

## **Commitments of a Powerful Leader, Part 1**

Titus 1:1

56-1

Well, this morning is a very important day for us because we begin a new book in the New Testament - in our ongoing effort to complete the whole New Testament - the book of Titus. And I want you to take your Bible, if you will do so, and open it to the first chapter of this epistle from the apostle Paul to his friend and co-worker, Titus.

Titus is the next to the last letter that Paul wrote. As in the case of 1 and 2 Timothy, it has a somewhat similar purpose. When Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy he was endeavoring to strengthen Timothy because Timothy was going to follow up on Paul's work. He wanted to pass the baton, as it were, to Timothy, and those two epistles were to give him a strong hand in ministry to equip him for the future. And the same is true in the case of Titus. Here is another young man who must replace Paul. Here is another very important young man who is close to Paul, beloved by Paul, and who has the responsibility of carrying on after Paul is gone. And so both of these young men, Timothy and Titus, have certain similarities.

It is also true that as it was in the case of Timothy, Titus had a very difficult task. He was in a different place than Timothy. Timothy, as you remember, was in Ephesus trying to straighten out the Ephesian church. And then from there other things would come in terms of future ministry. But he had a hard, a hard task to fix the decaying Ephesian church. Titus was in a different location as is noted here - down in verse 5 - he was in Crete, the island of Crete. And he had the responsibility there of straightening out the church, of establishing leadership in the church. Now in both Timothy and Titus' case there was strong opposition. There was opposition inside the church; there was opposition outside. So both of these young men had been properly and amply trained by the apostle Paul; both of them were gifted by the Holy Spirit; both of them had served faithfully and proven themselves; both of them had very difficult tasks at hand; both of them faced opposition. Consequently, both of them needed this kind of letter from Paul to strengthen them, also to give them some apostolic authority for the task that they faced.

Now in this letter that Paul writes to Titus, the purpose of the letter really is to instruct the church to do what it ought to do, to behave itself properly. And there are several things that fall very clearly from these chapters. First of all, chapter 1 looks at the character and conduct of leaders. Chapter 1 looks at the character and conduct of leaders, a very appropriate subject for us to discuss in our own contemporary setting in the church. Chapter 2 looks at the character and conduct of members - the members of the church. And chapter 3 deals with character and conduct regarding the church's witness before the world.

So the first chapter focuses on the leaders. The second chapter focuses on the members. And the third chapter focuses on those outside the church and how the church is to behave itself before them - the good and godly deeds of leaders, the good and godly deeds of members, the good and godly

living of the church in the face of a watching world. Now this instruction is very important, not only for Titus and for the churches in the island of Crete, but for all churches.

Now these three brief chapters are doctrinal. They are full of rich, doctrinal treasures, as we shall see going through considering some of the great doctrines of the faith. We will note some of them even in the very beginning verse of chapter 1. And while there are some treasures of doctrine and theology in this brief epistle, it is preeminently practical. It deals with the qualifications for spiritual leadership. It confronts sin and heresy. It spells out the spiritual roles and obligations of believers in the church and in the family. It rehearses the magnificent realities of our salvation and their practical implications. It tells believers how to live godly before the watching world in order that we might have an effective witness. It speaks about necessary purging in the church and other very important matters.

Now it also should be noted that this is what I call a condensed epistle. It is compact. You could almost call it a pocket guide to life in the church, because it's that. It is concentrated, all the water is out. It is vacuum-packed, all the air is out. It is squeezed tight. But when we take the lid off, it's going to expand. When we add the water or the air of our own investigation we're going to see this very compact, condensed, concentrated epistle begin to expand. It is economical in the sense that there are not a lot of words, and yet again in the genius of the mind of God with an economy of words He can say a world of things. This is one of those epistles that you would call a bargain epistle; this is a sale item because you get a lot for a little. And it will be for all of us, I think, a very wonderful experience.

