



Week Two: The Meeting of Parallel Lines

This week, we look at the same introductory text and learn some things about God that are difficult to comprehend because of our limited understanding as creatures. This is always going to be a tension for us, as we grapple with the vastness and incomprehensibility of God's ways (see Romans 11:33). It should, however, encourage us to press in even deeper, so that we can glean as much as we can, and in so doing mature in our faith.

Text: Titus 1:1-4

1. Scripture Continually And Consistently Speaks Of The "Parallel" Truths Of God's Sovereignty And Man's Responsibility

"There is no conflict in the Bible between His (God's) sovereignty and our responsibility. Both concepts are taught with equal force and never with an attempt to "reconcile" them. Let us hold equally to both, doing our duty as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures and trusting God to sovereignly work out His purpose in us and through us." (Bridges, 1988)

- Read Titus 1:1-4

There is complexity in Paul's beliefs, but they are clear:

- God knows who the elect are and yet the elect *have* to have faith
- God's promises still stand and we need to *remain hopeful* in them
- God knows everything that will happen, and yet we are all *fully responsible* for how we respond to things that do happen

God's Sovereignty – See Psalm 33:10-11, Job 42:2, Psalm 135:6, Isaiah 46:8-12

"God is in control; He is sovereign. He does whatever pleases him and determines whether we can do what we have planned. This is the essence of God's sovereignty; his absolute independence to do as He pleases and His absolute control over the actions of all his creatures. No creature, person, or empire can either thwart his will or act outside the bounds of his will." (Bridges, 1988)

Man's Responsibility – See Ecclesiastes 10:18, Proverbs 20:4, Nehemiah 4:7-9, 16-18, 20

Though God is sovereign and fully in control, this does not allow us to drift into a foolish and fatalistic attitude. That is not a biblical response. All over scripture, we see that those who believed in God's promises still prayed and acted prudently, all the while still trusting God.

- ❖ *Q: It is hard to live with the tension and we tend to fall into one of two errors. Think about where you lean. Do you tend to lean more on God's sovereignty and passively accept the "way things are", with a bit of a fatalistic "victim mentality", or do you tend to get things done yourself, hoping God will sprinkle his blessing over your efforts when you are done?*
- ❖ *Q: What is it about us that struggles to embrace the tension of two co-existing truths, when it is beyond our comprehension to grasp how those truths can co-exist?*
- ❖ *Q: What impact do you think it will make on your life when you choose, by faith, to embrace the tension of God's sovereignty and our responsibility?*



2. God Never Loses AND We Must Remain Faithful

- Read Titus 1:1a, Philippians 2:12-13, Romans 10:17, Romans 10:17
 - It is God who does the saving, but it is we who have to have faith.
 - Faith and knowledge work *together* in our quest for Godliness.
- ❖ *Q: Why do we need faith and knowledge of the scriptures in order to grow in Godliness?*

3. God Never Lies SO We Must Remain Hopeful

- Read Titus 1:2

When we are tempted to lose hope, we can hold onto the truth that God never lies. There are so many promises for us as his children, to hold onto that can give us renewed hope.
- ❖ *Q: Why is it true that, when we lose hope in God's love, his presence or his plans to work out all things for our good, we are actually acting in unbelief?*

4. God's Never Late AND We Must Remain Witnesses

- Read Titus 1:3, Habakkuk 2:3

Scripture is full of accounts that show God intervening at the "appointed time". In our humanness, we often panic and try to control outcomes, or we tend to passively give up, assuming God is either late or unreliable. But we are wrong, each and every time. God's timing is always perfect.
- ❖ *Q: Why do we struggle to accept God's timing?*
- ❖ *Q: Think of one defining experience that you have had that showed you that you were wrong when you initially judged God for his "bad timing"? (We have all had these humbling moments with the Lord, haven't we?)*
- ❖ *Q: In what way it is a witness to Christ to wait with hope and expectation?*

5. God Brings Grace SO We Must Live At Peace

- Read Titus 1:4

God's grace brings us peace in all areas of our lives - with God, with others and with ourselves. We no longer need to strive to be more than we are because there is grace for where we are at, and grace to transform us one step at a time.
- ❖ *Q: In what way does God's grace give us peace? Explain how that has become evident in one particular area of your life since knowing Christ.*

General Reflection Q:

- ❖ *Q: What is the one big take away that God is asking you to take on board from this week's message?*