

# Titus 1:1-4

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Preacher: David Moser

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. I'm just waiting to make sure I have my mic check complete.! I want to make sure. All good. Excellent. Good morning Shoreline. I'm so glad to be with you this morning. Even if we are remote and distant.

I'm so grateful that we have this opportunity to be together and to consider our Lord's word and as both Mike and Matt have already spoken.

I invite you to turn to the book of Titus. It's right before the book of Hebrews. There's Hebrews right before that is Philemon and then the book of Titus.

It's one of the smaller letters that Paul wrote, but it's very, very rich for us. So we consider this new series. We're going to be starting a series in the book of Titus.

I want to look back on what we've talked about in this coronavirus shutdown. We started our preaching by explaining what hasn't changed in COVID, right?

[ 1 : 08 ] The first thing we looked at was in Revelation chapter four and we reassured ourselves that Christ presently rules and reigns in this world. And that this has not shaken him or shaken our hope and the foundations of our faith.

And because of that, the second Sunday we considered how we can walk by faith with God as he rules and reigns, even in the midst of hardship and difficulty and uncertainty in this world.

And that's not just abstractly though. It's not just some ideas we're considering, but we can walk with God. That's the third week we talked about how walking with God, we can actually do that in our lives.

And then that message was reinforced to this week. If you caught the Facebook live stream with Pastor Jordan and Jess Leach in their Thursday live stream, they talked about living before the face of God together.

And so I'd encourage you if you didn't get a chance to look that up and to benefit from that, to go back and check it. Then on Easter, we looked at the resurrection of Jesus Christ and where he opened the gates of heaven to all repentant sinners.

[ 2 : 22 ] And he showed himself in his resurrection to be strong, to deliver on his promises, because in fact, he had promised to do just that. Just days before Easter, we looked and Good Friday at John chapter 10 and Jesus promised.

He said, I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority, he said, to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. Now, the resurrected Christ can deliver on his promises. And so we know we will never be separated from. He will never leave us or forsake us.

He will be with us to the end of the age because that's just what he promised. And he has proven himself by robbing the grave and emptying his own tomb that he can deliver on his promises.

And so we will never be separated from Christ. But in this moment, we are separated from his church. We're separated from our church family.

[ 3 : 28 ] So this is a good time to put our gaze on the church. What is it? Have you ever asked that question? What is a church?

And what is the church, the global church? And why exactly are we missing it? And why are we missing it more than maybe many of the other things in life? Why ought we miss it more than many of the other things that have been shut down by COVID-19?

And what does the Lord want for his church and from his church? What does he want us to be doing? These are some of the things as we walk into the book of Titus that we're going to be thinking about and hearing from God's word.

And so first, I hope that you are missing your church. What we're doing right now, this virtual community groups and live streamed Sunday worship. What we're doing right now, what we're experiencing right this moment should feel less than the gathered worship of the saints. From the very outset, the first week that we canceled corporate worship, the elders said that the gathering of the saints together is precious and unique. [ 4 : 43 ] It is not something that can be replicated online, no matter how polished the execution. Now, we're grateful. We're very grateful for technology that allows us to do what we're doing right now, virtually.

Virtually, it's a wonderful accommodation, but it remains an accommodation, not a replacement. Right. You ought not feel that this is an adequate replacement.

If you do feel that this is just as good as our normal gathering or that the church part of your quarantine seems like you're not skipping a beat.

Well, there's something missing from your normal experience of church. Just for example, in the last six to nine months, Shoreline, we have been singing more songs of lament.

And I'm really glad for that. Just in general, I think it's a healthy thing for our church family. And here's one aspect of that that has been particularly meaningful to me and specifically within the context of our gathered worship together.

[ 5 : 50 ] When we join our voices together and sing songs of lament and sing songs of hope in Christ through hardship.

When we sing songs like because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Well, because you're my church family and I am yours. I know what tomorrow looks like for some of you.

And it's not awesome in this moment. And to hear you proclaim that you can walk into tomorrow because he walked out of his grave.

You have added such depth to my experience of worship, more so than if I was just singing it myself. And so when we as a body of believers, knowing one another, share our burdens and sorrows with our brothers and sisters in Christ, not only do we receive the benefit of their helps and prayers and encouragements and their help, but we bless them in the midst of our worship.

You bless me. You bless me. You enrich our worship. When you saying those words, you brought a weight to our gathered worship that is beautiful and precious.

[ 7 : 09 ] I was thinking also this week about other ways that the gathering of the saints together are is special and adds dimension to our worship and our relationship with God the Father.

