

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God

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Bible Verse: Titus 1:3-4
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As we start the new year, I wanted to go back to a text in the book of Titus before we return to the 10 Commandments as I hope to do next week. In Titus 1, there's a very foundational text that instructs us on evangelism and the sovereignty of God, that is the title of today's message if you're taking notes, "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God," and you find those themes wrapped up in the first four verses of the book of Titus and I want to read those verses to start us with and kind of set a tone for the new year by choosing to dwell on this theme. Titus, beginning in chapter 1, verses 1 through 4.

1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, 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, 3 but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, 4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Our church is, without apology, a church committed to the Reformed doctrines of salvation, the ideas of the total depravity of man; God's unconditional election of sinners to salvation before the beginning of time; particular redemption, that Christ died in order to save the ones that God chose before the foundation of the world and his salvation, his work on the cross actually secured salvation for the elect. It didn't simply make it possible, it made it certain, so great is the work of Christ on our behalf. The work of the Spirit in irresistible grace, the powerful work of the Holy Spirit bringing people, the ones that God has chosen to salvation in Christ and bringing them to Christ through an effectual call in their inner man, and then also with the idea of the perseverance of the saints, that God keeps those whom he saves and it could be no other way. If he appointed us for salvation before the beginning of time, if Christ died to secure our salvation at the cross 2,000 years ago, and the Spirit has caused us to be born again to a living hope, then it's obvious that that Triune work of God could never be undone. We live in the security of the great love of God for our souls and the great way that Christ has saved us in love in order to ensure that we will be with him throughout all of the ages of eternity. All of those things are wrapped up in the text that we have in front of us here today, but today and as we start this new year, I just want to make it plain that those are the doctrines upon which our church was first built. Nothing has changed. We are the same church now that

we were back at the beginning, and we are as committed to these doctrines as ever, and by going to this text and preaching on those themes, I wanted to emphasize that for all of us as we go into the new year.

Now along with those doctrinal commitments, we also see in this text our parallel duty to evangelism to the lost; the fact that God is sovereign in salvation does not mitigate our duty and responsibility for evangelism, indeed, it is what makes our evangelism have the possibility of success. If I, as a preacher, had to go and preach the gospel to people without an assurance of the sovereignty of God, I would quickly lose my mind, get discouraged and leave ministry because Scripture tells us that men are dead in trespasses and sins, that their minds are hostile to the Spirit of God, that they cannot understand spiritual things, 1 Corinthians 2. And so if anybody is going to be saved, if there is ever going to be a spiritual work done in the hearts of men that last throughout all of eternity, it must be something that comes from the holiness and love of the Triune God and from his power, it could never be something that man initiated on his own. Scripture makes it certain that we love, we love God, we love Christ only because he first loved us, 1 John 4:19. Now these are truths that many people dislike and, you know, there are people that object to these things and even get angry at them, but this is the teaching of Scripture and we are glad to stand on these truths as we exist as the body of Truth Community Church.

So I just want to do a brief review. I don't expect this to be a terribly long message here this morning, I just want to cover three aspects of the reality of evangelism and the sovereignty of God for you here this morning and we'll start with this, we'll start with that reality of election, the reality of election from Titus 1:1. Scripture, as I said, teaches that God promised a redeemed people to Christ, to his Son, before time even began. God promised his Son that he would have a people to redeem that would love him and be his bride throughout all of eternity, and so before time began, God promised these people to Christ with the goal, with the idea that they would honor Christ forever after the end of time. And if you look at chapter 1, verse 1 of Titus, you can see this taking place where it says,

1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, 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,

