

## Mid Week • Titus 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Book of Titus is another of what are called the *Pastoral Epistles* – letters written by the Apostle Paul to men who were pastoring churches.

The other two pastoral epistles are 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, which we've recently studied.

While Paul addressed these letters specifically to Titus and Timothy, he knew they would be read by a wider audience – so while he gives specific instruction to these two men, he also intends them to be an affirmation of their role as leaders in the church.

Most people acknowledged Paul's apostolic calling and authority. If *he* commissioned Titus and Timothy to be pastors, this would go a long way toward their recognition by the people in the churches they ministered to.

Titus was a Gentile believer who had been a long-time companion of Paul's.

We find his name mentioned frequently in the NT.

Though Luke doesn't tell us when and where Titus was led to faith, Paul's reference to Titus as his spiritual son implies he was one of Paul's converts.

It's safe to conclude that he was led to faith by Paul on his *second* missionary journey, because *after that* is when we start hearing about him.

He was with Paul in Corinth and is mentioned nine times in Paul's second letter to the church there.

Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to attend the Council of Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 15.

It was at this Council that the issue of Judaizing was settled once and for all.

It was important and strategic that Titus attend this meeting of the church leadership as they determined to what degree Gentiles converts to the faith should be compelled to obey the Law of Moses.

You see, Titus was Paul's *model* of a born-again, Spirit-filled

Gentile convert, who had no need to identify himself in any way with religious Judaism, either through circumcision or obedience to the Law of Moses (Gal. 2:3-5).

Titus' experience of attending this important Church Council was critical to the ministry he would fulfill on the island of Crete – which is where we find him when he received this letter from Paul.

Crete is located in the Mediterranean Sea, SW of Turkey and SE of Greece.

Paul had left Titus on Crete to take charge of the Christian community there and set in order a number of troubling problems. Not least of which was a problem with the Judaizers.

[SHOW SLIDE OF LOCATION OF CRETE]

As we will see, the description of the opposition Titus faced on Crete sounds similar to what Paul addressed in 1 Timothy and what was going on in Ephesus.

This suggests that the error addressed in the letter to Timothy was spreading rapidly among Christian congregations.

Paul's old opponents, the Judaizers, continued to follow on his heels to "correct" Paul's converts.

Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia give us a clear picture of the error these false teachers taught.

They said that while salvation was first gained by faith in Christ, genuine spiritual enlightenment was only attained by *full conversion* to Judaism and the Law of Moses.

Gentile converts were told they had to submit to circumcision, and all the ritual law, including sacrifices and the observance of the feasts and festivals – including the observance of the Sabbath.

The Jerusalem Council was clear in its finding that Gentiles did NOT have to convert to Judaism – but the Judaizers disregarded this and continued to spread their heresy among the churches Paul planted.

After Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus, he and Titus traveled on to Crete.

They found many small house churches – probably planted by the Jews who had been brought to faith in Christ on the Day of Pentecost some 30 years before.

We read in Acts 2 that among the crowd that gathered that day to hear Peter’s message, were Jewish pilgrims from Crete.

When Peter gave the invitation to come to faith in Christ, no doubt some of the 3000 who responded were from Crete.

They stayed in Jerusalem long enough to be disciplined into the basics of the faith and then returned to their homes on Crete.

There, they shared their fledgling faith with others and soon little house churches sprang up all over the island.

But their leadership was weak to non-existent and they became easy prey for the false teachers who eventually arrived and began spreading their error.

Paul knew from past experience that Titus was the right man for the job of staying there and dealing with the problems of the churches on Crete.

Shortly after leaving Titus, he wrote this letter of support and encouragement, knowing it would lend weight and authority to Titus as he sought to carry out the work of trouble-shooting the Christian community on Crete.

In Chapter 1 Paul focuses on the quality of church leadership.

In Chapter 2 he takes a look at the character and conduct of church members among themselves and –

In Chapter 3 he concentrates on the character and conduct of both leaders and members before the unbelieving world in which they lived.

## **CHAPTER 1**

**<sup>1</sup>Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,**

**<sup>2</sup>in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,**

**3but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;**

The more I study the letters of Paul and the greetings he gives at the outset of each, the more I am blown away on how he can take the most profound theological truths and wrap them in something as pedantic and mundane as a greeting.

