

Getting out of the Ghetto

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Date: 11 October 2026

Preacher: Nick Louw

[0:00] Well, I don't know if you've ever heard the story of the Warsaw Ghetto. In World War II, when the Nazis invaded Poland, this was the first capital city that they conquered, Warsaw, the capital city of Poland.

And what they did was they created a ghetto and locked in around 450,000 Jews in the space of an area smaller than Plumstead.

Three and a half square kilometers. And it was called the Warsaw Ghetto. And so you had all these Jewish people in there and the Nazis were basically starving them out as their program of systematic extermination.

And they would have all been starved to death in the Warsaw Ghetto had it not been for the brave members of the Warsaw Underground. People who arranged through hidden tunnels in the sewers of Warsaw a vital mission to get food and supplies to the people in the Warsaw Ghetto and through the course of the war to evacuate a whole lot of them and save their lives.

Okay, so why the history lesson? Well, today as we start this book of Titus, we're going to meet this man, Titus, who was sent by the Apostle Paul on a very similar mission 2,000 years before on an island in the Mediterranean, the island of Crete.

[1:38] But he was sent there not to bring food aid. He was sent there to bring something even more essential, which is the truth about God that gives real life to a people who were otherwise headed for eternal death.

But it's not just Crete that was in this situation. You see, we all are born into what you could describe in this world as a spiritual ghetto.

We're trapped here. We're trapped here. And we're slowly dying because we by nature are cut off from our life. We're starved from the life that we were made for.

And we're cut off from living the way God intended us for. And we're actually all spiritually hungry and headed for death. And there's nothing we can do about it.

That is our natural default state, much like the residents of that ghetto, but spiritually. If not, that would be the case. If not, for the brave men that God sent in history to bring us life-giving truth.

[2:53] Titus was one of those men. And in this book of Titus, where Paul instructs Titus about his mission in the island of Crete, we're going to learn about what that mission is, what it involves, why it was so essential for us and how we can be part of it as well.

That's what we're going to learn this term. But also today in these opening verses, as Paul starts this letter to Titus, we're going to learn why, if you and I are ever going to escape the ghetto that we're in and experience real life, the kind of life God made us for, we need to listen very carefully to these men that God has sent us.

And so, have a look in your Bibles at these opening verses. In this opening, Paul tells Titus why their mission in the world is so vital.

And these opening verses are profound. So I'm going to read them again from verse 1. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now, it is appointed season, he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior to Titus, my true son in our common faith.

Now, these verses, you could spend hours thinking about them, but just there in verse 1, I love verse 1 because right there is an incredible summary of the Christian mission.

[4:43] It's a summary of the purpose that we exist and do our work as a church, for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. It's all there. It's an amazing

summary of what we should be doing and involved in as Christians in the world.

And we're going to spend some time in a few minutes unpacking that amazing verse. But before we do, I want you to notice the motivation that Paul says actually fuels him and should fuel Titus to do this work, and it's in verse 2, in the hope of eternal life.

That's it. That's the underlying motivation. Eternal life. That is why the apostles did what they did.

That's why they gave their lives to do what they did. It's why we, here at St. Mark's, do what we do.

It's why Christians throughout the ages have lived and sacrificed and died for the Christian mission.

For one reason, and one reason alone, because eternal life is real. Eternal life is real.

[6:06] Life coming in the future that will never end. It's a real thing.

Okay, now, think about it. If that is true, if that really exists, if eternal life really exists, the singular most important thing we can do in these years that we are in this world is get ready for that life.

If that life exists. If that life does not exist, right? If eternal life is not really a thing, if it doesn't really exist, then all of this is pointless.

Right? All of this. We may as well not wake up early on Sunday morning and come to church if eternal life is not real. I may as well not do this job. If eternal life was not real, I would quit and go get a corporate job and live a nice cushy life until I retire.

Right? The only reason I do this is because eternal life is real. I believe and I am convinced that eternal life, future life without end is a real thing and so did Paul and so did Titus.

[7:16] Do you really believe that? Do you really believe that there is a life to come that is not wishful thinking that is real, physical and eternal in the future that will never end?

