

Let's take our Bibles and turn to the epistle of Paul to Titus. We are not going to stand to read because I'm kind of basing my sermon on the whole letter this morning. I've entitled this series, Doing Good. You're going to see that this morning. One of the themes of Titus is doing good. Good works is something that is laced and peppered throughout this letter and that's going to be the challenge. Are you doing good? Wherever you are, are you being good and are you doing good? Are you reflecting the purpose of Jesus Christ and His death for you and me? Because He died to purchase to Himself a people zealous for good works. A people who will put their Christianity out there on the pavement the public square. I hope that's true of you. Titus is going to challenge you and I to do good. We'll see that as we go through this letter.

If I'm just going to read one verse it would simply be verse four of chapter one. Paul is writing, because chapter one verse one tells us that Paul, the bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ is writing this letter. In verse four he writes the letter to Titus, a true son in our common faith, grace, mercy and peace from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. The message this morning is entitled Setting Things Straight. Setting Things Straight, the letter of Titus.

I don't know about you, but when June and I go on vacation the first thing we do, if we have time to do it, is scout the place out. You know, unless it's midnight and we want to get to bed. But we usually spend an hour or two, as soon as we drop our bags off in our room in the hotel, and we like to kind of walk around the hotel to see where the amenities are, we want to get a handle on the landmarks in the surrounding area, June wants to know where the shops are, I want to know where the beach is or the nearest golf course, and we both want to know where the nearest Starbucks is. After our little expedition we kind of head back to the room so that in the morning we can get up with a sense of direction and discovery because we kind of got our bearings as newbies wherever we are.

As we begin our study of the book of Titus, I want to spend this Sunday just helping you get your bearings. Kind of know where we are going, give you a sense of direction and discovery in this short, spirited, but significant letter in the New Testament. Let me say by way of introduction, this letter is known as a pastoral epistle. A pastoral epistle. Now remember, an epistle is not the wife of an apostle, okay? It's a letter. It's correspondence from the apostle Paul. It is one among many letters, in fact you can categorize his letters for the most part into two categories, there is the prison epistles and there is the pastoral epistles.

What are the prison epistles? Those are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. We believe that Paul wrote them during his first imprisonment, which is described and recorded for us in Acts 28. Then you have three pastoral epistles, or three pastoral letters. First and second Timothy and Titus. We believe these were written around his second imprisonment, leading to his death. First Timothy and Titus were written before his second imprisonment, second Timothy was written during his second imprisonment where he acknowledges the time of my departure is at hand, I don't think I'm going to escape this one.

What you have in this pastoral epistle is one pastor talking to another pastor on how they ought to conduct themselves among the people of God over whom God has made them an overseer. You see that in first Timothy chapter three verse 15 explicitly where Paul writes to Timothy as he will write to Titus and he says, "I write so that you may know how to act or how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth." Paul's hourglass is emptying and he is driven and preoccupied with his desire to make sure that there is gospel

continuity. That there is a legacy of faithfulness to that which he has started in preaching the gospel, making disciples of all nations and establishing local churches as expressions of the body of Christ.

So this is usually in the pastoral epistle, it's the case of Paul, the older pastor, talking to Timothy and Titus the younger pastor. Helping them to indeed be faithful, reminding them of their call, their mandate, their commission. Reminding them of what a good church looks like and what are the component parts of a ministry that God honors.

Let's begin to work our way through this little letter. We've got several things we want to cover this morning. The author, the audience, the aims, the arrangement, the applications. Let's look at the author. Well, verse one solves that mystery. "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness." The letter was probably written somewhere in Macedonia or northern Greece, while Paul was in route to Nicopolis, in western Greece. We see in chapter three verse 12 that he is heading to Nicopolis and we believe somewhere around that time he writes this letter. The time and context of the letters writing falls between Paul's first imprisonment and Paul's second imprisonment.

Now, biblical scholars have had to kind of work this out because Paul is arrested for the first time and that is recorded in Acts 28. He is under house arrest and we read in Acts 28 verse 30-31 that he is preaching and teaching the kingdom of God. But we are not told how that works out. Are we to read into second Timothy that the time of his departure was Acts 28? Most biblical scholars say no. Our assumption is he did get released from there. If you read his prison epistle to the Philippians he has this kind of confidence through their prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit, he will get his head out of this noose and get back to gospel missions. That's our assumption.

