

## Titus 1

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### How to do Good : Helps & Hindrances

In my later teenage years I used to listen  
to some of a band called DC talk  
& one of their songs began with a quotation  
that it turns out is from  
a Catholic writer called Brennan Manning

"The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is  
Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and walk out  
the door and deny Him by their lifestyle," ... "That is what an  
unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."<sup>1</sup>

& yet that would be a contradiction in terms for Paul

One of the drumbeats that goes right through  
the letter to Titus

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<sup>1</sup> Brennan Manning

is the idea of doing good.

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You get it in chapter 1 here in v8

as he outlines the character of an elder

It's again in v16

as he shows these opponents

as unfit for doing anything good

Then in ch 2

for the various groups within the church he speaks to  
they are

to teach what is good - v3

to be kind [actually good] - v5

to do what is good - v7

& you get it again in ch 2 -

*God has purified for himself a people  
eager to do what is good*

& it's there again in ch 3

v1 to be ready to do whatever is good,

v8 careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

v14 Our people must learn to devote themselves  
to doing what is good,

& so what's going on?!  
What is this goodness about?

Well one thing that we'll see is certain  
is that it's not being good to try & earn favour with God

That is a BIG misunderstanding that many have  
with the Christian faith  
It's not as if God is there as a grumpy headmaster  
& we're on best behavior  
to try & stay out of his office

we do what is good  
& hope we don't have to meet him

That's not it at all.

The - eager to do good here -  
is all about changed lives

It's that the gospel of Jesus really works.  
It transforms people

& AS they are transformed  
then people notice

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As Paul would say: 2v14:  
Jesus gave himself for us  
to redeem us from all wickedness &  
to purify for himself a people that are his very own  
eager to do what is Good.

The gospel changes lives  
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And the context for those changed lives is the church.

In chapter 1 - we'll see in a bit - a big focus on  
leadership  
he outlines qualifications for elders.

In chapter 2 – next week – a focus on  
different groups of people &  
intra-church household relationships  
how the generations should relate to one another

&  
In chapter 3 then – in a fortnight  
how the church  
the household of God  
relates to the world  
how MRC relates to East Oxford.

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So let's dive into chapter 1.  
& we're going to split it into 3.

v1-4: Gospel foundations

v5-9: Gospel leadership

v10-16: Gospel hindrances

So firstly then

v1-4: Gospel foundations

& Paul lays on the table for us  
**in a world of voices**  
why we ought to listen to him

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& so  
Notice with me  
– the who  
– the what  
– the why  
& – the how  
of Paul's ministry...

**The who?**

Well..... Paul.

Paul who describes himself as a servant – a slave.  
& a slave was the **property** of his master.  
all he was – was because of his master  
he owed everything  
utter dependence  
utter reliance

for protection  
for provision

Paul the servant.

& It doesn't take much for us to draw the lines to us does it?

In a culture of rights & power

we easily - easily bristle

at the thought of being a servant of God

at the thought of giving him

trusting him with our ALL

But he is the boss.

All we are & have is because of him.

We look to him

for protection

for provision

Of course the tricky thing is when we look elsewhere

But he's a God we CAN trust

A God who loves

Loves so much he gives us himself

& To be a servant of that kind of God?  
well that is liberating.

Paul - the servant

& also Paul the apostle.

Apostle means that Jesus has sent him.

Jesus has entrusted a job to Paul

& Jesus is the master.

But **what** is the job of an apostle?

Why has Jesus sent him??

Well look again at v1... it's

for the faith of God's elect

Paul's *raison d'être* is for the elect.

For those whom God has chosen.

God's people

& it's to do with their faith

Their trust in God

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But then he zooms in on one aspect especially  
the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

It ties up with the being good as well  
A people who live good lives.

& we say...  
Why... this?  
Why this aspect... in particular?

We'll come onto it in a bit in our final section for this morning  
But as is often the case with Paul  
his **opening** to the letter...  
raises many of the issues  
that he'll tackle later on.

For now just glance at v16.  
<sup>16</sup> They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.  
They are detestable, disobedient  
& unfit for doing anything good.

You see there are people around saying they're believers  
ticking the box.

But when you look at their lives...sadly you see it's all talk  
they've not grasped  
that the gospel actually changes you.  
that a knowledge of the truth  
leads to godliness

& if it doesn't lead to godliness  
then it *might* be that you don't KNOW the truth  
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Paul's told us **what** he does.  
Now he tells us **why** he does it.

& he begins at the end.  
v2 Resting on the hope of eternal life

I take it - if you know what's coming then  
Then you know where to invest now.

You know what matters now.

