

# Gospel Ministry and Eternal Life

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn to Titus chapter 1 and looking at this passage. We read it a short time ago, but we're looking at the first three verses this morning. Titus chapter 1 and verses 1 to 3.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 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.

Here. Sometimes you can compare Paul's introduction to his letters like what you find in a box of chocolates.

I'm not saying that, I'm not trying to trivialize it in any way, but when you come to a box of chocolates, you know that there's usually either on the outside of the box or a card inside. That gives you some details in a summary way of what kind of chocolates the box contains.

So as you look at it and you want to find out what sort of chocolates they are, what kind of centers they have, you then actually decide, well, okay, I'll find all that inside the box.

[ 1 : 24 ] When you open the box, then you have the freedom to pick up all of these centers and you then actually taste them for yourself. And in some ways, Paul's introductions are like that because most of the time, especially with a fairly long introduction like that, he's really packing into the introduction the things that he's going to open up and give us a greater taste of in the rest of the letter.

And you'll find that here, you'll find it in many of his other introductions as well to the letter. So that what you find there is that as you pick out the points in that introduction, you realize that it's a very rich introduction to a letter.

It has all of these various types of points mentioned, just like the varieties of the chocolate box, whereas you take them, you discover that that tastes slightly different to the next one, yet they have things in common.

And the same with this introduction as well. He talks about himself as a servant and as an apostle. He talks about why he's been made an apostle, what the main thrust of his ministry is in regard to faith and the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth.

And he mentions that in accordance with godliness. And he mentions that then as set in the hope of eternal life and that that eternal life was something which was promised by God before the world began.

[ 2 : 47 ] And then it was manifested in time and especially and particularly through preaching. You've got all of these points, wonderfully important points in themselves.

And yet they're combined so beautifully in this opening introduction to Titus. And as you then read through the rest of this little letter, you realize that, yes, here are the points that we had in the introduction.

And here is where I now get a full taste of what they're really like as he expounds them in the rest of the chapter. And he tells us that we know from the rest of the chapter from verse 5 as well.

That's why Paul actually left him in Crete. If you've ever been to Crete, which I haven't, it's a popular enough holiday destination. But Crete is one of those places where in history the Apostle Paul actually visited that island.

And as the church was established there, so the Apostle here gives Titus, who he had left behind in Crete to actually organize the church there, to appoint elders, to actually exercise a ministry where he would set out the requirements of God.

[ 3 : 58 ] All of that's mentioned there in the opening chapter here following on from the introduction. And you'll find all of these points expanded, as we say, in the next few chapters.

Well, in the introduction you find that's why Paul connects certain things together like truth and godliness. It's something that comes into Titus' ministry of the gospel that he has to hold together. So let's look at two things. First of all, Paul and the man and his ministry, we can say, mostly to do with his ministry. But he speaks about himself personally there as well as to who he is and what he is and what his life is about.

First of all, he's a servant of God. Paul, a servant of God. Very simple words and yet profound enough in their meaning. Because this word servant is really, really, literally the word that the Bible elsewhere uses for slave.

And in Romans, especially, Paul makes the very interesting comparison and contrast with what we were before we became Christians and what we now are in Christ.

[ 5 : 09 ] He says, using the same word, you were a slave to sin and to unrighteousness, but now you are bonded. You are a slave to God and to righteousness. Now he doesn't use that word with exactly the same meaning in each case.

And we mustn't think that being a slave of God is just God taking us to do things against our will. That there's an element of cruelty in it. That you just don't have any choice in the matter yourself. The essential meaning of a slave of this word *doulos* in the New Testament is someone who is bonded to the person who owns them or is their employer.

And you find that that's the essential meaning in being a slave of sin. You're bonded to sin. You're tied closely to it. It's your employer.

It makes out what your life is going to be like. And when you're delivered from that and when you're brought to Christ and to know Jesus Christ, you're no longer a slave to sin, but you're nothing less than bonded to Christ.

[ 6 : 16 ] It's not a bondage where you are enslaved in the normal sense of the word. It's a bonding to Christ where you're willingly and lovingly under his direction, under his mastery, where he becomes your preferred employer.

And where your will is to please him. Paul is bonded to Christ. He is a servant of Christ.

It's not just that he's doing Christ's work, but he's doing it as one who is under his mastery, his employment. He's bonded to him.

