

A Great Trust

October 22 – Titus 1:1-16

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 294 – 71 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We transitioned to Paul’s letter to Titus, whom Paul left in Crete to “set in order” the churches there (v.5). Crete is an island just south of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. **Like Timothy, Titus was Paul’s friend and co-laborer, highly trusted and given important responsibilities.** It is likely that Paul led Titus to Christ (v.4). Paul wrote this letter to Titus while in prison in Rome (62-64 AD), awaiting his verdict from Caesar.

Paul directed Titus to appoint elders in every city or church (v.5). We have seen elders in our reading several times already. They comprise one of two church offices (the other being deacons). Together they meet the spiritual and physical needs of the church body. Notice there is a plurality of elders, not just one. Elders are overseers, stewards, managers, and pastors of the church (v.7). We can deduce three of their responsibilities from this letter, that of leading (v.5), teaching (v.9), and protecting (v.9).

Since elders are given oversight of God’s church, they must be men of character and integrity (v.6). Thus, Paul listed some of the qualifications necessary for elder candidates (v.6-10). Notice that these qualifications are more about the type of man he is, not about what he can do. While the world emphasizes talents, strengths, and abilities, God emphasizes the quality of a man — his heart, his disposition, his attitudes, his motives, and his lifestyle.

Regarding an elder’s abilities, he must be able to “exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict” (v.9). In other words, elders must be doctrinally sound, first having a knowledge of God’s Word and theology, then having the ability to teach or explain it to others. Thus, these men must have their life, character, and theology examined, to see if they qualify. Since Paul did not prescribe a means to do that, each church is free to establish ways to ensure that their elders meet the qualifications.

Why did Paul make such a big deal about elders and their qualifications? He knew their task would be difficult and demanding. For example, their priority would be to confront and silence false teachers, greedy “rebellious men, empty talkers who were teaching things they should not teach” (v.11). These men needed to be “reproved severely for turning away from the truth” (v.13, 14). Paul said, “They professed to know God, but they deny Him by their deeds” (v.16). **It would take strong godly men to battle such worthless, demonic forces.**

Daily Reflection

In his greeting, Paul wrote that he had been entrusted with God’s Word, “according to the commandment of God our Savior” (v.3). It was his responsibility to ensure that the gospel was shared without interference or distortion. Thus, he passed that trust to Titus and positioned him in Crete to carry on the work. **Now, he tasked Titus to convey that trust to men of high quality (elders), to protect God’s people from enemies.**

Has your church followed Paul’s instructions to Titus and appointed godly men (plural) to oversee or steward God’s people? How so?

How do you select and examine these men, to ensure they are qualified and vetted to serve?

Knowing more about what elders are tasked by God to do, you can better understand how much they need your prayer and encouragement.

A People for His Own Possession

October 23 – Titus 2:1-15

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 295 – 70 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

In contrast to the opening of Paul's letter to Titus, in which he stressed the need for elders to combat false teachers, Paul now exhorted Titus to teach things that are "fitting for sound doctrine" (v.1, 15). **Sound doctrine refers to those things that are healthy and beneficial to the church. The result in the lives of God's people is godly character and good works.** What follows are examples of the difference Christ makes in the lives of His followers.

First, Paul instructed older people (empty nesters) to be good role models for younger Christians (v.2, 3). He addressed both their character and actions. Second, Paul instructed younger men and women to avoid any attitude or activity that would "dishonor the word of God" (v.4, 5), showing themselves to be "examples of good deeds," so that "the opponent would have nothing bad to say about them" (v.6-8). In other words, Paul expected young believers to live a life of integrity, to be above reproach (v.8).

Third, Paul instructed bondslaves or indentured servants (employees today) to act in such a way that would "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect" (v.9, 10). Our behavior and performance in the workplace should display the beauty of the gospel and attract others to the difference that Christ can make in their lives.

The reason that God's people should act this way, Paul said, is that "the grace of God has appeared and brought salvation to us all" (v.11). That salvation has changed us from what we were to what we are. We no longer entertain "worldly desires but rather deny ungodliness and live sensibly and righteously in this present age" (v.12). In the meantime, we look forward to that "blessed hope" of Christ's return, "the appearing of the glory of our Savior" (v.13).