The book of Acts doesn't tell us what happens after that. But in reading Paul's letters we have kind of pieced together this kind of travelogue. Let me just throw it your way and not spend a lot of time here. So he gets arrested and he endures his first imprisonment around A.D. 60-62, that's Acts 28. Our assumption is, although we are not told but is inferred in Philippians and elsewhere, he is released from the first Roman imprisonment. And if you read Eusebius and some of the church fathers, that seems to be what actually happened. Then he travels west. He may have perhaps gotten as far west as Spain because in his Roman letter in chapter 15:24-28 he hints at his desire to get to Spain. Let's hope he got there.

We also believe that he travels to Crete. That's where Titus has been left to indeed fix what is lacking in the churches there. He travels to Miletus, second Timothy four verse 20. He travels to Ephesus and he leaves Timothy there, first Timothy one verse three. He travels to Macedonia and Nicopolis, which we have made reference of here in Titus three verse 12. And we believe on his way to Ephesus he's arrested for the second time. He is imprisoned and we believe he's martyred. That seems to be the case in second Timothy chapter four verses six to 8. He was martyred by Nero probably around A.D. 67-68, by means of beheading.

That's kind of the background to where we are. The author is Paul, he's writing this pastoral epistle to one of his young protégés in the ministry, somewhere between his first and second imprisonment, probably bumping up against his second imprisonment. The audience, well that's clear also, verse four. The author is Paul, the bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, the audience is Titus and the church and churches in Crete. To Titus, verse four, a true son in our common faith. He is writing to a young pastor, one of his apostolic delegates. Paul had evidently ministered alongside Titus alongside the

island of Crete at some point, because look at verse five. "For this reason I left you in Crete." The inference seems to be that I was with you in Crete but I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city I have commanded. So he was left there to strengthen and straighten out the emerging churches that we believe were born out of the day of Pentecost, hence my sermon title straightening things out.

Now the churches at Crete, there's a plurality of churches because he is told to appoint elders in every city. There is a plurality of churches in Crete. Where did they emerge? How did they come about? Well, our assumption is in Acts two verse 11 you will read about Cretans who were at the Pentecost, who got saved along with the 3,000 and they went home and we believe that some of them established certain churches. We believe that Paul visited Crete, though it's not stated anywhere in the New Testament that he did that.

The two verses we would use to come up with that is Acts 27 verses seven and eight when he is on that boat, which will ultimately be shipwrecked on the way to Rome, it says that they harbored or found shelter in Crete, so we believe that Paul at some point stayed at Crete, maybe only for a few days but he maybe met some of the believers or they came and met him and he got a sense of what needs to be done there so he committed to returning there a leader, which he seems to have done and after he ministered there he left Titus in Crete, Titus one verse five. To do what? Well, we read here, to set in order the things that are lacking. That's the Greek word that gives us our English word orthopedics. He was left there to kind of straighten things out like a bone that needs set.

Crete. What do we know about Crete? Well, Crete is an island in the Mediterranean just south of Greece. According to chapter one in verse 12 culturally it was pretty pagan. We read here one of them, a prophet of their own, said that the Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. I mean if you were looking at a vacation brochure back in those days, you would send your wife, "I think we'll skip Crete. I don't fancy it." Although it's got climate and mountains and is an island in the Mediterranean, it doesn't sound like you would want to hang out with people on Crete. They were morally decadent.

In terms of Greek mythology it was said that the god Zeus was born on the island of Crete. The minotaur, a kind of half bull half man creature, again in Greek mythology, was there in Crete. Just to get an idea in your mind, it's an island in the Mediterranean. Someone called it the island of 100 cities. Morally decadent, riddled through with paganism and Greek mythology. But the gospel takes root and Titus is used by God.

Now, let's just do a quick profile of Titus as we look at the audience. The audience is Titus, but over Titus's shoulder you have got elders that Paul wants to address and Christians in general. But let's give your profile and Titus. He is mentioned 13 times in the New Testament. In the pastoral epistles in second Corinthians and Galatians. He is not, interestingly, mentioned in Acts. We believe he is from the city of Antioch. The fact that he is not mentioned in the book of Acts has led some to posit a theory that out of deference to his brother Luke, the writer of Acts doesn't mention Titus less he seems to be pushing his family. He is mentioned in Paul's letters. He is from the city of Antioch, possibly this brother of Luke.

He is certainly a friend of Timothy. He seems to be a stronger personality than Timothy, both physically and psychologically. Timothy was more fragile than Titus. According to Galatians two verse three he was a Greek or a Gentile by birth. We read there that he was not made to be circumcised after the whole controversy at the Jerusalem Council. We see here in Titus one verse four, to Titus, a son in the faith. He

was a convert of Paul. Paul led him to faith in Jesus Christ. According to Galatians two verses one to three he attended the Jerusalem Council, the controversy over whether Gentile believers need to be circumcised, whether they need to be a partial Jew to be a complete Christian, whether they need to add the law of Moses to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul says no. That's why Titus will not be circumcised. He doesn't need to be. Now Timothy was but that was done for pragmatic, emotional reasons.

