

For the Sake of God's Elect – Titus 1:1-5

Tracy Catron, Ruling Elder, Branch of Hope OPC, 7/28/2019

Sermon Text

Good morning. My name is Tracy Catron. I'm one of the elders here at Branch of Hope church. I will be speaking to you today on the subject, **"For the sake of God's elect"**. We will consider the apostle Paul's letter to Titus. This letter was driven by specific concerns in their day, but is relevant to us as well in the establishment of our own Christian life and practice. This letter is particularly close to my heart, as it contains two of the earliest passages I memorized as a youth.

Our primary text is Titus 1:1-5.

Hear now the word of the LORD:

Titus 1:1-5 (ESV)

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;

To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you

Opening Prayer

Before we get started, I need to give you a short roadmap of where we are headed. Yes, it would have been better had I provided an outline for the bulletin or screen, but unfortunately that didn't happen. So, to help us from getting lost, here is our outline:

- Introduction
- Recipient/Author/Situation of the Letter
- God's Elect
- For the Sake of God's Elect

My goal is you will be able to walk away with a summary of this exhortation on one hand:

- Thumb: A greater appreciation for the grace of God in sovereign election
- Fingers: A greater appreciation for Faith, Knowledge, Godliness and Hope

Introduction

Imagine you are directed to oversee a young church in a predominantly non-Christian culture. Adding to the challenge, you have no telephone, no internet, and minimal contact with other Christians and other churches for weeks or months at a time. And by the way, the church is located in a city on an island with a reputation for self-indulgence, dishonesty and evil conduct. This church was established by a prominent missionary evangelist whom you have worked alongside for many years. After a time, he departed but left you behind to “put what remained into order” (Titus 1:5), appoint leaders, promote pure doctrine in the midst of false teachers and pagan influences, and instill the importance of good works and godly conduct, not as a means of salvation, but as a response to the grace of God in our lives.

Sounds easy? It is for such a situation that the book of Titus was written. This short 3-chapter book, which is actually a personal letter from the apostle Paul to his close friend Titus, is immensely practical in this regard. It is packed full of both doctrine and pastoral guidance as to how Titus should instruct, train and guard his young congregation, that they may conduct themselves in a manner pleasing to God, adorning the gospel of Christ and giving no cause for accusation from outsiders. This letter, along with those of 1st and 2nd Timothy, are known as the Pastoral Epistles. They are pastoral handbooks of sorts, providing practical guidance from the aging apostle to young ministers as to “how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15). They contain instruction and encouragement about faith and conduct among God’s people, qualifications for elders and warnings about false teachers. These letters, written near the end of Paul’s many years of service as an apostle and missionary, express tenderness and love but also an awareness the mantle of faith was being passed to the next generation of pastors and leaders, and they needed to be equipped to preserve sound doctrine, teach it to faithful men who would then teach others, and rightly serve Christ and his church.

This letter, written nearly two thousand years ago, remains practical and relevant and authoritative to us today, for we read and “accept it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in (us) believers” as well (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Recipient, Author, Situation

Titus

Titus was a Gentile Christian, one of Paul’s converts to the faith (Titus 1:5) and a close associate in his ministry. When Paul and Barnabas went from Antioch to discuss the gospel with the Jerusalem leaders, Titus accompanied them (Gal 2:1-5). Titus assisted Paul in caring for the Corinthian church, delivering letters from Paul, addressing sensitive matters in his absence, and bringing Paul news of the church’s condition. Titus was also responsible for helping oversee and administer the collection of funds for relief of the saints (2 Cor 7, 8). Titus briefly worked with Paul in Crete, and was commissioned to stay behind as his representative to complete the work that remained. Later, in the final reference to Titus in the New Testament (2 Tim 4:10), we learn he went on a mission to Dalmatia. Clearly Titus was beloved by Paul, capable and trusted to serve on his behalf.

Paul

In the opening verse of Titus, Paul identifies himself as **a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ.**

To understand the profoundness of Paul’s identity in Christ, we need to first remember who he was in his former life, before he knew Christ. The scriptures tell us that Paul was **a Jew of utmost pedigree,** circumcised on the eighth day, a Hebrew of Hebrews, raised in Jerusalem and educated at the feet of

Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law, a Pharisee zealous for God, as to righteousness under the law, blameless (Phil 3:5-6, Acts 22:3-5). Paul was also a **proud persecutor of the church**, persecuting the Way to the death, serving as a prosecuting attorney, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, bringing them to Jerusalem to be tried and punished (Acts 22:3-5).

