

## Adult Sunday School Class

Objective: The first chapter of Paul's letter to Titus and a review the fundamentals of faith.

Opening Prayer: Thank you Father, we pause now to acknowledge your presence..... I thank you that you always hear me. That you never leave me or forsake me and that you are an ever present help. I ask for a special anointing on this lesson plan and the time we will spend together today. Bless both speaker and listener. Open our hearts to receive a fresh revelation from your Spirit. I bind forces that would hinder and welcome the Holy Spirit as our teacher today. In Jesus name!

**Read:** Titus 1

**Review:** A brief review of the items covered in our last lesson and a mention of items in this chapter that will not be addressed in this lesson plan. Items not to be covered in any significant detail are:

- The reason Titus was left at Crete was to finish the organizational tasks required for the churches.
- The qualifications for elders and deacons which was recently covered in a previous lesson plan.
- The nature and reputation of the Cretan people.

Q – What are the biggest issues that you've been dealing with for the last month? – Allow me to tell you what was on our plate when I taught this lesson in January of 2002.

- Patty Lawrence had been diagnosed with a large inoperable malignant mass in her pelvic region. Requiring chemo and radiation, which as you may know were ultimately unsuccessful treatments.
- Our daughter in-law was having severe headaches, was concerned about a possible calcification in her brain and was haunted by her sister's MS and the potential hereditary aspects of the disease.
- My sister was suffering from being divorced for the second time and her ex-husband had recently passed away after a lengthy bout of prostate cancer. In addition, she and her daughter were still estranged and the rest of her family was in a constant state of turmoil.

Q – What does any of this have to do with what we've read in Titus chapter 1?

- It's tied to Paul's stated purpose for writing to Titus which was?
- The faith of the elect and knowledge of the truth which leads to godliness.

Q – How might faith be applied to each of the situations we've discussed, including those from the 2002 time frame?

- Healing and recovery.
- Provision and direction to the best resource for medical treatments and/or the best solutions.
- The peace of God to garrison about one in the midst of turmoil and crisis.
- The courage and confidence to hold the situation up in prayer even though the prognosis is poor.
- An assurance that God is in control even though answers to prayer seem absent or severely delayed.
- A confidence that God is always acting with our best interests at heart even though we do not understand how the apparent outcome could be His best.

..... Continue from where we left off last session.....

Q – Why would Paul have to say “God does not lie”, isn't that just stating the obvious?

- His stated purpose for writing was for the faith of the elect and their knowledge of the truth.
- One very significant element of absolute truth is God does not lie.
- His word is true and His statements come to pass.

Q – What did he say the value of the knowledge of the truth is? - It leads to godliness.

Q – What is godliness, how would you define it? - Godliness is a life style that consistently demonstrates the values and resultant characteristics that are taught in the scriptures.

Q – Perhaps the best way to understand godliness is to contrast it with ungodliness or godlessness. How does scripture define godlessness?

- Galatians 5:19) The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21) and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Q – How does Paul describe the alternative to godlessness?

- Galatians 5:22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24) Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25) Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit

Q – How do we absolutely know that verses 22 and following are topically tied or linked to the preceding verses? - Because he begins verse 22 with the conjunction “but”.

Q – What did Paul conclude regarding godliness in his letter to Timothy? - I Timothy 6:6) But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7) For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

Q – Does his statement to Timothy imply that it's possible to have godliness without contentment?

- I believe it does.
- Although allow me to quickly add, I also believe, an absolute state of godliness produces contentment.

Q – How is it possible to have godliness without contentment?

- Godliness is not a black and white / on or off proposition. I believe it is more accurately stated in degrees of godliness.
- The scripture says Enoch walked with God and he was not because God took him.
- I interpret that statement to say that when Enoch significantly exceeded a degree of godliness, perhaps the the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, God said enough and Enoch was graduated to his heavenly home.

Q – How does a knowledge of the truth lead to or result in godliness? - By changing the values by which a person lives.

Q – What triggers the change in values in a person that comes into the knowledge of the truth?

- The person who accepts the truth of the gospel becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus.
- They are born again!

Q – What does the scripture describe as a result of a person being born again? - They become a new creation, “old things pass away and all things become new”.

Q – What passes away and what becomes new? - Are they changed physically?

- Typically no, physical conditions like moles, warts and crooked teeth are not changed by a person's conversion to Christ.
- However a person's outlook and countenance will be favorably affected.

Q – What aspect of a person becomes new when they are born again? - Their values or the core set of instructions “programmed” into their soul, (AKA, their will, mind and emotions.)

Q – Why? What causes the core values of a person who becomes saved or “born again” to change?