This is one of the sure evidences of the divine inspiration of scripture.

Make no mistake, there is enough theology, enough doctrine, sufficient truth given in these first 3 verses that if we were to take the time to really dig into this, it could occupy our attention and excite our spirit for weeks!

Let me just whet your appetite with how rich these words are and suggest that you spend some time digging in to this on your own and meditating on the riches of what we find here.

Paul calls himself both a bondservant and an apostle.

He's the bondservant of God and the apostle of Jesus Christ.

At first blush, these two things seem to be at polar opposites of the importance and status spectrums.

A bondservant is one who has willingly bound himself to perpetual slavery to his or her master.

Slaves had no rights and no position in the ancient world – they were not even considered Persons in a legal sense – they were property.

And yet, some slaves, because they had a sincere love for their master, when it came time for them to be set free, they could choose, of their own volition, to remain in slavery and bind themselves for life to the service of their master.

Some masters were so kind and generous, that a slave might actually count bondage to the master sweeter than freedom to self.

That's how Paul sees himself in relation to Christ as Lord and Master.

Service of Christ is sweeter than freedom to self.

So he had died to self and bound himself to the perpetual

service of God.

But he was also an apostles, and that is at the opposite end of the scale from being a bondservant,

An apostle was someone who was commissioned and sent on a mission and given all the authority necessary to accomplish the mission.

An apostle was an ambassador – an officer of the court, a royal official; someone who had servants attending *him* so that he could be free to pursue the priorities of his commission.

Paul had been called and commissioned by Jesus to go and plant churches among the Gentiles.

As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was the premier personality of the Church as it spread into the pagan world.

How did Paul balance these two seemingly opposite identities of servant and Apostle?

Simple – By dying to self and taking on the priority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, he used the authority given to him, not to advance himself or his name, but to exalt the Name of Jesus and advance the cause of His Kingdom!

Paul saw himself as simply a tool in the Lord's hand.

His effectiveness in ministry he knew was directly proportional to his yieldedness to the Lord and not his own desires.

This reminds me of a cartoon I saw some years ago in *Leadership* magazine.

It showed a singer standing next to a piano with a mic in hand. The caption had him saying - "I'd like to share a song with you that the Lord gave me a year ago -- and even though he did give it to me, any reproduction of this song in any form without my written consent will constitute infringement of copyright law, which grants me the right to sue your pants off. Praise God!"

Paul understood and lived Jesus' words – “Freely you have received – freely give.”

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Paul's calling as an apostle was, v. 1 - “according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,”

In other words, his calling was to preach, and by preaching to bring faith to those destined for salvation, and then, after they

were saved, to see them go on to spiritual maturity.

**2in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie,  
promised before time began,**

One of the greatest motivations to holy living is the realization that heaven awaits us and the quality of life we will enjoy there is total holiness with the complete absence of sin.

Hope is one of the unique distinctives of the Christian Faith.

Because we are saved by grace through faith in the completed work of Christ, our hope is as secure as the cross.

So we have hope as a sure possession – no matter what, as we abide in Christ, then heaven is our certain destiny.

But at best the other religions of the world can only hold forth a “Hope-so.”

They hope that if they have been good enough, given enough, sacrificed enough, then maybe, they’ve done enough to merit eternal life.

We have a hope – not a hope-so.

**3but has in due time manifested His word through  
preaching, which was committed to me according to the  
commandment of God our Savior;**

The plan by which men and women can obtain eternal life was ordained by God before He ever spoke the first atom into existence.

But it was only revealed in history through the task of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Friends – hear me tonight – let us never, ever underestimate the power and priority of proclaiming the Gospel!

When we share with others the Good News of Jesus Christ, it is far more than just words that spin off into the air.

When we speak, preach, or teach, and our words contain the simple message of who Jesus is and what He has done – they are a “manifesting” if I can misuse that word for a moment, they are a manifesting of the plan and principal that underlies all of creation.

You see, God created all of this so that He might gain for Himself a Bride, and eternal companion who would receive His love,

and of her own volition, enjoy it, make it her own, and then return it to Him in a manner worthy of Him.