But everything changed when Paul (i.e. Saul) encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus:

At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, **for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you**, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (Acts 26:13-18)

Paul would later write of himself, looking back on his life apart from Christ, that "formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent" (1 Timothy 1:13). "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Philippians 3:7-9).

We now understand why Paul viewed himself as a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ. **He was given this identity by Christ himself.** The Lord said "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15-16). Just as a servant sets aside all rights of his own to serve another, Paul would be singularly devoted to the will and purpose and service of God – even imprisoned and in chains for his testimony. And although he was not one of the original apostles who accompanied Jesus from his baptism to his resurrection and ascension, Paul was made an apostle by virtue of his encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 1:21-22, Acts 9:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:8). And as an apostle he spoke with the authority of Christ himself, authority he conferred to Titus in this letter.

So, I pause to ask you, what is your identity? Have you encountered the risen Christ and placed your trust in him? If so, you belong to him. Paul was a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ in the most formal way, to the extent he carried the authority of the office of apostle, authority to speak and write the words of God, and as a servant of God chained and imprisoned for his testimony. You are not called to the office of apostle as was Paul, but you are sent by Christ to be his ambassador and representative. You are not under obligation to preach in the same way Paul was compelled as a bond-slave of God, but you are one who has been sent by Christ to be his witness within your own sphere of influence. As a parent, you are entrusted with the spiritual nurture and care of your children. As a member of Christ's church, you are responsible to love and care for all those Christ brings through these doors. And as a friend, co-worker or neighbor, you are in a unique position to listen and pray for and even share the hope of Christ with friends who are hurting or who may never have set foot into a church.

Why Paul wrote this letter (i.e., why I left you in Crete)

Paul left Titus behind in Crete to continue the work they had started, to put what remained into order, and to appoint elders. Paul did similarly with Timothy, leaving him behind in Ephesus to “charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith” (1 Timothy 1:3-4). And Paul wrote these letters to provide specific instructions. Why? Because God is concerned about the salvation and spiritual growth of his people. He does not call us by his grace, only to abandon us to sink or swim by our own power. We have the promise that “he who began a good work in [us] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

For this reason, Paul wrote his letter to Titus. I would like to highlight four themes. **This is a letter about salvation.** Men had risen up in Crete to challenge the message of salvation, seeking to distract from it or add to it. Paul reminds Titus of the truth of the gospel. His letter speaks often of God our Savior (3x), Jesus Christ our Savior (3x), our God and Savior Jesus Christ. It was written for the sake of God’s elect, to announce the grace that brings salvation has appeared, that Jesus gave himself to redeem us and purify us, that God saved us according to his mercy, that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom God poured out richly upon us, declaring we are justified by the grace of God. And this salvation is the work of the triune God. The opening verse makes it clear no man can be the servant of God who does not embrace Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Lord.

This letter is also about the proclamation and defense and passing down of the Christian faith, which is the gospel, the truth of God, the body of sound doctrine, sound teaching, the message that the grace and goodness and lovingkindness of God appeared in Jesus to bring salvation, and that Jesus will appear again in full glory as God and Savior, granting that all those justified by his grace will be heirs of the hope of eternal life. Elders must be appointed to instruct in the faith and preserve the purity of the faith. The faith is to be taught, believers are to live in subjection to it, the insubordinate who distort the faith are to be rebuked and those who teach falsehood and lead others astray are to be silenced.

The letter to Titus is also a call to piety, to godliness, to a pattern of life that is faithful and obedient, that adorns the gospel and leaves no cause for reproach by outsiders. Titus needed to address those in the church who by their disobedience were promoting ungodliness and dishonor to the faith, and leading others astray with them.

The letter is about personal encounters with Jesus. There were those in Crete who challenged the necessity of Christ, or who doubted his return. In response, Paul opens with a personal greeting of grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior (Titus 1:4). The promise of salvation that was made before the world began was revealed (made manifest) at the proper time through preaching (Titus 1:2-3). The grace of God has appeared in Christ, bringing salvation and training us in godliness (Titus 2:11-12). We wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). The goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior has appeared (Titus 3:4).

