

To Titus

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[0 : 00] All right, well this morning we are turning the page to a new book of the Bible. We just finished going through the book of 1 Timothy this past fall, and now we are turning the page to the book of Titus.

Just like Paul wrote a letter to Timothy, he also wrote a letter to a man named Titus. And if we just for a moment think of these two letters side by side, there's some similarities between them, but there are also some differences.

These two letters both have a similar feel to them. This letter to Titus is full of instruction to Titus about how to put things in order in the churches where Titus has been stationed.

There's also warning about false teachers and about controversies and arguments and division, similar to the letter that Paul sent to Timothy.

There's instructions about elders and how various people ought to relate to each other in the church. But there's also some major differences in this letter.

[1 : 05] Paul says very little about money or wealth or social status. It seems in Titus' area, laziness and lust and a lack of self-control are the big problems.

Everybody seems to be really focused just on their own pleasures at all costs. And in this letter to Titus, Paul spends quite a bit of the letter talking about the gospel and reminding them of what is this good news of what God has done according to his love and his grace and his kindness for us. So we're going to start this morning just by looking at the first four verses of this letter and do a little bit of an introduction, and then we'll work our way towards the Lord's table.

Let me read the first four verses for you. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now, at his appointed season, he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.

To Titus, my true son in our common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

[2 : 43] So this letter begins in a manner very similar to Paul's other letters. Paul begins by introducing himself and stating who he is in the first three verses, and then he states who he's writing to in verse 4, and he gives that customary blessing or greeting also in verse 4.

Let's begin by talking about Titus. Who is Titus? Titus. Most of us know who Paul is, but who is this guy named Titus, and where is he?

What's the background to this letter? Well, we don't know exactly where Titus is from, but we do know that he was a Greek. We know that from the book of Galatians.

Somewhere along the way, Titus became a follower of Jesus, a believer, and he ended up being one of Paul's trusted co-workers and partners in the ministry.

And we first see Titus at Paul's side at the end of Paul's first missionary journey, when Paul goes to Jerusalem to speak to the Jerusalem Council on matters of circumcision.

[3 : 57] Titus is there with him at that meeting. We read about that in Galatians chapter 2. Then, as Paul embarks on his second missionary journey, one of the places that he gets to is a city called Corinth, which is on the Grecian peninsula.

I don't have a laser pointer, but you can see it in the top left corner in Icaa there. And we read in the book of Acts, chapter 18, about how the church at Corinth was established.

Paul stays there for a year and a half, and then he moves on in his travels. But then sometime later, after the church had been established at Corinth, Paul sends Titus to the church there in Corinth, and Titus seems to serve there in the church as an apostolic delegate, much in the same way that

Timothy did in Ephesus.

And we read about how Titus goes back and forth between the church there in Corinth and Paul, wherever he is, a couple times. We learn all this from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

So Titus has a bit of a history of working with Paul, even before we get to this letter. Then we fast forward, and Paul does a third missionary journey.

[5 : 17] And if you know the story from the book of Acts, this journey ends with him going back to Jerusalem, preaching, getting imprisoned, and then later being shipped all the way off to Rome.

And it's generally thought that Paul was released from his house arrest in Rome in 62 AD, after which he continued doing ministry for a few years before he was martyred.

So it's in that time period, that time after he was released, but before he was martyred, that seems to be the likely time that this letter to Titus was written.

And we discover in this letter that Titus has been given a new assignment. In verse 5, it says, The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

So for Titus, Corinth is history. His new assignment from Paul is to see that these already established churches on the island of Crete come to have proper leadership and order.

[6 : 32] Crete is a big island, and it's just southeast of Greece. This was the island that Paul stopped at briefly before he was shipwrecked on the way to Rome.

And this island of Crete is the location of Titus, as Paul writes this letter. Now this island has quite the history to it. It was the home of the ancient Minoan civilization.

It's thought to be, by some, the place where the Philistines originated from. Back in the days of the Greek Empire, there were about 40 cities on this island. And probably most of them were along the coast, all around the edges, because I don't think you can really see it on the screen, but it's quite a mountainous island.