That phrase "promised long ages ago" is an indication of before time eternal, and who existed before time began? There was no one but the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and so this is a promise that God the Father made to God the Son that he would provide an elect people for him to redeem, and Paul describes those objects of the choice, the electing work of God there in the middle of verse 1. He describes them, look at there with me, those that are "chosen of God." Before time began, we step completely out of worldly affairs here this morning to contemplate the great work of God, before time began God chose certain men and women to receive saving grace. God determined beforehand that the men and women that he had chosen would certainly receive saving grace in the course of time, and it's very important for us to understand that this was a

sovereign act of God, this was according to God's good pleasure. This is what God wanted to do. He chose these before anyone had done anything good or bad. He had done this before they had exercised any kind of faith. God's choice was not based on our works and it was not based – and hear me carefully on this – it was not based on any foreseen faith that they might have in the future. If that was the case, then grace would no longer be grace, grace would not be undeserved favor, God would be looking down the corridors of time, as it were, and responding and rewarding people for a choice that he saw that they were going to make. That is not the structure of biblical election. That is not the structure of biblical faith. If that were the case, then those of us who were saved, we would have something to boast about over and against those who did not have faith. Why am I saved and not you, if that false thinking were true. If I were saved and you were not, I could say it was because of my choice, it was my faith and I get the final glory in that. I am the distinguishing factor in why I was saved and you were not, and then it becomes a man-centered basis upon which salvation takes place. This is not what Scripture describes at all. Scripture describes men as dead in sin, incapable of exercising faith, and therefore if anyone was to be saved, it would be by the saving electing grace of God alone.

Now Scripture teaches this in multiple places. Look over at the book of Ephesians with me, Ephesians 1, beginning in verse 3 where the same Apostle Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to," look at this, "the kind intention of His will." Election is premised on the kind intention of the will of God, the love of God, the undeserved mercy and favor of God upon those that he chose. It is not according to anything that the man had done in himself with the result that in verse 6 it would all be "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Now go on in chapter 2 where he says and expands on this, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." There is nothing in man to generate a spark of faith. There is no spark of divinity in unsaved man. He is dead in sin. He has no life within him. He is under the supernatural blindness of the devil and he is doomed to suffer the wrath of God unless God shows favor to him. There is nothing in man that would generate a spark of faith that would enable him to save his own soul.

Now this has very far-reaching implications. You can kind of measure whether you're understanding this or not by a thought process that goes something like this. Well, if that's true, you say, if that's accurate, then what you're saying is there is no hope for me in me. There is nothing that I can do to save and deliver my own soul. And that is exactly correct. You are spiritually dead and there is nothing that you can do to give new life to yourself. That is why Jesus said in John 3 to Nicodemus, the teacher in Israel, he said,

"You must be born again. You must receive new life from above. You must receive new life from God or you cannot be saved." And beloved, we do not control that. We do not control when and how God gives new life, we are completely at the feet of his mercy and if he does not have mercy on us, we cannot be saved. That's the implications of this doctrine.

Now I understand that men do not like this. I understand that men want to be the captain of their own souls and the master of their own destiny, but Scripture does not tell us that we have that position in life. We are not the captains of our own soul despite what the poet said years ago. We are not the masters of our own fate. We are desperately dependent upon, desperately in need upon utterly undeserved grace and favor from God or we will be utterly lost. Now some people would take that and take a fatalistic view of things and just walk away from it, but what that does is it places a responsibility on you. Even though you cannot save your own soul, it places a responsibility on you. If these things are true, then there is only one proper response for an unsaved man to make, and that is to go and begin knocking on the door of heaven saying, "God, be merciful to me the sinner," and with a sense of urgency and desperation praying for God to have mercy on him just as the tax collector did in Luke 18 standing away from the Pharisee, beating his breast saying, "God, have mercy on me the sinner," and looking to God for grace, and knowing that his grace is revealed in his word, going to his word and reading his word and exposing yourself to the life-giving word of God. This is the only proper response and the fact that men do not do that, the fact that men are not interested in doing that, is not an indication of any fault on God, it is simply a condemnation and a judgment against how indifferent and how cold and how utterly resolute they are against turning to the living God. How could someone hearing these things not go to God's word? How could someone hearing these things not go to him for grace and cry out for mercy until God answered him?

