

Titus 1:1-3 – February 21, 2021

Keep On Keeping On

JD Farag

All right. Good morning and welcome to our second service. On Sunday mornings, we have two services. The first of which is the Bible Prophecy Update that we do weekly. The second is the sermon, our verse-by-verse teaching through the Bible. Last week we completed 2 Timothy, and today really looking forward to starting up in the Book of Titus. Our text today will be Chapter 1 verses 1 through 3. We'll invite you at this time to turn there if you're not there already.

While you're doing that, if you would just kindly allow me to, I want to take a moment to update you on the JDFarag.org website. For those of you online again, we very much appreciate your continued patience with us. But more importantly, your prayers for us. We do have an amazing team. They are working tirelessly, and they're doing their best, and we're very excited to announce that we're really making progress.

First, I want to address the Livestream. Now, this applies only to the Prophecy Update, the first service. Pictured here is the home page, where on the bottom left, you can select "Watch Live: Bible Prophecy," and it will take you to the live streaming video while it's live. Actually, we're encouraging everyone, especially those on YouTube and Facebook where it's livestreamed... only the introduction, by the way... to go to the website from the start for the complete, uninterrupted, and uncensored update.

Because again, we're only doing the introduction to the update and live streaming that on social media, YouTube, and Facebook. Second, I want to draw your attention - This is really important because a lot of people are having difficulties trying to figure out if they miss the live stream or something happens - How do they watch the update? Okay.

Pictured here is a screenshot where at the top in the menu bar, you can select "Prophecy VIDS," and when you select that, it will take you to the "Bible Prophecy Updates" Page, and you can select the update. Now, today's update, the first service update, is not there yet. Please, again, be patient with us. It takes about an hour or so, heavy on the "or so," to upload the video, and then once it's there, you'll be able to select it.

Now, pictured here, we selected last week's update on February 14th titled, "Divide & Conquer." When you select the update, it will take you to that video of that update. Here you'll find the "Share & Download" features that are now available. Give us about a day or night to upload the captioned video, the closed-caption video, for the hearing impaired. It's there for last the week's update. We'll get it up as soon as we can. We know we have a number of online members that really use the closed-captioning video.

Also, the transcript: We have an amazing team that has major treasures in heaven that actually word for word, transcribe the update. It's a PDF file; you'll see it there on the screen with every update. Now, this is what takes a few days to complete, and once it's completed, you can select that and download and print that out as well.

Also, the links that are referenced in the update are there. All you have to do is just select it. Again, thank you for your patience.

One last thing that I need to bring to your attention. It seems to be getting worse. We continue to have scammers on social media that use the pictures and info and create these accounts, and they try to scam people out of money. This one, in particular, is asking our Facebook followers to quote "kindly inbox me." That's not me! We don't do that! Here's another thing, and this is happening on YouTube on a regular basis. In fact, I'm sure it will happen again today.

What you need to do is report them as soon as you see them because we will never, ever, ever, ever ask for money. They do, and it's a scam. On YouTube, they will pretend to be me, ask for money for an orphanage. Please don't be deceived by these people. Actually, pray for these people. They need

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the Lord. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. We don't message anyone, and we never ask for money from anyone. Okay.

Titus Chapter 1 verses 1 through 3. Can I ask you if you're able to stand and follow along with me as I read? If not, where you're seated is fine. I'm really excited about this book—this letter from Paul. Verse 1, we're only going to take the first 3 verses today. If you haven't already noticed, it's all one sentence. Three verses, so I'm going to do my best and take a deep breath.

"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness - in the hope [verse 2] of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and [verse 3] which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God, our Savior."

Let's pray if you would please join with me, and we'll ask God's blessing on our understanding. Loving heavenly Father, thank you so much for your Word, for this portion that we have here today in your Word. Lord, we desperately need for you at this time as only you can to settle our hearts, quiet our minds.

