

Titus 1:1-4

by St. John Chrysostom

The Epistle to Titus emphasizes the importance of the faith of God's elect, the acknowledging of the truth, and the hope of eternal life, while also highlighting the significance of the Bishop's office and the need for humility and compassion.

Scripture: Titus 3:13

Topics: "Ministerial Responsibilities", "Faith And Truth"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the responsibilities and challenges of being a servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the importance of faith, truth, and godliness in the ministry. He highlights the eternal hope promised by God, who is faithful and true from the beginning of time. Chrysostom discusses the commitment to preaching the Word of God, the necessity of boldness in proclaiming the Gospel, and the commandment of God entrusted to him as a servant. He reflects on the relationship between a spiritual father and son in the faith, the common faith shared among believers, and the need for grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ for all who serve in ministry.

Transcript

Paul, a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; But has in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; To Titus, my own son after the common faith; Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Titus was an approved one of the companions of Paul; otherwise, he would not have committed to him the charge of that whole island, nor would he have commanded him to supply what was deficient, as he says, That you should set in order the things that are wanting. Titus 1:5 He would not have given him jurisdiction over so many Bishops, if he had not placed great confidence in him. They say that he also was a young man, because he calls him his son, though this does not prove it. I think that there is mention made of him in the Acts. Perhaps he was a Corinthian, unless there was some other of the same name. And he summons Zenas, and orders Apollos to be sent to him, never Titus. Titus 3:13 For he also attests their superior virtue and courage in the presence of the Emperor.

Some time seems to have since elapsed, and Paul, when he wrote this Epistle, appears to have been at liberty. For he says nothing about his trials, but dwells continually upon the grace of God, as being a

sufficient encouragement to believers to persevere in virtue. For to learn what they had deserved, and to what state they had been transferred, and that by grace, and what had been vouchsafed them, was no little encouragement. He takes aim also against the Jews, and if he censures the whole nation, we need not wonder, for he does the same in the case of the Galatians, saying, O foolish Galatians. Galatians 3:1 And this does not proceed from a censorious temper, but from affection. For if it were done for his own sake, one might fairly blame him; but if from the fervor of his zeal for the Gospel, it was not done reproachfully. Christ too, on many occasions, reproached the Scribes and Pharisees, not on his own account, but because they were the ruin of all the rest.

And he writes a short Epistle, with good reason, and this is a proof of the virtue of Titus, that he did not require many words, but a short remembrance. But this Epistle seems to have been written before that to Timothy, for that he wrote as near his end and in prison, but here, as free and at liberty. For his saying, I have determined to winter at Nicopolis Titus 3:12, is a proof that he was not yet in bonds, as when he wrote to Timothy.

Ver. 1. Paul, a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect.

You observe how he uses these expressions indifferently, sometimes calling himself the servant of God, and sometimes the servant of Christ, thus making no difference between the Father and the Son.

According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness. In hope of eternal life.

According to the faith of God's elect. It is because you have believed, or rather because you were entrusted? I think he meant, that he was entrusted with God's elect, that is, not for any achievements of mine, nor from my toils and labors, did I receive this dignity. It was wholly the effect of His goodness who entrusted me. Yet that the grace may not seem without reason, (for still the whole was not of Him, for why did He not entrust it to others?) he therefore adds, And the acknowledging of the truth that is after godliness. For it was for this acknowledgment that I was entrusted, or rather it was of His grace that this too was entrusted to me, for He was the author of this also. Whence Christ Himself said, You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you. John 15:16 And elsewhere this same blessed one writes, I shall know, even as also I am known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 And again, If I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12 First we are apprehended, and afterwards we know: first we are known, and then we apprehend: first we were called, and then we obeyed. But in saying, according to the faith of the elect, all is reckoned to them, because on their account I am an Apostle, not for my worthiness, but for the elect's sake. As he elsewhere says, All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos. 1 Corinthians 3:21

And the acknowledging the truth that is after godliness. For there is a truth in other things, that is not according to godliness; for knowledge in matters of agriculture, knowledge of the arts, is true knowledge; but this truth is after godliness. Or this, according to faith, means that they believed, as the other elect believed, and acknowledged the truth. This acknowledging then is from faith, and not from reasonings.

