

# Christ's Purpose for the Church

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## **Truth Community Fellowship**

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Welcome once again to Truth Community Fellowship here this morning. We're so glad that you're with us and I know that we have some people that have traveled a far distance to be with us and we're glad you're with us here today. I just want to kind of bring you into context, those of you that are visiting. We are a young church. We've only been at this for a very short time and we're studying the book of Titus as a means of understanding the purpose of Christ for the church and to understand what it is that we need to set our hearts and our minds and set our hands to do as we begin to grow together as a body of believers in this area.

Now, young adults face a common question from friends and family and my children know this as they're entering into that stage: what are you going to do with your life? What are your plans for family and career and education? You know, you're right on the beginning, moving into life, what are you going to do with yourself? What are you looking to do? What are your hopes and aspirations to accomplish with the life that the Lord has given to you? We understand that and we interact with those kinds of conversations all the time. Well, what I want you to see is that as a young body of believers, we face a similar question that we have to answer as a church. What are we going to do? What is it that's going to define Truth Community in the days and years and decades to come? What I want you to see and what is so urgent for us to embrace as a body of believers is that we must answer that question from Scripture. We cannot look around and see what other churches are doing and get a good answer to that question. We can't look at our own desires and what we want church to be like as if that were a reliable guide to understand what the will of the Lord Jesus Christ is for his people. No, we have to look to Scripture in order to answer that question because we were bought with a price. As Titus 2:14 and as I've said many times and I'll allude to this verse repeatedly, the Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us, to purify for Himself a people for His own possession."

You see, we're not our own. We were bought with a price and the thing that we have to understand is what is the intention, what is the desire of the one who bought us? What does he want from us and then conform ourselves to that. That's the only thing that matters, is what does the Lord Jesus Christ want? As we look at the first two verses of Titus, we get a really clear answer to that question and I'm very excited to be able to open these verses to you here this morning. Look at Titus 1. We'll look at the first two verses here this morning. "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Last week we looked at those words and realized that in that was the authority upon which Paul presumed to instruct and teach the church. He was a slave of God, he was a commissioned apostle of Jesus Christ sent to do the will of God in his ministry. He was under instructions. He was under authority. It was not what he wanted, it was what the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned him to do.

As we continue on in these next two verses, a very concentrated, jam-packed passage in Scripture, we see what it is that Christ purposed for Paul's apostleship.

“1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ,” here it is, “for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”

Beloved, when you look at those verses and I realize when we read Scripture, we just kind of go through things. You know, when we're reading Scripture privately on our own, it's so easy to read through things quickly and not realize the vast, deep significance of what is being said. These are verses that are particularly like that. There is a vast, unmeasurable depth of instruction to the church in these two verses and as Paul explains what the purpose of his apostleship is, he is laying down for the church of all time what the church of Jesus Christ is to do, what is its purpose, what is it to accomplish? As Paul says, “This is why I am an apostle.” By extension, he is telling the church what it is to do today.

Let me just step back for a second and just kind of preface this with things that are obvious when this Bible is opened up in front of you but which is not obvious when you look at the church around us here today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jesus Christ did not appoint the Apostle Paul to promote the material prosperity of the elect. Jesus Christ did not call Paul to produce political change in the corrupt Roman culture that was all around him. Jesus Christ did not call Paul to entertain non-Christians with motivational messages. No, Jesus Christ called Paul to advance a spiritual work which Christ began with his life, death and resurrection and if we want to line ourselves up with the purposes of Christ as a young church, we have to understand what the purpose that Christ died to achieve was and we have to understand what he commissioned Paul to do. We want to be apostolic in the sense that we want to be consistent with apostolic doctrine and apostolic purpose. There is no such thing as apostolic succession in the sense of a generational man-to-man passing on of tradition. We looked at that in our Thursday night series some time ago when we looked at the Catholic Church. Apostolic succession is not based on a genealogical connection with the apostles, it's based on consistency and faithfulness with apostolic doctrine and with apostolic purpose.

That's what we're after, is faithfulness to the purpose of why Christ appointed the apostles to carry out his work. We're answering the question: what is the church supposed to do? What is Christ's purpose for the church? That's what we're after and in these verses that I just read, we find three clear answers to the question and it's wonderful, it's clear and what I want you to see and what I want you to have operating in the background of your mind as we look at this is the utter nobility of what a church is called to be and called to do. The nobility is not rooted in who we are, who you are or who I am. Our nobility, the nobility of our purpose is rooted in the fact that our commission comes from the throne of God. Our commission comes from the Lord Jesus Christ as he expressed it in the words of Scripture and as he communicated it to the Apostle Paul.

First of all, what's the church to do? 1. We lead men to Christ. We lead men to Christ. The Apostle Paul says that he received his apostleship so that those whom God had chosen would convert to faith in Christ. Look at verse 1 with me again. “Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for” expressing the purpose here. “What's the purpose of your apostleship, Paul?” He states it right from the beginning. He doesn't mince words. He doesn't waste words. Everything in this is of profound consequence. He's not simply saying, “Hey Titus, how are ya? How's it going? What did you think about the game last night?” No, by stark contrast to the way that we often interact with each other, Paul's words were profound and he wasted no words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to communicate the sincerity and the importance of why he was called as an apostle. He says, “I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of those chosen of God.” Jesus Christ commissioned the Apostle Paul. He was called to be an apostle so that God's chosen ones would come to faith in Jesus Christ. He was an agent. He was a representative. He was a legate of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was sent on a commission to accomplish a particular purpose and that was to bring the chosen ones of God to faith in Jesus Christ.

That's the purpose of his apostleship, is that those who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world would come to faith in Christ. He's describing the fact that he was appointed to preach, to teach, to write, so that there would be a personal believing response to Christ by those who repent when they hear the gospel. He wasn't a man sent to the entire world, as it were, to address world problems on a world political stage even though the Apostle Paul had the mind and the training in order to engage that kind of discussion. No, no, his purpose was much more narrow. It was focused. It was directed toward the spiritual

object to further and advance the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That was why Christ sent him as an apostle. It wasn't for temporary reasons, for temporal reasons, it was for the spiritual purpose of advancing the work of Christ.

You can see this clearly in Christ's commission to Paul in his own words. Turn back to Acts 26, this will clarify it for you. Christ sent Paul to be an instrument of leading people to faith in Christ, saving conversion in Christ. We looked at this passage, I think, some 3-4 weeks ago, Acts 26, and we come to it again here. Look at Acts 26:15. You remember, Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, stopped him in his tracks while Paul was going to persecute the church. The Lord was about to appoint him to be an agent of furthering the work of the church, remarkable. Verse 15, we'll pick it up mid-story. Paul is speaking here and he says this, "I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose,'" oooooohhh, purpose, that's what we're talking about here today. We're talking about the purpose of Paul's apostleship and now we get it straight from the Lord Jesus Christ. "Paul, here's the purpose for which I have appeared to you." What I'm showing you from Acts 26 is that this is consistent with what we see in Titus 1. We're letting Scripture interpret Scripture for us. Jesus said, "For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you," here it is, "to," for this purpose, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Jesus tells Paul, "Paul, there is an entire Gentile world that is alienated from God. They are under judgment. They are in spiritual danger," and we see that he appoints Paul, "I am appointing you so that you can go and teach and preach, that you can reveal the gospel to them so that they will turn away from that and be saved, to find the forgiveness of their sins." And we see in this that God is a saving God who wanted to redeem people from every tribe and tongue. God loving. God gracious. God reaching out to people who had no claim upon him. God loving, gracious, merciful, reaching out to those who were deserving only of his judgment. Who did he have in mind? Look around in this room. You were part of the story. You were part of the intention of God. You were part of that unredeemed mass of humanity. Under judgment. Guilty. Not seeking God. Not loving him. Not interested in the things of the word of God. And in the great purpose, the great mercy, the great goodness of God, he sent someone, something, some book, some person, some message, to you so that the message of the gospel would be delivered to you and that the Holy Spirit would take that message and give life to it in your heart so that you would respond and come to faith in Christ and be saved.

This is the purpose of the apostleship that was given to Paul, was so that that ministry would take place, that conversion story would be repeated multiple, multiple times, both in Paul's life and in the wake of his ministry that would follow. It was so that men would come to saving faith in Christ and if Christ had not sent Paul to accomplish that, if he had not sent the apostles on that mission, you and I would all be miserably lost with no hope. No hope of eternal life. No hope of forgiveness. Simply in chains, bound in darkness, never to find light, never to find freedom, never to find release. Guilty. Lost. Condemned.

As it were, the Lord Jesus Christ sends the Apostle Paul with the key to unlock us from that dungeon, to unlock us from that darkness and to unlock us from those chains. This is the ministry that Christ sent Paul to accomplish: to advance the gospel amongst those whom Christ had chosen before the foundation of the world. This is wonderful. This is marvelous. Paul was sent to lead men to Christ and we have to understand the narrow, deep, profound purpose of that apostleship so that we would understand the narrow, deep, profound purpose that is ours as a church. We're not trying to change the world. We're not trying to change the political climate of the United States of America. What kind of mission would that be? What would that mean for the rest of the world if we were sent simply to change the American political culture? That's not a transcendent message, that's a time-bound cultural message that has nothing to do with God's saving intentions toward the entire world.

No, Christ sent Paul on a spiritual mission to lead men to Christ. Look at 2 Timothy. We see this being interpreted for us in another passage of Scripture, 2 Timothy 2:8. Everything is secondary to the gospel. Let me say that again: everything is secondary to the gospel. Our lives are secondary to the gospel, that's why

martyrs gladly shed their blood to uphold the name of Christ. Our lives are secondary to the gospel, material wealth, worldly fame, it comes and goes. It's secondary. It's passing. It's temporary and therefore we don't devote our highest energies and greatest thoughts to the pursuit of things that are tied to this world. 2 Timothy 2:8, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen." There it is, the same kind of language he was expressing in Titus, "for the sake of those who are chosen so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."

Leading men to Christ, leading men to salvation was the purpose of Paul's apostleship and, beloved, nothing has changed. That's the purpose for the church today as well. Our goal, our desire is to preach and teach so that men would come to faith in Christ and be rescued from the darkness in which they are enveloped, to rescue them from the certainty of eternal judgment which will be theirs soon if they don't repent and believe in Christ. So, just as Paul's goal was to lead men to Christ, that's the goal that we inherit at Truth Community as well. That's our purpose. We preach the gospel freely to all men without distinction to anyone who will listen. We proclaim Christ as the Savior of sinners. Some who hear that message will repent and believe in Christ and their response will show that God had chosen them out of the mass of humanity beforehand in order to enter into his saving grace.

Why do we exist? We exist because we realize that we have a temporary passing life in this world and that God has appointed us to, during that short brief period of time within the circle of relationships and the circle of opportunities that he's given us, for us to be a mouthpiece for the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying humanity. Whether God gives us a small circle or a greater circle, we are unaffected by the breadth of our ministry, we just want to be faithful to the calling of our ministry which is to lead men to Christ. That's why we exist. We realize that there are going to be political injustices that are never corrected in this life. We realize that we will always have the poor with us; there is always going to be poverty around us. We can't fix that. That's not why we're called. It's part of a fall.

We focus on the main thing which Christ sent us to do which is to preach the gospel. Sometimes along the way we'll alleviate human suffering as we do that but that is not why we exist. We have a purpose that no other institution on earth has and that is to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Listen, if we don't do, if we as the church, if the people of Christ don't preach the gospel, no one else will. There will be other people to pick up some of the problems with poverty. There will be people to deal with political issues that are interested in that kind of thing. But as a church, as an institution, corporately what do we do? Our focus is the gospel and we leave earthly problems to others because we realize that if we devote ourselves to that, we're going to take our mind off the spiritual purpose for which we've been appointed to fulfill. That's our goal at Truth Community. We want to lead men to Christ. That is supreme in our affection because it was supreme in the elevation of importance to what Christ gave to the Apostle Paul to do.

Now, that's the first purpose of the church. Secondly, related to that: we not only lead men to Christ but, secondly, we teach biblical truth. We teach biblical truth. Paul was appointed for that purpose. Look back at verse 1 with me again. I love this. "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God," that's what we just looked at, "and," he joins it together. He says, "There's something else in mind here." "The faith of those chosen of God and," a second purpose he lays out for us by the simple three letter word in English "and." "And the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." See the dual purpose. Paul is an apostle for the faith of those chosen of God and, secondly, to be an instrument of the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness. Now watch this, this is really, really important: this very phrase right here explains why we put at the center of our Sunday services the teaching of the word of God. This is why we do what we do. It's laid out clearly and plainly in Scripture. Paul was an apostle for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.

Beloved, what you have to see is that biblical instruction, biblical instruction is central to the church's mission. We teach because it's what God commands and you see that carried through in what Paul said to Titus elsewhere in the letter. The purpose of teaching, the centrality of instruction. Look at Titus 1:9. As Paul is laying forth the qualifications for leadership in the church, he says that these men must be those

who hold fast, verse 9, “hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” If you want to find a biblical church anywhere, you need to ask yourself the question: are they teaching the Bible? Are they exhorting in sound doctrine? Are they explaining the doctrines of the Bible so that men can understand it, so that the people of God can understand it? Are they refuting those who deny central doctrine, central teachings of the Scripture? Is there a positive and negative tone to their teaching? This is what the Bible says. Some men say this, this is wrong and here is why from the Bible. That is central to the mission of the church. That is central to the teaching mission of the church.

Let me help you understand, perhaps for a few of you, some of you, let me help you interpret your past experience in other churches with this simple statement: Christians wither on the vine when they only hear evangelistic messages; when they only hear messages that are directed to people supposedly calling them, supposedly evangelizing the lost to the neglect of the instruction of other biblical doctrines that are meant to edify Christians and build them up. When you only hear and evangelism message week after week, you wither on the vine because it's not supposed to be that way. Once you are brought to Christ, you are meant, God intends for the church to come alongside you and instruct you in the truth of God, in the full counsel of God. When you only hear evangelism messages and weak ones at that week after week, you start to suffer. You start to be malnourished and you don't even realize it's happening. You see, God calls the church to be an instrument of the knowledge of the truth. Churches, our church, must teach believers the full counsel of God. That's the purpose of the church, beloved.

Jesus said this, look back at Matthew 28. What I want you to see is that this is no isolated theme in Titus, there's a reason why we teach. There's a reason why we take teaching seriously at Truth Community. It's because it's the purpose of the church. It's because we're under command, under direction from the Son of God himself. We can do no other than to honor and to respond and to obey him to the best of our ability and to the way that he has pulled us together. Look at what Jesus said just before his ascension, Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'” Okay, this is authoritative. This is a declaration of sovereign purpose with what he is about to say. The disciples are gathered around him, by extension, we are gathered around him and saying, “Jesus what would you have us do? Jesus, do you know what Paul did when you appeared to him? He said, 'Lord, what would you have me do?' I'm brand new to this, what would you have me do?” Corporately, we're brand new to this in a sense and we look to Christ and we say, “Christ, what would you have us do? What is your purpose for us in bringing us together?” Verse 19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,” go and lead men to Christ, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Verse 20, “teaching them,” instructing them, “to observe all that I commanded you.” It's a comprehensive statement. Jesus tells the disciples, “Go. You've been hearing me teach for three solid years now, go and teach them what I gave to you.”

And that's a lot. We've spent months just reading through the gospel of Mark here at Truth Community. We haven't even gotten to Matthew, Luke and John. Just in public reading, let alone explaining what Jesus meant by it. Jesus intends for his church to be an instrument of the teaching of the counsel of God. That's why we teach. That's what we have to do. That's what we must do because we are under authority. We don't get to make this up. Look, lots of people pull together and make up their own clubs. That's fine. They can gather together, especially in our country, they're free to assemble and do whatever they want to do. You want to have an airplane club? Go and have an airplane club. That's fine. You want to be a fan of the St. Louis Cardinals? Good, God bless you. Have a Cardinal fan club. Whatever your interests may be, we say to the world, you can do that. But our purpose, our mission has been defined by the Lord Jesus Christ and we're under obligation to do what he tells us to do. He bought us with his blood. He redeemed us for his purpose. We're under obligation to do what the one who bought us tells us to do and it's very important for us to be really clear on this because it doesn't really astonish me, it astonished me and it doesn't astonish me at the same time, the arrogance of people outside the church that try to tell the church what it ought to do. You ought to be talking about how to solve social problems. You ought to be helping alleviate poverty in the world. Well, who are you to tell the church what to do? By what authority do you, as a journalist let's say, on what authority do you speak to the church and tell us what to do? Did you shed your blood for the church? What interest do you have to tell the church what to do? No, no, no, no. Stamp my foot and say no to that. We do what the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to do because he is the one who bought us with

his own blood and our loyalty and our obedience belong to him, not to what the men of the world tell us that we should be doing.