You know, one of the things that I've heard people say in the past and, you know, you've heard these things too, people say, "Well, I tried that and it didn't work. I tried that and it didn't work," as if that excuses them from any further searching. Well, look, if you have any sense of the great danger that your soul is in, any sense of the great guilt that you carry before a holy God, you don't stop looking, you don't stop asking. The pattern of Scripture quite to the contrary is found in Matthew 7, you can look over there with me. Matthew 7:7. The recognition of how lost you are should not cause you to walk away in irreverence, it should make you all the more desperate to seek him and to insist that God help you. Matthew 7:7, and the idea of all of these verbs is keep on doing what is said here, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks," and keeps on asking, "receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." And the idea is that the great treasure of salvation and the great urgency of the gospel would cause you to go to God and continually ask and ask and ask until, at last, he responds and gives you the new life. Someone who doesn't do that has no complaint against going to hell condemned and unsaved. If it didn't matter enough to you to seek out God and to ask him for mercy when you knew that you could not save yourself, what complaint is there against a holy God if he doesn't save you? What does that say about the condition of a man's heart that he could

be so cold to the condition of his own soul? No, these things don't make us cold and indifferent, they should stimulate us to seek the one and only source of eternal salvation.

Look over at 2 Thessalonians as we continue to consider the reality of election. 2 Thessalonians 2, beginning in verse 13, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." God has chosen you from the beginning, Paul said, from the beginning of time. As he writes to Christians, as he writes to those who are truly born again, he tells them, "You were chosen by God from the beginning and God set you apart so that you would receive the Spirit, that you would receive the truth." Then one more in 2 Timothy 2:10 says this, "For this reason I endure all things 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." And if we need a clenching passage, Romans 9 could hardly be more explicit on the matter of everything that we've been saying here. Romans 9:15 God says to Moses, "'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.' So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." God shows mercy to whom he wishes and that is his sovereign prerogative, that is what God gets to do.

Now inevitably, inevitably if you're talking about these things with others outside our persuasion, someone will object that that is not fair. "That's not fair, how can God give His salvation to some and not to others? How can God do that?" Well, election of only some is not unfair, the very premise of that question shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the condition of man. The issue is not that God is unfair because he doesn't save everyone or, you know, not everyone even hears the gospel. That's not a matter of unfairness on the part of God, forbid the thought, and the question is missing something utterly foundational and it's this, it's that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, every one of us has forfeited any claim on God. When Adam fell into sin, the whole human race was catapulted into sin and destruction and separation from God, and we were born into that condition. And beyond that, beloved, beyond that is the reality that in our own choices and in our own nature, we have been opposed to God and hostile to him. The mind of the flesh is hostile toward God and so on what basis does anyone in that condition claim that God owes me something? On what basis does a rebel sinner say, "God, You owe me"? That kind of mindset is just a further manifestation of greater rebellion. It's because people don't understand the depth of man's depravity, it's because people don't understand the depth of their own sin and how righteous the judgment of God is against all men that that question even comes up.

We forfeited any claim on God. We have no basis upon which to insist that he do anything and Paul points that out in verse 19 of Romans 9. He says, "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" And Paul says, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say

to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" God can do with his creation whatever he wishes, and so the idea is not that election of some is unfair, rather the fact that God chose to save any is a statement of profound grace and undeserved favor. You and I, the world at large as we contemplate the realities of the gospel, we need to come back to something pretty fundamental: salvation is not ours, it is not ours to dispose of and to determine what to do with it. Jonah 2:9 says that salvation belongs to the Lord. Salvation is the Lord's gift. The Lord's mercy is his to share and dispense as he chooses to do.

I illustrate it this way. You all know that Dane Logan is our elder chairman, now suppose even if I did it publicly, suppose I did it publicly, I'm not going to do this but suppose I did and I gave a \$20 bill to Dane Logan in the presence of everyone else. It was just a gracious gift, something that I wanted to do to be a blessing to him and as an expression of appreciation to him for whatever reason. Dane has no claim on my \$20 bill. He couldn't insist that I give it to him but I just give it to him. Now look, this is all very simple and it's a very homely illustration but understand this, if I give \$20 to Dane, that does not obligate me to give it to the rest of you as well. I'm under no obligation because I give a gift to one to give it to all.