In hope of eternal life. He spoke of the present life, which is in the grace of God, and he also speaks of the future, and sets before us the rewards that follow the mercies which God has bestowed upon us. For He is willing to crown us because we have believed, and have been delivered from error. Observe how the introduction is full of the mercies of God, and this whole Epistle is especially of the same character, thus exciting the holy man himself, and his disciples also, to greater exertions. For nothing profits us so much

as constantly to remember the mercies of God, whether public or private. And if our hearts are warmed when we receive the favors of our friends, or hear some kind word or deed of theirs, much more shall we be zealous in His service when we see into what dangers we had fallen, and that God has delivered us from them all.

And the acknowledging of the truth. This he says with reference to the type. For that was an acknowledging and a godliness, yet not of the Truth, yet neither was it falsehood, it was godliness, but it was in type and figure. And he has well said, In hope of eternal life. For the former was in hope of the present life. For it is said, he that does these things shall live in them. Romans 10:5 You see how at the beginning he sets forth the difference of grace. They are not the elect, but we. For if they were once called the elect, yet are they no longer called so.

Ver. 2. Which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

That is, not now upon a change of mind, but from the beginning it was so foreordained. This he often asserts, as when he says, Separated unto the Gospel of God. Romans 1:1 And again, Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate. Romans 8:29 Thus showing our high origin, in that He did not love us now first, but from the beginning: and it is no little matter to be loved of old, and from the beginning.

Which God, that cannot lie, promised. If He cannot lie, what He has promised will assuredly be fulfilled. If He cannot lie, we ought not to doubt it, though it be after death. Which God, that cannot lie, he says, promised before the world began; by this also, before the world began, he shows that it is worthy of our belief. It is not because the Jews have not come in, that these things are promised. It had been so planned from the first. Hear therefore what he says,

But has in His own times manifested.

Wherefore then was the delay? From His concern for men, and that it might be done at a seasonable time. It is time for You, Lord, to work Psalm 119:125, says the Prophet. For by His own times is meant the suitable times, the due, the fitting.

Ver. 3. But has in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me.

That is, the preaching is committed unto me. For this included everything, the Gospel, and things present, and things future, life, and godliness, and faith, and all things at once. Through preaching, that is, openly and with all boldness, for this is the meaning of preaching. For as a herald proclaims in the theater in the presence of all, so also we preach, adding nothing, but declaring the things which we have heard. For the excellence of a herald consists in proclaiming to all what has really happened, not in adding or taking away anything. If therefore it is necessary to preach, it is necessary to do it with boldness of speech. Otherwise, it is not preaching. On this account Christ did not say, Tell it upon the housetops, but preach upon the housetops Matthew 10:27; showing both by the place and by the manner what was to be done.

Which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.

The expressions, committed unto me, and according to the commandment, show the matter to be worthy of credit, so that no one should think it discreditable, nor be hesitating about it, or discontented. If then it is a commandment, it is not at my disposal. I fulfill what is commanded. For of things to be done, some are in our power, others are not. For what He commands, that is not in our power, what He permits, is left to our choice. For instance, Whosoever shall say to his brother, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Matthew

5:22 This is a commandment. And again, If you bring your gift to the altar, and there rememberest that your brother has anything against you, leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24 This also is a command. But when He says, If you will be perfect, go and sell all that you have Matthew 19:21: and, He that is able to receive it, let him receive it Matthew 19:12: this is not a command, for He makes His hearer the disposer of the matter, and leaves him the choice, whether he will do it or not. For these things we may either do or not do. But commandments are not left to our choice, we must either perform them, or be punished for not doing so. This is implied when he says, Necessity is laid upon me; yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:16 This I will state more plainly, that it may be manifest to all. For instance, He that is entrusted with the government of the Church, and honored with the office of a Bishop, if he does not declare to the people what they ought to do, will have to answer for it. But the layman is under no such obligation. On this account Paul also says, According to the commandment of God our Saviour, I do this. And see how the epithets fit in to what I have said. For having said above, God who cannot lie, here he says, According to the commandment of God our Saviour. If then He is our Saviour, and He commanded these things with a view that we should be saved, it is not from a love of command. It is a matter of faith, and the commandment of God our Saviour.