Now it all begins, of course, at the beginning, and that's where we have to start. Let's look at the first four verses. "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, even His word in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior."

Now honestly, that is an unusual amount of words. That is a sentence, a long and involved and intricate and somewhat complicated sentence, stringing together various thoughts without ever putting a period anywhere. It is not only a long sentence and a somewhat involved one, but it is an unusual amount of words to introduce a letter written to a dear personal friend. You get the feeling in reading this that there's something very formal about this introduction and yet there must be something very informal about Paul's relationship to Titus. It is, in fact, more lengthy and more formal than either of the letters to Timothy. Does it reflect that Paul had somewhat of a distant relationship to Titus or that Paul was somewhat a stranger to Titus or there was some kind of alienation in their relationship? Not at all. There is good reason for this rather technical, rather formal, rather lengthy approach, sort of cataloguing apostolic data in regard to writing Titus. And the good reason is this: the letter is intended to delegate to Titus apostolic authority.

He was working, as I said, in the island of Crete, as it notes in verse 5, and he was working in the churches there. The churches were new. The churches were immature. It was going to be his job to ordain elders and to establish pastors and leaders there. He was in the foundational work of the church. He also was undoubtedly a young man. There were already false teachers, as we shall see, in Crete. There were already false teachers who had come around the church and had begun to

pervert the church with heresy and ungodliness. These false teachers would surely question whatever Titus tried to do. It's a very formative time in these churches. They are new. They are immature. The believers are young. They are without leadership. There is already the influx of error and the lack of virtue in the lives of these false teachers as impacting the church.

This young man is going to have to get a hold of this whole thing, put the right people in leadership, set the church on its feet, give it the doctrinal foundation. And he's not going to do it without opposition, and he knows, does Paul, that he will need some strong authority. He is going to have to be perceived as one with apostolic authority, delegated to him to act in behalf of Paul. He is in every sense the direct legate, the delegate, the envoy, the ambassador sent by the great apostle himself. He needs strong apostolic backing to carry on his ministry. And the opening then lays out carefully Paul's apostolic authority and shows then in verse 4 how he delegates this to Titus, so that anyone who wants to counterattack or attempt to withstand or to prevent Titus from doing what he is doing is going to be dealing with the apostle Paul himself and with authority which he possesses, because it was given him by none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

In fact, I think we would be fair in saying this: that the purpose of this letter is not to give Titus the information that is contained in it. And I mean not only in the first four verses but in the rest of the letter. It is most likely that Titus already knew most of this. If not the fine points, certainly in general he knew this. He already knew what the standards for leadership were, because he had been with Paul long enough to see Paul in action and to see the kind of leaders that Paul put into place. He was very involved in Paul's interaction with the Corinthian church. And so he knew what Paul expected in terms of church leadership.

He also was very well aware of what the apostle's expectations were for the membership. He also knew full well how the people of Christ were to conduct themselves in the face of a watching world. So this is not primarily information for Titus; but what it is to do is to arm Titus with an apostolic document by which he can lead the church and his leadership not be questioned. The letter, then, with its formidable opening and strong teaching, should give Titus the necessary clout to lead the church and overcome the resistance of the obstinate detractors and false teachers.

Now, as we look at Paul's opening statement about himself, I don't want us to see this just as history. I mean, we could say, "Well it's just here because it's an apostolic recitation of certain data that will cause anybody who questions Titus to know that he's representing Paul, and this is who Paul is, and herein lies Paul's authority, and so it's sort of historical." Well, it's more than that. It is not just history. It is not just an interesting insight into Paul. It is not just a bit of data about his apostolic authority. It is not just a note, as it were, that tells us the authority on which Titus was to base his ministry. It is contemporary; it is applicable. Why? Follow this: because it gives to us - as so often Paul does - it gives to us certain vital patterns and principles regarding our own ministry. It is again a model of ministry. What we see that is true of Paul becomes the pattern for us. From these opening verses we can learn what I believe could be simply stated as the commitments of a great leader. What makes a great leader? We have certainly a major leadership gap in America in the church today. The continual defaulting of leadership is of grave concern to me, and I think to all of us who name the name of Christ and love His truth and put our confidence in His representatives.

When we come to a passage like this, it is very instructive for us because it again gives us the characteristics of a man who was a leader, who was blameless and above reproach and without fault and who was powerful and effective and useful and fruitful. And so whenever I hear Paul talk about

himself and about his ministry and about the nature of it or the authority of it or the quality of it or the character of it, or the emphasis of it, I listen carefully because I'm hearing in those words a model for my own life. So I want to ask the question then regarding these four verses - What commitments in Paul's life made him the great leader that he was? What was it that made him such a useful, powerful, effective and fruitful leader? Why was he so respected and so honored and so loved? And the answer, I believe, is bound up in part in these four verses. There are several obvious components - if you look long enough at the text you could probably see there what I see - but there are several components that come out of these four verses that identify the features of his spiritual commitment.

Now let me just say this. Anyone who is effective in life in terms of spiritual ministry makes commitments and then sticks with those commitments. The aspect of leadership that we see, or I should say the level of leadership that we see in Paul, doesn't happen by accident; you don't back into it. It is the result of a resolute mind and a resolute heart and a strong determination to walk in the power of the Spirit of God and in obedience to the Word. You learn to make commitments and to keep them. And Paul made such commitments. And they became the benchmarks of his leadership. In this greeting those commitments surface and they then become for us transferable principles that we can apply in our own life, commitments which we ourselves can and must make. These commitments, I believe, provide the framework for the greatness of his ministry. They provide the structure, the internal structure. He made strong commitments. He made unwavering commitments. And by the power of God, he kept them.

Let's look at the first one. First of all, he was committed to God's mastery. He was committed to God's mastery. He says, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Now in that very introduction, you can clearly see that he saw himself as a man under sovereign authority. Introducing himself with the word "Paul," he reminds us that in ancient times people put their name at the beginning of a letter, not at the end, which seems to me to make a lot more sense so you don't have to rummage through all the pages to find out who it's from. "Paul" comes from the Latin *Paulus*, which means "little." He also had the name "Saul" - "Paulos" is a Greek name; "Saul" is a Hebrew name. Some believe he had both names from birth, both a Greek and a Hebrew name. Because he was a Jew he would have a Hebrew name, because he was born and raised in a Greek culture, he may well have had also the name "Paul" all his life long. We're not sure about that. But he is the same as the one known as "Saul."

He was an unusually gifted man. He was a Jew. He was trained by the best Jewish teacher, Gamaliel; yet he was raised in the Greek world, so he was sufficiently Hellenized to understand his culture very well. He was fiercely loyal, however, and unaffected, as it were, by Gentile religion - fiercely loyal to Judaism and dutifully zealous as a Pharisee. So zealous was he as a Pharisee that he was a persecutor of Christians until the day he was confronted by Jesus Christ Himself. He was converted and became a preacher of the gospel.

He had a brilliant mind. He was a powerful and forceful person in terms of his abilities to reason and to proclaim truth. He became God's instrument for thirteen books of the New Testament. His spiritual credentials were endless; his achievements legendary; his miracles recorded for us; his virtues exemplary. But none of those formed the basis of his authority.

He does not say, "Paul, a Jew trained by the very best Jewish teacher. Paul, raised in a Greek world understanding fully Greek culture. Paul, a fiercely loyal believer in Judaism. Paul, a zealous Pharisee

who knew the Law. Paul, a persecutor. Paul, the one who saw the beauty of Jesus Christ and yielded himself to Him." He doesn't say, "Paul with a brilliant mind." He doesn't say, "Paul, the man that God used to write so many books." He doesn't say, "Paul whose achievements are legendary, whose virtue is exemplary. Paul whose credentials are endless. Paul, the one who performed miracles." No. He doesn't base his authority on any of those personal matters.