That raises the question today, what is my relationship to Jesus Christ? What is my relationship to sin? What is my relationship to righteousness, to that standard of life that God requires and expects of all human beings?

What is my relation to these hugely important things in the teaching of the scripture as they're brought to it? What's my relation on the one hand to sin? What's my relation to unrighteousness?

[ 7 : 25 ] On the other hand, what is my relation to Christ? What's my relation to righteousness? Am I bonded to Jesus Christ? If not, I'm still bonded to sin.

Because, you see, for Paul, there is no in-between. I'm not going to expand this point very much further, but it's important. There is no in-between for the apostle in the teaching of scripture.

Either we're still bonded to our old life, to what we've always been, to the sin that we're born with. Or we've been delivered from that, and we're bonded to Jesus, and we're bonded to his righteousness, and we're bonded, as we'll see here, to the hope of eternal life.

There's the first thing that the passage really challenges us with. And it's a challenge that's so, so crucial and so important. What are we connected with? What sort of power dictates how we live our life?

That's really what's in it. He's a servant of God. He's a servant God has called him, so that he will carry out his ministry as someone bonded to Jesus, bonded to God.

[ 8 : 32 ] But in a way in which love from God to him and from him to God lies at the very heart of what he's doing. Secondly, he is an apostle of Jesus Christ.

That obviously brings Christ up to the same level as the word God in the first part of the sentence. And it really does emphasize for us that Christ is God.

Nothing less than that. But Paul is being very precise here because the person who commissioned him, and that's really what's in the word apostle. An apostle is someone who was sent.

That's the meaning of the word. It's somebody sent and somebody commissioned for a certain task. When we go to the General Assembly, for example, our presbytery commissions us.

That's, strictly speaking, the word that's used of those who attend the General Assembly. They are known as commissioners of the assembly. All the ministers and elders who have been given a

commission by their presbytery.

[ 9 : 34 ] That's a formal thing. The presbytery chooses who goes to the assembly every year to the assembly. They are commissioned. There's a certain form in which their name is entered.

And their commission is to represent the presbytery, to speak on things that are important to the church at large. But they represent the presbytery that has commissioned them.

And so it is with the apostle. He's been commissioned specifically and precisely by Jesus Christ. And you can see that when you read in Acts, for example, is the way in which he was converted, the way Jesus spoke to him, as he stopped him on the way to Damascus.

He had been commissioned to carry further letters that would be damaging to the church. That's what he himself was set upon doing. And then Jesus met him.

Jesus actually confronted him. The risen Jesus. The splendid Jesus. The Jesus in the glory that he now has. So bright that he couldn't look upon him.

[ 10 : 37 ] And was temporarily blinded by the sight. And Jesus stopped him in his tracks and changed his life. He took him from being bonded to sin and opposition and hatred of the church, to being bonded to himself and to his service and to gospel ministry, and to his love for the people of God.

As this passage goes on to see, as we'll see in a minute, the whole aim and purpose of his ministry, of an apostle's ministry, is directed to the interests of God's people.

For the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. And Jesus commissioned him. He specifically set him up as an apostle.

And you remember when Jesus told Ananias, who was then a disciple, to go to this certain house in this place that he mentioned, for there was one there, Saul of Tarsus, and he was praying.

And Ananias was taken aback. He was actually scared. He knew the reputation of this man. And he said to the Lord, Lord, I've heard much about this man.

[ 11 : 50 ] And the havoc that he's caused in the church. And the Lord assured him, you go to him. For he is a chosen vessel to me. To carry my name for the Gentiles.

And to, in other words, to carry out a ministry of the gospel for me. God, Christ especially, particularly, commissioned him. That's what put him into the position of an apostle.

But then he tells us that it was for the sake of the faith of God's elect. Paul didn't choose this personally. Paul didn't go into the ministry of the gospel just because he thought it was a good career move.

Some people think of the ministry of the gospel like that. That is just a career. That is just a kind of employment or career just like any other job.

Just like any other sort of job that might go by the word professional. We're not professionals. We're not professionals because God commissions those who preach the gospel for the sake of his own cause.

[ 12 : 57 ] It's not a self-chosen career. It's where God specifically appoints people who will go with the gospel and carry that gospel by his commission into the world.

