

June 7, 2009

Titus 1:2-3

Good morning. It is good to be back with you as we move into summer together. Grab your bibles and turn back with me to Titus chapter 1. If you don't have your Bible with you, no problem, just grab one of the pew Bibles in front of you and turn to page 844.

We started our study of the book of Titus a few weeks ago. And we have learned that this compact little letter is going to be about the local church – about God's plan for establishing His church. We've also discovered that in these opening verses as Paul describes his own ministry, God gives us a blueprint for ministry within the larger blueprint of the letter. If you've missed either of the first two sermons, you'll want to listen to or read those online to be sure you have a handle on how God has started off this study.

But this morning we'll move forward into this blueprint within the blueprint – this model within the plan – and look at verses 2 and 3. And the best way to be thinking about how this is going to fit together today and how it fits into what God through Paul is saying is to be thinking in terms of "how?" as we go through it. Let's start back at verse 1 and come through verse 3.

*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--
a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,
and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,*

So verse 2 says that faith and knowledge is resting on the hope of eternal life – a hope God promised long long ago. So here is where the "how" comes in first.

- How do the salvation and sanctification we talked about in verse 1 become important to any of us?
- How do we come to see ourselves as servants or slaves and messengers of God that we talked about in verse 1?
- How do we personally live in that process of godliness?
- And how does that play out in God's plan for His church?

He says a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life. Now that is not just based on hope the way the word is employed today in common conversation. I hope it rains – I hope it doesn't rain. I hope she likes me – I hope he isn't mad. I hope I get that job – I hope I keep my job – I hope my Tivo worked – basically when we say "I hope something is going to happen or not happen" we wish that it would or wouldn't. That doesn't work here. Try it.

I hope there really is a heaven. I hope I really have a relationship with Jesus forever. I hope there really is eternal life. I hope Jesus really does come back to get us.

Folks remember what we are talking about. This faith is connected to us being slaves of God – us giving up our lives in exchange for the life of Jesus in us. This knowledge of truth is connected to radical transformation – us changing the whole 'normal' or better 'societal' way of thinking in exchange for thinking and living according to God's truth. To do that based on a hope of some unsure consequence is not going to happen. Which is why in verse 2 Paul says that hope of eternal life was promised by God who does not lie.

Now just let me just chase that real fast – it is not being taught in this passage though it is being exemplified here clearly – and I can't just not address it. **What enables us to go from wishful thinking to biblical hope is the PROMISE of God. When God says something is going to happen, it is going to happen.** Good or bad, you can count on it. So when Paul talks about the hope of eternal life here he is talking about believing that what is not yet yours will be. Eternal life –

eternal heaven – eternal salvation – the redemption of our bodies – the return of Jesus Christ - what is not yet yours fully as a present possession, absolutely, unequivocally, certainly, unchangeably, guaranteed will be. Why? Because God who does not lie promised. Now there is a whole other series of sermons on this truth, but we're in Titus and need to stick to where we are – so what's going on here?

Look at verse 2 and it says that the faith and knowledge we talked about are resting on the hope of eternal life. Resting becomes the key there. **Not only is eternal life - the hope of being right with God now and forever the heart of the GOSPEL – that hope and all that goes with it are the MOTIVATION for godliness.** Few examples:

1 John 3:2-3 tells us it encourages us toward **HOLINESS**.

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”

Knowing that I am going to face Christ – knowing that I am going to live in his eternal heaven – knowing that his goal is my sinless perfection – purifies my life – encourages me to be pure.

Similarly, it encourages us toward **SERVICE**. (1 Corinthians 3:8, 12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

Knowing as Paul explains to the Corinthians more than once that the hope of eternal life means I will stand before Him to receive a reward for the things done in the body – good or worthless – gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay or stubble – motivates me in godliness toward service – that I might hear God my Savior say “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

One more – **this hope encourages us in SUFFERING**. Knowing that I will one day be delivered from sin and sorrow and sickness and pain and disappointment and problems and even death encourages me when I suffer. The last half of **2 Corinthians 4** is all about that ends with the declaration that these *“momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”* Paul says it again in **Romans 8** where Bryan has been preaching through in **verse 18** *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*

Paul's mission was very clear. He was a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ in order to bring those chosen by God to saving faith and to bring the saved to godliness through the knowledge of God's truth both of which are based on this hope of eternal life. And that eternal life is reality because God promised it. So it motivates us toward holiness and service and encourages us in suffering and all of that again is not just true for Paul's ministry, it is the plan for God's church – whether it be as individual Christians who are the church or the corporate life of those Christians as the church together. This is God's foundational plan.

And the next issue in that plan is how do we know? Go back to the beginning again, how do the elect find faith? How do those chosen of God know truth? How do we have hope in eternal life? Go back to the text. Verse 3 ***“and at his appointed season he brought his word to light.”***

Listen – as simple as that sounds it is so crucial. Paul is saying that the truth at the center of my mission – the content of the gospel that elicits faith in the elect – the truth at the core of the knowledge that leads to godliness – the promise that enables this hope of eternal life - this truth comes from God.

In the context of what God is giving us I can't make this point strongly enough. I know most if not all of you would affirm this but it has tremendous implications. Paul is saying whatever I want to preach about salvation has to come from God – whatever I want to preach about sanctification has to come from God – whatever I want to preach about glorification has to come from God. **Everything that we**

experience as Christians is because God brought his WORD to light. So the message that is the how – the message that accomplishes God’s blueprint is found nowhere else but the BIBLE.

So if we as the church are going to be about evangelism, we are dependent on the Bible. If we are going to be about growing in godliness, we are dependent on the Bible. If we are going to share the hope of eternity, we are dependent on the Bible.

And personally – if you are going to try to lead people to salvation, you have to use Scripture. If you are going to lead your friends into what is right, what is best, what is godly, you have to use Scripture. If you’re going to try and lead them to deal with issues of life and to endure through trials and to have hope in the midst of suffering in view of the future, you have to use Scripture. There is no other source. God promised and then brought it to light unfolding all this truth to produce all of these effects in his Word.

And that brings us to the last issue of “how” in the blueprint God is giving us through Paul this morning. How does the church communicate? How do people get access to what God has brought to light? How do we function as apostles – as ambassadors – as messengers? Again – Paul’s own description gives us a picture of God’s plan. Look back at verse 3:

*“and at his appointed season he brought his word to light **through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,**”*

If the message is the Word – the means is the PREACHING. The how is preaching. Now don’t turn me off here because the word scares you. Listen – the Greek word for **preaching here basically comes from kerusso which meant to PROCLAIM or herald.** In Paul’s day and before they didn’t have newspapers – they didn’t have TV – definitely didn’t have the internet so when kings had a need to communicate new laws or information or whatever it was, a town crier as they were called in American history – a herald – a proclaimer would come and *kerusso* – he would proclaim the news. That’s the word here for preaching.

Now notice **here in verse 3 that God is talking about the preaching not the preacher – the PROCLAMATION not the proclaimer. The word of God is the message – and the means, the how is NOT based on the person, but on the preaching of the message.** And that’s what Paul says he was called for – by the command of God our Savior. And that has always been God’s means.

The Old Testament prophets were preachers. Jesus himself was a preacher. The early followers of Jesus were commanded to be preachers. The Apostles – capital A this time – were preachers. In fact go ahead and turn to Romans 10 with me where we see this as God’s chosen method. **Romans 10 begin in verse 13-15**

“for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!””

That last phrase literally is that ‘preaching good news.’ How beautiful are the feet of those who preach. Now I know you can’t see my feet right at this moment so I guess I can tell you that oh yes – my feet are beautiful! But obviously that’s not the point right? And obviously that’s not the truth about my feet either but we’ll move on.

This quote about preachers’ beautiful feet from Isaiah 52 simply means that because of the message we bring, our approach itself is beautiful. As John MacArthur – who I’m sure has no more

better looking feet than me says – “It’s not that our feet in themselves are beautiful, it is that when we approach we bring such a glorious message that our approaching feet are beautiful.” The gospel that saves – the truth that sanctifies – it doesn’t fall out of the sky like rain, it comes through the mouths of preachers. God Word is the message – preaching is the means. It isn’t about the person – it is about the preaching – the proclaiming – the speaking no matter who it is – you or me.

But on that note – as we let God’s word guide us in that – we have to know he is not referring to manipulation. Paul isn’t saying he was about manipulative oratory – controlling his crowd. That’s not what God means with “the preaching” entrusted to Paul.

You see this really laid out in **1 Corinthians chapter 2**. Paul says there in **verse 1** “*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.*”

He says I didn’t come to blow you away and impress you with my skills as a speaker. **Verse 4** says “*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.*”

He says I wasn’t about technique or manipulation. I didn’t want your response to be about my approach so I came with God’s wisdom – in God’s power. **Verse 3** says *I came in weakness and fear and trembling* – there was nothing about me that would move or excite results – I just preached the scripture for your minds to deal with. And you can read the rest of that chapter and see the importance of all that. And the reason I’m hitting this you’ll see for sure in just a moment, but for now is because we have to clarify what preaching is not.

There are people - preachers - who are talented communicators and who are articulate and who use the emotional techniques and the sad stories and the tear jerking approaches and who get the mood music playing behind the scene and can create the kind of manipulative environment that can create in behavior changes in people and even alter their basic values at least temporarily and never need to use the Word of God.

But what is the result? What is the ultimate outcome? It is true salvation – is it true godliness? Is it even true change? Of course not. **The only legitimate tool is the Scripture. And as we saw a couple weeks ago, the only legitimate bridge to change is the MIND.** Verse 1 of Titus points out that it is the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. **Romans 12:2** says we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, remember?

Psychologist William McGuire suggests that a change in human attitude goes through 5 steps: attention, comprehension, yielding, retention, and action. In other words for you to legitimately change your behavior towards some truth, you begin with something catching your attention – you come to comprehend the truth around it, you choose to yield to it, which causes you to retain it and then to begin acting on what you retain. Each step is necessary and based on the preceding step.

And the old school approach to preaching seems to suggest that the goal of preaching is that third step – the yielding – the preacher’s preaching brings a person to yield, to surrender. So they do everything they can to manipulate the yielding not by clarifying the truth but with sounds and sights and stories and music and pressure - getting caught up in the flow, if you will. That’s just manipulation.

And listen clearly here – I’m not saying people can’t be converted in that situation, but people who aren’t being converted can get swept up in it. People are converted – or to use the wording in Titus - the elect respond in faith – because they comprehend the truth and the Spirit of God brings transformation.

You ask why am I getting all into this – because it is crucial for us to understand for our own application. The preacher’s goal should not be seen as the yielding step, but as the comprehension step. It is the preacher’s responsibility to get attention – to make possible clear comprehension – and

it is the Holy Spirit's job to produce yielding and surrender – to produce retention and action. That's not my job – it isn't my task to manipulate you emotionally to do something. All the slick methodology of flailing around and sad or scary stories and endless invitations and all that pressure is not preaching the Word. It has nothing to do with comprehension. The decision to yield and then retain and then act is between the hearer and God not the hearer and the preacher. Listen – **preaching is proclaiming God's saving, sanctifying, and strengthening TRUTH from Scripture – the rest is up to the HOLY SPIRIT.** And that is God's blueprint that we see in Paul here in Titus.

Now – again – why all that about the preaching? After all you probably say – that's your job Brett – that's your role in the church – that's stuff for you to worry about, not me – I'm not a preacher. Folks listen to **Mark 16:15** – Jesus says – his last command to us in the gospel of Mark – *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”* **The Great Commission isn't about the preacher – it is about the preaching – just like in Titus. You may not have a PULPIT like I do in your job description, but you have a mandate from God just the same. To preach – to proclaim – God's truth wherever and WHENEVER you can.**

That's why it was so important for us to understand what preaching is and isn't – that's why it was so important for us to understand where our responsibility stops and where the Holy Spirit alone can take over in those we preach to. Because you are preachers every bit as much as I am.

Here's the deal – look at me – hear this with me.

Even before we get into the book as a whole - in the blueprint God gives here — **God's plan for his church is that first of all it be completely under his sovereign AUTHORITY.**

Secondly that the church is under His Lordship so **God's church can bring those He has chosen to salvation by FAITH and then bring the saved to GODLINESS by the knowledge of truth – empowered by the indubitable or un-doubt-able HOPE of eternal life.** That hope which enables us to pursue holiness – to act in service – to persevere in suffering - because God promised it.

Third – is how God's church accomplishes that – the source of it - **the MESSAGE of God's church is the bible – the inerrant scripture – the Word of God.** Not my opinion or any one else's – not what I think – not my feeling – not even my experience – but the Word of God alone.

And finally – how God's church enables that message to reach the world – how the Word is communicated – is through preaching. **God's church communicates God's message through preaching – PROCLAIMING God's truth in God's power.**

That is God's blueprint for His Church exemplified in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. Now here is where I need you to click. Here is where comprehension must come. Here is where you have to make application.

Everything I just summarized about God's church is also God's plan for you. **God's plan for His church is God's plan for YOU.** If you claim to be a Christian – then everywhere I just used the word 'church,' replace with your name.

God's plan for you, Christian, is to be and live completely under his sovereign authority and Lordship as his ambassador.

God's plan for you, Christian, is that you might live for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness and that you would do so because of the hope of eternal life God has promised.

God's plan for you, Christian, is that in order to do so, you would proclaim God's Word, in every way – at every chance – every where you do life, trusting that when you do that, you can let the Holy Spirit take it from there.

And folks the reason we as Christians must get that is because **FAIRWAY will not conform to God's plan until WE individually as his church begin to do so ourselves.**

Before we can deal with the practical blueprint of the rest of Titus, we have got to surrender and embrace the foundational blueprint together with our lives. Will you? That's what you and the Holy Spirit have to deal with now. Let's pray.