Now if that's true of me and my limited resources and that's obviously true, none of you feel obligated because you give a gift to someone in your family that you've got to give a gift to everyone in the body of Christ; you would say that's absurd, there is no such obligation. Well, extract the sin of it, extract the humanity from it and look at it from God's perspective. Salvation is his gracious gift. He is free to do with it whatever he wants. We have no way of imposing an obligation on him to give it to anyone else. We are beggars. We are bankrupt. We are poor in spirit. We have forfeited any claim on a holy God and therefore and only from that perspective can we rightly understand that God is free to give his gift of salvation however he wishes to do. This is the right way to think about the doctrine of election and the way that God saves people. It's his gift to do with as he wishes, and the fact that he chose some and not others is no violation of his holiness, it is an exercise of divine prerogative which belongs exclusively to him.

Now that reality of election does raise questions, there are implications, you might say, to that that we do well to think through biblically. Why then do we evangelize? If God has already determined how many people are going to be saved and God has determined who is going to be saved, why do we even share the gospel then if the outcome is preordained? Well, that brings us to our second point this morning which we could title the requirement of evangelism. The requirement of evangelism, and it's so important for us to understand this and Scripture is very plain on the matter. The God who appointed the end of election determined who would be saved. He didn't only determine and appoint the end of the people that would be saved, he did much more than that. God also – watch this – God also appointed the means by which the elect would be gathered into Christ. He appointed a means, you could say he appointed a method by which the elect would be saved. God does not automatically zap people and they just suddenly become Christians by direct divine intervention in that sense. No, God has appointed the preaching of the

gospel so that men would be gathered in. It has pleased God to appoint the method of gospel proclamation, of evangelism to be the means by which the Spirit would use to bring people to saving faith in Christ.

Look at Titus 1:3 as Paul is speaking about his ministry, having said that he exists for the faith of those chosen of God, he goes on and talks about what God has done. In verse 3 he says,

3 ... at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior,

Paul is saying that God entrusted the message of salvation to him. The message of eternal life God entrusted it to the Apostle Paul and Paul had a stewardship, he had a responsibility that he was commanded to exercise, he was commanded to go out and preach. It's a weighty responsibility and Paul describes it clearly saying, "I was entrusted with this and God commands me to preach the gospel of Christ."

Now Paul isn't the only one who is under a commandment to teach the word of Christ to men. The whole church is under that commandment. Look over at Matthew 28 with me. Matthew 28. Before his ascension, after his resurrection, Jesus came up to his disciples in verse 18 and he spoke to them and he said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In Romans 10, you can turn there with me and then we'll draw some conclusions from these things as we try to pull all of this together, in Romans 10 we see the requirement of evangelism set forth there as well. In Romans 10:13 it says, "'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Scripture makes it plain that the gospel is spread, that God gathers in his people through the preaching of the word of God, through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So if we ask the question why do we preach the gospel, why do we evangelize if God has already determined the number of the elect, well, I think that there is a threefold answer that we can give to that. 1. We understand that this is God's appointed means. This is how people are saved, it is through preaching just like this. It is through evangelism just like what you do in your neighborhood, in your workplace, to your family and to your friends, as you plead with them to hear the gospel of Christ, as you tell them the facts of the gospel. "Jesus Christ came to earth, lived and died and rose again to save sinners just like you and I plead with you," you say to your friends, your family, "I plead with you to

return to Christ, to repent of your sins and to give your life irrevocably to Him so that you can be saved." This is the means that God has appointed and that's why we do it. It's the means that God uses and we understand that. Secondly, closely related to that, we do it because we're commanded to. Christ commands us, "Go and preach the gospel." Paul was commanded by God to preach the gospel. And so we do it as a matter of our own personal obedience to God. This is what he requires from us as Christians is that we would be gospel proclaimers. We understand it's the means that God uses, we understand that we have a command to do it, and then, thirdly, beloved, and perhaps some of us need to have our own hearts sifted by the word of God on this point, we do it out of love for men. We do it out of love for souls that would otherwise be lost.

