

# A Gospel-Rich Beginning

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Date: 22 January 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] This particular greeting is somewhat unique in that it is one of the longest of Paul's introductions to any of his letters. Most of his letters include a brief opening with his name and the name of the recipients.

Paul here with Titus, though, tips his hand a little bit. He tips his hand in these verses to reveal the main point of his letter, which is that the gospel produces godliness and that structures must be implemented in the churches on Crete that would preserve God's truth.

So let's refresh ourselves from last week. What is it that is the theme of the book of Titus? I found this helpful. There was no reason to try to improve on it. So from your ESV study Bibles, you'll see this as listed as the main theme.

The theme of Titus is the inseparable link between faith and practice. Between belief and behavior. And this truth is the basis for its critique of false teaching, as well as its instruction in Christian living and the qualifications for church leaders.

And when we start off right here at the beginning of the letter, Paul tips his hand a little bit and he gives us an idea, almost even a synopsis of what we can expect as we continue to study further.

[ 1 : 22 ] He states his call to begin. And in stating his call, Paul not only provides the credentials for his authority, but he connects the letter as a means by which God is accomplishing his purposes in the churches on Crete.

I know that was a mouthful, so let me just say that again. Why is it that Paul opens up by telling them he's a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ? Part of it does have to do with credentials.

There was some tendency in false teachers to diminish that in Paul's ministry. And it's not unusual for him to have that purpose at the beginning of his letters, establishing who he is and what his authority is.

But it's not just that here. There is this idea where Paul is saying, this is who I am. This is what God has called me to be.

Therefore, everything that's coming behind this, everything that I'm writing to you is God's means of building you up as his people. He's just using me as his instrument to do so.

[ 2 : 31 ] That's an important fact as we begin to get through this. He says he's a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ. His service to God is to bring the elect to faith, understanding, and godly living.

His apostleship for Jesus is to proclaim the Christian hope, which is God's eternal plan in salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

That's what he means by this. And he plainly spells it out to us so that we know what follows here is not actually coming from Paul. That's important, isn't it? Because how do we distinguish sometimes when we come to these New Testament letters, and then maybe we look at some of the extra biblical letters and books, maybe the early church fathers, and how do we distinguish that this particular book belongs in our Bible, and this particular book, it may be helpful, but it doesn't actually belong in our Bible.

And some of that comes back to how the apostles addressed it themselves. Paul knew as he wrote this letter that this was not just coming from him. This was coming from God.

This was a means by which God was building up his people. And so the content of Titus serves the very purpose for which God had saved Paul and called Paul into the ministry.

[ 3 : 50 ] And I think that's helpful for us to note as we start. The beginning here is, as we just read, I'm sure you picked up on it, it is rich in gospel theology.

Paul's testimony here serves as a helpful model to us as to how we should even think of and evaluate our own Christian lives. And my aim this morning is to do two things.

Using Paul's greeting, I want to encourage you through the hope that we have in Jesus, because that is really what this greeting is about. It's about Jesus, and it's about the gospel, and we should take great encouragement in the words that Paul says.

I want to encourage you about that. But I also want to challenge you, as we look at Paul's life as a model for Christian living, to examine ourselves and ask, is the gospel impacting my life in the way that I write, in the way that I talk, in the way that I think about others, in the way that I carry on in my life?

Is the gospel impacting my life in the same way that it impacted Paul's life? And if it isn't, why isn't it? Because it's not a failure in the gospel. It's not that the gospel was more meaningful for the apostles than it is for us.

[ 5 : 12 ] So there must be something there. What is it that is preventing me from actually following the pattern that Paul sets forth as he faithfully followed Christ? So let's dig into this greeting together.

The first thing I want to note is Paul's gospel purpose. Paul's gospel purpose. Look with me again at verse one. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

So very clearly, right off the bat, the source for Paul's authority was not a religious enterprise. It was not a denominational council of Christian leaders.

From the opening line, he asserts that his authority came from being a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. And now one of the reasons we can discern that this was a public letter is that Titus didn't need to know that.

Titus already knew that. He had, for many years, traveled with the apostle Paul. He was well aware of Paul's apostleship. He was well aware of Paul's calling. He knew Paul's testimony as well as anybody else would have known Paul's testimony.