That's what he's saying. It was for the sake. It's for the interest especially of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. Now that of course brings up this word elect.

And there's no way around that. In the teaching of the Bible we're told in Ephesians 1 for example that before the world was ever created. God had a specific love directed towards all those who would be saved in Christ as his chosen people.

And it's not for you or for me to argue with that or to try and find a reason in that as to why we should not come to Christ. Because some people will have that kind of attitude towards election as something they believe the Bible teaches about God and what God has done from all eternity.

And they will say well if that is the case then all of God's elect are going to be saved yes. And then they'll say well if I am one of those then I will be saved too.

[ 14 : 21 ] And what does God say in response to that? What does the rest of the Bible teach you in response to that? Because that is a real kind of fatalism. That's a kind of just letting things be as if there were no responsibilities or requirement laid upon us at all.

Well yes the elect will be saved. No doubt about that. God's chosen people will be saved. But they will never be saved without prayer. Without coming to Christ.

Without repentance. Without faith as trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without coming to be bonded to Christ. Without loving the Lord.

Without loving his people. Don't use this word elect as somehow or other a reason why you just avoid your responsibilities and privileges indeed.

In coming to know Christ personally as your Savior. On the one hand yes the elect will be saved. On the other hand God is saying to you and he's saying to me. If you really are concerned to be saved.

[ 15 : 25 ] Then you've got to come to me. You've got to repent of your sin. You've got to turn to God. You've got to accept God's terms. You've got to lay down your arms of rebellion against him. You've got to accept him for what he is in the scriptures as he's revealed to you.

You've got to put your trust in him. And you've got to come to hope that way for eternal life. You will not be saved. Just by thinking about the elect and who they are.

But that's what he says. This was for the sake of the faith. Why he was made an apostle. It's for the sake of it. It's for the benefit of it. It's in the interest of not just God's elect but the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth.

So these are two elements that Paul now specifies as the reason why God made him an apostle. As he tells us in this context anyway. It's for the faith of God's elect.

In other words the apostle is directing his ministry towards not just the believing of these people of God. And their belief of the truth of the doctrines of the faith.

[ 16 : 35 ] Believing or faith also carries with it of course their reliance upon God. And that's why you find elsewhere as you read through Paul's letters.

He is so concerned that these people of God would be strengthened in their faith. That they'd be built up in their faith. That they would be nurtured as like children proceeding towards maturity. So that in their faith and their reliance upon God. They would actually find an experience from his writing. Something that would help them towards that. Why do we have the preaching of the gospel here?

Why do we have Bible studies? Why do we have fellowship meetings? Why do we have mid-week meetings? So as to study God's truth further and to engage in prayer. It's so that as the people of God.

We will actually have our faith increased and nourished and nurtured. Why does the Bible tell you? That sometimes we need.

[ 17 : 38 ] Trials. Traumas. Difficulties. Why do these things happen to Christians? Why shouldn't they happen to Christians?

They're part of the context in which your faith must grow. They're a contributory factor to the way in which your faith must develop.

In which your reliance upon God increases. Somebody puts it this way. That the growth of a Christian is not really so much what you see above ground if you like.

The growth of a Christian is really first and foremost what you can't see. What is through of the roots of your life. In other words the roots of your life spiritually grow downwards into Christ. Into being totally reliant upon Christ. The more then you will produce above ground. Of the kind of lifestyle a Christian should have.

[ 18 : 44 ] So that's what's important in the apostles thinking as to why he's been made an apostle. What is apostleship is directed to. What is the main thrust of it?

He's saying it's this. It's that it's for the faith of God's elect for their reliance. For their increase. For their development as believers.

So that their roots will strike downwards more and more. So that that will produce more spiritual fruit. But it's also. We're passing these things very quickly of course.

But as we said there's so many points. There's so much in this box of chocolate. You want to taste all of them. Don't want to just take one out and open it up and look at it in itself. You want to take them all out and just taste a little bit of what they're all like.

So the next one really he says is their knowledge of the truth. Truth. That of course raises the question. When you're looking at a passage like this. It raises the question.

[ 19 : 43 ] Well what is truth? How do you know today what truth really is? How do you explain truth? Somebody comes from another planet.

Not suggesting there are people on other planets. But supposing somebody comes from another planet. And lands in your garden and says look. The signal I received from earth said a lot about this word truth.

And I've never heard this word truth before. Can you tell me what truth is? Where would you begin? Where would you begin trying to explain to somebody.

Who had no idea what it was. What truth really is. Well you'd hopefully say well. Truth has its beginnings.

Or its roots in God. Himself. God is truth. You see for something for you and for me to be truth.

[ 20 : 41 ] It's no use just saying well it's truth for me. Because I think this is so important. I have made this a principle of my life. Whatever somebody else thinks might be different.

This is the truth to me as I see it. That's no use because that really is something that will fluctuate. And it will fluctuate as far as you yourself are concerned with your circumstances. And it might change as your life goes on.

You might say something is truth for you today. And you say tomorrow well it's not truth for me. Now I know no better. Truth is God Himself.

In His veracity and His truthfulness. There's no darkness in God. There's nothing untruthful in God. We begin thinking about the truth with God Himself. And then God has given us a reflection of what's in Himself as truth in His word, in His law.

[ 21 : 40 ] We'll see in a minute His word is mentioned here. In His word, in His law. Because the truth that's in God has come out to us. It's been breathed out by Him if you like.

Just like you come as 2 Timothy there shows us in regarding to the scripture. It's breathed out by God. Like on a cold day when you breathe onto a cold wind or an object of some kind.

And your breath distills. And you see it distilling on that. Well He's saying this really in a sense is a symbol of what the truth is as God has revealed it in the scripture.

He's breathed it out. You can see the truth distilled for you. It's come from God, from the truth in Himself. And it's come out to us because He's concerned that we know it.

Now that means if you put, as we so often say these days, if you put the Bible aside and say it should no longer have any place in human society, particularly in public life, what are you doing?

[ 22 : 45 ] You're taking the very basis of truth, the very way by which you come to define and understand truth, and you're putting it aside. And what are you putting in its place? You're putting my own ideas.

My own version of the truth. People's own views of what truth is or should be. No, He says it's for the truth. Their knowledge of the truth.

Knowledge just means, not just that you come to know something, it also means an acknowledgement of. In other words, when you say you know somebody, that's one aspect of it, but then when you meet somebody else along with this person you know, and that person's asking you, is this so and so, you will acknowledge then, you will confess it to be true.

Yes, that's such and such. So, in other words, when you come to know the truth, it's not just a matter of knowing it for yourself. That's coming to acknowledge it.

It's coming really into the area of confession, isn't it? Of confession that this is the truth. And why does Jesus describe Himself as He does in John's Gospel, in chapter 14, when Philip said to us, Show us the way, Lord, and that will be sufficient for us.

[ 24 : 10 ] I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except by me.

Why did Jesus say that? Well, for one thing, He was concerned that we would see the truth from God, in Himself, in Jesus, distilled in us, if you like, in Him to us.

And that that excludes anybody else as the embodiment of the truth. Nobody else, in all existence, could claim meaningfully and properly and authoritatively what Jesus claimed for Himself.

Nobody else could stand in the presence of human beings and say, I am the truth. I can't say that to you today as your minister. I can't say to you in preaching the Gospel, you should look to me because I am the truth.

I have to live by the truth. I'm not the truth. You're not the truth. Christ is the truth. God is the truth. And the ministry of the Gospel is for the sake of the faith of God's elect, but also for their knowledge of the truth.

[ 25 : 24 ] For their acknowledgement of it to be the truth, which is what you carry out in your own life. Well, we're not going to finish all of this today because there are so many important points in it, but let's just continue into the next part of it.

The truth, which is, which is according or which accords with godliness. Now, why does he add that? Well, it's really simply saying that the truth of God, which it goes on to say has been revealed

to us, this eternal life, this truth about eternal life, if you like, it's been manifested in his word through the preaching.

But he's here saying that this truth, this revealed truth, it accords with godliness. It is in keeping with godliness.

In other words, it's saying to us, you must never, ever separate the truth as it's revealed to you in the Bible from a life of godliness.

You can't have a life of godliness detached from the truth. You cannot think of the truth except as it is attached to the life of godliness that the truth requires.

[ 26 : 49 ] You must never put a line of separation between the Bible's teaching, the truth of God as it's revealed in it, and the kind of lifestyle that God requires of us.

That's revealed in that truth. My way of life, your way of life, what is called here, godliness, is always to be seen as very closely bound with the truth itself.

The Bible's teaching, the truth, revealed and written. You must never detach them. Now, there are two errors that we have to avoid in relation to that.

And the two errors are these. On the one hand, it's really, really easy to look at doctrinal orthodoxy, let's put it that way, or for the younger ones, let's make it more simple.

It's very, very easy to put what you might say is just keeping right in relation to what you believe as the Bible's teaching, the doctrines, the teachings of the Bible, and you think that on the one hand, because you're doing that, that's all that's required of you.

[ 28 : 05 ] A doctrinal orthodoxy. We'll see in our Bible study for Wednesday that faith in James is always stated as something which includes works or is attached to works and that faith without works is actually dead.

And the question in the Bible study is a very important one. Is my faith a dead faith or a living faith? Going by James there in chapter 2. Well, here is Paul saying that this truth and godliness on the one hand, you can have a doctrinal orthodoxy and have no personal saving relationship to Christ at all.

There are many people in the world who say I'm a Christian because this is what I believe. Whereas the Bible adds to that, yes, but are you a Christian because you're united to Christ because you know him as your saviour because he is the most important feature and influence in your life personally in your relationship with him.

That's what the Bible is also saying. On the one hand, there's the extreme of biblical orthodoxy by itself and just taking confidence from that alone. On the other hand, you could go to defining godliness in much too narrow a way or terms.

Sometimes we define or are likely to define godliness as just keeping to a set of rules. We have the rules in the Bible we have the Ten Commandments.

[ 29 : 47 ] Godliness is just keeping to them or else we can define godliness perhaps as somebody who just sits and studies the Bible a lot, somebody who prays a lot, somebody who goes to church at every opportunity.

I'm not saying for one single moment that none of these things comes into godliness and the definition of godliness. godliness but you mustn't confine it to that.

A godly person is not just to be described as somebody who keeps to a set of rules or somebody who attends church X number of times a year. Godliness is taking what you believe and living it out in all your circumstances in a god-pleasing life.

Nothing is more challenging than seeking to be godly. Godliness is essentially how you face the problems of life.

What kind of spirit you show towards other people. How you actually deal with people who accuse you wrongly. How you actually put up with people who constantly want to get at you because you are a Christian because you live a life of obedience to Christ.

[ 31 : 01 ] Godliness is all about that. All of these issues in everyday life and how you actually live in relation to them. How you handle them. How you overcome them.

What sort of spirit is shown by you towards other people. All of that comes into your godliness.

There's no use believing a set of things and saying these are the rules that I live by if you're as grumpy as you like towards non Christians.

It's all about living a Christ like life as the Bible describes it by the grace of God in dependence on God and seeking that that indeed is how you want to live.

And that's what Paul is saying. That's why God made me an apostle. That's why I was commissioned by Christ is for the sake of the faith of God's elect and for their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness.

Let's take from that these important questions and leave it at that today. what is my relationship to sin?

[ 32 : 17 ] What's my relationship to Jesus Christ, to God? To which of these am I bonded? Am I attached closely? What is the dominant influence that regulates or on the other hand just dominates my life?

and then what is my faith? Is my faith real dependence on God? I'm not asking is my faith great faith?

Is my faith greater than somebody else's faith? I'm saying is my faith real faith? Am I living in dependence daily on Christ? Do I come to him every day to rely upon him?

what's my knowledge of the truth? Is it just a head knowledge? Is it just a set of things that I believe in?

What is my knowledge of the truth? A knowledge that's streamed through my relationship with Jesus Christ? And is my knowledge of the truth something that accords with godliness?

[ 33 : 30 ] Is the truth that I believe? A truth that I keep in my own experience and application closely connected with the kind of life that God is pleased with? Or do I just leave it and say well I believe these things and that makes me a Christian?

Am I concerned today to be someone who in my life appreciates what it is to seek to please God and to do it in a godliness God is attached to and indeed fed from his truth let's pray Lord we bless you today for this opportunity we have to give our minds to the teaching of your word we know that all of these things are so important to us Lord you have revealed them as very basic and important to our lives we pray today that you would help us to apply them to our lives individually to our lives together in this congregation and to our life as we live it in the world so that we may be known as your people and as your godly people as a people whose burden it is to bring praise and further glory to your name hear us now we pray for

Jesus sake Amen you you