

And this morning we'll look at Titus chapter 1 verses 1 through 4. Titus chapter 1 verses 1 through 4. A little introduction to this book. Paul wrote this letter by divine inspiration to a co-laborer of his by the name of Titus. Now Titus and Paul had been doing ministry together on the island of Crete. And according to verse 5, Paul has left that island where they were doing ministry, but Titus has stayed behind. And so Paul writes this letter to Titus, who is still doing ministry on the island of Crete, as something of what we might call a divinely inspired instruction manual for how to do ministry on the island of Crete. He's writing to his co-laborer Titus and he's trying to give him some insights into some items that he's going to want to prioritize as he continues the ministry on the island of Crete.

And so in this divinely inspired instruction manual, if you will, He gives Titus three major overarching things that he wants him to be doing. He needs to be correcting false teachers, he needs to be promoting right teaching, and he needs to be establishing elders in the church. So those are the three major things that Paul exhorts Titus to be doing. He needs to be dealing with false teachers, promoting right teaching, and he needs to be establishing elders on the island of Crete in those churches.

Well, these introductory comments, let us pray and ask God to help us as we read his word. Oh God, we do come before you and we know that only the spirit can make the reading and preaching of the word drive home to the hearts of men. And the reason we need the spirit to do this is because apart from him, we can do nothing. Because when it comes to spiritual matters and real affection for Christ, it has to come from above. So we pray, oh God, that as you speak through your word, your servants would be listening. And that you would create in us a love for what you teach us in this portion of your word. Help us to rightly understand it, to love it, and to live it.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen. Titus chapter one, verses one through four, this is the word of God. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect in 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. Amen. Thus ends the reading of God's word. May he bless it to our lives. Well, opening words are important.

You can think, for example, of the opening words of the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The first subject of the entire Bible is God. And then, as those opening words of Genesis develop into the first chapter of Genesis, You see how important opening words are because that word God is used over 30 times in just the first chapter of the Bible.

What do you think then God is wanting to drive home to the reader? He's wanting to drive home this point that God is the most important, that God is the subject of the Bible. God is the writer of the scriptures and he is the main subject of the scriptures. The Bible is first and foremost about the creator God.

In a similar sort of way, God is the focus of Titus' greeting this morning. In our passage, the name God is used five times. Jesus twice, Savior twice, Christ twice, Father once. So these titles or names for God are used many, many times in just this opening greeting to Titus. And to put that in perspective, there are 12 titles or names used for God in these opening verses. and in the original language this greeting is only 35 words long. So 12 of the first 35 words of the book of Titus are names or titles for God.

What's the point? The point is that God is at the center of this greeting. Paul is writing a God-centered greeting. And he's writing a God-centered greeting because he knows that as Titus is doing ministry on the island of Crete, He needs to be a God-centered man, and the churches there need to be God-centered churches.

And so this directly applies to the church today. We need to be a God-centered people. You need to be a God-centered person. The Christian is to be a God-centered individual. And so we come to our text today and we see a God-centered greeting. We're going to consider this God-centered greeting under three headings.

First, God's servant. Second, God's elect. And third, God's message. So first, God's servant. Paul begins here, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul begins this letter by calling himself a servant of God. Now, this Greek word for servant literally just means slave. It's *doulos*. And this title, slave or servant of God, immediately says something about how Paul relates to God. Paul views God as his master. Paul believes that it's his duty to do whatever God commands. God rules over him, he is his master, and Paul is his servant, submissive to him.

Now, how can being God's servant be a good thing? How can it be a good thing? to consider yourself the servant of God. Well, that is a good thing when you really know who God is. Because God is a good master. It is good to be God's servant because God knows what is best for his people. It is good to be God's servant because God loves his children. because every other master leads to sin and misery and death. It is good to be God's servant because that means you have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ.

You don't become God's servant by your performance. You become God's servant at the value and cost of his son's blood. He bought you that you might be his child. And fighting his mastery over you is foolish. It is foolish because you will simply be giving yourself over to sin, to death, to ruin and destruction.

