

Season 8: Titus

Episode 2: Titus: Good News for the Good Life

The following is an uncorrected transcript generated by a transcription service. Before quoting in print, please check the corresponding audio for accuracy

Sarah: This season, we're really thankful for the sponsorship of New Growth Press. New Growth Press is an award winning trusted resource for Christian books, bible stories and Bible based resources. Today, we want to tell you about one of their excellent children's resources, called The Radical Book For Kids, exploring the roots and Shoots to the faith, here's what one avid reader has been enjoying. I have been enjoying it because I love how there's so many interesting things to find out about the Bible and it's got a great page on what to do if I'm struggling with being angry. The book is a fun filled explorer's guide to the Bible, church history and living life for Jesus for children aged seven and up. It is brilliant. Grab your copy at 10offthose.com.

Felicity: Welcome to two Sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I'm in the States. This is my sister Sarah, she's in the UK. And this week we're excited to be continuing our new season in Titus. We're going to be jumping into the first four verses of this book. But, Sarah, have a cup in hand?

Sarah: I have a cup in hand and I've got a little bit of a controversial biscuit in the fact that I've gone for a Jaffa Cake today, which I know I haven't really bought out since probably season one or two. But I was in the supermarket today with all three children and it feels like there's a bit of a tax on taking your kids to the supermarket. You feel like, what's going to end up in the trolley? What's been persuaded to get through the checkout? And the Jaffa Cakes won this time. So it's a Jaffa cake day.

Felicity: I feel like that's actually quite a low tax you've paid there. I'm pretty sure there were other things.

Sarah: But the Jaffa Cake won out on the biscuit front.

Felicity: Biscuit or cake as ever. But maybe you've just hit both categories and you're all okay.

Sarah: Yeah. How about you?

Felicity: Just a classic Yorkshire. I'm just still munching on Easter chocolate, actually, which you kind of keep because the kids, well, for some reason, they've just forgotten. They've forgotten that they got it. So it's kind of in the back of the fridge. And when you get the milk for a cup of tea, it's just kind of a little nibble.

Sarah: Nice. Very good. I can't wait to get into Titus with you. I'm really excited about this. We're going to be tackling some questions about reading the Bible with one another over the course of the season. And the first one is, why do we bother getting the Bible open with someone else in this kind of format over a cup of tea? Just 20 minutes or whatever it is? Why bother?

Felicity: Great question. Because I think we're all kind of busy, aren't we? So time is precious. Like, why would we give over even just 20 minutes to doing this? And I think there are two big factors in it. And the key is not in the cup of tea. You'll be surprised to know it's actually in God's word, being powerful. So because we know that God works powerfully by His Spirit through His Word, that then prompts us to want to get the Bible open with anyone and everyone. And that's what's happening when we're in church or in a small group, but on a one to one basis, there's something about the people as well. God has given us people as a means of grace as well, and the relational aspect of being in this powerful word together. I think pastorally, there's just huge benefit from there sitting there together in this powerful word. And I just think it is gold dust what happens as we do that. What would you add to that?

Sarah: Yeah, the power of the word, as you say, to speak into each one of those lives very specifically and to be able to ask those questions of one another that you wouldn't ask on a Sunday at church, I think is a real key, isn't it? And are really valuable. The power to open up this word.

Felicity: And know that it is going to.

Sarah: Change, it's going to change our hearts, it's going to change the way we think. And that's exciting, so why bother? Because of that, it's really worth it. It's the best. Before we read our verses listy, give us a bit of a kind of background to the letter of Titus. Letter of Titus. Letter to Titus. Sorry. And what are we getting into as we read this little letter?

Felicity: Yes, it is. Paul writing to Titus and Titus. It seems that Paul has left Titus behind in Crete and she's an island off Greece. We don't actually hear about Paul's journey through Crete, though that journey is not recorded, but we know that he was there. He says in, in chapter one, verse five, the reason I left you in Crete was that you might put this place in in order. And so Titus been left in Crete in order to order the church. And Crete, by all accounts, was a pretty hard place to be. A Christian Cretan culture was kind of renowned throughout the world for being just, I think, a pretty dark island to be on. So Titus had his work cut out and he wasn't just the leading one church, I think he was actually kind of heading up this whole network of Cretan churches. And so Paul kind of tasked him with, here's what you need to do. And that's the context that we then jump into as we hear Paul write. Do you want to read those first few verses for us, Sarah?

Sarah: I'd love to. So we're reading as ever from the NIV version, and I'm going to read chapter one, verse one to four. 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. To Titus, my true son, in our common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Savior. Yes.

Felicity: It's full, isn't it? I feel like in some letters you just get that the last two lines there, grace and peace. But instead, he's kind of packing in quite a lot into those first three verses, isn't he?

