

Introduction to Titus

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[0 : 00] And if you'd open your Bibles to Titus chapter 1, our scripture reading this evening. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. And at his appointed season, he brought his word 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 Lord, Christ Jesus, our Savior. The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

[1 : 42] For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced because they're ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach, and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

Even one of their own prophets has said, Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.

Well, that's the Word of God. Pastor Jason, come and preach to us. Well, tonight we're going to start a new series on Titus. Martin Luther never saw a hyperbole that he didn't like.

[3 : 04] He was a big-hearted, big-minded, big-brained fellow, and he always seemed like he had to find the biggest way to say something.

And his motto seemed to be a little exaggeration, never hurt anyone. But this is what he said about the book of Titus. And you're going to see why I just prefaced it with all that commentary.

He says this, This is a short epistle, but a model of Christian doctrine in which is comprehended in a masterful way, all that is necessary for a Christian to know and to live.

I don't necessarily agree that it's everything you need to know. But you see what he thought of the book of Titus. It's this wonderful collection of what we need to know in order to live.

It's a blueprint. It's a model for the Christian life. On the south end of Plymouth, downtown Plymouth, for what that's worth, somebody is building three luxury apartments.

[4 : 16] It really is quite something. I am not sure what they're thinking. I'm not sure if it's a good idea or not. Right across the street from these three luxury apartments is a liquor store.

And right across the other street is a run-down Penguin Point. It doesn't seem like a promising area to build three luxury apartments, apartment buildings.

I would have never have thought to build those there. When they bought the property, it was abandoned. There was this old abandoned four, maybe five-story furniture building on it that hadn't been vacated for years.

And Plymouth isn't New York City by any stretch of the imagination, and so the downtown life doesn't have a lot to offer. And right around the corner, I mentioned the Penguin Point, right around the corner from that, there's just this stretch of ghetto houses.

It's not a great area. But they bought the building. They bought the property. They tore down the building. They flattened it. And since early last year now, they have been building these three beautiful, big apartment buildings.

[5 : 50] But what have they been doing since day one, or even before day one, of building? They've been looking at the blueprints. They've been saying, this is what we need to do. This is what the plan is, and this is what we need in order to build this.

And so they've been going back to the blueprints day after day after day. It started out in a rough area with a rough plot of land, with a rough building on it, and they are truly making it into something pretty special, something pretty wonderful for Plymouth anyways.

In a lot of ways, that is exactly the story of the book of Titus. So you have that picture of rough ground, but we're going to put a beautiful building on it.

It's going to have some troubles, but we're hopefully going to make something special out of it. That's the story of the book of Titus. Crete and its people and its church are that rough plot of land. We're going to talk about that in a few minutes. Titus is the workman, and he's going to be building this building, and hopefully he's going to put something together that's pretty special.

[7 : 05] And the book of Titus is Paul's instructions for Titus, but especially for the believers, for the churches in Crete.

Now, what is the church supposed to look like? How is it supposed to function? What's its structure to look like?

What about the leadership? What about a Christian home life? What about how we live in the world? Those are all questions that are addressed in the book of Titus. Those are all questions that have blueprints embedded in the book of Titus.

Titus. Now, so you can see that it makes it especially good, helpful for a church that's just starting out.

But we're not a church just starting out like the church in Crete was. Why should we care about Titus? Well, besides all the regular reasons of this is God's word, and every word is profitable for us, I think, brothers and sisters, Grace Fellowship needs to say to itself, we need to say to ourselves, we are not done growing.

[8 : 27] We are not done building. We shouldn't think that we can now just hold the line, maintain the status quo. We don't have anything to improve in.

We don't have anything to build on. We don't have anywhere to go. No, we are not done building. And so how do we need to keep building? How do we need to keep going forward as a church? Well, Titus is going to tell us. So, or we can say this, we've been building for a while. Well, then are we on track?

Well, we need to check the blueprint. What about leaders? What kind of leaders should we be looking for? What kind of leaders should we be seeking to create as far as we can?