By the days of the Roman Empire, there were at least 20 cities that we know of on the island through archaeology studies. And there was quite a religious mix on this island.

There's lots of evidence of the worship of Greek gods. There are some Roman religions that were present, some Egyptian religions. And we know from the Bible that there was an established Jewish presence in Crete.

[7 : 49] Some of the Jews that were present on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached his sermon, were from Crete. And there's also mention in this letter of the circumcision group and quarrels about the Jewish law.

It's quite possible that the church on Crete first got its start from some of those Jews who had gone to Jerusalem for Pentecost, heard Peter preaching the good news of Jesus that day, and then went back home to Crete and shared the news with other people in their hometown or home cities on the island.

Whatever the case, there are now churches there. There are now followers of Jesus in many towns and cities on the island. And this is why Paul has assigned Titus to be there.

We notice in verse 5 that he not only serves the congregation in one city, but that he is functioning in the whole region.

His job is to appoint elders in every town. So we get the sense that the gospel has really spread by this time to many of these cities and towns on the island of Crete.

[9 : 01] And on top of all this, we discover at the end of this letter, if we look ahead to chapter 3, verse 12, that Titus' assignment here is temporary. Chapter 3, verse 12, Paul says, As soon as I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there.

So Titus is not the pastor of one of the churches there. He's a co-worker of Paul. He's an apostolic delegate who's assigned here to put things in order for the churches on Crete until he is relieved in the near future by someone else.

Finally, notice how Paul refers to Titus in his salutation in verse 4. To Titus, my true son in our common faith.

These are really warm words. Not just a friend, not just a co-worker or partner, but son. Just like Timothy has been as a son to Paul, we get the sense that Titus is like family with Paul.

They've worked together, they've traveled together, there's high trust between them, but of course this closeness of family runs even deeper than that. Paul says, My true son in our common faith.

[10:18] It's because they share in the same faith in Jesus. And through the Spirit, are members together of the family of God. Let's now go back up to what we skipped over in the first three verses and just talk a little bit about Paul.

Paul introduces himself as two things here. First, a servant of God. And second, as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

And we've talked about this many times before, but we'll just run it over one more time in case you're new or you miss some of those Sundays. The apostles were men specially chosen by Jesus himself to speak on Jesus' behalf the very words of God to the people.

They were tasked with preaching, much like the prophets of old. They were tasked with bearing witness to what they had seen and heard of Jesus Christ when he was here on earth.

Although Paul is a bit of an exception to that if you know his story. And they were tasked with spreading that message, that good news in Jerusalem and from there outward all over the world.

[11:35] And they bore a special authority from Jesus to do this work. Christ spoke through them, which is why we count their words, like in this letter, as the very words of God.

So Paul is reminding Titus of his role, his authoritative role from Jesus. These aren't just the words of Paul.

They're the words of Christ through me because I am his apostle. And here in this introduction, Paul actually goes on a fair bit about what his role is as an apostle.

Let's look at some of the things that Paul says here for a moment. He says, An apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness in the hope of eternal life.

Now, depending on your translation, there may be a little bit of a difference there, but the gist of this seems to be that Paul's purpose as an apostle is to further the faith of God's people.

[12:44] It's that they would go deeper in their knowledge of the truth, which will result in them being more godly, more fully devoted to God.

And this is his work as an apostle wherever he goes. This is his aim. Paul speaks on behalf of Jesus, or in this case, writes on behalf of Jesus, and it's for the benefit of God's people that they will come to know the truth, how they're to worship God, how they're to be devoted to God, and for those who don't already believe in him, that they would believe in him, that they would come to have that faith.

And Paul says, it's not only about godliness, they kind of chopped the verse off before it gets to the end of the thought here.

It's not only about being devoted to God, but it's in the hope of eternal life. The sure hope of everlasting life is what this is all about for Paul.

It's why he has been sent by Jesus as an apostle to speak and to write. It's so that people can believe and so that they can know the truth that leads them to receiving God's amazing gift of everlasting life.

[14:08] Because that's what Jesus promised time and time again as he walked the earth. That was his message, that those who believe will be raised from the dead and will receive eternal life.

At this point, Paul goes on a bit of a rabbit trail and he just gets talking about this promise of eternal life. And when God made this promise, Paul says that God, who does not lie, promised this before the beginning of time.

First, we notice the way that Paul describes God here. Quite literally, in the original, it's the unlying God. The unlying God. Which means that God always tells the truth.

He never lies. Think about the false gods of Greek mythology. If you ever learned about those stories as a kid in school, they were known to lie at times, to be deceptive, to be manipulative, to try to further their own little ends.

But God, the creator, Yahweh, is not like that, says Paul. He never lies. He is the unlying God.

[15:27] Which means that his promises give us sure hope. Not the flimsy, hope so kind of hope. Next, we notice when God made this promise.

And again, there's some variance in the translations here, but quite literally, which the unlying God promised before the times of eternity. And all of the translations seem to recognize that this is an idiom of sorts, but there's a couple different thoughts on how to translate it.

Some say that he promised before long ages ago, which God promised long ages ago, possibly referring to God speaking through his prophets in the Old Testament days.

But the majority of translations seem to understand this idiom to refer to that period of time before God created the heavens and the earth. And so, before time began, before the beginning of time, not that time is anything of itself or had a beginning of its own, but before time as in the history here on earth, the times of man, before all that, before we were even created, before the earth was made, God made the promise of everlasting life for his chosen people.

His elect, as Paul calls them in verse 1. So this promise of eternal life was made long, long, long ago before the world was made.

[17 : 02] God knew exactly what he was going to do. He knew what would happen on the earth. He knew how things would unfold and back then he made the promise. But, Paul says, it's just now that God has brought all of this to light.

His great plan to save us, to give us this eternal life. Now, in the time of Paul's writing, in the days of Jesus and the apostles, according to God's own appointed time, he has brought it to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God, says Paul.

So Paul knows exactly what he's doing as an apostle. He knows that he has been tasked with declaring the promise of eternal life, the promise that God made before the world began.

A promise that God is now revealing through Christ and through his apostles so that God's elect, God's chosen people, might hear and believe and receive this wonderful gift of eternal life.

Let's talk for just a minute about that word elect in verse 1. This is the way that Christ refers to the people of God as the elect.

[18 : 32] It means those who are selected or chosen and it is a word that sometimes makes people uncomfortable. There's a lot of debate around this idea and how and when and who is chosen.

What does it mean to be chosen by God and we're not going to get into all that this morning but the word chosen, the idea of being chosen is right here in the words of God.

That's how Jesus refers to the people of God. They are God's elect. He has chosen them and this word is interesting.

Maybe one of the reasons for it is because it partly can refer to people who have not even yet come to believe. think about Paul's commissioning as an apostle.

Before he had gone out and done any preaching there were people that God knew in advance would receive the message and be saved.

[19 : 34] God's God's choosing and so for Paul this choosing of God it wasn't a disincentive to preach the gospel.

It wasn't as though he said well God's chosen we'll just let it happen then. No it was the opposite.

There are people out there whom God has chosen to be his own but how can they have faith in God and believe in his son unless they hear this good news about Jesus.

I gotta get out there I gotta proclaim this message as we heard in Sunday school this morning. I'm obligated to get to those people in Rome and preach the good news to them. This was Paul's role to play in God's elect coming to faith in him.

We shouldn't shy away from this idea that God has chosen his people even before they hear the message of the gospel. He chose Abraham.

he chose Isaac. He chose Jacob in the Old Testament. He chose specially the nation of Israel to be his special people and not the other nations. But in the nation of Israel he chose the tribe of Levi to do that special work at the temple and the priesthood.

[20 : 50] And here we read that those who have come to faith in Jesus through Paul's preaching are the chosen, the elect of God. And so if you are here this morning and you truly have faith in Jesus then this is true of you as well.

You were chosen by God. This should be precious to us. Do we deserve it? No.

We've all sinned. We've all fall short of God's glory. But God's choosing of us even before we had heard the gospel speaks of his great love for us.