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& we say – well how can we trust **this** hope?  
People let me down the whole time...  
How do we **know** that God is dependable?

& Paul say's it's because He makes promises  
God makes promises BEFORE the beginning of time  
& – **unlike** the Cretans v12 –  
God does not lie.

He's the kind of God who always follows through.  
The kind of God we can lean upon  
& rely upon in everything.  
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& that's clear in v3  
because at the appointed season  
in line with the plan  
Jesus came.  
**The word was brought to light.**  
& through Paul's preaching  
that truth is made known.

That's the **how** question...  
– He's preaching about Jesus  
– With a message entrusted to him by Jesus

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It's easy to be disillusioned or doubtful...  
We mustn't miss how powerful  
this message  
this gospel is

in these first few verses  
it's powerful enough to change you  
**truth leads to godliness**  
it's powerful enough to change Titus  
**v4 he's Paul's true son in the common faith**  
it's powerful enough to start churches  
v5 that's why Titus is there  
he's finishing the job

That's worth pondering.  
It might be you're here as a Christian  
& you're tired

tired of falling into sin again & again

Well know that slowly but surely

the gospel transforms people's lives

as God deals with us

☺ we'll see much more of that in chapter 2

so come back next week!

OOrrr It might be you're here as a visitor

& you wouldn't call yourself a Christian.

& the word gospel doesn't mean that much to you

☺

That's not surprising it is one of those church-y words

that we bandy around & don't explain enough

But v4 is actually really helpful.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our  
SAVIOUR.

Gospel simply means good news.

It's the good news that

through Jesus

through his death on the cross

we can be friends with the God who made us

It's why Paul calls Jesus our savior.

It implies we needed saving

You see

Because of God's perfect absolute goodness

He cannot simply overlook sin

& yet as Jesus dies

so God is angry with him

instead of his people.

We are saved from the just anger of God

Which means we have grace

that is God's generosity

it giving us what we don't deserve

It means we have peace from God

& with God

They're not random words

They're what Jesus - our savior - achieves for us

For the Christian they are very precious words

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& it was **that** message

*peace with God through Jesus dying on a cross*  
as Paul travelled around  
that started churches all around Crete

People were forgiven  
Their lives were transformed

& now what Titus is to do  
is to finish the job.

Churches have been planted  
Little baby seedlings

Now it's time to sort out the leaders.  
To encourage & help the plants to grow

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One of the things I've spotted at Magdalen Road

is the vast number of people  
who seem to grow their own vegetables!!

It's remarkable!

It's like the goodlife

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But imagine you plant your lettuces  
or radishes  
*or your vegetable of choice*

& you're hoping for some kind of a salad  
so you want to give them  
the best chance to thrive

Well I've currently not been infected with the bug...

But I guess

- you fertilize the soil
- you water them regularly
- you put a plastic bottle over to keep the slugs off

You **do** things to help them grow

Well so Titus is to appoint elders

He's helping the church grow  
Creating a structure whereby it will thrive

So

v5-9: Gospel leadership

Before we look at the verses  
3 things to notice

1. spot that he uses 2 words here  
to talk about the same people

There are elders v6

&

There are overseers v7

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I take that to be deliberate.

The elder word here picks up ideas  
of being a leader of a household  
looking at family relationships  
a godly husband  
a godly dad

& that seems to be the training pool then  
for the overseer

who is a steward of God's work

His household

then you swim in the deepend

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2. Notice too the repetition of blameless  
it's outlined for both elders & overseers in v6 & v7.

He's underlining it & putting it in bold

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Blamelessness is about reputation & respect.

& this was **vital**.

It was **vital** because of the prevailing culture of  
honour & shame

within the wider first century Mediterranean world

But

It was also **vital** because of Crete  
& the nastier elements of the culture  
that we'll see in a bit.

If their leaders cannot point the way  
Then the trajectory of the church is going to be off

3. & thirdly notice v5 it IS leaders  
that's plural.  
wherever possible  
a plurality of leaders  
a plurality of elders  
is the goal.

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Maybe as we begin though your question is  
but I'm never going to be an elder!?

I think my comment would be  
whilst this **is**  
a **description** of eldership  
I'm not sure I can see any aspects  
that don't apply to any Christian

This is what a godly person looks like.  
It's the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness

In glorious technicolour  
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There's lots we could say on each  
we're going to have to be brief...  
we'll slowly move over each one...

- the husband of but one wife  
it's a man who - if married  
is faithful - utterly loyal - to his wife

as Christ loves the church  
so he loves her.

- a man who's children believe  
& are not open to the charge  
of being wild & disobedient

So not just the reputation of the dad counts...