A lot of things come into our minds and distract us, and Lord, we don't want to miss anything that you have for us today. The enemy would love nothing more than to distract us, so we do. Lord, will you enable us to focus and concentrate and give you our undivided attention as you speak into our lives in and through your Word. Lord, thank you. Speak, Lord, we, your servants, are listening. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

I want to talk with you today about both why it is and how it is that we as Christians in these last days can, as the saying goes, "Keep On Keeping On." All one needs to do is consider all the hardship and the difficulty that the Apostle Paul went through. We have actually a pretty detailed list when he writes to the Corinthian church about all the times that he was shipwrecked, and beaten, and whipped, and stoned, and left for dead.

All of the things that he went through, and from that, the question arises of how? How was the Apostle Paul able to endure all that he endured to the end? Thankfully, in today's text in writing to Titus, Paul answers the question of both why and how he persevered, endured and never gave up, kept getting back up even after being left for dead.

Now, before we get started, I want to thank the Bereans that we have both locally and online, who graciously corrected me on last week's teaching in 2 Timothy. As you know, we finished 2 Timothy last week, and I mistakenly, much to my horror, I might add, said that it was Paul who Priscilla and Aquila took aside to show a more accurate way.

What an irony, right? I was inaccurate. The problem is, it wasn't Paul. It was Apollos. And as you might imagine, I was horrified and mortified when this was brought to my attention by Priscilla and Aquila that we have here in our church that took me aside. Bless their hearts, actually. Thank you so much, by the way.

It was so ironic because they took me aside to point out that I was inaccurate about who Priscilla and Aquila took aside to be more accurate. And here's the thing, I taught through the Book of Acts. Lord, I'm so sorry, and I'm sorry to you, so please forgive me. Oh, my goodness. I need to be more accurate. I'm so thankful to the Priscilla's and Aquila's that we have that took me aside. It was not Paul. I stand corrected. It was Apollos. Okay? All right. So, by God's grace, I'll do a better job of being more accurate.

We'll start today in the Book of Titus and our text today, which, as always, speaks to the right where we're at in our lives. It's because no matter where we're at in God's Word, God's Word is alive, and it speaks to where we're at in our lives. Such is the case with Titus here today, in the sense that our

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text speaks to exactly where we're at in the world today, with everything that is happening in the world today.

As I was seeking the Lord about teaching this passage, I sensed that what the Lord would have me do is just give an encouraging message of hope because things are getting really hard. Yeah? I think you would agree. As we talked about in the update today, it looks like it's going to get worse, like, much worse. Yeah! But God.

The Apostle Paul, when he writes this letter, some believe it was right after he wrote the first letter to Timothy because we know that 2 Timothy was the last letter he wrote. So, he would have had to have written this prior, so some believe that it was close in proximity to his first letter to Timothy. There's a lot of similarities, as we're about to see in this letter.

But you have to understand that when he penned these letters, he is sitting in a cold, dark, damp dungeon, and he knows it's a matter of time before they take his head off.

That's why he writes to Timothy and says, the time for my departure is near, and I know it. But I've finished the race. I've fought the good fight of the faith. I've finished well. And now what awaits me is this crown of righteousness. Not only me but all of those too who long for His appearing. Do you know who he's talking about? You and me.

The point is this. In Paul's life at this time, it's really hard. He loves Timothy and Titus so much he's going to refer to Titus, as we'll see, Lord willing, next week, as he did to Timothy, his son in the faith, who he loves so much. What he's saying to them is, guys, I'm not going to be around much longer. You're not going to have me around much longer, and I want to prepare you, inasmuch as I'm able for what lies ahead for you after I'm gone. It's going to get really hard, perilous times are going to come, and it's going to be very difficult.

But in the first 3 verses of this letter... I know this is the Holy Spirit inspired by the Holy Spirit. It's like, and I hate to use this phrase because the world has totally hijacked it. I know Arab's shouldn't use the word "hijacked," but this is the secret to his success. This is how it is. This is why it is that Paul was able to endure to the end. He tells us why and this is why.

These are 4 ways that I found. You might again find more but 4 ways that we, as Christians, can stay the course, press on, and keep on keeping on, as things are likely to get much worse, and they are.