And I read some wonderful words from Charles Spurgeon preached a whole sermon on why we ought to gather together and pray. I'll share just a few of the things he brought out. The first thing he mentioned was simply to enjoy together the presence of the great shepherd.

Why do we get together for a Super Bowl party? Why do we do that? Right. Why don't we all just sit on our own couches and watch it? Well, our delight is multiplied in the sharing, isn't it?

And so, too, in our worship of the great God, it's awesome to share our worship of God with each other. Spurgeon also said that gathering together for worship is an open, a public, that is a vowel of our faith in God.

It's a public declaration that we're his. He said it is an open declaration that we believe in God, that let others do as they may. As for us, we will worship him. We believe in the reality and power and usefulness of prayer.

[ 8 : 29 ] And therefore, in the light of day before all men, we gather ourselves to pray. And so it's a public testimony. It's a declaration of our faith together.

He said, I love this public worship on Earth is a rehearsal for the service of heaven. That is, it's a dress rehearsal for the great choir in which we'll sing.

He said, we shall sing together there, brethren, not solos, but grand chorals and choruses. We shall take parts in the divine or ratio of redemption.

That is to say, we won't sing solo with pieces. We won't be all by ourselves. We will join in a choir that is greater than we can imagine. And together we will be singing to our Lord.

And so gathering together for worship is a preview. Is heaven brought a little bit into this world together. And so Spurgeon said, as long as we have legs to carry us and health with which to use those legs, let us be found among the waiting assemblies in God's sanctuary.

[ 9 : 37 ] And so what Spurgeon just shared, what I shared about my the depth of worship that comes from gathering together in the saints. I could speak at length to you what it is like, you know,

what it's like to preach that minister God's word to you is powerfully spiritually deep for me.

When we gather together that is just lost right now. And so I eagerly anticipate the day when I can minister God's word to God's people again face to face. It is so beautiful to see God God's word and God's spirit working in and among his people.

I'm not I'm not special, but his word is in his spirit moves and and I get to see that as I proclaim his word to you. And so I can't wait to be doing that again.

And so that's why, while we're separated from our church and while we miss our church family. And while we may not even be able to fully explain all that we are missing in the church.

The others believe that this is the right time to place our gaze on the church. And that's where we're going to look over the next several weeks, Lord willing, at the book of Titus. Titus is one of the three pastoral epistles. Epistles are letters for you know, this one is from Paul to Titus and the pastoral epistles that's the first and second Timothy and Titus are the three letters in the New Testament that are written to pastors about the ministry.

[11:12] They've been charged with, which means that it's the most tightly concentrated teaching on the church in scripture. And so that's why we're looking to Titus right now in the if we're thinking about the church, the pastoral epistles are probably the place to go.

Now, as we approach God's word together, we're only looking at four verses in Titus chapter one today. They are densely packed. So I'm really excited to open them up and bring out some treasures together.

Let's pray to the Lord that he would bless this time and that he would bless the reading of his word. Lord, thank you that you have made us a church friendly, a people of your own.

I ask Lord that even in the midst of internet connections and live streams and physical distancing. Lord that you would help us place our eyes on you, place our eyes on our hope in you, on your promises to us.

And Lord, as we, we, we, as we put our gaze on the church, Father, I pray that it might grow in our hearts. We might grow in our love for your people, for your church, your bride.

[12:25] Father, I pray that you would help us to learn and to love your church. And through that, learn to honor you even more.

We pray these things in Jesus Christ, who formed his church, bought his church with his blood. Amen. I'm just going to make sure we are still good to go.

Excellent. All right. I'm going to read now the first four verses of the epistle to Titus. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Christ of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which records with godliness in hope of eternal life, which God who never lies promised before the ages began.

And at the proper time manifested his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God, our savior to Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God, the father and Christ Jesus, our savior.

Now, Paul begins his letter to Titus by naming himself a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, Titus was one of Paul's close associates.

[13:48] Had he suddenly forgotten who Paul was? Was Paul concerned that that he needed to remind Titus who he was? Unlikely. Rather, Paul intended the book of Titus as an open letter.

Clearly, verse four, the letter is to Titus, but it was also for the whole church in Crete. If you look at verse five, you'll see that each city and town on the island of Crete had its own congregation, its own local assembly with elders and discipleship and worship and teaching.

Paul expected that this letter is going to go to all of those churches. Now, we know that because, first of all, this introduction that is much more formal that needs to be simply to Titus, but also because the final words of the letter are grace be with you all.

