

Introduction to Titus: The Supreme Thing

Beautifying the Bride

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Bible Text: Titus 2:14
Preached on: Sunday, January 8, 2023

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Well, take your Bibles and let's go to the last of the pastoral epistles that I have not preached through, the book of Titus, the book of Titus. I've entitled this exposition "Beautifying the Bride, Part 3," because 1 Timothy was about the local church, the bride being proper in function and in fashion, and 2 Timothy was about beautifying the bride, the local church in her function, and in her fashion, and then Titus, likewise, is about beautifying the bride. And, um, so I thought about it and thought about it, actually this is the second message I've prepared out of Titus. I've prepared one on the first few verses of the book, and then as I looked through the book I found out, nope, gotta do something else. So I set that outline aside and I went to this section. So this will be our introduction to Titus. Introduction to the book of Titus and the subtitle is "The Supreme Thing." The supreme thing as we talk about the introduction to Titus.

I want to use Titus 2:14 because I'm convinced it outlines, sets forth, the supreme issue that Titus is all about and that God is all about. Titus 2:14. Paul writes to Titus on the Isle of Crete, and he says, "who gave himself," that's Christ Jesus, "for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Now of course, the author of this book is the Apostle Paul. Titus is the audience of the book. Before we get there, let me just say that it was a penned likely between 62 and 64 AD between Paul's imprisonments. Paul was likely in the city of Corinth.

Now actually we don't know near as much about Titus as we knew about Timothy. He's a young man but a proven disciple and a fellow worker of the Apostle Paul. He ministered with Paul in several places, but particularly on the island of Crete, one of the Greek Isles, and Paul left him in Crete so that he might strengthen the churches and put things in order. We do know that he's mentioned nine times in 2 Corinthians where he's called "my brother," and, "my partner and fellow worker." So that's the author, the date the the audience is Titus, of course, as it was written to Titus, it's also written to the local churches on the island of Crete, as Titus would take the truths Paul wrote to him and preach them and teach them to the churches there.

The setting is the island of Crete. As I've said, it's one of the largest or the largest of the Greek islands. It's the furthest south of all of the islands, and, um, it's not a whole lot to

look at. It's quite a barren place, just quite rocky, but it has a beauty all its own. Matter of fact, it's a, it's a great, uh, vacation location today. When Pam and I were going to do our Greece trip, we, uh, were trying to find out which areas of Greece we were going to go to to follow the ministry of the Apostle Paul and, of course, the island of Crete came to our mind, but it was just a long way away and so we didn't go there, but we did call Steve Missios, our missionary in Austria, because he's a Greek. He's from Greece. And when we called, he said, "Well, while you're in Greece, I'm going to be vacationing on the island of Crete," and I thought, "You and Paul, you guys both get to go there." So it is a, it is a sought after vacation destination.

Now Matthew 13 is a cross reference I want us to get in our mind right now, verses 24 and 25. It says, "Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.'" Of course, the good seed is the gospel seed. That's the wheat seed. The bad seed is the seed that grows up and becomes a tare because a tare will grow up with the wheat and it looks just like the wheat until harvest time, and the wheat puts out the head and has grain, has fruit, but the tare just takes up room, takes up nutrients and moisture, but it has no fruit. It's the imposter. It's the false. And you know, as soon as Paul journeyed to a new land like Crete, and sowed the true seed of the gospel in the field of the world, Satan comes in and sows the false seed, the tare seed among the wheat. He sows those impostors, those counterfeits, those false teachers among the true wheat and the tares come up and then Paul and his associates, here we have Titus as the leading associate on the island of Crete, they go to work to purge out and push back against these tares and reclaim the local churches to sound doctrine, sound structure and sound practice.

Now Paul was involved in planting the churches on the island of Crete. This was probably when he was journeying around Crete on his way to his imprisonment in Rome. Uh, it's likely, though, that there were converts already in Crete when Paul arrived from hearing, uh, Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost being converted and taking the gospel back, but the churches on the island of Crete were not mature at all. They needed strengthening and they needed strengthening in sound doctrine and strengthening in sound structure and strengthening in sound practice. And as always, false teachers almost immediately begin to creep into these fellowships, and these false teachers needed to be exposed and removed.