Look at Romans 10:1, actually go back to chapter 9, verse 1 and then we'll come back to that verse. The redeemed heart, the redeemed heart has genuine sorrow over the lost and so we preach the gospel to them out of love for them; as we seek the glory of God, we also do so out of love for them. Paul says in Romans 9:1, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Paul says, "My heart is crushed with longing for the salvation of my kinsmen." Paul was not preaching the gospel and it was a heartbreaking matter for him that the Jews rejected his testimony and thus sent him off, as it were, to the Gentiles, but this was not a spiritual abstraction to him, this was not a matter of cold calculation, his heart was utterly engaged with the people that he knew and loved and he wanted to see them saved, and his heart longed after that and he recognized their dangerous condition and longed for them to be delivered from it. The redeemed heart, beloved, the truly redeemed heart is affected by the love of God and it is affected by the love of sinners in such a way that compels us in some manner or another to speak lest these people go to hell without having ever heard the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

You know, and it's a convicting thought. You know, who do I speak to? What do I say? Who do I pray for even, that they might come to a saving knowledge of Christ? If we have received Christ, if Christ has truly saved us, if Christ so loved the world and God the Father so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son so that whoever believes would not perish but have eternal life, if we've been saved by that kind of spirit, beloved, if we've been saved by a God who came to seek and to save the lost, and that that is the spirit that has been placed inside our heart by the Holy Spirit, then how is it possible that a genuine Christian could be utterly indifferent to the salvation of those around him? How is that even possible if the Spirit of God who is like that, God is a saving merciful God, how is it possible that we would be in Christ and not have something of that coursing through our spiritual veins in prayer, in words, in support of gospel ministry? How could that even be possible in light of the requirement of evangelism? If this is the means that God has appointed for salvation to take place, how can we ignore it? If this is the command that God places on the church, go and preach the gospel to all the nations,

how can we ignore it? For the glory of Christ, for love of seeing our Savior exalted in the hearts of men, how could we ignore it? And for the sake of those that we know that are on the brink of eternal destruction, those that are on the brink of finding out that hell and judgment for their sins is real and is painful and it is eternal and that there is no ending of the everlasting punishment inflicted upon rebels against God, and we know that our own flesh and blood is on the verge of that, I ask you, when we know the people that we interact with day by day are on the verge of that, how can we be so cold and indifferent not to speak? How is that possible if everything that we say we believe here we actually believe?

It's a weighty responsibility and the Apostle Paul felt the weight of it. In 1 Corinthians 9:16, you don't need to turn there, Paul said, "if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." Paul says, "In light of all of these things, woe on me, how great is my responsibility and accountability before God if I don't preach the gospel."

So this is the thing and this is one of the reasons I wanted to bring this out today at the brink of a new year and to kind of refresh all of our minds going forward in the ministry of the corporate ministry of Truth Community Church, going forward into the new year, our commitment to doctrine is very real, our commitment to Reformed doctrine is established, solid and not subject to change or negotiation in any way, shape or form, but the biblical way that we hold that doctrine is not in a cold indifferent way where we are indifferent to whether anybody else comes to believe it or not. We're not indifferent to whether men come to Christ or not. No, these truths captivate us for the glory of God, they captivate us for the souls and for the love of men in such a way that we're compelled to speak. And beloved, if there's a willingness and just a coldness and an indifference in you that lets men go to hell without saying anything to them at all, without breathing a word to God about their souls, something's wrong with you. It's not a problem in the doctrine because the doctrine is designed to captivate your heart, captivate your soul, captivate your affections in a way that you feel the same compulsion to speak that the Apostle Paul did in one way or another.

So we come alongside men, we put our arms around them, as it were, and we tell them, "You must believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior in order to be saved. You must call on Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." And woe is you if you don't because Scripture says, and I say this to, you know, this is a mixed room of believers and unbelievers, let me just remind those of you that are not in Christ that the greatest accountability before the judgment seat of God will be on those who heard the gospel and refused to respond, and understand that your refusal to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ, you're not refusing to respond because of anything related to God's election of people to salvation, you are responding out of the desires of your own heart that you won't have Christ reign over you. You prefer your sin to salvation. You judge Christ as being unworthy of your time, your life, or your affections. And beloved, quite apart from the doctrine of election, that is a culpable judgment-worthy response to the glorious Christ that is held forth before you in the word of God and in the gospel of Christ.

So I call on you to come out of the world, come out of your deadness, come out of your sin and come to Christ because he's freely offered to you today. And do you know what? You may not have a chance tomorrow. Today, Scripture says, is the day of salvation. There should be such a sense of urgency in your unbelieving heart that, "I must resolve this. I must turn to Christ today and not presume on tomorrow." Look, you know, if you spend any time in life dealing with people who are dying, one thing becomes pretty sadly clear: people as they approach death, as a general rule, they don't get softer to the gospel. They simply become more and more confirmed in the hardness that they showed to the gospel earlier in their lives and so don't think we'll all come to Christ later in life, you know, presupposing that, people think that way because they think the power of repentance and faith, that they have the power of that in themselves and they don't. You don't. That's what it means to be spiritually dead. And so don't assume that years of hardness in your heart and years of rejecting the gospel of Christ is suddenly going to yield over to this tender response when somebody's praying at your bedside moments before you enter into eternity. Don't think you're going to be softer then than you are now because the more you harden, the more you resist, you more you say no, the harder and more set in concrete your heart's becoming. Your heart isn't getting warmer as you get closer to death, it gets colder and harder. So that's why, you know, I mean, I'm just worried about you. I'm concerned for you to not walk away today knowing that you're not in Christ and saying, "Well, I'll take care of it later." There were two thieves on the cross. We always like to talk about the repentant one. There was another one who saw the same Christ that the other one and he just hardened in his unbelief and he perished and went to hell. Take that to heart, beloved.

Now these are great and weighty matters to talk about what God determined in the counsel of his own will before the foundation of the world. Great and weighty matters. None of us are fit to speak of such things. None of our tongues are worthy of declaring the unsearchable glory of that and to probe into the intra-Trinitarian councils that took place before time began. None of us are fit vessels to hold forth the gospel of Christ. None of us are fit in and of ourselves to adequately warn people about the consequences of rejecting Christ. None of us are fit for that. What are we but creatures of flesh, clay pots, and totally unable to adequately convey in ourselves the glory of Christ and the urgency of the gospel? Who's fit for this? Who's adequate for such things? How can creatures of clay communicate the urgency of eternal matters in a right way?

Well, we're not excused from speaking because of our lack of ability and of our indifference. God does something else. 3. He gives us the resource for our effectiveness. Point number 3: the resource for our effectiveness. We've seen the reality of election, secondly, we've seen the requirement for evangelism, thirdly, we see the resource for effectiveness found in Titus 1:4. Paul, as he writes to Titus, reminds Titus of the divine provision that is made for the ministry of the gospel. Titus 1:4 Paul says,

4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Do you see it? Paul before he launches into everything that Titus was going to be responsible for, sets before him the spiritual resources that God makes available to his own in Christ, "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Yes, we are unworthy for the task at hand and well might we ask ourselves how shall we who struggle with sin, how shall we who struggle with doubt, how shall we with lukewarm hearts, how shall we who are like that call men to Christ? How shall we ever be used? How could we ever do such a thing? How shall we who lack eloquence call men into the fold of Christ? The answer is found in the fact that we don't have that capacity in ourselves. It is supplied to us by the God of our salvation. It is supplied to us by the indwelling Holy Spirit so that, so that, so that we understand, we understand that we cannot share the gospel in our own carnal strength. We don't share the gospel with an easy confidence in man or in our own abilities or in some kind of program that we went through that supposedly gave us all of the tools to make sure that someone would come to Christ. We don't trust in any kind of human resource, we realize that unless the Spirit of God comes down upon us, the Spirit of God equips our lips, unless the Spirit of God is hard at work in the heart of those who hear, that it's all in vain.

So we share not independence on our own carnality, our own ability, our own prior training, our own experience, our own emotion, none of that stuff, none of that human stuff has any power to save. And so we have to recognize our utter inadequacy to such a degree that we are consciously turning to the Holy Spirit and depending upon him to give help and weight to our words in a way that we understand that by that means Christ gets the glory and we were just a vessel quickly to be set aside and forgotten as the enduring work of the Holy Spirit goes forth.

Look at 2 Corinthians 3 with me. Everything about what we have heard today should drive us to humility as we realize God's electing choice, as we realize the command to evangelize, and as we realize our inadequacy for the task, all of this should cause us to divest ourselves of pride, divest ourselves of any confidence in self, and put our trust, our confidence, and our exclusive hope in the Triune God and in the work of the Holy Spirit as we do what he's commanded us to do.

Look at 2 Corinthians 3:5. This is the Apostle Paul speaking, Paul who saw the resurrected Christ with his own eyes, Paul the appointed apostle says this and how much more us? In verse 5, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Then over in chapter 4, verse 5, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves." It is the Spirit of God alone that gives us the power for evangelism. It is the

Spirit of God alone that gives any lasting results, true results to our preaching, to our evangelism.

Beloved, we rely on Christ, not our strength, in every aspect of spiritual ministry. This is where the sovereignty of God in salvation, this is where the sovereignty of God in evangelism leads us. God planned salvation for the elect but his plan goes further, he commands us to speak, he commands us to preach and, beloved, understanding something of that command shapes the way a church views the pulpit. This is not a comedy hour. This is not Entertainment Tonight. This is life and death eternal matters grounded in the word of God as a dying man to dying men. And when we realize the magnitude of that, it leads us to set aside self-confidence, to pray and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit in the task, and while we're grateful for the new life that God has given through the ministry of Truth Community Church, I hope and pray that you, and with you, that none of us are satisfied with that, none of us are satisfied to have a church of a couple, 300 people, when there are 7 billion outside our walls, most of whom do not know Christ. How could we be satisfied with where we are or who we are as we enter into a new year? I say those things that it would humble us to pray, to plead, to ask the Spirit of God day by day, week by week, to pour out more of his power and strength upon us that there might be visible results to the invisible work that he does in the hearts of men, and that he'd be pleased to use us to that end, not just us in the church but you in your families, you before your young ones, you as you bow down before them and as you anticipate new ones coming into your family, that there would just be this clarity of mind that what matters is not what they do for their career, what matters is the ultimate destiny of their eternal soul, and that that would motivate and shape your priorities in parenting, shape your priorities in parenting in a way that puts the word of God, that puts the salvation of your children central in your aspirations, not simply other matters pertaining to this passing world that they would otherwise give themselves over to. Your children are not going to think salvation is important unless you tell them that it is, and that you live by priorities that show that spiritual matters are what is the central theme of your home.

God commands us to speak. God will be with us in the task but it is ours to ask him and to express our dependence upon him. J. I. Packer said this in his famous book "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God," "Far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless for it creates the possibility, indeed the certainty that evangelism will be fruitful." You and I and as a church, we remember that God does the work of salvation and we trust him for that, and we remember that he commands us to speak. We obey and we ask him to help us obey better as we do.

Let's pray.

God, we ask You in this coming year, we ask You for the help of Your Holy Spirit to shape our hearts, to believe the truth, to understand it, to assert it, to defend it gladly and without apology, without fear of man but, Father, not only to understand the truth but to, Father, to have a sense and a heart for evangelism as we do. Why are we left on earth,

Father, if we're not going to somehow, somehow be instruments in seeking that which Christ came to save? Father, rebuke our cold indifferent hearts, convict us of all of our past failures in a way that would cause us to flee to the cross of Christ to seek forgiveness for our indifference and then, Lord, change us individually, change me, Father, you know how much that needs to happen, change us individually and change us corporately, Father, that we might be true instruments of the saving work of the Holy Spirit through the gospel of Christ. And work in the hearts of those that are here with us that are not in Christ, young people who just haven't cared until now, older people, Father, self-deluded and indifferent. Father, may You prompt a sense of urgency in us born of Your Spirit that would cause all of us to flee to Christ in dependence, seeking His glory, seeking the salvation of the lost. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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