

“Dear Titus...” – Titus 1:1-4

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take a Bible and meet me in Titus 1...

Today marks the beginning of a new series that will take us through this New Testament letter, written by the apostle Paul, to an early church leader by the name of Titus. It's not a long letter, at just three chapters, and it's not one that gets a lot of attention today, but it is packed with meaningful material that should shape our ambitions as Christians and as a local church.

We often talk about wanting our church to be a beacon of light, a glowing community on a hill that truly reflects Christ to our neighbors. But if we are honest, there can sometimes be a nagging disconnect between the Sunday morning songs we sing and the Monday morning lives we lead. This is a problem since we live in a world that is increasingly cynical toward religion, often because they see a significant gap between our professed beliefs and our actual behavior. The book of Titus meets us right in that tension, serving as a practical guide for bridging that divide by showing us how a deep encounter with God's grace should naturally overflow into a life that is noticeably and beautifully different.

The heartbeat of this letter is the idea that we were saved not just to secure a future in heaven, but to become a people who are passionately devoted to good works. Paul argues that while we can never earn God's love through our own efforts, the very purpose of His grace is to transform us into individuals whose lives actually "beautify" or "decorate" the message of the Gospel for everyone to see. This presents us with a massive opportunity to reach our culture. In an era where people are starving for authenticity, Titus teaches us that the most powerful way to share our faith isn't necessarily through a new program or a clever marketing campaign, but through the quiet, consistent, and radical kindness of a community that lives out what it professes.

As we begin this journey through Titus, prepare to be both challenged and encouraged by its ancient wisdom. We are going to explore how the truth of the Gospel should saturate every part of our lives—affecting our character, our relationships, and our impact on the world around us. If you've ever felt like your faith was staying on the surface or if you've wondered how our church can truly make a difference in our community, this study is for you. By God's grace, we'll discover together how to become the kind of people who don't just talk about the light, but who let it shine so brightly that the world can't help but take notice and give glory to God.

But as with any series, it must be introduced. The opening verses of this letter—usually referred to as the prologue—don't merely identify the author (Paul) but also clue us in on how he viewed himself, his ministry, and his relationship to the recipient (Titus). This is what we will consider briefly today. To that end, let's look at the first four verses together. If you are able, I invite you to stand to your feet in recognition of the authority of God's Word. The most important thing I will say to you today is what I am about to read, so listen accordingly and follow along, as I begin reading in verse 1...

“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, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³ 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; ⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.” (Titus 1:1-4)

This is God's Word. You may be seated...

The letter to Titus begins, like most other New Testament and Greco-Roman letters, with a greeting that identifies both the author—in this case, Paul—and the recipient—a man by the name of Titus. Paul we know. Most recently, in our sermon series through the first half of the book of Acts, we considered his background persecuting the Church and his miraculous conversion to Christianity on the road to Damascus. When we paused our Acts series, Paul had found his way to the church in Antioch, at the invitation of Barnabas, where he was involved in a thriving ministry of discipling others who had recently begun to follow Jesus. We were on the cusp of that church sending Paul out on the first of his famous missionary journeys.

When we come to Titus, we have jumped ahead in history. Paul has been a missionary for many years, and Titus was likely one that Paul first became acquainted with during his second missionary journey and who subsequently traveled with Paul to partner in his missionary efforts. We'll say more about Titus and his background later, but the opening verse of our text is about Paul. And the first impression we are given of Paul is that he is a man who knows exactly who he is and whose he is.

The Identity of the Messenger: Mastered and Authorized (1a)

Paul introduces himself not by providing a list of personal accomplishments or citing his academic credentials, but by providing instead two seemingly contradictory titles that define his identity—“*A servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ*” (1:1).

The first title he claims is one of humility and is probably better rendered as “slave” of God. He sees himself as permanently committed to his Master.¹ By calling himself God's slave, he is aligning his life with great leaders of the Old Testament, such as Moses and Joshua, who were also referred to as servants/slaves of the Lord.² We shy away from the term “slave,” but Paul wore it like “a badge of honor.”³ It put him in the best of company. It put him in the company of none other than Jesus Himself, *the* Servant of the Lord. This self-description highlights a life that has been completely surrendered. As John MacArthur explains,

“Paul was in complete, but willing, bondage to God. He has no life that he called his own, no will of his own, purpose of his own, or plan of his own. All was subject to his Lord. In every thought, every breath, and every effort he was under the mastery of God.”⁴

In other words, Jesus was his Lord. When we profess that “Jesus is Lord,” as we do in those baptismal waters, we are saying that we are mastered individuals. Paul was too. He no longer operates according to his own agenda or personal desires because he recognizes that he has been bought and paid for by the sacrifice of another (cf. 1 Pet 1:18-19; 1 Cor 6:19).

And this brings us to the very heart of the Gospel: while we were once in active revolt against our Creator and justly under His judgment, God in His incredible love sent Christ to bear our sins and reconcile us to Himself. Because of this redemptive work, our lives are no longer our own; we've been brought out of the darkness of our own rebellion and into a state of graceful ownership by a Master who is perfectly wise and just. For Paul, being a servant then is not a title of shame but an honor that signifies his total dependence on the God who rescued him. He was a mastered man. And the same should be true of every Christian in this place.

Of course, this is not an easy pill for many in our day to swallow. We live in a culture that is obsessed with self-branding and the pursuit of absolute autonomy, where we are told that we must be the masters of our own fate. We hear, “slave of Christ?”, and we think, “Hard pass.” We are told that there is such a thing as “your truth” as though truth were a concept beholden to your personal preferences. But the Scriptures challenges these modern myths by showing us that true meaning is found not in self-rule, but in being mastered by the Savior. Your true

identity is not something you “find” within yourself or build through your career; it’s something you receive from God. Paul reminds us that we are most ourselves when we remember that we are not our own.

And when you realize that you belong to God, it provides an incredible relief from the constant pressure to build your own status or secure your own worth. Whoever you are—whether you are a student in high school, a young professional, someone eyeing retirement, or someone who has outlived most of your peers—your life takes on inestimable value when you see yourself as a servant of the King, authorized to live out His purposes in every corner of your daily life. And this is actually freeing. Like Paul, we are most free when we are fully surrendered to the One who loved us and died for us. When we are slaves to Christ, we are free in every sense that truly matters. We are free from every enemy that stood against us, including sin and death. We are set free from “the constant striving for status and affection that characterizes the natural human state.”⁵ We’ve been set free to belong to Christ, whose yoke of obedience is light in view of the guilt and shame He has removed from our shoulders to borne on His on our behalf. All this attends being a “*servant of God*” (1:1).

That said, Paul immediately balances that first title with a second—“*an apostle of Jesus Christ*” (Titus 1:1). This is a claim of significant authority. If servant/slave indicates Paul’s submission, Apostle indicates his authority.⁶

What is an “*apostle*”? Literally, the word simply means “sent one.” An apostle is someone who has been specifically sent out as an official representative or envoy, carrying the full weight and authority of the one who commissioned them. Paul was commissioned by none other than the risen Christ. This was not a career path Paul chose for himself or a position he earned through a resume; rather, it was a sacred trust and a divine command that he received directly from the risen Lord. If his role as a slave emphasizes his obligation to obey, his role as an Apostle emphasizes his delegated right to speak on behalf of heaven.⁷ He stands before the church not as a religious entrepreneur offering his own opinions, but as an authorized spokesperson whose message is a direct conduit of divine revelation. He speaks for Christ.

There is no analogous office to the New Testament office of Apostle in the present. I know some traditions will speak of their leaders as “apostles,” but I think this is misguided. Such practice deviates from how the Bible applies this language and therefore sows confusion. Pastors are not Apostles. We don’t convey original divine revelation. The closest analogy to the office of Apostle would be that of the Old Testament prophet, who likewise would speak to God’s people on God’s behalf (2 Pet 2:11).⁸ There was a time when we needed such people to convey such revelation, particularly in that time prior to the arrival of Christ and in those times before God’s revelation was inscripturated (i.e., put into the written form that is the biblical canon). After that time, the need for such revelation has subsided (cf. Heb 1:1). We have what we need. The Church has been established, as Paul explains elsewhere, “*on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone*” (Eph 2:20). And the foundation laid is contained in the pages of our Bible. Thus, we have no need for Apostles today. We have need for what the Apostles passed down.

And this is why, when we gather and your pastors stand before you on Sunday mornings, we depend on the authority of God’s Word in our preaching. We have no intrinsic sage wisdom to offer. You don’t need a series of sermons on trending movies. You need a fellow-beggar, called by God to show you where to find bread. And that’s what we are as pastors, as Paul will remind Titus in due course.

So why study a book like Titus? The first few words tell us. We should study Titus because Paul, the author, was “*a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ*” (1:1).⁹ A mastered man and a commissioned messenger of Jesus Christ. And you need the message that Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, commissioned him to share. And this leads us to consider next...

The Purpose of His Ministry: Faith and Knowledge Expressed as Godliness (1b)

Immediately after telling us who he is, Paul shifts the focus to what his ministry is specifically designed to achieve. He operates with a laser-focused objective that centers on three interconnected realities: faith, truth, and godliness. Look again at verse 1...

“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...” (Titus 1:1)

First, he says that he serves *“for the sake of the faith of God’s elect...”* We’re getting into the deep end of the pool now. The word *“elect”* literally means *“chosen.”*¹⁰ The elect are God’s chosen people. Chosen for what? For salvation. Now that doesn’t negate human responsibility, and we see that even here. Paul’s apostleship exists for *“the faith”* (that’s human responsibility) *“of God’s elect”* (that’s divine sovereignty).¹¹ And furthermore, divine sovereignty didn’t negate Paul’s responsibility to engage in the missionary task; rather it gave him a bold confidence (cf. 18:9-10).¹² He preached to everyone without discrimination, knowing that God will effectively use his message to draw those He had chosen into a living relationship with Him. It’s not divine sovereignty *or* human responsibility. It’s both. As Daniel Akin explains,

*“Paul sees no dichotomy, no contradiction between the sovereignty of God and the human responsibility of man. Salvation from beginning to end is the sovereign work of the grace of God (Eph 2:8; Heb 12:2). And yet no one will be saved who does not repent and believe, and all who repent and believe will be saved (Rom 10:13).”*¹³

This is sometimes called *“theological compatibilism,”* the notion that divine sovereignty does not remove human responsibility. Both can exist at the same time; both are compatible with one another. Both are taught in Scripture. But they are *not* mutually dependent when it comes to doctrines like election. God’s people are the elect because they are the *“chosen”* not the *“choosers.”* Their choice depends on His, not the other way around. *“His choosing of His people is decisive.”*¹⁴ It’s the reason, in fact, they *can* choose Him. That’s grace too. This is why, for instance, during Paul’s first missionary journey described in Acts, he preaches the Gospel in Pisidian Antioch, and the text tells us, *“when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:48). Who believed? Those appointed for eternal life.

Is this mysterious? Yes. How do we know who is elect? By faith in Christ. Do I pretend to fully understand the divine mystery of all this? Absolutely not. Do I have questions? Yup. But am I committed to take the Bible at its Word? Also yes. And as I read the Bible, it seems to me that the accent is consistently on God as the Chooser, not as the one chosen. The glory and ultimacy of His choice, not ours (e.g., 1 John 4:19).¹⁵ But I don’t expect you to take my word for it. I expect you to read the Word of God for yourself and see what it says. And I think what you’ll find is that the Bible doesn’t speak about election in the same *“heated”* way that many in our day do. It leverages the doctrine to encourage us. As Sam Storms writes,

*“Divine election is a controversial subject. It has the potential to put Christians at each other’s throats as each defends their understanding of this complex topic. But election is designed by God to serve as a foundation for our gratitude and an incentive to holiness in life. That is precisely why Paul mentions it here in the opening verses of Titus 1. He reminds us that his ministry as an apostle is for the sake of those whom God has sovereignly chosen to inherit eternal life.”*¹⁶

However, I would add, when Paul describes his ministry as being *“for the sake of the faith of God’s elect,”* he doesn’t mean that his ministry is instrumental *merely* in the awakening of their faith, but also in the ongoing strengthening of their faith.¹⁷ His desire is not just to see people make a one-time decision, but to see their reliance on God deepen and mature over time. And one does not experience maturity in faith apart from a growing awareness of God’s truth.

This brings us to the next reason for Paul’s ministry, which we see at the end of verse 1—Paul’s ministry was “*for the sake of...[second]...their knowledge of the truth*”. This “*truth*” here is synonymous with the Gospel message itself¹⁸—the historical reality of what God has done in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Knowledge of the truth and faith are, thus, inseparable. To truly believe, one must first understand and embrace the truth of the Gospel. And to grow in our faith, requires a growing knowledge of the Gospel.

Yet, when Paul speaks of such “*knowledge*,” he’s not talking about *mere* “intellectual insight.”¹⁹ Such knowledge “*puffs up*” (1 Cor 8:1). He’s talking about a knowledge that “*accords with godliness*”. Do you see that in verse 1? That could be understood a couple different ways. Most people take it to mean that our faith and Gospel knowledge *produces* godliness (cf. “leads to” in NIV, CSB, HCSB). Paul would certainly agree that a Christian’s faith and knowledge should result in godly character and actions. He’ll make this clear throughout this letter. As John Stott put it: “Any doctrine which does not promote godliness is manifestly bogus.”²⁰ If we understand the Gospel, it should lead to godliness.

But another interpretation of the phrase is more along the lines of how the ESV translates it—it’s a truth “*which accords with godliness*” (cf. KJV; NKJV; NET). Philip Towner advocates for this understanding, suggesting that godliness is the “yardstick” or “the authentic measurement of truth.”²¹ In other words, godliness is the evidence that we possess a “*knowledge of the truth*.” This is also something that Paul teaches in this epistle (e.g., 1:16). There were false teachers in Crete, where Titus was stationed, who taught that the grace of God gave them a license to live however they wanted. But Paul disagrees. “Any truth claim that does not promote godliness is not truth.”²² A proper “*knowledge of the truth*” will demonstrate itself by aligning with godly behavior.

So which is it? Is Paul saying that knowledge of the truth causes godliness (i.e., the first view) or that godliness is the sign of the truth (i.e., the second view)? Hard to say. Paul teaches both ideas. And, in truth, both ideas are connected. As Tim Chester writes, “Godliness is the sign of truth because truth leads to godliness.”²³ Or as Akin puts it, “what I believe will affect how I live, and how I live will demonstrate what I believe!”²⁴

This is perhaps the central theme of the entire letter to Titus: that right belief (orthodoxy) should always result in right living (orthopraxy). The latter proves the former. Paul has no interest in abstract theology that doesn’t change a person’s behavior. He argues instead that any claim to the truth that doesn’t lead to a transformed life is fundamentally fraudulent.

Can you see why this matters for us today? In our own information-saturated age, it is incredibly easy to collect religious facts without being changed by them. To know facts about godliness, but not be known for godliness. But that’s not true knowledge. That’s not experiential knowledge. True Christian maturity is not measured by the size of your library, but by the character of your life. Whether you are navigating the ethics of your career or the complexities of family relationships, the Gospel is designed to train you to reject ungodliness and to live a self-controlled, upright life (2:11-12). Our mission as a church, then, is to pursue a knowledge of Christ, that makes us zealous for good deeds, proving to a skeptical world that the truth we profess is indeed living and active. This is where this letter will take us. It takes us there because Paul’s ministry was for the sake of our faith and our knowledge expressed as godliness.

But the next couple of verses teach us something about...

The Foundation of Our Hope: The Character of God and the Priority of Preaching (2-3)

After understanding the messenger and his mission, we must now look at what actually supports the weight of our lives—the bedrock that makes this message credible. Paul grounds everything in the concept of hope—the “*hope of eternal life*” (1:2)—but we must be careful not to confuse biblical hope with the vague, uncertain

wishes we express in our daily conversations. “I hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow” or “I hope the Cowboys will make the playoffs next season” is not the kind of hope that Paul is referring to here.

In the Scriptures, hope is a rock-solid, objective expectation that is anchored directly in the very nature of God. This is why Paul says here that the “*hope of eternal life*” was “*promised*” by the “*God, who never lies*” (1:2). He identifies the Father as the One who is incapable of deceit, which would have been a shocking contrast to the deceptive culture of the ancient world where lying was often seen as a standard way of doing business. Because our Creator is the source of all truth, we can be absolutely certain that His promises are unbreakable; He doesn’t just tell the truth, His character is the very foundation of truth itself. Thus, biblical hope is more like certainty.²⁵ As Charles Spurgeon once said, “Brethren, if it be so that God cannot lie, then it must be the natural duty of all His creatures to believe Him” (cf. Num 23:19; Rom 3:4; Heb 6:18).²⁶ Another Charles, H. B. Charles, quips, “Praise God for what He cannot do!”²⁷

Furthermore, this promise of life that never ends wasn’t a last-minute reaction to human rebellion; it was an eternal decision made before the beginning of time. That’s what verse 2 says: it was “*promised before the ages began...*” Long before we ever revolted against Him or fell under the weight of His just judgment, God had already planned a rescue through His infinite love. As Paul told the Ephesians,

“[God] *chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love* ⁵ *he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,* ⁶ *to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:4-6)²⁸

This means our salvation is not an afterthought but a primary decree from the depths of eternity.

However, for that eternal plan to actually save us, it had to be revealed within history, and Paul explains, in verse 3, that at exactly the right moment, God chose to bring this light into our world through the specific act of preaching. As Paul says elsewhere, “*faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Rom 10:17). No wonder this ministry of preaching was “*entrusted*” to Paul “*by the command of God our Savior*” (Titus 1:3). If God’s plans are brought to light in Jesus, then how do we see Jesus? We can’t go to Jerusalem and set up a meeting. We can’t set up a “Facetime” chat through our messenger app. So how is He encountered? Through His Word, which is shared in our evangelism, in our preaching.²⁹

This is an incredible thought. We must come to terms with the reality that for the Apostle Paul, preaching was never a secondary church program or a mere tradition, but at the heart of God’s rescue mission. Think about the staggering logic he presents here in verses 2 and 3: a promise of life that was made before the stars were formed was kept hidden in the depths of God’s own heart until the exact moment He chose to go public with it. And the vehicle He chose for this grand unveiling wasn’t a political revolution or a philosophical treatise, but the proclaimed Word. This the primacy of preaching—it is the appointed bridge that spans the distance between an ancient, eternal promise and our present messy reality.

That’s what preaching is meant to be. Not entertainment. Not some exploration of trending movies or pop culture with a religious twist. But the vehicle through which God’s eternal purposes are brought to bear in our lives. That’s how Paul viewed his preaching. It was a sacred trust. So when we prioritize sitting under the ministry of the Word, we are not merely fulfilling some religious duty, but we are being refashioned into a people who find joy and stability in the hope that Christ supplies, and we are empowered to serve our community with a heart renewed by grace.

And, yes, not everything that calls itself “preaching” today is this. But inasmuch as it is tethered to God’s Word and used by the Spirit, it can be. It’s not about the preacher. It’s about the preached Word and what God can and does do through it in our lives. But there is no Christian preaching without the Word of God and His Gospel. I once heard a preacher share a “sad parable” of a church building that had the words, “We Preach Christ

Crucified,” inscribed on the outside brick wall. As the time went on, however, these words from 1 Corinthians 1:23 were slowly overtaken by the ivy until a passerby could only see the words “We Preach Christ,” and eventually only “We Preach”—illustrating how contemporary “sermonizing” can lose its “truth-driven, gospel-saturated” focus.³⁰ Our churches are not in need of mere preaching, but preaching that is centered on Christ crucified! Pray that we never drift from this mark.

So what is Paul reminding us of concerning the foundation of our hope in verses 2 and 3? First, that we are held by a God who never breaks His Word, and second, that His plan, which predates the stars, is unveiled to us in the preaching of His Word. And because of this we can face any trial with optimism, with a calm assurance that His promises in Christ are sure.

And the blessing that this entails is not just something we experience later. It’s something that transforms us now, which leads us to a final idea I would like to explore with you related to...

The Blessing of the Gospel: Unity in a Common Faith (4)

We come now to verse 4, where we are introduced for first time to the Titus, the original recipient of this letter. Who is Titus? Titus was a non-Jewish convert to Christianity who became a partner and a trusted associate of the Apostle Paul. Since Paul calls him “*my true child in a common faith*,” it was likely that he was converted through the preaching ministry of Paul. He’s never mentioned in Acts, but he is mentioned over a dozen times in the Paul’s writings. He played a significant role at the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:1-3; cf. Acts 15), where Paul brought him along as evidence that Gentiles were being reached through the Gospel and as part of the case made against insisting that certain Jewish rites were necessary for conversion.

Titus was a highly capable leader and Paul frequently used him as a diplomatic envoy to resolve conflict, most notably within the fractured church at Corinth. By the time this letter was written, he was fulfilling a demanding assignment on the island of Crete, where he had been tasked with organizing young congregations and establishing a structure of godly leadership to protect these churches from deceptive cultural influences. Paul is writing this letter to assist him at that task.

We’ll have more to say about Titus as we go along. But what I want highlight today is the way Paul describes him in verse 4—“*my true child in the common faith*.” What a warm greeting. Titus is not just his coworker. He’s his spiritual offspring. Paul is a father figure to him. And in addressing Titus in this fashion Paul legitimizes his standing before the churches he has been appointed to serve.

More importantly though, in calling this *Gentile* his “*true child*,” Paul, the former Pharisee, is demonstrating the power of the Gospel. He’s showing that the boundaries of biological heritage and religious ritual have been permanently dismantled by the work of Christ. “Paul looks past the ancient antipathies between Jews (of which he is one) and Gentiles (of which Titus is one) and says that they are of the same faith and family.”³¹ I don’t want it to be lost on us how scandalous this was: a man who once defined himself by his Jewish superiority is now embracing an uncircumcised Greek as a full heir of the same promise! This, brothers and sisters, is the Gospel in action. God’s amazing love has not only turned aside the judgment we deserved through the cross, but also has reconciled us to one another in a new household.

This unity is anchored in what Paul calls a shared commitment to the truth—“*a common faith*” (1:4)—that belongs equally to the scholar and the student, the Jew and the Gentile. This shared foundation—this “*common faith*”—is not just a vague religious feeling, but a specific body of doctrine centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which provides the identity for every believer.

In a world like ours, which is often fractured by racial prejudices, national hatred, political alliances, and social status, the Gospel offers the only true basis for harmony. When we recognize that we are all equally desperate

for a Savior—“*our*” Savior—and all equally rescued through faith by sheer grace, the need for comparison and competition begins to die. Whether you are a grad student looking for a place to belong, or a young professional tired of constantly striving for status, or a recent retiree figuring out who you are on the other side of your vocation, our common faith creates a community where your value is not earned, but given by the Father. Where your place is secured by a Savior who gave Himself for you. I love what Bryan Chapell writes along these lines:

“For the person who says, ‘My sin is too large or has persisted too long for God to forgive,’ we must say, ‘But his grace is great.’ For the sensitive soul that despairs in the face of personal weakness saying, ‘I am not able to measure up to God’s requirements,’ we respond, ‘God does not save you on the basis of your ability but bestows his grace by mercy alone.’ For the tormented realist who says, ‘I can resist temptation for a while, but I cannot guarantee that I will maintain my resolve,’ we offer the assurance, ‘But his grace is forever.’ For the timid who fear, ‘I will not fit in,’ we share Christ’s embrace, saying, ‘The grace of God our Father unites you to our family.’”³²

No wonder Paul concludes the greeting with the words, “*Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior*” (1:4). That’s what’s available to us: undeserved grace and peace with God and man. Grace is what invites us into this family, while peace is the wholeness we experience once we realize our future is safe in God’s hands. This the fruit of the Gospel. They’re not just polite words. They’re sustaining gifts from our God and Savior.

Parting Words and What’s in Store

So as we step back and take in these opening words, we are reminded that this is not just an ancient greeting—it’s a summons. A summons to remember who we are and whose we are. Like Paul, we are a mastered people, no longer living for ourselves but for the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. And like Titus, we are recipients of a message that is not ours to edit, soften, or reshape, but to receive, believe, and live. The faith we possess is rooted in truth, and that truth is meant to produce a visible, tangible godliness in our lives. If the Gospel we claim has not begun to shape the way we think, speak, and live, then we must ask whether we have truly grasped it at all. But if we have, then our lives—however ordinary they seem—become the very means by which God displays His grace to the world.

And here is the hope that steadies us: this entire work rests not on our strength, but on the unshakable character of a God who never lies. Before time began, He set His love upon His people. At the right time, He revealed that love through His Word. And even now, He continues to work through that same Word to form us into a people who reflect His Son. So brothers and sisters, let us hold fast to this hope. Let us sit under the Word with humility, receive it with faith, and walk in obedience. And as we begin this journey through Titus together, may God continue to make us into a church where right doctrine leads to right living, where grace produces godliness, and where the beauty of the Gospel is not only proclaimed with our lips—but displayed with our lives. God help us...

To be continued...

Let’s pray.

¹ Jon Laansma notes, however, that “Central to this relationship was the fact that being a slave/servant of God meant that one was a slave of all, following the example of their Lord (Mark 10:41–45; John 13:1–17; Phil 2:1–11).” Jon C. Laansma, “Commentary on Titus,” in *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews*, CBC (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 224.

² E.g., Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1, 13, 15; 24:29; Judg 2:8; Ps 105:26.

³ Typically, Paul refers to himself as a servant/slave of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; cf. Jude 1), but this instance is unique in the New Testament since he identifies as a servant/slave of God. See H. B. Charles, "From Paul to Titus," accessed online at: <https://hbcharlesjr.com/resource-library/sermon-outlines/from-paul-to-titus-titus-11-4/>.

⁴ John MacArthur, *Titus*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 3.

⁵ Bryan Chapell, "Titus," in *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, PW (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 278.

⁶ Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

⁷ Or as Walter Liefeld put it: "If slavery meant obligation, apostleship meant authority, but both meant responsibility." Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 309

⁸ See Albert Mohler, "Titus 1:1-4," accessed online at: <https://albertmohler.com/2023/01/29/titus-11-4/>.

⁹ Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

¹⁰ "By referring to Christian believers as God's elect (cf. Rom 8:33; Col 3:12), Paul employed a descriptive term that calls attention to God's activity in human salvation, known theologically as "election." This doctrine is not exclusively Pauline. It reflects Jesus' own teaching (e.g., Matt 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31 and parallels; Luke 18:7; John 6:37-44; 10:27-29) and that of other New Testament writers (e.g., Acts 13:48; 1 Pet 1:1-5; 2:9; 2 Pet 1:3, 10-11; Rev 17:14). Divine election constitutes a basic element in the doctrine of salvation (also known as Soteriology). Although this element contains mysteries for human understanding, election is biblically emphasized as a central part of God's dealing with his people. It is clearly evident in his choice of Israel (Deut 7:6-9; 14:2; Ps 33:12; Isa 41:8-10; Ezek 20:5; Acts 13:16-17) and his choice of the church (Col 3:11-12; 2 Thess 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:1; 2:9-10; Rev 17:14). Paul specifically taught throughout his epistles that God is the Source, Initiator, Implementer, and Guarantor of salvation (cf. Rom 8:28-39; 9:10-16; Eph 1:4-14; 2:4-10; 1 Thess 1:4-5)." Hayne Griffin, "Titus," in *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 264.

¹¹ Daniel L. Akin, "Titus," in *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, CCE (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 227.

¹² Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ David Mathis, "They Cannot Cancel Our Hope," accessed online at: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/they-cannot-cancel-our-hope>. John Calvin suggests that Paul is point "out that faith does not begin with us. It is because God has chosen us, because of his immutable election and because of the unmerited goodness which he showed in adopting us as his children, that he have us to Jesus Christ." John Calvin, *Sermons on Titus*, trans. Robert White (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 14.

¹⁵ If we try to reverse that for philosophical reasons or to ease our discomfort with some perceived implications, then we risk emptying the Bible's language of its natural sense. It strikes me as trying to interpret the language in a way that is opposite of its literal meaning. And I see no warrant for that in context. Indeed, I see the opposite.

¹⁶ Sam Storms, *2 Timothy and Titus: A 40-Day Bible Study* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2025), 139.

¹⁷ David Campbell, *Opening up Titus*, OUC (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2007), 15; Storms, 139.

¹⁸ Charles, "From Paul to Titus"; Griffin, 266; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 668.

¹⁹ Storms, 137.

²⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, BST (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 169.

²¹ Towner, 668.

²² Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

²³ Tim Chester, *Titus for You* (The Good Book Company, 2014), 19.

²⁴ Akin, 228.

²⁵ Campbell, 19.

²⁶ Quoted in Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

²⁷ Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

²⁸ "'He chose us in him,' says Paul. God the Father chose us in God the Son. God the Father made a promise to his Son. He promised him a bride. He promised him *you*. He did this 'in accordance with his pleasure and will'. It was his pleasure to choose us. God the Father had such pleasure in his Son that he chose to share that pleasure. He created and recreated us so that we could share his delight in his Son. The Son died so that we could share his experience of sonship and be loved by his Father with the same love that his Son receives.'" Chester, 23.

²⁹ Ibid., 24.

³⁰ Charles, "From Paul to Titus."

³¹ Chapell, 278.

³² Ibid., 279.