To Titus my own son, that is, my true son. For it is possible for men not to be true sons, as he of whom he says, If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, with such an one no not to eat. 1 Corinthians 5:11 Here is a son, but not a true son. A son indeed he is, because he has once received the grace, and has been regenerated: but he is not a true son, because he is unworthy of his Father, and a deserter to the usurped sovereignty of another. For in children by nature, the true and the spurious are determined by the father that begot, and the mother who bore them. But it is not so in this case, but it depends on the disposition. For one who was a true son may become spurious, and a spurious son may become a true one. For it is not the force of nature, but the power of choice, on which it depends, whence it is subject to frequent changes. Onesimus was a true son, but he was again not true, for he became unprofitable; then he again became a true son, so as to be called by the Apostle his own bowels. Philemon 12

Ver. 4. To Titus, my own son after the common faith.

What is after the common faith? After he had called him his own son, and assumed the dignity of a father, hear how it is that he lessens and lowers that honor. He adds, After the common faith; that is, with respect to the faith I have no advantage over you; for it is common, and both thou and I were born by it. Whence then does he call him his son? Either only wishing to express his affection for him, or his priority in the Gospel, or to show that Titus had been enlightened by him. On this account he calls the faithful both children and brethren; brethren, because they were born by the same faith; children, because it was by his hands. By mentioning the common faith, therefore, he intimates their brotherhood.

Ver. 4. Grace and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Because he had called him his son, he adds, from God the Father, to elevate his mind by showing whose son he was, and by not only naming the common faith, but by adding our Father, he implies that he has this honor equally with himself. Moral . Observe also how he offers the same prayers for the Teacher, as for the disciples and the multitude. For indeed he needs such prayers as much, or rather more than they, by how much he has greater enmities to encounter, and is more exposed to the necessity of offending God. For the higher is the dignity, the greater are the dangers of the priestly office. For one good act in his

episcopal office is sufficient to raise him to heaven and one error to sink him to hell itself. For, to pass over all other cases of daily occurrence, if he happens, either from friendship or any other cause, to have advanced an unworthy person to a Bishopric, and have committed to him the rule of a great city, see to how great a flame he renders himself obnoxious. For not only will he have to account for the souls that are lost, for they are lost through the man's irreligion, but for all that is done amiss by the other. For he that is irreligious in a private station will be much more so when he is raised to power. It is much indeed, if a pious man continue such after his elevation to rule. For he is then more strongly assailed by vainglory, and the love of wealth, and self-will, when office gives him the power; and by offenses, insults, and reproaches, and numberless other evils. If therefore any one be irreligious, he will become more so when raised to office; and he who appoints such a ruler will be answerable for all the offenses committed by him, and for the whole people. But if it is said of him who gives offense to one soul, It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea Matthew 18:6; what will he have to suffer who offends so many souls, whole cities and populations, and multitudes of families, men, women, children, citizens, and husbandmen, the inhabitants of the city itself, and of all places subject to it? To say thrice as much more is to say nothing, so severe is the vengeance and the punishment to which he will be obnoxious. So that a Bishop especially needs the grace and peace of God. For if without these he governs the people, all is ruined and lost, for want of those helms. And though he be skilled in the art of steering, he will sink the vessel and those that sail in it, if he has not these helms, the grace and peace of God.

Hence I am struck with astonishment at those who desire so great a burden. Wretched and unhappy man, do you see what it is you desire? If you are by yourself, unknown and undistinguished, though you commit ten thousand faults, you have only one soul for which to give an account, and for it alone will you be answerable. But when you are raised to this office, consider for how many persons you are obnoxious to punishment. Hear what Paul says, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account. Hebrews 13:17 But do you desire honor and power? But what pleasure is there in this honor? I confess, I see not. For to be a ruler indeed is not possible, since it depends upon those under your rule to obey or not. And to any one who considers the matter closely; it will appear that a Bishop does not so much come to rule, as to serve a multitude of masters, who are of opposite desires and sentiments. For what one commends, another blames; what this man censures, that admires. To whom therefore shall he listen, with whom shall he comply? It is impossible! And the slave that is bought with money complains if his master's commands are contrary to each other. But should you grieve, when so many masters give the contrary orders, you are condemned even for this, and all mouths are opened against you. Tell me then, is this honor, is this rule, is this power?

