

# Titus: Unfinished Business

## *Introduction*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Titus 1

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

August 3, 2025

For those of you that know me well and have known me for a while, you know that I am a person of order and structure. I learned a long time ago that I function at my best when I have a plan of action and I have a schedule that I can follow. I love to-do lists. I get excited about things like Google Calendar and Excel spreadsheets. I know I am pretty sick, but that is just who I am.

My life runs by my calendar, both inside of work and outside of work. I use Google Calendar, and I'm sure that the staff at the church, they make fun of me, they laugh at me all the time, because all they have to do is look at my calendar, and they know everything that I'm doing and where I am at. And for me, the other benefit is it also serves as a form of accountability. Everybody knows where I'm at and what I am doing.

And so being someone who works inside of order and structure well certainly has its benefits and its flaws. There are things that help me be a better person, and there are things that I have to be cautious and look out for, and my wife is very good at pointing out some of these flaws. But we'll start with the benefits, all right? First benefit, I find that I can get a lot done. When I have structure, when I have order, when I have a to-do list, I can be very productive.

Everyone knows where I am at and how to get a hold of me, and so I am reachable for people. It certainly lowers my stress level if I can see a list and cross things off to make sure things are getting done. I don't forget meetings or events as often. Now, I'm not 100%. I think I'm in the 99th percentile, all right? So I'm still not perfect, but I generally, with my calendar, I can keep track of everything that I have going on.

And now let me share with you some of the flaws. And again, if you are married to somebody like me that is very structured and ordered, you will recognize these right away. The first problem with being a person of order and structure is that I am not as flexible when change comes to my schedule. Change is difficult for me, obviously, and so because of that, I have to remind myself to leave openings in my schedule for rest and for God's sightings.

I can get so focused on my to-do list and things that I need to get done that I can miss what I would call God appointments in my life, opportunities that He brings before me, and so I have to work on that a little more than maybe the normal person. The other weakness or flaw with being a task-driven person is that my list is never done. I always say to myself, well, if I get to this point in the list, I will feel comfortable, I can relax, I can breathe, but I just keep adding things to the list.

There's always something else to do. Another problem is that I can lack emotion. Sometimes I just go through the motions because I just get so focused on what I have to do. My emotions don't go real high or real low, and so I can sometimes act like a robot. Now, I know that not everyone functions best in this type of structure and order, but I will share with you, as I look through Scripture, I will tell you that God is a God of order. God is a God of structure.

So yes, I found some verses to make me feel better about myself, all right? So 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace, as in all the congregations of the Lord's people." And here in 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian church and really rebuking them because their worship services were out of control. They were becoming chaotic even to the point of being offensive to unbelievers who were visiting their service.

You look back in Genesis, God created things systematically, there was order, there was structure, so much so that even after sin entered into creation, you and I can still look at nature and see order in the creation. So basically, I am telling you that if you are a creative fly by the seat of your pants right-brained person, you're wrong and I'm right, okay? So, I'm just joking.

No, God created us in all these different ways, and you have order and structure in your life as well, because God is a God of order and structure. Today, we're going to start a new series where we're going to be talking about this idea of having order and structure in the church and in our worship services. We're going to start this new series called Titus and the Island of Crete, but it's also Unfinished Business.

This is going to take us through the New Testament Book of Titus, and I want to give you some information, some background to help you understand a little more before we jump into this book. Of course, the book of Titus is a letter that the apostle Paul wrote to a young man named Titus. That's where we get the name for the book, Titus. Titus, this young man was a Greek convert to Christianity. He came to know Christ through the ministry of the apostle Paul.

And I say he was Greek because he was not Jewish, and so he didn't have any of that history or preconceived ideas about who God was. He came to know Jesus through Paul's ministry, and because of that, he became a trusted coworker with Paul. He began to travel around the known world with Paul, planting churches and telling people about Jesus.

It wasn't long before Paul recognized that Titus was actually really good at taking on challenging and difficult situations, things that needed creative solutions to fix problems. As Paul is writing to Titus, it's because he left Titus on the island of Crete. They began to travel again around the Mediterranean, spreading the news of Jesus.

And while they were together, they came to the island of Crete, and Paul continued to move on as he often did, and he left Titus there to manage the churches that were starting on this island. And so Paul is writing back to him, and he's writing to him because these churches are struggling on the island of Crete. They are lacking order, they're lacking structure, and they're even beginning to struggle with false teachers and false doctrine that is infiltrating the church.