Uh, Paul left Titus there when he left and tells Titus, "I want you to set things in order." Matter of fact, look at chapter 1, verse 5 of Titus. Would you do that? Chapter 1, verse 5, and here's what Paul says, "For this reason," writing to Titus, "I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you." So actually Titus's job is to go to these immature, enemy-attacked, little congregations all over the island, it's a big Island, and set in order these disorganized disorderly churches. Okay, that's what he's to do. So it's a book that gives us great insight into how God wants us to structure, how he wants us to order things, how we are to practice as God's people in serving God together as his local church.

So in follow-up to that, Paul writes this letter we have as the book called Titus, where he gives the instructions of all he wants Titus to do, and the way he wants Titus to do it. Now an additional challenge for Titus as he goes about the island trying to get these disorderly congregations back in order, or maybe in order for the first time, is that the people of Crete, comparatively speaking, were not very good people. They were a people of quite low character, if you will. Um, don't know if I've got that. Yeah, look at Titus 1:12 and 13. Would you look at that? Paul, um, Paul was not politically correct at all. Paul didn't know you're not supposed to make these generalized statements about a group of people but he does. Titus 1:12, "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith." Uh, Paul says, "Timothy, um, as you do your ministry, I'm well aware that you're dealing with some real difficult people." I mean, lying is just a part of the culture, it's just a part of what they do. They're lazy and undisciplined. They're gluttons. They're just a people of low character compared to other places, even in Greece. So that's going to make building a pure and holy and disciplined and church of high character, building that kind of place is going to be a special challenge. Would you like to take this challenge? That would have been a difficult challenge.

So Titus, a young man, however, like Timothy, a long-time associate of Paul has his hands full and he doesn't have a long time to get the job done because Paul writes him here in this letter and says, "When our fellow associates Artemas and Tychicus come, I want you, Titus, to leave it with Artemas and Tychicus and you come to Nicopolis and join me in the work there." So you might outline the tasks this way. "Timothy, you're to silence and remove false teaching and false teachers from our churches in Crete. You're to clean up the bad behavior, the low character of so many of the new believers in these churches. And then you're to bring the churches to proper order and function," all right? My heart goes out to Titus because I've been doing this for 43 years and I'm not finished. I'm not finished with me and I'm not finished with you, but we can say there are certain, uh, shall we say, levels or so that churches ought to get to to where they're not dealing with the kind of low, base, immaturities and cultural deficiencies that the Crete churches we're dealing with. We ought to move past some things and get on higher planes as we go forward.

Now in the back of all that's going on here, in the back of all this work, the question should come to our minds: what is the purpose of God in the book of Titus? What is the the purpose of Titus as he ministers in Crete? Or what is God's purpose in Paul writing this letter to Titus and writing the letter to us? I mean the the great purpose, the the supreme thing as I said I've subtitled this. What is the purpose of God, the primary, the foundational purpose of God in the entirety of Scripture? Well, as in many other places in the Scripture, the key is in Titus 2:14. Let's look at Titus 2:14 again. I'll read it and then we're going to unpack it, okay? Paul, writing to Titus reminds him of the foundational theme and purpose of all that we're about as Christians, "who gave Himself to redeem for us, redeem us, rather, from every lawless deed," and here's what I want to emphasize, "and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

Now let's unpack it a phrase at a time. First of all it says just Jesus came and gave himself. He came and gave that which is beyond all price or all value. He said parallel things in Galatians 1:4, for example, "who gave Himself for our sins," and Galatians 2:20, "who gave Himself for me," and Ephesians 5:25, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." He gave himself to this end that he might have for himself a people for his own possession. That's in back of everything. That's the great river all the other things and boats and vessels of Christian practice float upon.