This leads to an important question – when did the grace of God appear? I believe the answer of scripture is many times, some public and some personal, but always at the right time. **In my own life,** I am aware of three distinct personal encounters with Christ: At the time of my salvation and baptism in 1969 – when I came to understand and embrace the truth that I was a sinner and that Jesus Christ was my Savior and Lord. At the death of my father in 1977 – when at age 15 all that I knew about life was up for grabs, but the grace of God overwhelmed me as I was assured that no matter what happens in this life, I can trust the word of God and the promise he will never leave me nor forsake me. At the death of my mother in 1986 – when as a young father I faced the loss of someone I loved deeply, and in it gained a new reassurance of God’s great love for me in the death of his son Jesus. In each encounter there was

a testing and proving of my faith, my knowledge of the truth, my commitment to godliness and hope of eternal life. Everything in life seen through the lens of our Heavenly Father caring for his elect children.

Now, let's move on to talk about God's elect, and those key areas of the Christian life highlighted by Paul in which we must be grounded and rooted and firmly established.

God's Elect

The words "God's elect" simply means all those chosen by God to be saved. Election is a good biblical term. We should not be afraid to use it. Jesus, Peter and Paul all used it.

Who are God's elect? Those whom God chose and appointed from eternity past to become Christians. Those whom he plucked from the fires of judgment and wrath, dead men in whom he breathed the gift of life, blind men to whom he gives sight, ignorant men to whom he gives the knowledge of the glory of the gospel of Christ, all those who hear and believe the gospel because they have been appointed to eternal life. All whom the Father has given to the Son will come to him. And all those given to the Son will be pursued and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is the gracious work of the triune God: God the Father promised the salvation of his elect, God the Son accomplished salvation for the elect, and God the Holy Spirit applies salvation to the elect.

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will ... In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:4-5, 13-14)

He saved and called us because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began (2 Timothy 1:9-11)

The act of election is consistent with the character of God who is both Sovereign and Savior. This is seen throughout the scriptures, and particularly in the Pastoral Epistles:

- God is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords - 1 Timothy 6:15
- He is God our Savior - 1 Timothy 1:1, 2:4; Titus 1:3, 2:10, 3:4
- He is God the Savior of all people - 1 Timothy 4:10
- He is Our Savior Christ Jesus - 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:4, 3:6
- He is Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ - Titus 2:13

We have a simple yet beautiful picture of God's grace toward his elect in Acts 13. When Paul proclaimed the risen Jesus to be the promised Savior who grants forgiveness of sins and justification to everyone who believes, the Jews rejected the message. But when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, **and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed** - Acts 13:48.

Paul's concern for God's elect

God's Elect includes many who are appointed to eternal life but who have not yet turned to God in repentance and faith in the gospel. **We should never think of election as an insider's club, as only the "chosen frozen". The gospel continues to spread, the kingdom of God continues to grow.** The book of Acts is the glorious account of God adding to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

What is this book of Titus about? **It is about the salvation and well-being of God's elect, of God's children, of all those whom he has appointed to believe.** This encompasses those who had already professed faith in Christ and were part of the church at Crete, those who were yet to come to the knowledge of faith, and by extension it includes every one of us here today who calls upon the name of the Lord, and even those of you in our midst who have not yet turned to Christ but by the work of the Spirit you will come to him at the proper time, including our children and the generations yet to come.

The fact that God elects people to salvation had a profound impact on Paul's understanding of the grace of God. "But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:16).

The confident assurance that God has elected many to salvation, as Revelation 7:9 says "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages", drove Paul with missionary zeal to proclaim the gospel to all people everywhere.

And that is why he said, "I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them" (1 Corinthians 9:19).

For the Sake of God's Elect

Many of you are familiar with the game show, **The Family Feud**. In it, contestants compete to name the most popular responses to survey questions. Let's try it for a moment with an easy question. A hundred people were surveyed, and the top four answers are on the board. **What's a popular name for a dog?** Answers would be given such as Max, Charlie, Bella, and Lucy (according to the internet, those really are the current most popular dog names!). But what if we chose a more significant question, such as **What is most important in a person's life?** What sort of answers would you give? Good education, satisfying job, big house, family, health, plenty of leisure time. This is an important question to ponder. Let us return to the text to see the four answers Paul gave in response to what is most needed by God's elect.