[ 6 : 22 ] He knew he was a servant of God. There would have been no reason for Paul to write a letter to Titus, intending only for Titus to read it and to give this type of address at the beginning. Clearly, Paul understood this is not just for Titus.

It's a personal letter, but it is not a private letter. And given the tendency that the opponents of Paul had to arouse suspicion about his credentials, it makes sense that Paul would state his authority at the beginning of a letter he intended to be a public letter.

And just a simple note like that is helpful to us. It's also necessary to see Paul didn't view his authority arrogantly. He didn't think of this as a means to lord over people.

That's not why he's writing them a letter. It's not like Paul got word that, Hey, Paul, you know, there's these churches in Crete. They're not doing things the way you do them.

And we think you should probably say something. Because typically, we have that type of personality sometimes, don't we? Especially in the church world, we can be bad about this, where we hear about this Christian over here or this church over here, and we think they're not doing things the way that we should.

[ 7 : 38 ] We should be the spiritual watchdogs for the churches in our town. And we should let them know that they're wrong. That's not what Paul's doing here. He's not getting word that the churches on Crete are doing something, and he just needs to correct it because he needs all these churches to look like him and do things the way that he does it, as far as just his personality and preferences are concerned.

No. He described his calling in terms of service to God. I'm writing this to you because God has instructed me for this purpose.

I serve him, not myself. I'm not trying to tell you what to do. I'm trying to instruct you in what God desires for you to do. He uses the Greek word for slave here.

We translate it servant or bond servant often in modern English translations because we're so afraid of the word slave. It has such a negative connotation in the history of our nation that we're afraid to use it in any sense.

But that's exactly the word that Paul uses here. He says, I am a slave of God. Doulos. Doulos reminds us that he had completely, willingly given his whole self, all of his life, all of his will, all of his desires, all of his identity, all of his freedoms.

[ 8 : 58 ] He had surrendered it all to serve the Lord God. The theme of Titus, of course, is that the gospel of Jesus radically transforms those who believe and follow him.

And is there any greater example in the New Testament of this type of transformation than the man who was once known as Saul of Tarsus? You can read about it in the book of Acts.

Paul had always considered himself a servant of God. But prior to trusting Christ, the service he offered to God had the purpose of self-righteousness.

He was trying to establish his own status before God, trying to earn his way into God's favor, and it made him an enemy of God. He was an enemy of Christ, going throughout the churches, dragging people out in their worship services, persecuting the church, consenting to the murder of leaders within the church as we see him consenting to the martyrdom of Stephen.

That's who Paul was. But that man is now writing to these churches on Crete, and he's saying, no, I'm not the enemy of Christ. I am now the servant of Christ. I am an apostle, a messenger sent by Christ.

[10:16] Just in the very fact of that identification, we see that something dramatic and transformative has happened in this man's life. He was a servant of God.

He wasn't writing from a sense of entitlement. He was writing from a sense of responsibility to fulfill the commission that had been given to him from the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what was the purpose of this calling? Look again at verse 1. Why did Jesus choose Paul? What was really the purpose of this? What was the plan that God had for Paul's life? Well, Paul tells us here that God had saved him, and Jesus had commissioned him, quote, for the sake of God's elect.

Those God has graciously chosen to redeem as his people. And there's three ways here that Paul identifies that his calling was working itself out in relation to God's elect, to God's church, to those who believe in Christ.

[11:40] First way is this. It was for the sake of their faith. For the sake of their faith. Look at it again. For the sake of the faith of God's elect.

Now, my intention is not to get into the complexities of the biblical doctrine of election, and I'm sure many of you will be appreciative of that. But this verse actually can be very helpful for us, especially those of us who struggle to reconcile what seems to be, in the Scripture, a contradiction between the doctrine of God's sovereign election and Jesus' command of evangelization, of preaching the gospel to the world around us.

And what I want to point out to you here, and for our purposes this morning, is this, that Paul didn't view his ministry as paradoxical to God's sovereignty. He viewed it as completely consistent with it. He knew that the Spirit's mysterious work in salvation was God's business. That was in his business to determine who is elect and who is not elect. His responsibility was to preach the gospel to all people, trusting that God would accomplish his saving purposes as the gospel went forth.