Well, we need to check the blueprint. We want godly homes. I know each one here wants a godly home. Well, what is that supposed to look like? What does godliness look like in everyday life?

[9 : 25] Well, Titus is going to tell us. I think one that is especially helpful is our culture. Our culture, our country is becoming increasingly hostile.

Increasingly. And it's not just hostile towards us. That's true. It is. But it's becoming increasingly hostile and ruthless towards everyone.

You see hating and being hated as more and more growing in our culture. Where people are now more brutal and ruthless.

So how do we live in that? Not only with their attitude towards us, but just how do you live in a culture that is becoming more and more like that? Well, Titus is going to tell us.

These things that we need to think about. These things that we need to remember. These things that we need to act like. Now, it's especially that last thing that I want to talk to you about tonight.

[10 : 33] As we just talk about an introduction. And as we talk about the context of this book. What do we do when your culture is corrupt? Even abnormally corrupt.

Well, Crete was a pretty rough place to build a church. It is a rough place to grow the gospel. It's a rough place to live. It wasn't the most promising place.

But this is where Jesus Christ had said, I'm going to build my church. It's probable that the very first believers that ever lived on Crete were, first of all, present on the day of Pentecost.

You can read about it in Acts. Where there was people from all over. And it says that there were people from Crete. Jews from Crete were in the city of Jerusalem. They heard the Apostle Paul speaking.

Or the Apostle Peter preaching. And they most likely went back. And it's imaginable that they began to live as Christians. They began to tell other people about Jesus Christ.

[11 : 36] And that's where the church starts to grow. And to come out and flourish. But this is where Jesus Christ says, I'm going to build my church. And this is where Titus is sent to minister.

It's not an easy place. We're going to find out. So we need to talk about Crete. Do you know where Crete is? If you have your Bible and there's maps on the back, you can look.

And in the middle of the Mediterranean, sort of like south of Greece and south of Turkey, there's this island called Crete. Crete. It's a rough place.

Literally. It's about 160 miles long. At its widest. It's 37 miles wide. And it's almost completely covered with mountains.

So this whole island is made of mountains. In Paul's day, no one really lived inland. They all lived in these.

[12 : 37] There's 12 major cities scattered around the coast of Crete. And the thing that you need to know about these 12 cities is that they all hated each other.

So it's playoff season in the NFL. And I'm sure, right, Philadelphia is hating Chicago. Well, that's what it was like all the time on Crete. These cities hated each other.

If you were in Crete, you loved your city and you hated them. And the only people that you hated more than them were people that were not even from your city, from Crete.

Now, these cities were in constant, these petty civil wars for a long, long time. And those civil wars just went back and forth for years and years and years.

Until Rome came in and kind of squashed the whole business. But old enmities die hard. So here's this culture with this embedded hatred for other, even Cretans.

[13 : 39] So there you are. If you're Titus, I want you to imagine this. You are in this city. And your job that Paul has given you is to appoint elders in all of these different towns.

And it's this rocky, mountainous island in the middle of the Mediterranean. There's no Roman roads on Crete.

Which just is to say there's no flat, well-kept, easy-to-travel roads in all of Crete. So, you're either going up a dirt road or you're going down a dirt road.

That's what you're doing if you're on Crete. And so just think of Titus. This is a physically difficult job that he's going to be called to do. What were the people of Crete like?

Well, in chapter 1, verse 12, you get an expert's opinion. And you can see it there. Even one of their own prophets has said, Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.

[14 : 50] So how do you like that for a five-star review? And this is not one of their enemies that said this about them. This is one of their own people.

One of their own spiritual leaders. One of their own prophets. But that's the place where Jesus said, I'm going to build my church. Among these people. Out of these people. So, when Jesus was saving people out of Crete, he was saving, what?

Liars. Brutes. Gluttons. He's going to build his church there.

He's going to save people like that. When you think of Crete, you can almost think of the Wild West. That's what I was thinking as I read more and more about this.

This place is not that civilized. It's like the Pirates of the Caribbean. Put right in the middle of the Mediterranean. Listen to how some of the ancient historians wrote about Crete.

[15 : 58] Crete. And just put yourself here. Put yourself in the midst of this. Now you're a Christian in this environment. Or you're Titus. And now you have to, you're working in this environment.

This is what some of the ancient historians wrote about Crete. When it comes to ambushes and piracy, the Cretans are irresistible both by land and sea.

Things have settled down since Rome came to dominate. But it's still the back country. It's still rough. And Cretans have lived like this for generations.

Here's a couple other quotes from Polybius, the ancient historian. He wrote this. It is almost impossible to find personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than in Crete.

So politically, big government system, he said it's really hard to find a more unjust way of living than the people in Crete personally more treacherous.

[17 : 08] And this is what else he says. So much, in fact, do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them that the Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful.

If you're not robbing and getting richer, that's the disgrace. Cicero, the Roman, wrote this. Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans consider highway robbery honorable. We're going to talk about that later. One modern historian summed it up like this. Crete was a failure. Cretan was a failure.

A primitive, pirate-infested, aristocratic ghetto with nothing to recommend it beyond its ability to produce mercenaries.

That was the one thing Crete was good at, was producing men who would leave the island and kill for pay, fight for money. So, in one way, in other words, it's like a little boy's fantasy.

[18 : 27] You want to be a pirate? Well, you come to Crete. You want to be a mercenary? Well, you live on Crete. That's why I said it's like the Wild West or the Pirates of the Caribbean dropped right in the middle of the Mediterranean.

And so what goes along with all of this? What goes along with being a pirate? Being a mercenary? Well, drinking. Paul says an elder can't be given to drunkenness.

And that was a real possibility for most men on the island of Crete. They were drunks. Stealing. I've given you some, but this whole island had a reputation for harboring robbers and pirates.

On Crete, you did whatever you wanted to get money. And so in the middle of that, he says, an elder must not pursue dishonest gain.

We have a pretty refined way of thinking about that, and that's a perfectly good way of thinking about that. Paul easily could have met an elder can't be participating in theft.

[19 : 36] He can't just be a pirate like everyone else. He can't be harboring. He can't just be giving in to this culture of greed where you will do anything, commit any kind of fraud, commit any kind of stealing in order to get money.

That was a real, palpable, cultural problem in Crete. Lying. If you read through Titus, and we've already read chapter one, but if you read through it all, he talks a lot about telling the truth.

God tells the truth. God cannot lie. The God who does not lie is how he says it. He emphasizes that because on Crete, lying was a way of life.

And you know how destructive, and it doesn't take much thought to realize, how destructive a culture of lying is. So we're doing business together, but you're lying about what you're going to do. You're lying about what you're going to produce. You're lying about what you're going to, what your plan is. You're lying and you're cheating. And in that kind of culture, this constant friction, and that's what it was like on Crete.

[20 : 52] People were compulsive liars. It was a way of life. They even looked on it as a form of godliness. Not in our sense of the word godliness, but in their sense of the word of godliness.

On Crete, they had this very strange form of the Greek mythology. You know, Zeus is the great god. Well, they thought that Zeus was a man who was born on Crete, who later became a god.

And that's going to be an important idea that Paul is going to refute and play on through his book because his important truth that we need to bring in is that God became a man.

He appeared. Godliness appeared. Well, in their religion, their god, their chief god, was a man and he became a god. But instead of being embarrassed about all of Zeus' indiscretions, all of Zeus' wildness and all of his lies and seduction and deceit and all the rest, they celebrated it.

So instead of saying, oh, apologizing for it, they actually celebrated it. Zeus was something people aspire to be. So lying, seducing, that was acting like a god.

[22 : 14] that was a good thing. Epimenides, the Cretan prophet that's quoted in verse 12, says, Cretans are always liars.

It was so common that another Roman poet, Ovid, referred to this whole island as lying Crete.

Sounds like something that Donald Trump would come up with. Lying Crete. The other Greeks made up a verb out of the word Crete. If you were to Cretize, it was just a synonym for lying.

So you lie, you're acting like a Cretan. On top of all of that, this is, I hope you're feeling, this is like, this is a bad place.

This is a rough place to spread the gospel. But on top of all of that, spreading throughout the Roman world was what the historians have called the new Roman woman.

[23 : 22] Roman culture was a very traditional, generally speaking, traditional culture for most of its history. Women were praised for their modesty, for their modesty of dress, for their quietness, for their virtue, for their faithfulness to their husbands.

About 60, 70 years before Paul was writing, some of these, the financial laws changed in Rome that gave women more control of their money and more control of their inheritance.

And people looked on it as a good thing, and it generally was. But along with this new power, financial power, a whole bunch of wickedness had come in.

And the virtues had been turned into vices. the same, and so now, adultery becomes more and more common.

Promiscuity becomes more and more common among women. The same Ovid I just quoted, praised adulterous, he praised adulterous wives. And he made fun of husbands who were offended at their wife's behavior.

[24 : 35] So if you're a husband and you're offended with what your wife is doing, he basically called them country bumpkins. They're just a bunch of old-fashioned guys that need to get with the times.

So there you are in Crete with a centuries-long corrupt culture. And now layered on top of it is this idea. And so, suddenly there's a lot of women dressing immodestly and provocatively.

Not all of them, of course, but it became such a big deal. It became such a problem that Augustus Caesar himself made laws against this. And he even exiled his own daughter for immoral behavior. It was such an issue. So here's Crete, a culturally rotten place, a rough place to work, a rough place to build the church. But there's the church.

There's God's people. That's where Jesus is building. It's surrounded with decay where what is evil is praised as good. And what is good is made fun of.

[25 : 46] So men are drunk, women are sleeping around, everyone is lying, cheating, and stealing. And on top of that, you have these Jewish leaders who are, they don't seem to be any better. They themselves are mad for money and seduction.

They say they believe in Jesus, but their godliness has no power. They are detestable. And Paul says they don't do anything good. So here's the church.

It's young. It's unformed in so many ways. It's not ready to stand. Paul spent a little time there, but now he's left and he's left Titus to do the, to straighten things out.

Now, I hope you can take all of that that I just gave you, which is a lot of background knowledge and a lot of stuff maybe you didn't know, and I hope you can see what kind of guy Titus was.

What kind of man he was. Titus was not a coward. Titus was no fool.

[26 : 53] He was courageous. He was confident. He was wise. He was gifted for this job. Paul did not have a lot of people that he could, I think that he could feel comfortable with leaving there in Crete in the condition that it is.

It's funny. The Bible says a lot about Titus, but you'll not find him anywhere in the book of Acts. We know that he traveled with Paul. He was a Greek.

He was heathen born. He was probably from the city of Antioch. He was probably one of the Apostle Paul's converts from that city when he was preaching there.

He didn't grow up a Jew. He didn't grow up knowing the law. He didn't grow up in the church, but he was saved.

And out of this rough beginning that Titus came from, he began to distinguish himself as a person of real character. A person that you could count on.

[27 : 56] A person that you could take into hard places. Thank God that there's men like that that can go into hard places and aren't overwhelmed and overcome with the circumstances and the temptations.

The book of Galatians tells us that when Paul and Barnabas went down to Jerusalem, Paul received a vision and a revelation telling him to go down to Jerusalem.

He was to explain to the leaders there, this is the gospel that I'm preaching. And the question is, is Paul clearly preaching the gospel? And if you read the book of Galatians, you know there's all this tension, real tension, about circumcision.

There's a lot of question marks. There's a lot of fear. There's a lot of just differences of opinion. Now Paul and Barnabas, they were both Jews. And so they're coming down and they want someone to come with them who will be a good representative to the church in Jerusalem.

A Greek. An uncircumcised person. And so they choose Titus. And you remember there's all this controversy and tension.