He came and gave himself "for us," the next phrase is. He voluntarily gave himself but he vicariously gave himself for us. He didn't just give himself to splash an opportunity out there, he gave himself for us vicariously, that's in our place, in our stead. You see, our condition of bondage in our lawlessness had to be undone if he was to secure for himself a people. It's God's motive and God's heart that, "I will have a people," that led God to send Jesus to give himself that we might be purified from every lawless deed. You've got to get back to that God-centered view to get what's going on. He rescued us from the power of sin and law that is that bondage, that we might have new power that he would place in us, the power to love and serve him as our Lord and King so that we have now a new bondage which is a bondage to our loving Redeemer. It's a blessed bondage indeed.

The phrase continues on that he might "purify for Himself." It's a key phrase in all of Scripture. He purified us that we might be his own people. I might not say it's a phrase in all of Scripture, but it's a truth bore out in the totality of Scripture, that God's primary means, his primary goal, the supreme thing is that he might purify a group so that they might qualify to be his people. See, he couldn't just go out and make a bunch of folks his people because you don't, you don't match him, you don't meet up to him, you don't qualify for him. You are offensive to him. You're a sinner before him. So he had to do something if he's gonna have a people that would bring those people to a righteous state where they could be, indeed, his people.

Now look at the text again. There's two words here that, um, to me this is the motivation for everything I do as a pastor and everything we do as a people, "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify," oh, that's just glorious in itself but notice these next few words, "to purify," for their good, for their well-being, that's totally true and taught in Scripture, but not here, it gets us back to that God-centered God's view of things, "to purify for Himself." God saved you for himself. You've become a Christian because it delighted him. It was his good pleasure to do so. Banish the blasphemous, proud, arrogant notion that God did these good things but I did a couple of good things so now God's obligated by contract to take me to heaven. I got a good Greek word for that: hogwash, baloney, foolishness. God did it all for himself. You are Grace Life Church of the Shoals, for himself.

We are purified that we might become his own possession. Notice how he words it there in verse 14, the last phrase of the verse, "a people for His own possession." We're purified so that we could become his own possession. Becoming his possession is the outcome of his purification and the outcome of his purification is to the end of his possession, and the outcome of his purification so that we could be his possession is for

his glorification. Have I ever told you before God is absolutely enthralled with himself? God God is the only being in the universe that can look in the mirror and say, "Perfect. You're so beautiful." Because God is such of such character and dignity and infinite worth and glory he couldn't rejoice in anything less than God. He can't rejoice in you because you're fallen but he can rejoice in Christ in you and therefore rejoice in you because of what Christ has made you, worthy to be accepted in this holy Triune God's holy presence. Are y'all getting this? All right, I don't have to start over. Too far in already.

Exodus 19:5 we see this truth bubbling out of the Old Testament as progressive revelation leads us to the unfolding of it in the New Testament as the New Testament unfolds to the culmination of it in revelation. Exodus 19:5, "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice," his covenant to the nation of Israel, "and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples." In other words, there's all these nations, and all these tribes, and all these tongues, and all these peoples, "But Israel, I'm going to pluck you out, and if you'll obey My voice and do My commandments, keep My covenant, then I'll make you My unique special possession. You and I are gonna have a real intimate close relationship and the other nations don't even know who I am."

So to be this special possession of God, this special people of God, they had to, Exodus 19:5 again, keep the covenant and obey his voice." Well, I've got a question for you. Did the nation of Israel keep the covenant and did the nation of Israel obey his voice? No. They failed totally. So God said, "I'll have to get Me a new Israel. I'll have to get Me a new servant. Israel, the nation would be My special, unique, peculiar, special possession but they fell completely so I'm gonna need another one, another one who does qualify, who will keep My voice, who will keep My covenant, who will be as righteous as I am." So God sent his own Israel, Jesus Christ. You see, we keep the covenant and we obey his voice if we're in Christ. No, no, no, I don't mean in the actual performance of your human natural abilities do you obey his voice and do you keep his covenant. I mean once you're saved, that special phrase that Paul uses over and over and over "in Christ" is so important. You are now, in God's eyes, a covenant keeper and you are now, in God's eyes, one who obeys his voice through the merits of Jesus Christ.