Titus 1:2–3

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**

Paul desired to equip the elect of God in four areas:

- **Faith**
- **Knowledge**
- **Godliness**
- **Hope**

Brothers and sisters, these words are written to us, and we must hear them. We must be rooted and grounded and firmly established in these things. We must learn to treasure what God treasures on our behalf. We must realize what is truly worth pursuing in this life, and apply ourselves accordingly. These four areas are distinct, yet closely intertwined. They are not the foundation of our salvation, and by no means do they amount to works of righteousness that lead to our salvation, but they are four pillars God equips and grows in us for his glory and our good. We will examine them each briefly.

The Faith of God's Elect

A friend recently said this to me about faith: "You have faith, I don't. Some people do and others don't. People are just different, and that's OK." That statement continues to trouble me for several reasons. First, it ignores the meaning of the word. Faith simply means trust or belief. Everyone has faith in something - in love, in themselves, in the laws of nature or logic, in evolution, in karma, in a system of subjective or arbitrary justice where they believe they will turn out good enough to be accepted by whatever or whoever is ultimately in charge. Second, it implies there is no truth, that everyone's personal reality is equally valid. Sure, this works in musical preferences or favorite ice cream flavor, but its folly is revealed in the more important matters of life which are not governed by our own opinion.

Faith is also more than mere mental assent. It is a belief that involves the whole self, a commitment. To illustrate this, I refer back to an illustration given to me as a teenager. Amazingly, I still have the bible in which I wrote the illustration some 40+ years ago. Let me read it to you:

In the 1860's there was a famous tightrope walker named Blondin. He toured the country putting on exhibitions. Once he went to Niagara Falls for a 3-day show. The first 2 days he walked back and forth across the falls. On the 3rd day he said he would walk the tightrope blindfolded and pushing a wheelbarrow. He asked the crowd if they believed he could do it. No one there doubted him. He got into position and asked, "Ok, who will be the first to come and get into the wheelbarrow?" How many do you think volunteered?

Biblical faith means believing God and living by his word. Trusting him in the midst of the struggles of life, even when we don't know what the future will bring. It involves both belief and trust.

The faith of God's elect is unique in that it is based on something tangible, objective, real. Paul said, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The object of the Christian's faith is referred to in Titus as "a common faith" (Titus 1:4), "the trustworthy word" (Titus 1:9), "sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9, 2:1), "the faith" (Titus 1:13, 3:15), "the truth" (Titus 1:14), "the doctrine of God our Savior" (Titus 2:10). Elsewhere in Romans we read, "And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness" (Romans 4:5), and "the righteousness of God [which is] through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." (Romans 3:22-25). And in 2 Timothy we read, "faith and love are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13), and again, "continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

In Titus 1:10, we also see an interesting twist on faith – those who do not hold firm to the faith are labeled as insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers. Let us not be so negligent in our faith.

Paul tirelessly proclaimed the good news of salvation in Christ to all people. Why? Because he knew everyone believes in something, and he was confident that when those chosen by God heard the truth of the gospel, they would believe it.

As RC Sproul said, "The more I expose myself to the word of God, the greater my faith will be."

The Knowledge of the Truth

I was recently in Colorado and **got to experience one of their beloved Denver thunderstorms**. I was inside a newly constructed home with a front lawn that was still little more than a pile of smoothed dirt. Quite suddenly the weather changed from a sunny afternoon to a torrential downpour that threatened

to wash away everything in its path. Yet an hour later, when the sun reappeared, I was shocked to find the lawn still in one piece, thanks to a carefully laid foundation of barriers and supports put in place to guard against such an onslaught. This reminded me of the need for a foundation of truth to buttress our faith, so that we can withstand the challenges of the enemies of the gospel.

The Christian faith is not based on hollow emotion or childish fantasy. One need not commit intellectual suicide to believe in Jesus. The Christian faith is rational, understandable, based on truth. Paul was not concerned merely with gaining converts, but in training them to know and worship the one true God in spirit and in truth.

