

THE ROCK COMMUNITY CHURCH

Titus 1:1-4

"Introducing Titus"

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42:48

So with that, I wanna pray and we're gonna jump into our study for this morning. Would you guys pray with me now? God, we thank you for, God for this time. God, we thank you for just an incredible morning where we were able to hear from our children, where we were able to enjoy the fruits of their work as they've spent all the time this week at VBS as they have been studying your word, as they've been learning these songs and dancing around and having all kinds of incredible fun.

43:15

We just, we thank you for the blessing of being able to enjoy them. And God, we also thank you just for the blessing of being able to gather together with a church family. God, the way that you have brought your church together and God that as this morning, as we are gathered here together, God, we pray that you would be glorified in everything that we do.

43:34

God, we pray that the next few minutes that we have to come and to study and to hear from your word this morning, we pray that you would use it that you would be glorified, but God also that you would enrich us.

43:44

God, that you would help us to hear what you have to say to us. God, give us ears to hear from you this morning. So we give this time to you and we pray that you would use it for your glory. And we pray all this in Jesus' beautiful name, amen.

43:56

All right, well, as you guys are here, you picked a good week to come to church this week because we are in the middle of a big series that we're calling "Pure Church." Now, inside of this series, we've been spending a good chunk of this year already and we're gonna really kind of finish this year looking at this series called Pure Church, but we're looking at a couple of different books of the Bible that all talk about how we're supposed to do this Christian life together, right?

44:23

How we're supposed to do this. And so we just finished the book of First Timothy and we're getting ready to start a book of the Bible that's called Titus. So if you've got a copy of your Bible, or if you don't have one, you should be able to reach underneath of your chair like Oprah-style and there should be one underneath of there for you.

44:39

So you can grab one there and follow along or you can follow along on the screens, but we're gonna be looking at a letter over the next several weeks called the book of Titus, the letter of Paul to Titus.

44:51

And so I wanted to just kind of paint the picture for you guys of where we're gonna be going over the next couple of months. Hopefully, peak your interest a little bit so that over the next few months, you kind of know where we're heading with this.

45:02

So let me give you guys just the occasion for why this letter is important, why we're studying this and how it fits into our Pure Church series. So the series that we've been looking at has been focused on looking at how God has created His church.

45:18

That word that just means when people, when Christians gather together, people that are all marching under the same banner, we all follow Jesus, right? When the church gathers together, these books and this series has been talking about how God created the church to function.

45:35

So first Timothy that we were looking at has spent a whole bunch of time talking about guarding the truth kind of seems like an appropriate theme for us as we've been talking about guarding the kingdom and spiritual armor and all of those things.

45:48

But Paul was concerned, this is Paul writing this letter to a young man named Timothy, the last series. He was concerned about how false teachers were coming up with their own ideas and how the church needed to defend the truth.

46:02

Well, this series that we're getting, or this book that we're getting ready to jump into with Titus is also gonna talk about some of the same topics, but it's gonna be a little bit more generally focused on how life in God's family is supposed to work.

46:16

How things are supposed to work in your household, how things are supposed to work in the household of faith in the church and how life with God is drastically different than life apart from God. Kind of the same idea that the kids have been learning about this week, that there's two kingdoms.

46:34

There's the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. And so life with God is completely and radically different than life apart from God. And so to simply kind of summarize what this book is gonna be talking about, he wants to tell us that right belief is gonna make an impact in your life.

46:51

It's gonna change some things in your life. There's a practical impact in the gospel. So I don't wanna spend too much time talking about all the details of what this book is about and who wrote it and what the setting is, but I do think it's important for us to know.

47:06

So our friends over at The Bible Project have done a great job. If you've been with us, we use these little videos. It's a little cartoony sketch video that's gonna kind of lay out the details of what this book of the Bible is about, kind of help us have a basic understanding of the big picture of what's going on here so that as we jump into this over the next several weeks, we'll have an idea of what's going on in the context.

47:30

So I wanna invite you guys to watch the screens for a few minutes. We're gonna figure out what this book of Titus is all about. Let's take a look.