Do you really believe that? Because you know what? I've got to admit, it's difficult to believe. If you stop and think about that just for a second, right?

That there will be a life where we will live forever in real physical world, in real physical bodies that will never end. And it will go on forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and never end.

If you just sit and think about that, it's mind blowing. We are so used to things ending. Our minds cannot conceive actually of eternity and living forever.

And so it's not an easy thing to believe. And that's why lots of people actually, they might come to church and they might say the things and sing the songs, but do they really, really believe that there is a real eternal life to come?

[8:32] Many people will think, it's a nice idea. You know, I wish that were true. But you can't really, really know what's on the other side, can you?

Well, Paul begs to differ. Right here in these opening verses, he says, you absolutely can. You can know. Look what he says in verse 2.

In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

Now, it's interesting he says that about God.

He does not lie. And the reason he says that, especially in this letter to Titus, is to contrast the culture that Titus is being parachuted into.

Not really parachuted. They didn't have parachutes or planes those days. But that's essentially what's going on. Titus is being sent into this island of Crete. And the culture there is notoriously full of liars.

[9:35] And I'm not making this up. Paul actually says it later in this letter. This culture in the island of Crete was notorious. Look at verse, later on, we'll get to verse 12.

But I just want to read it. This is what Paul writes to Titus. He says, One of Crete's own prophets has said it, Cretins are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.

Cretins. Now, you would expect Paul to say, Now, he was being really unfair, but he doesn't. The next verse he says, This saying is true. Okay, that's where we get the word Cretins from.

From here. This was a really tough culture. And it was full of liars. You couldn't know who was telling the truth. It sounds quite familiar, doesn't it? I mean, today we live in a world, you wonder, Where's the...

Who can we really believe? You see all this news media, and you don't really know who's telling the truth. Well, it was similar there in Crete.

[10:37] And in a world where nobody really knew what was true, Paul came and said, This eternal life is something we can know is true.

And the reason is, he says, Because the God who made all of the reality that we do know is real in our lives, The God who made the things we see and touch, The God who made our bodies and our

minds and our ability to reason, All the things we know are real, The same God promises that there is real life beyond this life that he's made.

It's not a different God who's come and told us about eternal life. It's the God who made all of our reality, Who also says there is life to come. And because, look at verse 2, It is something that he has been planning before the beginning of time.

Eternal life was something God was planning before he even made the cosmos. And you know what that means?

That means that when God made us, When he decided, I'm going to make these human beings, With two arms and two legs, ears and eyes, And when he planned us, When he designed us in eternity past, He made us with the intent to live forever.

[12:08] That was his intention for us from the beginning. We are not actually meant to grow old. Do you know that? You're getting gray hairs.

You're starting to feel your body aching. You're starting to feel your age. You know what? God did not design you for that. God did not. That was not God's intent for you.

We are not actually meant to grow old and die. It is not natural. It is a result of the brokenness that has come into this world. And you know what? I think deep, deep down, We all know that.

I think deep down we all know this is, Life is meant to go forward. It's meant to grow. It's not meant to decline. We're not meant to grow old. Our bodies are not meant to fail like this.

And throughout time, Humans have always suspected, Surely, surely there is more to life than this. Well, you know what? God has now confirmed our suspicions to be true.

[13:15] Because the life that is coming in the future is something that He has planned in eternity past. But now, in verse 3 we read, He has actually revealed it to us in history.

Look at verse 3. This life, which God promised before the beginning of time, And which now at His appointed season, He has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.

God has now revealed that eternal life is a real thing in history. And we needed Him to reveal that to us.

Even though we always suspected it, We never knew it. We never knew that eternal life is a real thing until God revealed it to us. And we needed it to be revealed to us because we don't automatically have it.

We don't automatically know about eternal life. And we don't automatically have eternal life because of sin, the Bible tells us. The sin that is inside us that has cut us off from a right relationship with God.

[14:24] And God is the source of eternal life. So if we are cut off from God, we are cut off from life. That is why we are all slowly dying.

I'm sorry to say, but you have a terminal disease. It is terminal and it is going to kill you. It is called sin.

If you didn't know that, I'm sorry to break the news to you this morning. But we are all slowly dying from the day we are born. Just like the people in that Warsaw ghetto, we are cut off from the thing that will keep us alive.

We are cut off from the source of life. But these amazing verses that Paul writes to Titus reveal to us that God has made eternal life known.

And more than that, he wants us to have it. God wants to break us out of our ghetto so that we can access life again. Even though we are all, because of sin, cut off from life by nature, God wants to do something to change that.

[15:35] And you know what he did? He came up with a plan. And he revealed it in his appointed season. He has brought to light this plan through the preaching entrusted to the apostles by the command of God, the Savior.

Did you realize that? Did you notice that? What Paul says about God there at the end of verse 3? God, our Savior. God is a Savior. His heart is to save people who cannot save themselves.

God, our Savior. And God planned to save us from this situation. And he fulfilled that plan in the person of Jesus when he came, broke into our history, and died for our sins that cut us off from God.

And then through the apostles in history, God has revealed clearly how you and I can be saved and have life. Through their message.

That's where we find out how to have eternal life. Through the apostles' message. Now, if you've not yet heard that message, right?

[16 : 49] That these men lived and died to put on paper so that we can have it today. If you've not yet understood that message. If you've not heard it.

Then, before anything else, sign up for Discover Jesus in November. Because that is where we will read exactly what they wrote. We will read their message.

We will understand it. If you haven't yet done that, obviously do it. Don't waste any more time. But if you haven't yet heard their message that reveals to us how to have eternal life, then I want you to know something.

I want you to know this is not real life. I think you deep down know that. Maybe subconsciously. But there is a life beyond this that God made you for.

That God designed you for before you were even born. But to have that life, you need to hear and believe the message that these men bring. That's what you need. That is, in fact, we'll see next, the only way to get this new life.

[17 : 53] Because look again at the apostles' job description in verse 1. Now I want to dive into this verse. He said, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

That is their mission statement. That is their job description. The job of the apostles was to bring truth, God's truth, to people that when they believe, will make them godly.

Do you see that? Knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. Godliness. To be godly simply means to be living as God intends us to live.

Right? To be living according to God's design. To be living according to God's will. That's what it means to be godly. And godliness is actually proof that the new life has already started in us.

The Bible teaches us. That's how you know that we have life, this new life, that will go into eternity. It's like when you know a medication that you're taking has actually taken.

[19 : 20] You know, if you have to go to the doctor, because, I don't know, you've got a rash or something and you don't know what it is, and the doctor says, ah, yes, I know what that is. Here's medicine that you can take which will make the rash go away. And you take the medicine.

How do you know it's working? Well, you start to see a change, right? You start to see the rash going away. That's how you know the medication is taken. Because you see changes, and that's exactly the same with the new life that God has made possible for us.

And it's the way we know that this new life is actually taken in us. And it's the guarantee that that new life will keep us living after we die.

It will raise us. Just like it raised Jesus, who had this life in him, which caused him to rise from the dead. That same life in us will cause us to rise from the dead.

But how do we know we have it? What is the indicator that it's inside us? Godliness. Living the way God intended. See, godliness, if you think about it, proof that we will have the new life God intends in the future is that we start living the life God intends now.

[20 : 33] Right? That makes sense. If God has intended us for a life in the future which is amazing, and it doesn't have brokenness and sin and hatred and all the things that break this world. And that's the life that God has planned for us.

The proof that we're going to be there is that we already start to see that new life in us now. Now, of course, we're still battling with sin at the same time, but we see flashes of it. And we see it growing. Godliness. Godliness is the proof that we've received the cure for sin. But, what is the actual cure? See, this is important. Godliness is not the cure. Being godly, doing godly things is not the thing that's going to save us. It's the indicator.

It's the symptom of the cure. It's the way we know we've received the cure. But what is the cure? Well, it's there in verse 1. Do you see it? Knowledge of the truth.

[21 : 32] Knowledge of the truth is how we receive this new life. That is profound. And you will never hear that in any other religious system other than what the Bible teaches, that we receive this new life in us simply by hearing and believing something.

That's it. That is how you receive this new life in you, which then issues and is seen in godliness. But the way you get it is simply by hearing and believing something.

And you know what that means. And you know what that means. Now this is... If you don't take anything else away, take this away from today. That means that a person does not become godly

through their own religious effort.

they become godly through believing a message. That's it. It's kind of like the difference in how butter is made as opposed to how yogurt is made.

Now you're going, what on earth is he talking about? Well, I happen to have with me a tub of yogurt. And I happen to have with me a block of butter.

[22 : 53] From pick and pay. Now, I don't know if you know much about how these are made. But butter and yogurt are made in very different ways.

If you want to make butter, you have to churn cream. Now I'm not an expert in the process, but what I understand is it takes a lot of effort and churning.

You can actually make butter by taking cream in a container and just shaking it and shaking it.

People used to do that, just shake it, shake it, shake it. And they put in a lot of effort. And once you put in all this energy and effort, it would churn it into butter.

That's how butter is made. And I'm going to take this home because it's very expensive at the moment. A lot of effort went into making it. Yogurt, on the other hand, you know, it's made in a completely different way.

Yogurt is not made through a whole lot of effort. Yogurt is made through simply introducing a live culture and letting it do its work silently.

[23 : 55] It quietly works, this culture in the yogurt, to form the yogurt. Well, that's what God's truth is like in us. You see, many people think that we become godly through hard work and effort.

But really, the way we become godly is by introducing a truth into our lives that transforms us quietly from the inside out.

Christians, we're not this. We're not butter. Christians are this. Christians are yogurt.

We don't become who we are through hard work and effort and shaking and making sure we're doing the right things and keeping the rules and being disciplined.

We don't actually become godly through our own hard work and effort. We don't come to love God truly and we don't come to have a passion to serve Him through forcing ourselves to.

[25 : 08] But we become godly and we become who we are through a truth that has entered into our life and starts to do work on us and change us from the inside out.

If you here yet are not yet passionate for God, if you do not yet fully love God above all other things, maybe you sit at church and you look around and see people passionately singing these songs and you feel like a bit of a fraud.

If that is you, let me tell you, maybe it's like those dry bones that Ezekiel was talking about. You don't actually feel this spiritual life in you.

Well, the only way you will change and become really a Christian and godly and start to love God and be passionate for Him is if this truth is introduced in your life and starts to take hold.

If you let it do its work in you. That's how you will change. That's how you'll become godly. But it is a specific truth that needs to come in and enter into you.

[26 : 17] Not just any truth. You can't just put anything in milk and it'll become yogurt. It has to be a particular culture and in the same way, it's got to be a particular truth, a particular set of facts that enters into us that when we hear and believe starts to do its work.

And that is why this truth for thousands of years has needed guardians in history. People who could protect it and guard it because it is a particular set of facts.

And that's why in verse 3, Paul says towards the end there, he's brought this truth to light through the preaching entrusted, look at that word, entrusted to me by the command of God, our Savior.

It was entrusted to him and these men, these apostles. You know why? Because it's very easy to lose truth, isn't it? It's very easy for truth to be manipulated and to change.

And we see that again, of course, in today's world when something happens and we hear it on the news. Now, the news always likes to, especially today, put a spin on it. So it's quite, it's a little bit different from what actually happened because they want to sort of push their own narrative depending on their political, you know, where they're on the political spectrum.

[27 : 33] They'll want to spin the events of the world for a particular narrative and so it's not actually true. And then we are surrounded, aren't we, by fake news, news that actually is just a lie to get taps and to get clicks and to get likes.

And so we're in a world that is surrounded by lies, not unlike the culture that Titus was in. And so this truth, if there is a truth that is vital to give us life, it must be protected, surely it must be guarded

and that is exactly what God arranged.

These men would give their lives to guard this truth to make sure it doesn't change. He entrusted this critical truth in history to these men who died to guard it.

These apostles who were given truth directly from God and then once they had written it down and spent their lives making sure it was protected, God then, miraculously, if you look at history, preserved this truth so that you and I can read and hear the same truth today in 2026 that they were given by God without it being changed.

