

## ***“Penetrating a Dark World” Week 2***

Dr. Bruce Bickel

Titus 1:1-4

February 10, 2017

**Bruce:** Good morning, men.

**Men:** Good morning, Bruce.

**Bruce:** It’s nice to be with you. Don, do you want to set the tone for us, brother?

*(Music)*

Lord, I’m overwhelmed at the privilege we have of living in a debt free society in the body of Christ. We thank you that our sins have been taken care of. Father, it gives us great responsibility, a luxury in which we cannot just sit on our haunches and do nothing. We need to live a life of godliness in order to call attention to your marvelous grace, the marvelous grace of our wonderful Lord. So Father, we sit at your feet this day, trusting Your Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. May You be pleased with what we learn and how we apply it. And may it be done for Jesus’ sake. Amen and Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Please turn in your Bibles to the book of Titus. Last week I introduced us to the entire book and its concepts. We’re basically calling this series “Penetrating a Dark World,” because of the historical background. The island of Crete was a very dark environment. Paul sent his young protégé Titus to bring the church back up to speed and to make things right in the island of Crete. And so as we went through the review last week, we learned that there were three chapters which we were talking about.

First of all, chapter one deals with *orderliness in the church*. Orderliness in the church is chapter one. Chapter two is *godliness in the home*. And chapter three is *consistency in the world*. When we put those three things together, that’s how we understand that we might have the potential of penetrating a dark world for the glory of Christ.

Did anybody bring the English Standard Version? I brought the wrong Bible today, the NIV. But I studied this passage from the ESV. Would somebody read verses 1-4?

**Participant:** I will.

**Bruce:** Please. Thank you.

**Participant:** Titus 1, beginning at verse 1. *“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 through 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 Jesus Christ our Savior.”*

**Bruce:** This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and Amen. There are three major things that we pick up in this first couple of verses 1-4. The first part is *the relationship between ministry and the Word*.

Now remember this. Titus was a protégé of the apostle Paul. And so Paul is going to describe for us his understanding of the relationship between ministry and the word of God. He does that in the first three verses. It’s very, very impactful. And we’ll walk

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through this today. It’s a description of how the relationship of the Word deals with ministry.

It’s a very good definition for us to see, how the ministries that we’re involved in are consistent with what Paul is teaching Titus. Remember, he was teaching Titus so that Titus would go and do the same thing that Paul had done with him. And so the first thing we want to take a look at is this. What is the relationship between ministry and the word of God?

The second part we want to look at in verse four is the ministry that Paul had with Titus. Now we probably won’t get into that until next week because it’s such an important thing.

I had a wonderful time just looking and analyzing the relationship that Paul had with Titus and how unique it was, and what a blessing it was. And men, you and I have something very unique between us. Over the years God has been pleased to do some wonderful things with us.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** It’s very unique in our relationship. And I hope we never take that for granted. We don’t just show up here on Friday to learn something. We come together to build up the body of Christ for the glory of God.

And I want us to explore this, probably next week. I’ll probably get into that in greater depth, to understand the relationship that Paul had with Titus, because there are some very interesting things about their relationship that I think we can parry off of, as those are exactly the same things that are happening to us in the body of Christ. It’s a wonderful definition of the uniqueness of the body of Christ, and we should never forget that. We should never forget the uniqueness that we have in the body of Christ. And we’ll see that, probably next week.

So today I want you to discover three things with me in verses 1-3. First of all I want you to see that the relationship between the Word and ministry is this: that *ministry is governed by the Word*. It is governed by the Word. That would be verse one. And I want you to see that *godliness is the goal*. That’s verses one and two. And then *the content of the message is commanded by God*. That is verse three. Governed by the Word. Godliness is the goal. And the context is commanded by God.

Now that’s the relationship that Paul is describing for Titus. He says, “Titus, you’re going to go into this very difficult situation, and you need to understand this. There’s a direct correlation between the Word and your ministry.” Paul says, “Let me describe that for you.”

Here is my understanding. Paul is teaching Titus that this is the correlation of the unification of the Word and ministry. He gives us a wonderful illustration of this. I think that we can evaluate our own ministry by asking ourselves this. Is this something that we are about, very much like Paul was teaching Titus? Let’s examine this—the relationship between ministry and the Word.