The first one is in the first part of verse 1, and it's the "Furtherance of the faith." After starting out in a familiar way, referring to himself as a bondservant. That's a slave who chooses of his own volition to stay with the master, though he could be free. "Do los" in the Greek, bondservant, bondslave.

He says that his service in Christ is to further the faith. It's almost like you could hear the Apostle Paul saying, "This is why I do what I do." You know how they say, "It's what I do." This is what I do. You ask Paul, why do you do what you do? It's just what I do - to further the faith.

If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the greatest motivators for us as Christians in these last days, this would be it. Namely that of furthering the faith of the people of God during these perilous times in human history, when it's needed the most. The antithesis of faith, would you agree? Fear. He has not given us a Spirit of fear. Faith is the antithesis of fear. Faith and fear cannot coexist in the life of a Christian. You're either living by faith, walking by faith or you're living in fear.

Actually, ironically again, that's the cure for fear, faith. Because what is fear when you peel back all the layers? Is it not the fear of "what if" in the future? And what is faith? Oh! "Faith is the substance of things hoped for in the future and [strong word] evidence of that which is yet unseen." In the future -evidence.

We'll talk about that more at the conclusion but stay with me. This is very important. The furthering of the faith of God's people in a day that people arguably are riddled with fear because of the

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uncertainty and with everything that's happening in the world. Think about it like this. As a parent, even a grandparent, do you want to see your children living in fear? How much would that hurt your heart? How needless, how unnecessary!

I think about Jesus in Matthew 6 when he refers to the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, and He says, look at these flowers, look at these birds. Your heavenly Father clothes this flower and feeds that bird. How much more will he provide for you, oh, you of little faith?

Never imagine a harsh tone from the Savior. Never imagine that it would be, oh, you of little faith! No! With compassion, love, a gentleness. Just why is your faith so little when your God is so big? When he would calm the storm, they feared for their lives. Jesus again, lovingly, gently with compassion and kindness, would ask them, why did you doubt? Why did you fear?

Throughout Scripture time and time again, be not afraid. Be not afraid. I think about Joshua, ho! Moses? Those were some pretty big sandals to fill. God calls Joshua to take Moses' place, and Joshua is terrified. And what does God do? Joshua Chapter 1, "Don't be afraid.! Be strong and courageous! Repeatedly throughout the first chapter. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid.

I think about the Apostle Paul; I should be careful when I think about the Apostle Paul now. Was it Paul or Apollos? No, it's Paul on that ship. This is not his first rodeo, shipwreck.

Luke writes in Acts this detail about how we, all of us, had given up hope of surviving this storm. "We" includes Luke and Paul, both of whom were on that ship like, this is it! And then the angel of the Lord appears to Paul. I know it wasn't Apollos because Apollos wasn't on that ship. He appears to Paul, and he says to Paul, "Do not be afraid."

Now, why would he say to Paul, do not be afraid? Unless Paul was afraid. I think this is the Word of the Lord to us today. For those who have ears to hear what the Spirit would say to the church today, "Do not be afraid." Do not be afraid. Do not have little faith because you have a very big God. Don't doubt. That's the furtherance of the faith at a time when God's people need it the most.

Number 2, the second part of verse 1, the "knowledge of the truth." Paul adds to the furtherance of the faith, the knowledge of the truth, in the sense that truth is acknowledged when faith is furthered. By that, I mean, as we grow in grace and mature in Christ, we're further in our faith, which then leads to the knowledge of the truth. Again, I want to expound more on this here at the conclusion.

I would suggest that knowing the truth of what's really going on in the world is what keeps us pressing on in this world in these last days. I mean, think about it. If you did not know the truth, wouldn't you be like freaking out right now? Is this not what keeps us, and this is not hyperbole; literally keeps us sane, anchored in the knowledge of the truth.

This word knowledge, I know this is deeply profound: Know, K-N-O-W-ledge, know-ledge, knowledge. Okay, just bear with me. I'll try to clean that up here in a moment.