47:40

Paul's letter to Titus. Titus was a Greek follower of Jesus who was for years a trusted co-worker and traveling companion of Paul's. He had helped Paul in a number of crisis situations in the past, and in this letter we discover that Paul had assigned him the task of going to Crete, a large island off the coast of Greece, to restore order to a network of house churches.

48:00

Now Cretan culture was notorious in the ancient world. One of the Greek words for being a liar was Cretidzo, to be a Cretan. These people were infamous for treachery and greed. Most of the men on the island had served as mercenary soldiers to the highest bidder, and the island's cities were known as being unsafe, plagued by violence and sexual corruption.

48:22

However, the island of Crete had many strategic harbors, and they serviced cities all over the ancient Mediterranean Sea. And so from Paul's point of view, Crete was the perfect place to start a network of churches.

48:33

Now we don't know the details, but somehow these churches came under the influence of corrupt Cretan leaders. They said they were Christians, but they were ruining the churches. And so Paul assigned Titus with the task of going there to set things straight, and this letter provided the instructions.

48:49

It has a pretty straightforward design. After a brief introduction, Paul gives Titus clear instructions about his tasks in the church. He then offers guidance about the new kind of household, and then about the new kind of humanity that the gospel could create in these Cretan communities.

49:05

Paul then closes the letter with some final greetings. So Paul opens the whole thing by reminding Titus that his message as an apostle is about the hope of eternal life, that is the life of the new creation, that is available starting now through Jesus the Messiah.

49:22

And this hope was promised long ago by the God who does not lie. Now this little opening comment introduces an important theme underlying the whole letter. One of the

problems in the Cretan churches was that they had assimilated their ideas about Jesus, the Christian God, to their ideas about the Greek gods that they grew up with, specifically Zeus, their chief god.

49:44

Cretan people claimed that Zeus was actually born on their island, and they love to tell stories and mythologies about Zeus' underhanded character. He would seduce women and lie to get his way. And Paul wants to be really clear.

49:57

The God revealed through Jesus is totally different than Zeus. His basic character traits are faithfulness and truth, which means the Christian way of life will be about truth also, which will be a real change for these Cretans.

50:11

So Paul then addresses Titus with a twofold task. He says the first one is to appoint new leaders for each church community, a team of what he calls elders, mature husbands or fathers whose way of life is totally different from Cretan culture, there to be known for integrity, total devotion to Jesus, for self-control and generosity both in their families and in the community at large.

50:34

And these new leaders are to teach the good news about Jesus and replace the corrupt leaders who need to be confronted. That's Titus' second task. Paul identifies the teachers as those of the circumcision.

50:46

In other words, they were ethnically Jewish Cretans who said that they followed Jesus, but similar to the problems in Galatia, these people demanded that non-Jewish Christians be circumcised and follow the laws of the Torah if they really wanted to become followers of the Jewish Messiah.

51:02

Paul says that they're obsessed with Jewish myths and human commands. And to top it off, they're just in the church leadership business to make money. And so Paul, in a brilliant move, he pulls a quote from an ancient Cretan poet Epimenides who was very frank and honest about the character of his own people.

51:20

He said Cretans are always liars, vicious beasts and lazy glutton. They blur the lines between true and false, between good and evil, and they're just in it for the money. And so while these leaders claim to know God, their Cretan way of life denies him.

51:36

They have to be dealt with. And this leads Paul into the next section. Because of these corrupt leaders, many Christians in these churches now have homes and personal lives that are a total wreck. And three different times, Paul highlights the result of all this.

51:50

The message about Jesus is discredited. Their non-Christian neighbors now have good cause to make evil accusations. And all of this makes the teaching about God our savior totally unattractive and not compelling to anybody.

52:03

So Paul paints a picture of the ideal Cretan household that is devoted to Jesus. It would be elderly men and women who are full of integrity and self-control so they can become models of character to the young people.

52:17

And the young women shouldn't be sleeping around and avoiding marriage as was fashionable on Crete at the time, but rather they should be looking for faithful partners so they can raise stable, healthy families.

52:27

And the young men are to do the same. They're to be known as productive, healthy citizens. Christian slaves on Crete were in a unique position because we know that because of the gospel they were treated as equals in Paul's church communities.

52:41

However, there was a danger that they would use that equality as license to disrespect their masters and then become associated with slave rebellions, which would further discredit the Christian message.