Isn't that what Jesus had in mind in the Great Commission? He told the apostles, I have all authority, therefore go, make disciples, preach the gospel, teach them what I've commanded you, and then remember he followed it up with, and lo, I am with you always.

[13:15] In other words, as you go, I'm going, and as you preach the gospel with your words, my spirit is gonna stir the hearts of the people that you speak to. This is the means by which God does his saving work.

Paul understood that. He said, God has called me. He's commissioned me so that people will be saved for the elect's sake. Tim Chester said, Paul knew there were people out there whom God had chosen to make alive.

All they needed was someone to preach the gospel, and he could be that person. If he preached, then those whom God had chosen would put their faith in Christ. It might be a long process, but God would save his elect.

All Paul needed to do was preach the gospel. See, God's sovereignty and salvation does not negate the Christian's responsibility of evangelism.

It actually does the opposite. It empowers those efforts. It tells us that our evangelization of our families and of our communities and of the world does not rest ultimately on our ability to phrase things in just the right way or to have just the right personality.

[14:30] That burden doesn't rest with us. God says, go, preach the gospel, and he's gonna accomplish his work as he sees fit to accomplish his work. And as Charles Spurgeon said, the same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay.

And there's gonna be times when we preach the gospel where God's purpose is a purpose of judgment, where he hardens the clay of someone's heart. And there's gonna be a lot of times where we preach the gospel and the gospel melts the ice of people's hearts.

That's not because we're good at sharing the gospel. It's because God is a faithful God. And as we go, he goes. It is through the sharing of the gospel that God draws sinners to himself.

And like Paul, our call from Christ is to joyfully and faithfully spread the good news. He says, I'm a servant of God.

I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ. And the first thing God intends for me to do, the reason he's done this in my life, is for the sake of the faith of God's elect so that people will be saved.

[ 15 : 35 ] But then there's a second thing here. It's also their knowledge of the truth, their knowledge of the truth. Look again at verse one. Paul, a servant for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth.

So if the faith of God's elect reflects the responsibility of evangelism, the knowledge of the truth might be understood as the ongoing work of discipling.

That was also a part of Jesus' great commission, wasn't it? It was go, make disciples of all nations by baptizing them, preaching the gospel, and teaching them, training them in the truth.

Paul saw his calling as one that helped mature believers in the truth. And his emphasis on sound doctrine as we go through this letter indicates that discipling was a vital ministry, not only of Paul, but he intended it to be a vital ministry within the church.

And we do well to note that. But I don't think that's what he means primarily in this verse. I think those things are true.

[ 16 : 51 ] But Paul especially has in mind in this moment the full knowledge of the gospel. The full knowledge of the gospel. Bill Mount says this.

He's a Greek scholar. He says, Truth is a technical term in the pastoral epistles for the gospel, emphasizing the need to understand the content of the preached message.

When Paul says, My purpose is for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. He means their full knowledge of the gospel.

Why would he say this? Because there's always a temptation to water down the gospel in an effort to produce as many converts as we possibly can.

But Paul understood that true faith was only possible with a complete understanding of the gospel of Jesus. Not a complete understanding of the Bible.

[ 17 : 57 ] Not a complete understanding of all the different theologies and systematics and what's going to happen at the end and what does this mean and all of that kind of stuff. Not that. But for a person to be saved, they need to actually know the fullness of the gospel.

And when we get our eyes set on winning as many people as we can, there will always be a temptation for us to cheapen the gospel message, to shorten the gospel message in order to try to persuade people to believe.

But that's not true faith. Churches do that this way. They emphasize Christ. They emphasize his love. They don't really deal much with sin.

If you don't deal with sin, if you don't deal with God's wrath, you're not preaching the full gospel. I think what Paul intends primarily, I think the discipling part is there. I think that's clear in the letter.

But I think primarily what Paul is saying here is that God has called me to preach the gospel for the sake of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, their full knowledge of the person work of Jesus Christ, which is reflected in Paul's letters as we read through.

[ 19 : 06 ] There's a reason the apostles return to the fundamental truths of the gospel over and over. It's because it's tempting to think that the gospel is only helpful at the moment of conversion.