When Titus is with Barnabas and Paul at the Council of Jerusalem Paul uses to have Titus circumcised because in his mind that would be caving in and we would be move away from the gospel of faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone. So he is a convert of Paul, he is a Gentile by birth, he was with Paul at the Jerusalem Council, he will later travel with Paul on his third missionary journey, second Corinthians eight verse 23, he helps collect the collection for the poor Jerusalem and Judean churches, according to second Corinthians eight verse six, so Paul tends that sends them to Corinth to collect the collection.

You also realize, and this is one of his biggest traits and one of his biggest skill sets, he's a problem solver. He's a problem solver. He's a troubleshooter. Literally. In fact, when we call him a pastor that's not really technically correct. Timothy is not technically a pastor either. They are apostolic delegates who are sent by Paul on short-term missions. They will stay for the while but they won't stay for a long time. They will raise up elders or they will appoint elders who will stay for a long time.

You read in second Corinthians seven verse six and verses 13 to 16 that Paul sends Titus to Corinthians because there are some within the Corinthian church that don't like Paul and are trying to undermine his authority and Titus goes on Paul's behalf and tries to troubleshoot and wedge himself in between all of that and bring about some reconciliation. You read about the fact that he's left in Crete to set in order the things that are lacking. You know what, if that's true, which I think is, he was a troubleshooter, he was a problem solver, he was a bridge builder. By implication, I think we can get an idea of what kind of guy this guy is. He is a trusted, capable leader. He is a man of a forceful personality, tactful, resourceful, skillful, personal, and good with public relations.

That just would have to be the inference of a guy who is sent to bring about fractured relationships to a point of harmony. Also, what of ministry. The man that mentored me and is a friend of Stephen's, Pastor Freddie McLachlan, that's his role right now to some degree. Back in Northern Ireland he pastored several churches residentially for a long time but now he is like a pastor to pastors, and the Irish Baptists have released him and financially support him to go around smaller churches to pastors who are in trouble or need encouragement. He's a bit of a troubleshooter, bit of a bridge builder. It's a biblical role.

I had a friend of Freddie McLachlan's, Pastor Jim Smith, who is now with the Lord. A wonderful man of God. In his latter years he deliberately accepted calls to broken churches. We used to say, "Jim, great will be your reward in heaven." He would deliberately go into those churches and try to bring about healing and get some momentum going where maybe some younger guy maybe a middle-aged pastor can get in there and kick that church somewhere. He took all the arrows, he mopped up all the blood and brought about something that resembled a church. That's what's going on here with Titus.

In fact, when I was at Placerita Baptist Church in Santa Clarita I got to know a wonderful man by the name of C.W. Smith, in fact one of the dorms is named after him right now. I was on an oncology committee at Henry Mayo Hospital with him in Santa Clarita and he was a troubleshooter. He worked for a body of churches I'll not name and he would troubleshoot and help struggling churches and if there was leadership tension he would go in there and help them. I remember one day he told me about a

church he was working with, where he said it was so divided that the only thing they had in common was the car lot. That's pretty bad.

His son-in-law, Tom Pennington, told me one day that C.W. Smith used to describe himself as a church pooper scooper. That's not a great image, but you kind of get what he saying. I've got to go in and fix stuff. I'm a church pooper scooper. I got to straighten out staff, and that's kind of where Titus is at. That's what we are dealing with in Titus. I love to think of him that way, and that's what we meet him here in Crete straightening out, orthopedics, you know? Things are broken, fractured, things need fixed, he is getting about fixing them.

Let's go to the aims, the aims. Several lines of investigation, I'm going to just go popcorn style here because I have got four applications I want to make sure we cover, set ourselves up for a wonderful study in this letter. There are several lines of investigation, why did he write this, what's aim, what's his purpose, what's his intent? Number one, he wants to continue to mentor Titus. He loves this young man. He takes a certain pride and satisfaction in watching him grow and develop. Titus 1:4. To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Can you hear affection there? I love you, boy. Stay at Crete, build the churches up, carry on gospel continuity. I will be so thankful if you do that. Grace and mercy and peace to you.