Notice. In verse one *it is governed by the Word*. “*For the sake of the faith of God’s elect*.” Paul’s ministry was governed by the word of God. He was a slave of God. It’s the

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only time he ever used this word in describing himself. He uses it one time. He also describes himself as a messenger sent on a special commission by Christ.

The phrase he uses to describe himself first of all is the word *servant*. It's the Greek word *dulos*, which means *a love slave*. It means a person who exists to do God's will and not his own will. So in that sense he's a slave of God. He's a love slave of God.

The second word that he uses to describe himself is that he is *“an apostle of Jesus Christ.”* Now there's a difference between a love slave and an apostle. An apostle is a person directly chosen, commissioned, empowered and sent by Jesus Christ to found the church, expand the church, conform the church to Biblical doctrine and glorify God on the earth. He was in direct commission to that. So notice what Paul says about himself. He says that he's not only a slave, but he's an apostle.

All leaders must be servants. Good leaders are servants. Paul describes himself first of all as a servant. Yes, he's been commissioned. Yes, he's been ordained. But he's also a servant at heart. And we need to understand that real leadership starts with a servant's heart and a servant's attitude.

Now what's the definition of a servant? I would offer this for your consideration. A servant is someone who is willing to do something for somebody else and expect nothing in return. You see, Paul is teaching Titus this. Titus, you're going to be a leader. Yes, you're commissioned. Yes, you're ordained. You have to get a specific calling for what you're going to do. But it's also got to be this. You've got to be a love slave of God and do things for people, expecting nothing in return. All good leadership is servant leadership. Note that all great leaders are servants.

Next, Paul reminds Titus about the ministry of the Word. The purpose of the ministry that he's teaching Titus is this. It's *to teach the faith*, that body of doctrine contained in the word of God. That was the goal of his ministry, to teach the faith, that body of truth contained in the word of God. God's elect are those who have been chosen before the foundation of the world to embrace Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Now Paul had a threefold ministry of teaching. First of all he says this. “Titus, you've got to be a servant.” Titus, you're commissioned. But you've got to be a servant. And here is what you do. You teach and preach the Word. The goal of the ministry is to preach the Word.

Now Paul describes for himself a threefold ministry that I think he wanted Titus to understand. It's a very good picture of what I think a New Testament pastor ought to be in our day and age. First of all, it's this. *Paul brought the elect to saving faith*. He brought the elect to saving faith.

Notice 2 Timothy 2:10. *“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”* You see, the first goal of ministry is this: to bring the elect to saving faith.

We talk a lot about the end times. People get all excited about the end times, and rightfully so. There's a lot of stuff going on in the world. But we need to understand this. The one thing we do know is this. We don't know the time the Lord is going to return in all of His glory. But we do know when. He will return only when all of the elect come to

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saving faith. When the elect come to saving faith, the Lord is going to return. He told us in John 17 and John 10 that He will not lose any of the ones that the Father gave Him.

So we know this: that the Lord is not going to return until all of the elect come to saving faith. Now Paul is teaching this to Titus. Titus, your first missionary role is this: to bring the elect to saving faith. Now he didn't know who they were. But you have to do that by preaching the Word. So the first thing we need to do is to preach the Word and bring the elect to saving faith.

The second part of Paul's ministry is this. *He tells them the truth after they were saved.* He didn't stop just because they embraced saving faith. He taught them different things after they came to saving faith.

Take a look at Acts chapter 20 verse 20. *“How I did not shrink from declaring to you everything that was profitable, and teaching you in public from house to house.”* Discipleship. Just because you bring the elect to saving faith doesn't mean that you stop there.

One of my great concerns about our culture today is that all the ministry you have is to bring people to faith, but they leave them there.

**Participant:** That's right.

**Bruce:** They didn't do anything to follow up. We have these wonderful breakfasts. We have these wonderful rallies. But what happens to the people when they do embrace saving faith? When the elect come to saving faith, what happens to them? Paul says this. You've got to teach them after they come to saving faith. It doesn't stop there. You're just beginning. That's the beginning of the ministry. You begin to teach the people who come to saving faith, and you teach them after they come to saving faith.

That was the second phase that he was teaching Titus. He says, “Titus, if you're really going to impact the world, you've got to preach. Preach the Word because that is your ministry.” Teach the doctrines of truth. And when you do that, the elect will come to saving faith. “You don't stop there, Titus. Titus, you teach them after they've come to saving faith.” That's discipleship. Bring them to saving faith, but don't stop there. Nurture them in the Word.

And the third phase would be this. *He led them into a godly life.* Paul led them into a godly life. He brought the elect to saving faith. He taught them the truth after they came to saving faith. And he led them to a godly life. He taught them the truth. And that truth, when obeyed, produces godliness.

Take a look at Titus 1:1. *“The knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.”* The word *accords* means *produces*. It manifests itself.

You see, there's got to be some evidence of true saving faith. You teach people to bring the elect to saving faith. You teach them after that in discipleship. There's got to be some evidence. That evidence is godliness, worship rightly directed.

It doesn't just stop at their conversion. You've got to teach them more. And this is the correlation between ministry and the Word. It doesn't just stop with their conversion. You bring people to saving faith. You teach them the doctrines of grace. You have to understand what discipleship is. And you bring them to a life of godliness.

**Participant:** Amen.

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**Bruce:** You bring them to a life of godliness. That was his threefold ministry. And honestly, men, I don’t know of a better description for a New Testament pastor than those three things, because there is a direct correlation between ministry and the Word.

The second thing we can notice about Paul’s ministry to Titus in teaching him is that *godliness is the goal*. Take a look at verse 2. *“The truth which accords with godliness.”*

Now godliness is a very important concept in this letter, just as it was in the first letter to Timothy, even though the word *godliness* is only used once. But the repetition of the theme of good works is an indication of the emphasis of godliness. How does godliness manifest itself? By good works. Take a look at these verses to help you understand the emphasis that the goal is godliness.

**Transcriber’s Note:** All of the following verses are from the New King James Version of the Bible. Bruce gives the verses and the quotations follow.

**Bruce:** Titus 1:16. *“They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”*

**Bruce:** Chapter 2 verse 7 of Titus. *“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.”*

**Bruce:** Chapter 2 verse 14.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Titus 2:13-14. *“Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”*

**Bruce:** Chapter 3 verse 1. *“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work.”*

**Bruce:** Chapter 3 verse 5.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Titus 3:4-5. *“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*

**Bruce:** Chapter 3 verse 8. *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”*

**Bruce:** Chapter 3 verse 14. *“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”*

**Bruce:** You see, all those verses deal with the fact that we produce good works. That’s a form of godliness. And that’s why this was Paul’s ministry—not only to bring the elect to saving faith and to teach them after they came to saving faith, but to move them in the direction of godliness, because that is the goal of ministry, so that you will see evidence of somebody’s true saving faith. There’s got to be increased righteousness. That’s one of the indications of the assurance of our salvation, an indication of the true ministry of increased righteousness, of godliness.

And he writes to Titus and says, “Emphasize the good works,” which are a demonstration and a revelation of a person’s godliness. The truth of the gospel changes a life from ungodliness to holy living.

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Take a look at Titus 2:12. *“Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.”*

You see, the goal of ministry is this. Godliness is the goal, so that people will live a life of godliness in this present age. That’s how he was teaching them to penetrate a darkened world in a dark environment, to live a life of godliness.

Now it’s sad to say that it’s most likely that some of the Cretan Christians, just like church members today, professed to be saved, but their evidence of godliness was lacking. That’s a great concern that we should have for our culture today.

Take a look at Titus 1:12. *“Of the Cretans a prophet of their own said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’”*

So there was evidence that something was going on in the church. Many of these people professed Christ, but the conduct was not something that validated it. And ministry helps people validate the authenticity of their conversion. You bring the elect to saving faith. You teach them after their saving faith and you bring them to a life of godliness. And Paul is teaching Titus that the goal of ministry is this. Yes, it is governed by the Word. You preach the Word. But the goal is godliness, to let people see what happens when a person believes the gospel of Jesus Christ. What happens is that their lives go from ungodliness to a life of godliness.

Now as I look at this passage, I think that Paul also had something else in mind. When he spoke to Titus about straightening out the things in the church I think there was something else going on. First of all we’re told in verses nine and ten of chapter one that there were some false teachers who resided in Crete. And there was some erroneous teaching going on in the church body. But more than that, it seems to me that there is something that he wanted to deal with that he is going to remind Titus of in the next verses as we go through this. And that was that the faith of the Christians in Crete was what I would call *unfinished*.

Now what do I mean by *unfinished faith*? You see, Paul is saying this. “Titus, you need to go and set things straight in the church. But you’ve got to deal with something else.” And that’s what I’m calling *unfinished faith*. Now what do I mean by that? Faith needs to be expressed in fruitful lives for God. The good news of God’s grace and love ought to lead us to live good and godly lifestyles.

So Paul is basically saying this. You can’t just stop at their conversion. You’ve got to take them into greater depths of godliness. Now you can pick up this theme several times in the book of Titus. Let me give you a couple of examples. He’s saying that the ministry of the Word doesn’t stop at just proclaiming the gospel. You’ve got to bring people to live a life of godliness, because if somebody believes the gospel, he goes from a life of ungodliness to a life of godliness.

And you’ve got to help people finish their faith. That means to express their conversion, their regeneration, to express that in good works which produce and give evidence of godliness. It’s the power of the gospel. People see evidence in their lives.

Let me give you some examples of why I think this is important that Paul is writing this to Titus. Take a look at chapter 2 verse 1. *“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.”*

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Now notice what he does right after that. Right after the teaching of sound doctrine he gives you some application of where this sound doctrine is to be applied. And he applies it to men. He applies it to women. And he applies it to children. You see, as you teach sound doctrine and you make application, there is an appropriate time with the right people. There are certain things that you teach men. There are certain things that you teach women. There are certain things that you teach children.

And they may be different. Yes, there are going to be a lot of things you’ll teach the same. But you’ll teach sound doctrine specifically for the men. And there is sound doctrine that’s specifically for the women. And there’s some sound doctrine that’s particularly for the kids.

And so the very first thing that he does is that he says, “You’ve got to help them to finish their faith.” You teach them sound doctrine, and then you teach them how to apply that doctrine correctly so that we can penetrate a lost world and a dark world. And we’ll discuss that in greater length as we move into chapter two.

Here’s another example. How about chapter 2, verses 11-12? It’s another example of helping people to finish their faith by living out a life of godliness. *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”*

Now notice the key words there—*training us to renounce things*. Do we know what to renounce? Do we know what to give up? Paul says that you teach them the right doctrine. Then you make the application of the right doctrine. Then you have to relinquish those things that are not consistent with sound doctrine.

And he does this in chapter two. He’s helping them to see that Titus has got to bring them to finish their faith. And the faith is demonstrated in a life of godliness, which is the goal.

You see, the believing reception of Christian truth ought to issue a distinctly disciplined Christian life. Embracing Christian truth brings about a disciplined Christian life. That’s helping people finish their faith.

The third example of helping people finish their faith in the book of Titus that I would offer for your consideration would be this. Titus 3:8. *“The saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** NIV.

**Bruce:** You see men, faith in Jesus Christ not only saves us today and makes our lives godly today, but also gives us a living hope because of the gospel of Christ. Titus 1:2: *“the hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”*

Now we have assurance of our future because of God’s promises, and God cannot lie. So we have the assurance of His promises. We have the assurance of our hope. We are *“born again to a living hope.”* 1 Peter 1:3. And the reason that we are born again to a living hope is because we’re trusting a living Savior. That’s why we have hope.

You see, part of your faith is this. Finish it! Help people understand that they have a living hope. What does the world want more than anything else? They want hope! Where

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is it going to be found? It’s going to be found in the ministry of the Word, by preaching sound doctrine, finding it correctly, and helping people to understand this. You having living hope because you’re serving a living Lord. You have a living hope because you’re worshipping a living Lord. You have a living hope because you’re following a living Lord. You see, there’s a correlation between our hope and who our hope is in. Our hope is in the living Lord because we are trusting in Him.

Look at 1 Peter 1:3. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Now we know that we have eternal life because of saving faith. You have that in John 3:16.

**Transcriber’s Note:** John 3:16, ESV. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*

**Bruce:** But when Christ returns, we’re going to enjoy eternal life in a far greater way than we enjoy it right now. I take you to 1 John 5:11-12. *“Now this is the testimony: that God gave us eternal life.”*

Now notice! Where did eternal life come from?