This brings us to our third one. It's in the third part of verse 1, and it's a "Leading to godliness." Here Paul takes it further, adding that furtherance of the faith and the knowledge of the truth will lead to and produce godliness. That's how it works.

It should be noted that the knowledge of the truth that Paul speaks of comes packaged with the specificity of God's Word of truth. Again, stay with me. In other words, one can know a truth without knowing the truth. That's not a play on words. I can know a truth. That's true. That's truth, but is not necessarily the truth.

Because see, we know Who the truth is: Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life; not a way, a truth, a life. There are many paths. No, there's not. There's only one way to the Father, and there's no way except through Him. Oh, that's so narrow-minded. Well, wide is the path, wide is the gate

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that leads to destruction, and many go thereof. But the narrow gate, the narrow path that leads to life - only a few.

Well, I wanted to leave enough time for this last one in verses 2-3, and it sort of seals the deal if I could say it like that. It's this hope, "Hope of eternal life." We refer to this hope of eternal life as our blessed hope. But here, in these verses, Paul takes it to a whole new level.

Don't you find it interesting that the Holy Spirit would inspire Paul to include this detail of God made this promise and, oh, by the way, God can't lie. It's not God won't lie because the inference is that he could. No, it's like he can't! Try as he may; it's impossible. God can't lie!

Now, why is that important? I mean, it might at first-read seem like a firm grasp of the obvious. But it's not! What Paul is saying here is God has given you his Word. God has made you this promise. What promise? The hope of eternal life. You can take it to the bank. Actually, don't take it to the bank right now because those scan your forehead.

But to me, the strength with which Paul writes this when he says that God doesn't lie. He can't lie. He's made you this promise. This promise is "Yea and Amen." So be it. It's a done deal.

The reason I'm wanting to highlight this is because of the aforementioned emphasis on the word, know. Because when you refer to it and nothing wrong with referring to it as the blessed hope. But the problem in that is that it can kind of carry with it this idea of, I sure hope so. I sure hope; I'm really hoping.

No, that's not what this hope is. This is the hope, like the truth, because of the promise from God who can't lie. So, it's more like this: It's not like, well, is that what you're hoping for? Oh, it's better than that. I don't just hope. I know! I know. How do you know? No, I know! It's the knowledge of the truth. The knowledge - I know! And that's why I have the hope.

Now, if the word, know, means what it means, which is "know" again, I know deeply profound. Then wouldn't it stand to reason that we should be able with an absolute certainty, to know that we have eternal life? In other words, the jury's not out. The verdict is in. We can know. There's no doubt. There's no question mark. There's no wondering. There's no ambiguity. There is no uncertainty.

That's 1 John, Chapter 5 verse 13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may [wait for it] know [know] that you have eternal life." Pastor, why are you so upset about this word? No, I'm not upset, maybe a little bit. It is of paramount importance to know the importance of "know."

Because if you don't know the importance of "know," then what's coming is going to blow you away. If you don't know! If there's even just a little bit of doubt, well, I don't know. You're in big trouble. You don't know? No, I don't know. No, you need to know! You may know, you don't know? No. No, on the last no. Well, I'm just doing great today, aren't I?

So, do you know, k-n-o-w, why Paul was able to endure all that he endured? Wouldn't you agree, by the way, that what Paul endured would make what we're enduring, and may, yet future, endure look like nothing? Right? So, I think that he's earned the right don't you to teach us, if we're teachable the, again, the secret to his success in being able to endure. Obviously, Paul was onto something, right? As we like to say it, do you know something I don't? Well, in this case may be, maybe so. Well, what do you know?

Here's what I know. James Chapter 1 verses 2 and 3, you know this verse. If you're anything like me and I would suspect that you are, you don't like this verse. I know for a pastor, that's kind of bad. I actually have to confess that early in my Christian life - I hated this verse. Is that bad? I know it's strong, but it's true. I'm just being open with you.

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Because I couldn't quite wrap my mind around what James was saying here. He says, "Consider it pure joy [joy], my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds..." "Stop right there. Surely it cannot say that in the original language. So, let's do a study of the Greek. I think this is a poor translation from the original manuscripts.