Secondly, the purpose is to establish godly leadership, we'll come back to that before we are done this morning. Titus one verse five, "For this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you." The letter is there to promote the development of leaders within the local church. Number three, promotion of sound doctrine. This is one of the themes of this letter. He says in verse nine, hold fast the faithful word as you have been taught and he wants the men that Titus will appoint to do the same thing, holding fast the faithful word that he has been taught, that he might be able to, by sound doctrine, to exhort and convince those who contradict.

Verse ten through to verse 16 is all about false teachers that need to be confronted. In chapter three verses nine and ten, avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contention, striving about the law, reject the device of man. This letter is all about the promotion of sound doctrine and the confrontation of false teaching. It's to encourage good works. To encourage good works. We see in chapter two in verse 14 that the Lord Jesus gave himself that he might redeem us from every evil or lawless deed and purify for himself a people zealous for good works.

Look at what he says to Christians, remind them, verse one of chapter 3, to be subject to leaders and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. Look at verse eight of chapter three. This is a faithful saying and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have belief in God should be careful to maintain good works. What's the purpose of this letter? To continue to mentor Titus, establish godly leaders, promote sound doctrine, confront false teachers, and encourage good works. That faith be accompanied by works. That these Christians in Crete amidst liars and evil beasts and gluttons, in the middle of the birthplace almost of Greek mythology, that they put their Christianity evidently, publicly on display. Not just verbally, but through good and attractive actions. Finally, it is also to summon Titus to Nicopolis to enlist his support, chapter three verses 12 to 13.

Okay, one more thing and then we will get the applications, what I call the arrangement. It'll take me 30 seconds to do this, stole it from my friend Mark Hitchcock, don't tell him next week. Here is his breakdown of the book of Titus. Chapter 1, church order. Chapter two and three, Christian obligation.

Chapter one is all about establishing leaders, the quality of those leaders, one of the qualities is they will refute error, and then he goes on to talk about false teachers and how they need to be faced down.

Chapter 1, church order. Let's get the church in order. Let's get church is healthy and holy in biblical and theological and then chapter two and three, Christian obligation. Inside the church and outside the church, let the older women teach the younger women, let the older men teach the younger men. Do you know why Jesus died, to redeem a people zealous for good works. Do you know how you live under pagan government? By displaying good works and submitting. The arrangement is church order, Christian obligation.

Let's now get in, for the remainder of this morning, on the applications. We're going to come back to these, but I want to give you four big applications from Titus. I want to remind you that this is a wonderful little letter. Danny Akin, who is the president of Southeastern seminary in North Carolina, calls Titus a bargain-basement letter. What does he mean by that? A bargain-basement letter. He says, "You know what, in three short chapters you get your money's worth. It's punchy. It's pithy. It's practical. Everyday truths are forced into and packed into a confined space." Three chapters, 46 verses, beautifully balanced between creed conduct, conduct, duty, doctrine. Gospel indicatives, gospel imperatives.

Here's the four things that jumped out at me. Number one, Titus promotes Christian leadership. Titus promotes Christian leadership. We'll get into this soon enough, but these churches were emerging and Paul wants them to be healthy and holy. He wants them to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ, and so what does he do? Right out the gate, first order of business, he directs Titus to develop competent leaders. Going back to verse five, for this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are lacking, appoint elders in every city, and then he goes on to describe those elders, man that is blameless, husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of dissipation, insubordination.

A bishop must be blameless, assured of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, hospitable, lover of what is good. There's that theme of goodness again, even in the leadership. Sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding to the faith. The key to the church's health is leadership. Leaders that help the church and cause the church to be well led, well fed, and well bred. That's the role of a leader. Well led, well fed, well bred. Paul wants that for the churches in Crete. Everything starts with godly theological, caring, excellent, wise, male leadership. That's where this letter begins. Progress will require that, the appointment of competent leaders.

You know what we'll see in a few weeks? We have their commission, their character, their credibility, their creed, their calling, their courage. It's all there. The thing that strikes me about most of the emphasis is on who they are because everything begins with their personal holiness. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, "My people's greatest need is my personal holiness." Beyond that, the one element that they are to give themselves to is the ability to teach. That's kind of the one quality or ability that is marked out in the text, that they would be male and able to teach. We see that in first Timothy three and here in verse nine, holding fast the faithful word as has been taught that he might be able by sound doctrine to exhort convince those who contradict.

That elder, that leader, that bishop, it's all interchangeable. It's got to be a man who can handle the word of God, preach the word of God. He must model it through obedience, and he must be fearless in refuting those who refute what he has preached as sound doctrine. That's maybe the one thing that I'm going to pick up because we are coming back to this because that so I want to leave something there. I

think it's worth noting because I don't see this emphasis as much today, holding fast the faithful word as it has been taught, being able to, by sound doctrine that you may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince those who contradict.