Sarah: Yeah. And I think it's really important how he identifies himself as a servant of God. That's the first thing before he says apostle. He's kind of there to serve God and to serve the Christians that he's writing to. He's writing to Titus, isn't he? My true son in our common faith. That's a very affectionate way to write to him. But if you flip over to the end of the letter in chapter three, verse 15, it says, everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. So this is a letter to Titus, but it is meant to be overheard by everyone. And I think that's really helpful, isn't it? Because I think sometimes you can approach something like this and go, well, why would I be reading this? Why is this important for me to read? But actually, this is a letter to a church leader, but it is to be overheard by everyone so that everyone can understand what's going on and what needs to happen. And I think that's just really crucial at the beginning to kind of understand that, as with a lot of Paul's letters in the introduction, he kind of rams home what he wants to say in the whole letter. And it's no different in this. It's jumpacked, isn't it?

Felicity: Yeah. And that's what we thought we might do, is actually pull out essentially the kind of heart of these verses, didn't we? And then just consider what that means, really, even just if you read verse one. So this idea that Paul is writing to further the faith of God's elect, when he talks about God's elect, he's just talking about Christians, isn't he? Knowledge of the truth that leads to Godliness. That seems to be, in many ways, the heartbeat not only of this verse, but of the whole letter. That this knowledge of the truth that leads to Godliness.

Sarah: Yeah. So we're going to pick out each word of that phrase and kind of try and track it through the letter a bit to kind of get our bearings in the letter. Yes.

Felicity: Yes.

Sarah: So, firstly, knowledge. So Paul wants to kind of he's keen to expand through the whole letter. It seems that it's knowledge of the Gospel that is the starting point for any behavior, change any kind of life that should reflect Jesus. That it's. Knowledge of the Gospel is growing in that knowledge. And I love that he starts that in these first four verses. That in these first four verses we have what the Gospel is about, the hope of eternal life which has been planned from before time began. And at the heart of it is God our Savior, Jesus Christ our Savior. At the heart of it is grace and peace. Like, wow, there's so much straight away he's going, what do you need? You need knowledge of the truth. You need

knowledge of this gospel and something really key through the letter. If you use the kind of repetition tool that we've been talking about over the last few seasons, you'll see that God our Savior is a really important aspect of the Gospel that he's trying to emphasize. So our salvation being all gods and nothing to do with us, that's something that he's really kind of emphasizing through the letter. There's three kind of big descriptions of the Gospel in the letter. Considering this is a small little letter, I think that's quite extraordinary how much time is taken up describing the good News, describing the Gospel. So we get it in this first four verses, we then get it in chapter two, in verses eleven to 14, and then we get it in chapter three, verse three to seven as well. And in each one, it's beautiful. It's worth just dwelling on each of those gospel sections and growing in our own knowledge of this Gospel.

Felicity: They're almost little poems.

Sarah: I think they're so beautiful ones to memorize. Its aim is to grow and to kind of help people see that knowledge of the truth is crucial. Talk to us, Felicity, a bit more about knowledge of the truth.

Felicity: Yes. So the truth being what you've just spoken about the Gospel, so we are talking about the Gospel of Jesus that Paul has been preaching. And I think here we have it in verse three. He has been brought to light that's God Christ has been brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. So this truth is what Paul and others have been preaching. And so what we have is this kind of concrete word of truth which we now have in the Bible as Paul's words are recorded, as Christ's words are recorded. And this truth is in stark contrast to the truths that are around Crete, the world, wherever this is the truth of Christ our Savior. And so that truth is the thing which the readers or Titus is being called to hold to. So it's not just kind of knowing any truth, it's actually this truth, whatever other whatever everyone else is saying, this is the truth, and we see it in the second half of chapter one. We have this kind of almost a picture, really, of the Cretan culture that he's in. And this is full of meaningless talk and deception. We see that in chapter one, verse ten. And so this truth is in stark contrast to that. And actually the cretans are in verse twelve. We get them. They're known as liars and evil brutes, lazy glasses. This idea of lying seems to come up a few times, I think, in the letter. So, again, truth of Christ versus the lies that surround. And so there seems to be this kind of guard yourselves through the knowledge of this truth. And you're going to have to guard yourself because the culture in which you are is going to be throwing lies and deception and all sorts at you that's going to kind of seek to undermine this truth. And I think, yeah, that then carries on throughout the letter. We have this kind of almost toing and froing of this is it Titus trust that this truth, knowing this truth, is going to bring about the change.

Sarah: But it's rooted in chapter one, verse two, in God Who Does Not Lie, isn't it? So I think, just like from the outset, he's kind of pinpointing God's character as the one from whom all truth comes. And that's the kind of plumb line that's the root of everything else that they hear from the Gospel, which I think is really helpful, isn't it? So knowledge of the truth leads to that's our next phrase, a little bit of a elusive phrase, but just the nature that it's a living truth and it changes hearts. It's not stationary. To know this truth is to be changed by it. You cannot know this truth and not be changed by it for it not to lead to something. And conversely, those who pretend to know the truth and lie, the false teachers that are kind of being described in the letter, they're not only not changed, but they're unfit for doing anything good. So they're actually described as the opposite of what knowing the truth leads to. So knowing the truth in this letter seems to always have an outbox of doing good, of being eager to do good, to let the good news shape the good life. And actually, those who pretend to know the truth but don't, actually, the opposite is true. They fit for doing anything good. So there's a real stark in contrast.