Paul, right? Paul, right? And so, yes, it's for Titus, but it's also for the churches. And what's awesome for us is that the teaching Paul gives about the church and the instruction Paul gives to the church in Crete.

Well, it's applicable widely to every church. As we walk through this letter, his focus isn't on some unique, unrepeatable, you know, niche sort of situation in Crete.

[15:08] His focus is establishing a healthy church that will survive every situation in Crete. In other words, this book is about what we're separated from, what we're missing in the midst of COVID-19, that it's about the church of God.

And what's more, because it's an open letter to the churches, it's written to the church of God. And so we receive this message as well alongside Titus.

Now, Paul begins saying, Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, what's odd here? Normally, when someone lists their credentials, they list the most impressive thing first. You know, if you have a PhD, you list PhD right after your name, before you list your other lesser degrees. We list our qualifications and our accolades in descending order.

You know, start big and add the rest at the end, right? You know, several presidents, you know, in recent past were governors before that. Well, we think of them first as presidents, then as governors, not governors first just because it was chronological, right?

[16:20] We think of the highest achievement first. Which would mean Paul would normally lead with apostle, right? That's the highest office in the church.

But Paul doesn't lead with apostle. Instead, he begins with servant of God. Now, as Paul is about to say at the end of verse one, the gospel leads to Godliness.

It changes the heart of every Christian, including church leaders, especially as we're going to find church leaders. So leadership, even apostleship in the church, becomes a stewardship of service. And we've seen that, right? Recently in the book of Matthew. If you think back to chapter 20, when Jesus is talking with his disciples, he said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them, should not be so among you.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be your slave. Now, as we saw, you know, in that passage, right?

[17:32] Leadership for Christians is not an opportunity to accumulate servants or to accumulate prestige. It's an opportunity to serve.

And as we saw, as we walked through. And if you missed that sermon or if you haven't thought about it in a while, I really, I mean, I grew a lot through prepping and preaching that sermon.

If you go back to that sermon, Matthew chapter 20, that section 25 to 27, has a lot to do with how the church works, how Christian homes ought to work.

And it's different, I think, because of what Christ said, it's different than a lot of cultural assumptions about the church are.

As we saw there, every leadership commission in the scriptures, whether it's in the home or in the church or anywhere, has service in view, not power.

[18:29] Right. Parents don't extract something from their children. They they give specifically they transmit the faith. Husbands don't lead their wives to get their own way.

They are responsible to lead their wives into deeper fellowship and obedience to the Lord. It's not for the husband at all service in the church is always service in the home service leadership in is always for the person being that for that person for their good.

And it's the same in the church. Right. What has what goal has the Lord set for elders and pastors? Hebrews chapter 13 said to obey leaders, submit to them for their keeping watch over souls as those who have to give an account.

Right. The goal is not leaders getting their own way about the leaders. It's about the congregation to keep watch over souls that they are growing in the Lord. They are not straying away. It's for the flock. It's not for the leader.

And probably the ultimate goal statement for for leading the people of God is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, with all your might.

[19:39] These words that I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children. You shall talk to them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and lie down and when you rise.

And that's the chief and probably the overarching leadership commission to the people of God. The goal of leadership in the kingdom is leading others to love and serve the king.

And so husbands and fathers and pastors and here Paul, a servant, his apostleship is a service, are charged to lead their families and congregations into holiness and love for the Lord.

Leadership in the kingdom of God is a stewardship to give just as the king himself gave his very life for his people.

And so you ought to feel as if elders and deacons and leaders of every church that the Lord places you in at every season of your life are giving to you, not using you for their gain.

[ 20 : 44 ] And so that's who Paul is an apostle, which means he's a servant of God's churches. Now, what is he doing? How is he serving his ministry serves in two ways? It's for two things.

The second half of verse one, he says, for the for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with God. The ministry of the apostles and of the church they serve is is this. It's for the faith of God's people.

It is to preach the gospel and to bring them to faith. It is to preach the gospel and bolster them in their faith. That is to make them resoundingly confident in Christ. It is to preach the gospel and shape them in their faith so that they know the truth of God's word, which he says leads to God. Churches are rooted friends in the gospel and the gospel works in God's people to reshape us from the inside out into godly service who offer the hope of the gospel to the world, which is exactly how Paul continues.

if you look at verses two and three he says in hope of eternal life which god who never lies promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested his word through the preaching with which i have been entrusted by the command of god our savior now let me point out a few important details in those verses first the church the the people of god have our hope anchored somewhere and and when paul says hope he isn't saying well i hope this comes true someday right i hope you know i tell my wife every time we we pass on the side of a road a corvette for so i i want a corvette um i i hope someday to have a corvette um but i don't expect that i i don't think that's in the cards for me so to speak um but when the bible talks about hope it's talking about where we have our expectation right i don't expect to have that corvette but i have my expectation my confidence our hope we're staking our life is in heaven where is your confidence anchored and i'm not asking you necessarily you know where do you think the sunday school answer is but where is it right now we're in the middle of a circumstance that presently has us separated from each other covet is shaking a lot of our foundations where are we're setting our hopes right for instance even if you're financially unaffected by this first of all praise the lord thank him for it right but even if you're financially unaffected i bet you feel that your confidence in your finances is shaken you feel the inherent instability much more now even if you're medically unaffected right now praise the lord but i bet you feel your confidence in your health is shaken right even if covid in all its ways has mostly left you left you alone i bet any illusion that you had that you're in control of your own life is being ripped away how many plans have you had to change recently how often have you wanted to do something and been unable to do it there is something else in the driver's seat our hope must not be in ourselves no matter what disney says and and our hope must not be in the things of this life the circumstances of this world they can be taken away in an instant and friends they will be on the day we close our eyes for good whether that's from covid or something else our hope our confidence must be be and for christians it is rooted in christ we serve the king who conquered death we serve the king who carried a cross for his people we serve the king who calls us verse 2 to hope in eternal life with him and what are you hoping are you hoping in an end of the coronavirus now certainly we must pray for the end of the pandemic we must pray for those who are affected we must serve others if we're able but if tomorrow the virus vanished something else will kill you today tomorrow 50 years from now if your confidence confidence is in let's just ride out this virus thing your hope is much too small and it will fail you eventually or are you hoping in your plans right your career plans your education plans your family plans

[ 25 : 58 ] i hope covet 19 has shown you those are fragile foundations on which to build the storm can sweep them away at any instant now truly enjoy those things invest in them but don't build your life on them don't rest your hope there instead based on the knowledge of the truth verse one we rest our confidence in eternal life with christ verse 2. how can we have that hope that confidence right we don't trust our wishes or our intuition or or the trends of history even paul is quick to point out this is kind of the second major thing i want to look at in verses two and three that we trust a person because christianity isn't just a list of doctrines now paul is very concerned about doctrine right right doctrine in this letter we're going to see that he gives a lot of attention to correcting wrong doctrine and teaching right doctrine but the only reason any of that doctrine matters is because it comes from a trustworthy god who has spoken it we wouldn't believe it otherwise and since he has spoken and because he is sovereign and because he is true and because he is trustworthy then we can listen and we must listen and and specifically what kind of speech does paul point out verse two not just god making a list of things to remember not just god making a list of doctrines or a list of commands to obey god made a promise so it means we are trusting god we are trusting him in the

promise that he has made when the bible talks about faith that's what it's talking about not some general i have a faith tradition or i find inspiration in the bible or even i believe the doctrines of the bible certainly all those things can be true but the trust the faith that we're talking about when we are saved by faith uh saved by grace through faith is i trust the god of the bible i believe his testimony is true that christ died for sinners was buried and raised to life and for the fulfillment of the scriptures and for the fulfillment of the scriptures and it is him i trust i trust him i trust his promise to offer me eternal life with him to and to all who repent and believe and that's what biblical faith is trust in the god of the bible that he will offer eternal life all who repent and believe including verse four he said to titus my one true child in a common faith grace and peace from god the father and christ jesus our savior and we just said in verses uh verse one that the gospel leads to godliness it gives us so big a treasure christ himself it breaks the shackles of hoping in this world it knits us to christ to his family through adoption and anchors our hearts in heaven and what happens when there's the whole community of people like that what we call the church or a result of that paul calls titus his true child and paul said that of others this is not just a one off paul said that of his other co-workers uh if you look at the other pastoral epistles first and second timothy he he also has affection for timothy he says second timothy chapter one to timothy my beloved child i long to see you that i may be filled with joy um he he speaks in uh the letter to

philemon of philemon of onesimus he says i am sending onesimus back to you sending my very heart and this is not only to certain particular individuals but paul has an affection to entire churches entire congregations um uh in looking at the the book of philippians he says um uh or so he said for for god is my witness how i yearn for you all with the affection of christ jesus and again to the philippian church he says uh therefore my brothers whom i love and long for my joy and crown stand firm in the lord my beloved right and and how often do the apostles um in their letters to the the churches call them brothers and sisters again you can look at the letter to the thessalonians um paul said you know like a father with his children we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of god who calls you into his own kingdom and glory and this wasn't unique to paul either as if he were the weepy and affectionate apostle um quite the contrary right we we think of paul is sort of aggressive uh and very concerned with doctrine well he is sort of a mama bear so right the reason he is so concerned with the faith and the practice of the churches is because he is so knit to them in love he cares so much for the church um and this was not only true of paul it's also true of the other apostles the leaders of the church and in fact it's true of titus um in second corinthians 8 he talks about sending titus to the church in corinth uh to minister to them uh prior to his ministry in creed here's what he says of titus he said thanks be to god who put it in the heart of titus the same earnest care i have for you for he not only accepted our appeal but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord titus has this burning for he not only accepted our appeal but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord titus has this burning um passion for the church the apostle john and third john says the apostle john and third john says i have no greater joy than to hear that my children that is the church receiving this letter are walking in the truth and it's even true of churches as a whole for other people in the church in first thessalonians 3 um paul says now that timothy has come to us and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and you long to see us as we long to see you the the whole church friends the apostles the elders the congregations have an affection for each other hopefully you feel a longing for your church family today why is that why do christians love christ's people well it's because jesus christ who died for me he is the most important thing in my life and he if he is also that most important thing in your life the apple of your eye we have a bond that transcends every human affiliation right we have a person a savior a lord in common i am raised with christ my savior and my god and so are you right that's more solid than the ground we're standing on more real than any interest or cause or affiliation we can have and it's not abstract it's not just a cause or an interest it's a person he is a person he has made us family and so

i worship jesus christ and if you do too i have a higher interest in common with you than with any other affiliation i have in this world no other label or grouping in this world can top that can best that we have a hope anchored in heaven itself because his tomb is empty i i have nothing more fundamentally in common i can have nothing more fundamentally in common with other people than that and so if you're missing your church family more than the clubs you belong to or more than your colleagues at work or more than your teachers or fellow students or whatever else you're

missing in the midst of this quarantine that's why the gospel of grace changes us we belong to a family whose home is to heaven it transcends every earthly tie every affiliation every earthly culture every preference and so friends that is what the church is people who trust the god of the bible and have taken him up on his promise to redeem sinners by the blood of the risen messiah and who have been transformed in their hearts by the powerful working of the gospel and become a family together and that all of us adopted into christ and who have become servants of god of his church and of his mission and that's what we're about to see in the next week still as the lord opens up now through paul's letter hit to paul's son in the faith titus we will deepen our understanding of the church and of our appreciation of for the church of for the church and push us on towards more healthy more faithful more satisfying church life together friends christ loves his church he shed his blood for her and so he cares for her even now while we are physically separated from one another and so let us with eager anticipation look through the book of titus and find gold find gold find treasure about christ's love for us about how we ought to be building one another up in love and how we do that practically and let this in the moment that we are separated from our church family let it be the let this let the book of titus knit up and build up our church family together so that we are stronger more knowledgeable about the church of christ in the days that come i'm so excited for this and i can't wait to share it with you and so now i've turned this back over we're going to sing a song of response to this before we close our time together god bless you all amen amen thank you dave thank you for that reminder we're going to sing the hope that's an anchor for our soul a song a song I will hold to you With endless love All my fears And away And everything I will trust in you There is hope in the promise of the cross You gave everything to save the world through life And this hope is an anchor for my soul Our God will stand and shake the world Changing one Changing one Mommy Because there is a chance to come Your promise sure You will not let go There is hope There is hope in the promise of the cross You gave everything to save the world you love And this hope is an anchor for my soul Our God will stand unshakable Sing your name Your name is higher Your name is greater All my hope is in you [ 39 : 56 ] Your word unfailing Your promise unshaken All my hope is in you There is hope There is hope in the promise of the cross You gave everything to save the world you love And this hope is an anchor for my soul Our God will stand unshakable Sing high love Love ye because thou hast first loved me And precious And precious my party On Calvary's tree

Well friends I'm I was excited to see more of our church family With the Landbecks just there I hope that you were blessed as well By opening God's word together And considering our church family So even though we are apart from one another now Be in prayer Be in contact Be in communication And friends Let us look to our God And from his word Receive the knowledge That we are a church family together Let this build us up in love And so friends To him who loves us And has freed us From our sins by his blood And made us a kingdom Priests to his God and Father To him be glory And dominion Forever and ever Amen Friends

Go in peace God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all God bless you all