**Participant:** Jesus.

**Bruce:** God gave it! I didn’t receive it. God gave it. Now we talk a lot about this. Did you receive Christ? I think a more appropriate question is did Christ receive me? Receive me! I repent of my sin. Will You receive me? You see, God gave salvation to us. And whenever you ask God in a prayerful request, and you repent and believe the gospel, and you say, “Lord, I repent of my sin. Would You receive me?”, God will receive you. It’s an indication of your election and divine grace. We’re told that God gave us salvation.

He gave us eternal life. *“And this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son does not have life.”*

So Paul was teaching Titus. Titus, if you’re going to penetrate a dark world,-- Yes, Brian?

**Brian:** Finish your thought.

**Bruce:** If you’re going to penetrate a dark world, you’ve got to understand this: the correlation between ministry and the Word. This last issue is that *the content is commanded by God*. So take a look at the three things in your outline.

The correlation is this. It’s governed by the Word. Godliness is the goal. The last thing we need to understand is this. *The content is commanded by God*. The content of what we preach is commanded by God. It is not something that we make up ourselves. We’re governed by the Word. Godliness is the goal. And the content is commanded by God.

Now what do we mean by that? God reveals His message through preaching. Now this does not mean the act of proclaiming or the act of preaching. That’s not what he’s talking about. He’s talking about the content of your preaching. That is what is commanded by God. It’s not the act itself; it’s the content of the Word that you’re preaching. That’s what’s commanded by God, the content of the message.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:21. *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching.”* So you see that in that sense preaching is foolishness *“to save them that believe.”* The critical

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ingredient is not the act of preaching per se. It’s the content of the preaching when we are giving the message. Where does the message come from? It is something that is commanded by God. It is not something that you make up yourself.

The word of the gospel was committed to Paul. Look at 1 Timothy 1:11. *“In accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.”*

Paul says this to Timothy. The ministry is governed by the Word. Godliness is the goal. We’ve been entrusted with a divinely enforced message. We’ve got to preach the full doctrine. And we’ll explain this as we get into other verses in the passage.

But notice this: *“with which I have been entrusted.”* It was something that God had given him. It was commanded by God. And he committed this same message to Titus. The ministry was according to the commandment of God and was not given by men.

I take you to Galatians 1:10. *“Or am I now seeking the approval of men or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me was not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it. But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

But he was called to manifest the gospel content through heralding, through preaching. And it was a message that was given to him. That’s why we have to understand what the real gospel is.

Recently, I had an opportunity to speak to a group of men. I wanted men to be aggressive responders to what God was doing in their lives. And I gave some illustrations of that.

I gave the illustration of a young woman who helped me start a Bible study. I was just an aggressive responder to what God was doing in my life at my time at PNC. She walked into my office and said, “May I ask you a question?”

I said, “As long as it’s not about banking.” *(Laughter)*

And she said, “No, it’s not.”

And I said, “What’s your question?”

She said, “Why must I be saved from my sin?”

I said, “Who said that you did?”

She said, “I was listening to the radio driving down 279, and somebody was talking about repentance and faith. I just thought I’d ask you.”

So I said, “Why are you asking me?” I was just trying to find out the seriousness of her question by the questions I was asking her.

And she said, “Well there just seems to be something different about you.”

And I said, “Well come in.”

That was a Thursday, twenty-eight years ago. And I sat down and I went through the gospel with her—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. It was a message that was entrusted to me just as it had been entrusted to Paul, who was entrusting it to Titus. It’s a message that does not come from man. It’s a message about the glory of God. It’s about the glory of God in the face of Christ.

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And I spoke to this group of men a couple of weeks ago. I had a couple of men come up to me afterwards, and they said this. “What was your definition of the gospel again?” They said, “What were those six points that you gave? When you gave the gospel to that girl, what was the content of the gospel?” All I did was give a message that was entrusted to me. It was not from man. It was given by God, commanded by God.

And that was this. The gospel is about the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. That’s the message that we’ve been entrusted with. It’s commanded by God. It is not a message of man. It is not the Jesus of human imagination. It’s the Jesus of Biblical revelation.

**Participant:** What was the chapter and verse of the last book that you read?

**Bruce:** Galatians 1:10-12.

**Participant:** Thank you.

**Bruce:** Now let me wrap this up for a minute. Paul is telling Titus, “Titus, there is a direct correlation between your ministry and the word of God.” You’ve got to have your ministry governed by the Word. You’ve got to realize that your ministry goal is godliness. And you’ve got to realize that the content of your message is commanded by God, not something that you make up to be socially correct.