Daily Reflection

Christ has made all the difference in our lives. "He gave Himself for us," Paul wrote, "to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify" us from our sins (v.14). Why did He do that? **He made for Himself "a people for His own possession,"** people who would demonstrate this internal change externally. **He transformed sinners so that they would be His witnesses in the world, to speak of the glorious transformation, so that others might come to Him in salvation.**

As a result of His grace and what He has done for us, we (the Church) are "zealous for good deeds" (v.14). Our salvation and redemption, which Christ secured for us, motivate us to do those things that bring attention to Him, not to ourselves. To be zealous means to have a burning desire or passion. **In a world in which people have a passion for so many things that have no eternal significance, Christ has earned, by His death, "a people for His possession," who would have a burning desire to glorify Him in all they do.**

Would you say that you are zealous for good works? Why or why not?

Re-read the verse(s) that relate to your age group (v.2-8). How are you doing exemplifying what God expects of you?

Saved for Good Deeds

October 24 – Titus 3:1-15

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 296 – 69 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We completed Paul's short letter to Titus. He ended with several reminders (v.1), all of which could be summarized by the theme of good deeds or godly living. The word *deeds* is used four times in this passage. **Good deeds or good works are a byproduct of a life that has been changed by Christ (v.7).**

The first mention of good deeds is in the context of our relationship with others, especially to rulers or authorities (v.1-3). Although we may have been disobedient, malicious, envious, or hateful before following Christ, now we are submissive, gentle, peaceable, and considerate to all people. Christ has changed our view of them. Since they are valuable in His eyes, created in His image, as we are, then they should be valuable in our eyes as well. **Our love for God will be evident in our love for others.**

The second mention of good deeds is in the context of the unity of the church (v.8-10). **Christians are to engage in those things that are "good and profitable for all men" (v.8).** By contrast, what is not good and profitable is to engage in "foolish controversies, strife, or disputes about the Law (Scripture), for that is unprofitable and worthless" (v.9). These activities are not beneficial to the unity of the church, but rather they cause division. Those who are intentionally stirring up factions (warring sides) are to be rejected (v.10, 11).

The third mention of good deeds is in the context of meeting the needs of others (v.13, 14). "Our people," Paul wrote, "must learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful" (v.14). He wrote this exhortation in connection with Zenas and Apollos. The churches in Crete were asked to help them "on their way, so that they would lack nothing" (v.13). **While it is natural to think only of our own needs, that is unfruitful. Christians are to be mindful of others (to be unselfish) and look for ways to bless them.**

Daily Reflection

Of course, though we have been saved for good deeds, our works do not save us. Our salvation is a result of "the kindness of God and His love for mankind" (v.4). Paul continued, "He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done" (v.5), but by His mercy and the deeds which He has done. Because of Christ, God has "washed us, regenerated us, and renewed us by the Holy Spirit" (v.5), which has made us "new creatures" in Him (2 Cor. 5:17). **Because of His good deeds towards us, we now engage in good deeds for Him towards others.**

Take a minute to read *Titus 2:14; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:17; and James 2:14-20.*

Clearly, good deeds are to be our response to the good work of Christ in us. But what is required of us to do good deeds for others?

When you consider what you do in an average day or week, what good deeds are evident? What percentage of your actions are for the benefit of others?

God, in all I do, and every word I say,
Let me be your hands and caring voice today.
Let me ponder oft' of meeting others' needs
And glorify Your name in all my selfless deeds.

Spirit of Fear or Power?

October 25 – 2 Timothy 1:1-18

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 297 – 68 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We transitioned to Paul's second letter to Timothy, which is also Paul's last letter, his farewell address. In 64 AD, the psychotic Emperor Nero set a large part of Rome on fire to make space for a new construction project. When angry citizens demanded retribution, Nero blamed the Christians and launched the most intense wave of persecution to that point. Scores of Christians were arrested and killed. The Apostle Paul was one of them. Therefore, he wrote this letter to Timothy while in prison (a second time), just before his death (66-68 AD).

Knowing that his days were numbered, Paul wanted to warn and encourage Timothy one last time. Before he warned Timothy of the difficult days ahead (Chapter 3), Paul affirmed and challenged Timothy in several areas. First, after his standard greeting (1:1, 2), Paul affirmed Timothy with his prayers (v.3). Second, Paul affirmed him by expressing his desire to see him again, knowing that he wouldn't (v.4). Finally, he affirmed Timothy's sincere faith, which was handed down to him by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (v.5).

After these affirmations, Paul laid out several challenges for Timothy. "For this reason, I remind you...", he wrote. Paul's first challenge was to "kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you..." (v.6), referring to Timothy's spiritual gifts of leadership, preaching, and teaching. Evidently, **Paul had either heard or sensed that Timothy was too passive in confronting the problems in the church at Ephesus** (i.e., dealing with false teachers).