- The Holy Spirit of God comes to make his home in their heart.
- He immediately realigns their conscience so that sin and righteousness become obvious.
- Repentance or a strong desire to “turn their life around” is the new order of the day.
- Because their standard of right and wrong is now aligned to that of the Holy Spirit of God.

Q – What is the effect when a person has a new set of core values? - There are changes in their life style and personality.

Q – By contrast, how does drug addiction affect a person?

- It erodes or degrades their core values and sense of self worth. Individuals who would never consider selling themselves prior to addiction now do it willingly.
- Their personality and outlook on life are severely damaged, sometimes beyond repair, But God!

Q – Does a knowledge of the truth result in a new life for everyone who comes in contact with it?

- No, only to those who are willing to accept it.
- The scriptures say that “whosoever will may come” .
- In another place “He's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”.
- However the will of the individual is involved and God does not violate a person's will.

Q – Did Judas have an extensive exposure to the knowledge of the truth? - He did, but he was not willing to accept it and allow his values to be permanently changed by it.

Q – Again, what specific knowledge of the truth leads to godliness? - The fundamental message of the gospel, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Q – What did Karl Barth, the great theologian say, when asked what his most profound thought about God was?

- His answer, delivered without hesitation was, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the bible tells me so”.

Q – Why was that simple truth so profound to Karl Barth?

- Because it demonstrated the revelation of God's love to him on a personal level.
- He was saying, I now know for certain that God loves me!
- His statement is one of absolute confidence in the truth of the gospel.
- Truth that had been revealed to his heart by the Holy Spirit of God.

Q – How does one come to the point of **faith** or absolute confidence **that God so loved the world He sent his only son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life?**

- The Spirit of God reveals the nature of God's love to the human heart in an offer of adoption.
- The realization of acceptance, forgiveness and adoption produces confidence in the love of God.

Q – What's different, if anything, about the way the Spirit of God reveals the promise of salvation to the human heart as compared to the other promises in scripture, healing, his ever present help and protection, etc.?

- The process of faith is the same.
- God's love and commitment to us and to ours is revealed to our hearts.
- We must accept it by faith and begin to walk as the Spirit of God directs.
- For some, healing is immediate, others are directed to medical professionals or lifestyle changes.
- Faith requires us to believe God is in control in spite of contrary evidence.
- To rest in the fact that He knows how to bring about His desired solution.
- Again, we must believe He is always acting in our best interest.

Q – How does a typical Christian talk about the miracle they desire before the fact or before there is any evidence that it is coming to fruition? - You might hear them say,

- “We're standing on the promises” or
- “We're believing God to heal, restore, etc.” or
- “The word says” ..... or
- “By faith .....

Q – How did David talk to Goliath when their battle was about to begin?

- I Samuel 17:45) “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46) This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47) All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

Q – Why don't most Christians talk about the issues they're battling the way David did?

- We lack confidence in our knowledge of God's plan for the specific issue.
- We may also lack knowledge of His promises.
- We'll seldom admit it but at times, we lack confidence in God.

Q – Now there are Christian's who will boldly tell you exactly how God is going to deal with a given situation and why He must. Their assertions are either statements of faith or \_\_\_\_\_? - Presumption.

Q – How do you know if it's faith or presumption?

- Does it come to pass?
- What is their track record of previous assertions?
- At times, like the lad walking through the grave yard, they're simply “whistling in the dark”?

Q – What do we know for certain about the way God approaches and does things?

- His thoughts and His ways are higher than ours (Hebrews 12).
- We mistakenly presume He'll use Saul's sword in David's hand instead of the sling and stone.
- We presume He'll remove Paul's thorn in the flesh in stead of a demonstration of His grace.
- We presume the 3 Hebrew children will be saved without being thrown into the fiery furnace.
- We presume the money to pay our taxes will come through our employer instead of the mouth of some smelly fish.
- Allow me to paraphrase one of the remarks of Jesus, “don't say today we will go here and tomorrow we'll do that. Rather say if it be God's will we'll do those things.”

Q – How many of you have ever walked out onto a frozen lake or perhaps driven onto one? - Most will have done so.

Q – How do you know if the ice is thick enough to support the intended weight?

- Experience or trial and error.
- Measurement.
- Observation.

Q – Why are we talking about going out on a frozen lake in this lesson? - Because of the correlation between the confidence required to walk on frozen water and faith, the “assurance of things not seen”. (Hebrews 11)

Q – Could it be, as some well meaning Christians assert, we just don't know how to talk to the issues in our lives?