That is absolutely essential to understand so that people who try to intimidate us to silence the gospel gain no foothold in our thinking. The foothold of our thinking, beloved, was secured 2,000 years ago when the blood of Christ poured down from his veins onto the ground around the cross at Golgotha. He earned, as it were, the right. He earned, he purchased the prerogative to tell his people what to do and we listen to no other. We listen to no competing voices. We realize the singular authority in the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. We realize that he has expressed his authority, his will in his written word, the 66 books of the Bible and that is where we find our purpose. That is where we find our marching orders. We lead men to Christ and we teach biblical truth because that's what Christ wants us to do. That's all the reason we need.

And so, when we come together, when we give the support of our resources, when we give the attention of our minds, we give the attention of our presence to the teaching of biblical truth, we're doing a great and high and noble and lofty task which has been given to the church which is to explain God's word, to explain the truth so that it would have an effect on the people of God and we let no one else, we let no earthly men, no unsanctified unregenerated men try to tell us what to do. They do not have that prerogative any more than you and I would have a prerogative to go into a business on Main Street and say, "I think you should do your business this way." The owner of the shop looks at you and says, "Who are you? Who are you? Did you invest in this business? Have you poured your life and money into this business that I've made? I'll run it the way I want. That's my prerogative. It's my investment, my time, my authority. I'll do what I want. Get out of here!" he says and rightfully so. We have no prerogative to go in and tell a business how to run itself.

In the same way, we have to be careful what voices we let influence the direction of Truth Community. The world will try to tell us what to do and what I want you to see is the utter arrogance of that. The utter absence of position and prerogative to speak in that way. What does an unsaved man have to say to the church of God? By what right do you speak to us? No, we look to our Lord who bought us, who gave himself for us and with tender submissive loving hearts we say, "Lord, what would you have us to do?" And he says, "Well, consider what I said to Paul. I appointed you for the faith of those chosen of God. I appointed you for the knowledge of the truth. There's what you do. You further the purposes of the apostles whom I appointed to lay the foundation for my church."

Now, let's go from outside the walls of the church to bring it inside here. I have no agenda here, I just want to help you understand. I want to give you perspective. I don't have any of you in mind personally with what I'm about to say. But let's just think through life in the church broadly speaking, not just Truth Community but life in the church of those who claim to be the people of God. Within that circle, there are people, many people, who are impatient with sustained biblical instruction. They don't want to spend their time on this. Forty-five minutes is too long of a message for them. They want more stories, more entertainment. They want interpretive dance for some reason. I don't know, there are churches that do that. Don't be expecting me in part of a dance line anytime soon. You don't want that and I don't want that. It's just not going to happen. But some people are impatient with that. "Why does it have to be so long? Why do we have to listen to this? Can't we get in and out in an hour and get to the roast in the oven?" Look, there is something embedded in that. A lot of them probably just aren't converted is part of it but let's give them the benefit of the doubt and say they are true Christians with that attitude. Do you know why they can be like that? Do you know why they can say things like that and have that attitude? I'll tell you why: it's because they do not realize that they need to grow. They are satisfied with their own spiritual condition. They are happy with where they are at as a Christian and therefore they say, "I don't need this instruction. I know what I need to know. My life is where it needs to be so would you please stop spending so much time on the grammar and context of Scripture." What else can you say? That's the only that would explain that attitude.

Let me tell you, join in this with me, you and I are in the same kettle of soup of here with what I'm about to say. You and I, without exception, every one of us needs to grow. Every one of us. Turn over to 1 Peter. Why do we teach? It's because teaching is the instrument of Christian growth and we all need to grow. We're all commanded to grow. You see, at the root of all of it is a question of pride versus humility. I don't

need the instruction which is a statement of pride that I'm okay where I'm at. The humble believer says, "I'm not okay where I'm at and therefore I need biblical instruction to achieve the purposes of God in my life." 1 Peter 2:2 says, "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." Are you here as a Christian today? You've tasted the kindness of the Lord in your life. He's been good and loving and merciful to you. If that's you, if you've tasted that kind of kindness, then long for the milk of the word so that you can grow even more in respect to that salvation.

Turn to over to 2 Peter 3 at the end. This is a verse that has stuck with me, that has informed my prayers for many, many, many years. It's my prayer for Truth Community. We see in chapter 3, verse 17, Peter says, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand," that there's going to be people that distort the Scriptures, "knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but," here it is, "but," it's a command, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity." You see, we can't stand stationary. We're either moving forward or we are regressing and Peter says there in verse 16, he says, "there are untaught and unstable men who distort the Scriptures, to their own destruction." They're all around you and he says on account of that, "be on guard. Watch out for them and as you're watching out, realize that I command you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Growth, spiritual growth is a safeguard against error.

Go back to Titus now for just a second. This is clear from the words of the Apostle Paul. Titus 1, we're picking up in verse 1 again, "I'm an apostle. It's for the faith of those chosen of God and this second purpose, equal coordinate purpose, it's not just evangelism, it's the sanctification of those who belong to Christ." He says it's the knowledge of the truth, watch this, watch the qualifying phrase there, "the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." You see, when we teach whatever the future holds for the future of Truth Community Fellowship, one day soon to be Truth Community Church, the future of the role of teaching in this church is not simply academic instruction. It's not merely the impartation of factual knowledge to inform and enrich your mind, the purpose of biblical instruction in the church is always to produce and to improve and enhance the godliness of the people that are there. Teaching is designed to produce life change. We can't come under the teaching of the word of God and walk out unchanged and unaffected by it whether you're reading it privately in your life, whether you're under the teaching of a Sunday pulpit. We have to understand that God is speaking to us in order to promote our spiritual growth and what that means is, follow this all the way through and realize how humbling this is, what it means is that you have not arrived in your Christian life to a place where further instruction is no longer necessary for you.

You need to grow in your understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. Every one of you. You need to grow in your character. You need to grow in your seriousness and earnestness and profundity of your prayer life. You need to grow in biblical conduct. So do I on every point. You see, we have not attained perfection yet and the result of that is that we are short of, we fall short of, even as earnest believers we fall short of what God would have us to be. Well, how do we progress from where we're at to get a little bit closer to the likeness of Christ in our life? Scripture says it's through the teaching of the word of God applied to your heart. A biblical ministry produces life change. Look at chapter 2, verse 14 of Titus. There is a sense in which there is a holy, sanctified, dissatisfaction that should mark the life of every true Christian that say, "Oh, I love Christ. He is so perfect and great and I love and magnify him and I am secure in my salvation but you know what? In my daily life I fall short of those aspirations. I'm not all that Christ would have me to be. I want to get more like him." There's that holy dissatisfaction that motivates us toward growth and that is the purpose of salvation is that we would grow.

Look at chapter 2, verse 14. Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself," there are some impurities left in your life, there are some imperfections, there is remaining indwelling sin in your heart that we need to be purified from so that it would less manifest itself in our daily lives and we would be more manifesting the fruit of the precious Spirit of God. He purifies us that we would be "zealous for good works." Chapter 3, verse 1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." Verse 8, "This is a trustworthy statement; I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good

deeds.” Apparently, there was a carelessness about life that marked these people and Paul says, “Titus, I’m sending you, I want you to remain on Crete and to instruct them so that this ungodliness would be diminished in their life and we would see the fruit of godly character, good deeds being brought out and manifested. That’s why you’re supposed to teach them.” You see, it says it in verse 14 too, chapter 3, “Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.”

At the very start of the letter, Paul said, “My apostleship is to promote the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.” You see, as we understand the truth, as we earnestly, humbly receive it, it has a transforming impact on our lives and that is the purpose of biblical instruction in the church. We teach so that the mental understanding of the truth can be upheld and strengthened but it’s not just that, it’s a transformation of life as well. Our purpose is to produce godliness in God’s people and the way that that is done is through the teaching of God’s godly word. We teach Christians the Bible so that that kind of transformation is continually occurring. Our goal, our expectation for everyone of us as we come together is that as we come together around the word of God, as we share in that commitment, as we share in life and fellowship together under the teaching of the word of God, is that our lives are going to be more godly in July of 2014 than they are in July of 2013 and in five years that we’re going to look and say we’re more like Christ now than we were back when we started.

There’s going to be this progressive growth that is produced by the teaching of the word of God to receptive Christian people. We’re not content – look, look, look – we don’t want to stay where we’re at. I don’t want you to stay where you’re at. I know you’re not perfected yet. I don’t want to stay where I’m at. I’m not perfected yet. We need to grow and the way that we grow is through the teaching of the word of God. When a church takes the word of God out and substitutes in something else or waters down the teaching instead of giving the pure milk of the word of God, it is dooming its people to spiritual mediocrity and they don’t even know it’s happening. They think everything’s okay but it’s not. You see, we’re willing to admit we’re not what we should be and we understand and we pursue the word of God because we understand that the word of God is that which produces growth in God’s people. That’s what we want to do as long as God gives us breath.