The bridal price was His blood, shed at the cross of Calvary.

This was God's plan before a particle existed.

When we share this message, when we speak the words, the very fabric of creation vibrates in harmony with our words.

Do you know what a sympathetic vibration is?

It's what happens when a string is plucked on a guitar or piano, and it causes the surrounding strings to pick up the sound wave and start vibrating on their own.

These vibrations are in tune with the first because they move in time and produce natural harmonies.

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8 [18-22]

**<sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup>For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; <sup>21</sup>because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.**

God is conducting a great symphony in the lives of His redeemed people.

As we faithfully sing our part, the creation itself joins in.

At times, like the groaning Paul describes here, the sound seems dissonant and disjointed.

But like a master symphony, the groaning of creation is just the minor and diminished notes that swell to be resolved in the bright major chords and finale of the Return of Christ.

When you and I faithfully share the gospel, we are repeating the leitmotif – the main theme of that great ageless symphony God composed before time began, but is now playing through what we call history.

There's power inherent in the words of the gospel – power to stir up faith in those who hear.

And that is why preaching must take a priority in our lives.

Whether it's classic preaching, as a preacher does from a pulpit, or the preaching we do from a godly lifestyle that gives evidence to a changed life – preach on!

#### **4 To Titus, a true son in *our* common faith:**

**Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.**

It's interesting that Paul adds the word “mercy” to his classic greeting of “Grace & Peace”.

We only see this in the Pastoral Epistles and it makes us wonder if pastors need MORE mercy than others.

After all, as the scripture says, to whom much is given, much is required.

I know I sure need all the mercy I can get.

This is just a quick side note – but notice how Paul links the Father and Son here.

Grace, mercy, and peace come from both of them, equally.

And here, the Jesus Christ is given the title of both Lord & Savior.

Because Yahweh is called the only Lord & Savior in the OT, this would have been absolutely scandalous for a Jew to say unless he meant to be understood to say that Jesus IS Yahweh!

#### **5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—**

There were several cities and towns on the island of Crete, and in each of them there were small house churches.

Crete is 160 miles long and varies from 7 to 35 miles wide, so it is quite a sizeable island.

Dotted with cities, Titus would have the spiritual oversight of the entire thing.

While no single church would be very large, only large enough to fill a house, putting them all together would amount to a pretty large body of believers.



As we read on, we discover that Titus faced two challenges, two areas of concern that Paul left him there to set in order:

- 1) The Judaizers, who we referred to earlier, had come in and done their damage by making the Gentile believers think they had to convert to Judaism.
- 2) Others were teaching that if we're saved by grace, it doesn't matter how you live.

They were living sloppy, immoral lives.

Paul knows the cure to both of these problems, indeed, the cure to most problems in the church is godly, mature spiritual leadership. So here he instructs Titus to set such men, who he calls elders, into official positions of leadership in each city.

In vs. 6-9. he gives a list of qualifications for eldership.

This list is a repeat of what he wrote in 1 Timothy 3.

SI(nce we covered that list in great depth, I'll be more summary with these things tonight.

### **6if a man is blameless,**

This means there's no *glaring fault* that would bar him from *rightly representing* Christ.

The word blameless does not mean perfection – it speaks of something that would result in someone being hauled into court.

### **the husband of one wife,**

Literally – he's a "one-woman man."

He has demonstrated consistent loyalty since he's been a believer, specially as it applies to his marriage.

He's no womanizer and has a reputation for fidelity to his marriage vow.

### **having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.**

He's demonstrated a consistency in his home life that shows he can be responsible for the nurture and care of others.

His children are well-behaved and generally compliant while they are under his authority and responsibility.

**7 For a bishop [overseer] must be blameless, as a steward of God,**

This is to be taken together – the word *blameless* here is the same as in v. 6.

But here Paul means that in terms of stewardship in the task of being an elder, he needs to demonstrate consistent faithfulness.

The elder needs to realize that as a steward, he answers, not to man, but to the Lord!

**not self-willed,**

The word means to be arrogant and self-focused.