When he looks at the very essence of his ministry, he sees himself in ministry not because of anything in himself or accomplished by himself, but because of sovereign choice. He is a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is one who refers to himself in those two ways to demonstrate his commitment to God's mastery over his life. He did not see himself as a loose cannon - as somebody who could act independently, as somebody who could control his own life, could call the shots, could live any way he wanted to live, could determine the direction of his ministry. He saw himself and was fully committed to the fact that he was a man under divine call, authority, and obligation.

That becomes clear in the two titles which he uses here. First, "a bond-servant of God," "a bond-servant of God." By the way, that's the only time he gives himself that title, the only time in Scripture. He often refers to himself as "a bond-servant of Christ," but this is the only time he refers to himself as "a bond-servant of God." James does refer to himself as "a bond-servant of God." Even more interestingly, Moses is called "a bond-servant of God" in Revelation 15:3. So Paul here is putting himself on a level with Moses as one uniquely called to serve Yahweh, the living God. He puts himself then on the level of other Old Testament leaders and New Testament leaders as the servant of the true God.

I think this is very important because there was obviously some negative influence in Crete. If you go down to verse 10 of chapter 1, already in Crete, before Titus could even get the work started, there were rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. Already, Judaizing influence had entered - certain Jews who said you can't have a right relationship to God unless you've been circumcised. They were holding to Old Testament prescription.

Notice down in verse 14, we go a little bit further. He reminds Titus and the church not to pay attention to "Jewish myths and commandments of men," these Jewish commandments that had grown up in the rabbinical tradition. So already there was a pretty heavy influence there in regard to Judaism. And that may be the reason that the apostle chooses to call himself a servant of God, or a bond-servant and slave of God rather than of Jesus Christ because he wants those who are associated with Judaism to know that he stands in the great tradition with Moses and other Old Testament servants of Jehovah God. He is therefore describing himself by the term *doulos*, which means "slave." It's the most servile word in the Greek language. It points out that he is nothing but a slave. It describes someone who serves without any regard for his own interest, who serves without any regard for his own interest. And that word contains, I guess you could say, all the common connotations of the word *slave*. All that you can conceive of in the concept of slavery is in that word. Paul understood that he had no life of his own. He understood that he had no will of his own, that he had no purpose of his own, that he had no plan of his own, that he had no goal of his own. He was under the mastery of God. And he understood that that called him to a life of absolute submission to God. Such a commitment is at the heart of his effectiveness.

It all started on the road to Damascus when he was struck down. And as he was lying in the dirt a voice said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:5). "He said, 'Who art thou, Lord?'

And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." And from that moment on it was submission on his part. "Who are You, Lord? Who are You?"

And then he asked, "What do You want me to do?" He engaged himself at that moment in the submissive role as a slave to God, to Christ. It meant that Paul was the undisputed possession of God. It meant that he had no time of his own, that he had no plans of his own. He was God's slave, *doulos theos*. Back in Joshua 1:2 you'll find that in reference again to Moses, and Joshua his successor (Joshua 24:29), also "slave of God." It was said of the prophets in Amos 3:7 that they were slaves of Jehovah. Jeremiah 7:25 says it. And so here he is in a long line of those who stood as slaves to God.

Now the apostle Paul understood - and I just want to comment on this for a brief few moments - he understood what spiritual slavery meant, and he joyfully concurred with the privilege of such slavery. And I don't need to beg the issue, but you remember Philippians 2, for example, verse 17, "Even if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice." In other words, "Even if I have to give up my life, even if I have to sacrifice myself in my ministry to you, I rejoice in that."

In other words, he was utterly and totally sacrificial. He had yielded himself up completely to service to God. In Acts 20:24 he said, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received." "I don't consider my life dear; I am not important." He was completely enslaved to God.

