

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

01.04.2026 | Grace and Peace | Titus 1:1-4 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible this morning, I wanna invite you to turn with me to Titus chapter one. If you're looking for a Bible in the pew or the chair in front of you, I can tell you that Titus one is on page 938 of that Bible. If you wanna join us there. Titus chapter one, we're gonna begin a new series as we start 2026, we're starting a new sermon series that's gonna be through the book of Titus. It'll take us a couple of months to walk through this book. We'll talk a little bit about the context of this letter in just a little bit, but I wanna tell you more a little bit about the theme of this letter and just this kind of tagline we've given the series which is gospel-shaped living.

You know, one of the core values of our church is gospel-rooted living. One of the things that we want to value and prioritize as a church is that we rely on the good news of Jesus for the abundant life that we experience here on this earth and for the eternal life that we will have with God forever. All that we do in the Christian life here on earth, all that we hope for in the future is all rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ accomplishing the work of salvation on our behalf. We don't wanna live the Christian life as if we are trying to earn God's love. We wanna live the Christian life as if we've already received God's love, freely given to us in Jesus. That's what it means to have gospel-rooted living in the present. Our hopes for the future about our place in heaven, our eternity with God should not be based on how much money we give to the church, how faithful are we attending on Sunday mornings, or what good things we do. Our place in heaven is secure because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. This is what it means to have gospel-rooted living for the future. This is something we wanna value and prioritize as a church. Day in and day out, week in and week out, we want our church to be shaped by and rooted in the gospel.

This is really a major theme for the book of Titus. As Paul writes this letter to Titus, what he's going to do throughout the letters, he is going to explain so much of what the gospel is. He's going to defend gospel doctrines because they were being misunderstood and false teachers were coming in and confusing people, so he's going to explain what the gospel is, but then he's going to help Titus to make connections for the church. What does it look like for the gospel to shape your lives? What does it look like for your lives to be rooted in the gospel? This is why I wanna start 2026 in this book because I want this value of ours to become a priority, a focus for us as we begin a new year. That I want us as individuals and I want our church as a whole to be rooted in the gospel. I want us to be shaped by the gospel. I think the study of Titus will help us and we see that even here in the opening verses of this letter. It'd be easy to just read the beginning of a letter and say, well, that's just the greeting. It's just Paul sending a letter to Titus, but even here in these first four verses as Paul opens his letter, we see him beginning to unpack these gospel realities for us. Paul here says a number of great things about this salvation that we have received by grace from God and how we are to respond to that work of God in salvation.

So I'm gonna read this greeting of Paul to Titus in the beginning of this letter and then just begin to unpack it for us this morning. Titus chapter one, I'm gonna read verses one through four. 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 Jesus Christ our savior."

You know, when you approach a book of the Bible like this and you slow down and pay attention to something like a greeting, it is just fun to remember that what we are reading is a letter from one person to another. Like yes, we believe this is the word of God. We believe that Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but what we have here is a letter from a father in the faith to a son in the faith, giving him encouragement, giving him instruction, calling him to live out these gospel realities. I mean, isn't it so amazing that God's spirit has preserved this letter for us over the years, that we get this insight into what Paul wanted to write to Titus. And while it is a letter that I think is so beneficial for the church at all eras and ages of the church, it is so good to know the context of which this letter was written because it helps us to know a little bit more about how we understand and apply the truths that we find here.

So we know that this letter was written by Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. If you're familiar with Christianity at all, you probably know something about Paul. He wrote a lot of the New Testament. He was at one point a zealous Jewish leader.