52:51

You can see Paul negotiating a fine line here. He believes that the gospel about Jesus needs to prove its redemptive power in the public square if it's really going to transform Cretan culture. And that's not going to happen through social upheaval or by Christians cloistering away from urban life.

53:10

The Christian message will be compelling to Cretans when Christians fully participate in public life, when their lives and homes look similar on the surface. Because after a closer look, their neighbors will discover that Christians live by a totally different value system out of devotion to a totally different God.

53:28

And that's the difference that Paul beautifully summarizes at the end of chapter 2. He says, The value system driving the Christian way of life is God's generous grace, which appeared in the person of Jesus and will appear again at his return.

53:42

This grace was demonstrated when Jesus gave up his honor to die a shameful death on behalf of his enemies so that he could rescue and redeem them. And it's that same grace that calls God's people to say "no" to corrupt ways of life that are inconsistent with the generous love of God.

53:59

Paul then zooms out from the Christian household to a vision of Christians living like new humans in Cretan society. Of all people, Christians should be known as the ideal citizens, peaceable, generous, obedient to authorities known for pursuing the common good.

54:17

But this is really different from how Cretans grew up. How are Christians supposed to sustain this countercultural way of life? And Paul believes the power source is the transforming love of the three in one God announced in the gospel.

54:30

And he explores this with a really beautiful poem. He says, God's kindness and love are what saved us, despite ourselves, so that through the Holy Spirit, God washed and rebirthed and renewed people, and through Jesus has provided a way for people to be declared right before him.

54:49

And all of this opens up eternal life, that is, a new future in the new creation. This living story is so powerful it can produce new kinds of people. Paul's convinced that spirit - empowered faithfulness to the teachings of Jesus will declare God's grace all over the island of Crete and all over the world.

55:09

Paul concludes by promising to send back up for Titus, either Artemis or Tychicus, and then he says hello to their common friends. And so the letter ends. The letter of Titus shows us Paul's missionary strategy, for churches to become agents of transformation within their communities.

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It won't happen by waging a culture war or by assimilating to the Cretan way of life. Rather, he calls these Christians to wisely participate in Cretan culture. They need to reject what's corrupt, but also embrace what's good there.

55:40

If they can learn to live peaceably and devote themselves to Jesus and to the common good, Christians will, in his words, show the beauty of the message about our saving God. And that's what the letter to Titus is all about.

55:57

There you go, right? You guys get all that? Yeah? All right, just so that you know, if you are anything like me, you didn't get all of it, right? You bunch of liars. So, I printed off that sketch. I printed copies of that, and those are available back at that table, the hub, just in the back hallway.

56:18

So on the way out, if you wanna grab one of those, hopefully that'll be helpful for you if you continue to come and are a part of this series with us. But I just wanted to take a few minutes, our last few minutes that we've got here together this morning, and just kinda give a basic overview of a topic.

56:35

I wanna touch briefly on just the first few verses of this letter. So I wanna invite you guys to make your way to the Book of Titus. We're gonna look at chapter one, verse one, we're gonna go through verse four, just a few short verses, but I think this provides just a

great little launch point for us for this series, that I think there's a cool little detail in here that I want us to take a minute and note.

56:56

So if you wanna follow along in your copy of God's Word or on the screens, I wanna read from Titus chapter one, starting in verse one. It says, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, 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 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;

57:33

To Titus, my true child in a common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." These are the words of the Lord as we read them. And so much of the information that's in this passage, actually we just looked at in that video, right?

57:41

Kinda talked about who the author is and what the recipient is and kinda what's going on in the context. But there's a key phrase in this passage that I want us to focus on for just a couple of minutes because there's some really rich stuff in here that I think it would be good for us to slow down.

57:58

I wanted to point out in verse one, where he says, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, he says, For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. That statement, that idea that's there, I want us to take just a few minutes and take just a quick flyover of a topic that would actually require weeks, it would probably be its own series if we wanted to go to all of the places that we see this idea.

58:25

But I want you to stick with me for just a couple of minutes because I wanna lay a brief foundation with making a biblical case for something because there's a very important point that I wanna make at the end of all of this.

58:37

So Paul uses a term here that may be unfamiliar to many in the room, in a biblical sense at least, but this isn't an isolated idea. This isn't just something that Paul came up with in this letter, but he talks about what's really a key doctrine, a key biblical belief that's referred to as election.

58:56

This idea of election, we're not talking about voting for a president or a senator or a governor or whatever, but political elections do kind of give us an idea of what he's talking about here with this term because election simply means a choice, right?

59:09

And so this idea of a choice, if the Bible talks about election and it talks about a choice, biblical election, talks about the fact that God chooses people based on his own purposes, his own desire to show grace to undeserving sinners.

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Now this is good news for us because if anybody in this room deserved God's favor, well, you don't, right? You're lying about that, but because God's standard is absolute perfection. God's standard is absolute pure motives in everything.

59:39

We could never do something even with a selfish motive. We could never lose our temper. We could never get tied up in whatever thing falls outside of God's standard. So the reality is that none of us deserve God's favor.

59:56

But grace and this idea of election that God chooses to show grace and to show kindness to people who don't deserve it, this is really good news for us. This is incredible news for us. And so I've got a little research here by a guy named Hain Griffin.

01:00:11

So I don't wanna take credit for this, but I do wanna show just a couple of places, a couple of places, right? I wanna invite you, if you're a person that takes notes, please don't take this as a challenge, but there is a lot of information that I'm about to throw at you guys in just a couple of minutes.

01:00:27

So I would encourage you, rather than trying to scribble all these references down, I would encourage you take your phone out, point it at the screen, and just snap a picture of each of these screens that I'm gonna share with you guys in just a minute, because we don't have time to go and look at all these places that this idea shows up in scripture.

01:00:43

But I do wanna point out and show you guys that this idea is all over the place in scripture. So what I'm saying is not just my opinion, but there's lots of references that I just wanna briefly mention a few things.

01:00:57

And so if you'll snap a picture of it, that means that you can go back and read these verses and take a look and see for yourself that the Bible talks about this, and this isn't just a little isolated idea that I came up with, but it's actually several places throughout scripture.

01:01:11

First thing that I wanna point out is the fact that Paul refers to Christian believers as God's elect, as God's chosen ones. And so we see that in the book of Titus here where we're talking this week.

01:01:21

We also see it in Romans chapter eight. We also see it in Colossians chapter three. Now you may hear that and you may think, well, this is just Paul's thing, right? This is just something that Paul's kind of got in his mind.

01:01:35

So this isn't just Paul's opinion though, because election actually reflects Jesus's own teaching as well. And so the next screen, we're gonna show that election refers to Christians, Jesus refers to Christians as God's elect.

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And so there's several places there. We see it in Matthew 22 and Matthew 24 and the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John. We see Jesus talk about this idea that God has chosen to love some. We also, maybe it's just Paul and Jesus were in cahoots.

01:02:05

Well, there's other New Testament authors that talk about this same idea. You'll see that the apostle, the man Bible writer Luke talks about it in the book of Acts. You'll know that Peter talks about it in both 1 Peter and 2 Peter.

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He talks about this idea. And also the apostle John talks about it in the book of Revelation. Simply put, to kind of boil all this down, God is in control, right? To say it simply, God is in control.

01:02:36

He's in sovereign control. And the plan of salvation is not something that was initiated by us. We didn't look at God and say, hey God, I can't figure this out for myself. You need to do something about it, right?

01:02:47

That's not how salvation works. Salvation, the idea of saving people was God's idea, not ours. In fact, the book of Romans refers to us before God came and worked in our lives. The book of Romans refers to us as dead in our trespasses, dead in our sin.

01:03:06

We see that in Romans chapter eight. It shows up in Ephesians two and Colossians chapter two as well, this idea that we are dead, that we are hopeless and lost and without any opportunity to do anything.

01:03:19

We are dead in our sin. Now, I don't know about you. This is just me thinking for a minute. But as I think about examples of resurrections that have happened, that have been confirmed and seen in human history, I know one thing with absolute certainty.

01:03:34

Dead people, dead things don't raise themselves, right? Dead things don't just come back to life. You can't go to a funeral. I went to a funeral this week. There was no opportunity for him to just get up and say, you know, I don't like this.