Now there's a sense in which every one of us is in that same kind of slavery, to one degree or another, as the servants of God. You remember in Romans chapter 6 and verse 22, Paul said there, "But you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God." When you became a Christian, the fact is you became a slave to God. First Corinthians 6 says, "What? Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, you have been purchased, bought with a price?" First Peter 1 says, "The price was the precious blood as of a lamb without spot and without blemish." Every believer, then, is a slave of God. We are to be submissive. We are to be obedient. We have no agenda of our own; we have no will of our own except to align our own will with His will. We have no goal of our own except to fulfill the purposes of God. As we read earlier from the gospel of Luke in our opening prayer this morning, "Seek first His kingdom and let everything else be added at God's own discretion."

Now there's a second title here that I think is very obvious and familiar to us. He says not only is he "a slave to God" and thereby committed to God's mastery of his life, but he is "an apostle of Jesus Christ." This, in a sense, more narrowly and more specifically defines the very general concept of being a slave to God. He is a slave to God. So was Moses. So was Joshua. So were the prophets. And so were the apostles. But he has narrowed down in the second phrase the nature of his slavery. He has been sent by God as God's slave to perform the task of being a messenger on behalf of Jesus Christ. *Apostolos* means "a messenger," "one sent on a mission." The specific nature then of his slavery is defined.

Now let me just say a word about this. We think of the word "apostle," "a messenger." Sometimes you hear that the term "envoy," sometimes "ambassador," and you get the idea that this is some kind of a lofty term. The fact is, it is not. It is not an elevated term. Now when we talk about the apostles, we have elevated the term because God elevated the men. But the term itself is not an elevated term. It is not particularly lofty; it is not even very dignified.

For example, if I have a slave and he may be the lowest slave in my stable of slaves; he may be the very bottom guy on the totem pole, if you will, and I say to my slave, "I want you to go across town and I want you to take this message to a man over there," that slave then becomes my apostle. It doesn't carry any more dignity than that. The dignity is in the authority of the one who sent the messenger, not in the messenger. There's no inherent dignity in being a messenger of Jesus Christ, except the dignity of the task itself, based upon the authority of the Lord who gave the task.

So, Paul is not in any sense elevating himself when he calls himself an apostle. He is saying, however, "I come with authority, not my own authority, not based on my own credentials, but I am a slave of God, and God has sent me as the messenger of Jesus Christ." And so he with that title then narrows the sense of his slavery; he is a slave with a specific task of being sent by Jesus Christ.

And I believe this note is perhaps to help those Gentiles who may not understand the necessary authority that Titus bears. Down in verse 15 we get a little insight into some of the culture in Crete. In fact, verse 12 might help even as a starter. "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" - not exactly a chamber of commerce recommendation for the place. But verse 15 says, "To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

Now it may well be that there were religious people in Crete, professing to know God, but not knowing Jesus Christ. That's very evident. They were defiled. They were unbelieving. They were impure. Their mind, their conscience was defiled, their deeds denied the knowledge of God, they were detestable, disobedient, and they were worthless with regard to any good deed. This may well be the characterization of the local pagan Gentiles. And they need to know that this man comes not with the authority of Moses. The Jews need to know that he comes as Moses came, the slave of Jehovah, and the Gentiles need to know he comes as the messenger of Jesus Christ with the saving gospel. Now certainly that's a word for the Jews as well, but it may be that it covers the ground. If you look at both those titles and see one having an emphasis toward the Jews, the other having an emphasis toward the Gentiles.

Another way to look at it is this. "Slave of God" is an Old Testament name of authority. "Apostle of Jesus Christ" is a New Testament name of authority. He then comes to the Jews with Old Testament, with the equivalent of Old Testament authority. He comes to the Gentiles with the equivalent of New Testament apostolic authority. He is then in every sense the slave of God, the messenger of Jesus Christ. It cannot be gainsaid by Jew or Gentile. He is under divine mastery, and he is committed totally and singularly to his master.

