

## Serve God . . . For The Sake of Others

### Titus 1:1-4

Introduced our theme for the year last week – Spread the Word.

Talked about what the Word is – the whole counsel of God), how it spreads, and when it spreads based on Acts 12:24 and the rest of the NT

What I didn't tell you is how we're going to do that on Sundays

We're going to study the book of Titus this year

Appropriate in *general* because Paul insists on the need for both sound doctrine *and* consistent application in our lives

Appropriate for our church *specifically* because it summarizes much of Paul's teaching, especially as it relates to young churches

When he covers issues like – Serving, Church leadership, Marriage, and Missions . . .

We're going to step off for a short mini-series to explore what other parts of Scripture have to say as well

When we're finished with a particular mini-series, we'll go back to Titus and continue on with the next issue he brings up

So for 2 or 3 weeks here we're going to be looking at what it means to serve God in our church and our lives in general, starting with the first 4 verses of Titus chapter 1

**Read** Titus 1:1-4

### Background

Titus was a trustworthy and valued co-worker of Paul's

Accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys

Was Paul's poster boy at the Jerusalem council concerning whether the Gentiles were bound by the Jewish law or not (Gal 2:1-3)

Even carried 2 Corinthians to Corinth for Paul, and helped collect a special gift for the hurting believers in Jerusalem

Paul writes in order to bolster Titus' efforts to fulfill a difficult assignment – put the churches on Crete in order, which were in moral and doctrinal disarray

So Paul writes to Titus, who surely knew all of this, but it was Paul's way of reminding him of what he already knew, encouraging him, and reinforce his authority in building the Cretan churches

Hook – before Paul gets into the meat of the letter, he lays out in his extended introduction, basic principles/reasons for serving God

Telling us why he serves God – becomes our example for why we serve God

Important for us to know why we serve, and for those reasons to be embraced – otherwise we risk disillusionment, disappointment, bitterness, and failure all at the expense of those we are supposed to serve

Something like that happened with the famous, but short-lived, Pony Express

Mail delivery company from St Joseph, MO to Sacramento, CA

2000 mile journey in 10 days

**Read** excerpt from *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* – Whitney, P. 115-116

What they expected from their riders . . .

Why? Because the adventure was promising, the journey was challenging, and the pay was decent

Same is true of serving God for the sake of others –

It's definitely an adventure that is promising

The journey is certainly challenging at times

And the pay (though deferred) is great

But, serving God (*un-like* the Pony Express) is . . .

Not a job for the casually interested – serving God for the sake of others will cost you

Not a pastime to take or leave – it has to be a priority

Not a responsibility that's fulfilled with your leftovers – it requires your best

Not a short-term venture – it requires commitment

All of which is at risk if we're not clear as to the reasons we serve

### • Serve God because you *are* a servant

*Paul, a servant of God* (1) – a slave, a bondservant (one who joyfully and voluntarily becomes a slave of God, irrevocably employed in his service)

Paul was a servant of God, and so is every person who professes Jesus as Lord

Rom 6:22 – *Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

Heb 9:14 – *the blood of Christ purifies our consciences from dead works to serve the living God*

Ps 100:2 – *Serve the Lord with gladness!*

John 13:15 – [After washing the disciples feet, Jesus says,] *I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*

Serve each other, just as I have served you

That means . . .

We need to obey God's command to serve; Submit to Christ's desire for us to serve

Depend on the Spirit's help to serve

Because that's what servants do

There are no prima-donna's in the body of Christ; At least there's not supposed to be

It doesn't matter if you hold the highest position in the working world, or run with the mucky-mucks socially – you should still be willing and proactive about serving

God's people in the humblest of positions

Proud to say, many of you are in that boat – high work status (doctor, lawyer, executive, manager, president, owner), humble to serve in what many consider menial positions

Sad to say, others of you act like you walk on water

You haven't yet humbled yourself and started serving God for the sake of others

Don't you think the time has come?

Not just for a week or month or a year, but for the rest of your life

Not just in the easiest, least invasive, most convenient roles; but in the dirtiest, hardest, most menial ones

Get rid of the prima-donna attitude – that some things are just too far below you

Start serving God because you *are* a servant

### • Serve God to strengthen the faith of others

*For the sake of the faith of God's elect* (1) – the faith of those who are saved

The word *elect* is not intended here to emphasize predestination (God's sovereign choosing of some to salvation) but rather to identify the people that Paul serves, as God's people

Paul's service as a slave of Christ, like ours, is intended not only to bring God's people to saving faith, but to strengthen it so that by God's power they will persevere to the end, kept for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time

So along with initiating the faith of those who believe, strengthening it is one of the primary purposes of all service in our church – That's why . . .

Teams come in early to set up the lobby, CM area, and the auditorium – so we can worship and learn and be strengthened in our faith

Without those who serve in that way, there would be no church and no opportunity to strengthen the faith of others

People tear down and put it all away every week – so we can remain in the high school and set it up again the next week

Again, no tear down, no church to strengthen the faith of others

Team leaders and church leaders cast vision and chart a course for ministry – so that we maximize/leverage every opportunity and resource to initiate and strengthen the faith of others

Our staff works so hard to serve God for your sake – so that your faith is strengthened  
Every single thing we do in serving one another here at Harvest, is done to strengthen the faith of others

#### • **Serve God to spread the word among others**

To spread *the knowledge of God's truth* (1) among those around you

To increase their understanding of God's message, and hopefully their reception of it

Involves telling people what they want to hear – the love of Christ

And telling them what they don't want to hear – the justice of God

Both of which are necessary for *godliness* (1) – conduct well-pleasing to God

Can't conduct your life according to God's desires, if you don't know what they are

Knowledge of God's truth is necessary for godliness

Example – Remember conversation that Becky had with friend about 10 years ago

This gal had become a believer as an adult; Grew up in a very secular, worldly home

Before she was married and saved, she lived a very promiscuous life

Shocked to hear her say that she didn't know pre-marital sex was wrong until she became a believer and learned what the Bible says

Serve God to spread the knowledge of his truth among others

Truth that is necessary for godliness

And truth that is necessary for the *hope of eternal life* (2) – the assurance/confidence of salvation

Just like *godliness* doesn't just happen by itself, neither does salvation apart from a knowledge of God's truth

If it did, Paul and the other apostles wouldn't have risked life/limb to spread the word

The message of God's word is not salvation by *ritual* – sprinkling, blessing, class

Not salvation by *experience* – I just feel like I'm saved

But salvation by faith (the hope of eternal life), is based on a knowledge of God's truth as found in his word

That *hope of eternal life* is based on a *promise* to save us, by a God *who never lies* (2)

A promise he made before time began

A promise he revealed through the preaching of the apostles as a result of Christ's life, death, and resurrection (3)

Serve God to spread the word, for the sake of eternal life and godliness among others

#### • **Serve God to bless others**

That's what Paul does here with Titus – he blesses him by . . .

Identifying with him (4)

Affirming their *common faith* and bond because of Paul's discipleship of Titus

Wishing the same *grace and peace* on Titus that Paul well knew in his walk with Christ

He wanted Titus to benefit from the same unmerited favor in the things of life

The same harmony and inner rest that comes from a quiet assurance of God's sovereignty and control

His blessing of others didn't stop there

We know from the rest of NT that Paul *worked hard* to be a blessing to others

Based on his example, I want to give you . . .

#### 5 Ways to Bless Others in Serving:

To extend God's grace and peace to them in tangibly

1. Do what needs to be done

Be available to do anything that needs to be done; lighten the load for others

2. Do what others won't/can't

Step up to the plate in those least desirable positions

Don't wait or depend on others to do things *you* can do

3. Do it together

Serve alongside someone

Work as a team – you bless those you serve with, as well as those you serve

4. Do it with a good attitude

If you serve with a bad attitude, you just as well not serve at all

It doesn't please the Lord

And it makes those around you miserable (the opposite of blessing them)

Don't be Wendy-whiner, Frankie-frowner, or Corey-complainer

And the solution is not to quit

The Solution is to knock it off and get a good attitude – on your knees before God

So you can serve joyfully, humbly, patiently, with a teachable spirit/submissive heart

5. Do it all the time

Faithfully; Consistently; Make a long-term commitment and stick with it

When you serve God for the sake of others in those ways, you will be a *conduit* of God's grace and peace in their lives

#### Summary

Read excerpt from *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* – D. Whitney, P. 116-117

Take advantage of the opportunities on the insert, and serve God for the sake of others

#### Close