Really, what James should have said was, Consider it pure hell, my brothers and sisters. Right? Come on! Don't look at me all spiritual and smug and pious. Let's be honest, right? You're in church. Do you consider it not just joy, pure joy, when you face trials of many kinds? The inference being fiery trials, life, and death trials, when the storms of life hit, scary!

You're like God, what are you doing? Or how about this, God, why are you doing this? How can I possibly, I mean, come on! This is God's Word. So, you look it up in the original, and "pure joy" means pure joy. So, consider it pure joy. Okay.

I'm so glad James doesn't stop there because if he did, then this is what would happen. It would be, "Consider it pure joy, brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." Okay, I'll start tomorrow. No. God will never call us or command us in his Word to do anything without empowering us by the Holy Spirit to do it.

That's another thing He can't do. God cannot tempt with evil. God will never put us in a situation in our lives that's conducive to our failing and falling and sinning against him. In fact, the opposite is true. He'll always create an environment in our Christian lives that is conducive to our obedience.

It's been said that God's callings are God's enabling. So when you read a passage like this in Scripture, You can't read it without also knowing that if God is telling me this, that he's also going to empower me to do this. Because to not do that would be inconsistent with the goodness of God and the love of God.

That is inconsistent, incompatible with the nature of God. Think about it again and this is a healthy thing to do when you're in the Word of God, because he's your loving heavenly Father. Think about it in the context as an earthly parent, as an earthly father, how much you love your children, how much you want what's best for your children. How much more does your heavenly Father want what's best for you?

I think about even when Jesus was teaching that parable and talking about the Holy Spirit and the Heavenly Father giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask. It's very interesting, it's intriguing actually because he says you as earthly parents, you know how to give good gifts to your kids when they ask you.

I mean, if they ask you for a piece of bread, you're not going to give them a rock. If they ask you for fish, you're not going to give them a snake. Can you imagine? Hey, dad, can I have some good, spicy ahi poke fish? S-s-s-ure. You got the point, right? Tell me you did. How much more does your heavenly

Father want to give you the Holy Spirit? Just ask! James will go on to say, "You have not because you ask not." That sends shivers up and down my spiritual spine because I wonder about all of those things that were mine - had I but asked. And then Jesus says, If you'll ask me for anything, anything, ask me for anything! Anything? Yeah. If it brings glory to the Father and it's according to my will, you got it.

Really, anything? Yeah. Well, hey, pastor, with all due respect, I prayed so long, and God never answered that prayer. Oh, no, He answered it. You just didn't like the answer. See... Oh, He answers the prayer; either yes, no, or wait. But we hate to wait, but he answered the prayer.

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Oh, by the way, there are so many prayers that we pray you don't want God to answer those prayers. I can just picture the angels in heaven given charge concerning us. Here we are, innocently praying, oh, God, and here are the angels going no, don't pray that! You don't want that!

Which is why people say, I thank God for the prayers that he answered. But in some ways, I'm more thankful to God for the prayers that he didn't answer. Because if he would have answered that prayer that way, the way I prayed, it would have been catastrophic. I'm still going somewhere with this, so please stay with me.

So, consider it pure joy. Okay. Pastor, I don't know what's going to happen. They're going to mandate the vaccine, and I may lose my employment and my income, and I may lose my house, and you're saying, "Consider it pure joy." Yeah, I'm not saying it. James said it here. Okay. How?

In a word - knowing. Know. Because you know. Not wish, hope, sure hope this works out. No, you know! I do. Yeah. You know, I don't know. You know! That the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Wait, what? You're telling me that the way I'm going to persevere this trial and consider it pure joy is by going through the trial. Yeah. That's what you're saying? No, I'm not saying that. James is saying that.

Lord, I need perseverance! Okay, then here comes the trial. Because that's how perseverance comes. Lord, I need to consider it pure joy. Okay, here comes the trial. Because that's how pure joy comes. Wait a minute. How does that work? What does that look like? How does that apply to me today? And tomorrow morning when that alarm clock from H-E-double toothpicks goes off like mine did this morning. I hate alarm clocks. There will not be alarm clocks in heaven, I want you to know. It's back to the grind.

I know what I face tomorrow, and it's getting worse. And I'm to consider it pure joy? Yeah. So how did Paul persevere? Because he knew. How am I going to persevere? Because I know. I know. What do you know? I know. I know how it ends. I know that God is good. There's no doubt. There's no question.

I know by faith and by the way, it's not blind faith. This is an intelligent faith. We have this God-given intellect. We saw that in Isaiah, Chapter 1, where the prophet writes, inspired by the Holy Spirit, God pleading with his people, come! Come here. Let's be reasonable. Let's reason together. I've given you this ability to reason. Intellectually, let's be reasonable. Let's reason together. Let's resolve this. Let's settle this.

You can know, and knowing has no room for questioning. I'll explain that, and this is important because if there's any little crevice or little crack where questioning can seep in, here's what happens. Yeah, I know, I know, but... Here's the problem with that. I want to say this very carefully. The "but" is in the wrong spot. That was as good as I'm going to be able to say it.

Example. I know that God works all things together for the good, but I don't know if I'm going to have a job this month. Your "but" is in the wrong spot. I say that in love. You know what I mean by that, right?

Let's switch it around. You've got it backward. I may not have a job this month, but I know that God works all things together for the good. Ahhh! Now you got your "but" in the right spot. That's the last time I say it because that time I didn't come out very good. But God, He will have the final word. How do you know? Because I know by faith.

Let me ask a question, and we'll bring it to a close. Let me see if I've got this right. I'll speak for myself because I'm just as guilty as the next guy when it comes to this, and I preach it. It's kind of a practice what you preach, preacher. Man, if I had a dollar for every time, I heard that. Anyway, I'd probably drive a newer car.

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I'm trusting God; I'm speaking for myself. I'm trusting God: When that trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ rise first, and we who are alive and remain are going to be caught up, raptured up, to meet the Lord in the air. I'm trusting God for that, and I can't trust him for next month's rent? Oh, you don't know? If you knew? Then! You could consider it pure joy because you know how it ends. You know how it ends!

Again, it goes back to keeping one's sanity in an insane world. Is this world not insane? Seemingly getting more insane with each passing day? Man, if I didn't know the Lord, I don't know what I would do. Doesn't that just give you compassion and grace for those who don't know the Lord? How are those who don't "know" the Lord dealing with this? They're not.

If I didn't know the Lord, where am I going to turn? What hope do I have? I don't have hope, because I don't know. But because I know without a doubt by faith that my God is good and he loves me, and he'll never let anything happen to me. Not one hair on my head will fall to the ground unless he allows it. He's allowed a few more than I would have liked to fall to the ground off of my head.

Why don't you stand? I want to have the worship team come up, and I'll close in prayer. I just want to encourage anyone who may be here today; you needed to hear this today; this was the Lord's Word to you. Somebody is perhaps watching online, and you're very discouraged. The discouragement is giving way to despair.

God never faults a man for despair. Many in Scripture, despaired of life. Even the Apostle Paul, as we saw, despaired of life. But God, make sure you put the "but" in the right spot. You take your situation as bad as it is, and it's bad. Then you say, "But I know my God is good only, always good.

I don't know how he's going to do it. I don't know the way he's going to do it. I certainly don't know when he's going to do it. Any time now, Lord would be great. But I do know that he will do it. Because he can't not, and that's what I know.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, I thank you so much. The knowledge of the truth; You're the truth, Jesus. Because of that, we know it's not just a blessed hope. It's the blessed fact, the blessed truth, so, Lord, thank you.

For anyone, Lord, that's struggling and hurting, I pray that you would encourage and strengthen their hearts that they would know you in ways that they could have otherwise never known you. That they would drink deeply from the cup of joy that they could have never otherwise had ever imagined that they would drink from.

Lord, thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen.