

Jesus, Remind Me Who I Am

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[0 : 00] We're going to read God's Word from the book of Titus this morning, verses 1-4.

Titus 1, 1-4. 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 which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior, with which I have been entrusted.

To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. Lord Jesus, thank you for your Word.

We acknowledge that we are sinners who need a Savior. We are not strong in faith. We are not the ones who make everything happen.

Those things are in your hands. Use your Word, Lord Jesus, to show us yourself and convince us again of your power to work and to save. In Jesus' name, amen.

[1 : 34] Amen. Please be seated. I'll take a couple minutes to just give a little bit of update on what we're doing before we dig into that passage.

First, I would be in trouble if I didn't tell you that Jenny, my wife, sends her greetings. Some of you who've been around a few years will remember that I borrowed her from the choir about 21 years ago and so far have refused to give her back.

And I don't think, I won't give her back. But she sends her greeting. We both love New City and are very grateful for you and what God is doing here in Chattanooga.

I guess I have to confess I'm one of the old timers. First started worshipping at New City when I was in Jim Ward's band and we were doing worship at Third Street Sunday School.

So, that's a few years ago. And we just thank the Lord. I thank the Lord for his faithfulness. As was mentioned, Jenny and I have worked with Serge and close to 39 years now.

[3 : 03] So, you've walked with us all that time and we're very thankful, grateful for that. Interesting couple of years that we've had with lots of turmoil in the U.S., not just from COVID.

And the amazing thing is that Serge as an organization trying to take Jesus' name around the world has actually grown during the pandemic.

How? Well, the Lord Jesus. That's the only explanation you can give. In the last seven years, the number of people that are going out through Serge has increased by 100%.

So, we serve a pretty amazing Jesus. And I'm helping these days with a train. With doubling the size in the last seven years, it means that the average age in Serge has gone down between 15 and 20 years.

Lots of young people and lots of good things to do and helping them get ready to reach the generation that we live in. I'm also, these days, helping oversee Latin America, which is South America, Central America, and the Caribbean.

[4 : 24] And I had the pleasure two weeks ago from today, about this time, I was worshipping in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on the sidewalk.

And I was worshipping with a church that calls itself Sigo Vivo. And the pastor, Rudy Garcia, was pastoring a church in the neighborhood. Large areas of Guatemala City are drug-ridden, filled with shanties, much of the time don't have water.

And Pastor Rudy was the pastor of a church of 200 or so about 10 years ago in that region. And people started coming in off the street in that area.

The neighborhood had changed, as we hear about neighborhood changes. And there was sort of a rotating group of people between prison and the street, prison and the street.

And some of them started coming to their church in that area of Guatemala City, I think it's Zone 3. And the other leadership in the church said, these people scare us to death.

[5 : 38] We can't have them in our church. And he said, God opened the doors and brought them in. And so the leadership of the church decided, okay, if that's the way you feel, we don't need you as a pastor anymore.

So they fired him. And he and his wife prayed and began Sigo Vivo, which is a church on the street that ministers to this rotating group of people.

Many of them still with drug addictions, lots of diseases, in and out of the prisons. They go in the prisons during the week, do Bible studies, visit with people. They said there's a high interest in studying the Bible in the prison.

No one else visits them, those that are in there. But they have to be careful because they can only have one gang in a Bible study at a time, or else the Bible study turns into a war.

So they do several Bible studies to accommodate what God is doing. And then when those people come on the street, many of them will come to Sigo Vivo. Jesus is working in the slums of Guatemala City, and we thank him for that.

[6 : 46] Well, this morning we're going to Titus. And this is Paul's letter to Titus, asking Titus to help him care for a new church.

You'll remember that the Apostle Paul traveled around the Mediterranean region. And if you think of the Mediterranean as an oval, sort of like this, Crete was almost right in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.

And it was important as a travel drop-off staff passed through because of all the different types of peoples and cultures of people that lived in Crete, and that came and went.

There were Greeks, Jews, people from every nation you can imagine, from Africa, from Asia.

And they were passing through there. And it was an island because of that that was spiritually a total mess. And you may remember from reading the Scripture that one of the only places that a reference like this is made to a people where Paul said, all Cretans are liars.

[8 : 03] And even in our English vocabulary, the word Cretan doesn't have a favorable meaning to it. And if you call someone a Cretan, you're not complimenting them.

And that comes from this place where Paul had been ministering, starting a church, and then asked Timothy to go and represent the gospel of Jesus Christ there and work with his church.

And it was a real privilege to be able to do that. Titus, as a young man, going into a place that was so filled with chaos, but where Jesus was saving people to himself.

Jesus, help me remember who I am. Now, if you look at this passage, and I'm going to read it again in a minute, and ask you to think about something as we're reading it, what's interesting with Titus 1, 1 through 4, is it's an introduction to the book, yes, it is, but it is put in a setting in the book of Titus where, well, let's ask ourselves this question, which comes first, believing or behaving? And I guess I can't walk this way because I'm getting feedback. Which comes first, believing or behaving?

[9 : 34] And that is one of the issues that Paul is dealing with in this book. We read this passage, and let me read it again. Paul, a servant of God, 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 and a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Paul is laying the foundation for what he's going to say next. And we will notice, if you look through the rest of the book, it's a short book, you could read it this afternoon, that what follows these verses is a list of character traits and qualities that the Lord Jesus says we should have in our lives. And it's really very interesting that Paul, and I think it's intentional, that Paul first gives us what needs to happen in our lives from the outside, from the power of Jesus, from the Holy Spirit working and drawing us before he gives us this list of character traits.

It takes time, usually, for God to work those things in us, but it's based on what he has worked in us to believe in Jesus Christ.

We all struggle with sin, and I hope we all realize that today. It's something that's constant in our lives, this battle between sin and salvation, between the work of the Holy Spirit and what our own

flesh wants.

[11 : 32] I noticed several years ago that one of my weaknesses is having worshipped efficiency and productivity in my work life.

I was always thinking about, I didn't do this consciously, it wasn't on a checklist, it just kind of happened in my head and heart, that I was always trying to get more done in a lesser amount of time than what I did yesterday.

And I didn't ever frequently get it done, but I was still trying. And that can be good in your work life, but it's hard if you let that bleed over into your personal life, into your marriage, your parenting. Let me give you one example of that. Some of you may have heard this before, but it's a good reminder to me how I need Jesus every day. Well, when Jenny and I got married, we were married here in New City Fellowship, May 5th, 2001.

And two weeks after we got married, I had been invited to preach in a new church in New York City in Greenwich Village. I don't know how many of you have ever visited New York.

[12 : 49] New York. Yeah, a good number. It's a big city. New York is a big city. And the person we were staying with, we were there on a Saturday, and our youngest daughter, Lydia, was there with us.

And the host said to us, well, are there things you would like to see in New York City? And we thought, Liberty, those would be good things for us to see.

And so the host said to us, okay, I'll take you to the subway, and I'll show you how to get on, tell you where to change, and you can get to Staten Island, and you can see the Statue of Liberty.

So he took us down into the subway. We went down in, I don't know what picture you have in your mind, a New York City subway. It's a pretty efficient transportation system.

Its reputation is not always good, but it works. And while we were down there waiting for the train to come in, I looked and saw a train coming into the station, and I noticed that the first three cars had almost no one in them.

[14 : 07] And then the next four cars were just filled with people, and everybody was having to stand. And so, not thinking about Jenny and Lydia, I jumped up, and I ran for those first three cars.

And, but when I got there, the train had stopped, the doors were open, I jumped inside, and I said, oh, Jenny and Lydia. And Lydia got into the door, into the car, and just as Jenny approached the doors, they slammed shut.

And I put my hands in and tried to open the doors. They wouldn't open, and I looked, there was a picture right next to the subway car door that said, if you want to go to jail, do this.

And there was a picture of exactly what I was doing. So, I let go, tried to mouth some words, and off we went into the bowels of New York City.

We got off at the next station, hoping that maybe Jenny would be on and we would see her as she came in. When Lydia and I jumped off, we noticed that we were in a station where there was one bare light bulb hanging from a wire, and there were no other people.

[15 : 22] And my thoughts about New York City was, this is not a good place to be by yourself alone in this subway station. So, the next train that came through, we jumped on.

We went to the place we were supposed to transfer to another train, and we waited to see if Jenny would come. One train, two trains, three trains.

Remember, let's see, Lydia was 15 years old, and I said to her, Lydia, you wait right here in case Jenny comes, and I'll go on the other side and go back and see if I can find her.

And Lydia, being the astute young lady she was, said, there's no way I'm waiting here by myself.

So, we got back on. We went back to the first station, and sure enough, Jenny was very smart.

When she lost us, she just sat down. And I got out of the car, Lydia and I got out of the car, and I went up to her very sheepishly, and I said, honey, are you okay?

[16 : 27] And she said, yes, and then burst into tears. Not the greatest record in your first two weeks of marriage.

And so, I confess my impatience and sin to her, forgetting about them, not caring for them. She quickly forgave me. But I can tell you, she remembers that.

She doesn't hold it against me, but when I tell this story, you can see her still cringe. So, that's sort of an example of how things that might be a strength in one area of life can be a way that leads you into sin in other areas.

And what the Apostle Paul is telling Titus here is that we need to learn every day that we are children of King Jesus, and he calls us every day to love him more so he works that, those values, that character, those ways of life in us that we need to keep him working on every day. Titus, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Christ Jesus for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with God.

[17 : 55] So where was Paul now? Paul was in the middle of some of his missionary journeys. He had traveled to Crete. He had traveled to other parts of Asia, Asia Minor, Eastern Europe, and he was taking the gospel wherever he went.

And you will remember the example of him saying God stopped him from going to one place or another place that happened several times but then he had a dream where a man from Macedonia called him.

Come, help us. One of the sayings of Dr. King was, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the 8th century prophets left their little villages and carried their thus saith the Lord far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns and just as the apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Greco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown.

Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid. You know, the Lord is always calling us to come to the aid of other people and we can't do that unless we every day are receiving the call to him, to go back to him, to see Jesus at work in our lives.

[19 : 42] You hear a lot of things about identity these days, people declaring, they're wanting to look inside themselves and find their identity. They want to change their identity.

They think, we think often we are in control. We can make ourselves into who we want to be. And brothers and sisters, I would say that is a dangerous road to go down.

When you look inside yourselves, if you look honestly, you will find many things you don't like. and the scripture calls us to look to Jesus, he is the one who can remind us who we are.

Lord Jesus, remind us who we are. Titus is the disciple of the apostle Paul called to similar work as Timothy was doing in the Roman province of Asia.

Titus was with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch. They traveled often with the apostle in his missionary trips. After several years of working together, Paul gives Titus, who he views as a son, as a son, the responsibility to organize and brand new groups of believers in Crete.

[21 : 00] Well, I think this is a pattern we should follow. If God has given you some experience and helped you, and I think many of you do this already, you take younger people along with you.

You help them see what God has been doing and call them back to Jesus. That's what Paul was doing with Titus. And he gives him this responsibility in a place as crazy and wild as Crete, calling to point people to Jesus.

Who are you? Who are you? who am I? According to these first four verses, we are fully loved children of the one true king.

Paul used all these words, many biblical words, in these first four verses when he's calling Titus. He says, an apostle of Jesus Christ, I am, for the sake of the faith of God's elect.

Their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness and 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 which I have entrusted by the command of God our Savior.

[22 : 27] He says, you have all these things. This is who you are. You don't need to figure out deep inside yourself your true identity. You have an identity in Jesus if you have believed in him.

That is your most important identity. Our adoption as children of God is the identity that will carry us through whatever changes come to us in life.

And you will notice that when we read through that passage, Paul uses several words again and again. Faith, he uses in verse 13 and then he uses it throughout the rest of the book.

Paul uses the word godliness. He uses ungodliness later. He uses the word hope of eternal life which God who never lies promised before the ages began.

A blessed hope is waiting for us. The appearing of God, our great God, the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. That hope of glory.

[23 : 36] I love the name hope. Hope for Chattanooga. What our brother Tony was telling us about this morning. A revealing of the glory of Jesus Christ in Chattanooga.

That's what we are to be about. He also uses words like eternal life and salvation. So all these words that we could spend a whole message talking about each one of them. It's what Paul says we have received we are receiving in Jesus Christ. God's work of calling us Jesus redeeming us with a price and the Holy Spirit drawing us all happen first. And then we come to the list of character traits things that we should be who we should be what he's calling us to do. And you may have heard that many people refer to this list that comes next as qualifications for leadership in the church. And the apostle Paul later says older men should be this older women should be this younger women should be this younger men should be like this. [24 : 52] and all of that is based on what the Lord Jesus has done and doing in us. Psalm 61 verses 1 and 2 says for God alone my soul waits in silence from him comes my salvation he alone is my rock and my salvation my fortress I shall not be greatly shaken.

Lord Jesus help me remember who I am I am only who I am when I look to him. Some people have said and I'm sure you've heard this that what is the longest road in the world? Anyone know? It's a trick question. The longest road in the world is the road from the head to the heart.

we don't by ourselves we don't automatically take what we have believed with our heads and understood and move those things to our heart.

The Holy Spirit not only gives us those things in the head but he's the one that makes those things go into our heart. What has Christ done for us?

[26 : 08] What has he done? Well verses three chapter three verse three goes back to this list of words we were talking about of the believing part of what God does in our lives and he reiterates it.

He puts it this way in chapter three beginning with verse three for we ourselves were once foolish disobedient led astray slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared that's referring to Jesus he saved us not by works or qualities in our lives things that we have done but he saved us by saved us in righteousness according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

I just want to say to you if you're here today and used struggle whether or not you want to follow Jesus if you're working to clean yourself up to make your life better to get rid of an addiction and then you can come to Christ you can come to church that's the wrong order the Bible says first come to Jesus on your knees begging him to come to come to you and he says if you come I will draw you I will come to you I will live in you confess your sins to me and I will make you a new creature he is the one who's going to do it we can't get the cart before the horse if we wait until we get cleaned up in order to come to Christ to know him or to come and fellowship in his church we'll never go we'll never come to him because we never get totally cleaned up from the heart Jesus help me remember who I am there was a song that was written several years ago I'm not sure it wasn't a really popular song but it was written in a way that I think expresses some of this very well it was written by this young man named Jason Gray and Jason had a big struggle some of us here may have had this struggle too and that is that when he tried to talk if he was under any pressure at all he would stutter ceaselessly and you can go on YouTube and look for the name Jason Gray and see some interviews there and you see what he's talking about he just stuttered he couldn't get away from it but when he sang he didn't stutter now those of you in the medical professions will know that the parts of the brain that control talking and those that control singing are different so even though you may stutter talking your singing will be okay and this is what he wrote as talking about his struggle and his coming to Christ when I lose my way and I forget my name remind me who I am in the mirror all I see is who I don't want to be remind me who I am in the loneliest places when I can't remember what grace is tell me once again who I am to you Lord who I am to you tell me lest I forget who I am to you that I belong to you to you when my heart is like a stone and I'm running far from home and we regularly get there remind me who I am when I can't receive your love afraid I'll never be enough remind me who I am if I'm your beloved can you help me believe it tell me once again who I am to you who I am to you yes Lord Jesus remind us who we are beloved children of

[30 : 49] King Jesus called to him made new by him living in him you may remember the name Allen Houston I don't know if you are despite being living in all kinds of places I don't seem to be able to get away from Tennessee Vol Sports you know that's usually a curse not a blessing but I still am involved in it trying to follow and Allen Houston played for the University of Tennessee 30 years ago has still has the SEC record for the most points scored in a career basketball career from the time he went to play in Knoxville he started every game that he was in and then played for the New York Knicks still works in management in their office but what his life is about is something that has to do with faith he started a foundation to encourage fathers to live before Jesus with their children to care for them raise them in the Lord be present with them never abandon them walk with them point them to Christ point them to good practices in caring for their families work being faithful in the community and at the final four next weekend

Alan Houston is going to appear and receive an award from athletes in action as one of the leading examples like John Wooden I didn't know that John Wooden from UCLA was a follower of Jesus but he was and the John Wooden award is what Alan Houston is going to receive now how can he be that way how can he do that over so many years but because Jesus showing him who he is a child of the king a needy sinner who needs a savior and we are all like Alan in that way Jesus help me remember who I am sometimes I call this banging the coke machine now we'll probably if you acknowledge that you are one of these people you will date yourself like I'm dating myself you know we didn't used to have coke machines like you see these days you walk into a movie theater or almost any restaurant and you touch a screen and you get about 50 different flavors of coca-cola products that you in anything you want you can get it didn't used to be that way if you go back into ancient history before the turn of the century there were machines that were boxes that were a little bit taller than me be square down they were red and white with coca-cola emblem on them and they either had a door that opened or a button you pushed for which one you wanted to get you put in your money in those days if you didn't have coins you weren't going to get a coke you need coins and you put the money in you watch and see what happens usually you got a coke to drink but sometimes what would happen nothing nothing would happen you try to push the lever to get the money back the money won't come back so what are you going to do so if you're really smart and keen you will shake the machine kick it or beat it on the side and then Lord Lord knows the coin drops and the coke bottle comes and you get something to drink well remembering who we are is often like those coke machines we need to beat have ways that we can shake our hearts and our minds so that the gospel not only stays in our heads but every day comes back down comes into our hearts reminded who we are God has created us in such a way and sin has affected us that what we did yesterday isn't automatically with us today leading us and driving us we have to come back to Jesus every day every day and bang that coke machine ask him for his help and there are hundreds of ways that we can do this we are blessed these days because you can get a podcast that reads the Bible to you or hear a message any day of the week you can go and hear

Pastor Kevin's sermons or any one of thousands of others private Bible reading and prayer together the small groups if you're not in a small group in the church in New City I would urge you to go there those of you that are online as soon as you can feel comfortable get back together in the fellowship of God's people all those are ways of getting the gospel again and again from our heads to our hearts normally brothers and sisters we need to remember who we are in Jesus I shouldn't have said normally we need to remember who we are in Jesus who he's made us to be why he died for us normally believing happens before that behavior can begin to change and slowly make us look more like the Lord Jesus but our majestic creator can do it because he says remember that Jesus is the one he is the one is by his grace that we are saved whether we are dealing with an addiction a moral failure whether we look perfect before the community we still need to be before Jesus asking him remind me who

[37 : 30] I am let's pray Lord Jesus thank you for who you are thank you that you have called us to yourself it is really by your mercy that we are knitted to you in the gospel that you died on the cross for us that you send your Holy Spirit to convince our hearts and minds that you are the savior of the world and our savior Lord Jesus have mercy on us if there is someone here who is still struggling with whether they belong to you or not Lord Jesus meet them today draw them into that fellowship move them to talk to someone else about their need for Christ and we all need to be helped by each other Lord Jesus do that for your glory do is take you now