You're in the sphere, in the domain of Christ, and in him you are one who keeps the covenant and obey his voice, therefore you shall be his special, his own possession, Exodus 19:5 again. Actually, that word "possession" can mean a special treasure. God says out of all the peoples on the earth, I'm gonna have a people. Now God's love is so big, he splashes, unmerited love all over all the peoples of the world far beyond what any of them could possibly deserve. But God said, "I've got, I've got a plan to have a people out of all those peoples and they're going to be My special treasure." You ever held your newborn baby or even better, your your grandbaby. Ain't nobody gotta tell you this is a special treasure. Multiply that by infinity and that's how God feels about you. God's not just holding his nose and dangling grace out to you and try to hold you by the hand and get you into heaven. Oh no, no no, in Christ you are the apple of his eye. You are his special treasure.

Well, Christ therefore does for us what we could not and the law, keeping the law by our human abilities could not do, which is to actually truly purify us so we could be his own special possession, his own special treasure. Another word that scholars use for this very Hebrew word out of Exodus 19:5 instead of possession or special treasure, you could say peculiar people, and some are more peculiar than others. Peculiar, though, means unique, different from all others. Just listed some of the things that make us peculiar, that make us a special treasure compared to all the other peoples of the world. We are peculiar because we are the offspring of the blood of Christ. We are peculiar because we are those who are near to God. We are peculiar because we are more noble than others. We're peculiar because we are the sons of God, because we are the brethren of Christ, because we function by higher principles and by the true law. We're peculiar because we are citizens of heaven and not this earth. We are peculiar because we have an everlasting King, and our King was not born nor created. We are peculiar because we have a kingdom that has no end. We're peculiar because we walk according to his perfect law and the truth that cannot change though the world's laws and the world's idea of what's right and wrong changes faster than we can hear it and understand it. Well, we can hear it but we can't understand it. It's too weird. We are peculiar because we are victorious over our enemies through what men would call weakness. We're peculiar because our Captain has never been defeated. We're peculiar because our apparel is put on us by God himself; we are clothed in his righteousness. We are peculiar because we eat food that is not of this world. We are peculiar because we are the only kingdom come from, comprised rather of individuals from every people, tongue, tribe and nation. And you could go on and on and on.

So this thing of God's doing something for himself. God was sitting in heaven one day, God the Father and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and God the Father looked over at God the Son and God the Son looked over at God the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit looked over at God the Father and God the Father looked over at God the Son again and they said, "Let's do something super special for Ourselves, and we're going to do this out of Our agape, Our unique love that only God can have. And we're just going to be as, we're going to show Our power, Our wisdom and Our beauty in making a people that qualify to be with Us out of the most wretched, vile, polluted, corrupt, and ungodly material you can even imagine." And he he sent Jesus to procure the people and Jesus never fails.

So, as Paul's writing to Titus, he says, "Titus, I want you to, I want you to get this that's in back of it all. The reason why you're a Christian, Titus, and the reason why you're my associate, Titus, and the reason why you're on the island of Crete, Titus, and the reason why you're going to get these low character, low ethics, corrupted, disorderly churches in line is because we're those God has chosen for Himself to be His special treasure and we ought to live like it. We ought to look like it, and we ought to act like it. That's why we do what we do in the church, Titus. That's why I left you there to get them more in order." That's where the phrase, Titus 2:14, I'm convinced, comes in at the very last one, "zealous for good deeds." He's redeemed us from every lawless thing. There's a lot of theological implications we're not going into. I'll do that when I get to verse 14 of of my overall exposition because I just want to bring out this foundational the the the the, the,

the main thing, the primary thing, the supreme thing. And he says, "God redeems us from every lawless deed, purifies for himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." The word "good" there can have the idea of being beautiful or proper. When the church walks with God it's a beautiful thing. It's setting things right. That's why I say Grace Life Church of the Shoals is the oasis of sanity because we are proper. It has idea of being proper. We're functioning proper according to God's word and law in a world that's ungodly and totally improper.