And I might simply add that if you read Acts chapter 22 you really feel the heartbeat of this man as the testimony of what happened on the day that he was confronted with Christ finds its way into his first-person description. Let me just share with you that in Acts 22:6 Paul recites that on that road to Damascus, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven. It was about noon. He fell to the ground. He was confronted with Christ. In verse 10 he says, "What shall I do? And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go on into Damascus and there will be there'" – "you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do." From the very outset he said, "What do I do?" God says, "You go in there and I'll tell you what to do." And you know where it went from there - how he was commissioned to preach. And in verse 21 - sort of wraps it up in Acts 22 – "He said to me, 'Go, for I will send you.'"

So Paul gave the recitation of his own submission in Acts chapter 22. He really then becomes the model for our submission, doesn't he? All effective, all powerful, all useful, all fruitful, all genuinely spiritual people see themselves as under divine authority. That becomes the controlling influence of their life. They say with the apostle Paul, "I don't count my life dear unto myself, it's of little consequence to me what happens in my own life as regards to my own comfort or my own success. I am under authority." These kinds of people don't fulfill a personal agenda - they aren't building a personal empire; they aren't pursuing personal goals; they aren't trying to achieve personal accomplishments. They are subject to the master whose slave they are. They are subject to the master whose messenger they are and in whose will is their life and their joy.

When Paul came to the end of his life in that last epistle to Timothy, he wrote - just across the page you can see it in chapter 4 of 2 Timothy, verse 17 - he said, "The Lord stood with me, the Lord strengthened me in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom." That's his only goal. I just want to keep preaching; I just want to get through the whole ministry. I want to preach fully what He wants me to preach. He'll protect me as long as I'm faithful, and He'll bring me to His kingdom. That was and that should be the goal of everyone who follows the pattern of Paul - under God's control until the end.

There, then, is the very beginning of all spiritual effectiveness. You are under authority. You are a slave of God and a messenger of Jesus Christ.

Now not in the same sense that Paul was - certainly that's not true in my life. I'm not an apostle with a capital *a*. I'm not one of the Twelve, or Paul who saw the resurrected Christ. But I am, nonetheless, a slave of God and a messenger of Christ, and so are you. It's only a question of degree. That was Paul's first and undying commitment. And that commitment sustained him through his life.

Let me give you a second commitment - and we won't be able to cover all of this because it's such a rich one, but I want to give at least a part of it. The second thing he was committed to was God's mission - not only God's mastery in his life, but he was committed to God's mission. Please note verse 1 again, this man who is "the bond-servant" or the *doulos*, "the slave of God and the messenger of Jesus Christ," was "for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life." We'll stop at that point.

Here he tells us what his mission was. He not only lived to do God's will and to do Christ's bidding, but to fulfill a very specific mission that was their will. And here we move to the very straight-forward and specific expression of the will of God for his ministry. And again, I just remind you, this is compact. What you have in verse 1 and 2 you could probably preach on for six months. It's so rich - more of this condensed, concentrated, vacuum-packed, profound stuff. And we're going to have to let it expand a little bit, although we're not going to spend months but must maybe a couple of Sundays looking at it.

In verse 1, and then into verse 2, Paul is talking about the mission on which he was sent. Now let me show you, it's three parts, okay? Part one, "For the faith of those chosen of God." Part two, "For the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." Part three, "For the hope of eternal life."

Those are the three aspects of his ministry, and they are profound and comprehensive.

The first one says he was for evangelization, the faith of those chosen of God. The second one, he was for edification, the knowledge of the truth which produces godliness. The third one, he was for endurance, the hope that sustains in view of eternal life. We could call that encouragement. He was for evangelism. He was for edification. And he was for encouragement. That is the threefold mission. And that is the same threefold mission for every preacher and every teacher and every believer. We are for the bringing of the lost to Christ; we are for the training up of the saved to godliness; and we are for the encouragement that allows for endurance unto eternal life - a threefold mission statement is given in those great words.