**not quick-tempered,**

He is prone to fits of rage and anger – he doesn't fly off the handle at the slightest provocation.

**not given to wine,**

He doesn't have a drinking problem – he doesn't run to the bottle.

**not violent,**

He doesn't use his size or power to get his way.

**not greedy for money,**

He's not motivated by filthy lucre.

**8 but hospitable,**

Rather than being greedy, he opens his life and home to minister to the needs of others.

**a lover of what is good,**

He's a promoter of virtue.

**sober-minded,**

He's not seduced by fashions, fads, movements, or mere carnal excitement.

His head is clear because there is nothing that has captured his mind but the truth and love of God.

It is as easy to be deluded and drunk with a fashion as alcohol.

Our thinking can become as easily dominated by some carnal interest as by a drug.

Addiction can take many forms – and the problem with addiction is that it comes to take over our thought process.

Being sober-minded means not allowing ANY influence to usurp the place that belongs to Christ as Lord.

**just,**

The spiritually mature person doesn't play favorites.

**holy,**

The spiritually mature have a heart to be pure – free of anything unworthy of the Lord.

**self-controlled,**

The requirement Jesus gave for following Him was dying to self.

The spiritually mature man or woman is the one who is self-controlled because there is a daily reckoning of the self to be dead and the life they now live they live unto Christ.

**9holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**

In the list of elder qualifications Paul gives in 1 Tim. 3 he says the elder must be able to teach.

He says much the same thing here.

The elder needs to have an aptitude to teach others what God's word says about any given topic.

Bearing the duty of spiritual oversight – the elder is charged with the task of protecting and leading the flock of God.

When he encounters an influence in the church that is contrary to spiritual health, he needs to have the wisdom and the resources to be able to refute it and exhort those who are in error to repent.

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Paul now speaks about some of the threats to the Church in Crete.

**10For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,**

**11whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole**

**households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.**

Paul identifies the fact that there was a whole host of false teachers floating around from church to church and house to house that were spreading lies and false doctrine because it was personally profitable.

Not a few of these were of Jewish background.

They found a fertile field among the Gentiles to ply their trade of heresy because Christianity at this time was seen as an offshoot of Judaism.

So, who better to learn it from than a Jew.

As I mentioned before, the Judaizers were Jewish teachers who had come in to Gentile churches and were telling them that in order to be a Christian, one had to FIRST be a Jew.

So they were taking these young and impressionable Gentile Christians and telling them they had to be circumcised, take an oath of allegiance to Moses, observe the Sabbath, eat only kosher foods and obey the entire Mosaic Law.

In v. 10 – Paul breaks the camp of the Judaizers down into two groups: *idle talkers* and *deceivers*.

1) The *deceivers* were people who knew what they were teaching had been banned and forbidden by the Church leadership in Jerusalem.

They knew it didn't square with the gospel – but they went on teaching it anyway.

Why? Because it had become their source of income.

Being itinerant preachers, they earned a living off of their heresy.

They told people they would stay and share with them the secrets of super-spirituality if they would support them.

2) The second group Paul calls *idle-talkers*.

These were the converts of the Judaizers.

Being deceived by the deceivers, they had come to believe the error they had been told.

They had forsaken the path of grace for a religion of works.

Whether they were of the first or second group, it didn't matter – they were believing and promulgating a dangerous lie that was doing

great harm.

Their mouths must be stopped.

Until they were, they would continue to turn whole households away from the faith.

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It has been my sorry experience to see this happen to people today.

I have known people, families even, that *seemingly* got off to a good start in the faith.

But a Jehovah's Witness stops by and catches their ear with a false demonstration of piety and an *apparent* incredible grasp of scripture.

I know a young man who grew up in a solid Christian home but when he went away to college, started attending a meeting of the LA Church of Christ.

These people are about as close to the Judaizers of NT times as possible.

They began to tell him he couldn't be saved because he wasn't a part of their church and so couldn't possibly be "doing things right."

They didn't require that he be circumcised, but they did disallow his prior baptism and said he had to be baptized by them, IN THEIR CHURCH BUILDING, according to their formula.

He had to attend their meetings, several times a week.

He had to abide by each and every pronouncement of the organization.

