

THE TRUSTWORTHY MESSAGE

Titus 1:1-16

Key Verse: 1:9

"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."

Titus is a pastoral epistle, along with 1 and 2 Timothy. Paul appointed Titus as the overseer of the church of Crete. The contents of Titus are very similar to those of 1 and 2 Timothy. But in 1,2 Timothy Paul instructed Timothy in the basic duty and principles of being a Christian leader of God's people. In Titus Paul emphasizes to raise those who can teach the Bible among the rank and file. Paul does not think about the human situations. Paul encourages his fellow coworkers to overcome all kinds of human situations by faith and concentrate on raising Bible teachers and encouraging them to teach the Bible.

First, the hope of eternal life (1-4). Look at verses 1-2. "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time...." This is a part of Paul's greeting to Titus. But this greeting came from Paul's faith. Also, this greeting teaches us what we should believe as a Christian leader.

In the first place, we must learn that we are God's elect. Many Christian leaders do not have clear confidence that they are God's elect. Some of them think that they chose God to do God's work because God's work is better in value than other business. But they are wrong. They did not choose themselves to be the servants of God. God chose them to be servants of God. John 15:16 says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." From among the chosen people, God's elect are supposed to carry out a specific mission. For example, David was elected as a king of Israel to serve God's purpose in his generation (Ac 13:36). Peter was elected as the

top leader of the church to fight against the superstitious Jews and Romans. Paul was elected to be a light for the Gentiles. As long as we have a clear assurance that we are God's elect, we can do God's work. God's elected person must find and have a specific prayer topic because God elected him to carry out a specific mission and because man cannot carry out God's mission without prayer. Paul also introduces himself as being God's elect to proclaim the knowledge of God. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for anyone to be a messenger of God in that lawless and godless time. But Paul was sure that he was called to proclaim the truth of God, for God's word leads men to godliness. It is indeed amazing that Paul had faith in being God's elect and proclaiming the knowledge and truth of God that leads men to godliness.

In the second place, the hope of eternal life. It is indeed a glorious mission to plant the hope of eternal life in a person's heart. In the past and present, many saintly people searched for man's salvation from their limited lives. They sought especially man's eternal life because they thought that death leads people to nihilism, pessimism, and finally to become party animal men. Whenever we study philosophies we remember the name Socrates. He

said, "Gnothi seauton" (know yourself). He is one of the ancestors of philosophy. But his philosophy does not lead people to eternal life at all. Buddha and Confucius are known as the most influential people to the human race. But they could not lead people to eternal life. They did not even know how to obtain eternal life. Confucius' two basic human relationships and five moral codes renovated the people of East and West. Buddha's "Nirvana" (freedom from suffering) appealed to the suffering people of the world. But neither man said anything about eternal life. Descartes' philosophical theme, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) cannot save men even from their human agonies. The last part of the 20th century has been influenced by existentialism and pragmatism. These two "ism's" lack a philosophical theme. However, we can describe these two philosophies with the word *übermensch* (superman). Superman mentality produces a lot of comic books and men and women of wild gyrations like Rocky, a famous boxer in the movies. But these semi-philosophies cannot lead man to godliness and to eternal life. It is important for us to have faith in Jesus that only in Jesus can we grow up to be godly and have eternal life. The promise of eternal life is not a man-made story. It was promised before the beginning of time, and at God's right time

God brought this promise to fulfillment through his Son Jesus Christ; this promise was entrusted to St. Paul (3).

Second, Christian leaders must have a firm faith (5-9). Paul sent Titus to Crete that he might straighten out one unfinished task. But the major reason was to let Titus appoint elders in every town as Paul directed him. Here Paul briefly mentions elders' qualifications. Look at verses 6-7. "An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain." This teach us two things.

In the first place, Christian leaders must be mature servants of God. The first part of verse 6 says, "An elder must be blameless...." How can a man be blameless when human beings are men and women of many mistakes? The last part of verse 6 teaches us what it means to be blameless. He must be the husband of but one wife. At that time, women were bought and sold. Before

the gospel was deeply rooted, women's equality was ignored. So there were many Christian leaders who had but one wife in one state and another wife in another state. This is against the truth of God. Not only so, but also it is harmful for the spiritual growth of their children. Therefore, Christian leaders must have but one wife. That's not conditional, but imperative. The holiness of God is the power source of Christian faith. Purity is the strength of a Christian's daily life. Therefore they must have but one wife so that their children may grow under pious parents and learn the life of faith from their parents' life of faith. If Christian parents live a double life, their children will become disobedient. A Christian leader must be blameless. In this case, "blameless" means "not overbearing." When we become leaders we have one thing to do. We must humble ourselves every day. Otherwise we become proud and reveal ourselves not as gentle persons, but as domineering characters. Then it is very difficult for God to use such persons.