Sometimes we think, I know that. I don't have to keep thinking about that. But then you come to your New Testament and your Bible reading plan and you'll find that the apostles, they never shut up about it, did they?

They just kept talking about Jesus. They just kept talking about the gospel. Why? Because there will never be a day in your life that you don't need to at least preach to yourself the truth of the gospel.

It's through daily reflection on Jesus that the Holy Spirit shapes us, that he fashions us in the likeness of Christ. And if the end result of faith in Christ and knowledge of the truth is godly living as we'll see in just a moment, doesn't it make sense that every day we think on Christ, we think about

Christ, we think about his gospel, because that seems to be the way that the Holy Spirit comes in and he begins to shape our lives to be like Christ.

Paul's call and our call is to preach the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So help us God, right? Well, what's his purpose?

[ 20 : 27 ] It's the forsake of the faith of God's elect, it's their knowledge of the truth and then it's their godliness. Look again at the verse. For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness.

It's really complicated, isn't it? It lays it right out for us. Well, what is godliness? Godliness is the total commitment of one's life to God and it emphasizes the practical outworking of one's faith. I don't remember which letter it was, it might have been to the Philippians. Paul said, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Do you remember that? That doesn't mean figure out a way to be saved.

It means the salvation that God has put in you, the gospel that God has transformed inside of you. Let it work itself out in the way that you believe, in the way that you live, in the way that you talk, and in the things that you do.

Accords with, here in this verse, it means that godliness is not exclusive from faith and knowledge, but instead it is the inevitable result that they bring about.

[ 21 : 41 ] In other words, faith and knowledge and godliness are not three options and you choose kind of independently which one you want to focus on. Oh, they all three, they work together.

They make us like Christ. And again, this is the main point of the whole letter. Paul's tipping his hand here. He saw it as a fulfillment of his call to instruct godly behavior that accords with one who truly belongs to Christ.

It just makes sense, doesn't it? If we belong to Christ, wouldn't that affect the way we live? And Paul opens up, he says it just makes sense. As you believe the gospel and know the truth, things are going to change in your life.

They're going to change. You're going to look at the word different. Your obedience is going to be different. It's going to come with a different spirit. Of course, he's going to flesh that out. Maybe we summarize this point this way.

Paul says, God has called me. Jesus has commissioned me so that his chosen will be saved so that they'll know the fullness of the gospel and display godliness in the way that they live.

[ 22 : 51 ] And what I'm writing to you in this letter, Titus and Cretans, is the fulfillment of my responsibility. as God's servant. This is what God called me to do and I'm doing it.

And that's how you should receive this letter. Not as me lording over your life, but as a message from God and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And if that's how Paul intended the Cretans to understand it, that's the way we need to understand this letter as we work our way through it as well.

So we see Paul's purpose. That was the longest part. Now we'll see Paul's hope. His gospel hope. Look at verse 2. In hope of eternal life, which God who never lies promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God, our Savior.

Well, verse 1 shows the purpose of Paul's letter. Verses 2 and 3 revealed the spirit with which he wrote it. He did write with urgency.

We talked about that last week, but his tone was not worrisome. You know, when I get urgent or stressed out, the tone with which I speak to Julie and the girls is not typically hopeful.

[ 24 : 09 ] It's typically harsh and worrisome and fretful. If we don't get going on these things, it's not going to happen the right way and things are going to fall apart. That's not the sense that Paul has here.

He is writing with urgency because all of this is important, but the spirit with which he's writing is actually very hopeful. His eyes are set on eternity as he writes this letter.

And it is through the lens of Christian hope that we are to understand the message. So let's consider it. Verse 2. He says, hope of eternal life.

And can I remind you that in the Bible, hope is not a wish. Hope is a confident anticipation. By faith, we believe God is going to do what God said he'd do.

That's what biblical hope is. It's not, I'm clinging to this as best I can and hopefully it all works out. That's not biblical hope.

[ 25 : 12 ] Biblical hope is God has said this, I believe this, and I am awaiting with confident anticipation the fulfillment of all that God has said. When Paul is writing this, he doesn't mean to indicate a cautious optimism.

No, he's absolutely convinced that believers by faith receive eternal life. And that comes through Jesus Christ alone because Jesus is our Lord and Jesus is our Savior.

But hope with Christ reminds us of our hopelessness without Christ. So let's take a moment and just rehearse this truth of the gospel.

What is this hope that Paul speaks of? Kids are learning this on Thursday nights. Maybe kids, you can help me out here. The Bible says that God created us to reflect his image and to bring him what?

Glory. That's our purpose. The world tells you you have no purpose. It will tell you that you're here by chance. What you do with your life is really up to you.

[ 26 : 27 ] So you live it the way that you want to live it? You live your truth because your purpose is whatever purpose you want it to be. There's no one else indicating why you're here or why you should be here or why you should do any one thing.

That's what the world tells us. That's not what the Bible tells us. The Bible says we actually have a purpose. That God created us for the purpose of his glory. Kids, what does the Bible say?

How can we glorify God? God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. God. By loving him and obeying him.

Wasn't that Adam and Eve's purpose in the garden? Of course, God gave them responsibilities. We understand that. They were to be fruitful and multiply, but the ultimate purpose of all of that was God's glory. And they would display God's glory and they would give him glory by loving him and their love for him would ultimately be shown in their obedience to him.

And God comes down and he says, you can have whatever you want in the garden, but don't eat of this tree. Now, everything God made was good. There wasn't poison in the tree. It wasn't a bad tree.

[ 27 : 33 ] It was just God said, don't eat of it. And it's God's prerogative as creator to tell us what he likes and what he doesn't like, what he wants us to do and what he doesn't want us to do. And for Adam and Eve, it was don't eat of this tree, but they did it anyways, didn't they?

And the problem is that every one of us has done the same thing. We haven't eaten of a forbidden tree, but we've fallen short of God's glory by sinning against him, rebelling against him.

And every one of us are guilty. That's Romans 3. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. What's the glory? Loving and obeying him. How do we fall short?

We sin against him. We disobey him, indicating that we love us more than we love him. Well, then the Bible also reveals to us that God is holy.

He can't tolerate sin. He can't have communion with sinners. Therefore, he must judge our sins. And what does sin bring, kids?

[ 28 : 36 ] Sin brings death. Now, God even shows his kindness to Adam in even the fact that he could have taken their life right there on the spot, but he didn't. Graciously, they live a full life.

They live the life of a thousand people in the years that they lived. That's because of God's grace. But in that moment, they died in a different way. Spiritually, they died.

They could no longer have fellowship with God the way they had enjoyed before. And they never would apart from God's intervening in their lives. The same is true for us.

Sin makes us the enemy of God. And our only hope of peace with God is if he forgives our sins. But that's the problem, isn't it?

God is holy. How can a holy God forgive our sins? Because he wouldn't be holy and just if he just pretended like our sins never happened.

[ 29 : 38 ] That's not the gospel. The gospel isn't if you do these things that the Bible says to do that God will turn a blind eye to all the things you've done in your past and he'll give you a free pass into heaven.

That's not the gospel. If that's what you think the gospel is, you are not a Christian. And your home in eternity is not heaven.

That's a lie. God can't turn a blind eye to our sin. He must judge sin. That's why Jesus is a gift.

Because God sends his only son, his perfect son, his sinless son, because only a sinless sacrifice could atone for our sins.

And when we come to Christ in faith, it's not that God the Father looks at us and turns a blind eye to the things that we've done. No, he takes our sin and he pours out his wrath that's meant for us on his perfectly sinless son.

That's why atonement is made at the cross. Christ, through the cross, bears the wrath of God that's intended for sinners. And because he's absolutely sinless, it's a sufficient sacrifice.

[ 30 : 51 ] And God proved that it was a sufficient sacrifice by raising him from the dead three days later. That was the purpose of his resurrection. Yes, indeed.

Death has no claim on him because he had no sin. Yes, he has the power over life and death because he's the Lord and creator of the universe. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God.

But it was also to show us that God received his atonement as sufficient for us. Why does Paul write with hope? Because Paul knows that it worked, that we actually have forgiveness.

This is the hope with which he's writing. And he means that because of Jesus, the sinless Son of God, eternal life, is a certainty for him as a believer.

Two things I want to point out quickly. Here's the first one. The foundation of hope is God's righteousness. The foundation of hope is God's righteousness.