He had to submit his entire life to the leadership of his local bible study group.

They would tell him what classes to take in school, who he could date, where he should live and what job he should take.

Take about *legalistic*, they just about wrote the book.

What was mind-boggling to me is that this young man almost fell in with them.

I urged him not to – to stay away and not even return their calls or answer the door when they came over.

Fortunately, he heeded my advice, and indeed, they harassed him and made life very hard for him till it was evident he was not going to be bullied by their persistence.

It's the task of the elders and pastors to refute error and equip the

people in their church to shut the lying mouths of false teachers,  
not by violence, but by humble, yet persuasive argument.

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Paul now speaks specifically about the situation there on Crete . . .

**12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”**

**13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,**

**14 not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.**

This is simply brutal!

Paul was a man who was wide-read and in his reading he had discovered an interesting quote from a Cretan prophet.

This quote characterized the Cretans as, well – *Cretans!*

They were lying cheats, more animal-like than civilized humans and tended to be sensual sloths.

Paul is likely quoting the 6th-century B.C. teacher Epimenides of Knossos in Crete.

Epimenides was reputed to have been a traveling wonderworker, teacher and prophet.

This is the way he described the people of his homeland.

By Paul’s time, Crete had gained a reputation for arrogance, treachery and greed.

To get an idea of what the words of v. 12 describe in modern terms, picture a guy sitting in a dirty and stained recliner, wearing a dingy and ripped T-shirt, chewing on a chicken drumstick while the bar-be-que sauce runs down his chin onto his chest.

In the other hand he’s flicking the remote, looking for trashy TV, and giggling as he finds what he wants.

When his wife enters the room, he quickly flicks to the Discovery channel where there’s a show on how to repair plaster walls.

When she asks him what he’s watching, he says, “Nothin’.”

Then when she leaves the room he flips back to the trashy stuff.

That’s a Cretan.

It seems the culture of Crete had degraded morally so that the people were acting little better than brute beasts.

Paul says the false teachers on Crete are acting as stereo-typical Cretans.

They bend the truth into a lie that will make them money so they can consume it on their base instincts and carnal desires.

Because the people of Crete tended to be a rough lot, Titus would have to apply the appropriate means to arrest their attention and return the Church to the right path.

Paul tells him to rebuke them *sharply*.

If they had become a bit numb, they would need waking up.

If the coarseness of their behavior had deafened them to the gentle voice of the Spirit, then Titus might have to raise his voice to be heard above the racket.

There have been a few times in counseling when I've had to deal with a person who was coarse in speech and manner.

It was clear that they did not want to be there and thought that by offending me they could escape.

So their speech was rough and their manner an attempt at intimidation.

Depending on the circumstance, and using the wisdom the Lord gives me in that moment, there have been times when I've looked them square in the eye and gone toe to toe with them to stop with the games.

There have been a few times when I've had to literally shout down someone because they were like a rocket rising into the sky on the smoke of their own explosion.

Oh – you should see the looks I get!

I'm a man of the cloth and supposed to be all meek and mild and never raise my voice.

But when sin is getting full vent and damage is being done to another that may be irreparable – I don't believe it's right to sit idly by and let it just go on.

Salt stings! And being the salt of the earth sometimes means that we must be sprinkled liberally in a place of infection.

Crete was a tough place to live and minister and Titus was called to the arduous task of leading all the churches to health – dealing

with the problem and plague of legalism.

This would take extraordinary patience and love.

It would have been easy for Titus to have “heard God’s call to go elsewhere,” but he stuck it out and finished his work.

When I read this I’m reminded of a close friend who was called to a very hard place of ministry.

He was like a Titus or Timothy to me.

I’m the one who laid hands on him and ordained him to the ministry.

After a couple years of ministry as a pastor in a tough place, he packed up and left for green pastures.

He ought to have stayed, because the church he left behind was picked up by another man and is doing really well.

**15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.**

The false teachers were in to all kinds of rules and regulations about what was clean and unclean.

But Paul reminds Titus and the others who would read this letter that purity is not an issue of *externals*.

As Jesus said, it’s not what goes in to a man that defiles him, but what comes out.