[29 : 13] People are saying you have to be circumcised. The pressure is up. You know, the pressure cooker is on full. And there goes Titus. He's in the middle of it. He's facing this.

And here's Titus, this Greek convert, getting all kinds of pressure from all these people. And it says in Galatians, yet not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised. There was a lot of pressure to do it.

And Titus said, no, I'm not going to do it. And this is not in his home turf of Antioch. This is in the middle of Jerusalem. I'm not going to do that.

You remember Paul took Timothy. When he took Timothy, he had him circumcised. It was to make things easier. It was to give Timothy a clear hearing among the Jews.

And there's nothing wrong with that. But Titus didn't seem to think that way. He didn't want that. He didn't think he had to. He didn't do it. And so he's right in the middle of Jerusalem and he refuses to budge at all.

[30 : 14] Do you see what kind of man Titus is? He's a man of character. He's a man of confidence. He is a man of conviction. And so Paul started to see that you can put this guy into a tight place and he does a good job.

He really thrives. Some people are like that. Some aren't. Then you remember there was a famine in Judea and Paul was going around collecting money for the church, the church in Judea.

And someone needed to help him with that. Someone needed to help collect the money. Now, Paul at the time was preaching in Ephesus and he had already been to Corinth and but if you've read when you read 1st and 2nd Corinthians you know there's again, this is not an easy relationship.

The church in Corinth and Paul they're not always on the best of terms. There's lots of ups and downs in that situation. Now, in one occasion he had to write a very severe letter to the church in Corinth.

It's going to sting. It's going to be stepping on a lot of people's toes. It's going to hurt. And he needs someone to carry it. Someone that can represent him.

[31 : 36] Someone that can be gracious and winsome. Someone that can be strong. And he chooses Titus. And when it came time to collect money from Corinth he sends Titus.

Titus is a man that can go into a hard situation and navigate it well. So, it should be no surprise that he leaves Titus in Crete to straighten things out.

So, to take this rough unorganized under attack tempted coming from all different directions coming out of this cultural wasteland church and to make it into something beautiful and organized that is going to shine in the middle of Crete in the middle of a dark culture.

And what's going to be the driving power behind all of this? What's going to be Titus' main weapon? It's going to be the lever that he's going to move the church on Crete to transform their lives to draw back in repentance and in faith and in holiness.

Well, it's going to be the grace of God. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. You see what that means?

[33 : 02] Not just civilized nice people. It's appeared to all men. Men like people in Crete. And it teaches us to say no to ungodliness.

So what can transform a corrupt culture into something beautiful? The gospel can. What can transform a corrupt, ugly heart and life into something beautiful?

Well, the gospel can. What can go into unpromising areas and work wonders? Well, the grace of God that brings salvation can. The gospel.

And Titus knows it. He knows it in his own life. He knows it in his own life because he himself had experienced this. He was not a good person. He was a he then.

He was separated from God and yet God called him and saved him and transformed his life. Titus knew that. He knew the power. He had seen it. And Paul is saying now teach that gospel. Teach them what is true of them because of Jesus.

[34 : 03] Teach them what now the kind of life they should live because of what God has done. Now that's what Titus' job is to organize.

We're going to talk about the importance of organization. We're going to talk about the importance of holiness in your own personal life. We're going to talk about how do you live and how do you think about those people on the outside who don't agree and who are so corrupt.

How do you think about them? How do you live there? Paul has instructions for Titus and for us. I've given you a lot of background and I hope it helps you understand the book a little better.

I hope it helps you understand Titus a little better as you read it. But I think, I mean, we haven't got to verse 1. We'll get there in a couple of weeks.

But I think there is a lesson here. For us an encouraging lesson. A lesson that I need to take to heart and a lesson that is really encouraging. And it's this, we can't be afraid to go into hard places.

[35 : 23] Christianity is not just for rural, conservative America. America. It's for places like Crete.

And we can go all around the world and say, well, this place is like Crete and that's places like Crete. And that's true. And you can think of those examples. But I thought of our inner cities of Chicago and of Philadelphia.

for Detroit and Los Angeles and for Atlanta. It's for culturally difficult places.

Culturally corrupt places. So can the gospel thrive in a place where drinking and stealing and murder and violence and promiscuity are the order of the day?

You bet it can. You bet it can. It can thrive. And more than that, it can transform little by little, heart by heart, what is so ugly and what is so rotten into something that is beautiful.

[36 : 43] And so we need to pray for Paul's and we need to pray for Titus's who aren't afraid to go into hard places, who have a confidence when they look at those places that doesn't say, you know what, that can't happen.

I don't see that happening. That's too hard. They're too far gone. We need people who are like Titus, confident and wise who can be in a hard place and not be overwhelmed and know how to navigate those waters who are courageous and firm.

Titus stayed there and he built in a hard place. And we need that kind of forward thinking, confidence, faith in God that doesn't say it's not possible, the deck is stacked against us, there's just no way.

Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. We saw this a couple weeks ago. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God and the salvation.

Can a corrupt culture stand against the power of God? No. So we need that kind of confidence. So what about Detroit?

[37 : 54] What about Philadelphia? What about Camden, New Jersey and Los Angeles? Well, we need gospel workers, gospel missions, gospel churches, churches, not just in the tame suburbs.

Gospel needs to go there too, but into places where law and order are not such a given. We need churches in Gary and in East Chicago, Chicago.

And we need men, men like Titus. Where do they come from? Well, they come from the Lord, the Father of the Harvest, the Lord of the Harvest, to raise up workers to go into that harvest field.

world. So when you think of Crete, you shouldn't just be thinking about that island in the Mediterranean. We have our own Cretes an hour and a half from here.

An hour and a half south in Indianapolis and parts of Indianapolis in poor, run-down, culturally broken and hurting places. We need to pray that men would go.

[39 : 14] We need to pray for men that have that kind of vision, that kind of confidence to do this.

Men with a sense of adventure. I think we're so afraid of having people with a sense of adventure or a sense of romance that we say, no, it's anything but that.

I mean this in a godly sense. A sense of, this is going to be hard, this is going to be a challenge, there's going to be some danger, but I'm going to go. sense of courage and confidence.

An army bold whose battle cry is love. So, I just think, you young men, I won't name names, but I'll look at you, some of you young men, start thinking that way.

There's no work like the gospel work. I know we make a big deal, and rightfully so, that all of our callings are good, but can I just step back from that and just say for a second, it's a good thing to be a missionary.

It's a good thing to be a pastor. It's a good thing to be able to go into those areas. Somewhat wild, not tame, the wild west, the pirates of the Caribbean of our day, and go in there for Jesus.

[40 : 41] And you don't just go for Jesus, you go with Jesus. He said, I'm going to be with you. Just think, I'm going to do this with him and for him.

He says, I'll be with you to the very end of the age, and so we should have great confidence as we look forward, as we look out into the world.

Let's pray. Oh, our great God, our Lord Jesus Christ, you are worthy, you are worthy of praise from every heart.

You are worthy of praise from every nation and people and tribe and tongue. You are worthy of praise from every city and every street and every house. And you've told us to go.

And going isn't always going into nice places. it isn't always going into civilized places. It's going into hard places.

[41 : 48] So please give us that kind of courage that would see you sending us and seeing you there with us. love us. And I pray as we meet maybe people even in our own lives that almost fit the description of these Cretans.

And humanly speaking, we say they have no hope. Pray that you would give us faith to begin praying for their salvation, faith to begin speaking to them, faith to love them.

Lord, make us more and more like Titus, who could live in a hard spot, who could take on a challenge, who knew how to navigate those difficult waters.

Please make us more like that. Make us more like Jesus, the ultimate missionary, filled with love, going into a hard, uncivilized place, Lord, help us to honor you in our lives, help us to honor you with our faith.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.