Now, we lead men to Christ, we teach the Bible, the Scriptures are central to it and now, third point, now we get to the really good stuff. It would be great to be a church and to lead men to Christ. That would be great. That’s a high and lofty purpose that motivates us. It would be great, it would be wonderful to be a church that is growing spiritually, teaching the word of God and were seeing our lives conformed to godliness but there is something else, there is a third purpose to what we do that informs the other two, that makes everything so very sweet. This is the most wonderful capstone that could be added to our purpose and Paul lays it out as he explains his apostleship. Look at verse 1 with me again. “Paul, a bond-servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.” We’ve got that. That’s good. But he goes on and he adds something else. There is a whole other pillar that under girds the whole purpose of the church. Verse 2, “in the hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” What’s our third purpose? We proclaim our future hope. We proclaim our future hope. You see, I really want to just stand on this pulpit right now but I’m not going to do it because I know I’d fall and that wouldn’t be cool. We proclaim our future hope. You see, the reason we exist is not earth bound. The reason that we do what we do transcends this earthly life for every one of us. It transcends any biblical instruction that takes place here and now. It transcends any of the life change that takes place in our lives right now as important and essential as that is. We have a transcendent purpose in the establishment of Truth Community that goes beyond this life and echoes into all of eternity. We proclaim our future hope.

This is the purpose of the church. This is what fuels your joy and confidence in this life that includes so many tears and sorrows and temptations. A God, an omnipotent, all-powerful God who cannot lie has promised us that he has eternal life waiting for us when this life is over. This is our hope and earnest expectation, the hope of eternal life. Oh beloved, especially, especially in the watered down insipid preaching that marks the church in America today by and large, the focus is on what’s happening now, your best life now and health and wealth and prosperity now. It’s a total perversion of the aim and the goal of biblical teaching to have that focus. Political change now. No! No! That’s not what motivates us. If we fixed the culture, the next people to come along would just mess it up right after us. That’s a waste of time.

That's not going to happen in this life. Paul said evil men will proceed from bad to worse and so we're not so focused on this life, our hope, our motivation, the thing that enraptures our soul and captures our affections is this: it is that salvation is more than the forgiveness of sin. It is more than godly living in this life. The capstone of our salvation is an endless, eternal, future life in the presence of Christ in heaven that will never end. We must teach men. We must exhort one another. You must look yourself in the mirror, you must look yourself in the face and say, "The sorrows and difficulties of this life are secondary to the future hope that belongs to me in Christ." Paul was an apostle designed to promote and teach and proclaim the hope of eternal life and you see it woven through his letter at key points.

Look at chapter 2, verse 11. You know, what's wonderful is the fact that one day we're going to get into these future verses in detail. Chapter 2, chapter 3. We're just touching on them now but we're going to get to enjoy them more in the future. Paul says, verse 11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." There is that biblical instruction that leads to godliness from verse 1 of chapter 1. Now look at verse 13 of chapter 2. This is picking up on chapter 1, verse 2. While we're teaching this, while we're growing in godliness, what are we doing? Verse 13 of chapter 2, we are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us." Our hope, our expectations, our desires are not rooted in what this life can bring to us. That is not Christianity at all. Our hope, our joy, our great satisfaction is going to be when Christ appears and brings us with him. When we see him face-to-face. When we are made like him by the sight of his glory and it transforms us and it conforms us to the body of his glory by the power that he has to subject all things to himself, Philippians 3:20. Oh, oh, oh, beloved, that's what salvation is ultimately about. That's what we're looking forward to. We have to proclaim that. We have to teach that. We have to love that hope and believe it. That's what enables us to transcend the sorrows that make us negative about this life. Without that future hope, it all kind of collapses. With that future hope, our spirits transcend the gravity of this life and soar to world's unknown.