And so Paul is writing this letter to give Titus this authority to address and deal with all of these oppositions that are facing the church. He also wants to give him some instructions about faith and conduct and how we're supposed to act, as well as giving him warnings about these false teachers. It's good to know that this letter by Paul was written around 60 AD. We're not sure 100% of the date, but certainly within a 10-year period of that.

So between 55 and 65 AD, and most scholars believe that Paul wrote this letter to Titus after he was released from his first stint in prison in Rome. Again, many of you who have studied biblical history know that Paul often was in prison because the Romans did not like that he was trying to teach people to be submissive and to have a higher authority over the emperor. And so the emperor would track them down and put him in prison.

And so many people believe the reason why Paul wasn't there or able to visit Titus is because he just got out of prison. Now before we jump into chapter one, let me tell you a little bit about the island of Crete, because knowing this will help you understand what Paul is addressing and what Titus is dealing with. One of their own poets, a man by the name of Epimenides, said this about Crete.

Cretans are liars, vicious beasts, and lazy gluttons. Great definition, right? Wouldn't you like to be defined by those things? And this is Epimenides. He is a Cretan. So he's writing about his own people. And so many of the churches on the island of Crete, of course, were being influenced by some of these corrupt leaders, these Cretan leaders, and some of these leaders were only in it for the money, even people within the church.

And so Crete was a rough place to live. It was difficult. The island was infamous for being unsafe, plagued by violence and sexual seduction. They were known for sensual living and addictions and of course being liars. And so Paul thought this is the perfect place to plant a church, right? But it was a perfect place to plant a church. Why would Paul choose the island of Crete to invest in and to have ministry there?

Well, it's because Crete was a pivotal location in ancient history. Around the known world of the Mediterranean, Crete had many ports where ships would come from all around the world to trade goods and services, which is probably why they struggled with some of the things they did. And so Paul knew if he could get the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ there in Crete, as all of these ships would come, they would encounter Jesus while they were there and they would take the good news back to their homes.

And so Paul said, "This is a perfect place to plant churches and for us to plant our flag for Christianity so that the good news of Jesus will spread around the known world." So we're going to begin today in Titus chapter 1 verse 1. If you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up there. Titus chapter 1 verse 1. It's in the New Testament, so it's going to be towards the back of your Bibles. The words will also be on the screen behind me. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we come before You.

And again, I thank You for Scripture. I thank You for these truths that we can read 2,000 years later that still definitely apply to our lives, the instructions that are given, the encouragement that we can receive, the warnings that we should watch out for. And so, Father, may we be encouraged to live for You and to shine for You where You have placed us here and now, that we would point people to Your grace and to Your mercy, and we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to start in Titus chapter 1. I'm going to read verses 1 through 4. 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 of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now, at His appointed season, He has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior, verse 4, "To Titus, my true Son in our common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Savior." Let me point out a few things in these opening verses in the introduction.

Most of these I've already covered, but there's a couple more that I want to point your attention to. And the first is this. If you ever wonder what our faith is, what we are hoping for, Paul makes it clear, our faith as Christ followers and our knowledge rests on the hope of eternal life. That's what you and I are hoping for. It's why we submit to Jesus as our Lord and Savior in the hopes that we can have eternal life with Jesus Christ.

The second thing that Paul points out in these immediate verses, he points out that he is a servant of God and then he adds a little information there. Oh, by the way, God does not lie. So why would he share this as he's writing to the people of Crete? Well, of course, as we already read, one of their own poets said Cretans are known for being liars, but the reason why they were liars is because their gods that they were serving were liars. They served the Greek gods.

Think of people like Zeus and other Greek mythological gods, and those gods were good at seducing and lying and whatever else. And so as they would look at their gods, they would emulate that in their own lives. And so Paul wants to make sure from the very beginning that they know and understand our God, Yahweh, is nothing like your God. He is not a liar. He speaks only truth, and so he wants to point that out and remind Titus of that so that he could teach that.

And then finally, it's interesting to note that Paul sees this as God's perfect timing, that God would reveal to the world the true Word, Jesus Christ, and Paul sees himself as receiving that message and being entrusted with the task of bringing that truth to light around the world. And Titus is also going to follow in his footsteps and share that light. Let's go on to verse five.

Paul says, "The reason I left you in Crete," so why did Paul leave Titus there? It's because he wanted Titus to put in order what was left unfinished, and what was left unfinished? They hadn't gotten to the point of appointing elders in every town as Paul had directed him. The reason he left him in Crete was to complete this unfinished business of setting up these churches on Crete because there were holes in the church leadership that needed to be filled.