If someone tells you, oh, the Bible has changed over time, that is complete rubbish. We can prove historically we actually have documents from the first century that we can compare and see that it hasn't, God has miraculously preserved this truth for you and I in our Bibles.

[29:04] What's in here is so precious. Right? What's in here is the most precious thing we have. It is a truth that has not changed. It has been preserved for us so that we can have eternal life because this is how we have it through hearing and believing this word.

Now, what's very, very sad is how many people in this world ignore this truth. If this is God's truth given to give us life, it is shocking how many people just don't even know it, don't even listen to it, completely ignore it.

And the reason, the Bible tells us, the reason is the sin that is inside us. The sin that corrupts our bodies and makes us grow old and die is also the sin that corrupts our minds and causes people to ignore what is true, to not believe God's truth, even though we have every reason to believe it historically, and there's so many reasons to believe that this is true and yet so many people don't believe it's true because of sin that is blinding, the Bible says, it blinds the minds of people.

So much so that without God doing something first, we would never have believed this. You and I do not have within us the capacity to believe this.

God has to do something and that is why I want you to notice something Paul writes in verse 1.

Again, he says, for the faith of God's elect.

[30:49] That word, God's elect. It means those that God has chosen. And it's vital, I think, that Paul reminds us of this here.

because without God actually choosing people to hear and believe this truth, nobody would because we don't have the capacity to work it out and believe it ourselves.

God has to choose who believes this. Now, I do admit this idea of predestination, of election, is a very controversial and very mysterious doctrine that is in the Bible.

And it leads to many questions. You know, why does God not choose everyone? Why does God choose some people and not others? And we don't know. You know, those are God's mysteries.

But the Bible does teach that God has to choose people before they can believe.

We cannot do it ourselves. And if you put the questions and stuff aside, which can be dealt with at another time, let's just look at how encouraging that truth actually is.

[31:56] The truth of election. The fact that God chooses people to believe and that that is the only way to believe actually gives us great comfort. Think about it.

Because it means if, firstly, if you are sitting here today and you truly believe this, you know in your heart of hearts you truly believe this, you know what that means?

That means God has chosen you to believe it. And that is a comforting thought, isn't it? But secondly, you know what other encouragement that gives us?

That means that when we take this truth out there in this world, this hostile world, when we proclaim this truth to the world, it means that those God has chosen who are out there will inevitably believe it when they hear it.

And that is an encouraging thought, isn't it? In fact, we've been reading through the book of Acts, Acts 13, they're in Antioch, the apostles proclaiming this truth, and right at the end after they preach and proclaim, lots of people reject them, but listen to what it says in Acts 13, 48.

[33:13] You don't have to turn there, I'll read it to you. It says, when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord, and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

All who were appointed for eternal life believed. God has chosen people in the world who are going to respond and come alive when they hear this truth that is proclaimed.

And just as it was in Acts, it is when we share this message to those around us in the world, when we take this message out to Plumstead and to our workplaces and out into the world, many people will reject it because of sin and because of darkness and blindness.

But you know what? Those God has already chosen before time began, when they hear it, they will wake up and they will believe it. They will be activated when they hear the truth.

Like sleeper agents. They're already out there. We don't know who they are, but they're there, God's elect who have not yet heard this truth and have not yet come to salvation. When we take it to them and when it reaches them and they hear it, they will believe it and they will wake up and they will have life.

[34 : 19] Now that is an encouraging thought, isn't it? That should encourage us to take this truth out. And that is why Paul wrote this to Titus, so that he would do that in Crete.

Paul, what he's doing here in Titus, in the letter, he's getting old, by the way, and we know in history that not long after he wrote this, he was arrested again by the Romans taken to Rome and killed. And so he's passing on the baton to the next generation here. That's what this letter's about. His mission, to make this life-giving truth known in the world, he's now going, I need to pass this on. And so he's passing it on to Titus, this responsibility of making this truth known in the world here in Crete, on this island. But you know what?

That then, Titus grew old and died. You know what he did? And men like him, they passed on this truth to the next generation to preserve and to proclaim. And they passed it on to the next generation.

[35 : 22] And they passed it on to the next generation. And they passed it on to us. Many, many, many generations later, we now have this responsibility.

This baton has been passed to us as a church to take this truth into the world, to preserve it, to do what verse one says. For the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, that is now our mission.

That is what we are here for. That is what St. Mark's Plumstead is here for. That is what Reach South Africa, our denomination, is here for. That is what the church is here for in the world. We don't get to decide, by the way, what we're here for.

We don't get to say, okay, we own this building, let's decide what we're going to do. Let's decide what our church is going to do. We don't get to decide. God has already given us a mission. It's here.

We don't get to make up a new mission statement. It's here. This is what we're here for. If that is so, if we today, the church, and the church is not just people who stand up here, the church is you, the church is us.

[36 : 27] God has given us this responsibility. Then we must take this responsibility seriously. To close, if this is true, I want to give us three things that I think we need to make sure we are doing, if this is true, if we now have the responsibility of this truth in the world, the first is to protect this truth that has been handed down to us.

To protect it such that we don't let it get manipulated or changed based on what our culture want to hear, based on what's politically correct, or based on what people want, we must make sure that the truth we proclaim is the same truth that was proclaimed 2,000 years ago, that it hasn't changed, we must protect this truth, and we must, as we'll see later in Titus, we must oppose and push against those who would change it, and those who would try to make it sound more politically correct.

We've got to protect this truth that was handed down to us. Secondly, obviously, we've got to proclaim this truth. We can't keep it to ourselves. If this is the only way people can have real eternal life, people out there, it's the only way God's elect will come to life, and it's the only way people will ever be able to access the life God intended, is by hearing this truth, how dare we keep it to ourselves?

How dare we think, oh, we'll just gather in church and keep it within these walls, but then when we go out there, we'll keep quiet because we don't want to rock the boat. Come on. We've got to be bold to proclaim this truth and to be involved in the church's strategies and the church's projects to make this truth known.

But then thirdly, if all this is true, there's an application for our own lives. We need to make sure we are prioritizing this truth in our lives, in your life.

[38 : 24] Do you prioritize hearing this truth? Because if hearing and believing this particular truth is the only way that eternal life will grow in us and godliness will grow in us, well then there is nothing more important than coming to church where this truth is responsibly taught.

Right? Of your entire week, the only time that you will actually sit and really focus on the truth that the apostles were handed down and given to us and where we unpack it and where we divide it is here right now at church.

This is where it happens. Life is too distracting. We go into the week, there's all kinds of thoughts and there's all kinds of distractions. This is where we put aside time, we carve our time to sit under this truth that will give us eternal life.

If that is the case, then there is nothing more important in your week than being here on Sunday morning. Am I right? Do you agree with me? Okay. I'm glad to hear that. So guard your Sunday morning.

Guard it with your life. There are 168 hours in your week. This is an hour and a half which you must make sure nothing else gets in the way of.

[39 : 43] Prioritize this time. Make sure that you don't get distracted by stupid things because you stayed up too late on Saturday night watching Netflix. Oh, I'm too tired to go to church. church.

Oh, I don't feel like it. Or whatever it is. Or, well, there's sport. Those are things that are going to pass away. This is what matters. Prioritize. Guard this time and guard it parents for your children. Show them. Model to them this is the most important time of the week. Because this truth, this truth, and this truth alone will give you and your family the real life that you are starving for. and it will bring you to the future life that God has always planned for you. Will you do that this term? Will you come to church every Sunday unless you have a very serious communicable disease?

Will you commit to do that, please? For you, so that we can hear this and we can grow in godliness. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a savior, that you have made truth known to us, that saves us, that gives us eternal life, and that gives us godliness, that helps us, teaches us, and transforms us to start living the life that you have always intended for us.

[41 : 11] Lord, would you help us all to prioritize this truth in our lives? Would you help us as a church and our denomination to protect this truth and proclaim it as well boldly in the world?

So that you would call your elect to faith and that you would grow us in godliness for your glory and our good. Amen.