[ 31 : 56 ] Look again at verse two. In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word.

What is Paul basing his hope on? It's not on his own reasoning. He wasn't sitting back one day and just as a genius, and I think Paul was actually a genius.

I don't think he was sitting back one day and thinking, you know, I'm going to examine all that I know about world history from the very beginning. And he didn't start to piece together and think, you know, here is a method that I think maybe we can work our way back to God.

And there's this guy, Jesus. And I think maybe there's the stories of him. That's not what Paul was doing. His hope wasn't based in his own reasoning. His hope was based in God's righteousness.

His hope was based in God's word.

Now this phrase, before the ages began, it might refer to God's plan in eternity to bring about our salvation. That truth that even before he created us, God promised our ultimate redemption in Christ.

[ 33 : 11 ] Now that doctrine is true. Paul talks about it in other places. Ephesians chapter one is the one that comes to mind most frequently where Paul says, even as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.

So clearly, God's plan of salvation is an eternal plan, not just eternal future, but also an eternity past. This is always God's plan. But I don't think that's what Paul means right here in this text.

I don't think that's what he means. While that is true, the context suggests that what was promised before the ages began are the promises of God shown to us in the Old Testament.

And what is listed as at the proper time was manifested in his word refers to the gospel of Jesus in the New Testament. Now it's very much like the way Paul opened his book of Romans.

Would you just flip there quickly? Let's read it together. Romans chapter one. Romans chapter one, verse one.

[ 34 : 23 ] Listen to how similar this is. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Now look at this in verse two, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

And what were the promises referring to? Verse three, concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

I think this is what Paul means in Titus chapter one. He's not necessarily referring to the eternal truth of salvation. He's saying, my hope rests, not on my own reasoning, my hope rests on the fact that God gave us his word and God never lies because God is absolutely perfect and holy in all that he does.

And I can prove that he didn't lie here because if you go over here and you look at the person of Jesus Christ, he fulfilled every prophecy about the Messiah, every one of them, not one is lacking. And all the power that was displayed in his life, all the power that we see ultimately in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul says, my hope is founded on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

[ 35 : 49 ] My hope is not on what I think, my hope is on the word of God and God doesn't lie. What a wonderful hope this is. This is real hope based on God's truth.

Listen, hope can only be certain if it's founded on something that's perfectly trustworthy. And the only thing that fits that description is the righteous character of God and his word.

And if your belief system is founded on anything other than God's truth, it's faulty. And you need to abandon it before it leads you to hell. There's hope in Christ alone.

And it's certain because it's founded on God himself. So, hope is founded on God's righteousness. Secondly, the preaching of hope is a necessary stewardship.

The preaching of hope is a necessary stewardship. Look at verse 3. through the preaching, this is how it was made manifest, through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God, our Savior.

[ 37 : 01 ] So, the hope of the gospel is revealed to people through the proclamation of God's truth. Paul said this preaching of the gospel was entrusted to him.

It was entrusted to him by the command of God, our Savior. This means that God's purpose in saving sinners is accomplished ultimately through the obedience of his people to share the gospel. Because we know and believe, we have a stewardship, a responsibility to preach the good news to others. Paul understood this.

It's true for us too. He actually uses this word stewardship in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 9.16, he says, necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.

For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward. But if not of my own will, I'm still entrusted with a stewardship. In other words, Paul says, even if I don't want to preach the gospel, it doesn't matter because I have a responsibility, a stewardship given to me by God the Savior to preach the gospel.

[ 38 : 10 ] And this stewardship belongs to us as well. I know only God can save, but it is unmistakable in this text that he accomplishes his saving work when we preach the gospel.

And the stewardship of the gospel, it wasn't just given to the apostles. apostles, Jesus commissioned all of us to go, all of us to go with his authority, all of us to go and make disciples of all nations.

And the question is, are you faithfully tending to your stewardship, to the responsibility you have? Are you being obedient to the Lord? Because it is through that obedience that we see the fruitfulness of God come forth in our lives.

If we don't tell the people around us, who will tell them? Isn't that Paul's point in Romans 10? Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

What a wonderful assertion. How then will they call on him if they haven't believed? How can they believe in him whom they have never heard? How are they to hear without someone preaching?