01:03:46

I don't wanna be dead anymore and get up and walk out of there that day, right? Dead things don't just raise themselves. And so the only instances of resurrections of people being dead and then not being dead that have happened in human history is when an outside entity, namely God who created us in the first place, looked at someone or something that was dead and said, no, no, you're not dead anymore.

01:04:11

We see that in the gospels. We see Jesus look at a young girl, a man named Jairus. His daughter had died. And so Jesus looked at her and said, no, no, you're not gonna be dead anymore. Get up. And he resurrects this young girl.

01:04:25

There was another man named Lazarus you guys may be familiar with. One of Jesus's friends who had been dead for four days, they had buried him, they had had the funeral. Everything was done and Jesus shows up and they point their finger at him and say, why weren't you here sooner?

01:04:40

You could have healed him if you had gotten here before he died. And Jesus goes, you just wait for a minute. Lazarus, get up and walk out of the grave. And this dead guy, that had been dead for four days.

01:04:52

They were concerned about opening the grave up because he's four days in. He stinks at this point, right? He gets up and he walks out of the grave. God works and when dead things are no longer dead, it's not because they decided not to be dead.

01:05:04

It's because God has worked and made them no longer dead. So while this is a difficult concept for us to wrap our minds around, I know intellectually limited people like us, like me, at least I'll speak for myself.

01:05:18

I'm sure you have no limitations, but I do, right? We're finite people. There's things that we don't understand and maybe there's a few things that you don't understand. Maybe there's a lot of things that I don't understand, but there's things that sometimes we just can't understand.

01:05:32

We can't wrap our minds around. But the reality is that we cannot ignore what the Bible clearly communicates, repeatedly communicates, just because it's hard for us to wrap our minds around it. God is at work in the world.

01:05:48

God is at work in making a difference and reaching in and choosing for himself, making people for himself. And so a couple more pictures for you to snap here, because if we look at the Old Testament, we'll see throughout the story of the first half of the Bible that God chose and made a people for himself.

01:06:08

He chose Israel, the nation of Israel to be his people. And we see that primarily in the Old Testament, but there's some places in the New Testament as well that kind of point back and talk about how God has chosen and taken this family, taken this man named Abraham, his children, his grandchildren, his great -grandchildren that became this nation, that God has made a people for himself.

01:06:31

And that nation of Israel is special to God among all the other nations of the world. When the same way we also see in the New Testament and the second half of the Bible, we see that God has chosen a people for himself as well in the New Testament, that is the church, that is us sitting here today.

01:06:49

And we see that scattered all throughout the New Testament in several different places, in Colossians, Second Thessalonians, First Peter, Revelation, among others, right? I ran out of space. Those were just the ones. If I put all the verses on there, they'd be so small you guys couldn't read them. So I just picked a few for each of these things.

01:07:06

But I wanna acknowledge something here as we're talking about this idea. And I'm giving you, like, I'm just back in the dump truck up right now, right? I know that, I realize, like, this is a lot, but there's a point to all of this because the doctrine of election, this idea that Paul is starting his letter to Titus and he says, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, this idea of election, this idea that God chooses to gather unto himself a people, it creates an intellectual tension for us.

01:07:38

It creates this, I can't make sense of this. I can't make sense of how God is good and God chooses some, but what do we do with all of this? When we look at this idea of free will, right? What do we do with that?

01:07:52

What do we do with, no, no, no, I was there when I became a Christian. I played a role in some of that, right? What do I do with this idea of free will and people being able to choose for themselves and also God being in control?

01:08:04

There's a tension there, right? Those two things simply can't both be true. They can't both make sense to us. We see the idea of people being responsible for their moral decisions. People are responsible as moral agents of their own decisions.

01:08:22

We are responsible, and the Bible talks about that as well. So there's this tension here, but tension between two different things that are both true, we have to be comfortable with that. There's times where we have to be comfortable saying that both things are true, even though we can't figure out how to put all the pieces together.

01:08:41

Because there's other things that show up in the Bible that are difficult for us to wrap our small, little, limited minds around. Most notably, one example of this is the fact that the Bible says that Jesus was fully God, 100% absolutely fully God, and he was absolutely fully 100% man.