It talks about eternal life. Men, the first thing in Paul’s threefold ministry was to bring the elect to saving faith and eternal life.

Let me give you some insights on eternal life, what we can gain from this passage. First of all, this. *The promise of eternal life was given before the world began.* It tells us that. Would somebody read verse 2 of Titus chapter 1?

**Participant:** “*A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.*”

**Bruce:** Got that? Before the beginning of time; before the world began.

Look at 2 Timothy 1:9-10. You see, God, who cannot lie, purposed and promised to give eternal life to the elect. He had promised to do that to the elect. That’s the covenant of redemption. Look at 2 Timothy 1:9-10. “*He saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the world began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*”

Now this terminology *before the world began, before the ages began*, is seen in some other places. I encourage you to take a look at Ephesians 1:4. “*Even as He chose us in Him.*” When? “*Before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.*”

Now in the covenant of redemption a wonderful thing occurred. God the Father made a promise to God the Son in the interest of His elect. And this is clearly implied by the fact that believers are viewed as being given to Christ by the Father. Do you realize, men, that you are a love gift of God the Father to God the Son? And when did that occur?

**Participant:** Before the beginning of time.

**Bruce:** Before the beginning of time. Now let’s follow this through. The covenant of redemption says that God the Father gave His Son for the elect in order to accomplish

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their salvation, in order that they may inherit everlasting life and enjoy its most glorious manifestation. Take a look at John 17:24.

John 17:24. Here’s this wonderful promise! And notice when the promise began—before the world began, before the ages began! Verse 24 of John 17. *“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me from before the foundation of the world.”*

Now let’s put John 17:24 and Ephesians 1:4 together. We’re told in John 17:24 that God loved Jesus when?

**Participant:** Before our birth.

**Bruce:** Before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1:4 we’re told this. We were chosen in Him when? Before the foundation of the world. That speaks of our union with Christ.

Now notice this. You put those two things together. If God loved Jesus before the foundation of the world and gave Him you and me as love gifts from the Father to the Son, giving you as a love gift, when did He love you? He loved you before the foundation of the world. That’s because you were in Christ. When did Jesus love you? Before the foundation of the world because you were in Him! You’re a love gift! God gave you as a love gift to the Son. He loved the Son before the foundation of the world. And if you’re in the Son, He loved you before the foundation of the world. Do you understand that? Men, you were loved before the foundation of the world. We’re just manifesting this love in this covenant of redemption now in our lifetime.

You see, that’s the power of the word of God being preached. You can’t let people just come to saving faith. You’ve got to take them to the greater depths of God’s grace because godliness is the goal.

And you need to understand this, men. I want you to ponder this. You’re a love gift! And Jesus loved you because you were in Him. Because God loved Him before the foundation of the world, that’s when Jesus began His love for you, before the foundation of the world.

Now men, if that doesn’t change your life, I don’t know what will. When you understand the grace there, in all my vileness, my total depravity, all of my vileness, in spite of all that I was loved before the foundation of the world. God’s love for me has been that deep, it’s been that broad, it’s been that long. Before the foundation of the world He chose to love me. How could I do anything but respond to Him now?

You see, there’s a direct correlation, brothers, between ministry and the Word. And the ministry that we need to be involved in is this. We need to bring the elect to saving faith. We need to teach them after they come to saving faith and to lead them to a life of godliness. Our ministry must be governed by the Word. Godliness is the goal. And the message of the content of the gospel is commanded to us by Christ. It’s not a manmade gospel. It’s the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. We have a living hope because we serve a living Savior.

May God be pleased for us to continue to learn what Paul is teaching Titus about ministry and its relationship to the Word. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake.

## ***“Penetrating a Dark World” Week 2***

Let’s pray. Father, I don’t even know what to do with that thought, that You loved me and You loved my brothers before the foundation of the world because You saw us in Christ. You gave us as a love gift from the Father to the Son so that the Son could love us and accomplish our salvation, and call us to a life of godliness to demonstrate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, I just pray that somehow, through Your Holy Spirit, You would penetrate the blindness of our own souls and help us understand how deep and immeasurable is the love that You have for us. No one can separate us from the love of God, and that is because of this. It began before the foundation of the world. And all God’s men said,

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** And Amen. (*Applause*)