Let's just look at the first one. Paul says, "As a slave of God and a messenger of Jesus Christ" - here's my mission - "for the faith of those chosen of God," "for the faith of those chosen of God." What does he mean? Listen carefully; here's what he means. To bring the elect to the point of saving faith - that's what he means. My first mission, my first goal, is to bring the elect to the point of saving faith. Those chosen of God are the elect, the ones that the Lord has chosen for salvation. Paul's job is to be a messenger for their faith, because the elect are not redeemed until they activate faith when hearing the truth. And so Paul says, "I have come, I have been sent to preach the truth which activates the faith which saves the elect." He was for the faith of those chosen by God.

Back in 2 Timothy 2:10 he says - he's willing in verse 9 to suffer hardship, even imprisonment as a criminal; I'll suffer anything - verse 10, "For this reason" - Why do you go through this? - "I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen." Why? "In order that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." I'll endure anything to get the elect saved. That's his whole purpose.

Simply stated, point one, "I will give my life to see people saved." That's his mission. And he was committed to it. He was committed to a life of evangelization.

That little phrase, "those chosen of God," is also used in Romans 8:33; "God's elect" it is often translated. It is also used in Colossians 3:12, that's the only other places it's used in the New Testament. But it is a well-known Old Testament term. And again, it may be that any Jews hovering around the church there would identify immediately with that phrase "God's elect," because in the Old Testament it was a title for Israel. You find in Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 6; Deuteronomy chapter 14, verse 2; Israel is designated as God's elect, the chosen of God. But now there is a new group, a new church, chosen of God. And Paul's mission was to bring to those chosen of God saving faith through the preaching of the gospel.

Now I don't need to beg this issue either, but just to mention that some of you may be saying, "Well now, are you saying that people who come to salvation are saved because God chose them to be saved?" I'm not saying that - the Bible is, and I'm echoing it. It's obvious; it's all through Scripture. We don't need to take a great amount of time but just to remind you of scriptures that are very, very explicit. In John 15:16 it is said, as specifically as it could ever be said; Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain." "You didn't choose Me, I chose you." That pattern follows through in the teaching of the book of Acts. In Acts chapter 13, verse 46, "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life...we're turning to the Gentiles. For thus the Lord has commanded

us, "I have placed you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth." And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." As many as had been already chosen for eternal life believed.

You find now, moving from the gospels, where Jesus said it, to the book of Acts where it is reiterated by the Holy Spirit inspiring the writer Luke into the epistles themselves; you come into Romans; you find the very same thing is taught in Romans. Romans 9:13, "It is written, 'Jacob I loved and Esau I hated.' What shall we say then? There is injustice with God?" - Is there? - "May it never be. For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,...I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" In other words, "I'll do what I want." And "it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." It's God's choice. It's God's choice.

You find, coming into Ephesians chapter 1, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." He predestined us to the adoption of sons. You come into 1 Thessalonians, you find the very same thing - I'm only giving you some samples. "That we are brethren beloved by God and we are chosen by Him." Second Thessalonians, the same thing; chapter 2, verse 13, "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." On it goes.

Now that divine choice in eternity past. Our names, Revelation says, were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. We were chosen in Christ. We'll see a little more about that as we move through this text and even as we study further into Titus. But that divine choice that God made in eternity past is activated in time by personal faith. And so look at Titus 1 again, and you get the feeling here of what Paul is saying. They're chosen of God, but I have been sent for the activation of their faith. That's what we all do, beloved; we are all in the world for that. That's the Great Commission, "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," make disciples. Why? Because God will use you as the means of bringing the message that activates the faith of His elect. They can't be saved without personal faith, "for by grace are you saved," Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "through faith." Romans 3 says salvation is by faith; justification is by faith.

So Paul says, "I know my mission. My mission is to give the elect the opportunity to hear the saving gospel so they can believe and be redeemed. That's my mission. That's my purpose."

Now, you can see in just looking at as much as we've looked at up to this point that here is a man whose life is very confined. He says, first of all, "I am a slave. I am a slave of God. I have no will of my own, no personal agenda, no goals, no purpose, no plan for my life but that which is God's will and purpose. My slavery is defined as being a messenger on behalf of Jesus Christ which means I bear the Word of Christ, the message of Christ. That's who I am. That's why I live. Consequently I will do nothing to cause myself to step out of my commitment to God's mastery. I will not act independently. I will not create my own agenda. I will not set my life in its own direction." And so he was controlled by his commitment.

Secondly he says, "I am a man who understands my mission. Not only the mastery of God but the mission of God, and I know that mission is that I might be the instrument by which the chosen come to faith." What a tremendous thing that is.

Listen, Paul knew that it wasn't his cleverness that converted people. Paul knew that it wasn't the uniqueness of his style that converted people. It wasn't the depth of his own ability to reason and preach that converted people. What he knew was the simple gospel, when it hit the heart of the elect, brought about conversion. And so he says to the Corinthians, "I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified. I didn't come to you with the words of wisdom" - man's wisdom - "I didn't come to you with clever speech. I came determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified." The simplicity of his message.

When I hear people say about me, and I hear it quite often, "MacArthur is biblical, but he's not relevant." I am, frankly, not distressed by that but complimented, because if ever I am anything but biblical I have prostituted this task. The simplicity of ministry is its genius. The elect will respond to the gospel. It isn't a question of repackaging it. The knowledge of the gospel elicits faith in the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of those chosen.

So, I don't see myself as somebody who has to go around and try to talk people into being converted, and somebody who has to run across the world in a frenzy and a panic trying to convert everybody in sight. In fact, I grieve when I see these things that say, "If you'll give us this many dollars, we'll guarantee you this many conversions." But sometimes that kind of solicitation is done in the name of ministry. That's not the task. The task is simply to know this: there are God's elect all over the world, and I want to be the instrument where God can use me as the instrument to bring them the message of Christ so that it can activate saving faith. What a joy.

Yes, there's a certain joy in being used to bless someone's life by being the instrument of their salvation, but the greater joy is being counted useful to God Himself, to be that kind of agency. So Paul says, "My mission is very clear. I am for the faith of those chosen by God."

That's only one out of three, but we'll have to look at the rest next time. Time passes so fast.

Father, thank You this morning again that our lives can be led and guided by Your Word. We thank You for the commitments of this great man, Paul, who could have laid out a string of achievements and accomplishments and exemplary patterns of life and behavior and said, "On the basis of all of this, listen to me," but he didn't. Rather than take the place of pride, he took the place of humility and said, "I'm nothing but a slave, and I've been sent on a mission." He had a commitment to Your mastery in his life; speaks of a pattern that we must have in our own lives. May we see ourselves as slaves, slaves to God, messengers of Jesus Christ. In neither title is there anything lofty. Slave is the lowest, the humblest of all, and a messenger is simply one sent as a slave with a duty. Lord, may we see ourselves committed to Your mastery with no personal agenda, no pursuit of our personal goals but only living to do Your bidding, to serve You, to do Your will, and to represent Jesus Christ. And may we understand not only Your mastery but Your mission. And may we know that it begins in the sense that You want to use us to bring about the gospel to elicit faith in the heart of the heart of the elect. What a tremendous, what a thrilling mission that You don't need our innovation and our creativity. You don't need our cleverness; You just need us to be faithful to preach the message that produces in the power of the Spirit saving faith in the hearts of the elect. O God, may we be so faithful. And even as we anticipate next Lord's Day and the rest of that mission, may You use us also to bring the knowledge of the truth that produces godliness, and the hope of eternal life that produces encouragement through all the trials and struggles of life. May we live for these things for which Paul lived and died, fulfilling his calling.

Thank You for giving us a pattern of a godly leader who made commitments and kept them to the very end. May we be so faithful. We pray in our Savior's dear name. Amen.

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