- No, “the name it and claim it” assertions have been shown to be a myth many times over.

- The primary reason we don't talk to the issues in our lives the way David talked to Goliath is we lack confidence in our knowledge of God and in the "thickness of the ice" of God's word.

**Statement:** Karl Barth's most profound theological insight and the manner in which David talked to Goliath are both statements of absolute confidence in God.

- Karl is "betting" eternity and David is "betting" with his life.
- Both are excellent examples of true statements of faith.

Q – How would you define hope? - It's desire with some degree of expectancy.

Q – How would you define faith? - A quiet confidence or absolute assurance of the outcome.

Q – Why would we add the adjective quiet to the term confidence in our definition of faith?

- True faith doesn't need to advertise or to be reminded of the underlying principles.
- It simply acts on and accepts as fact the promises of God as revealed to the human heart (spirit).
- Frequently people of faith will review or relive the word that's been revealed to their heart.
- It has a quieting effect in times of testing and reinforces confidence.

Q – Are faith and hope related? - Yes, Hebrews 11:1 says divinely inspired hope is the triggering mechanism of faith.

- NIV - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
- KJV - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Q – Does hope in and of itself trigger faith? Will the hope of winning the lottery and the purchase of a ticket lead to the faith that I'm going to win?

- No, the precursor of faith is divine hope.
- Hope that's inspired by the Spirit of God, primarily through the promises or the word of God.

Q – Do you believe Paul was confident that he would spend eternity with God?

- I do. He said in essence, I have mixed emotions about staying here with my earthy family and going home to be with my heavenly family.
- I believe he was fully committed to his ministry and also longed for his heavenly home.

Q – Why did he use the term the "hope" of eternal life?

- He was saying the reason a knowledge of the truth leads to godliness is because it contains within it the hope of eternal life.
- Paul said if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ( I Corinthians 15:19)

Q – Is hope a natural or spiritual force?

- Hope is a natural force, it's a product of the soul, the will, mind and emotions.
- Faith on the other hand is a spiritual force, it's a product of a human spirit that is either reborn or in the process of being reborn and that is acting in cooperation with the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Q – What are the ingredients of faith?

- A promise of God that has been revealed to a human heart.
- Divinely inspired hope in that promise and its applicability to the individual's situation.
- A willingness to act in concert with the Spirit of God in the matter.

Q – How would you define reveal or revelation?

- To make known something that is concealed; to disclose; divulge, lay open or display.

- The Spirit of God discloses or makes known spiritual truths to a human heart and when it's accepted a seed of faith is planted.

Q – What are the ingredients of an epoxy? - The base adhesive material and a catalyst.

Q – What is the consistency of the two materials prior to being mixed together? - Soft or pliable.

Q – What happens when the catalyst is added to the base materials? - The adhesive is activated, it sets and the materials harden.

Q – What happens when the Spirit of God reveals a spark of absolute truth to divinely inspired hope? - A seed of faith is formed in the human heart or the spirit of a person.

Q – Is that seed faith?

- Not yet, it's still in the embryo stages.
- Just as grape seeds and orange seeds are not yet fruit so it is with the seed of faith.
- It must first germinate in the human heart.
- At times, the Spirit of God will accelerate the seed through the incubation period but for the most part the nurturing period becomes an invaluable part of the faith process.
- It hardens the bond between the individual and the promises of God.

Q – We spoke last week about the parable of the sower as recorded in Mark 4:13-20. What is one of the main points to that parable? - When the word of God is sown in human hearts it has an enemy who wants to destroy it before it can come to full maturity.

Q – How can we protect the seeds of faith that are planted in our hearts by God's Spirit?

- Be careful not to subject them to busy bodies and those who are always chasing after sensationalism,
- Avoid excessive analysis and the reasoning of the well intentioned, **including yourself.**
- Don't dig up the seed to inspect it, allow the sprout to appear for confirmation of progress.
- Remain humble, avoid feelings of pride when you feel the “kick” of faith deep within your heart.
- It's not your accomplishment, Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. He initiates it and brings it to maturity. (Hebrews 12:2)
- Our role is that of fertile soil, cultivated with thoughts inspired by the word of God and uncluttered by the “weeds” of our surroundings, the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things.

Q – Again, what are the ingredients of faith?

- The base materials are a promise of God and a willing and accepting human heart.
- The catalyst is the Holy Spirit of God.
- When these ingredients are combined divinely inspired hope becomes a reality!

Q – What knowledge of God is the starting point for all faith?

- Jesus loves me this I know!
- God is love!
- He is always acting in my best interest.
- He never leaves me or forsakes me and is an ever present help in time of trouble.