01:09:02

Now, how do you take 100% of something and 100% of something and make one thing? The math doesn't add up. Any school teachers, we got a problem if we take 100 and 100, put them together, and we get 100, right?

01:09:15

We got a problem here. That doesn't make sense to us, in our limited minds, how is somebody fully God and fully man at the same time? But having a balanced biblical theology requires that we have to be okay with some tensions that just need to exist.

01:09:30

Because God reveals some things about himself, but God, let me just give you guys the simple version that makes sense in my mind. God is really big, right? I, really small by comparison, God spoke and the universe flew out into existence.

01:09:47

God knows all things, understands all things, created all things, and so God is probably going to be able to do and understand some things that little old me doesn't understand, right? That little old me can't figure out.

01:10:03

And so rejecting what the Bible clearly teaches because I don't understand it, that's not a good path for us to follow. That's a dangerous thing. If we say everything that the Bible says and everything that God says is true, I have to understand it and it has to make sense to me.

01:10:21

Well, if I'm gonna distill everything about God down to, him being small enough that I can understand, that I can wrap my mind around it, you know what? That's not a very big God. That's not someone that really deserves our worship because you know how big he is?

01:10:37

He's about this big, right? He's about six foot two. If God is just as big as I make him, that's not God. That's me putting on a show and pretending for myself and everybody else that this is somehow God's thing.

01:10:57

No, no, that's just me. That's my opinions dressed up in religion. But if God is who we say he is, then we need to be okay with some things being a mystery to us sometimes. In fact, even talking about this idea after, talking about the idea of election and how God chooses some in Romans chapter nine and Romans chapter 10, the apostle Paul, the same guy who wrote this letter that we're gonna be looking at Titus.

01:11:23

After laying all this out in Romans nine and Romans 10, he continues in Romans chapter 11. And let me read for you what he says talking about how this mystery, it's a good thing for us. Because in Romans 11:33, he's celebrating, he says, oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

01:11:44

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways? He's telling us God is really big and that's a good thing that we can celebrate how big and how powerful and how incredible God is. But let me bring all of this together and make my point, here's my point for this morning that I wanna share with you guys.

01:12:05

The doctrine of divine election firmly establishes the believer's security. Because let me just lay this out for you for a minute. If God was looking around humanity and said, I'm going to save some people, Jesus is gonna go, he's gonna die on a cross, he's gonna save some people from the punishment that they deserve.

01:12:24

And he looks around and he decides who gets chosen or not chosen, saved or not saved based on how good I live my life. He looks around and takes the best 20% or the best 50% or whatever. That is a terrifying proposition for us, right?

01:12:41

Because what we're implying by that is the fact that I have to live good enough to earn God's attention, to earn God's favor. And if I have a really good day, I'll be like, all right, man, God, you and I are good.

01:12:55

And if I have a really bad day, you better look out for lightning bolts, right? We have a problem because if my hope for God loving me and saving me is based on me, I know there's gonna be some days that I got a big problem there.

01:13:14

I think this alleviates any, I hope I can measure up and earn God's favor that naturally, that logically proceeds from, if we have anything to do with it, if God looks at us and saves us because we deserve it, well, the reality is none of us deserve it.

01:13:29

None of us are good in God's sight. And so this is good news for us to consider because God has not left the decision for our salvation or the assurance of our salvation. It's not being held captive by our feelings.

01:13:45

It's not being held captive by our good days versus our bad days. See, this is good news for us to hold onto because our salvation is tied up not in my ability, but in the faithfulness of God. That when God is at work in my life, that God demonstrates his love for us, that the Bible tells us even though we were sinners, even though we were enemies of God, God decided, no, no, no, no, you're with me, right?

01:14:10

That's not because I made a decision. That's not because I was good enough because if it's all about me, I got a problem. But if God is the one that reached in and said, come on, you're coming with me.

01:14:22

Well, you know who's, who is ultimately at work in that decision? You know where that decision ultimately has its foundation, a very solid foundation? It's in the fact that God is the one that works because if God has worked and God has saved me, there is nothing that can mess that up.

01:14:44

Me included, right? That's good news. We are saved not because of something we do, but we're saved because of something that God already did. We are saved because Jesus knew that we would be helpless on our own.