Paul's second challenge related to the first. He reminded Timothy that **"God has not given us a spirit of timidity (or fear) but of power and discipline"** (v.7). Because of Christ, we have overcome our sin and flesh. Because of Christ, we have overcome the devil and his evil forces. Because of Christ, we can have confidence to go to God for help. **We need not to exhibit fear.**

Paul's third challenge related to the intensity of the Roman persecution and the fact that Paul was in prison again. "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner..." (v.8-11). Paul told Timothy that he "was not ashamed" of Christ, "for I know whom I have believed," he said (v.12). He believed that Christ, who had "abolished death and brought life and immortality" would keep "what he had entrusted to Him" until that day when he met Him in glory (v.10, 12).

Paul's fourth challenge was to remain faithful to the gospel. "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me...", he wrote (v.13). He followed by pointing out that "all who are in Asia (province) had turned away," except for Onesiphorus (v.15-18). This unfaithfulness was due in part to the success of the false teachers and the rise in persecution. Thus, Paul issued his final challenge (in this passage), "Guard the treasure which has been entrusted to you" (v.14). **Timothy had to do more to ensure that the gospel message was protected from evil men who would distort or destroy it.**

Daily Reflection

Why are today's Christians not bolder and more outspoken about their faith in Christ? What is it that we fear? What about you?

Fear is selfish. Love is unselfish. Fear is not of God. He has given us a spirit of power and love. How should love empower our testimony?

Good Soldiers

October 26 – 2 Timothy 2:1-26

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 298 – 67 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We continued Paul's second and last letter to Timothy. In the opening (1:1-18), Paul challenged Timothy to be bold, fearless, and disciplined when dealing with the issues facing the church at Ephesus (i.e., false teachers). Paul carried this challenge into our passage today, charging Timothy "to be strong, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:1, 3).

While Paul used multiple analogies in our passage, they all build on this idea of a soldier of Christ. For example, soldiers are under command. They have their orders. Timothy's orders were to protect the church from phony gospels (1:13, 14), battle the false teachers, and leave the church in the hands of faithful men, referring to elders (2:2; 1 Tim. 3).

In the course of completing their mission, good soldiers will inevitably suffer hardship (2:3). But the question is what will soldiers do when they encounter difficulties? If they are single-minded, focused on the mission, then they will be determined to complete it, avoiding distractions and any unnecessary entanglements (v.4). Like an athlete, soldiers discipline themselves and follow the rules of engagement, being diligent and keeping their eyes on the reward, like a farmer who waits for the harvest (v.5, 6).

Good soldiers understand that they are fighting for something bigger than themselves, a noble cause, for which they consider themselves expendable. They will gladly give their lives to fight for that cause. In this case, Paul said "he endured all things for the sake of the chosen," which is the Church for whom Christ died (v.8). Though he was imprisoned, Paul said, "The word of God cannot be imprisoned" (v.9), for the gospel is worthy of any sacrifice (v.7-13).

To battle the enemy (false teachers), Paul challenged Timothy to be competent with his weapon, "handling accurately the word of truth" (v.15). Competency requires diligent practice.

The last obstacle before facing the enemy is a soldier's own lusts and desires. While Christ has dealt with our sin and shame forever, our sinful flesh can get in the way. It frequently trips us and causes us to stumble. We must "cleanse ourselves of these things" and "flee from youthful lusts," so that we may be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work" (v.20, 21).

Daily Reflection

Though we are all soldiers in the army of God, fighting the enemy, are we good soldiers? Have we prepared ourselves as Paul instructed Timothy, and are we fighting in such a way as God instructed? "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind and patient with all, gently correcting those who are in opposition" (v.16, 23-26). Though we may be tough on the inside (bold, fearless, strong), we are tender on the outside (gentle, patient, and pure).

By our fearless yet loving strategy, God can do wonders. He may even "grant our opponents repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth. They may come to their senses and escape the captivity of the enemy" (v.25, 26).

Would you consider yourself to be a good soldier of Christ? Why or why not?

Re-read 2 Timothy 2:15. How competent are you with your weapon — the word of truth?

Adequate to the Times

October 27 – 2 Timothy 3:1-17

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 299 – 66 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul warned Timothy of difficult days to come, during which things will “proceed from bad to worse” (v.1-9, 13). Evil men and imposters (of the faith) “will be deceived and deceive” others (v.13). Though “holding to a form of godliness,” they will indulge themselves and even promote all sorts of ungodly behavior (v.5).

Unfortunately, Paul could have been describing the world today, the times in which we are living. **What are we to do in such an environment? How did Paul advise Timothy?**

First, Paul wrote, **“Avoid such men as these”** (v.5) because they have “a depraved mind, rejecting the faith and opposing the truth” (v.8). It would make sense, if these people do what Paul described, that we would not participate, for they oppose all that we believe. But that’s not all Paul advised Timothy to do.