They were beginning to lack purpose and order and structure. And so Paul says, you know, Titus, you need to go and find leaders that will fill these positions, that will be a positive influence, that will offer godly leadership, because God is a God of order. And so, of course, the question that Paul knew Titus was going to ask was, well, how do you find godly leaders? What makes a godly leader? Give me some reference for who I am supposed to choose.

And so Paul is going to answer that question next in verses 6 through 9. Paul says, "An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer, which is another term for elder, manages God's household, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. So Paul gives some qualifications for those that could serve in this position of elder or overseer over the churches.

And there's certainly something that you probably noticed as you're reading through that list that I want to address, but I'm not going to spend a bunch of time on. You probably notice that as you're reading through those qualifications, that as we read in our text, that Paul says it is to be a man of but one wife, and he continues to use the "he" reference. And so the question that comes up in the church or the question that people ask me is, "Hey, pastor, is this only a position for males?

Is this not a position for females?" And so, I want to make sure that I address that, but I'm not going to spend time debating it, all right? Because I don't think that that would be beneficial for the bride of Christ today. So, let me just say this. If this position is indeed only to be filled by men and not by women, this is not a sign of importance or value. We should not read that into the text. I will say it again.

If this is indeed a position that should only be filled by males for whatever reason God is designed, it is not a sign of importance or value. Does that make sense to everybody? It doesn't mean that women are less valuable, less important, less gifted even. It would just be because it's God's order and God's structure. How do I know that to be true? Because Jesus, the Son, submitted to God the Father, and the Son is not less than God, submission is a function of order.

Does that make sense? It doesn't mean less than or greater than, and since we see the submission between the Son and the Father, if we're asking some type of submission between male and female or whatever else, it is not a sign of importance or value, nor is it to be used to be taken advantage of. Again, we could go through a bunch of scripture. And just so you all know, in the missionary church, which Fairview is a missionary church, there are roughly 500 missionary churches in the United States of America.

This is a question that is being debated right now, all right? And so we just had a conference in July down in Fort Wayne, and we had individuals that are on one side of the argument and individuals that are on the other side of the argument, and they took two years to craft their understanding of Scripture, and they shared those at our

conference, and I can tell you that we're no further along than when we started, all right? It's a difficult topic, it's a difficult conversation, and we're going to continue to talk about it, hopefully with love and grace, and whatever else.

And I am intentionally not going to tell you where I stand on that subject right now, all right? So, if you want to talk to me later, I have no problem talking about that. But these leaders, regardless of male, female, needed to be above reproach. They were to be blameless, some of these words that Paul uses. They were to be hospitable. They were to love what is good. They were to be self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined.

They were not to be overbearing, quick-tempered, given to drunkenness, violent, or pursuing dishonest gain. They needed to have sound doctrine and the ability to defend their faith because Paul knew that their faith would be under attack. It was going to be under attack because these false teachers were coming in and they were manipulating the words for their own personal gain. And so they had to be able to defend the congregation and defend their faith.

Now, let's try to understand why Paul put such large guidelines on these leaders. The answer is because these leaders represent the entire body of believers to the outside world. Everybody was looking at the leaders, they were looking at the people in these churches, and these leaders, these individuals, could give God a bad name, and in fact, many of them already had on the island of Crete.

And so as we look at this taking place, how we can apply this to our lives today is by understanding that you and I have the same opportunity to either represent God well or to shame His name. Here's the question you should be thinking about. Does your life exemplify Jesus and lift Him up? When people look at you and when they get to know you, are they attracted to you because of your relationship with Jesus?

Or do they want nothing to do with you because of your relationship with Jesus? You either have the opportunity to encourage people to get to know Him, or you have the opportunity for somebody to say, "I don't want anything to do with them." This is the issue that Paul is dealing with here on the island of Crete, because many of these individuals within the church are claiming to be Christ's followers, but their lives look nothing like it. Let's go on in verse 10.

Paul says, "For there are many rebellious people full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group, they must be silenced because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach, and that for the sake of dishonest gain." Paul tells Titus, which he already knows, "Listen, there are ethnic Jews that are already living on the island of Crete, who claim to follow this man named Jesus, but who have tarnished His name." Paul says, "The life of a true believer should stand out.

It should be different by the way that they're acting." But unfortunately, this was not the case on Crete. They were teaching things that were not true. They were making things more difficult. Paul specifically addresses this circumcision group. You had a group of ethnic Jews that were telling people, "Listen, if you want to follow Jesus, you need to be circumcised. You need to follow all of the commands in the Torah, which they couldn't even follow." This is the only way that you can come to know Jesus, and so they were making it more difficult than what it needed to be.