It tells us that he wanted us. He desired us. A relationship with us for us to be his people despite our sin, despite the bad things that he knew we would do.

God's choosing speaks of his unconditional love. love. So this is how Paul starts his letter to Titus here on the island of Crete. He reminds Titus of who he is, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and that he does in fact carry spiritual authority, and yet he speaks to Titus affectionately as his true son because they share the same faith in Jesus.

[22 : 13] He prays a blessing of God's grace and peace upon Titus, and already we've seen that Paul is ready to just declare the good news of Jesus, even in this introduction.

We're going to take time now to come to the Lord's table once again. We do this every month, and it's a remembrance of Jesus.

It's a remembrance of the gospel. There are two elements on this table. There is the bread, and there is what we call the cup.

Actually, we've got lots of little cups, but what's in them is grape juice. Both of these are symbols that Jesus gave meaning to on the night that he was betrayed, on the night before his death.

Jesus sat around the table with his twelve disciples that night, and he took bread, he gave thanks, and then he broke it, and he passed it out to his disciples around the table.

[23 : 21] He said, take, eat, this is my body, which is for you. And then later he took a cup, and it had the fruit of the vine in it, or in some of the vernacular of that day, the blood of the grape, and he passed that cup around the table as well, and urged his disciples to drink from it.

He said, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus was, of course, speaking about his death the next day, and he was essentially saying to his followers, I'm about to die, but my death, my body being broken, my blood being poured out tomorrow is for your benefit.

It's for you, for the forgiveness of your sins, for a new arrangement between you and God. They didn't fully realize at that moment the full meaning of this.

All along they'd been hearing Jesus talk about all these wonderful things, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, salvation, which they were to be a part of, eternal life, as we heard as Titus mentions here, or Paul mentions here to Titus, eternal life that they would receive, resurrection from the dead after they die, standing before God in the judgment, not guilty, and all of these things Jesus was saying that they could receive just by faith, by believing.

They didn't see, however, that this amazing free gift of God to people had a cost. It would come at the cost of Jesus' life to make all these good promises a reality.

[25 : 27] Jesus would have to suffer and to die for them, for us. And Jesus did that on the cross 2,000 years ago.

Three days later, he rose from the dead. And this truth, this knowledge, is what Paul is talking about here in his letter to Titus.

This is the news, this is the gospel that was entrusted to him, that's been, he's been commanded by God to preach, this truth that believing gives us that sure hope of eternal life.

Have you put your faith in Jesus? Do you believe in him? The one that God sent from heaven to save us?

What does it mean to put your faith in him? It just simply means to believe, to take seriously as truth the things that Jesus said. The things that are revealed about who Jesus is, that yes, he is the Son of God.

[26 : 45] He is the Messiah. He is the Savior provided. He is the way to God. Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ?

Christ. If you haven't done this yet, I want to urge you to do it today. This is the most important decision that anyone can make in their lives.

I urge you, if you haven't done it, confess your sins to him today. Ask for his forgiveness. Find that sure hope, that offer that he gives us freely of eternal life.

You can even do this now, in these next minutes, as we take time to quietly pray and reflect. Feel free to close your eyes and just to be with God in these next moments.

And for those of us who believe what we do here is we just take a moment to pray quietly, to think over what Jesus has done for us, confess our sins to the Lord, and to be reminded of his love before we partake of the table.

[27 : 57] After a few minutes of that, we'll have our elders come forward, and I think that's just one. That's just Charles today. Maybe Brian will come and help as well.

And they'll serve the bread and the cup, and if you truly believe in Jesus, whether for many years or whether it's for the first time today, then join with us and partake with us of the bread and the cup.

We'll wait till everybody has been served, and then we'll eat and drink all together in unison after I pray and give thanks. pour us irenei, let's look past our sceme ■ earnest to bereme the Kenneth we'll sit on af.

We'll Ariana we'll see you next time and before you Thank you.

Thank you.

[30 : 15] Thank you.

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[32 : 45] Thank you.

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Thank you.

[35 : 15] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.