01:14:59

And so he came and he paid a punishment that we deserved, but we could never pay on our own. So Jesus came and Jesus took care of it for us. We are saved by God's grace. That word grace is a word that you hear a lot in church when it clicks.

01:15:18

And I hope it'll click as we study the book of Titus because Titus kind of talks about this idea a lot, but grace simply defined means undeserved favor. That's good news for the Christian because if we deserved God's favor or had to deserve God's favor, we can't.

01:15:36

But the fact that God shows grace, that God smiles upon us and gives us what we don't deserve, that's good news. That is the good news. That is the good news of the message of the Bible, right? Because God reached in and saved people that were helpless on their own like me and like you.

01:15:57

In fact, let me just double down even more on this idea for just a minute. If you go to Ephesians chapter one, or let me just share with you guys a little bit from Ephesians chapter one, because in the book of Ephesians, in the beginning of that book, it tells us that God chose us in Jesus before the foundations of the world.

01:16:16

Ephesians 1:4, even as he, God, chose us in Jesus before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. You know what he's saying there? He's saying that before the world was in existence, before God spoke and created the heavens and the earth.

01:16:35

Before you were a twinkle in daddy's eye, God had chosen you. God had set his affections on you and God loved you. You want to take a logical step from there? If God chose you and loved you, and it says that you were destined for adoption in just the continuing statements there in Ephesians chapter one, if God chose you and you were destined to be his child before you were ever born, let's take the logical step, right?

01:17:07

That decision to save you cannot be based on you if you didn't exist when God made it. It didn't depend on your ability to measure up to God's standard. It didn't depend on your ability to be a good person.

01:17:21

It didn't even depend on your ability to go to church enough times or give enough or serve the community or whatever it is that we think make us a good person or a bad person, right? None of that has anything to do with God choosing to reach into humanity, to reach into human history and to love someone that doesn't deserve it like me or like you.

01:17:46

So maybe you're sitting here thinking, what do I even do with all of this? What do I do with the reality of God chooses some and kind of by extension doesn't choose others, right? What do I do with that?

01:17:58

Am I chosen? Am I one of those people? Well, maybe I'm not. Creates some anxiety, right? Well, you know what? Please do not ever let the thought, well if I'm chosen it doesn't matter what I do and if I'm not chosen it doesn't matter what I do because if God's in control who cares what I do, right?

01:18:19

Listen for just a minute because that's a really silly argument for you to make. I know you didn't make it but for some people to make because if you're asking that question, if you're asking the question did God choose me?

01:18:31

Does God love me? Am I sitting here... you know I want God but maybe that's, maybe I'm not one, maybe I'm not on the team, right? If you're asking that question it means that God is working in your spirit.

01:18:45

If you have a desire to follow God it means that God has already been at work in your life and in your spirit that's brought you to this point. You know there's billions of people around the world. The fact that you're one of a couple hundred that are sitting in this room this morning tells me that God's at work in your life.

01:19:01

The fact that maybe when you heard this gospel message for the first time, if you grew up in a house where you had a mom and a dad that loved God and shared how much God loved you, that if they shared that with you that means that God's at work in your life.

01:19:16

If you brought your children this week for Vacation Bible School and they heard how much God loves them that means that God is at work in your life and in your child's life by bringing you here this morning.

01:19:26

Because if you're sitting here and you're asking the question, God I want to follow you but am I chosen? If you're spiritually dead you're not sitting here thinking that question. If you're spiritually dead you're sitting here looking at your watch going when's this guy gonna shut up?

01:19:40

That's the thought of a person that maybe, hey I'm not gonna keep pulling on that string. But if any of this is making sense to you and you're sitting there thinking wait God chose me and it's got nothing to do with me, that tells me that we need to have a conversation.

01:19:59

That tells me that after this service is over I'm gonna be hanging out back there at the end of the hallway as you're heading for your hot dog or heading for the library or whatever. We need to have a conversation because I'm telling you if that is stirring in your soul that means that God has chosen you and you need to respond.

01:20:18

It means that God is working and he's inviting you to be his son or his daughter. He's adopting you into his family and that is the greatest news in the world. That the God of heaven, that the God who created it all has made a way for me, for you, for us to be adopted as his people.