But his family too.  
- his is not to be a divided household

- his children can't have ASBOs!

I've heard of people who have stepped  
off elderships  
for this verse

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He is **not overbearing**

- you're not to be a bully.  
when people disagree with you -  
you won't ride roughshod over their feelings  
to make sure you always selfishly  
get your way

**Not quick tempered**

you don't fly off the handle at people  
- when things don't go how you'd like  
you don't have a reputation whereby  
people have walk on egg shells  
the whole time around you  
fearful of an explosion

**Not given to drunken-ness**

- that is you're disciplined - self-controlled  
& don't **lean** on alcohol to get you through

**Not violent**

- you have a careful - calm composure to lead others  
& you don't resort to physical force

**Not pursuing dishonest gain**

- you don't cheat on your tax returns  
- you have integrity with how you handle money  
- you're famous at work  
for filling out expenses forms correctly!

In the context here it was particularly about  
cheating people out of their cash  
as you do ministry

v8

You **must be hospitable**

when you're tired after a busy stressful day at work  
you love people in - costly way  
perhaps even if you want some down-time

you happily open your house to them

You're happy to roast & bake

The spare beds are out

You LIKE people

**You love what is good**

particularly the good you see in others

loving others

encouraging the good you see in them

**You are self-controlled**

that's a key word in Titus.

it's something we thought about yesterday with the men

at the SHED!

so it's someone who can lead

not just others

but themselves in every nook & cranny of life

The word **especially** highlights

what you think about

& how you behave as a result

It's not flicking through the IKEA catalogue or RightMove

Or surfing on autotrader

coz you know they'll make you discontent.

what you think about impacts how you live

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**Self control**

when the spotlight's on you

but also & maybe more importantly

when you're all alone

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**Upright**

Think upright

Think absolutely just - fair - honest - trustworthy

Think stick of rock from the sea-side

wherever you chop it it's the same inside

Whoever you're with..... you're upright

**Holy**

at the very core of who you are

you want to be holy

like your God

& **disciplined**

that's like self control

but I'm told the word points to

a big focus on your body

& your appetites

- It's godly restraint

Your appetites are your slaves.

& not your masters

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[8]

Whenever you read these lists of character traits in the bible

it's VEEERY easy for it all to be a bit theoretical.

I'm the kind of person

who doesn't get on well with the abstract & philosophical

I love examples.

Ideas fleshed out with nitty-gritty reality

& so with these lists it helps me to simply look at Jesus

Read through the gospels afresh

& see him being the example for us of these things

Seeing how he wasn't overbearing

or quick tempered

or drunk

or violent

Seeing how he was

upright & holy & disciplined & so on

It's his church

He embodies what his leaders need to be like

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So the character of a leader is utterly vital

It's not JUST about character

but it's largely about character

The extra dimension is there in v9

it's someone who not only shows the life fruit of  
knowing the truth  
but someone who holds to it  
who encourages others with it  
who stands up & says no when people are wrong

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But character **IS** vital

& that's something we need to hear  
Because it's easy to get the emphasis wrong  
as we look for  
elders  
or especially perhaps  
people who are considering  
paid pastoral ministry

I was chatting to a **wise** friend recently  
who I think put his finger on it – he said  
we easily a culture is created where  
gifted people can play the game  
They're great at understanding the bible

They're able to teach it perhaps  
& yet behind closed doors -- they're very different

& so when you begin to ask difficult questions  
& it turns out they're nowhere near v7-8 character...  
& then they're left confused

when you can't encourage them  
towards eldership

They've jumped through the public hoops  
Because we over-emphasize teaching  
& under-emphasize character

Our leaders must have both  
– A life adorned by the fruit of gospel growth &  
– Lips that can speak of & stand up for gospel truth

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If you're here this morning...  
aspiring to eldership  
even considering paid ministry  
Please don't rush over v6, v7 & v8

They are the cake not the icing

In fact

If you're here & you're not

Please don't rush over v6, v7 & v8

It's the Christ-like fruit of a life

built on the gospel

Pray them

for yourself -

for your spouse -

for your homegroup

for your leaders

& a church that has leaders like this

a church made up of people like this

will stick out like a sore thumb.

because our culture is so alien & anti

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Let's have a look at

v10-16: Gospel hindrances

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So we're back on the allotment

We're wanting this church plant to grow

& we've been **doing** stuff -

like appointing godly leaders to help it thrive

But now we see why that's so necessary.

in v10-16

He tells us that... the soil is pretty rubbish in the first place...

But also that there are slugs & aphids.

there are predators at large

wanting to destroy the crop

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So the metaphorical **soil** is there in v12

The soil of Crete in general...

