

Opening Greeting of the Letter to Titus

Titus 1:1-4

Titus 1:1-4 – *“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,² in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,³ but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;⁴ To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”*

Background Notes

The book of Titus is one of the three “Pastoral Epistles” in the New Testament. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are called “pastoral” epistles because they give directions on how to shepherd, or pastor, God’s flock within the Church. The first verse of the letter tells us that the apostle Paul was the author of this letter to Titus.

Paul traveled extensively on three missionary journeys before his first imprisonment. After the third journey, Paul was arrested in the Temple area in Jerusalem for “disturbing the peace” of Judaism. He was imprisoned for two years in Caesarea, which is located on the Mediterranean coast of Israel. The Roman authorities that governed the whole area of Israel at that time were headquartered at Caesarea. Paul was a Roman citizen, so when he realized that his legal case was not being decided at Caesarea, he appealed to his case to Caesar. Thus, he was sent to Rome, and the account of his ship voyage to Rome was recorded in Acts 27.

During his first Roman imprisonment, Paul was not in a dungeon. He was allowed to rent his own house, but he was confined there under house arrest. From this house arrest situation, he wrote the four “Prison Epistles” - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul’s first Roman imprisonment is covered in Acts 28. At the end of the book of Acts, Acts 28:30-31 says: *“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”* Although Paul was in his own rented house, he still was chained to a Roman guard.

After about two years, it appears that the apostle Paul was released from this first Roman imprisonment and made further missionary travels, sometimes called his “Fourth Missionary Journey.” We don’t know the exact itinerary, but he may have made it as far as Spain, because in Romans 15 he expressed a desire to go to Spain. In any case, during these travels he visited Ephesus and he left his co-worker Timothy there to help pastor the church at Ephesus. In addition, he visited the island of Crete and left his co-worker Titus there to help build up the churches on Crete.

The letter to Titus was written between Paul's two Roman imprisonments. The purpose of this letter was to encourage Titus, and to remind him of his responsibilities to help establish the young churches on the island of Crete. Verse 5: *"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you."*

What do we know about Titus? Galatians 2:3 says that Titus was a Gentile, and it appears that Titus, like Timothy, was converted through the ministry of the apostle Paul. Titus 1:4 says, *"To Titus, my true son in our common faith."*

2 Corinthians tells us that during Paul's missionary travels, he sent Titus to Corinth to help straighten out the tangled problems in the Corinthian church. Thus, we know that Titus was quite a capable young man. Paul would certainly not have sent just anyone to the church at Corinth to straighten out affairs there, because it certainly was not a model church. It had a lot of problems.

After Paul left Titus on Crete, he went on further in his missionary travels. He wrote back to Timothy, who was at Ephesus, and then he wrote back to Titus who was still serving on Crete. Some time after that, Paul was arrested for his outspoken testimony as a Christian, and he was once again imprisoned in Rome - this time in a dungeon. That was his second Roman imprisonment. From the dungeon he wrote again to Timothy: "The Second Epistle to Timothy," or as we know it, 2 Timothy. Soon after writing that letter, the apostle Paul died as a martyr for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul mentioned that Titus had gone to Dalmatia, which is part of the country of Albania today (part of the former Yugoslavia). Tradition says that Titus later returned to Crete, and that he died there.

Doctrinal Points

1. Salvation is more than "fire insurance"!

When God saves us, there is more to our salvation than just escape from going on down the road to hell. It would be wonderful enough to escape the fires of hell - but salvation is **more** than just "fire insurance" – much more!

In verse 1 Paul said that he was a *"servant of God and an apostle [sent one] of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness."* Thus, Paul's life-purpose was two-fold:

- to bring to faith those whom God has chosen for salvation
- to perfect that faith by teaching the truth that leads to godliness.

That's what it's all about - to help people come to Christ and become believers, and then to help them grow in their knowledge of the faith.

But this teaching should not just be for the accumulation of Bible knowledge (v1). The "knowledge of the truth" should lead to **godly living**. At Emmaus Bible College, we teach the Bible - but we try to teach it in such a way that the students are not just gaining Bible knowledge. That knowledge should lead to a godly or Christ-like lifestyle. Are you gaining Bible knowledge that is leading to a godly lifestyle? Is that going on in your church?

My two-fold purpose with this Talk from Titus, and your two-fold purpose as a church, is to lead people to Christ and then see them grow in the faith. Salvation is **more** than "fire insurance"!

2. Salvation was planned in "Eternity," but made known in "Time."

Verses 2-3: *"In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,³ but has in due time manifested His word through preaching."* The eternal life that we receive as part of our salvation is described here as "the **hope** of eternal life." The idea is not that we *hope* it will come true, but we're not really sure. No! It's a sure thing! It's referred to as a "hope" because the reality of our eternal life is not seen now – but it **will** be seen in the future!

Notice that our eternal life was "promised before time began" (v2). When was that? When was our eternal life promised? It was certainly promised in the Old Testament. Think of David's well-known psalm, for example - Psalm 23: *"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* The promise of eternal life is found in the Old Testament.

But the idea in verse 1 is that the promise of our salvation goes all the way back to the eternal councils of God, before Creation – and before Time began! That's amazing! God was thinking of us long before Time began! And in eternity past, within the eternal councils of the Godhead, the promise was made that believers would live forever in glory. What a promise! That should go a long way to lift your spirits when you're discouraged - and to help you to live out what you believe!

Verse 3 informs us that this promise that was made before Time began has been made known to us in "Time." God's promise about salvation and eternal life has been made known. *"...in due time manifested His word through preaching"* (v3).

When and how has this promise of eternal life been made known – this promise that was made before Time ever began? It has been made known with the coming of Jesus Christ, and the preaching of the gospel. That's the "due time" mentioned here - the proper time; the **appointed time!**

There were certainly glimpses of this promise in the Old Testament, but the promise was fully manifested with the coming of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the gospel. That's what we believers proclaim - God's promise of eternal life for anyone who trusts in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

Maybe you're not a Christian. If you're not, this promise is good for you. All you have to do is believe. The promise was made before Time began - but it is now fully revealed for you to believe. Don't put it off! What God reveals in Time He holds us responsible to believe in Time.

Remember: salvation was planned in Eternity - but it's made known in Time.

Practical Application

Aren't you glad that "God cannot lie"?

There are some things that God cannot do - and one of them is that **God cannot lie** (v2)! So, if anyone asks you whether you believe that God can do **anything**, the answer is: No, He can't do **everything** – because He can't lie.

Don't get caught by one of those trick questions from a wise guy who tries to trap you into saying, "Yes, of course! God can do **everything**!" The proper answer to that trick question is, "God can't do everything, because God cannot do anything that is inconsistent with His moral character. God cannot sin, and God cannot lie."

Aren't you glad that God can't lie? People lie. Friends lie. Egyptian travel guides lie! (Egyptian travel guides lie?! Yes. We recently led a tour of biblical sites in Egypt, and unfortunately they sometimes lie!)

But - **GOD does not lie!**

I'm so glad that I can come to this book, the Bible, and know that it does not lie. How can I be sure? I'm sure because the Bible is the God's Word - and God cannot lie! The Bible is not man's words about God - it is **God's words to mankind**. It cannot lie because it's the Word of God.

I'm so glad that God cannot lie. The good news of salvation is true! All God's promises to us in His Word are true! Every one of them will be fulfilled!

Aren't you glad that God cannot lie?