

The Gospel Ministry

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- [0 : 0 0] Please open your Bibles this morning to the book of Titus. The book of Titus. We are beginning a new sermon series this morning in the book of Titus.
- I can't remember exactly what page that is in and your pew Bibles there in front of you. It's in the 915 to 940 range, right there. What is it? 938.
- If you want to use your pew Bibles there in front of you, you can find that on page 938. The book of Titus. This book is a letter from the Apostle Paul to a fellow minister in the gospel, a co-worker, Titus.
- And as he gives Titus instruction and encouragement, instruction for the churches there in Crete, we can gain insight, we can gain knowledge for what a church of sound doctrine ought to believe and ought to do.
- We can gain insight for our church as we think about our life together in the days ahead. So let's look there now. Titus chapter 1. We're going to be in verses 1 through 4 this morning.
- [1 : 0 4] Paul writes, 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.
- To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. Would you pray with me once more?
- Lord, as we begin this book, we commit our time in your word to you. We ask that you would stir our hearts' affections for Christ, and would you be pleased to shape Seawee Bay by the power of your word.
- We pray and we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Imagine with me that you are in the first few months of a brand new job.
- You've wanted this job for a while, and now you're here. You're getting your feet wet and beginning to go about your work. And you've been given a book that provides your job description and job descriptions for every single fellow worker in the company.
- [2 : 3 7] And as with many new jobs, your first few months are spent with some on-the-ground training. You had this world-class mentor who really seemed to know what he was doing. He walked you through the ins and outs of what the work would look like but then the time comes when the mentor leaves and the work begins.
- As you begin to get into the weeds of the day-to-day grind, you realize there are some major problems here. There are people here in this company, in your workplace, that don't seem to follow the book at all.
- In fact, they seem to know what it says. I think they could pass any written exam on protocols and procedures that you might give them. Sometimes they seem like they know even more about the book than you do.

But something is off about the way that they go about their work. They don't seem to have any interest in actually doing what they're supposed to do. And not only that, but they sound so smart that they're beginning to convince everyone else around them to live this way too.

You got a mess to work through. But thankfully, your old mentor comes through again and he writes you a letter to remind you of your call and your confidence.

[3 : 57] That yes, what you're doing is hard. Yes, this is a big challenge. But press on because it is worth it. Well, this is exactly the situation that Titus finds himself in in the book that bears his name, the book of Titus.

Titus is one of Paul's converts. Paul had shared the gospel with Titus, seen him come to faith. And now Titus has become a fellow co-worker and companion of Paul.

They've labored together already in the church at Corinth. And now Paul and Titus have traveled together to the island of Crete, seeking to bring the gospel to this pagan island and share the gospel to build the church.

And they've seen the Lord work in power. They've seen souls saved. And the church was starting to be formed. Churches were forming on the island. And now Paul has left Titus behind to establish and continue the work that was started.

But as you might imagine, Satan hated the work that was going on in Crete. Satan, as we saw last week, hates to see the health of the church.

[5 : 10] He hates to see the church grow. And so what he did was he sent false teachers there in Crete. False teachers who would spread lies and do everything they could to stop the work of gospel ministry.

They're spreading lies and divisions. False teachers have crept into the church. And so Paul, as a good mentor would, he writes to Titus to remind him of two important truths as he continues the work in Crete.

Two important truths. He reminds Titus of the call and the confidence of gospel ministry. The call and the confidence of gospel ministry.

This is going to be our outline this morning. If you're a note taker, I encourage you to write these down. It'll help you to follow along. This is the call and the confidence of gospel ministry. And what I hope we'll see in our time together is that, yes, this is a book written to Titus, but this is also our call and our confidence as believers.

As we go about the work of gospel ministry, we share this call and we share this confidence with Paul and with Titus and with every believer in Christ.

[6 : 26] So first, we see the call of gospel ministry. The call of gospel ministry. Every Christian is called to the ministry of the gospel.

We may not all be called to be pastors or called to be church planters. We may not be called to be an apostle. Paul here is uniquely called in his role as an apostle of Christ Jesus.

But every believer, every Christian, is called by God to join in the work of gospel ministry. But what is that?