Even one of their own prophets has said,

"Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."

Paul is quoting from a poet from their time

... probably - but not definitely -

a guy called Epimenides  
& in fact there is stacks of evidence  
for Crete being an unpleasant place

In fact the Greek word meaning “to lie” developed later on  
& it is – KRETIZEIN  
from the word Crete

you lie?  
then you’re like someone from Crete

But it’s a phrase dripping with irony...  
the phrase evil brutes – is actually evil beasts  
there were apparently very few  
wild animals on Crete

His point being –  
there don’t need to be beasts on Crete  
because the people are beastly enough



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So the underlying culture & society was one famous –  
even among Pagans for sinfulness

But as well as the soil – predators are causing  
problems for this young church plant

& the shorthand for them from Paul is the circumcision group  
That’s there in v10.

10 For there are many rebellious people,  
mere talkers and deceivers,  
especially those of the circumcision group.

11 They must be silenced,  
because they are ruining whole households  
by teaching things they ought not to teach—  
and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

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Their words are having an impact  
Christians are getting wobbly  
Households are being hit

The rug has being pulled out from underneath them

**What are we supposed to believe any more?!**  
**Paul was so persuasive**

But these guys make sense too...!

& they were probably Jewish teachers  
who said something like  
that to be a Christian  
you needed to follow various aspects  
of the Jewish Law

It's there in v14 as well... see?

talk of **Jewish Myths or to the commands of those  
who reject the truth.**

So **Jewish Myths?**

Think what we might call 'speculative truth'  
based on  
OT writings  
or perhaps inter-testamental writings  
in between the New & the OT

It's probably similar stuff  
to what's going on in  
Galatians or Colossians

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And the **commands of those who reject the truth**  
Is actually - I'm told -  
a technical term  
describing **man-made rules.**

If you know Mark's gospel Jesus uses it in Mark 7  
It's a striking parallel  
It's where the Pharisees are obsessed with hand-washing  
& external cleanliness  
But don't give 2 hoots for what's inside people's hearts  
internal cleanliness...

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Which is why in v15  
He then says  
**to the pure - that is Christians**  
**all things are pure**  
so food is pure - clean

You're not made dirty by external things

**But to the impure** - those who do **not** believe  
then they are shot through to their very cores  
with sin

their hearts are unclean.

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So it is listening in to one side of the phone call  
but it looks like an unhelpful  
Jewish Law & speculative theology strand  
to these teachers...

There's also a money & payment element in the mix  
That's second half of verse 11:

by teaching things they ought not to teach—  
and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

So...

they're likely to have been  
trained in rhetoric & public speaking.  
They were eloquent  
& as was often the case  
with travelling speakers of the time  
you would pay them for their work.

It's why Paul so often works & makes tents  
So people can't accuse him of greed  
& manipulation

But not so with these teachers  
They care more about their bank balance  
Than about people

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And do you see his final verdict on them in v16?  
[The nail in the coffin?](#)

16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.  
They are detestable, disobedient  
& unfit for doing anything good.

See the contrast with Paul?

He's the apostle  
for the faith of God's elect and  
the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

See the contrast even with elders?

must hold firmly to the trustworthy message...

but also who must be

**blameless**

The gospel leads to changed lives.

These teachers *claim* orthodoxy.

But you can see

by their fruit they don't actually know God.

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& so I guess it becomes all the more clear

now why Paul

is so keen for Titus to establish elders

They're baby churches

**But the slugs are out**

**& the soil is pretty unfriendly too!**

They need leaders

They need protection to help them grow

**Chopped off plastic drinks bottles**

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Just as we finish

It'll come into starker focus next week

Paul's setting it up here...

But notice again

that gospel proclamation

& gospel living

**throughout** the passage

go hand in hand.

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That's a really useful thing for me to hear.

It's useful

Because I love the bible!

- I love studying it

- I love understanding it

- I love teaching it!

But that's not enough.

We actually talked about it a few weeks ago

in Ephesians 4 if you were here.  
It's the pound coin again  
we've put it in the vending machine  
but we need to whack it  
to make it drop into reality

& that was obvious because of how they lived  
& so they were unfit for  
doing - anything - GOOD

Paul knows that the  
Knowledge of the truth - the gospel - leads to godliness  
Changed lives

& the gospel **is** powerful to do that.

Let's pray

The gospel's gone in  
but is it having an impact  
on **everyday - life?**  
on normal - Monday afternoon or  
Tuesday night  
living?

Where the rubber hits the road  
is what you're up to each day  
what kind of a person you are  
- when people are around  
- when people aren't around

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These false teachers  
claimed to know God  
but it turned out they didn't