So this talks about good deeds for the church, and certainly that includes the totality of our lives, our home lives, our marriage lives, in the schools, in the workplace, and in in the, in the cities, and in the public square, etc. We ought to do right, have good deeds, but in this context it also means we as a people, a local church people, should be about doing this church thing right. That's what Paul's telling Titus to do, get the churches right. Now elaborating a little bit further, amplifying a little bit further this thing of God does this for himself, that is developing for himself a people to be his special peculiar treasure, the apple of his eye, we find that this thing God is doing to have a people that will love him, serve him and glorify him, and can I just pause right there for a moment? I have not the faintest motivation to get you to serve, love, honor, give in any way of fleshly coercion. If God hasn't put it in your heart of love, then don't do it. God doesn't have paid off, coerced servants. God has children who serve him because they love him and they can't get over what he's done for them. That's the motivation that a true church, a biblically spiritually healthy church functions from.

So God says, "I want to have a people that love Me, serve Me and glorify Me." That's the supreme thing. That's the supreme task. And it was the supreme task or purpose of the whole of the Old Testament. I'm going to run through these quickly. Genesis 12:1 and 2, the call of Abraham, "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house,'" in other words, we're gonna do something new, Abraham. The old, we're gonna leave the old behind, we're doing something new, "To the land which I will show you; And I will bless you and your family." Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. No. I want a people. "I will make you a great nation," because I want a people, "And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing." Deuteronomy 28:9, "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself," there it is again, the same basic thing Paul is saying in Titus 2:14, for himself to have a people for his own possession. So we have a people that are for God's own self. 2 Samuel 7:23, "And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel," you're distinct, you're set out and set apart, "whom God went to redeem," there it is, "for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself," that's his glory, I want these people for myself so in and through them I might get fame and notoriety and praise to me, "and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself," there it is again, saved them for yourself, "from Egypt, from nations and their gods?" Maybe in our evangelism we need to add to when we say, "You need to be saved for yourself," that's true you need to be saved for yourself, that's true, but you need to be saved more for God's self because God's doing something great and he wants you to be a part of the great thing he's doing in building for himself a people.

In the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, I found this little quote and I've used it a lot, "Redemptive history demonstrates that God's purposes are not limited to the redemption of individuals, instead God's intent was to form a people." And Israel was the Old Testament type of the New Testament church, the culmination or fulfillment. Well, it's the supreme thing or the supreme purpose of the whole of the Old Testament, but it's the supreme purpose of the entire New Testament. The whole New Testament unfolds so that God is throughout the land forming for himself his people, and for time and space history that is people in local churches. It's the supreme task, the supreme thing concerning Christ, his return, and his reign.

We'll move over to Revelation 21:2 and 3. You gotta understand something, folks, what you're a part of is what God started that's coming to this glorious culmination that God's going to finally, in his perfect timing, get his people to that final state of glorification with him because he saved you for himself. So so what I like to say is what progressively unfolds in the Old, New Testament progresses further and becomes much more evident in the New Testament, and culminates in reality at the end of the New Testament in the book of Revelation. Revelation 21:2 and 3, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, made ready as a bride for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them,'" here it is, "'and they shall be His people.'" That shouldn't surprise you because that's what he's been about the whole time, securing for himself his people. "And God Himself will be among them." And there's some figurative language here. For example, just what does the New Jerusalem mean? Well, no scholar knows for sure, and I'm not sure scholarship can answer some of these questions because they're spiritually discerned anyway, but I think the point is this is a new Jerusalem because it's in contrast to the old Jerusalem. You see, back in Revelation 21:1 he said the old things are passing away. The old things are gone. The first things are gone. The first creation, the first order started in Adam and Eve and this physical planet and all we know as as the physical things in time and space history. That's all the old order, the old creation, that's done away with.

Galatians 4:26, "But the Jerusalem above is free; and she is our mother." So there's another Jerusalem, not the literal physical city over there, there's another Jerusalem that's not bound in laws and man's works and traditions. It's fully free, i.e., free to be before God and with God without guilt and without condemnation. He says she is our mother and then Hebrews 11:10, Abraham went out "looking for the city," not the old Jerusalem, "which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Hebrews 12:22 and 23, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God," notice the city of the living God, and to "the heavenly Jerusalem," that's the new one. Not the old or the old creation, there's a new one coming and you are his new creations to inhabit the new city. "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect." I like that phrase "enrolled in heaven." You see, part of the people, part of God's own possession, his people are already enrolled in heaven. You see,

there's three rolls the Bible teaches. Number 1 is salvation's roll. When you turn to Christ for salvation, your name's on salvation's roll. Of course, it really was already but the realization of it to you happens when you come to Christ. Then there's the service roll, that's joining the local church and serving Christ through your local church until you get to the glory roll in heaven, or when he returns and sets up the New Jerusalem and the new City of God.