He was persecuting the Christian church when Jesus stopped him in his tracks on the road to Damascus, blinded him, called him to not just faith in Jesus, but to the mission of Jesus, to share this good news of Jesus with the people all around the world. And so Paul begins this mission and he establishes churches in different places and then he seeks to make sure those churches are well established. And often what he will do is he will write to those churches or sometimes he'll write to individuals who are leading those churches. What we have here is a letter from Paul to a son in the faith, Titus. Titus' letter is grouped with the letters to Timothy, often referred to as the pastoral epistles. Because what Paul is doing is he's not just writing to a whole church or a group of people, but he's writing to an individual whom he has entrusted to lead the church in a certain area. It seemed like Paul had a lot of trust in Titus. We don't know a ton about Titus. We do know that he was not Jewish in his background. He was a Gentile. In fact, we even know from scripture that he wasn't circumcised, which was so common for the people to do back then. Even Gentiles would often do this to kind of mark themselves as being of the Jewish faith. But Titus was kind of the beginning of something new that God was doing, of bringing the gospel to the nations, to other peoples. Titus kind of stands at the beginning to say, you don't actually have to be Jewish in ethnicity or in culture to be part of the people of God.

And because of that, Titus is used by Paul in different situations. We know from Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth that Titus was brought there or left there, sent there in a really difficult situation. That the church in Corinth was unhealthy. It was struggling with a lot of things. And Paul sends Titus with a letter to go and deliver this message to them, to strengthen the church there and help it to be in a healthy place. And from what we can tell, Titus is successful in that. And now Paul leaves Titus in another kind of difficult situation. It seems like Paul has a lot of trust in Titus, and he is putting him in difficult situations. I don't know if you have somebody like that in your life, somebody that you really trust. And you know, whenever things are really delicate, when they're really difficult, you can really trust them with that situation, that they're gonna be able to navigate the hard things well. That seems to be Paul with Titus.

Here, when this letter is written, Paul has left Titus in an island called Crete. Crete is an island just south of Greece. It was a, you know, very much a port area, as it's an island, had all these ports around it, making it a very strategic place for the gospel. Paul had established the church there because he knew there needed to be healthy churches on Crete for all the people that were coming in and out of there to hear the gospel and for it to be able to spread. The problem is the culture of Crete was very pagan. It was very much a non-religious culture. It was known for its dishonesty. It was known for its treachery. It was known for its violence. Many ways it was not an easy place to live. And as Paul is leaving there, he knows that the church needs to be strengthened and established. In fact, even early on, false teachers were coming into the church and they were leading people astray, confusing the gospel message, telling people they had to do certain things, maybe religious duties or legalistic practices to be part of the people of God.

And so Paul takes his trusted son Titus and he leaves him in Crete and he says, "Titus, I need you to establish "and strengthen the church there." Well, we'll see throughout this letter his instructions for how that happens. But I think this is such a helpful word for us as we enter into 2026 and we live in San Francisco because we live in a city in which there's going to be a lot of confusing messages. I mean, much like living on the island of Crete, living in San Francisco means you're going to get a lot of mixed messages. Many times just from outside the church, but many times even from people claiming to be Christians, people who will confuse the gospel message, who will shift what the word of God says. It's so important for us as Titus receives the word here for us to know what this message of God really is, to know what the doctrines of the gospel really are. But like Paul tells Titus, this should not just be something that we know or believe in our heads, but it should be something that shapes our lives. In fact, I'll go on to help Titus to see that as the community of the church is shaped by the gospel, it actually means that they're gonna go out and they're going to have a chance to adorn the gospel with their lives. They're gonna have the chance to show the glory of God and the beauty of the good news of Jesus as they live in this island of Crete.

This is what we have the opportunity to do is first us up here in San Francisco. If we will be people who are shaped by the gospel, we know the truth of the gospel. It shapes our lives. We will have the opportunity to go out into our city and adorn the gospel, show off God's glory and his goodness in Jesus Christ in our lives. This is what we're going to walk through in this letter and we're gonna see it even just here in the beginning. I mean, even just in this greeting, as Paul writes his introduction and his letter to Titus, he packs in so much here about what the truth of the gospel is. What he does is he kind of lays it out in two parts that I wanna unpack for you this morning. The first part is really on what is God's work in salvation. Paul makes it really clear throughout the New Testament, even in the opening of this letter, that

salvation is a work of God. He makes that clear here, but he then says that we have a response as people to God's saving work. And so that's why I want us to think about this this morning as we look at this greeting, what is God's work in salvation and then what is our response to God's work.

So God's work in salvation, really see it in two ways here in this passage. The first is we see God's sovereign plan. If you like to take notes, if you like to follow along, fill in blanks, that's the first one for you. But most importantly, I want you just to see how this comes from God's word in these verses. The Bible is really clear that God is sovereign over all things. He is the creator of all things, in him all things are made and all things hold together. He is sovereign, meaning he reigns over, he rules over all of history. All the things that happen happen under his control. And that means that even salvation, people coming to faith, all things being made new, the work of redemption is all under his sovereign plan. You see this here from the apostle Paul as he opens his letter. He says in verse one, that Paul, he's a servant of God and the apostle of Jesus Christ, and he is called for the sake of the faith of God's elect.

Now just notice those two words there, God's elect. The idea of election means there's some type of choosing that is happening. What Paul says here, what the New Testament says is that God's people are a chosen people. We see this in the Old Testament that the nation of Israel was a chosen people, God out of his grace just chose them. But what we see in the New Testament is no longer it's based on the nation of Israel, but now it is those who trust in Jesus Christ. They are now God's chosen people, they are God's elect. Now when you think about this idea of being God's elect, the idea of election, it sometimes will raise discussions, maybe even debates, maybe contention, or even division amongst God's people. Over the years, God's people have kind of talked about what does this mean for God to choose, for God to elect his people. What does that mean for us and our choice? Do we have free will? I mean if God's doing all the choosing, are we just kind of puppets in God's plan? Are we just robots following what God wants us to do? Do we have any agency in and of ourselves?

And what I love is that so often the New Testament puts these things together for us to feed together. As Paul writes that he is writing for the faith of God's elect. It's really clear throughout the Bible that God is sovereign over all things, including salvation. God knows and even elects those who are going to be saved, but yet the Bible says that that happens in such a way that it does not remove our agency. It does not remove our responsibility. We are not passive in God's plan. We have activity. Even as Paul will say here, there is a response that is required. So often people think about God's sovereignty and God's responsibility. They think how do you put those two things together? Like sometimes people will say, how will you reconcile these two ideas? And I love the way that the great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said it. He said, listen, you don't have to reconcile two friends.

These two doctrines that God is sovereign and that we are responsible are held up for us in scripture as working together for the work of salvation. That yes, we have a responsibility. We have choice, but God is sovereign over it all. And I think when Paul uses this language of God's elect, he was never trying to start theological debates. I don't think he was ever trying to be exclusionary to say, well, are you part of the elect or are you not? I think Paul was always using it as a way to encourage the people, to know that even if you live in Crete or you live in San Francisco, wherever you might live, and it might feel like you are all alone, it might feel like life is hard, know that you are part of the chosen people of God. I think it was supposed to be an encouraging word. I think it's supposed to be a humbling word. Supposed to recognize I would have never chosen God if he had not done something in my life to choose me.

I mean, isn't that what you just sang in that song about all I have is Christ? I mean, you said I was running my hellbound race until God intervened. Paul knew this in his own life. He knew if it wasn't for Jesus stopping him on the road to Damascus, he was never going to find Jesus. You probably know this in your life. Where were you when God found you? What were you pursuing? What were you worshiping? How were you living? It's a very humbling word to know that God has to work in our lives because on our own, we would have never found him. This is a plan, a sovereign plan of God's that Paul says has been at work for a long time. Go on to verse two. He says these people, they're growing in their knowledge of God in the hope of eternal life, which God who never lies promised before the ages began. We just came out from an Advent series and we were talking about the promises of God in the Old Testament, how he promised that there was gonna be a savior who came to save us from our sins. Paul says these promises actually began long before the Old Testament was ever written. Before the world even began, God had a sovereign plan to bring about redemption, to save a people for himself and to make all things new. Here's the good news, God never lies. God who was faithful to us in

2025 will be faithful to us in 2026. God who is sovereign over all things is sovereign over our salvation. He's sovereign over the plan of redemption and he is the one who does the work for salvation.

This is the second part of God's sovereign work, his saving work is that he is sovereign in his plan and he is saving in his work. God's work in salvation means that he accomplishes all that is needed in salvation. He planned it before the time began, he promised it, he fulfilled it in Jesus. So again, we just came off of Advent in which we're looking at all these promises that God gave, but also how Jesus fulfilled all these promises. The difference that Paul speaks of here, he says that after all that waiting, these promises came to be manifested in Jesus. Verse three, at the proper time, after all the ages, after all the time of these promises, at the proper time it was manifested in his word through the preaching which I have been entrusted by the command of God our savior. What Paul is saying here is God's not only the one who planned it sovereignly, the salvation, but he is the one who accomplished it. It was manifested in the proper time. Paul speaks here of the word.

That word is this gospel message, this good news. The good news that we just celebrated at Christmastime, that Jesus Christ, the son of God came into our world. The good news that he lived a perfect life that we could not live. The good news that he died in our place as sinners. The good news that he rose from the dead, conquering sin and death. Paul says this word, it was manifested in Jesus. All that is needed for salvation is accomplished in him. So God planned it sovereignly, he accomplished it in Jesus, and now he has even sovereignly ordained the means by which more people will be saved. And that is through this word being proclaimed or preached. Paul says here this word, this gospel message we now have, it is now going out to people. You've been entrusted with it, tight as you are entrusted with it. It is now going out so that more come to the salvation. All of that is a work of God. God planned it, he accomplished it, he has now ordained the means. His gospel message will go out and it will not return void. People will believe and they will come to saving faith in Jesus. Salvation is a work of God.

But yet, in the way that God brings about salvation in people's lives, we see even here the means by which he chose. God could have chosen any means to which to bring people into saving faith. He could have written it in the sky, he could have accomplished a number of things in miracles in our day to help us to see, but what he says is the gospel message is gonna go out through his people sharing it. This is how people are going to come to faith. This shows that even as salvation is a work of God, there is still a call for us as the people of God. That even God is sovereign over it all. He has involved us in such a way that we have a responsibility to respond, to be the people of God, to share this message of God. And this is where I want us to go in the second part of looking at these verses.

It's so important, it's so comforting to know that salvation is a work of God. Listen, you don't have to accomplish anything to be forgiven of your sins. Jesus has accomplished it all. God sovereignly planned it, he accomplished it. He has ordained the means for you to come to faith by hearing and believing this word, but there is a response for us as people. Paul lays out a number of things. Listen, if you're part of the visiting group, I'll just tell you, I don't normally have this many blanks for you to fill in. I just tried to capture all that Paul puts here, but he lays out a number of things for us to consider in our response to the people of God, so I just wanna walk through them with you quickly. Salvation is a work of God.

What is our response to God's saving work? First, it is faith in God. Our response to God's saving work is faith in him. So what Paul does in this opening letter is he names himself. He says that he is a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ that is both Paul's humility showing, which he says, I am first just a servant to God being used by God in the service of God's people, but it also shows his authority, that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, that he writes with that type of authority. What he says matters, we should listen to it. But then what he goes on to do is he explains what is he called to as a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ? What kind of service does he carry out?

And he says here in verse one, he is a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's elect. So what he says here is he is being called to see people come to faith. The Bible says that salvation is a work of God, but yet there is a response required. And the first step of that response is faith. Bible says you are saved by grace through faith. It is by grace, meaning you've done nothing to earn or deserve this. There wasn't anything that's special that you did that made Jesus come down and die on the cross for you. There's anything you have to do to make God love you. Unconditionally, he loves you and has given Jesus to save you. We don't have to do anything to deserve it or to earn

it, but we do have to receive it by faith. You have to have faith that there is a God who created you, a God who loves you, a God who knows what's best for you. You have faith to believe that you do not do what God has called you to do. That while he knows what is best, you have chosen to live in your own plan, pursue your own ways. You have to have faith to believe that God sent Jesus to save you from that straying, that rebelling. Jesus paid the price for your sins. He bridged the gap so that you could be with God forever.

Have you ever placed your faith in Jesus? Have you ever believed this about God, that he has created you, that he is saving you from your sins if you had trusted the work of Jesus? The first step of our response is a response in faith. Paul says, "This is what I'm called to. 'I'm called to serve God and the people' as an apostle of Jesus Christ 'that I might see people come to faith.'" Do you have that faith in Jesus? Maybe today for the first time, you place your faith in Jesus. But Paul doesn't stop there. He says it is for the sake of the faith of God's elect. Then he speaks next of the knowledge of the truth. This is the second part of our response. It begins with faith in God, then it grows and it moves to knowledge of the truth.

Paul makes it really clear here that he's not just looking to make converts, but he is looking to make disciples. The work of salvation doesn't just end when someone comes to faith in God. That's actually where it just begins. And there is this growth. So what does Paul say in verse one? He says that he is called for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. That when someone trusts in God and they are forgiven of their sin and they are made right with God, this begins a relationship with God in which they grow to know him more and to love him more. And this is what Paul is speaking about the knowledge of the truth. When Paul says the knowledge of the truth, he's not talking about just knowing more truth so that you're just smarter. He's not just talking about knowing more things that you can just pass the Christian-east test, like you know the lingo and you know the answers. When Paul talks about having a knowledge of the truth, he is actually talking about knowing God. God is truth.

Last week we closed out 2025 by considering Jesus' words that he is the way, the truth, and the life. We grow in our knowledge of the truth because we're growing in our knowledge of God, growing in our relationship with God. Being able to grow in your knowledge of the truth is like reading a letter from someone that you love. It's like reading a journal from a grandparent that you didn't get to know very well. You get these insights into who they are so that you know better who this person is. You grow to love them more. We talk about growing in our knowledge of the truth that is about growing to know and to love God more. This is why we have a daily Bible reading plan. Listen, if you use ours, if you use another plan, whatever God might lead you to, I just wanna encourage you, would you make it a point in 2026 to be in God's word regularly? Would you make it a point in this year to just grow in your knowledge of his truth? Not again just so that you can have more information or that you can be smarter, so that you can know God more.

This is why we have Bible studies. This is why we have ministries for our children and for our youth because we wanna see people grow in their knowledge of the truth. But Paul connects this very closely with something. He says it's for the sake of the faith that they would begin to have a relationship with God, but it's also for the sake that they would grow in their knowledge of the truth of God, which accords with godliness. So the third response is not just knowing the truth, but it is actually godly living. The third response to God's work and salvation begins in faith in him. It grows as we know more about him, but then it actually begins to correspond to the way that he wants us to live. Paul connects the two. Again, knowledge of truth and godly living. Go back to verse one, one more time. He is called as a servant for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.

The theme is that there is this correlation, this connection in the Christian life, that as one grows to know God more, one should grow to reflect the image of God more. As one grows to know the truth more, one should grow to be made into the image of Christ more. That it's not just about having information or knowing more things, knowledge of the truth. It's about being changed, about being transformed. It is our hope that the Bible studies that we host, the children and youth ministries, the discipleship groups that we have, community groups that we have, all that we do as a church would be leading people towards knowledge of the truth, but also godly living. We're not just supposed to be smarter sinners. The things that we actually learn should be shaping us, changing us. Yes, it takes the information of the truth, but it leads to transformation of our whole lives.

In fact, last year we began something we called discipleship groups. Discipleship groups are groups of three to five people that commit to meet for a period of time, maybe about six months, and the goal is to really help each other walk in godly living. As we began these discipleship groups, we had a lot of questions. People said, well, who's teaching the groups and what are we learning? Well, there is some things that we wanna learn and walk in, but what we really wanted to promote in these discipleship groups is not so much the knowledge of the truth, but we really wanted to promote the knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness. Are we walking in obedience with what God has called us to do? Are we helping each other do that? Paul says, there is this faith in God that undergirds this relationship with God, and this relationship with God looks like knowing God more and living more like God would want you to live, but yet there's still something that pulls you in this.

There's this foundation of faith in God that undergirds your Christian living, of knowing the truth and living in godliness, but what pulls you forward? What draws you to this godly living? Well, it is the hope of eternal life. That's the fourth part of the response, is the hope of eternal life. What is gonna compel you to continue to seek to know God more and grow in him when you are tired? What's gonna compel you to live for God when no one around you is? What's really hard to be a Christian? What's really hard to forgive as we should, to love as we should? Paul says all of this connects to this hope of eternal life, you move on to verse two. So he says that he has been called as a servant for the faith of God's elect in their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God who never lies promised before the ages began. See all that beginning that I was talking about with God's sovereignty, it's not just like theological lecture for you to know about, believing that God is in control, believing that he is sovereign, actually profoundly shapes your life. Paul says God's sovereignty gives us a hope.

I was reading the New York Times article on January 1st, it came out the first day of the year.

And it caught my attention, because as I was just looking at different articles, it was about why we need hope in 2026, or maybe a better way to have hope in 2026. And in the article the author said, basically he thinks in our country today, in our culture, hope is like at an all time low. And he said it's because the modern idea of hope is really built upon what can we achieve? Can we accomplish something? Can we finish a work? Then we have hope that we can do it. He says that type of hope often leaves you very hopeless because we begin to realize, no matter how much technological advances there are, and how much we can band together, we can't accomplish certain things, we can't achieve certain things.

I love how God's word tells us that our hope is not built on our abilities or our accomplishments, but in God and his sovereignty. Your hope for eternal life is not built upon how closely you can hold on to God, but how much he will hold on to you. This is the type of hope that you need as you enter into a new year. This is the type of hope that you need as you seek to grow in the knowledge of the truth, seek to walk in godliness. It's a hope that rests on that firm foundation that we sing about. It's a hope that rests in God and his sovereignty, that God makes promises and he keeps them. That he will never leave you or forsake you. That he is working out his plan of redemption. That he is working all things together for good in your life. Do you have this type of hope as you enter into 2026?

You know what, not only do you need this hope, but there are people around you who need this message of hope. This is why we respond to the work of salvation not just in receiving the good news, but in sharing the good news with others. This is the fifth part of our response. We're getting there guys, we're almost to the end. Fifth, sharing the good news. It's clear throughout the Bible, we're looking at the Old Testament today in our nine o'clock class, the New Testament. Those who receive the good news share the good news. We don't keep it to ourselves. We have a message of hope, share this message of hope with those who need it. Paul says this is the call to share this good news. Verse three, "At the proper time, "it was manifested in his word through the preaching "with which I have been entrusted "by the command of God our savior." Paul says, "I've been given, I've been entrusted "with this rich, beautiful message "of the good news of Jesus." And I've been entrusted not just to keep it safe, it is important to keep it safe as I teach the correct doctrines, but it's also very important to pass it on, to proclaim it or to preach it.

What Paul makes clear here is it wasn't just him who was entrusted with this, but Titus, Timothy, the churches that he writes to, we have now been entrusted with this good news and it is now our call to share it with others. Remember, God is sovereign over salvation. He has accomplished the work, but he's also ordained the means by which people will come to this hope and the saving faith. And how will they do it? It will be through the sharing of the gospel. So Paul says the people of God who have believed and received this good news are now called to share this good news. We've been

entrusted with this message, now we give it to others. This is why these students from Midwestern are here this weekend, to learn more about what that looks like, especially in cross-cultural contexts and to go out and actually do it. This is why they're being prepared to go out around the world. Because we know that sharing of the good news is how people come to faith in Jesus. People come to faith by hearing the word as it is proclaimed. But long after these students leave our city, we will have opportunities throughout 2026 to share this good news with others. If we are gonna be a church that is shaped by the gospel, that means we need to be a church that is sharing the gospel with those around us. Who is somebody that God has placed on your heart, giving you the opportunity to share the good news? As you take notes this morning, would you just write down a name, maybe that God places on your heart, who you could share this good news with, who needs this message of hope as they enter into a new year? Do you begin to pray for that person? Do you begin to ask that God would open up opportunities for you to share this message with them?

Lives that are shaped by the gospel are shown in the ways that we share this good news with others. It's also shown in the way that we have fellowship together as the people of God. And here's the last part of our response to God's saving work. It is communion with God's people. There's something about being saved by God, this message of salvation that we've received that we wanna go out and share it, but there's also something about it that draws us to have a fellowship, a community, a communion with the people of God. Paul writes this letter to Titus, and I want you to notice how he refers to Titus in verse four. It says to Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our savior. Paul calls Titus the same thing he calls Timothy, his true child.

Paul loved these young men. He saw himself as a father in the faith. He had a deep affection for him. We know from other letters, it wasn't just about Timothy and Titus, he has this deep affection for other believers the Essene come to faith. There is this love. He sees them as a son in the faith, but he also sees them as brothers in Christ. He says we share a common faith. We both have the same Father in heaven. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Yes, I am passing this on to you, but we have a common faith, something that undergirds us all. This is what brings unity, communion to the people of God. It's not something we have to manufacture, we have to try to create unity in the church. It's already there. We've been brought into one common faith. This is what unifies us.

Paul will go on to tell Titus, and we'll see as we study this letter, here's the ways that you are supposed to live this out as the people of God. I just wanna put an emphasis as we end this message today that I didn't want it just to be people whose lives as individuals are shaped by the gospel, but I want us to be a church that is shaped by the gospel. Because really being shaped by the gospel, I think really happens in community. I mean, think about just these two words that Paul leaves Titus with in this end of this greeting. He says, "Grace and peace to you." Now in some ways you could just read those two words and you could say, "Well, that's just a common greeting of the day." That's how Paul ended all of his greetings. It is true, it probably was just part of Paul's standard greeting, but he probably chose those words intentionally.

I have to think as as he writes them to Titus, he's saying that it is his desire that there would be grace and peace in Titus's life, but also in the people of God that Titus is leading. A gospel shaped church is one that is marked by grace and peace. And the reason why I say really being shaped by the gospel happens in community, because this is where we see grace and peace really take shape in our lives, is when we are in relationships with others. I mean, it would be one thing just to say, "Well, I'm so thankful for God's grace to me as a sinner, but do you show that grace to people who sin against you?" Bible says one of the best markers of knowing that you've been forgiven is that you extend forgiveness to others. You really wanna be shaped by the grace of God, then be in community with other people where you have to extend grace to others. You say, "Well, I've got this relationship with God, I've been brought to peace with God by the work of Jesus."

Well, is that shown in the peace that you have with your brothers and sisters? But it'd be easy to say, "Well, yes, I enjoy this peace in my relationship with God, but are you a peacemaker in the people of God?" Are you being shaped by the gospel that you are going out and you are making peace by confessing your sins, by admitting where you've wronged someone, by making peace through apologizing, through building relationships within the body? Gospel-shaped church is one that is marked by grace and peace. And so I just asked you this morning, as you begin a new year, is there somebody you need to extend grace to? Is there somebody who has wronged you? Maybe they don't deserve your forgiveness, maybe they haven't made up for it enough, but because you've received the grace of Jesus Christ, the gospel is shaping your life, you'll extend grace to them. Is there somebody yet that you need to go and do something that you

can make peace with? Maybe you've wronged them and you need to confess that. Maybe you've crossed the line, maybe you've done something and you need to go and you need to make peace with them. Be my prayer in 2026 that as God has done in our church for 176 plus years, He would continue to shape us in the gospel. They would have gospel-shaped lives as individuals, but we would also be a gospel-shaped church in 2026.