

Titus 1:1-4

~ Healthy Church Vision ~

Titus Introduction

It's written by a guy named the Apostle Paul sometime during the first century (around 55-60 A.D.) to a young man named Titus...

Titus (we think) was converted under the teaching & preaching ministry of Paul, and he appears to be a great resource & companion for Paul when it comes to planting churches, and establishing Gospel missions...

Titus is mentioned about 13 times in the New Testament Scriptures, but **never once** is he mentioned **by name** in the book of Acts...

Now that's significant because what that does, is it gives us a **time indicator** as to when Paul & Titus went off to the Island of Crete to plant these newly established churches...

Paul in Acts

And so most scholars believe that because Titus isn't actually mentioned in the book of Acts – that he & Paul go off to the island of Crete sometime **after** Paul's **first imprisonment** in Rome; which is how the book of Acts ended...

And so (it seems) that Paul gets out of Jail, goes off with Titus, to the island of Crete (the largest Island in the Mediterranean sea – it's just South of the Aegean sea), and he goes there to plant new Christian churches that will reflect the image, health, life, & beauty of God & the Gospel!

Paul then leaves Titus behind on the Island so that he can:

“Put into order that which was left undone...” Titus chapter 1 verse 5...

Titus was to put into order – to organize these Christian Churches so that they would begin to reflect the health and life of true Christian **doctrine** & true Christian **practice!**

And that’s why I’ve titled this series:

Titus: **a handbook for healthy churches**

Because in this book we have Paul’s instructions on how the Church of God – the Ecclesia (the called out people of Christ) must conduct themselves **in the knowledge of the Gospel & the holiness of faith...**

It was a book written **for the Church**, so that the nature & character **of the Church** would reflect **the nature & character of God!**

Titus is a handbook for healthy churches – or for Churches wanting to become healthy & holy in their doctrine & deeds!

So that’s really the heart of this epistle – & where it’s going to take us...

Book Outline

The book itself is divided up into 8 sections relating to healthy Church doctrine & healthy church practice:

So here’s the **proposed** outline that I’m seeking to employ; **it may change** as we progress along in the book but here’s what I’m thinking...

A healthy Church consists of having:

- *A Healthy Church Vision (1:1-4)*

- *Healthy Church Leaders (1:5-9)*
- *Healthy Church Rebuke (1:10-16)*
- *Healthy Church Discipleship (2:1-10)*
- *Healthy Church Living (2:11-3:2)*
- *Healthy Church Doctrine (3:3-8)*
- *Healthy Church Discipline (3:9-11)*
- **And** *Healthy Church Partnership (3:12-15)*

Do Good, Teach Good, Love Good

See in each & every section of this book, Paul urges Titus that he is to **do good**, to **teach good**, & to **love what is good!** X2

Sound Doctrine

This idea of goodness (seen in this epistle) **comes from the fact** that Titus is to teach that which accords with **Sound Doctrine!**

The word Paul uses for “*sound*” here is where we get our English word “*hygiene*” from – & it literally means “*to be healthy!*”

So Paul urges Titus while he is labouring for God on the Island of Crete to devote himself – to put into practice – all of those things that accord with good **spiritual** healthy doctrine & good **spiritual** healthy devotion!

Our doctrine fuels our devotion - & our devotion **comes from** our doctrine – what we believe about God will determine how we live for God!

So with that being said, and the foundation being laid why don't we pray and then we'll get into verses 1 to 4...

Introduction

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea.

With no thought to themselves, and no thought to their safety; they went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost.

This wonderful little station saved many lives & over time it became famous! Some of those who were saved, and others in the community wanted to become associated with the station, to give of their time and money and effort.

The little station grew! And soon new boats were added & new crews trained...

Some of the members of the station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge for those saved at sea.

And so they replaced the emergency cots with beds, and put better furniture in the enlarged building, gave it a new paint job and added many new features...and gradually...over time... it became a popular gathering place for its members... Using it as a sort of club.

But as a result of this, fewer members were now interested in going out to sea, and so **they hired** lifeboat crews to do the work for them, and they watched as other men were now going out at night & risking their lives!

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, bruised & battered – some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin; and the beautiful new club was now in a state of chaos & uproar.

So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside of the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting however, there was a split in the club's membership.

Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities altogether, having come to regard them as unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club.

Some of the other members however insisted that their primary purpose was to save lives and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station.

But eventually...they were voted down, & told; *that if they wanted to save lives, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast...*

And so they did...

But as the years went by, the new station, which had up & re-located experienced the same kinds of changes... It too evolved into a social club; caring more about **the idea** of saving lives, rather than saving lives itself!

Sadly, history continued to repeat itself, club after club, people after people – more concerned about catering to the comfortable needs of the members, rather than being a life saving station that sought the lost & those shipwrecked at sea!

And (as legend has it), if you were to visit that same sea coast today; you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore, all of them operating as social institutions of change, but never actually impacting the world around them...

Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown...

As I sat there this week in my office contemplating this story... I couldn't help but think to myself how so many Churches that appear sound in the faith – appear to be

grounded in the Gospel – they go from being a life saving station; eager for the truth of Gospel missions – to being a social gathering club with a lifesaving décor...

How many churches do you know that have gone from a love & zeal; seeking & saving the lost, to simply talking about doing it...

And so how do we stop our church (Grace Bible Church) from falling off the path and being another statistic of churches that close their doors and give up hope in preaching the Gospel and saving lives?

How do we stop ourselves from becoming a social club rather than a Church?

Titus – Main Point

Well... I think that Titus chapter 1 **verses 1 to 4** gives to us a healthy Church vision for us to adopt and to follow...

Our passage here this morning keeps the main thing the main thing, and it reorients our hearts & minds to focus on what is **near & dear** to the heart of God!

Laboring for the elect by laboring for the Gospel!

Today's Main Point/Outline

And that's really the main point we're going to see here today:

[SLIDE]

Healthy churches labour for God's elect by labouring for the Gospel X2

Outline

Now I did originally have an outline, but after many hours wrestling & straining to come up with one that was coherent & sourced from the text... I ended up **not** going with one because **it would have been more work** trying to justify the outline that I did have rather than simply going through the text... and so we're going to go "naked into the text" as it were...

And so for those who are beginning to sweat behind the knees as I say “there’s no outline...” (Craig)... I originally did have:

Verses 1-2 was “Labouring for the elect”

&

Verses 3-4 “laboring for the Gospel”

But I don’t think that quite fits with the text... this is actually one long sentence in the Greek (something like 64 words in the original [in verses 1 to 4] and so if you wanna have a crack at outlining that; go for gold... but we’re just gonna go through the text...

Titus 1:1-4

So if you have your bibles Titus chapter 1 beginning at verse 1 – Paul says this:

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. In his own time he has revealed his word in the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior:

To Titus, my true son in our common faith.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

[SLIDE]

Paul, a Servant...

Although his eyes had begun growing dim as he writes in the older stages of his life, the spiritual vision of this old man could not have been any clearer!

As he begins to write this letter to his young son in a common faith, Paul begins this book in a most humble & fascinating way...

First Paul introduces himself with his **favourite** self-description – he is a servant of God!

Actually...he's a slave of God... a **bondservant** of God... a **doulos** of God...

See as Paul looked back on his life & ministry, and as he considered everything that God had sovereignly done **in & through** this suffering servant – there was **one thing** that constantly brought joy & hope to the heart of this Apostle when life felt broken:

*“That he **was not** his own... that he belonged both in body & in soul, both in life & in death unto His faithful Saviour & friend Jesus Christ...”*

He was a servant of God! He was a **slave** of God!

For the Faith of God's Elect

And because Paul knew the price that his redemption cost for him to become a slave of God...

Because he knew the redemption that was bought at the foot of the cross for God to purchase him – then he knew! That his life was NOT his own...

He knew that he was called out of the world & into the service of gospel missions...

Which is why **he says, what he says** there in verse 2:

*Paul a servant of God & an Apostle Of Jesus Christ (why?!?!!) – **for the faith of God's elect** and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness...*

So this is what informed this man's life & ministry! This is what directed Paul as a slave of God – Paul's mission & vision – his purpose & passion; as a servant of God –

was to bring into existence the faith of God's elect by the proclamation of the Gospel that resulted in godliness...

So as Paul went around and preached **the** gospel, those **chosen by God**, responded **to** the Gospel, and His elect were converted **by** the Gospel!