These leaders need to be theological men who can handle text and men who have got backbone. Too many pastors today have a wishbone where they ought to have a backbone. They don't say what needs to be said. It's always positive and it's always upbeat and it's always constructive and you know what? I like that. That's nothing wrong with that but that's only part of your ministry. Exhortation is part of it, encouraging people, part of it loving people, part of it. Helping them work through their problems in life, part of it. But you've also got to contradict those who contradict the gospel, who refute what you preach. You can't always be positive.

We need leaders today who will call homosexuality what it is unwaveringly, a sin. They will say also that transgender is a lie, and an undermining of God's will for his creation. They will call Roman Catholicism a false gospel. They will not call the Pope our pope. He's not our Pope. Never was, and the popes before him martyred our forefathers and burned them at the stake. We need men who call Islam a threat, theologically and politically. Men who call evangelical egalitarianism a danger, men who call charismatic mania a deception, men who call theistic evolution a compromise, men who call open theism a blasphemy against God, men who call social justice a distraction. We need men who blow the trumpet clear and loud, men who know that when there is a fog in the pulpit there is a mist in the pew.

I'm not inviting what Spurgeon warns against, theological pugilism. I don't want a cast of men who want to fight everything about everything. I'm not into that. I think you've known me long enough, I'm not into that but where I have to say something tough, where I have to blow the trumpet clearly and loudly, I will do it. Because my audience is God first of all. My commitment first of all is to the gospel of Jesus Christ and I am given an apostolic mandate once in a while to contradict those who contradict, and in some places to stop their mouths or to use my mouth to stop them, or to warn the church.

I mean, we've got that. We must be willing, and maybe this is going to come sooner than later, to lose friendships, salary, invitations, popularity, and even freedom for the sake of the gospel. The New Testament church leader must not only feed the flock, he must confront the wolf. When Paul left the Ephesians, whom Timothy will be with soon enough, he says, guys, when I leave you, there will be men that will rise up among you who will draw disciples after themselves. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Shepherds not only feed the sheep, not only love the sheep, they protect the sheep.

I'm so proud of one of our pastors, who several years ago determined and ran it by us that there was a false teacher who turned up at our church and the next time he turned up we met him in the car lot, or one of us did, before he got out of his car with the door open we said, get back in your car along with Satan and get out of here. You go, "Ohhh." No. We're not going to allow wolves to come in and rip the flock apart. Men who rise up in the church to draw disciples after themselves. We love you too much for that, even if you don't understand what we do, that's what good parents do. They still do what their children don't understand.

I like John Calvin, who said that every pastor has to have two voices. One voice for gathering the sheep, and one another voice for driving away the wolves. That great Southern Baptist preacher, Adrian Rogers, rightly said it is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error. It's better to speak the truth that hurts and then ultimately heals than falsehood that comforts but ultimately kills.

I've told you before about this old pastor back in Northern Ireland, I didn't know him personally but I knew of him because he pastored a well-known church called the Temple Moore Hall in East Belfast where my mother grew up and although he had kind of past his days of active preaching he still kept an eye on his congregation, so he would sit behind the pulpit in this large chair and some of the young preachers would get up or guest speakers would come ... He was a little infirm and needed a walking stick to get about and so it is said, I never saw it but I heard about it, that once in a while if he heard something that he didn't like you would rap them about the ankles with a walking stick, and true bill he would whack them on the ankle and then he could be verbally heard to say, cut that out. Enough of that.

You know what? That might seem a little eccentric, but you know what? We do need men in the church, in whatever form, that just stand up sometimes and say, enough of that. That's not sound doctrine. That's not historic Christianity. That's a betrayal of the martyrs. That's a denial of the gospel. We are not standing for it. In the name of being contemporary or positive or conciliatory. Let's move on. I know you want me to.

He not only promotes Christian leadership, he promotes Christian learning. Christian learning. We touched on this, sound doctrine is one of the notes that as run throughout this little epistle. Because leaders are important, they are the first order of business. A church will never rise above its leadership. It can fall to where they are, but it will never rise above them. If a leader is to be fundamentally a teacher who holds fast the faithful word, who exhorts that word and contradicts those who contradict it, then the assumption is that there are churches are like a classroom for those teachers. The church gathers to hear the word, the word of God preached, sound doctrine.

The early Christians met with this conviction, they had the word of God. They met with this conviction that in times past God had spoken, God had spoken, what a thought. If that's not true nothing else matters. If it is true nothing else matters. We believe God has spoken. In former times he spoke through prophets and all kinds of people in all kinds of ways, but today, in these last days, he has spoken through his son, who spoke through his apostles. So we have God's word. So when the church gathers, what happens, what's happening right now, teachers of the word speak to a classroom of disciples of Jesus Christ and they teach sound doctrine.