Look at chapter 3, verse 6. Speaking of the Holy Spirit he says, "He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." You see, as Christians, we have received eternal life but the fullness of what all of that means is still future to us. We are waiting for the best part to come. Here in this life as we share in life together at Truth Community, as we lead men to Christ, as we teach the Bible, as we grow in godliness, we're tasting, we're enjoying. It's sweet. It's wonderful. It's great. But it's not all that there is to it. This is a little bitty tiny appetizer to the full greatness of eternal life that is going to belong to us in Christ one day. One day soon he's coming back and he's going to bring us with him and if we die first then we're just going to be there in the midst of his presence. Oh beloved, you're going to see Christ face-to-face. You're going to be like him in perfected glory. You will no longer sin in that day. You will be with the saints from all the ages. And just like Peter recognized Elijah and Moses at the transfiguration, somehow, I don't understand this, we're going to recognize and know the saints through all the ages. The ones that we've loved in Christ that have gone before us are going to be there. We're going to know them. We're going to be reunited with them. You will have perfect peace, never to be broken. God will bless you forever. It will never get old. This will be as fresh and joyous at year 500,000 in eternity if you can put it that way. That's the only way we can express it. As you go deeper and deeper and deeper into eternity, this is going to be fresher and fresher and more joyous. It's just going to continue to expand and the greatness of the joy and the peace and the glory and the bliss in our hearts and all around us is just going to multiply exponentially. There will be no end to the greatness of the glory of eternal life.

Christ could come right this moment and begin that and I'd be okay with it. When my mind goes to the realm of our future hope, I don't want to leave that mental realm. I don't want to come back and think about earthly things anymore. I just want that to come. Don't you? This is what Christ saved us for. He didn't save you just so that you would struggle in your growth for godliness in this life. You see, we've got to remember, we've got to proclaim to one another. We've got to teach the Scriptures that the whole point of the apostolic church is the hope of eternal life. Listen, I like to put it this way, if you're a Christian receiving, entering into what we're talking about here, the greatness of this eternal life, it is more certain in your life than the next breath you're going to draw with your lungs. It is more certain than what you're going to have for lunch because this eternal life is based on the promise of a God who cannot lie. He is

utterly incapable of fibbing to us. He's promised it and therefore it is certain to come to pass. These glories of which we are speaking are the certain inheritance of those who know Christ.

That's what we proclaim. That future hope brings joy in a hostile world and your personal trials. Beloved, you've got to remind yourself of this: your temporary life of tears is simply a prelude in a minor key to an eternal life of blessing in the presence of Christ. That is the certain outcome of your salvation. That's what we, as a church, get to proclaim. We lead men to Christ. We teach biblical truth. We proclaim eternal hope. It's noble. It's valuable. Not because we are the ones who are doing it but because Christ is the one who commissioned it. Beloved, that's why we exist. That's what we must do in the days to come.

Bow with me in prayer.

*Our Father, we thank you for the gift of eternal life. We thank you for your word. We thank you for the privilege that is ours to introduce men to our Savior. We pray that you would help us, our God, O God, help us lead men to Christ. We cannot do it on our own power so help us. Lord, help us as we proclaim the truth that leads to godliness. Help us to grow. We are so weak and frail and feeble in our own efforts. Help us to love this truth with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind. Help us to love Christ that way. Help us to love you that way. Father, as we focus on those things, focus on that truth, Father, may you increasingly envelope our minds with our hope of eternal life.*

*Lord Jesus, we're going to see you one day face-to-face and we can't wait for that day when our faith becomes sight. It's not always going to be hope of something to be fulfilled, one day there will be fulfillment, one day we'll see you physically face-to-face. We are going to look into the face of Incarnate God as the climax of a great, great salvation and, Lord, we thank you for that. We thank you now for that which we still have yet to receive and we can thank you with certainty because you're a God who cannot lie and you said this is coming and therefore we will most certainly experience it and so by faith and confident expectation, we thank you for that great climax to come.*

*Lord, can we really grasp here in this life, in this sinful mind, the full greatness of what it means to enjoy eternal life with you, to be free from sin, to be free from those who oppose you and your kingdom? We don't know what that's going to be like because that's all we've ever known. We don't know what it's going to be like to be completely free from sin because all we've ever known is having some remnant of sin inside us. Lord, we long for the day when these things become ours by possession, not merely by promise and we love you for it and we're eager to enter into that inheritance.*

*At the same time, Father, while you bid us tarry just a little while longer, we know that you would simply have us to be faithful to the work that is at hand so help us to do that. We present ourselves to you, a living and holy sacrifice, given to you to accomplish everything that you would have us to be individually and what you would have this church to be corporately. Bring it to pass, Lord. Just as you've given birth to us, now bring us to growth that would accomplish what you design us to be is our earnest prayer and we expect you to answer because we've prayed in Jesus' name. Amen.*