Hebrews 13:14 reminds us, "For here," in this present pilgrimage, "we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." Is there a part of you, is there a part of you, at least a germ inside of you that says, "I'm not going to be satisfied with anything down here, even church when it's the most glorious of glory, when it's the best of the best, I'm not gonna be satisfied until I get to the completion of all that God started." And we are going to be there glorified with him in the glorified New Jerusalem. The eternal state. You need to stir that germ up a little bit. You need to water that germ a little bit because that's gonna happen.

Well, here also in Revelation 21, uh, verse, uh, 2 of Revelation 21, he calls it the bride. It's the new Jerusalem. But then he says it's the "bride adorned for her husband." Does that not have connotations of the church? You see, in the new order, the new creation, God's kingdom is not simply a garden like Adam and Eve had in the first creation, and in this new kingdom, this new creation, it's not just a paradise. Remember Jesus when he was dying on the cross, the thief believed in him and he said, "Today you'll be with Me in Paradise," as glorious as that would be, there's something much more glorious coming. Can I say something to you? Listen: a significant factor of what makes the eternal state, the New Jerusalem in the kingdom of God, the new city glorious is because all the people will be there too. You actually help make heaven more glorious but it's only because of all that the Lamb did in making you fit for the city. The glory is somewhat diminished until every single member of the special treasured people are there home with their Lord and Savior. So there's glory in heaven right now but not the glory like there'll be when all the people that he came to save are there together with him.

So, so this new order, this new Jerusalem, this new city is not a garden like in Eden. It's not a paradise. It's the city of God come to earth. You see, it's a costlier kingdom because it's built on the blood of Christ. It's a statelier kingdom because it possesses the dignity of Christ. And it's a more glorious kingdom, because it shares in the glory of Christ. It is not built by the hand of Adam who was responsible to dress the garden of Eden, but it's built by God, its architect and builder is God, Hebrews says, and the chief cornerstone is Jesus himself, and he's fashioning us to be the living stones of the new city, all of us stones made after the pattern of Christ himself.

1 Peter 2:4 and 5, "And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God." We are choice and precious as his special possession. Verse 5, "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." In the grand culmination of all things when Christ returns to set up this new city, this eternal this eternal state, Revelation 21:3 again, "And I heard a loud voice from

the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people.'" The supreme thing will come to fruition. You see, you're part of the supreme thing now, but you're just a little part. You see, today as his local church we are his people, we are his special treasured possession. And by the way, it's both/and, it's you individually but it's you as a part of this church collectively. Both are always true. So we as a local church are his people, his treasured possession, but what we are actually is a preview of coming attractions. We're not yet perfected as we're going to be. We're not yet glorified as we're going to be. And we're not all together as one, all of God's church together as one as we're going to be. We as his people, his local churches are a glimpse of what is to come in the full. We are a shadow, if you will, of what is to come in the full. We are a foretaste of what's going to come in the full. We must, as a people, love, serve and honor him now for his glory even though it's only a shadow of the glory we will give to him in the future eternal state when we are purged of our old, redeemed, sinful humanity and glorified with Christ.

So here Paul leaves Titus on the Greek island of Crete to get the local churches in each town on solid footing and on the right track so that they might the best they can by God working through them, serve him according to his desires and bring him the glory he deserves now. You might as well get practiced up on bringing God glory as being a true, biblically spiritual church because that's all you're going to do in eternity. That's all you'll do in eternity. You see, Titus was not allowed to structure and to guide the churches on the island of Crete according to his own wisdom, or to fasten the churches on the island of Crete according to the customs and trends or fads of the day. No. Paul sent Titus the word right here, and particularly the book of Titus, a letter that we have today as the book of Titus.

