Titus 1:3–4

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

> *But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, mine own son after the common faith: grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

In Due Times Manifested

Verse 3 opens with a word of contrast: *but.* The eternal life was promised before the ages of time — but it was not immediately disclosed. There is a *due season* for everything that God does. The due season for this manifestation followed upon the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, which marked the end of God's dealings with the first Adam. With the glorification of Christ on the cross and His ascension into the presence of God, a new season opened in which it pleased God to reveal many things that had been kept secret since the world began. That was the due season for what we have in the New Testament.

There is an orderliness in this that reflects the character of the whole epistle. Things have their time and their place. The eternal things were purposed before the ages; they are manifested in due season; and the order in which they are disclosed is as perfect as the things themselves.

His Word Through Preaching — The Order of the Verse

The verse could have been written to put the preacher first — it could have said *God put me forth as the preacher of His word.* Instead, it says *He hath manifested*

His word through preaching. His word comes first. The preaching is the means. The preacher is named last. That ordering is precious and instructive. God has magnified His word. The power is in the word, not in the preacher. Romans 1:16 confirms: the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth — the power of God, not the power of the messenger.

The preaching committed to Paul was not generic. It was something specially entrusted to him — according to the commandment of God our Saviour. The dispensation of the grace of God was given to him; the truth of Christ as Head of the assembly was one of those things; the mystery of the one body was entrusted to him by direct revelation. When all those in Asia turned away from Paul, they were not simply turning from a person — they were turning from the body of doctrine he carried. Paul's person and Paul's doctrine are inseparably linked in Scripture. To receive him was to receive what God had committed to him; to turn from him was to set aside the revelation he bore.

Saviour God — The Character of God

The phrase *God our Saviour* appears three times in this short epistle (here, chapter 2:10, and chapter 3:4), and it carries a distinct weight. There is a difference between *God our Saviour* and *Saviour God.* The first speaks of God performing an act of saving. The second — which is closer to the force of the expression — describes the character of God: what kind of God He is. Isaiah said: *a just God and a Saviour.* That is the character. He is Saviour God — saving is not just something He does, it is what He is.

Chapter 3:4 joins this with kindness and love: *when the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.* The character of Saviour God is expressed in kindness and love toward man. These are not incidental attributes applied to a distant deity — they are what flows from the nature of the one who is Saviour God.

The Return Address — Perfect in Every Detail

The first three verses of Titus are, in the language of letter-writing, the return address — the sender's identification before the salutation begins. And it is an extraordinary return address: bondman and apostle; faith and full knowledge; godliness; hope of eternal life; the promise of God before the ages; due season; the word; preaching; the commandment of God our Saviour. Every word is in its right place. Every word is necessary. Not one could be omitted or rearranged without loss. If Titus is to set things in order in Crete, the one who sends him and the authority under which he acts are themselves perfectly in order. The letter's origin is as orderly as the order it calls for.

To Titus, My Own Son — The Salutation

With verse 4, the salutation begins. Titus is addressed as Paul's *own son according to the common faith.* The word *own* carries the thought of genuineness — Kelly renders it *genuine child.* Paul had led Titus to the Lord and had a deep and genuine affection for him. Titus was a trusted fellow-worker, sent on various demanding missions, capable of carrying the apostle's authority into difficult situations. The confidence Paul placed in him was not misplaced.

The faith is called the *common faith* — not because it is ordinary or undistinguished, but because it is shared by all who are God's elect. The bond between Paul and Titus is not personal sentiment alone but the one faith they hold together, the faith of God's elect that the first verse pressed so carefully.

Grace and Peace — A Contentful Greeting

The greeting is *grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.* This is not empty formality — not the content-less *have a happy day* of the commercial world. Grace and peace are real things with weight and

substance. Titus already had the knowledge of grace; he already had peace with God. But the greeting carries a bearing on the charge that follows: the difficult work of setting things in order in Crete, of rebuking sharply, of resisting unruly and vain talkers, calls for both grace and peace to operate steadily in the soul.

Grace originates in God — it is, as has been expressed, God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves. Peace is what flows from that grace when it is operative in the soul. The Father is the source; the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour is the channel through whom it is given effect. The two divine persons are here together — distinct persons, yet acting in the unity and cooperation that is always characteristic of the Trinity. Father sends; Son accomplishes. Neither acts independently; their purposes are one.

Even the rebuke of verse 13 — *rebuke them sharply* — falls within the sphere of this grace and peace. Sharpness in the service of the truth, aimed at restoration, is not inconsistent with grace when grace is its ground. *That they may be sound in the faith* is the purpose; and where that purpose is genuinely before the soul, the harshness of the means is consistent with the grace and peace from which the whole letter proceeds.

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