Healthy Church Vision/Mission

This is the pattern & this is the purpose that God has ordained, for Gospel-centred, Christ-exalting Churches!

This very phrase encapsulates precisely what it means to have a healthy Church vision – & a healthy Church mission!

We labour for the sake of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth (which by the way is shorthand for the Gospel) that leads to godliness!

Written for us

And this passage (like all of Scripture), this passage was written **not only** with the original audience in mind, but with a **future** audience in mind as well!

With a future Church in mind!

With **us** in mind, sitting here today!

We labour for the faith of God's elect!

The heart of Titus

But **NOT JUST for their faith** but also **for their godliness**; their holiness!

Paul was NOT content in simply making decisions for Christ! – he was not content for us to trust in Jesus and then go off and live however we want... rather **Paul was serious** about raising godly men that reflect godly lives!

He was serious about Christians growing in their knowledge & growing in their holiness!

In fact this verse encapsulates (not just a healthy church vision that we must adopt) but the very heart & soul of this entire epistle...

These words act like an introductory statement to the entire book! These themes are going to come up over & over & over again... and so Paul's getting us ready for what's about to come in later weeks...

In chapter 2 verse 14, Paul writes something very similar – he says:

Our Saviour, Jesus Christ gave Himself up for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to cleanse for Himself a people for His own possession, **eager to do good works.**

Paul wanted Godly men! Paul wanted godly women! He wanted godly Churches that reflect; the health, & life, & beauty, & character of the gospel itself!

We are **not** saved **by** our good works; but we are saved **for** good works! (For the purpose of good works) – Our salvation is by faith alone, but saving faith is **never** alone!

And although godliness & good works **do NOT merit salvation, they do in a very powerful way evidence** our salvation!

Election

And so after blowing our minds with the truth of the Gospel leading to godly lives – Paul then decides to completely obliterate our minds by referring to the truth of what the bible calls: **God's divine election...** X2

He says this:

*We labour for the faith of God's elect & their knowledge of the truth – and this knowledge of the truth & this hope of eternal life **was promised** by God the Father in eternity past; **before time began...**”*

Election in the bible

So Paul knew his bible!

Paul loved his bible!

And Paul loved seeing this glorious doctrine all throughout his bible!

Ephesians 1:4:

We are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world

John 6:44 Jesus says:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...

John 15:16:

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain...”

So these are biblical words & as biblical words I hope they are precious to you!

Just as precious as they were to Paul’s own heart...

Paul loved election! He loved the doctrine of election...

J.I Packer – Election

But perhaps you’re sitting there thinking: *“Rhoi what are you even talking about – I thought the election was last year (different kind of election)?!?!”*

We’re talking about biblical election – we’re talking about God choosing people to be saved for salvation (election)!

We’re talking about the hairy doctrines that everyone kind of just skips over in their bibles...

God is big – we are small

But listen! We don’t need to be scared about this doctrine!

We are naturally drawn toward things that make us feel small & insignificant – like we love to be drawn away to mountains, & rivers, & lakes, & stars & planets because they magnify the grandeur of God & make us realize just how small we really are...

But for some reason – when it comes to the doctrine of election and God choosing people to be saved – we're all of a sudden **no longer comfortable** with feeling small & insignificant?!?!?

Like that's crazy right?!?!

This is how depraved the human heart is... that when it comes to God & the transcendence of His Name we all of a sudden **lose our minds** when we read about election & predestination...

But listen! There is something freeing in knowing that God is God – and I don't have to make myself awesome for Him to love me...

I **don't** have to make myself **lovable** to God... because **He has already loved me** in eternity past...

And there's something freeing in that...

And that's what the doctrine of election does – it allows God to be God; and for us **to rest** in His electing love for us...

So if you're unfamiliar with this idea of election, allow me to quote the reverend J.I Packer in his book *Concise Theology*:

He says:

“The biblical doctrine of election is that before Creation (before time itself) God selected from the human race, a people whom He would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ...”

So before time began – before time existed: God in eternity past sovereignly chose all those people who would ever come to faith & trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their sins!

And this choice of God, to choose sinners for salvation, is based upon nothing in them – but everything in God!

It is based upon God’s divine wisdom & God’s divine mercy!

So that no one can boast

And then he says this:

*“In Scripture this doctrine [of election] is a pastoral doctrine, brought in to help Christians see **how great is the grace [of God] that saves them...**” X2*

[SLIDE]

That is the aim – that is the purpose that divine election brings!

It is meant to well-up inside of our soul joy, and emotion, and praise, and adoration because no one here deserves to be chosen!

No one in here deserves the grace of God!

And so this doctrine is designed for Christians to see & to say:

How great is the grace [of God] that saves them!

I mean we sang it here this morning in Reformation Song! We are saved by **grace** alone – through **faith** alone – in **Christ** alone – for the **glory** of God alone!

Why?!?! – So that no one can boast before God or men!

SOVEREIGN GRACE

So I want you feel the weight of what Paul says here...I want you to feel the joy rising up in his heart... as he writes about the glorious doctrine of election to Titus— Paul says that:

Prior to your existence, prior to my existence, prior to the creation of the world, God in eternity past **had chosen** to set His affections **on** you, so that He at the proper time, (in the fullness of time) would come down in human flesh, taking on human form & dying for our sin!

And after He had endured the full fury of God's divine wrath, Christ would be raised from the dead, and He would ascend into heaven **so that** He could grant faith and life to guys like Titus & Paul, **so that** they might preach sound doctrine that accords with godliness – and that saving message would make its way century by century, decade by decade, city by city, person by person, conversation by conversation into my heart and into your heart so that we could look back here in Titus chapter 1 and say to ourselves – **SOVEREIGN GRACE!**

It was all by grace – it was all by mercy!

Friends regardless of how you & I understand the doctrine of divine election – regardless of how we try & justify the understanding in our own heads, **you cannot deny** that here in Titus 1 we are informed of our transition from object of wrath to object of grace – from dead in our sin to alive in Christ – from hearts of stone, to hearts of flesh – and that this transition was exclusively and entirely - the work of God's divine mercy!

This is a healthy church vision & a healthy Church mission...

Is your view of God...this glorious?!?!

Is your heart thrilled?

See as you hear these words, as you read these verses, does your heart rise up in joy within you?

Do you feel free as you contemplate the magnitude of this doctrine?!?!

Are you quick to agree & amen this biblical truth... or are you offended at what Paul says here in Titus chapter 1?

Do you squirm at this doctrine? Are you upset at God because of this doctrine?

Listen, it's okay to be upset at this doctrine... it's okay to be scared about this doctrine... It's okay to be confused about this doctrine... listen we are all swimming in the deep end of Reformed theological truths, we are all swimming in the deepest end of the theological pool!

We are not even close to touching the bottom of the pool (in fact we can't even see the bottom of the pool), as long as we read words like eternity, & election, & a time before time! We are in over our heads as finite creatures of the Word!

So listen...it's okay if this upsets you, it's okay if this is scary... because this is really hard stuff! I Get that! I totally get that...

What we can't do

But what **we can't do** here this morning is look at words like eternity, & election, & predestine, & God's sovereignty and then close up our bibles and say – NOPE! That's not fair! That's not okay! I don't like that God is like this, I don't like that He chooses some and not others!

Because what that does is exposes the depths of our hearts and it indicates that **we don't like** the God of the bible...

That we want to be God and sit in the place of Him!

That you want salvation to work the way you think it should work – but see the problem with that, is the bible!

You don't get to define God – God's not affected by our opinions about Him as His creatures – God has defined Himself for us; and our opinions about who God is – they don't matter!

Now it's okay to say "*you don't like election*" – it's okay to say "*it's hard to understand this truth*" – it's even okay to say "*I wish it wasn't true...*"

That's okay... God still loves you...

But what **we can't do**, is try to manipulate the text – or manipulate God – or manipulate theology so that He fits inside our little theological box...

These truths are meant to humble our hearts; and cause us to bow the knee to grace...

3 Glorious Truths of divine election

And so if there are some here this morning, struggling to accept this fact, struggling to acknowledge the truth of election – then allow me to offer 3 truths taken from Titus chapter 1 that hopefully will fill your heart with joy & give you a passion for a healthy Church **vision** & a healthy Church **mission**!

1. Divine election guarantees our hope for eternal life

3 glorious truths that we're going to close with here today, of why the doctrine of divine election is actually something to be praised; something to be joyed in – & not something to be bitter against...

So 3 truths that comfort our hearts this morning for a healthy Church mission & a healthy Church vision; and help us to press on as a life saving station...

[SLIDE]

Number 1 – *Divine election guarantees our hope for eternal life* **X2**

Have a look at verse 2:

Paul says that he labours for the elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness; *in the hope of eternal life! X2*

Arthur Gossip

The year was 1927... The place was Aberdeen, Scotland. And The man was Arthur John Gossip, he was a pastor at Beech grove Church.

He was fifty-four years old and he had just lost his beautiful wife! When he returned to the pulpit (after the loss of his wife) he preached a sermon titled “When Life Tumbles In, What Then?”

In that sermon Gossip compared our life to watching a plane pass through the sky during the time of war – he said:

There you are, lying on your back watching a plane fly gracefully across a brilliant sunlit sky, when all of a sudden it is blown apart by gunfire and flames, and you begin to watch as it falls to the earth in a tumbling mess of tangled metal...

And so he’s preaching this sermon after he’s **just experienced** the death of his wife... like who does that right?!?!

And in the middle of this sermon – Arthur uses this analogy to talk about how a plane goes down during the time of war – only **this time!** The gunfire he saw that day, was **the tragic loss** of his wife’s death...

And so he goes on to preach this sermon in the midst of heartbreak & pain “when life tumbles in, what then?”

He said:

“I don’t [always] understand this life of ours...But still less can I comprehend how people in trouble and loss fling away peevishly from the Christian

faith...for crying out loud!!! Fling to what? Have we not lost enough without losing [God] as well...?"

*"You people in the sunshine [of life] **may** believe the faith, but we [who suffer in the shadow of death] we **must** believe the faith. For we have nothing else..."*

Brothers & sisters, Arthur gossip was a man who suffered with hope!

Friends when you are in the midst of a time of war in your life, when you feel the effects of living in this broken world – do you suffer with the hope of eternal life?

Do you consider your glorious election in eternity past and praise God in the mess!?!?

Here was a man who suffered with hope because he understood his identity in Christ & his glorious election promised in eternity past!

GBC - Hope

One of the things that the pastors here at Grace Bible Church long to do when preaching, when teaching, when counselling, when organising, putting together a sermon, putting together the music, putting together the order of worship, one of the things we love to do & to think about is this question:

What will be with you in those final moments of your life?

What will be the things you need to hear when you are on that bed, minutes away from seeing God face to face?

Will these prayers, will this sermon, will that song, help you to die well!?!?

Will it help you to suffer well? will it cause you to suffer with hope!?!?

What will be with you in those final moments of your life?

That is the aim & purpose **that we try to accomplish** here at Grace Bible Church; to promote the hope of eternal life founded upon the promises of God, grounded in His election!

Friends are you longing for the life to come!!!

Paul longed for the hope of heaven! He longed for eternal life! Because He understood the power; & the comfort; & the joy of God's divine election!

If we are to be a healthy Christian Church, **we must** labour for the elect and their knowledge of the truth **of eternal life!**

Divine election guarantees our hope for eternal life

2. Divine election guarantees our hope in sharing the Gospel

[SLIDE]

Secondly – *Divine election guarantees our hope in sharing in the Gospel X2*

Have a look at verse 3 – Paul says:

*“In his own time He (God) has revealed His word **in the preaching** with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Saviour...”*

So Paul says:

*That the hope of eternal life (life that is promised before time began) has been brought to light **through the preaching of the Gospel** entrusted to him by the command of God...*

So **the means by which** the message of eternal life is revealed to us & the means by which anyone comes to saving a faith in Christ, **is through the proclamation** of the Gospel that God has commanded us to preach!

Paul says we labour for the truth of the Gospel to be made manifest in the heart of God's elect – because God makes the Gospel precious to their hearts in His own time!

Why evangelise?

Now here's where we can misread this...

Some of us here this morning, will be reading these words, and listening to Paul & thinking to ourselves:

If God chooses his elect before the foundation of the world (before they believe) why do I need to tell others about Jesus?

If they're predestined to believe (before time began), then why would I ever evangelise the lost? What is the point of missions if God is fully sovereign?

And there are many reasons the bible gives to answer that question... but I'll just give you two:

1. Firstly, we evangelise the lost **because** the elect of God are **not only** the people sitting in Church on a Sunday morning!

The elect **aren't just those** who are **already trusting in Christ** – but the elect **also includes** others **who have not yet** come to a saving knowledge of the truth!

Do you think all of God's elect are sitting in Church around the world this Sunday?

Do you think all the elect are only those who look, & act, and smell like you and me?!?!

There are millions of men & women walking around; dead in their sin – dead in their trespasses, waiting for the hope of eternal life to be preached & proclaimed by you & me!

Brothers & sisters millions of God's elect have **not yet** heard the Gospel – some of them have **not yet** believed the message – some of them have **not yet** come to faith in Christ!

So **don't** read this as **only those who are already following Jesus**, because the **elect** here **also includes** labouring for people **who are not yet trusting in Christ!**

That's why we do missions! That's why we preach sermons! That's why we engage the world with the Gospel!

Because God has elect people in this city!

Jesus said in John chapter 10:

*“I am the good shepherd. I lay my life down for my sheep, I know my own and my own know me... **I have other sheep** that are **not** of this fold. I must bring them also, and they **will** listen to my voice...”*

We labour for the proclamation of the Gospel, because there are many **other people** in Brisbane city NOT yet trusting in Christ...

That's the first reason...

2. The second reason is because (like we said):

Divine election guarantees our hope in sharing the Gospel

See the bible tells us **with un-equivocation** that before any person comes to a saving faith and trust in the message of the Gospel – we are all:

1. Dead in our sin
2. Slaves of our flesh
3. & Children of wrath

By nature we are born; *enemies of God!*

We are sinners who **will not come** to the source of eternal life because **we love** the darkness & **we hate** the light! (John chapter 3)

And **because of this** (because people are dead their sin – not wanting Christ) we **need** the doctrine of divine election **if we are to ever** see fruitful disciples made for Christ!

Without divine election there is **no hope** of sharing our faith!

John Newton famously said that:

*“If I **do not** believe in election I may as well be preaching to horses & to cows...”*

His confidence was that God would work in His elect!

John Alexander, a former president of Inter-Varsity campus ministries (in America) said in one of his sermons:

*“At the beginning of my missionary career I believed that if predestination were true I could **not** be a missionary. [but] now after 20 years of struggling **with the hardness of the human heart**, I could **never** be a missionary **unless** I believed in [divine election]...”*

Brothers & sisters – election guarantees our hope that God will bring about faith in a human heart that is dead in sin & walking in the ways of the world...

Election **does not** prohibit our evangelism; it fuels our evangelism!

God’s sovereignty in salvation makes evangelism & missions possible; because **our only hope** is found in a really big God!

3. Divine election guarantees our hope of perseverance

Lastly (thirdly):

[SLIDE]

Divine election guarantees our hope of following Christ [till] the end...

Look back up with me at verse 2:

Paul says I labour for the elect – *in the hope of eternal life [& then notice] **that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began...***” X2

So according to Paul, before time began, God in His divine wisdom, had promised to secure a remnant for Himself, that would be redeemed **in the fullness of time**, through the preaching of the Gospel – and all of this hope is rooted & it is grounded in what!?!?

A God who cannot lie!

So that **our salvation** grounded in God, in eternity past [listen!] is **NOT** dependent upon you!

It does NOT upon:

- How good we are
- How rich we are
- How spiritual we are
- How religious we are
- How humble we are
- How much we drink or don't drink
- How much we cuss or don't cuss
- What we watch or don't watch

None of that determines our hope of eternal life!

What determines our hope of eternal life is God; graciously promising it to us in eternity past!

What determines our hope of eternal life **when we die** – **is the fact** that God in eternity past has promised to give it to us **before time began!**

Which makes sense, because only an Eternal God can grant eternal life!

We can't earn it – God must give it!

And I want you to notice! Where is he grounding this truth?!?!

Where is his hope that this truth will actually come to pass?

Well he grounds it as he says: **in the God who cannot lie!**

So he grounds it in the nature, & the character, & the goodness of God Himself!

So what is Paul saying here is that:

Our salvation was promised in eternity past by a God who cannot lie about the promises He makes – and if this eternal & gracious God has promised life to us – **then there is nothing we can do** to lose that promise!

This is what Paul tells us in Romans Chapter 8:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **No!** In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all*

creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Why? How is that possible – how can we believe this?

Because:

- God saved us
- God called us
- God predestined us
- God elected us
- God justified us
- God is sanctifying us
- God will glorifying us
- God has us
- God loves us
- God purchased us
- God brought us into Himself – we have NOT but God has!

And where I lack confidence in myself – I cannot lack confidence in Him!

He never lies!

And because He is good and because He is eternal and because He doesn't lie I can be sure that I will wake up tomorrow morning just as loved and cared for as I ever have been!!!

Because my election is not grounded in me... but in a God who cannot lie!

He is good – He is faithful – He is sovereign – And He loves you with an everlasting love before time began...

Our hope is NOT rooted in ourselves!

Our hope is not grounded in our ourselves!

Our hope is not grounded in our ability to make ourselves lovable to God!

It is rooted & it is grounded in the sovereign God who is outside of time and space...
a God Who **never lies!**

He's good brothers & sisters – He's so good!

And therefore; there is hope...

Conclusion

So let me finish here today with a story I found from a guy named Mark Webb a pastor in the states, & the story begins with him teaching a class of students about Reformed theology – he says:

*After giving a brief survey of these doctrines of sovereign grace, I asked for questions from the class. One lady, in particular, was quite troubled. She said, "This is the most awful thing I've ever heard! You make it sound as if God is intentionally turning away men who would be saved, receiving only **the elect**. I answered her in this vein.*

"[Mam] you misunderstand the situation. You're visualizing that God is standing at the door of heaven, and men are thronging to get in the door, and God is saying to various ones, 'Yes, you may come, but not you, or you, or you...'

*The situation is hardly this. Rather, God stands at the door of heaven with his arms outstretched, inviting all to come. Yet all men without exception are running in the opposite direction towards hell **as hard as they can go**. So God, **in election**, graciously reaches out and stops this one, and that one, and this one over here, and that one over there, and effectually draws them to Himself, by changing their hearts, & making them willing to come.*

Election keeps no one out of heaven who would otherwise have been there, but it keeps a whole multitude of sinners out of hell who otherwise would have

been there. Were it not for election, heaven would be an empty place, and hell would be bursting at the seams...”

Brothers & sisters healthy churches labour for God’s elect by labouring to proclaim the truth of the Gospel of grace revealed in the fullness of time!

This is a healthy Church mission & this is a healthy church vision!

Let’s pray.

Titus 1:1-4

Discussion Questions

Main Point: *Healthy churches labour for God's elect by labouring for the Gospel*

Q1. If someone were to ask you “*What is the purpose of the Church*” what would you say?

Q2. What does the bible say is God's Grand purpose for His Church?
[Read Exodus 19:6; Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Peter 1:16; 2:9-10; Titus 1:1-3; 2:14]

Q3. What is your favourite analogy for the people of God – (His temple, His body, His bride, His family) – Why is it your favourite?

Q4. What is the relationship between our identity as being “*slaves in Christ*” & doing Gospel missions/evangelism?

Q5. How can theology sometimes interfere with missions?

Q6. How should our theology empower & propel Gospel missions?

Q7. What passages of the bible provide you with the most assurance for “*The hope of eternal life?*”

Q8. In a few sentences, how would you begin to explain the doctrine of election?

Q9. How does the doctrine of election make you feel (happy, angry, sad, scared, confused, bitter, zealous?) – How “*should*” it make us feel?

Q10. How does knowing that God is sovereign in salvation encourage you to share your faith?

Q11. How does knowing that God is sovereign in salvation encourage you that He will hold you fast until the end?

Q12. Where does Paul tell us to place our confidence when we do evangelism? [Read Titus 1:1-2]

Q13. Do some Christians have a greater “gift” in sharing the Gospel?

Q14. Do some Christians have greater or lesser responsibility to share the Gospel? – What are some ways that those with lesser gifting in this area can still fulfil the great commission?

Application Questions

Q1. What difference has knowing the truth of the Gospel made to your life this week?

Q2. Is the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel producing godliness in your life?

Q3. How often do you/should you consider your identity as “a servant/slave of Christ”?

Q4. What difference should this knowledge of your servant hood make in your life?

Q5. What difference has the doctrine of divine election made in your life this week?

Q6. Has this doctrine fueled your hope/ given you confidence in God?

Q7. Who in your church could you begin to pray for, that they would grow in godliness?

Q8. Name a non-Christian in your life right now that we could pray for?