That's what comes out of the letter to Titus. The church isn't looking to hear rumors from God. We are not going to get involved in competing conjecture or endless debates over what is true. There is a faith once delivered to the saints, Jude 3. We do have a pattern of good doctrine, we have a limited theology. And we want to understand it through exposition, because what is exposition? It is exposing the meaning of the text and the author's intent historically within his context. We want to understand that and see in proper obligation have impinges upon our life.

That's why you should bring your Bible, that's why you should get a good night sleep, that's why should take notes, that's why you should re-listen to this during the week. That's why should have a half decent library at your home, because you see, you are the church under godly teachers and you want to kick in sound doctrine. Sound doctrine means healthy, effective doctrine. It is mentioned nine times in the pastorals, five times in this letter.

I will give you a flavor of it, chapter one verse nine concerning the elder, he is holding fast the faithful word as has been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine, sound is healthy, wholesome doctrine, what is true about the gospel. Verse 13, this testimony is true therefore rebuke by implication these false teachers that they may be sound in the faith. Titus, I want soundness. I want wholesomeness. I



want healthy theology. Look at chapter two, verse one, but as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine. Titus in all things, verse seven, show yourself to be a pattern of good works and doctrine, show integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned. The sound speech there is his preaching, his exhortation of God's word.

Old J.C. Ryle of England said that the results of per theology and a dislike of dogma among the church is a generation of jellyfish Christians. It's Christians who have got no bone, muscle, or power. It seems today, as I go into a Christian bookstores and I listen to Christians in general, they have an allergic reaction to the word doctrine. "Well, doctrine divides." They get the impression that doctrine is for seminarians, for scholastic study. Huh, interesting. In this little letter written to a live Christian leader in an island dotted by emerging churches that are young and early in their growth cycle regarding Christianity, it's all about doctrine. Because it produces sound and healthy churches.

Listen, a good church is not marked primarily by good music, big buildings, multiple ministries. It is marked by sound doctrine and a congregation that reads and loves theology. In fact, in this little letter there will be two clear theological statements about the gospel, chapter two verses 11 through 14 and chapter three verses three through eight. In fact, if you go to chapter three verse eight at the end of this treatise on the gospel and the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the work of Jesus Christ, what do we read? Verse eight, this is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly. Make theological statements, Titus, constantly.

Do you realize that sound theology keeps us from idolatry? Because what is idolatry? It's not only bowing to a physical image of God that falls short of his glory, it can be bowing to an intellectual image of God that you have created through your own ignorance about God. That's what it can be, and sound doctrine will fill in your gaps about what you need to know about God so you may worship him properly. Sound doctrine keeps us from idolatry and by implication as I've said inspires worship. It just defines the church's expect existence.

Because in his letter to Timothy, another pastoral epistle, chapter three verse 15, Paul says, I write to you that you might know how to conduct yourself or behave yourself in the Church of God, which is the ground and the pillar of truth. If you go to a church and you don't get doctrine you didn't go to church. If you sit under a ministry that doesn't promote sound theology you're not going to church, because church is the ground and pillar of truth. You'll hear the word truth a lot in a good church. You'll sit under a man who takes time to be precise in the text because God has spoken. Sound theology guards against false teachers. Sound theology shapes our behavior. Sound theology offers us a place to stand in the storm. When we understand what God commits himself to do for his people we understand the nature of God and how in his sovereignty and providence he can work all things together for good. Sound doctrine is a good thing.

There is an old cartoon by Charles Schultz in the Peanuts series, Lucy and Linus are at home, they are looking out the window and the storm is gathering and then it begins to drop buckets of rain, cats and dogs are raining from the sky so to speak and in typical candidness Lucy says to Linus, "I hope it doesn't rain and rain and rain until the whole world is flooded." Linus says to Lucy, "You know what, don't worry. In Genesis nine verse 13 to 14 God promises know that he will never again set a flood to the earth and he put a rainbow in the sky so we know his promise is true." Lucy sighs of relief and says, "That sure makes me feel better," to which Linus replies, "Sound doctrine has a way of doing that." Sound doctrine has a way of keeping us from idolatry, inspiring true worship, justifying the church's existence, guarding against false teachers, offering a refuge in the storm and shaping our behavior.

Let's move on, two more. Promotes not only leadership, Christian learning, but Christian living. It's one of the great emphases of this letter, gospel centered living. This little letter is going to punch you right in the face in the sense, are you living a transformed Christian life? Do your neighbors see it? Are your children the better for it? Is the culture feeling the presence of the church in terms of salt and light? As we said, remember Mark's division, chapter one, church order, chapter two and three Christian obligation inside the church and outside the church. It's all about Christian living. This is an economic little letter peppered with gospel imperatives, Christian commands, and good works is a major, major theme.

I like this idea, I think one commentator said it, according to Titus Christianity has a civilizing function within the world. That's a beautiful phrase. We need to think about that. The church exists to both reach the world through the gospel and civilize the world through its influence. Remember what this island is all about? It's full of liars, people who live like evil beasts, and who are greedy, materialistic. Does that sound like anywhere where you live? What's your job in the middle of all that? To live the gospel. To preach and share the gospel. To have a civilizing influence in the world.

That's the backdrop, a rotting culture where the church is called to sensibly, righteously, and in a godly manner live for Jesus Christ. Good works is the theme here. Can I show you it again? One of the qualifications of an elder is he is a lover of what is good. You can't be a lover of what is good without doing good, or at least that should be the case. Good works is part of the Christian's calling, in chapter two verse seven Titus is charged to model good works. Jesus died, chapter two verse 14, to produce a people zealous for good works. Chapter three verse one, we are to be ready for every good work. Chapter three verse eight we are to be careful to devote ourselves to good work. Verse 14 of chapter three, we are to indeed devote ourselves again to good works.

Through Titus, Paul is promoting the compelling apologetic of a godly life. Good works is the result of God's saving grace. Now we are not saved by good works. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Not of works, lest anyone should boast. Trying to go to heaven by good works, said George Whitfield, is like trying to climb to heaven on a rope of sand. Can't be done. Sir, stop it. Stop trying to please God through good works as a means of placating God's wrath against your sin. Jesus did it. He did it all. All to him we owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow.

Come to Jesus Christ and start loving him because he has loved you in a manner you cannot believe by giving his life on the cross because God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believes in him, believes, rests all their confidence in him, shall not perish. But Paul says, while we are saved by faith through grace without works, saving faith, putting our faith in Jesus leads to good works because for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, what, onto good works. We are not saved by good works but once we are saved good works result.

That's the whole thesis of James. "Oh, I've got faith." "Funny, I don't see it in your life," says James. Because faith is invisible. That's a transaction of the heart. James says I need to see that that's true by the effect that it has on your life. So if you've got faith without works your faith is dead, but if you've got saving faith in Jesus Christ now indwelt by the Holy Spirit who is committed to change you from the inside out, I want to see that bubbling to the surface. I want to see how you treat your neighbor, love your wife, take care of your kids. Live purely in an impure world, live honestly in a dishonest world. I want to see that and so does Paul and Titus is told to tell that to the Christians in Crete.

Good works are the result of salvation. Good work gain a hearing for the gospel. Good works create platforms for proclamation. Good work builds a bridge between the credibility gap and the church and the culture. Maybe the one verse I will finish on and move on is Titus two verse ten. Speaking to slaves, speaking to those who were in the Roman Empire as a slave, he says in verse ten, "Don't steal, don't pilfer from your boss, showing all good fidelity that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things, adorn the doctrine of God."

It's a beautiful word. It's a word that gives us the word cosmos. When we speak of the cosmos, when we speak of cosmology, we are talking about how our world is beautifully arranged. The tilt of the sun in relation to the earth, the movement of the planets, cosmos, order, beauty. That's where we get our view word cosmetics. The adorning, a woman taking a little bit of makeup and you know, accentuating her natural beauty, or covering a few spots, whatever the case might be.

By the way, ladies, it's a little makeup. Okay? You don't want to be like the woman a preacher northern island described that said, "She put on enough paint to paint a ship and she put enough powder to blow it up." We don't want that. But there's nothing wrong with a little bit of makeup, a little bit of jewelry, always remembering that it is the inner beauty of the heart that is most important, but there's nothing godly about looking like an unkempt bed. Nothing godly about that whatsoever. Christians can dress nice and look nice, but alongside that there must be a life that beautifies the gospel, that makes Jesus attractive. Life is a catwalk and you and I are modeling the gospel before a watching world. Let me say that again, life is a catwalk and you and I must model the gospel for a watching world.

It was old D.L. Moody who said, "We have the gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Luke, the gossiping according to Mark, and the gospel according to John, and then we have the gospel according to you." He said this, that some of us are the only Bible some people will read and some of us need revising. Do you realize that? For some of your neighbors in an increasingly post-Christian America you are the only Bible they are ever going to read. What did they see? What do they hear? Does it make Jesus attractive or unattractive?