But submitting to him will be delivery, delivery from sin, delivery from death, and delivery to obedience to him, to a right relationship with him, delivery to joy, delivery to peace. Paul did not become God's servant by anything in himself. Paul became God's servant by God's grace. Paul had formerly been a persecutor of the church. He imprisoned Christians. He hated Christ and he hated Christ's people. But now, Paul is the servant of God.

I want to ask you this morning, who's your master? Who do you serve? Is that master treating you well? What is that master doing for you? What is that thing providing for you? How does that compare with what God has said he's done for his children? Jesus Christ came down and shed his blood that you might have a right relationship with God. That's how much your master loves you. That's how much he has done for you. No other master, no other king, no other ruler over you will provide you with such joy, such peace, such love, and such good laws to order your life. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ here this morning, he is speaking right now. He is speaking to you through this servant. This servant is speaking as an ambassador of Christ, and I say unto you what he has said in his word.

Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Are you here this morning and you do not have rest for your soul? You do not have peace with God. You are miserable and you are filled with sin and iniquity. There is a way to be delivered, and that way is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to him, and he will save you, and you will have the joy of serving a master, a master who's worthy of your whole life. But secondly, you see God's elect. So you see God's servant, but then you see God's elect. You see this in the second half of verse one into verse two. Let's read verses 1 and 2 again.

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. So after mentioning that he is a servant of God, Paul goes on to mention that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Now, an apostle, if you don't know, is an office that has ceased in the church. It was an office that was established in the early church by God himself, and the apostle was someone who had seen the resurrected Christ, witnessed his resurrection, and then Also, in addition to that, been commissioned specifically to preach Christ as one sent by Christ. So someone who had seen the risen Christ and then was commissioned by Christ to be an apostle. This office was in the early church to establish the foundations of the church, but then this office ceased. But why was Paul an apostle? What was his goal in being an apostle?

We read here in verse 2, for the sake of the faith of God's elect. What does this word elect mean? The word elect simply means chosen. The doctrine found all throughout the Bible is this, that God has chosen or elected a people for himself in his sovereign free grace from before the foundation of the world. He is elected, he has chosen a people for himself before the foundation of the world. They're elect, we could say, from eternity past, from ages eternal, which is actually what it says at the end of verse two, before the ages began, the last words of verse two, or before ages eternal, it could be translated. So God chose his own for himself from before the ages began. But for how long does God choose his elect?

Those whom he has chosen for himself, in other words, will he keep for himself? Well, the text also says in verse two that he has chosen them in hope of eternal life, so he has chosen them from eternity past to eternity future, from ages eternal to ages eternal.

But can you trust him? Can you trust that he will not change his mind? Can you trust that he will not, having chose you yesterday, decide to un-choose you today or un-choose you tomorrow? Well, beloved, the certainty of your election does not depend ultimately on your performance, but on God's character.

And so this is what he says in verse two. in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. He stresses the reality that God never lies, that his promises are as good as done. The certainty of your election is grounded in the unchangeable, never-lying character of God.

And this hope here in the text, as it always is in the New Testament, is not wishful thinking. And hope of eternal life does not mean that you sort of have wishful expectations that maybe you will be a recipient of eternal life. Hope in the New Testament is always certainty about the future. As Edmund Clowney put it so well in his commentary on 1 Peter when Peter says in 1 Peter 1 about the living hope, The living hope, he says, our hope is anchored in the past.

Jesus rose. Our hope continues in the present. Jesus lives. Our hope is sure in the future because Jesus is coming again.

Beloved, the hope of the Christian is not wishful thinking. The hope of eternal life is a certainty about the future that is anchored in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Do you have hope? Do you have the hope of eternal life, the certainty, the surety that your life is going to be safe? Not just for a few more days or years, but forever and ever, ages without end.

That hope is only found in Jesus Christ. Every other hope leaves you wanting. This is the hope of eternal life. And it is found in Christ Jesus. It's anchored in the electing, choosing, and work of God himself. What hope would you have, I asked this morning, if God could change his mind? And he can't. What hope would you have this morning if God could change his mind? You would have no hope, would you? You would be completely uncertain, wouldn't you? Perhaps today he's chosen you and tomorrow he'll cast you off.

But you see, God's never-changing character is the anchor of your hope as you go through this life, as you look forward to eternity. This is why in the prophet we read this, for I, Lord, do not change. Therefore, you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. It was the unchanging character of God that brought the people of God hope in the Old Testament. Because you know what they did? They changed. They weren't unlike the people of God today. One day you're living well for the Lord. You're seeking him earnestly. You're desiring him sincerely. And the next day you're not. What hope is there for a people such as us? the unchanging character of God. Throw yourself at the cross and the unchanging character of God for your hope of eternal life, your certainty.

But it's from eternal, this election is from eternity, it is to eternity, but it also is supposed to affect everything in between. It is supposed to affect our lives today. Your life is to be shaped by these truths. Thus, in verse One, you read this, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness. God wants the knowledge of the truth to produce in you a godly life. These doctrines of election, for example, in this particular context, are not simply there so that you could have your I's dotted and your T's crossed.

That is true. Precision in theology matters. But it matters because God wants you to live a godly life. He wants you to live for him. And so this is what he is saying here. It is to accord with godliness. The end is not simply knowing truth. The end of truth is to have a transformed life. But why does God choose anyone at all? Why does he choose a people for himself? If you're in Christ this morning, why did he choose you? Why did he call you to himself?

Deuteronomy chapter seven is so helpful when you consider the why of God's choosing. Deuteronomy 7, verses 6 through 8. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all the peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God does not choose the Israelites in the Old Testament because of any virtue in them. He chose them because he loved them. And the only reason he chooses you is because he loves you. God doesn't choose you because of any virtue in you.

If you are looking for your performance to earn favor with God as if you could save yourself, you are missing the way that God saves sinners. God saves sinners because he loves to save his people for himself. And how should you respond to this? What sort of life ought you to live if this is true? You ought to live a life of loving God. Do you love God? Because loving God is the natural, supernatural response of the Christian to the love which he has received. Because you see that he has done something for you that you utterly don't deserve. You haven't earned it. You absolutely don't deserve it. And so you want to love him in return.

That ought to be your response here to this electing love of God this morning as loving God in return. But thirdly this morning, God's message. You see God's message in verses three and four. But to set up the context, let's read verse two as well again. 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." Paul's point is really just this. The gospel must be preached if the gospel is going to be believed. Nobody can believe the gospel if they've never heard the gospel. It's not possible. You can't believe something you literally don't know.

Now notice Paul says that this message, this gospel, this proclamation has been entrusted to him. He's entrusted with preaching this message. And since it is something entrusted to Paul, this means that he cannot alter the message. He cannot change the message. The message is entrusted to him and he's not allowed to edit it or delete things he doesn't like or add things he would prefer were in the message. He is simply to proclaim the message entrusted to him.

And it's entrusted to him, according to the end of verse three, by the command of God our Savior. Comes with the authority of God himself. And this is what the minister of the gospel must do today. He is to proclaim the message which has been entrusted to him. in the scriptures. He doesn't have the authority to alter or change it. It is his job, his duty to speak what God speaks.

And what is at the center of this message? At the center of this message is the gospel, the good news that God saves sinners. And how does he save sinners? He saves sinners by his grace through the work of Jesus Christ. That's why verse four concludes grace and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Savior. It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone that God saves sinners.

Now this word Savior is important in the book of Titus. See that word Savior at the end of verse three and you see that word Savior at the end of verse four. This word is very important in Titus. You can see that in a number of ways. Just consider some stats.

This word Savior is used six times in Titus. This word Savior is used 24 times in the New Testament. It's used more times in Titus than any other single book of the New Testament. This word Savior is found more here than any other book of the Bible of the New Testament.

So what's so important about Savior? Well, Savior implies something about mankind, doesn't it? You only need Savior if you're a sinner. If you don't think you're a sinner, you don't need a Savior. You see, he is the Savior of people who need him, people who need deliverance or rescue. If you don't think you're a sinner, then you won't think you need a Savior.

He came to save those who need him. He himself said, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And so by using this word savior six times in this little book, every time the spirit of God is saying, you need salvation and God is the only one who can bring it. God is the Savior. Every time he's saying, you can't save yourself, but praise God because I save sinners.

Come to me. Every time that Savior word comes up, it's a plea to look to him and to look away from yourself. Even the believer here this morning who knows this truth, you need to keep going back to him. You need to keep looking to him, going to your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I love our Heidelberg Catechism question, which we were reciting for a season here. What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own, but belong body and soul and life and death to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. You say with the hymn writer, my hope is built on nothing less but Jesus' blood and righteousness. That's the truth of the Savior. He's your all. He's the one upon whom you lean.

But maybe you're here this morning and you heard the word Savior, you know that word, and you even believe that you're a sinner, you believe that about yourself, you know you've broken God's law, but perhaps there's someone here and you believe your sins are too great for the Savior. It's not that you don't believe you're a sinner, it's that you believe you're a sinner but you're not sure that he can save you of your particular sins because you're convinced that they're too great.

Let me just tell you some words that I shared with a friend one time who walked away from the faith. We became community members together. He walked away from the faith. And I just looked him in the eyes when he was telling me he was rejecting Jesus because he was such a rotten sinner. And I said, Caleb, who are you to tell Jesus his blood isn't sufficient for you?

That's the height of pride, you see. Knowing that you're a sinner is important. It's very important. There's no way you're going to come to Jesus if you don't know that. But to reject that he could actually save you because you think your sins are too big is telling him his death on the cross isn't really that great. It's not big enough for you. And that's rejecting Jesus. So if you're here this morning and you're in that place, Jesus is able. Repent and come to Christ.

He is the Savior. God put that word six times in this book for a reason. But you get a sense of the glory of salvation when you consider another aspect here, which is this. At the end of verse three, it says, God, our Savior. At the end of verse 4, it says, Christ Jesus, our Savior. Now, who is your Savior? Is it God, verse 3, or is it Jesus, verse 4? And I hope you know the answer is yes. The triune God saves sinners, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now, how can Jesus be called the Savior?

Because Isaiah 43 verse 11 says, I, I am the Lord and beside me there is no savior. So Isaiah 43 11 says, God is the only savior. And then passages like Titus chapter 1 verse 4 say Jesus is the savior. But I thought God was the only savior. How can Jesus be the savior? The answer, Jesus is God. And so this text is affirming the deity of Christ, that you are saved by the triune God.

Now, for the Christian here this morning, for those who know Jesus, who love Jesus, how ought this reality that you are saved impact your life, that you have this Savior? Well, shouldn't it stir you up to want to obey him? Shouldn't you want to marvel more at who he is? that he has taken the penalty your sins deserve upon himself, the wrath of God. That should make you want to respond to him and love him and live for him. You have a love that will not let you go, a hope that will not let you down. You have steel in your backbones in the sorrows of life because you have this savior.

Do you ever get bored in your life? Probably not as much, maybe, depending on your stage of life. I don't know. I know there was a time in my life when I was a bit younger and didn't have two children to watch all the time when I was home. And you get a little bit bored. You have a little bit of time on your hands, and you get bored. And you think, what am I going to do? I've got 20 minutes. What am I going to do with this time? How about you try this? exhorted us to do this sort of thing this morning from our Sunday school class.

Why don't you meditate upon your Savior? And why don't you watch and see how that changes your life? Because it will if you know him and you meditate upon him. Well, today you've seen this God-centered greeting, God's servant, God's elect, and God's message.

Paul, by divine inspiration, wanted them to have a God-centered church and to live God-centered lives. And that's what you and every Christian needs, too. Let us pray. Almighty God, we do come before you, our Savior, the one who rescued us from ourselves and rescued us from the penalty that our sins deserve, the one who rescued us to a life of joy and peace and gladness in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We marvel at your saving work, and we pray that you would even help us as a congregation to be more meditative upon what you've done for us, to count our privileges, to consider what we have in Jesus, and to realize that all that we might wish we had in this life pales in comparison to what we already have in our risen and conquering King, Savior Jesus. It's in his name that we pray, amen.