What exactly is gospel ministry? What is the aim of our ministry as individual believers in Christ? And collectively, what is our aim together as a church?

Well, Paul tells us in verse 1. Look there with me. Verse 1. It says, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for, what's he writing? For, what's he working?

[7 : 28] For, this is what he's laboring. For, for the Savior, the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.

That's the mission. That's the mission. Every phrase is important here. They're all connected. How does the old song go? The head bone's connected to the, what is it? The shoulder bone?

The shoulder bone is connected to the, the rest of the body. It's all connected. Whatever the song is, it's a brilliant song. Every part is connected. And in Paul here, the same thing is happening.

He's, he's giving his aim for ministry. And he says, all of it is connected. Election is connected to faith. Faith is connected to knowledge. And genuine knowledge of the truth is connected to godliness.

So let's look at each part here. Every phrase is important. He says, he says, he's laboring for the sake of the faith of God's elect. That is gospel ministry in a sentence.

[8 : 30] That is gospel ministry. Gospel ministry is, is laboring for the sake of the faith of God's elect. Whether externally by evangelism, as we seek to share the gospel broadly with the lost, and we see men and women come to faith in Christ for the first time, or internally in the church, through the training, the discipling ministries of the church, seeing, seeing followers of Christ, disciples of Christ, grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Gospel ministry is laboring to see people come to faith and grow in faith in Christ Jesus. Is that your ambition? Is that your aim?

Is that your desire for our life together as a church? Now, election may be a scary word for some of us.

That word gets a bad rap. But we need to see this, that Paul's understanding of election was the reason he gave his life to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

For Paul, election was the reason he went to share the gospel. He believed that in every place he went, God had elected or chosen.

[9 : 49] That's what election means. He had chosen men and women unto salvation. And he believed that he was appointed as a servant to spread the seed of the gospel far and wide with the confidence that the Lord would cause it to bear the fruit of faith in his chosen people.

He was, verse 3, entrusted by the command of God to preach the word. So he writes, verse 1, he writes, for the sake of the faith of God's elect.

This is what God had shown Paul in the city of Corinth. You might remember Acts chapter 18. Acts chapter 18. He had labored there in Corinth. He had preached the gospel, wearing himself out.

Some of them accepted the message. Some of them rejected the message. And the Lord spoke to him one night in a vision. Acts chapter 18, verse 9. The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid, but go on speaking.

Do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you. For I have many in this city who are my people. And so he stayed a year and six months teaching the word of God among them.

[11 : 02] Why? Because God had many in that city who were his people. Many who were to become his people by hearing and receiving the word in faith.

Paul labored because he saw this connection between election and faith. But what is faith? What is faith? For by grace you have been saved through faith.

We are saved through faith. That's what we're aiming to produce in God's elect. So what is it? You know, this is one of the most watered down, diluted, stripped of its power words in the English language.

You can tell I have a hard time with this. Okay? You hear people say, Just have faith. You have your faith. I have my faith. Or keep the faith.

He's a person of faith. She's a person of faith. What are we talking about? What does that mean when we talk about faith? No one is saved by just having faith.

[12 : 10] No one is saved by keeping the faith, whatever that means. No one is saved by being a person of faith unless that faith is in someone who can save you.

See, faith is a tether. It is a rope. It's a chain that you throw outward, away from yourself to connect you to someone or something else.

We often talk about faith like we just throw it up in the sky and we just believe it's going to latch on to something that's going to help us. That's not biblical faith.

Untethered faith will save no one. No one who has fallen into a pit is saved by just having a rope unless on the other side of that rope is someone who is able to pull you out to save you.

Saving faith, in the Bible, saving faith is genuine trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. That's the only kind of faith that saves.

[13 : 19] Faith is the rope that ties your heart to Christ and all that He is, all that He's done in the gospel, and His reliance on Him alone, His dependence on Him alone is outward reaching towards Christ, saying, I'm not worthy of trust.

I can't bring myself out of this pit. Only you are. Only you can. I'm not righteous. You are. I'm not worthy of praise. You are. I'm not Lord of my life.

You are. You alone are God. That's saving faith. That's what we're laboring to see in our evangelism externally, in our discipleship internally, in our marriages, in our relationships, in our friendships, in our hospitality, in our life.

We are laboring for the sake of the faith of God's elect. And for that to happen, church, it requires knowledge of the truth.

Knowledge of the truth. You know, one of the craftiest lies that the devil has told the church is that somehow knowledge is an enemy of the faith.

[14 : 30] That you have your spiritual people over here who feel and experience, and you got your intellectual people over here who think and who study. The Bible doesn't talk that way. They are connected.

You can have faith without knowledge, but that knowledge, that faith will not save you. Some of the most devout men and women of faith are Muslims, Jews, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Their level of devotion, their level of faith is astounding, but they are trusting lies. They've tied their ropes to dust. You can have knowledge without faith, but that will not save you.

Even the devil believes the facts about Christ. Even the demons believe and shudder. It doesn't help you to know that someone's up there on the other side of the pit if you don't trust them to pull you out.

You see, we need both. Knowledge and faith. Knowledge and faith. We're aiming to produce both. You don't have to have much knowledge.

[15 : 39] You don't have to have an upper education degree or years of training, but you have to have enough knowledge of the truth to latch your heart and your mind onto the message of the gospel and say, I trust that to be true.

I believe that message to be true. I know and I believe that I'm a sinner. That's knowledge and faith. I know and I believe that I am separated from God.

Knowledge and faith. I know and I believe that apart from the grace of God, I will die in my sin and go to hell. Knowledge and faith. I know and I believe that Christ lived, that he died perfectly in my place, that he died on the cross for my sin.

I know and I believe that he rose from the grave in my place. I know and I trust him when he says, if anyone believes in me, he will not perish, but have eternal life.

So on the basis of that truth, that knowledge, my mind convinced and my heart awakened, I trust in Jesus Christ.

[16 : 51] It may be that you've never trusted in Christ. And if that's you this morning, if you hear these words and you say, I've heard that, but I've never believed that.

I've heard that knowledge, but I've never trusted that. Do you believe him? Do you know him and trust him as your savior?

Repent and believe the words of truth. You see, church, when we preach and proclaim the gospel, we are proclaiming knowledge that if believed, will save sinners and equip saints.

But don't leave it there. Don't be content to leave it there. What does Paul say? Election is connected to faith. Faith is connected to knowledge and real, genuine, saving knowledge of the truth is connected with godliness.

For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness. You see, this was the big problem here in Crete.

[18 : 05] False teachers have crept in and were teaching that you can keep the information and you can keep the knowledge and you can go on living however you want. As long as you know the right facts.

They were driving a wedge between saving knowledge and godly living, saying you can have one without the other. But Paul here says, any who truly know the Lord will bear the fruit of godliness.

See, the roots of election are hidden from our eyes. We can't see that. But the fruits of righteousness in those who believe, that's visible. That we can see.

Some of you, I know, grew up farming. And you can drive by a field and tell exactly what crop that is out there growing before it's even born any fruit.

I can't. Okay? I'm helpless. I'm absolutely clueless when it comes to that. We'll be driving by a field and someone in the car will ask, what is that? And I'll say, I don't know. But if it's bearing fruit, I can tell you, that's a blackberry bush.

[19 : 14] That's an apple tree. How do you know? I see apples. I see blackberries. I see the fruit that it's producing. Jesus tells us in Luke chapter 6, what? You know a tree by what?

By its fruits. He's not talking about a tree. He's talking about us, about our hearts. The only way that we're able to see and to discern the internal, hidden state of someone's heart is by the spiritual fruit of godliness in their life.

saving faith accords with godliness. Friend, if you or me or anyone else claims to be a follower of Christ, we should expect to see them follow.

If you or me or anyone else claims to be a child of God, born again as a child of God, we should expect to see the fruit of new life, regeneration.

If you or me or anyone else expects and claims to have our roots down in God's grace, to be rooted in the grace of God, we should expect to see the fruits of godliness in our life.

[20 : 27] Not perfection, but progress and pursuit of godliness. Putting off the old man, putting on the new. Church, this is the call of gospel ministry.

I want to hang this as a banner over every ministry of our church, over the preaching of the word is for the sake of the faith of God's elect. A knowledgeable faith, a godly faith.

Over our discipleship of one another is for the sake of the faith of God's elect. Over our children's ministry and the children's wing is for the sake of the faith of God's elect.

But how can we be certain that this will be accomplished? What is our confidence? Do we have any assurances that all of this work will be worth it?

That our efforts here as a church and the ministry of the word, that it won't be in vain? As we labor and we look together towards the new year and all that we have planned together as a church, as we launch out as a gospel preaching church in this area, how can we be confident that our ministry will be effective?

[21 : 34] Look with me to verses 2 and 3. Verses 2 and 3. This is our confidence of gospel ministry. All of this that we are aiming to produce, faith, knowledge, godliness, all of it, Paul says, all of it is in hope of eternal life.

In hope of eternal life. Our pursuit of knowledge and the truth is in hope. Faith is born in hope. Our pursuit of godliness is forward looking, onward looking to the hope of eternal life.

Our confidence, church, is in God's eternal promise and in God's appointed means. God's eternal promise and God's appointed means.

Christians are those who have the hope of eternal life. hope. We believe God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have what?

Help me. Eternal life. That's our hope. But we don't speak about hope the same way that the rest of the world does. The way that we tend to use that word, hope, is anything but certain.

[22 : 52] I hope it stops raining so much. Right? I hope the Braves will catch the Mets and take over first place. I hope the economy straightens out sometime soon.

All of that is wishful thinking. It's hopeful thinking. There's no certainty in that. That's a wish. It's not a certainty. It's not grounded in truth. But see, the Christian hope of eternal life is not wishful thinking.

It is certain hope. 100% certain. It's more certain than the sun rising tomorrow. It's more certain than your next breath.

Nothing is as certain as the hope of eternal life for all who are in Christ because God has promised it to be so. Look there at what he says again.

God, who never lies, promised this hope before the ages began. Numbers 23, verse 19 tells us, God is not a man that he should lie or a son of man that he should change his mind.

[24 : 03] Has he said and will he not do it or has he spoken and will he not fulfill it? See, our confidence in life and in ministry is the certain hope of eternal life promised by God who never lies.

See, the false teachers there in Crete were teaching falsehood. They were proclaiming lies. They were selling lies. They were deceiving many. And Paul says, believe the promise of God.

Remember the promise of God. God never lies. Church, listen to me here. everything else that you set your hope on in this life will disappoint you.

Everything else that you set your hope on in this life, if you set your hope on the economy, I guess you're probably pretty disappointed right now. If you set your hope on politics, politicians, you will be let down and disappointed.

If you set your hope on the uncertainty of riches, you will be disappointed. If you set your hope ultimately on a relationship, a friendship, a husband, a wife, you will be disappointed.

[25 : 20] But if you set your hope fully on Christ Jesus, you will never be disappointed. Because God, who never lies, has promised eternal life in Christ for all who believe before the ages began.

Do you see how certain that is? How unshakable that is before the ages began. Ephesians 1, remember this, it told us, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Before the ages began. 2 Timothy 1, verse 9 says, God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

You see, our salvation in time, our calling to faith in Christ in time, our holiness in time, Paul says it's not because of our works in time.

It's not because of anything we've done in this life. Rather, it's rooted in the eternal plan and promise of God. That's our confidence in this ministry. We can't lose this or mess this up because this promise was made to us who believe in Christ before we even existed.

[26 : 50] Now, let's come full circle here, church. We're laboring for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness in hope.

How is that hope given? How does anyone move from death to life? From darkness to light?

How does anyone move from the hopelessness of the world to the hope of eternal life? Look with me once more to verse 3. Paul says, at the proper time, God manifested this hope in his word through the preaching of the gospel.

How is hope manifested? How is it brought about in the hearts of the lost? How is it revealed and made known? Paul says, through the preaching of the word.

How do the elect come to faith in accordance with knowledge of the truth in accordance with godliness and hope of eternal life through the preaching of the word?

[28 : 03] Why does Paul preach the gospel even when it cost him everything? Imprisonment, ultimately death. Why do we place such a high emphasis on the preaching of the word?

Why do I spend hours every week laboring to explain four verses, all the four verses to you this morning? is because, church, we believe that God's word and the preaching of the gospel is God's appointed means to manifest hope, to manifest the hope of eternal life, to bring about hope in the hearts of the lost and to fix hope in the hearts of the saints.

What God purposes in eternity, he brings about in time through his appointed means. God accomplishes his purposes through means.

And our confidence is that this word, as we proclaim the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, is 100% effective in accomplishing the plan of God, even when we don't see it.

You remember the verses that Treg read for us this morning? Isaiah 55. It seems like every day we've been getting rain, finally we have had some sunshine out here today.

[29 : 24] I told Amanda I wasn't sure if we moved to Allendal or Seattle. It's been raining so much. But if you're a farmer, you know the importance of rain. Rain gives life.

It's effective. It's what waters and nourishes the soil. It brings growth. It brings life from the ground. Rain is good. It's the means. It's the tool, the instrument of life and growth.

Isaiah 55 reminds us that God's word is like the rain. Isaiah 55, verses 10 and 11, he says, For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be.

That goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty. Listen to this. But it shall accomplish the purpose for which I send it.

It shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. The word of God is 100% effective in fulfilling the plan of God.

[30 : 42] Hope is formed in the hearts of the lost and hope is fixed in the hearts of the redeemed by the preaching of the word.

Every one of you who's a believer in the room knows that to be true. How did you come to faith in Christ? Whether it was a friend, a family member, a church service, a pastor, a radio program, or by yourself with the word, someone, somehow, some way, God sent his word to you and it landed on fertile soil.

And that word caused growth in your heart. The growth of the hope of eternal life. The certain hope of eternal life planned and promised in Christ by God for you before the ages began was manifested in your life through the preaching of the word.

See, God has appointed the preaching of the word as his chosen means to accomplish his eternal purposes. He does not bypass us in his plans.

He works in and through us as we together proclaim the truth. This is why we send missionaries to the ends of the earth. Why we pray for a different country every week that the Lord would send the truth, send the word out to Bhutan this morning.

[32 : 12] This is why we preach the gospel. I stand here, Treg stands here week in, week out and proclaim the word of truth. This is why we share the good news of Christ with the lost and evangelize our lost friends and neighbors and co-workers and family members is because apart from hearing the word of God, no one can come to faith in Christ.

I love the fact that Romans 9 and Romans 10 are next to each other in the Bible. I encourage you all to go home and read those two chapters.

Back to back. Don't stop. Read all the way through Romans 9 to Romans 10. Go home, do that this afternoon. They hold hands. They're friends. They get along.

Paul wrote both chapters, I promise. Romans 9, he highlights the sovereignty of God and salvation. He highlights God's purposes in election.

He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. That's a whole other sermon or 20. But in the very next breath, here we are in Romans 10.

[33 : 21] Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have never heard?

How are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. election is connected to faith.

Faith is connected to knowledge. Knowledge is connected to godliness and all of it is lived in this rock-solid hope of eternal life promised by the mouth of God through His Word to all who believe.

Church, that is our call and that is our confidence. That's the ministry that we are to be about. That's the ministry of the gospel.

[34 : 31] This is like a good father who years before he ever even has a son promises that one day he will take that future son to the ballpark.

No work, no school, no homework, no distractions, just him and his son enjoying time together. The point isn't the ballpark as fun as that will be.

The point is time together with dad. And years later the day comes and his son is born. And this little baby has no idea what his father has planned for him.

Only the father knows when. He wakes his son up. And he hands him two tickets. And he says I planned something for us.

He sees what it says. He sees what the invitation is all about. He sees the names of the teams and that the price of admission has been paid in full. He doesn't have to pay a dime. He can come without cost to himself.

That his father will fulfill his promise. He's trustworthy. He's proven himself to be worthy of trust. And so he trusts that his father is going to keep his word.

[36 : 43] He wakes up and carries them in his pocket and he marks down the days on his calendar. His whole life is shaped around that coming day until the day arrives at last and he can finally enjoy the realization of the promise that was made before he was even born.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that for those who are in Christ, Lord, that is your doing.

Would you strengthen the hope of eternal life that you have placed within our hearts? And Lord, we pray, our prayer is that we would see faith born in the lost for the first time, even this week, as we share the gospel.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.