Last thought, he promotes Christian legacy. Christian legacy. One of the themes of Titus, as with first Timothy and especially second Timothy, is the transference of faith and the transition of leadership. In first Timothy six verses 20 to 21 along with second Timothy one verses 14 to 15 Paul says to Timothy, I want you to guard the deposit, speaking about the gospel. I want you to guard the gospel, the positive truth we find in the gospel Jesus Christ. I want there to be a transference of faith. Will you preach what I have preached? I hope that what we hear in this pulpit is what was preached in the 19th century, 18th-century, 16th-century, first century. I'm not desiring to preach anything new. There is no new revelation. I'm just preaching the old revelation in our day, hopefully with some new fervor and faithfulness.

So there is not only going to be a transference of the faith, there is going to be a transition of leadership because Paul is about to die according to second Timothy, so right in that world he has left Titus and Timothy and he calls them his sons in the faith and he urges them to preach the word in season and out of season. He encourages him to appoint elders in every city, to get the right men in the right seats of leadership over the church. So what is Paul's desire in the pastoral epistles and it's the same in Timothy? It is to establish the church for a post-apostolic period.

There are no apostles today and there are no prophets today. Ephesians 2:20, they are in the foundation, but there are those men that the apostles initially appointed, the elders who have hopefully, in a chain of faithfulness appointed other faithful men who will also teach the word and train

other men to be faithful and somewhere along the line this pulpit is connected to all those faithful pulpits going back to pulpits that were erected in Crete by Titus, an apostolic delegate.

Titus is all about legacy. It's all about appointing elders who will carry on gospel ministry. In fact, even in Titus two verses one to ten it's all that legacy within the body of Christ. Not only is there an emphasis on elders reproducing themselves, there is an emphasis on the congregation reproducing themselves. Older women teaching younger women, older men teaching younger men. I can't wait to get to Titus 2, when you've got this view of the Christian faith like a relay race where the faith is passed on dynamically, theologically, personally, historically. I hope you are involved in that.

Listen to this as we wrap up. Coming to Christ is a sprint. If you are not a Christian you need to get into a sprint to Jesus. The sooner you come, the better, because the sun is setting, Jesus is coming, hell is filling, you need to come to Jesus. Sprint. Coming to Jesus as a sprint but coming after Jesus once you have come to Jesus, that's a marathon. That's running the race with endurance, day in and day out until death calls or Jesus comes. But it's one more thing, it's a sprint to get to Jesus, it's a marathon after Jesus, and it's a relay race where we are meant to pass on our faith to others.

Mom and dad, are you doing it? Every older man in this conversation, have you got a Timothy? Every older woman, in this congregation, have you got a Tina? Where you are pouring your life into her? That's what it's all about, getting things setting up for gospel continuity. That's what Titus is going to challenge you and me about.

As the theme comes up, I like sports movies. I remember the Titans, I also like the movie Race about Jesse Owens running before Hitler. I like the movie 42 about Jackie Robinson, African-American baseball player who faced opposition, racism, hatred. Things were thrown at him, epithets were hurled at him from every stand and stadium he found himself in, but he persevered with both dignity and courage. He opened the door for a flood of African-American athletes into the major leagues. He did such a wonderful job of that at the MLB honored him by retiring the number 42 because he was a trailblazer. Jackie Robinson says this, a life isn't significant except for its impact on other lives. That's a good word. That's Paul. That comes out of the book of Titus, first Timothy, second Timothy. A life, lesson, life is not significant unless it is impacting other lives.

Father, we thank you for our study in Titus. We are looking forward to pick this up soon and work through it verse by verse, line upon line, precept upon precept. We believe it is a letter that will speak to us because we live in our Crete, in our culture marked by increasing paganism, godlessness, moral degradation and deterioration, where every man seems to be a liar. We are rising up in talking opposition to your word. Lord, we couldn't even commit ourselves in theory and in law to taking care of a child born after birth.

That's the world we are in, but you have called us to have a civilizing influence and have a gospel impact and we pray that we will do that through good works, through gospel proclamation, through churches that form under godly leadership where the young speak to the old and the old speak to the young and each disciple each other. Help us to become that. We thank you for what we have become here at Kindred but help us to straighten, set in order the things that are lacking. Help us to become the church that we are not yet. Help us to pursue Jesus. Help us to love sound doctrine. Help us to disciple each other. Help us to reach out into a world by adorning, beautifying the most beautiful of all, Lord Jesus. For we ask in previous things in his name, amen.