Felicity: And that in itself is quite a surprising maybe it's not surprising, but maybe we don't naturally think that that words like this knowledge of the truth, this kind of wordy thing is going to bring about, is going to lead to something that is active life. In life. There's a kind of connection. Yeah, exactly. The change you mentioned, it the good. And if you were to use the old repetition tool again, you'd find good so many times. And this knowledge of the truth is leading to Godliness, which is, in other words, good in God's sense of good lives are going to be changed. The impact of this truth goes way beyond just the pulpit or just even the leaders of the church. We're talking about every aspect of households and your

wider life being impacted by that. And we see it in the elders being spoken about and we see it, but also in chapter two, it seems that every person in the congregation is being kind of spoken to about the impact that this is supposed to have. And then as you get into chapter three, you have really is it chapter three I'm thinking of? Yeah. Chapter three, you have these kind of really quite direct commands, don't you, as to what it looks like to do.

Sarah: Yeah, to go wider, doesn't it? To kind of go wider than just kind of church family life. And that's exciting, isn't it? That actually knowledge of this truth leads to Godliness that isn't just contained in a little bubble in some way, but actually overflows and effervescence to every part of life. That's thrilling, isn't it? And actually, that is really hopeful vision for what the gospel can do to change hearts and to change lives. And I think I so often just don't believe that can happen.

Felicity: I agree. I agree. And I wonder whether for Titus, in this really pretty dark culture, it must have felt like, I don't know, is this really enough? And for us in our culture, it can feel like that the kind of the more rejecting of the gospel, it seems, is this lost its power. I think you're right. It's so exciting. It's what we were saying at the start, isn't it? The power of God's word goes beyond just that act of reading it.

Sarah: There's big change and the power of this word and the power of this story and of this truth that is being rooted from before the beginning of time and stretches to eternity. It's not how small Titus must have felt on this island, how small we feel in our different cultures, in our different contexts, thinking, gosh, we're slogging our guts out for the gospel here. But is it worth it? Is it because it feels so fruitless sometimes and so hard? And actually just to be reminded that we're part of the bigger, biggest story here. And God's in charge, he's brought everything to light through the preaching of His Word. God is savior. Grace and peace come from Him and we're called to delight in that and then share that, which is a much.

Felicity: Simpler thing than I think I conjure up panicking and thinking, oh, maybe this isn't enough, or I need to do more. Actually, we just come back to the knowledge of the truth. And as we share that, as we dwell on that ourselves, and it can be true for our own sinful hearts, isn't it? You feel a bit hopeless. You're like, I've just done it again. But actually, we come back to the knowledge of the truth that leads to Godliness big time.

Sarah: So, Philistine, why should people join us on this journey into Titus?

Felicity: Well, come and join us because we are going to be dwelling in this truth. And as we do, we're going to be challenged and encouraged to love one another. I think our hearts are going to be really challenged. It's not going to be about what we do, it's going to be about the truth that we're dwelling on. We're going to be really challenged as to what it looks like to do good and how that gospel truly impacts every part of our lives. I mean, for the three chapter letter.

Sarah: It's looking I know. I think because we could have chosen this after Deuteronomy, we thought, yeah, just a light, a light little letter. And the more that we started getting to it, like, oh, this isn't that light, and this is going to pack a punch, and this is good for us.

Felicity: We need.

Sarah: It's different to Deuteronomy. There's going to be actually quite a few similar themes coming out as well, and I'm really excited to get into it. I can't wait.

Felicity: Totally agree. And it is a short letter, which is going to pack a punch, but that means a really easy one, I reckon, to get someone getting it open with you. So why not grab a friend, get that Bible open with someone else? Sarah, why don't you pray for us as we finish?

Sarah: I'd love to. Heavenly Father, we just thank you so much that this knowledge of the truth can lead to Godliness. And we thank you that this knowledge of the truth is rooted in the biggest story that stretches from the beginning of time to eternity with God our Savior at the heart. We just praise you that this gospel is what we need to hear and dwell on and meditate on in these coming weeks, and we just pray. Would you do that work in our hearts? Would you help us to delight in ye? And would that lead to Godliness in the way that we live, in the way that we speak, in the way that we are in our different seasons and cultures of where we are? Lord, please do that. Work in us. By your Holy Spirit, we pray in your name. Amen.

Felicity: Amen. Well, looking forward to next week.

Sarah: Absolutely. So who can you think of who you could open Titus with? We'd love to challenge you to get Titus open with someone else. We'll have some show note questions each week to help you along the way. And we really look forward to getting stuck into this letter. We'll be in chapter one, verses five to nine next time, and we look forward to seeing you then.

Felicity: See you then.

Sarah: Bye bye. Thanks for joining us today. We're really thankful for the sponsorship of New Growth Press, who have enabled this episode to happen.

Felicity: You each one of.