If the heart is right with God, then issues of external form are not the focus.

If the heart is right, then all the actions and words that flow from it will be right as well.

But if the heart is corrupt, then it doesn’t matter that a person has all their ritual ducks in a row – it is unacceptable to God.

God looks at and sees the heart.

**16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.**

The legalistic Judaizers claimed they had the inside track on the knowledge of God, but a close inspection of their lives would reveal that they lived very far from what would be called genuine godliness.



In private, when they thought no one was listening, their speech was corrupt.

The thoughts and fantasies of their wicked hearts were abominable.

They violated the moral law of God at every corner.

And though they claimed to be doing a good work, they were in fact disqualified from speaking for the Lord.

V. 16 reminds us of the series of scandals that rocked the Christian community in the 80's.

Celebrity Christian leaders presented a face of godly piety when before the camera.

But off screen they were living deplorably immoral lives.

The wars that were going on between Jim Bakker and several other *Assembly of God* pastors and televangelists were horrendous.

Jimmy Swaggart looked like a paragon of virtue, wiping his sweating brow as he paced back and forth on some stage preaching the gospel and decrying the evils of this world.

But later that night he was shackled up with some street walker.

Hypocrisy has always been the dreaded scourge of the Church.

The famed outlaw Jesse James killed a fellow in a bank robbery and shortly thereafter was baptized in the Kearney Baptist Church.

Then he killed another man, a bank cashier, and joined the church choir and taught hymn-singing.

He liked Sundays, Jesse did, but he couldn't always show up at church.

On two Sundays, he robbed trains.

The pastor or teacher who desires to speak for God before people, but then is loath to allow those same people to investigate his life is on shaky ground.

While no one is perfect, there ought to be a basic continuity between what a man says and what he does.

And when necessity dictates that he teach something that his life is not in line with, then he must be honest and admit his struggle and need for growth.

I like what the Puritan Pastor Richard Baxter wrote nearly 300 years

ago –

“It is an obvious error for all to see in those ministers of the Church who make such a wide gulf between their preaching and their living. They will study hard, to *preach* exactly and yet study little or not at all to *live* exactly. All the week long is little enough time to study how to speak for *two hours*; and yet one hour seems too much time to study how to live *all week*. They are loath to misplace a word in their sermons; yet they think nothing of misplacing affections, words, and actions in the course of their lives. Oh, how curiously I have heard some men preach, and how carelessly have I seen them live!”

## CONCLUSION

Following this, Paul launches into a passage which speaks about making sure our manner of living is consistent with our profession of faith.

But let’s end our study tonight with a quick contrast between living by faith and legalism.

Paul has made it ultra-clear in this first chapter that legalism, while looking like a stricter and more holy approach to God, is in fact, a trusting in the flesh.

And flesh does not please God.

Obedying rules and regulations about diet and the observance of special days is not the means of approach God has given us.

We come to God through Faith in Christ.

When we do that, He cleanses us from sin and brings us in to a unique relationship with Him that results in holiness working itself outward from a new heart.

Legalism is a form that tries to make us appear holy, but has no power to change the thing about us that makes us *want* to sin.

The reason so many people are suckered into a legalistic lifestyle is because it appeals to our pride.

It makes us think that there is something we can do to earn our way before God.

It allows us to say, “Look what I did! Aren’t I good? Don’t I

deserve eternal life?”

Think about it – if legalism were the route to heaven, then what would heaven be?

It would be one big bragging session.

It would be one big ego party.

And because some of us would have done better than others, justice would demand that they got more goodies in heaven – and so there would be various levels of sainthood in the Celestial City.

Some would have their mansion on the hillsides overlooking the poor slobs living in the barrio.

Heaven would end up being an awful lot like this earth that we’re hoping to be liberated from.

No – legalism is not the way.

In heaven, we all come the same way to God – we are all equals – and we will boast in Only One – the One who saved us – Jesus.

Finally, as Paul makes so abundantly clear, because legalism trusts in the power of the flesh, the flesh will eventually assert itself and bring corruption to every area of our lives.

How will you live?

By faith in Christ alone – or by the flesh?

Will you trust in rules and regulations – or the Ruler of Heaven and Earth?