So Titus was to build the churches on Crete, Crete according to the word and maybe soon, by the aid of God working through them, these disorganized, immature, low character, troubled churches would become model churches that might help influence other churches like the church at Rome was in Romans 16:19. Paul says therefore "the report of your obedience has reached to all and I am rejoicing over you." His point was the church at Rome, you're you're loving God, you're you're serving God, you're glorifying God and you're helping others stay on track and that's what we want to do. You see, the True Church Conference that's coming up is the because the report of your obedience, Grace Life Church of the Shoals, has reached to all. Not to all but to many because that's what really matters. If we will strive to, put the will illustration, if you would, up for this moment, if we will strive to be sound in doctrine, sound in structure, sound in practice, and that will imperfectly, because no human illustration can bring out all the dynamics of biblical truth, if we can, if we'll do that well, then look at the bottom outside rim, a church God uses as a pattern for others, which is what God said the church of Rome was being, and what ultimately I know Paul wanted the churches at Crete to become.

So Paul wrote to Timothy and gave him the supreme thing. Titus, I should say, I'll call him Timothy the whole way through here, okay? They should have had different sounding names and I would have gotten it better. So the supreme thing Paul writes to

Titus is, "Titus. God is purifying for Himself a people for His own possession." In other words, "Titus, do you realize what you're getting to be a part of? Titus, do you realize the magnitude of what your task is?" Now we, Grace Life Church of the Shoals, must be a true church, a true people, obedient people living out the will because it's Bible, there's nothing special about the will, the Bible is what matters, and the True Church Conference will help us, therefore, to multiply on to others.

Now listen to me: if in life you miss the supreme thing, you miss everything. In life, if you miss the supreme thing, helping the church become all that God's called it and intends for it to be, then you miss everything. But in life, if you get in on this supreme thing, then you have it all and you miss nothing. I don't care whatever else you give up. Whatever. If you get in on that, and there's this magnificent truth from Matthew that the Lord Jesus himself said if you'll seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things, all the other things in the world you worry about will be added unto you. Get the supreme thing right, get the supreme thing first.

Now, and I mean this genuinely, you could have had a better pastor these last four decades. I know that. You could have had a better preacher. I know that. I don't think anyone would have worked harder to give you the main thing that I've worked on. If you'll buy into it, not because it's Jeff Noblit. "Well, Jeff, you came up with this purpose, these strategy statements and personalized strategic world missions, all this stuff," and I learned from other people too, by the way, in doing that, "you put all this together and we're doing all this stuff." That's not what it's about, it's about that it's all from the book. It's all thoroughly biblical. If we'll give ourselves to that and there's no better way to give yourself to that than to be all we can be during the True Church Conference for the glory of God. Now, if you get to the judgment seat of Christ and he says you missed it. You say, "Jeff Noblit, he's the problem. He's, I did what he said to do. He showed us in the Bible. That's what we did." If God says you missed it, then I'll step up and say, "Lord it's all my fault." That's why I'm always open show me the book, show me where we've missed it in the book, and I'll change because it's not about me. It's about the old truth that never never changes.

That's our introduction to the book of Titus being about the supreme thing. You know, we have, I've talked about this lately a lot, we have our Philemon Fellowship. You know why? Because when you men run businesses, it's to be, it's to be about the supreme thing. Amen, Brother Chad? Doesn't mean, it's wonderful to employ people and give people good wages and support families, that's all God's will, that glorifies God, but there's a supreme thing that Philemon was about, that Lydia was about, that Aquila and Priscilla was about in their businesses that mattered more than everything. And I'll be honest, I hope our young guys, I hope you guys make millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars and employ lots of people and provide good income for people. That's a blessing. That's wonderful. But I hope in back of it all you say, like I think the people who own Hobby Lobby and I think the people who own Chick-fil-A have done a pretty good job of, they they saw the supreme thing and made all of their lives about the supreme thing. Brother Steve, is that all right if these guys get wealthy and they make the supreme thing the supreme thing? Amen.