Second, to be prepared for such a time, **Paul told Timothy to “continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of,** knowing from whom you have learned them” (v.14). Timothy had been taught the truth by his mother and grandmother at an early age (1:5). What exactly had they taught him? Paul used the term “sacred writings” (3:15).

In short, Paul told Timothy to keep studying the Scriptures, to stay focused on God’s Word, which is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (v.16). Teaching refers to instruction for living. Reproof is to have one’s faults exposed. Correction refers to a course change, to rectify or recall from error; and righteousness refers to what is right by God, conformity to the divine laws or to the image of Christ (sanctification).

Notice what Paul said is the outcome of studying God’s Word. “The man (or woman) of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (v.16). To be adequate means to be equal to

the task or to have what is necessary. Though God has work for us to do, and the times in which we do it may be evil, God will equip us for the work, primarily through His Word.

Finally, Paul told Timothy to be prepared for and expect pushback. “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v.12). Since the world rejected Christ and persecuted Him, we cannot expect anything less. The only way to be prepared for such hatred and hostility is to be in the Word.

Daily Reflection

Let’s take 2 Timothy 3:14-17 in reverse order. God has work for us to do (v.17). He will prepare us for the work (v.17). God equips us primarily through Scripture (v.16). It is profitable for our salvation and spiritual growth (v.15, 16). Therefore, we must continue reading and studying God’s Word daily (v.14). **How can we be equipped for the work of God if we are not engaged in the Word of God?**

What tasks have you found yourself inadequate to undertake recently? Are you seeking the wisdom of God in His Word?

It’s no secret. These days are evil. Paul’s scenario is unfolding before our eyes. What about the times concerns you? How does Paul’s advice to Timothy encourage you?

Finish the Course

October 28 – 2 Timothy 4:1-22

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 300 – 65 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We closed the second letter to Timothy, the last written words of the Apostle Paul. He ended with his strongest appeal to Timothy, then described his situation in Rome, and finished with some personal requests. Let's look a little more closely at each of these sections.

First, Paul "solemnly charged Timothy to preach the Word" (v.1, 2), as he had done several times in his letter already. Remember, Paul sensed Timothy's passiveness in opposing the false teachers in Ephesus. He had already challenged Timothy to rekindle his spiritual gift (1:6), to preach or teach "in a spirit of power and love and discipline" (1:7), to "retain the standard of sound words" of the gospel (1:13), and guard the treasure entrusted to him" (1:14). Paul had also challenged Timothy to "be a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:3), to be a diligent student of God's Word (2:15; 3:14-17), and to be ready "to suffer hardship" (2:9; 4:5).

Paul was pleading with his young protégé to "do the work and fulfill his ministry" (4:5). He foretold of a time that people in the church "will not want to hear sound doctrine. Rather they will want to have their ears tickled" with feel-good messages, "in accordance with their own desires" (v.3). They will "turn away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (v.4). But the truth is what we need most, and Paul was urging Timothy to have the courage to give it.

Second, Paul shared with Timothy a little of his situation. He had been arrested and imprisoned by the Romans a second time and he was awaiting his execution. He recognized that "the time of his departure (death) had come" (v.6). He was ready to be "poured out as a drink offering," an Old Testament reference to offerings in the tabernacle (v.6). **He was not sad about coming to the end of his life; rather he looked forward to receiving his reward — the crown of righteousness (v.8).**

Upon reflection of his ministry, Paul described it with three metaphors (v.7). He had "fought the good fight," meaning he had done his best. He had "finished the course," meaning he did not quit but bravely endured every hardship to the end. He had "kept the faith," meaning he had not strayed from his task. He had remained faithful to the call of God and His gospel.

Finally, Paul made some personal requests. He was feeling abandoned in Rome, as nearly everyone had left him, except Luke (v.9-18). He wanted to see Timothy one more time (v.9, 21). But even when alone, Paul said he was not alone, "for the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (v.17). By His help, Paul said, "He was rescued out of the lion's mouth" (v.17). He was certain that the Lord would "bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom" (v.18).

Daily Reflection

Though it is with a saddened heart that I read Paul's farewell, I am also comforted. **He had given God his best effort. He had endured every difficulty the Lord had for him, and he had not strayed from his original task. What more can you say at the end of your life?** Through the Lord's help, "the proclamation was fully accomplished, so that the Gentiles might hear" of the gospel (v.17). **All we can say of Paul's journey is, "Well done."**

What do you want to be able to say at the end of your life or ministry? What will it require of you to finish the course and hear, "Well done"?