Paul has said elsewhere that you and I are saved by faith through grace, not by works, so that no one can boast. And here are these individuals going around saying, "No, you got to do A and B and C and D," and we also have people in our world that make it way more difficult to come to know Christ than what it needs to be. And Paul says you should stand up to them. Let's wrap this up, verse 12.

One of Crete's own prophets, one of her own poets, has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." Paul says, "This saying is true. I didn't say it. One of your own people said it. Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to merely human commands of those who reject the truth.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and their consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, dishonest, and unfit for doing anything good. Remember, the Cretans were known for their indulgent lifestyles.

Even their own poets called them liars, brutes, and gluttons. And these individuals would claim to come to know Christ, but their lifestyles wouldn't change. There were leaders even amongst the individuals who needed to be confronted and called out for their hypocrisy. Again, these ethnic Jews were teaching circumcision and following the Torah, even though they were not doing that. Paul reminds Titus that as followers of Jesus, you and I are called to live lives of integrity and truth.

If you've been here for the last few weeks, as we have been, as we have been going through the book of Micah, isn't it interesting that here we are 700 years later and still Paul is preaching integrity. We need to be people of integrity so that when people look at us, they are attracted to Christ and we can point them towards Jesus. But instead, Paul says, "Here are these Cretans who claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him." Because of this, Paul knows that the message about Jesus is being discredited.

It is being tainted by those that carry the name of Christ follower but don't live how they're supposed to live. This still happens today. How many times are you in a conversation with somebody about your faith and about what you believe to be true about your Messiah, Jesus Christ? And they would say to you, "You know what? I don't really want anything to do with the church." Well, why? Well, because I have been hurt in the past.

I once knew somebody who claimed to be a Christian and they did X, Y, and Z to me. Or I once went to a church and this stuff happened, and so I don't have any interest in going back to church. Now, I've been around long enough to know sometimes those stories are very true, and somebody did, their actions did deny Christ. There are other times that they're just excuses for people that don't want to come back, I get it. But how many times do you and I feel like we have to defend who our God is because of somebody that misrepresented Him?

We say, "No, no, no, you don't understand. That's nothing like God." It is wholly appropriate for us as followers of Jesus to call out those false teachers and other leaders that are misrepresenting God. And so as we close today, I want you to think about this question in your own life. As you look in the mirror, does your life exemplify Jesus and lift him up, or does it tear him down?

When people look at you, are they attracted to what you have because they see that peace and that joy in that life? Or do they look at you and say, "That person is more miserable than I am? Why would I want what they have?" We are to be living lives that point people towards Christ. It is our responsibility, it is our privilege to bear the name of Jesus in this world, to help others see how attractive He really is and to represent Him accurately.

Now, of course, you need to be reminded. I need to be reminded. Paul is not calling us or Titus to be perfect. We're still human. We're going to make mistakes, but even in our mistakes, we can point people towards God by repenting, asking for forgiveness, by saying we're sorry, by openly going to those we have hurt and say, "You know what? That wasn't right. I am sorry." Even in our weaknesses, we can point people back to Christ. I often will tell people that come to the church or meet with me.

I hope that you are not coming to this church because of me, because it's only a matter of time before I'm going to let you down or hurt you. I want you coming to this church because of who God is, and because you want to celebrate and praise Him, and it should be the same for you as you talk with friends and family about your belief in Jesus. Constantly remind them, "Don't look to me as the perfect example. I am not the perfect example. I want you to get to know Jesus. He is perfect.

I am just doing my best to submit to Him." Others should want to know Jesus because of how you live. And so that is my prayer for me, and it's my prayer for us as a church, that others would be attracted to Jesus because

of your life and because of my life. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, I know that we're not perfect. We make mistakes.

Father, we may have unintentionally pushed people away from you because of our actions. And so we do repent of that. We ask for forgiveness. If we need to apologize to somebody, I pray that You would make that clear to us. Lord, it is our desire that we would be like a mirror that reflects Your image, that people wouldn't really even see us, but that they would be able to see You through us.

That You would pour Your Spirit us in such a way that it would overflow to those we come in contact with that they would be excited and attracted to who you are. That they would come to that point of repentance and confession, that they would put their hope in You. We thank You for Your Word this morning.

As we look in the mirror and we ask the question, "Are we lifting you up?" I pray that You would make that clear to us, and if there are things we need to change, that we would change those. And if there are things that we're doing well, that we would be encouraged to continue shining for you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.