Yes, God gives us pastors and elders to fight the battle publicly on our behalf, to both instruct and rebuke (Titus 1:9). And they are instructed to study and rightly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). But as those who would be servant missionaries going out into our own communities, our faith likewise needs to be rooted and grounded, not blown here and there by every wind of doctrine.

Paul tells the Colossians their hearts are to be encouraged by the full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [He] says this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments” because of the firmness of your faith in Christ (Colossians 2-5).

Godliness

It matters how we live. Life is not an intellectual exercise. The Christian faith is not abstract spirituality, it is not just other-worldly focused, it is inseparably tied to our conduct. Faith must be accompanied by a godly life. A life lived not for myself, but for the God who made me and redeemed me.

The term *Coram Deo* - before the face of God - communicates the truth that all of life is conducted in the presence of God Almighty, under the authority of God, to the glory of God. Nothing escapes his attention. He is always present, presiding over all our affairs. In the letter to Titus, God is present, the assumed context of every word, whether implicitly or explicitly stated. This captures the essence of godliness – to recognize our lives are to be living sacrifices offered to God in a spirit of adoration and gratitude and obedience. Our lives are not segregated into the religious and the mundane. All of life is lived to the glory of God, or none of it is. There is no separation. Our lives are to be lived open before God with our conscience held captive by the word of God. As Paul says, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

1 Timothy has a clear example of godliness in action in discussing the care of widows in the church: “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God” (1 Timothy 5:4).

In Titus, Paul spends much of chapters 2 and 3 to explaining how sound doctrine is expressed in godly living for every category of person: older men, older women, younger women, younger men, slaves toward their masters, those subject to rulers and authorities, those who interact with anyone – Christian and non-Christian alike. A rather comprehensive list covering pretty much everyone and every situation. Paul summarizes his instruction in these words: “those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people” (Titus 3:8). Paul is ever mindful of the sake of the faith of God’s elect, especially those who have yet to hear and believe.

We are all responsible to know the truth and preserve the truth and pass it on to the next generation. And not simply head knowledge, but it must affect every aspect of our lives. We must live in a godly manner, turning aside from all distraction and worldly lust and calls to take care of only ourselves. We

must also continuously fight the desire to innovate and create our own truth. Today's concept of spirituality is little more than casting aside of truth in exchange for my own convenient subjective truth.

Ungodliness is a result of failure to understand the holiness of God. Paul tells us that irreverent babbling leads into ungodliness, swerving from the truth, upsetting the faith of others (2 Timothy 2:16-19). This can happen so easily, allowing conversation to drift into speculation and twisting of God's truth to fit our circumstances. This is a concern addressed multiple times throughout the Pastoral Epistles. This babbling can consist of denials of the truth, or the added burden of unbiblical duties and practices, or simply the pursuit of empty and meaningless debates that are unprofitable and which distract from growth and obedience in Christ. We see this today in those who want nothing to do with Christ or the bible, yet insist they are "spiritual". They function in a post-Christian era by living off the gas fumes of the faith of others, as Paul says having an appearance of godliness, but denying its power, always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:5, 7).

Lest you find yourself feeling too comfortable as we talk about the ungodliness of others, let me raise a red flag related to this topic. The scriptures provide long lists of ungodly practices, there is a notable list in 1 Timothy 1:9-10, but I want to focus on a particular item. **Social media is full of irreverent babbling.** And many of you here are active participants. It's time we turn from empty and unprofitable babbling, and return to the pursuit of godliness and holiness. If we spent as much time in the scriptures and works of piety and devotion as we do on social media, there would be such a great transformation and spiritual awakening that would be a blessing to yourselves, your families, and the unsaved who you encounter.

Hope of Eternal Life

Believers in Christ understand this life is just the beginning, a profound precursor of the life to come. We enjoy the hope of eternal life. Not in the sense of "I sure hope it happens", but in the sense of certain anticipation. As Peter says, we have "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and we rejoice in our salvation that is yet to be revealed (1 Peter 1:3-6).

Hope breeds patience and endurance and joy. We set our affections on things above, on the glory that awaits, and it affects how we live today. As the apostle John says, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

In the closing of what may have been his last epistle, Paul wrote: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

These areas were of utmost importance for Paul and he needed Titus to teach them to the believers in his day. **They are equally critical for us believers today** as we progress along our own path to maturity.

May God bless the hearing and application of his word. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer