

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Our Savior God

Titus 1:1–4

If you would, go ahead and take your Bibles and turn with me to the NT book of **Titus**. For the next few weeks, we are taking a break from the book of **Acts**. We will return to that book and that series at the end of the summer.

But today, we are beginning a new series. This series will be team-taught by myself and the other elders here at VBV. My job is to introduce this book and cover the first four verses that the Apostle Paul wrote.

Titus is, just so you know, a short, pithy, potent, preachy book.¹ It's the kind of book that a preacher, like myself, can really sink his teeth into.² The four main characters of this book are (1) Paul, the author, (2) Titus, his young, impressionable leader who Paul is coaching up, (3) The churches in Crete (more on that later), and (4) God.

The tone of this book is pastoral and authoritative. **Paul is like Bill Belichick in this book, and Titus is his Tom Brady. And Paul is coaching him up. And as we listen in on Paul's conversation with Titus, we're going to get coached up too. We're going to learn how a church should operate, how leaders should operate, and how a life transformed by Jesus Christ should evidence that transformation before the watching world.**

The title for this series through **Titus** is "Framework for a Healthy Church."

Let's get started with some introductory matters. First this...

1) Who wrote Titus, and to whom was it written?

The answers to those questions are found in verses 1–4. The answer to the first question is as follows:

Authors: The Apostle **Paul** and the **Holy Spirit** (Titus 1:1; 2 Tim 3:16–17)

Paul says, in verse 1.

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ,

That's a great way to self-identify here. Paul says, "I'm a servant. But I'm also an apostle. I've got authority, yes, but my authority comes only from Jesus... and by the way, I'm a slave."³

Now, we know, because we are Bible-believing, evangelical Christians, that Paul is not the only author of the Scriptures. There is both a human and a divine component to Scripture. The human author is Paul. And we will say from time to time through our study of **Titus** that "**Paul wrote this**" or "**Paul wrote that.**" Those statements are true. And there are elements, on a human level, of Paul's personality, writing style, vocabulary, etcetera in the text.

But keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is always a co-author of the Scriptures. That's true of **Titus**. And that's true of all of the Holy Scripture that you hold in your hands.

In terms of the recipient or recipients of this book, we see that in **verse 4**.

⁴ *To Titus, my true child in a common faith*

¹ MARTIN LUTHER: "The epistle to Titus is short, but it is a kind of epitome and summary of other, wordier epistles. We should be imbued with the attitudes that are taught in it." Quoted in Lee Gatiss, Bradley G. Green, and Timothy George, eds., *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, RCS (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 267.

² WILLIAM TYNDALE: "This is a short epistle: yet in it is contained all that is needful for a Christian to know." Quoted in Lee Gatiss, et al. *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, RCS, 267.

³ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 378: "'slave of God' is frequent in the OT as a designation for special people, including Abraham (Ps 105:42), Moses (Num 12:7; Neh 9:14; cf. Rev 15:3; Josephus *Ant.* 5.1.13 §39), David (Ps 89:3), Daniel (Dan 6:20), and the prophets (Jer 25:4; Ezek 38:17; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6)."

So Titus is the clear recipient of this letter. But it's not quite that simple. Yes, Paul wrote this book to Titus. Titus was a young leader in the church and one of Paul's understudies.⁴ But it's not as if Titus was supposed to hoard this letter for himself.

Paul actually wrote this letter with the intent that Titus would read it out loud to the church body. We know that from the way that Paul uses pronouns at the end of this book (the same is true with **1 and 2 Timothy**).

Paul says in **Titus 3:15**,

^{3:15} *Grace be with you all.*

The "you" in that verse is plural, and so is the "all." Paul is saying, "**Grace be with y'all.**" Who's the y'all? It's the churches and the people listening in on this conversation between Paul and his understudy.⁵ And it was understood that Titus would read this letter aloud to them. They need coaching from the Apostle Paul too!

And let me add this. One of the implications of the dual-authorship of Scripture is that the audience of the letter is more than just the original, historical recipient(s) of that ancient document. Yes, there is an immediate context within which Paul wrote. There was a historical situation that he wanted to address two-thousand years ago. And there was an actual historical person, Titus, whom he was addressing.

But since we believe in the dual-authorship of Scripture, we know that the Holy Spirit has preserved this letter in such a way that it would address a broader context including the church here today, twenty centuries later. So we should think of the recipients of this book as Titus, the churches where Titus served on Crete, and also all of God's people throughout church history including us here in San Antonio, Texas.

Recipients: **Titus** and all of **God's people** (Titus 1:4; 2 Tim 3:16–17)

Just as a reminder, **2 Timothy** suggests as much when it says,

^{2 Timothy 3:16–17} *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Here's a second question we want to answer.

2) What is Titus?

The answer to this question, very simply put, is that **Titus** is Scripture. It is part of our Christian Bible. More particularly it is a letter. We use the term "epistle" sometimes, but that simply means a letter. And the fact that this book of the Bible is a letter from Paul to Titus is clearly presented in the actual writing. This epistle has an author, a recipient, and a greeting at the beginning (**1:1–4**), and it has final instructions and greetings at the end (**3:12–15**).⁶

So, this is a letter. And it is...

One of Paul's **13** letters canonized as Christian Scripture (2 Pet 3:15–16)

Paul wrote thirteen books of the NT. And **Titus** is probably the twelfth of those thirteen letters (**2 Timothy** is the thirteenth).

Canonization is an important concept. The early church affirmed Paul's writing as Scripture as well as Peter's and the other books of the Old and New Testament in the first few centuries after Christ.⁷ These Scriptures are self-authenticating. They don't have authority because the church acknowledged them. Instead, they are inherently authoritative, and the church recognized them as such.

So Titus is one of Paul's thirteen letters. Also it is...

One of the **66** books of the Bible inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:21)

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), Titus: Background and Setting: "Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned nine times in 2 Corinthians (2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18, 18), where Paul refers to him as "my brother" (2:13) and "my partner and fellow worker" (8:23).

⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 382: "Paul expected this letter to be read by the church as well (cf. especially 3:15), the salutation clearly designates the recipient as an individual, and the epistle asks to be interpreted primarily within that context."

⁶ Denny Burk, "2 Timothy," in *Ephesians–Philemon*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. XI, ESVEC (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 456: "In these kinds of first-century letters, the opening would typically consist of three parts: (1) reference to the sender, (2) reference to the recipient, and (3) a greeting."

⁷ Peter recognized Paul's writing early on as Scripture as we see in 2 Peter 3:15–16.

Here's a harder question.

3) When was Titus written?

It's not possible to be exact about this. But the best historical reconstruction for the date of this work is A.D. 64 or thereabouts.⁸

Approximately **A.D. 62–64** before Paul's final imprisonment and death in **A.D. 67**⁹

The book of **Acts** ends with Paul in prison in Rome.¹⁰ More than likely, Paul was released from prison around A.D. 62.¹¹ And after that, he travelled to cities both east and west of Rome.¹² It was during this time that he sent the epistle of **Titus** to Titus, and the epistle of **1 Timothy** to Timothy.¹³

But after all that, Paul was imprisoned in Rome again. And this time was the last time for him.¹⁴ Because he was executed by the Roman Emperor Nero around A.D. 67. It was during that last imprisonment and shortly before his death, that he wrote the last of his letters, **2 Timothy**.¹⁵

Here's a fourth question for us.

4) Where did Paul send the book of Titus, and where was Paul when he wrote it?

The answer to both of these questions is clearly stated in the text.

Titus was in **Crete** when Paul wrote this letter to him (Titus 1:5)

Titus 1:5 says,

⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, lxiii: "Church tradition reports ... that while in Rome Paul was executed under the Neronian persecution (which began in A.D. 65). According to tradition ... Paul was beheaded (Tertullian De praescr. 36) at Aquae Salviae (currently named Tre Fontane) near the third milestone on the Ostian Way ... Eusebius dates Paul's death in Nero's thirteenth year (A.D. 67; Chronicle, Year of Abraham 2083); Jerome places it one year later in his translation of Eusebius ... It is noteworthy that no tradition contradicts Eusebius, no other location is claimed to be the location of Paul's death (cf. Bruce, Paul, 451–54), and this tradition comes from Rome (Bernard, xxxiii)."

⁹ Burk, "Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles," in *Ephesians–Philemon*, ESVEC, 364: "If we follow Eusebius's dating of Paul's martyrdom to AD 67, then Paul likely would have written 2 Timothy in AD 66 or 67. However, most modern scholars date his execution to AD 64 or 65, and so an earlier date is possible as well."

¹⁰ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the NT*, 578 give strong evidence why 2 Timothy wasn't written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome recorded in Acts 28:11–31: "Paul asks Timothy to come to him and pick up Mark on the way (4:11), so we know that this imprisonment in Rome is not that related in Acts (Timothy was with him when he wrote Colossians, as was Mark [Col. 1:1; 4:10; Philem. 24], two letters generally held to have been written from Rome). Paul appears to have been in Asia Minor not long before he wrote, for he speaks of having left a cloak at Troas (4:13), of Erastus having stayed in Corinth, and of his having left Trophimus sick in Miletus (4:20). We learn from Acts that Paul had been in prison in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27) prior to being sent to Rome and that his journey there was via Crete and Malta. He had thus not been in Asia Minor for quite some time. It is unlikely that he is writing from his imprisonment in Caesarea (which would fit the references to Asia Minor), for Trophimus was with him in Jerusalem when he was arrested (Acts 21:29) and probably Timothy also (Acts 20:4). It seems much more likely that Paul was released from the imprisonment mentioned in Acts and engaged in missionary activities for a period before being imprisoned again. The probabilities are that 2 Timothy was written during this second imprisonment in Rome." If the logic of this analysis holds, it is accurate to assume that 1 Timothy and Titus were written between Paul's first and second imprisonments in Rome.

¹¹ Burk, "Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles," in *Ephesians–Philemon*, ESVEC 364: "After Paul is released from the imprisonment recorded at the end of Acts, he engages in further ministry, including trips to Ephesus and Crete (mentioned respectively in 1 Tim. 1:3 and Titus 1:5). Eventually, Paul is rearrested and placed in prison, from which he writes 2 Timothy while anticipating execution." Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, 40–1: "Depending upon the date for the beginning of Paul's imprisonment, we would judge Paul's release date from prison to be either 61 or 63 (Acts 28:30). The only certain information concerning the time of Paul's death is that it took place during the reign of Nero (54–68), most likely between 64 and 67."

¹² Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the NT*, 561: "1 Clement 5:7 reports that Paul journeyed 'to the outer limits of the West' (Spain?), which could only have happened after Acts 28."

¹³ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the NT*, 562: "[N]umerous other patristic sources [the Muratorian Canon, Eusebius, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Jerome, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Pelagius, and Theodoret] stipulate that Paul was released from his imprisonment in Rome and ministered once again in the East."

¹⁴ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 2 Ti.: "Unlike Paul's confident hope of release during his first imprisonment (Phil. 1:19, 25, 26; 2:24; Philem. 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6–8). In his first imprisonment in Rome (c. A.D. 60–62), before Nero had begun the persecution of Christians (A.D. 64), he was only under house arrest and had opportunity for much interaction with people and ministry (Acts 28:16–31). At this time, five or six years later (c. A.D. 66–67), however, he was in a cold cell (4:13), in chains (2:9), and with no hope of deliverance (4:6)."

¹⁵ For a reasonable reconstruction of the historical period between Paul's release from prison in Rome in A.D. 62 (after Acts 28) and his final imprisonment and death in A.D. 67, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, liv–lxix.

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order

You might say, “**What does that mean? ... ‘put what remained into order’ ... what’s that about?**” Come back next week and we’ll tell you. What this verse indicates is that both Paul and Titus were in Crete for some time. And then Paul left him there to move on to another location.

If you look towards the end of this letter, you can see where Paul was when he wrote this book. It says in **Titus 3:12**.

¹² When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

Paul wrote from the city of **Nicopolis** (Titus 3:12)¹⁶

Let me show you where these places are found on the map.



Major first century sites on the Mediterranean¹⁷

You can see Rome and Jerusalem on opposite ends of this map and opposite ends of the Mediterranean Sea. You can see Antioch as well. Antioch was Paul’s sending church. And Crete is that island right in the middle of those locales.

In fact, Paul stopped at Crete on his way to Jerusalem in **Acts 27** when he was sent to Rome as a prisoner.¹⁸ Later, after Paul was released from prison, he travelled to Crete with Titus and left him there. Paul continued all the way to Nicopolis, just northwest of Crete in what is today, Greece. And that’s where Paul wrote to Titus.

Crete, just so you know was famous for its depravity. Cretans were well-known for their sexual immorality and violence.¹⁹ Many Cretans were hired as mercenaries for other countries. **They were guns-for-hire to the highest bidder.**

Also they were infamous for being deceitful and gluttonous. The ancient Greek word κρητίζω (*kretizō*) literally meant “to act like a Cretan.” It was derived from Κρής (*Krēs*), meaning “a Cretan” (a person from the island of Crete). In ancient usage, κρητίζω came to mean “to lie or be deceitful,” because of the stereotype that Cretans were untrustworthy.²⁰ Paul confirms this stereotype by quoting a famous Cretan proverb, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (**1:12**). Paul says shockingly that this testimony is true (**1:13**)! When it came to sin, Paul didn’t care about cultural sensitivity or cultural appropriation.

And Paul basically tells Titus to stay in Crete and fix all the churches there. Not an easy job for a young leader like Titus! But Paul had a lot of confidence in him.

And that leads to a fifth question.

5) Why did Paul write Titus?

¹⁶ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, Titus: Author and Date: “Titus was written, about A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments, from either Corinth or Nicopolis (cf. 3:12).”

¹⁷ Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), July 11, 2025. Some geographical points added by author.

¹⁸ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, Titus: Background and Setting: “Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:7–9, 12, 13, 21).”

¹⁹ For this and other details, see the Bible Project Video on Titus: <http://bibleproject.com/explore/video/titus/>

²⁰ Ibid.

I'll give you three reasons why. These are the main themes of the book.²¹ First of all, Paul wanted to...
To strengthen the churches with good leaders

Titus is similar to **1 and 2 Timothy** (the other so-called pastoral epistles), but it's also different. **1 and 2 Timothy** are written to Timothy while he's leading the church in one locale, namely Ephesus. Titus, on the other hand, was kind of a roving missionary on the island of Crete. And there were several churches that he was overseeing.

So, Paul tells Titus in **1:5** to appoint elders in every town.

⁵ *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.*

And after that, Paul details the qualifications for elders that parallel what he told Timothy in **1 Timothy**.
3. So Paul wrote this book to strengthen the churches with good leaders. That's something that the book of **Titus** has been doing for churches for two-thousand years.

The title of our series through **Titus** is "Framework for a Healthy Church." **A healthy church requires many things, but one of the most important things it requires is good leadership. As the leaders of the church go, so goes the church.** It's not an accident that as Paul is coaching up Titus to strengthen the churches, he begins by telling Titus to find principled and upstanding elders and put them over the churches. If you want a healthy church, you've got to have that! More on that next week!

But this book is not just about church leadership. Paul also wanted...

To encourage godliness among God's people

One of the key arguments of this book is that the proof is in the pudding. **The proof (of your commitment to God) is in the pudding (of your godliness).** And Crete was a tough place to be a godly Christian. But Paul is not letting Titus or these churches off the hook. He's not allowing them to live compromised lives. He wants them to be godly.

Paul says this in **Titus 2:11**... I can't wait to get to this passage:

¹¹ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.*

God wants godliness among his people.²² And a life that has been filled with the Holy Spirit will be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Full-stop!

And there's a third theme in this book as well. And it's intimately connected to the other two. Paul wrote this book to Titus...

To reinforce sound doctrine

Now Paul does that in most of his letters. But for whatever reason, his focus upon doctrine is particularly acute in this book, especially Paul's focus on the nature of God and the deity of Christ Jesus. That's something that shines forth even in the first four verses of introduction.

So let's turn our attention now to those four verses. And let's see how Paul opens this book.

In the next few minutes I want to show you five things: (1) God's servant (1:1a), (2) God's promise (1:2), (3) God's gospel (1:3), (4) God's family (1:4a) and (5) God's grace and peace (1:4b).

Let's start with #1.

1) God's **servant** (1:1a)

Paul writes,

¹ *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ,*²³

²¹ EDWARD LEIGH: "This epistle is by the learned called *Epitome Paulinarum Epistolarum*, an abridgement of all Paul's epistles." Quoted in Lee Gatiss, et al. *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, RCS, 267.

²² R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 279–80: "It seems almost counterintuitive that a great vision of grace would bring a great commitment to holiness, but this is precisely what happens in the heart of the true believer. Paul will drive home the theme of grace-engendered holiness again and again in this book."

²³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 378: "The salutation shows a high view of Christ as Paul pairs him with God in typical fashion. Paul is a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ (v 1). Both God and Christ act as savior (vv 3–4), and both together grant grace and peace (v 4b; see Comment)."

Paul says, **“I’m a servant. But I’m also an apostle.”** Now the first of those statements is true of all of us. We are all “slaves of Christ” (1 Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6). He bought us with his blood; we belong to him. **And if the Apostle Paul called himself a servant/slave of Jesus, how much more should we see ourselves that way!**²⁴

Now just to be clear, the first of those two terms applies to us. We are servants of Christ Jesus.²⁵ But we are not apostles. Not in the way that Paul means it here. Apostles are those who saw Christ and were commissioned by Christ. They wrote Scripture. They passed down the apostolic doctrines for us to embrace. So this opening statement is equal parts authoritative and humble. It’s equal parts commanding (I’m an apostle) and self-abnegating (I’m a servant).

Now this is where this letter gets interesting. This is where **Titus** is quite different from some of Paul’s other letters. Because the first few words have parallels in other letters. Paul calls himself a servant and an apostle elsewhere. But the amount of content between the addressor (Paul) and the addressee (Titus) in this letter is considerable.²⁶

Here’s what I mean. Paul mentions Titus by name in **verse 4**. But in **verses 1b–3**, Paul goes on this elaborate statement about his calling and the gospel that he was entrusted with.²⁷ **And Paul just stacks clause after clause together in a way that would make your English teacher in high school pull her hair out.**

But in that densely packed section of text, there is gold to mine. There are statements about God and his goodness that we can ruminate on.

For example, write this down as #2. After a description of God’s servant, we get a description of...

1) God’s **promise** (1:1b–2)

Paul writes,

^{1b} ... for the sake of the faith²⁸ of God’s²⁹ elect³⁰ and their knowledge of the truth,³¹ which accords with godliness,³² in hope of eternal life,³³ which God, who never lies,³⁴ promised before the ages began³⁵

²⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC,: “Slavery was widespread in the ancient world, and slaves were property with no freedom or rights. Why then do Paul and others use the term so frequently in a positive sense? Part of the answer may lie in Paul’s understanding of the power of sin. All people are in slavery to sin (cf. Rom 6:16; Gal 4:3, 8–9; Titus 3:3; cf. John 8:34) without choice. But once redeemed, they joyously become slaves of God (Rom 6:15–18, 20–23; 8:15; 1 Cor 7:22; Gal 4:4–5; cf. John 15:15) and are employed in his service.”

²⁵ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 468: “Jesus taught that those who count as leaders among his disciples are to regard themselves as the servants, even slaves, of others (Matt 20:27).”

²⁶ Titus has 46 Greek words between Paul’s name in verse 1 and the addressee, Titus, in verse 4. This is the second most of Paul’s thirteen epistles. Romans has the most with 71 words. 1 and 2 Thessalonians tie for shortest with four. See the chart in Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 466. “Between the first word of this epistle (‘Paul’) and the name of the recipient (‘Titus’), Paul sandwiches a wealth of historical and doctrinal information... Between the first word of this epistle (‘Paul’) and the name of the recipient (‘Titus’), Paul sandwiches a wealth of historical and doctrinal information.”

²⁷ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 468: “By the time Paul writes to Titus, he has been living out this calling for three decades.”

²⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 379: “The purpose for Paul’s apostleship is to bring God’s elect to faith.”

²⁹ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, Tt 1:1: “Those who have been graciously chosen for salvation “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), but who must exercise personal faith prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. God’s choice of believers always precedes and enables their choice of Him (cf. John 15:16; Acts 13:46–48; Rom. 9:15–21; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2).”

³⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 380: “ἐκλεκτός, ‘elect,’ is a common description of Israel in the OT (1 Chr 16:13; Ps 105:6, 43; Isa 43:20; 45:4; 65:9, 15, 23; cf. 1QS 8:6; 1QH 2:13; cf. Quinn, 53–54) and continues to be used of believers in the NT (Matt 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 3:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; Rom 8:33; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 1:1; 2:9; 2 John 1, 13; Rev 17:14; cf. Rom 16:13).” Hughes and Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, 277: “The term elect here and elsewhere (e.g., Romans 8:33; 16:13; Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:10) reminds us that God chooses his people to be his own out of his mercy rather than because they have achieved some mysterious level of holiness.”

³¹ John Calvin said that “the only foundation of all religion is the unchangeable truth of God.” Quoted in Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 471.

³² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 380: “‘Godliness,’ is a technical term in the [Pastoral Epistles] for the total commitment of one’s life to God with emphasis on the practical outworking of that faith (cf. 1 Tim 2:2).”

Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 469: “Such ‘godliness’ [*Eusebia*] is a prominent theme in 1 Timothy (2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; also 2 Tim 3:5). At roughly the same time of the AD 60s, Peter exhorted his readers to this same quality of

Wow, that's not your typical statement about God. What Paul is saying here is that he was called as a servant and as an apostle for the sake of Christians who were promised a promise. And that promise was promised before time began. Before the world was even created, God had a plan. And his plan involved election.³⁶ It involved an eternal hope. It involved the gospel and godliness and knowledge of the truth.³⁷

And that promise that God promised, which we call the gospel, is so rock solid... it's so unchanging and unchangeable, that we can count on it even more than the air we breathe. It is more trustworthy and reliable than the earth beneath our feet. Why? Because God promised it, and God never lies.³⁸

By the way, there are some things that God cannot do. Did you know that? We believe in omnipotence, and the Bible affirms that. But built into that biblical presentation of God's omnipotence is an understanding that there are things God can't do. He can't sin. He can't deny himself. He can't lie. He can't break his promises. It's not in his nature. It's not possible for him.³⁹

Can God create a rock so big he can't move it? I don't know, and I don't care. That's a ridiculous and unimportant question. People ask that question to get you to say that there are things that God can't do. But I concede the point. The Bible already says that God can't do stuff. This is one of them. He can't lie. And he can't break his promise.

And what is his promise? Let's be crystal clear about this. What is the promise that was promised before the ages began? The hope of eternal life? The promise is this—that Jesus Christ, God's Son, would die on the cross as payment for our sin. And after his resurrection, he would ascend to God the Father and intercede on our behalf. **So those who put their faith in Jesus have salvation. Those who put their faith in Jesus have their sins forgiven. Those who put their faith in Jesus have eternal life! And after death, we will enter into the presence of God forever and never have to deal with sin and death again.**

This is the promise of eternal life. This is the gospel that we believe and embrace. God promised it. God is unable to lie. His promises are true. Believe them. Hold fast to them.

Notice also, in verse 3,

3) God's **gospel** (1:3)

Paul writes,

character (2 Pet 1:3, 6, 7; 3:11). Such 'godliness' is the practical expression, the living out in real life situations, of the knowledge of God that easily veers off into abstract conviction that is mentally stimulating but practically barren. In contrast to a merely theoretical, confessional, or speculative 'truth' (note 2 Tim 3:7: 'always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth'), Paul writes to commend 'knowledge of the truth' that will make a difference for his readers' religious disposition, which affects their everyday affairs, relationships, and actions. This practical emphasis paves the way for Paul's stress on works in later sections of this epistle."

³³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 380: "ζωή, 'life,' is more than physical existence; it is a fullness of life available now through Christ, which reaches its climax on the other side of the Lord's return (cf. 1 Tim 1:16)."

³⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 380: "ἀψεudής, 'who does not lie, truthful,' is a compound of an alpha privative and ψευδής, 'false, lying,' hence 'unlying, truthful, trustworthy' (BAGD 129). It emphasizes the assuredness of the promise based on the character of God. It occurs only here in the NT but is always used of God in early Christian literature (cf. *Mart. Pol.* 14:2; Ignatius Rom. 8.2). The concept however is not unusual (Num 23:19; Wis 7:17; Rom 3:4; Heb 6:18)."

³⁵ Hughes and Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, 277: "This is a quick reminder of Paul's specific commission to preach the message of God's grace to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 26:15–18; Romans 1:16–18; Galatians 2:8). However, the apostle wants Titus to be certain of an even more encompassing truth: Though the message of grace for all the nations of the world comes through the apostle, it did not originate with him or in his time."

³⁶ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 468: "In broad biblical perspective, few concepts are more basic to the identity of God's people than being chosen by God."

³⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 380: "ἀλήθεια, 'truth,' is a technical term in the PE for the gospel, emphasizing the need to understand the content of the preached message."

³⁸ DAVID DICKSON: "The original of this truth is most ancient, inasmuch as God has promised eternal life, not only in the beginning of the world, preaching it to our first parents in paradise, but also covenanting with his Son (designed to be our mediator) about it before the world was made, in the covenant of redemption." Quoted in Lee Gatiss, et al. *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, RCS, 270.

³⁹ AMBROSE: "But God can neither be in doubt, nor can he be deceived. For he only is in doubt who is ignorant of the future. One who has predicted one thing while something else has happened is deceived about the future. Not so with God." Quoted in Peter Gorday, ed., *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 283.

³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted⁴⁰ by the command of God our Savior;

The promise of God predates time and space. God promised it before the ages began. But at the proper time, it was manifested in our world. It was manifested in his word (the *logos*)⁴¹ and through Paul's preaching.

When Jesus called Paul on that road to Damascus, he called him to preach. He entrusted him with the gospel and commanded him to preach it (see **Acts 9:15; Acts 22:21; 26:16–18; Gal 1:15–16**). Jesus told Ananias in **Acts 9** that “he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” This was Paul's calling. This was God's command to Paul. This is what God entrusted to him.

And notice too the ambiguity with which Paul ends this sentence.

³ ... through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

I say ambiguity because Paul doesn't specify here whether he's referring to God the Father or God the Son at the end of **verse 3**. Which is it? Is Paul referencing “God [the Father] our Savior” or “God [the Son] our Savior”? Or maybe both?

Listen, this is a bit technical. But stay with me. I'm inclined to say God the Son for two reasons. First of all, it was God the Son who explicitly appeared to Paul on the Road to Damascus in **Acts 9** and called him to preach. Secondly, Paul calls him “God our Savior.” That reference to a Savior is more particularly suited for God the Son in the context than God the Father.

And just to add a little evidence to that supposition, look at **verse 4** where Paul says,

⁴ ... Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

So in the very next verse, Paul calls Jesus “our Savior.” I think that's supporting evidence that the reference to God our Savior in **verse 3** is a reference to Jesus.

Some of you might ask, “**Why are you making such a big deal about this, Pastor Tony? We believe in God the Son and God the Father. We believe in the deity of Christ.**” Well there are some theologians who suggest that the Pauline Epistles never explicitly confirm the deity of Christ. They say that that's more a Johannine position than a Pauline position. To that, I reply, “**Not so fast! Look at the book of Titus. Paul does some serious theologizing for us in this little book. And at least part of that “theologizing” is an affirmation of Christ's deity.**”⁴²

The best evidence of that in this book is **Titus 2:13**. Paul says there that we are,

¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the deity of Christ affirmed clearly in a Pauline Epistle. And what Paul makes explicit in **Titus 2:13** is at least hinted at in the introduction, in **Titus 1:3**.

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 [i.e., “Jesus”];

Look at **verse 4**.

⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith

Okay, now finally Paul addresses his letter to the recipient. You can barely stop for a breath in **verses 1–3**. But now we see, “**O, this is addressed to Titus. Good. I was wondering about that.**”

Write this down as #4 in your notes. Paul now gives us a statement about...

4) God's **family** (1:4a)

⁴⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 381: “The proclamation of this gospel, which has now been made known, was entrusted to Paul in accordance with the authoritative command of God who provides true salvation. Although the heresy was not as intense in Crete as it was in Ephesus, it was nonetheless present and receives comment from the beginning of the epistle. Paul's opponents may have been questioning his apostolic ministry and authority, but Paul carries divine authority (cf. 1 Tim 1:1, 12–17; on Paul's entrustment of the gospel, cf. Comment on 1 Tim 1:11; 2:7).”

⁴¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 381: “The λόγος, ‘word,’ is the gospel (cf. 1 Tim 4:5).”

⁴² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 383: “Throughout the salutation Paul's high view of Christ and his relationship to God are apparent. Paul is God's slave and Christ's apostle. Both God and Christ are the savior, and both God and Christ together grant grace and peace. Although this theology is common in salutations, it will be shown that it addresses specific issues in Crete, where Titus was dealing with a Jewish influence that most likely downplayed Christ (cf. 1:10).”

⁴ To Titus, my true child⁴³ in a common faith:⁴⁴

Why does Paul say, “my true child?” What in the world does that mean? Just so you know, Titus was not Paul’s biological son. Titus was a Gentile (Gal 2:3). And Paul was a Jew. **In fact, Paul was the Michael Jordan of Judaism...** a Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:4–6). So how could Paul—a Jew—call Titus—a Gentile—his “true child”?

Well, the key to understanding that statement is found in the prepositional phrase. Titus was Paul’s “true child”... “in a common faith.”⁴⁵ In other words, Paul led Titus to Christ. Paul was his spiritual father. Paul even talks at one time about being a spiritual mother to others whom he breastfeeds like his own young children (see 1 Thes 2:7). That’s a striking metaphor!

No, Paul was not Titus’s biological father (or his biological mother for that matter). He was his spiritual father. He led him to Christ, and he paternally mentored him throughout his life.⁴⁶

You see, we who are Christians are family in a common faith. And our Christian kinship supersedes and transcends biological kinship. Because we’re God’s family. And church is a family dinner, not a restaurant. We are committed to one another and we are linked to one another in a way that goes beyond biological connection.

Now let me just ask an applicational question of you as we consider this verse. **Paul had a “true child” in the faith—Titus. Who’s your “child” in the faith? Who have you led to Christ? Who are you mentoring? Who are you discipling? Who are you coaching up like Paul coached up Titus?**

Finally, look at the end of verse 4.

⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace⁴⁷ from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Write this down as #5 in your notes. In this introduction, we see (1) God’s servant (1:1a), (2) God’s promise (1:2), (3) God’s gospel (1:3), (4) God’s family (1:4a) and finally...

5) God’s **grace** and **peace** (1:4b)

What is grace? Grace is God’s undeserved favor. How did we receive it? As a gift from God. What is peace? Peace in this context means “peace with God.” How do we have peace with God? We have peace with God as a result of having our sins removed by the blood of Jesus.

Formerly, we were enemies of God. There was separation due to our unholiness. The wrath of God abided over us. But now, because of what Christ has done, we have peace with God. We are credited with a righteousness that is not our own. And so now, we have peace “from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

By the way, the words “grace” and “peace” are repeatedly paired together in the NT.⁴⁸ In all thirteen of Paul’s letters these words are used in the opening introduction. And they are beautiful words: χάρις and εἰρήνη

⁴³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, 382: “Paul greets Titus in language similar to his address of Timothy, his γνησίῳ τέκνῳ ἐν πίστει, ‘true spiritual son’ (1 Tim 1:2), his ἀγαπητῷ τέκνῳ, ‘beloved son’ (2 Tim 1:2).”

⁴⁴ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 474: “Paul and Titus share a ‘common faith.’ This shared commitment certainly includes their experience of believing in Jesus, what theologians call *fides qua creditur* (personal faith that is placed in something or someone). But it likely refers still more to the substance of what both have believed in, the *fides quae creditur*, or core content of the Christian faith.”

⁴⁵ CHRYSOSTOM: “After Paul had called Titus his own son and assumed the dignity of a father, hear how it is that he lessens and lowers that honor. He adds, ‘After the common faith’—that means: with respect to the faith I have no advantage over you. It is common to us both. You and I were together born by it.” Quoted in Gorday, ed., *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS, 284.

⁴⁶ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC, 474: “Paul elsewhere refers to himself as the ‘father’ of those who received Christ through his missionary or pastoral efforts (1 Cor 4:15; cf. 1 Thess 2:11; Phlm 10). Paul’s expression of fatherly nurture is a reminder that the religion he represents, like the God he serves, has love as both inner essence (1 John 4:8) and outward marker (Matt 22:34–40).”

⁴⁷ JOHN CALVIN: “When St. Paul greets the brethren he usually contents himself with these two words, ‘grace and peace.’ This signifies (as we have declared on other passages) that all our good and all our happiness consists in this—that we are reconciled to God who holds us in his favor and in his love. Here therefore is the source of all that we should desire—that God loves us and is propitious toward us. For if he is our enemy, woe to us—even if the whole world should conspire to help us! But if God accepts us to himself, even if we are pitiable to human eyes yet all shall be turned to our good and to our salvation.” Quoted in Lee Gatiss, et al. *1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, RCS, 272.

in Greek. But you should note that it's always in that sequence in the NT. It's always "grace" and then "peace." It's never "peace" and then "grace." Why is that?

I don't know why exactly. Maybe it's just part of the figure of speech. But I might just argue for something chronological that's intrinsic to that statement. In other words, there's no such thing as peace, not really, before or without God's grace. In other words, first comes God's grace, and then what follows is God's peace.⁴⁹

There's an old adage that goes like this, "If you want to give someone peace, start by giving them grace." Well, that's exactly what God did. God offers us peace. But there's no such thing as peace without the offer of God's grace first. In fact, without God's grace, we have no peace. We have no peace with God, and we have no peace inside of ourselves.

And that's why Paul can say to Titus, as one Christian to another... as mentor to mentee...

⁴ ... *Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.*

I'll close with this. I've tried to emphasize, in this message, the focus upon "God" in Paul's introduction to Titus. God is mentioned four times in the first four verses, and that doesn't even count the references to Christ Jesus our Savior. It is an understatement to say that Paul's first four verses in this book are God-centered not man-centered.

And it harks back to something that Moses said in the OT. In the book of Deuteronomy, there's a fascinating statement about God. Moses, writing on behalf of the Lord, says, "Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" (Deut 4:33–34).

Those rhetorical questions are striking. The answer, of course, is no! No god ever did that or ever could do that. And that's why Moses follows by writing, "To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him" (Deut 4:35).

In the book of Titus, Paul captures the same kind of tone as Moses did in Deuteronomy. Paul communicates the originality and the exclusivity of the God of the Israelites, with the added gospel truth that this God, Yahweh, sent his son to die on the cross to save us from our sins. Did any other "god" do that for his people? No! Can any other "god" do that? No! He's "God our Savior." And there is "no other besides him."

⁴⁸ Based upon a Logos search, I found 17 occurrences in the ESV of "grace" NEAR "peace" (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:13; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phm 1:3; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; 2 John 3; Rev 1:4).

⁴⁹ Hughes and Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, 278: "Convinced that their standing before God is based entirely on his grace and not on any goodness in themselves, peace comes."