In the second place, Christian leaders must be hospitable. We remember the hospitality of Abraham to the three unknown guests, two of whom were later found to be angels of God who were going to Sodom and Gomorrah

to destroy those twin cities because of their wickedness. Abraham was so happy to see three unknown guests that he made a beef steak out of his own calf and baked delicious bread. Then the Lord told him the secret of God that he was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because they provoked God to anger by their immorality and violence. On the other hand, when the two angels came to Lot, he also welcomed the unknown guests. But he was not so joyful to treat these two dusty unknown guests, not knowing that they were the angels of God. That evening Lot gave them one cup of cold water each and two pieces of bread. So they did not tell him who they were and they didn't tell him the secret of God. They only told him the bad news that they would destroy the city. Lot could not know what human happiness was. Hospitality made the difference between Abraham and Lot. There was one young servant of God. He was living in a studio apartment. But a poor widow visited the servant's house three times a year and ate and slept in the same studio apartment at least three months every year for more than ten years. The young servant of God was happy to have the helpless widow sleep in his studio apartment freely. Then God blessed the young servant's ministry abundantly.

In the third place, Christian leaders must have a firm faith in Jesus Christ. Look at verse 9. "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." In the world, there are many glittering things. Many young men have their own plans and old men have their own dreams. To ordinary people, the attachment of the world is stronger than any other desire. Especially young people's sinful desire is the strongest. Their curiosity for sinful behavior cannot be ignored. On the contrary, to have a strong faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and in his eternal kingship is hard to keep in our hearts. Usually many good-looking Christians do not keep the faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and his eternal kingship. Instead, they seriously think about how to spend the long weekend holidays. Therefore, to have a firm faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and in his eternal kingship, which gives us eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance, is the most important thing to have in our hearts. In this matter, we must be like Jesus. To keep God's will for world salvation and man's eternal life through his death and resurrection he gave up the glory and power and honor of his kingdom and humbled himself and came down to this world and lived as one of us. Finally

he was accused of being a criminal and hung on a tree to shed his holy blood to cleanse our sin-stained blood. We must remember how much Jesus Christ struggled to keep his faith in God. When we keep the basic faith, true faith starts to grow in our hearts and continues. Sound doctrine is to believe that Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection give us eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance.

St. Peter was chosen to be God's elect to shepherd God's flock of sheep in the first century, when Christianity was sprouting. But when we read his messages in the Acts of the Apostles, he never missed Jesus' death on the cross for our sins to give us eternal life and his resurrection to give us the glorious kingdom of God as our inheritance. Paul was chosen as God's elect. Actually, Paul wanted to work for his own Jewish people. But the Jews rejected him as much as they rejected the Gentile people, simply because he associated with the Gentile people. But God made him a light for the Gentiles. A light for the Gentiles is a nickname of Jesus. The mission as a light for the Gentiles implies that Paul was the successor of Jesus' remaining suffering. When we study all his epistles, what he received was constant sufferings and

persecutions. But in Paul's message, he never missed Jesus' death for men's sins in order to give eternal life to all those who believe in him. It was also through Jesus' resurrection that God gives the kingdom of God as their inheritance to those who believe in his resurrection. When we are pointless in our gospel ministry our sheep also become pointless. Therefore we must have a firm faith. In this passage, "a firm faith" refers to Jesus' life and work. May God help us not to be pragmatic about the Christian faith but have a firm faith in Jesus. Sometimes we wonder what we are believing. But we must come back to our senses that we believe Jesus' death and resurrection and the kingdom of God as our inheritance. In short, we are believing God's word of promise.

Third, rebuke them sharply (10-16). As we have studied in 1 and 2 Timothy, there were many rebellious people. They are mere talkers and deceivers. If we point them out, they were the circumcision group. Look at verse 10. "For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group." They are equivalent to modern drug Christians. They claimed that if anybody received circumcision on the eighth day after his birth,

he was one of the children of Abraham, whose eternal life was guaranteed. Many of the pleasure-seeking and superficial believers followed them, abandoning the true faith which is accompanied by the cross of Jesus. They visited house to house and taught people false teachings for dishonest gain. There was a saying spread in Crete, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons" (12). This verse indicates the vicious activities of the circumcision party. Their influence misled innocent people to wander and suffer endlessly.

Another group was Judaism. Judaizers mainly taught Jewish myths (14). The coming of Jesus Christ is the coming of the light. (Mt 4:15,16). On the other hand, many Christians who wanted to believe hoped to be happier and have an easier life when they believed in Jesus Christ. But this was not so. They were under constant misunderstanding and persecutions. The Judaizers targeted these young Christians who were in conflict. The Judaizers went around and emptied innocent people's pockets by saying many lies. So Paul said, "Pure people are pure in all things. But corrupted people are corrupted in all things" (15). Corrupted people are, in fact, corrupted in both their minds and consciences. They claim to know God but by their actions they are

denying God themselves. They are detestable and disobedient, unfit for doing anything. Paul instructs Titus how to deal with them. Paul said, "rebuke them sharply." It means Titus must understand their falsity and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ all the more and protect God's flock of sheep from those liars. Paul instructs Titus not to tolerate these easygoing people who wear the guise of Christianity, but to destroy them all by standing firmly in the gospel truth.

May God help us to have a firm faith. As we have studied, the firm faith is to believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah. There is salvation only in him. Jesus gives us eternal life and the kingdom of God through his death and resurrection. When we have a firm faith in Jesus we grow more and more godly. We can overcome the world.