

Titus 1:1-4 A Summary of Gospel Ministry

As I mentioned two weeks ago in our introduction, Paul has charged Titus with the task of bringing order to the Church in Crete. Verses 1-4 make up Paul's greeting, or "salutation." And out of all Paul's letters, this greeting to Titus is the 2nd longest after Romans. Therefore, we find a lot of information packed into these 4 verses. In fact, these verses give us a clear description of the Apostle Paul's calling and purpose in his life since the Gospel of Jesus Christ came to him. We might call this "A Summary of Gospel Ministry." We are not "apostles" like Paul. But, the very same truths apply to us, which makes this passage very important to us today. With this in mind, I have 4 truths that summarize the ministry of the Gospel in our lives. (Source, Purpose, Motive, Means)

1. The source of gospel ministry is God. We see this throughout the passage. In v. 1 Paul calls himself a "servant" of God. He is also chosen by God as an "apostle." The word "apostle" means one who is "sent," but here refers to the office of apostle, as one who was called by the Lord Jesus himself on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). The primary reason for this truth is that Paul says he was "entrusted" (v. 3) with the word and with the task of preaching. This word is passive, indicating clearly that this gospel ministry had been given by God. Paul is only a steward. In v. 4 Paul refers to God's grace, which is the undeserved blessing of God. Paul is only a vessel, a servant, a "slave" to the ONE who has given him this ministry. In 1 Tim. 1:11 Paul says he does all things: "**in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.**"

Just this week, I watched Star Wars, episode IV *A New Hope*, from 1977. And right in the beginning Darth Vader captures Princess Leah's ship. And just before she is taken she gives the plans to the Death Star to R2D2, as he and C3PO escape to Tatoine. From that time, R2 is on a mission to deliver the plans to Obi Wan and eventually to the rebellion. And nothing can hinder him from his mission he was given. He was the recipient . . . We are entrusted with something infinitely more precious than plans for a death star. We have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, I do believe Paul is referring to his apostleship, which no longer exists today. But, the principle is still the same. God has entrusted his people with the ministry of the gospel.

This means we do not define the ministry. God does. We do not define the gospel. God does. We do not invent the good news. God does. And if, by God's grace, we are given such a privilege, we must not squander it. We must do everything in our effort to dispense this ministry. In Col. 1:28-29 Paul says, "**Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.**"

To be entrusted with the gospel also means that God gets all the glory for what we do. He is the One who empowers us to live out the gospel and to tell others. When sinners are converted and enter the church, God is the One who gets all the credit. We are stewards. We are vessels. 1 Thess. 2:4 says, "**but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.**"

2. The purpose of gospel ministry is to further the faith of God's people. The purpose of gospel ministry is to bring salvation to all God's people. This is what we do. Jesus says, "**As you go,**

make disciples of all nations . . .” This is the ministry God entrusted to Paul and to us. Look at v. 1: **“for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth . . .”** In other words, Paul is saying, *“I have been given this ministry of preaching the gospel that God’s people be saved, that they be complete.”* (We will come back to what it means to be “saved” in a moment.) But let’s spend a few moments on the doctrine of election we see clearly in this verse.

From one perspective, the people of God, both Jew and Gentile, are the elect (chosen) from before the foundation of the world. This truth is foundational as we see it everywhere in the Bible. And really, it merely follows our previous truth that all things we have are given by God, especially our salvation. The OT often refers to Israel as God’s chosen people. In Deut. 7:6 we read: **“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.”** The same can be said in the NT, in the new covenant. In Eph. 1:4 we read that God . . . **“chose us in him before the foundation of the world . . .”** Acts 13:48: **“And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”** Paul is merely following the teaching of the Lord Jesus who says: **“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice”** (John 10:14-16). The Apostle Peter also begins his letter to the persecuted, scattered Christians: **“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you”** (1 Pet. 1:1-2). Brothers and sisters, we are the elect of God. Few truths are more fundamental to the identity of the people of God than being chosen by God. And Paul’s Ministry is for their sake. In 2 Tim. 2:10 he says, **“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”**

Now, let me ask, *“How do we know who these people are?”* Look back at v. 1 again: **“for the sake of the FAITH . . .”** There is FAITH. This is BELIEF. There is a good profession. We preach so that people BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ. But that’s not all. Look at the next part of the verse: **“which accords with godliness . . .”** The gospel ministry is entrusted to us that we might see the elect of God saved. And to be saved is to live godly. Faith and godliness cannot be separated! This is why Paul is confident when he writes to the Thessalonians. Look with me to 1 Thess. 1:4-8: **“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you . . .”** Why is this? **“because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.”** One of the reasons for Paul’s ministry of the gospel is to see the faith of God’s people furthered, that he may present them mature in Christ.

Now, we are not apostles like Paul; And, the great majority of us are not travelling the world preaching and planting churches as Paul did. However, the principle is still the same. A few of us will go. Most of us will stay here. But, we are either those who go or those who send. And for those of us who stay here, the ministry of the gospel is the same as we do our best to further the faith of God's elect, God's people all over. As God said to Paul concerning the Corinthians, **“Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people”** (Acts 18:9-10) Brothers and sisters, the principle is the same. Our preaching, our evangelism, our efforts to make disciples, is to further the faith of God's elect. Let me give a few applications.

Application: Gospel ministry is not selfish. Everything we do is for the sake of the faith of God's elect. We preach. We teach. We tell our neighbors. We have coffee with our brother or sister to do them good. We counsel. We mourn and weep. We labor physically to build a fence. All these things we do for the sake of our neighbor. This means that the most loving thing we can do is preach the gospel of Christ.

Application: God's people will come into the fold. Jesus said, **“I have other sheep not of this fold; them I must bring in.”** When we go and preach, people will be saved.

Application: Gospel ministry is proved by godliness. It is important to know that God's people are chosen by God and because of this, faith has come, and further, this faith as it looks unto Christ, becomes more and more godly, more holy, we can say. So when we consider Paul's words, “for the sake of God's elect,” our gospel ministry isn't merely to get someone to pray a prayer or walk an isle or merely to make a profession. (These things are ok in and of themselves as we do call people to make professions). But we must realize that without godliness there may not be a credible profession. Jesus says, **“Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom.”**

Application: We labor and toil for this end. Why do you work jobs? You work for lots of reasons. You work because this is good. It is God's design for us. But practically, you work so you can get a paycheck and provide for yourself and your family as you contribute to the betterment of the world. For this you labor and toil. Well, how much more should we labor and toil in the ministry of the gospel?

3. The motive of Gospel ministry is God's eternal promise. Look at v. 2 **“in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”** There is a lot here. But, I want to focus on the truth that our motivation for gospel ministry is literally “out of this world.” We labor. We toil. We share. We care. We live our lives different than the world in godliness. We love one another. We gather together. We press on! ALL the things we do is because we have HOPE in the eternal promise of God to give us life. In just about every hymn we sing, the 4th or last verse is about heaven, or eternal life, that will come to us one day.

Why do you keep working your job? Because you know at the end of the week or the month, you will receive a paycheck. Why do athletes train so hard in this life? Because they want to win the prize. Why do farmers labor and toil with their fields? Because fruit is coming in the harvest.

Why do we endure hardships? Why do we endure persecutions? We do it because God has promised eternal life in the gospel we possess and preach. Has anyone ever heard of a man named Tim Challies? He is a Canadian, a preacher, a teacher, a blogger for the Gospel Coalition site. Through the years, his writings have helped me tremendously. And just this week, his 20-year-old son, a student at Boyce College (Southern Seminary), collapsed on the campus lawn as they were hanging out. And here is what he wrote the day after: *“In all the years I’ve been writing I have never had to type words more difficult, more devastating than these: Yesterday the Lord called my son to himself—my dear son, my sweet son, my kind son, my godly son, my only son . . . Nick was playing a game with his sister and fiancée and many other students when he suddenly collapsed, never regaining consciousness . . . He’s with the Lord he loved, the Lord he longed to serve. We have no answers to the what or why questions. Yesterday Aileen and I cried and cried until we could cry no more, until there were no tears left to cry. Then, later in the evening, we looked each other in the eye and said, “We can do this.” We don’t want to do this, but we can do this—this sorrow, grief, this devastation—because we know we don’t have to do it on our own strength. We can do it like Christians, like a son and daughter of the Father who knows what it is to lose a Son . . . Even though our minds are bewildered and our hearts are broken, our hope is fixed and our faith is holding. Our son is home.*

How can he write such words the day after his Son passed. He said it! Our HOPE is FIXED and our faith is holding. When the Apostle Paul sends Titus to this ungodly island below Greece called Crete, he knows what is in store. He knows. He tells the Corinthians he works: **“with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches”** (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Why did Paul continue this gospel ministry? V. 1: **“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.”** The writer of Hebrews writes to persecuted Christians. Listen carefully to his words in 10:32-39: **“But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”**

Why did Moses give up a luxurious life in the house Pharaoh to suffer persecution with God's people? In Heb. 11:24-26 we read: **“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.”**

Let me ask, *“Have you ever wanted to give up?”* Of course, you have! And many have given up on the faith they once professed. But by the grace of God as I preach these words to you the church at Grace, I repeat the words of Heb. 10:39: **“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”** At a very difficult time early on in Jesus' ministry the crowds were leaving him because of some hard saying. And he asked his disciples, *“Do you also want to leave?”* Peter replied, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”** (John 6:68). I read an interesting tweet on election day by a familiar pastor: *“Today is an election that will reflect the will of God for a few years on earth. In eternity past there was an election by the sovereign will of God that granted us everlasting heaven.”* Press on my brothers and sisters! Look unto Christ, who is eternal!

4. The means of Gospel ministry is preaching. Look at v. 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 will be very brief in closing with this truth. The Word of God came to Paul. Which word? In short, the word that Jesus died on the cross as a sacrificial lamb, a substitute sacrifice for sinners. And he laid down his life on the cross. And God laid upon him the sins of his people. And he punished Jesus in their place. And all the wrath and justice we deserve fell on him, the sinless Lord of Glory. But death could not hold him as he rose from the dead on the third day. And all the promises of God in the OT spoken through the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus Christ . . . ALL AT THE PROPER TIME. And these very same truths we also preach. Rom. 10:14-15: **“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”**

The means of the ministry of the gospel is the Word of God. Jesus says, **“As you go, make disciples . . .”** Brothers and sisters, we must begin this process with preaching. And we must continue it with preaching.”

There is so much more truth in these words today. But for the sake of the gospel ministry with which we have been entrusted: 1) God is the source; 2) Furthering the faith of God's people is the purpose; 3) Our motive is hope, founded upon the God's promise of eternal life; and 4) The Means is preaching!