One who holds the Episcopal office has required a contribution of money. He who is unwilling to contribute not only withholds it, but that he may not seem to withhold it from indifference, he accuses his Bishop. He is a thief, he says, a robber, he engulfs the goods of the poor, he devours the rights of the needy. Cease your calumnies! How long will you say these things? Will you not contribute? No one compels you, there is no constraint. Why do you revile him who counsels and advises you? Is any one reduced to need, and he from inability, or some other hindrance, has not lent a hand? No allowance is made for him, the reproaches in this case are worse than in the other. This then is government! And he cannot avenge himself. For they are his own bowels, and as though the bowels be swollen, and though they give pain to the head and the rest of the body, we venture not on revenge, we cannot take a sword and pierce them; so if one of those under our rule be of such sort, and create trouble and disorder by these accusations, we dare not avenge ourselves, for this would be far from the disposition of a father, but we must endure the

grief till he becomes sound and well.

The slave bought with money has an appointed work, which when he has performed, he is afterwards his own master. But the Bishop is distracted on every side and is expected to do many things that are beyond his power. If he knows not how to speak, there is great murmuring; and if he can speak, then he is accused of being vainglorious. If he cannot raise the dead, he is of no worth, they say: such an one is pious, but this man is not. If he eats a moderate meal, for this he is accused, he ought to be strangled, they say. If he is seen at the bath, he is much censured. In short, he ought not to look upon the sun! If he does the same things that I do, if he bathes, eats and drinks, and wears the same clothing, and has the care of a house and servants, on what account is he set over me? But he has domestics to minister to him, and an ass to ride upon, why then is he set over me? But say, ought he then to have no one to wait upon him? Ought he himself to light his own fire, to draw water, to cleave wood, to go to market? How great a degradation would this be! Even the holy Apostles would not that any ministers of the word should attend upon the tables of the widows, but they considered it a business unworthy of them: and would you degrade them to the offices of your own domestics? Why dost not thou, who commandest these things, come and perform these services? Tell me, does not he minister to you a better service than yours, which is bodily? Why do you not send your domestic to wait upon him? Christ washed the feet of His disciples; is it a great thing for you to give this service to your Teacher? But you are not willing to render it yourself, and you grudge it to him. Ought he then to draw his livelihood from heaven? But God wills not so.

But you say, Had the Apostles free men to serve them? Would you then hear how the Apostles lived? They made long journeys, and free men and honorable women laid down their lives and souls for their relief. But hear this blessed Apostle thus exhorting; Hold such in reputation Philippians 2:29-30: and again, Because for the work of Christ he was near unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me. See what he says! But you have not a word to throw away upon your spiritual father, much less will you submit to any danger in his behalf. But you say, He ought not to frequent the bath. And where is this forbidden? There is nothing honorable in being unclean.

These are not the things we find blamed or applauded at all. For the qualities which a Bishop is required to possess are different, as to be blameless, sober, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach. These the Apostle requires, and these we ought to look for in a ruler of the Church, but nothing further. You are not more strict than Paul, or rather more strict than the Spirit. If he be a striker, or violent, or cruel, and unmerciful, accuse him. These things are unworthy of a Bishop. If he be luxurious, this also is censurable. But if he takes care of his body that he may minister to you, if he attends to his health that he may be useful, ought he for this to be accused? Do you not know that bodily infirmity no less than infirmity of soul injures both us and the Church? Why, otherwise, does Paul attend to this matter, in writing to Timothy, Use a little wine for your stomach's sake, and your often infirmities? 1 Timothy 5:23 For if we could practice virtue with the soul alone, we need not take care of the body. And why then were we born at all? But if this has contributed a great share, is it not the extreme of folly to neglect it?

For suppose a man honored with the Bishopric, and entrusted with a public charge of the Church, and let him in other respects be virtuous, and have every quality, which a priest ought to possess, yet let him be always confined to his bed by reason of great infirmity, what service will he be able to render? Upon what mission can he go? What visitation can he undertake? Whom can he rebuke or admonish? These things I say, that you may learn not causelessly to accuse him, but rather may receive him favorably; as also that if any one desire rule in the Church, seeing the shower of abuse that attends it, he may quench that desire. Great indeed is the danger of such a station, and it requires the grace and peace of God. Which that we

may have abundantly, do you pray for us, and we for you, that practicing virtue aright we may so obtain the blessings promised, through Jesus Christ, with whom, etc.

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