01:20:38

That he would choose to reach in. That anyone who desires to be called by him can be adopted as his child. And the fact that it has nothing to do with your obedience, it has nothing to do with you measuring up to some standard that you don't have to be good enough.

01:20:55

That is what all of this boils down to because receiving his gift of eternal life, I promise you, you will never regret it. You will never sit back and go, you know, I wish I hadn't done that. So if you feel God moving in your spirit today, come talk to me, please come talk to me.

01:21:13

I'll be in the hallway, I'll be around. Maybe you already know Jesus. Maybe you already have that relationship with him. What's all this mean for you? Let me tell you what it means for you, right? The good news of all of this, if you have a relationship with Jesus, is that you get to leave here with a burden lifted off of your shoulders this morning.

01:21:35

You get to leave here with freedom in your spirit because, follow this for just a minute. If God loving you depends on you being good, well, that's an incredible burden because there's days where we're not.

01:21:52

There's days where we just lose it with our kids. There's days where we just lose it on the freeway. There's days where it's just a terrible day at work and you just don't want to be there. And maybe even you say some stuff you shouldn't say.

01:22:05

On those days where we're not good, where God doesn't, we don't deserve God's love. It's terrifying prospect. If God's love for us is dependent on us, but if God chose you completely, independently of anything that you did good or bad or whatever, you're free, right?

01:22:30

This is something that we get to just let go of all of the legalistic rules and the expectations and all of the burden that you can place on yourself and that other people often would place on you, right?

01:22:43

You have to do this and you have to do this and you have to do that and you have to check all the boxes. God chose you independently of anything that's got to do with you. You just get to go live in the joy of salvation.

01:22:59

You just get to go live your life. And by the way, we're gonna talk in the rest of Titus about how it should look different for us, right? It should look different. If we understand what God has done for us, our lives look different.

01:23:13

But we don't carry the burden of, was I good enough today for God to love me? We don't carry the burden of, I hope that God smiles at me when I lay my pillow, my head down on the pillow at the end of the night tonight.

01:23:27

I hope that I measured up. I hope that God loves me because I did enough good stuff today. No, no, that is a lie from the enemy. That is absolutely not the way it works because God loves you in spite of you.

01:23:44

God loves me in spite of me, not because of me in spite of me. That God demonstrated his love for us even though we were sinners, even though we were enemies of God. God is loving. God is gracious. God is merciful.

01:24:02

God is all of those things. All of our hope is not tied up in us. It's tied up in God. And that is a really cool place for us to live. And for those of you guys that were sitting here wondering, when's this guy gonna stop? That's it.

01:24:23

Our prayer team's gonna be down here after the service. They would love to talk with you. I'm gonna be around all of our volunteers, any of them that have a name tag on. If you've got questions, go talk to somebody.

01:24:32

They would love to talk with you. But would you guys pray with me as we wrap up? God, we love you. We thank you for loving us, even though this isn't us, even though it's not dependent on me somehow measuring up for me being good enough, for me doing the right thing or saying the right thing, or God, the fact that you reached into humanity, that

you reached in and looked at humanity and looked at how helpless and lost and utterly unable of reaching out to you we were.

01:25:06

God, we were dead in our trespasses and in our sins. But God, you being rich in mercy because of the great love with which you have loved us, you reached in and you made a way for us to be adopted. You have destined us to be your son or your daughter.

01:25:23

So God, we thank you for hope this morning. God, we thank you for bringing us here this morning. God, that we could come and that we could humble ourselves before your word. God, that means that you're working in our lives.

01:25:35

And God, if there's anyone in this room that's sitting here going, I need whatever it is that that crazy guy's talking about. God, I pray that you would continue to woo them. God, that you would continue to work in them and bring them to an understanding of what it means to be your son or your daughter.

01:25:55

And God, for those who already have, we thank you. We celebrate, we enjoy the rest that can come from knowing that our salvation does not depend on us. God, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for your perfect plan of salvation when you reached into human history, when you sent the only one who would ever be able to save us.

01:26:25

God, Jesus came to save people like me who never could do it on their own. God, I pray that you would help us to, just to realize that, to grasp that, to understand what that means in our life. God, we lay ourselves before you and we thank you for what you've done for us. And it's in Jesus' name, we pray, amen.