[ 39 : 18 ] And how are they to preach unless they're sent? For faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God. In other words, Paul says, look, I know salvation belongs to God, but it's our responsibility to obey his command to preach the truth.

And if we have a burden for the lost around us, we're going to do that. We're going to share the gospel. Even if we don't have a burden for the lost around us, we're going to do it out of obedience to the Lord and a desire for him to show fruitfulness in our lives.

Well, that's the gospel hope. Finally, let's look at Paul's gospel greeting. Paul's gospel greeting, verse four, to Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Not as flashy as the other parts, but it's good because it's a model. This became a standard greeting in the early church.

You'll see it often all throughout the New Testament, this phrase, grace and peace from God, grace and peace from God to you. It was a blessing that Christians gave to one another in recognition of the hope that they had.

[ 40 : 29 ] Some of you do this when you email me and you text me and I love it. I've tried to do it myself because of some of your example that when I write a note to not just end with your friend or whatever, but something like grace and peace from God or in Christ Jesus our Lord or whatever it is.

I love this because it shows that Paul was so consumed with the truth of the gospel that it pervaded all of his thoughts. It pervaded all of his interactions. Even his personal greetings to others were shaped by his understanding and the impact of the gospel on his life.

Grace to you, he says. Peace from God to you. It was only because of Jesus that Paul, a Jew, could refer to Titus, a Gentile, as a true child in a common faith.

For him, Titus wasn't merely a friend and colleague. He viewed his relationship to Titus through the lens of his unity with Titus in Christ. I think this is the way we should view one another.

We talked about it in our partnership class for a little while yesterday. We view one another not through the lens of what we hope each other will do for us. We view each other through the lens of what Christ has done for us.

[ 41 : 48 ] We love each other that way. We forgive each other that way. We see each other as brother, sister, child in the faith. Paul was so impacted by the grace of God that he used it as a language with which he greeted believers.

And I won't belabor the point. I just want you to see what it looks like when a believer allows the gospel to saturate their hearts and minds. What does that look like?

It looks like the first four verses of Titus. That's what it looks like. And if you're here this morning and you don't have a lot of confidence about your eternal standing with God, can I just remind you that true hope can only be found in Jesus?

You'll never be good enough. You may be good enough for me and for most people, but you can never reach God's standard. And you need not even try.

You'll never make it. You'll fall short every time. Jesus is everything that you need him to be. He suffered God's wrath for sinners.

[ 43 : 08 ] And if you will repent and believe, you'll know that he suffered God's wrath for your sin. This faith and repentance, it's the only path to forgiveness.

It's the only path to peace with God. It's the only path to eternal life. And if you hear his voice today, not with your ear, but with your heart, you don't need a delay in responding.

You need to come to him and you'll find him to be everything and more than what you ever thought. For those of us who know Christ, I think we need to recognize that Paul's purpose and Paul's hope is not different than ours.

He had a unique calling as an apostle, but his purpose was the same. We're here. Christ has saved us. He's left us here.

He's commissioned us for the sake of the faith of God's elect, for their knowledge of the truth, and for their godliness. We owe that to the community around us. We owe it to one another. It's our cause, our purpose.

[ 44 : 20 ] Live out that purpose to the glory of God and with great joy. Maybe today you need to repent of a lethargy in regards to evangelism or a lethargy and your commitment to study the gospel regularly and be faithful to it.

Maybe you need to refresh yourself on the beauty of the gospel so that you'll once again reflect it in the way that you live and in the things that you do and the way that you think.

Maybe you'd do well to evaluate the extent of the gospel's impact on your life, the extent of the gospel's impact on your routines.

Are you with Christ day by day? Are you in the word day by day? How has the gospel impacted the way that you live, the way that you speak, the way that you pray, the way that you regard the people around you, the way that you think about that guy that cut you off this morning or your husband when he refuses to make the bed?

The gospel impacts us in all of those ways. It really does. You're going cold or callous to this? Oh, I know. I know if you come to the Lord today repenting of those things and trusting in Him, He will give you the grace that you need to make the change necessary in your life because that's the hope we have in the gospel.

[ 45 : 45 ] It's not just a hope we have at conversion. It's a hope that is good and sufficient every single day. It's good to takeNING to take