

Paul, the Apostle

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Let's go to 2 Timothy as we continue our preaching through this New Testament epistle. We're calling this "Beautifying the Bride." Now 1 Timothy when we went through there, it was "Beautifying the Bride, Part 1: Her Form and Her Fashion." Now we're "Beautifying the Bride, Part 2: Her Form and Her Fashion," but with the added emphasis of Paul at the end of his life, his execution just ahead, in essence telling Timothy, "Stay with it, Timothy, to the end." And that's a good word for us, to stay with it to the end. It's probably true unless I live to be 122, that I'm closer to the end than I was when I started. I'm a lot closer but I want to end the way Paul is telling Timothy to end, faithful to the end.

Now we're just gonna look at the first verse and I've entitled this "Paul, the Apostle." All right, Paul writing to Timothy from the Roman prison, his execution just ahead,

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

Now Paul knows this letter's gonna be read to the churches, he knows he's writing with the anointing and empowering of God's Holy Spirit, and he wants Timothy to know and he wants all to know that he's God's apostle. Now there's no braggadocious conceit here. He's not trying to boost himself up. He's trying to lay the foundation of why his writing is important and why we ought to honor it and esteem it.

Paul, the apostle of Christ Jesus, then he adds according to the will of God. No man put me in this position, God put me in this position. So immediately he begins this letter challenging us to reaffirm the authority of the writers of Scripture and most particularly, of course, the writing of Scripture. "Well, Timothy, I'm writing these things just not as a buddy, just not as a guy who discipled you, though that's true. Timothy, I'm writing as God's apostle according to the will of God."

Let's break it down. First of all, I., let's notice Paul's high office. Paul's high office. It's the office of apostle. Now if we go back 2,000 years ago to the, uh, Greek world that this is written in, it was written in koine Greek, the Greek language of the common man. It wasn't a higher Greek of Shakespeare and others, it's just common what they call koine Greek. The word "apostle" was a common used, uh, common word, rather, used regularly

in that ancient culture. Apostle simply means send. It has the idea of a sent messenger, and in ancient Israel and in this time in the Greek world, it was one who was sent out authorized by someone else to act on their behalf, usually it would have to do with a personal matter or a legal matter, maybe a financial matter.

So in this context, the apostle is one sent out by Christ, sent out by God to do his bidding, to represent him. For example, in Romans 1:14, Paul says, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." What does he mean I'm under obligation? He means I've been called to this role. I, I don't have my own will about this. I don't have my own "rights." I have an obligation because I'm an apostle. I'm sent by someone else. I'm under their authorization and under their authority.

Then in Romans 15:15-16 he says, "But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles." I've been given this grace to do what? I've been given this favor, this blessing of God so I could be God's sent out one, all right?

Now the Bible also says Jesus is an apostle. Did you know that? Again, because the word is used in a broad range of settings. For example, Hebrews 3:1-2, "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house." So here Jesus is an apostle, now not like Paul but it just simply meant Jesus is a sent one. The Father sent Jesus out to do the Father's will, to carry out the Father's business in the world, and by the way, he carried it out to perfection. He was faithful to the office of Savior the Father sent him to perform.

So in the broadest sense of in a broad sense of the word, Jesus is an apostle. Um, Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways," now listen to this, "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." So God says, "I sent My Son to be My, My revelation of what I'm about to the entire world." God the Father sending God the Son.

In Mark 9:37, "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me." Jesus went out as an apostle, a sent one from the Father and says, "And when you receive Me, you resend the One, you receive the One who sent Me, My Father." And the same is true of us as we go out in his name today.

So, really, every Christian is an apostle in, in the general sense of the word. We're all saved and now sent ones to represent our Lord in this world. Uh, in John 20:21, referring to the disciples, Jesus said, "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me,'" I was a sent one from the Father, so "I also send you." Now all of you are sent ones. My Father sent me to get this thing started. I'm gonna purchase the children on the cross. I'm gonna lay down the essential doctrines of the faith, and now you take this and go forward with it. God the Father sent me, now God the Son sends the disciples.

In Matthew 10, Jesus tells his followers that an apostle could expect to be treated in the way the one who treated them was, or the one who sent them was treated. So he says, "If they rejected Me, they'll reject you. If they disdained Me, they're gonna disdain you. If they hated Me, they're going to hate you because you're not going in your own name, you're going into the world in my name." So a sent one bears the reproach of the one that sent him.

Now of the 80 or so times the word "apostle" is used in the New Testament, we know that most of the time it's not a general sense, most of the time it refers to the 12 disciples Jesus chose plus the Apostle Paul or and the Apostle Paul. Now this is an, a unique apostleship. This isn't just the general sending that we all are a part of as Christians and, and Christ's representatives in the world. There was a unique, one-time office God established called the apostolic office and that's what Paul belonged to. Let me just say some things about this one-time apostolic office because it has a lot of ramifications for how we do church today and how we function and who we look to, uh, concerning our authority today in the church.

First of all, these apostles saw the resurrected Lord. He commissioned them, he commissioned them in Matthew 28, he commissioned Paul. Paul said, "I was one untimely born. I came along later but I am an apostle." He commissioned Paul in Acts 9. These men also saw the ascended Christ. They saw him glorified after his resurrection and saw him go up into heaven. Of course, Paul saw him after he was already ascended into heaven as he spoke to Paul on the road when he struck him down.

These men received special spiritual anointing and special power. In John 20:22, the Bible says Jesus "breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Now he's not doing that anymore. This is not the kind of, uh, uh, spiritual empowerment you and I receive at conversion as wonderful and essential as that is. This was a special touch for a specific task for their office of apostle.

Uh, in Acts 1:8 we have the description of Jesus telling them, "You're going to go into all of the world after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You're gonna receive a special anointing for this apostolic mission of, of establishing the, the gospel in the earth and establishing the doctrines of the Christian faith in the earth."

In 2 Corinthians 12, the Bible speaks of those who perform "the signs of the apostles." That's why I have always taught that the signs and wonders and miracles you see in the New Testament are not normative for today's church because they were a special touch, a special enablement for those men God used to bring the foundations of the church into the world. They were, um, men who established the standards of doctrine and fellowship in the church. Let me spend a little time here.

Acts 2:42 tells us that when the early church first met together, "They were continually devoting themselves," now notice the phrase here, not to the word of God though that could've been said, that, that would have been equal to what's said here but "to the

apostles' doctrine." These were unique men with a special task and a special spiritual anointing to accomplish the task to lay out the doctrines of the church and give us the truth.

Ephesians 2:20, "having been built upon the," what? "Foundation of the apostles." Now wait a minute, I thought we were built on Jesus Christ? Yes, but Christ, uh, uh, superintended those doctrines through these men to be written and established for the church of all the ages. So it's the same thing. You say, "We're built on Christ or are we built on the teaching of the apostles?" Yes and yes. It's the same thing. They taught the truth of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:6, "nor did we seek glory from men either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ, we might have asserted our authority." He says, "We had special authority in this one-time only office of apostle, that authority to establish doctrine and to teach doctrine."

2 Peter 3:2, "that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." Again, not just Christians and not just teachers and not just pastor/teachers like we have today, these were unique men who had special authority to establish the church's doctrine.

Jude 17, "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 1:3, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you," now notice this, "contend earnestly for," definite article, "for the faith," the doctrines, the teaching, that "was once for all handed down to the saints." God says, "In My sovereign purposes, I placed these men 2,000 years ago in the office of apostle and through those men, I have laid down the faith, the doctrines My church is to hold to for time immemorial."

There's no more doctrine being written. There's no more doctrine being received by revelation. God established it through the early apostles. So they had special power, authority and gifting to write, if you will, the sacred Scriptures and establish the doctrines of the church.

Now a sixth thing about them is they are men who are esteemed for special honor and for special authority. Now we sometimes have a problem with this in the church because we want to highly emphasize, "Well, we're all equally sinners before Christ, we're all the groundest level at the cross," and that's 100% true, but God has ordained in his sovereignty that he selected some men for special tasks and they're going to be honored in a special way.

Galatians 2:9, "and recognizing the grace that had been given to me," Paul's talking about himself, "James and Cephas," or Peter, "and John, who were reputed to be pillars." Even in the early church these men were esteemed as the pillars of the church. I don't know why, it's a silly thing but I remember, uh, uh, an evangelist one time talking about the

men in the church in that particular local church who thought themselves to be pillars and they really weren't. They considered themselves important but they really weren't and he said, "Yeah, they're pillars all right, they're caterpillars." Well, I don't know why that came into my mind, but these aren't caterpillars, these are holy men of God that God set apart for a position of authority and honor.

Revelation 21:14, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Your name's not gonna be on that. There'll not be giant foundation stones with the name Jeff Noblit on it or Jim Hatcher on it, or, or, David Young on it, only those apostles. Equal sinners to you and I, absolutely. Need the forgiving grace of God in cleansing like all of us, absolutely. But God said, "I'm giving special honor because I put these men in a special role and gave them a special gifting for a special task, apostleship."

Luke 22, uh, 28 through 30, "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you," now notice this, "that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." God hadn't promised you and I that, that's those 12 apostles.

So this, this was a one-time office of special men with a special anointing and gifting of the Spirit for a specific task, that is, to establish in the earth the faith, the Christian faith, the doctrines that you and I stand on today. They were or they presented, rather, the authentic interpretation of the Lord to the world. We remind ourselves this morning there is no way to Christ that detours around the apostles and the apostolic doctrine. There's no new word. Did you hear me? There's no new revelation. There's no new insight necessary to be forgiven of your sins, to know God, and to serve God faithfully in this earth. It was settled through those original men in that unique role and that unique anointing they had to fulfill and give us the holy Scriptures.

Their writings that basically comprise the, the majority of the New Testament, comprise the final word of God to man. Through the agency, the ambassadorship of these early apostles, the foundation has been laid and no foundation repeats itself. Don't want to spend a lot of time on this but we hear about those today and they're Apostle This or they're Apostle That. "Our church has these apostles," somebody might say, or, or, "We've got this new prophecy and we've got this new revelation." Here's what I want to say: there's no need for another revelation because the truth has been settled and set in the earth. The work of establishing sound doctrine was once-for-all given and the New Testament is complete and the word of God is the only standard for doctrine and it is adequate for all subsequent generations since the apostolic era.

Just to remind us, Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways," that's the Old Testament era, "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son," Jesus came and he was God's truth to us, all right? Now Hebrews 2:1-4, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will

we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Notice this, "After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard," i.e. specifically the apostles, "God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." In other words, it's God's will that these men had a special anointing, a special gifting to take the words of the Lord and put them into written settled form so we would have the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. God, he could've done it a million different ways, I supposed, but he chose to cause, call men, put them in this office and use them in the founding of his church.

Now just as one example of the errors that go on in our day, Satan generation after generation keeps throwing out counterfeits. He's the great imitator. Satan is the great counterfeiter. The most prime example that came to my mind studying this is the so-called Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or the Mormons. My understanding is they have a President and a Vice President, then they have a quorum of apostles, and they believe that there is continuing truth being given, continuing revelation that is essential, authoritative doctrine for the Church today, and of course, it comes through them. Joseph Smith founded the Mormon Church in 1830 along with his 40 wives, some of whom were barely teenagers, if that old. And he founded it and he formed this quorum of 12 apostles and they claim they are the restoration of true doctrine and a true church in the world, but there's one problem with the Mormon's Church quorum of 12 apostles, they're 1,800 years late. The apostles have already been established, they've already been gifted, they've already been anointed, they've already been empowered to set down for us the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. The Mormons and the quorum of 12 apostles in the so-called Mormon Church are usurpers, they're impostors, they're frauds and they're false teachers.

Now we can be kind to Mormons, we love our Mormon friends but their Church is blasphemous. Pulling no punches. Why can't somebody else jump up and say, "Well, we're still right and the Bible too." Another group jump up and say, "Well, we're still right and the Bible too." Another group jump, "Well, we still have..." And that's what they're doing today, by the way, and it happens every, I mean, there's wave after wave after wave of a new twist on what the truth is. You know, we've heard this phrase recently in our culture, I've mentioned it many times, "Oh, these issues are gospel issues. We've got to have this social action and this social involvement." Brothers and sisters, all I need to know about gospel issue is right here. If it's not clear here, I'm not chasing it as an essential doctrine, amen? You'd be running around like a dog chasing your tail and you'll be on all kind of secondary things that are important but are not the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints, permeated, superintended through those original apostles.

So let's today renew our commitment to the true apostles of Jesus Christ and, of course, this means a renewal to the Christ they taught and the doctrines that he laid down, a reaffirming of our commitment to the full authority and absolute sufficiency of the once-for-all given Scriptures, a joyous acknowledgment and a loving submission to God's structure for taking the once-for-all faith and administering it to the church, that is, God is now giving men in the office of pastor/teacher. Jeff Noblit is not an apostle. There are no

more but God gives pastors whose job is teaching, what? Why is teaching so prominent and preaching so central? Because they're to preach and teach the doctrine laid down by the apostles given to them by the Lord.

The New Testament requires you "to love your pastor/teacher," to hold in high esteem your pastor/teacher, to submit to your pastor/teacher, and to obey your pastor/teacher. Why, because he's personally worthy? I can answer that absolutely not, but because of the office he holds to give you the apostles' doctrine. That's why. Scripture literally says for his works' sake, for the job God's called him to do, not because he's somehow special. Yes, you're to honor him as the vessel God's given you but it's not him inherent, it's the role God's given him. Today the faithful preaching pastor is the primary means God has ordained for the mediation of the apostles' doctrine to this generation.

A couple of verses to lay that foundation. Ephesians 4:8 when it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." Now what all kind of gifts did he give to men? One of the gifts he gave to men was the offices of ministry in the church. We find that in Ephesians 4:11-14, "He gave some as apostles," that era's over, "some as prophets," and in the truest sense of the definition of that word, that era's over, "some as evangelists," and then where we are today, "some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." If you sit under a faithful pastor very long, you should find yourself not easily pulled away by the heresies and the false teachers and the latest new insights that float through our world today. This is the will of God.

So we talk about Paul's high office. He's an apostle. Paul wants us to see that. Paul wants us to get that. This is God's way he's saying. Paul's not on some ego trip to throw himself out as, "Oh, esteem me. I have the office of apostle." No, what he's saying is, "I have an awesome responsibility because I am in the office of apostle and I want you to recognize that." Now let's go a step further, it intertwines but a step further, II., Paul's holy calling. Paul's holy calling. Now he says, "I'm an apostle," in verse 1, let's continue on, "by the will of God." By the will of God.

Now Paul uses this same expression in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and basically the same idea in 1 Timothy when he said, "I'm an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment or appointment of God." In other words, this is the doing of God. "I didn't run for this office. I didn't, I didn't sign up for training to be qualified for this office. I didn't, uh, take some sort of application or, or, uh, test to find out if I was approved for this office. God put me in this office." That's what Paul is saying. His office of leadership and authority was in no way the decree of men. It was the decree of God and therefore the arguments of men or the agencies of men had no effect on his office or on his authority. Paul's writings and instructions carried with them the divine impress. They carried divine authority. That's what he's trying to communicate to

Timothy and to all who will follow his writings. Do you think Paul had any notion that 2,000 years later we would be holding to his writings for what we believe and how we function or to beautify the bride, her form and her fashion? I don't know.

Well, today you and I, we do not have the Apostle Paul with us but we have something better, we have the completed canon of Scripture and he would say that. There's nothing more God could say to us than that which he has said and is saying through his holy written word, the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." And on these things we stand. Now you might say, "Pastor, we agree with that. We know that. We, we affirm that." Well, I want to re-preach it again, first of all, because that's basically what Paul's saying, "Listen to my words because they came from God." Because it's so very easy for a church to slip off of it. It's so subtle and it's so ever a temptation to move away from the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. One day I'm gonna be gone and you teenagers and you college age folks and you 20s and 30s, some 40 year olds, you'll be the leaders in the church then, and there'd better not be a man in this pulpit who preaches anything but that which was once-for-all delivered to the saints, recorded in the word of God. No doctrines of man. No current emphasis. No culturally relevant ideas. The word of the living God and that alone. If you let somebody in this pulpit who does not believe that, I will come back and get you, and if I don't, God will. The old songwriter wrote, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord/Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word/What more can He say than to you He hath said/To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled."

Now when he says here in the text, "I'm an apostle by the will of God," the word "will" there means a determination. It could be a choice or a purpose but I like that "determination." It's God who has determined that this is the right course, who used these men, Paul included, as his original office of apostle and called them to this role to establish the doctrines which make up the Christian faith. This is God's will and his will is always wise, his will is always good. It cannot be otherwise.

All right, quickly, Paul's holy purpose. We talked about his high office, we've talked about his holy calling, but now he tags on there and, and just in abbreviated form, his holy purpose. Notice how he words it there in verse 1, the last part, "according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus." I'm the apostle. I'm called to this office, this work, by the will of God and the reason, the purpose for it is this ministry of bringing the true life of God to mankind.

A. T. Robertson is esteemed as the greatest Greek scholar Baptists have ever produced and he says you can paraphrase that phrase "according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus" this way, with a view to the fulfillment of the promise of life. Paul says, "I'm here as God's apostle to bring the true doctrines that the Spirit of God will bless and bring the true life of God to men who are dead in their sins. I'm living out the actualization of the truth of God in men's lives. That's my purpose."

Paul's calling to apostleship was to that actualization of bringing new life which is the nucleus of the new creation, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation." The only way you can be a new creation is if you realize the new life coming into you. When one is converted or saved, he's changed, the Bible says, from death unto life. Now this is a spiritual life and it has power, powerful effects in our lives now but it's also spiritual eternal life and that means it, it's real now but it continues forever all through the eternal state.

1 Timothy 6:19, Paul said it this way, "taking hold of that which is life indeed." You have, you have a life right now, you're living right now, some of you fighting hard to keep living and so am I and that's good, but you don't have life indeed, the real thing, the life that really matters until you get this life Paul's talking about and Paul said, "That's my purpose, is to bring that real life that natural man doesn't have." You see, if you're, if you don't have the real life, you function sorta like a, a beast, you just function by your lust and your desires, and your longings, and once you're a participant in the new life, you begin to see higher beauties, higher joys, and higher purposes are all in God. God begins to wean you away from this base lower life of only living by your wants and lusts and desires into a higher life. There used to be an old stupid beer commercial that called itself the High Life. It's not the high life, it's just a dumb version of the low life. God through the indwelling Spirit gives you the new life and we begin grasping it and comprehending it and joying in it and loving it and walking in it, and longing for the day when the old life is taken away and we'll all be full of just the new life. Paul said, "That's what I'm about. That's my purpose."

So this new life Paul's talking about here isn't just a better version of the old life we were born with out of our mother's wombs. Boy, I'm so tired of that junk. I'm so tired of that nonsense, if you just do this, if you just do that, if you'll just be about this cause and that cause we can make the world a better place, and there's good in that, of course, but my friends, God's not about patching up the old wineskin, he's about creating something new in your heart and only the gospel of Jesus Christ energized by the Spirit of God can change you and give you this new life. It's life that is life in the highest sense, a life that contains all the blessings and glories of heaven which are ours now and which will be enjoyed to the full in heaven later. By the way, heaven's just not a perfect example of the fun and joy this life – listen to me, listen, church – heaven's just not a better, you know, a guy says, "When I get to heaven, I'm gonna fish every day." I don't know, you might, but, but here what you're missing is God has a transcendent, elitist, infinitely greater understanding of pleasures and joys and fulfillment and you're gonna drink that in the full when you get there. Now look, now you see through a glass dimly, now you just taste it. You saw it on my preaching on Sunday, and if the Spirit of God's in you, occasionally go, "I kind... about fell of that edge right there. "I about taste, I taste that. I kinda see that. I don't see it in the full but I kinda see that." That's my job is to help you grab for it and long for it and look to it because one day it's gonna be all you got and you won't miss the old life at all. You won't miss the old life at all. The worst thing that can happen to you is not die of the corona virus, the worst thing that can happen to you is when this life is over, you don't get the life indeed.

The Bible uses a lot of metaphors. The Bible's got a lot to say about this new life. It uses a lot of metaphors to describe this new life. He says we're made alive in Christ Jesus. The Bible calls it the resurrected life. The Bible calls it a new creation. The Bible calls it being a new man. The Bible calls it being born again or born from above.

The Bible speaks of us having a new song because we've got new life. These churches today, so-called churches today who have begun to bring the most vile, worldly-wrought pop music into the worship service to try to get people to come to church. How in heaven's name can you get a glimpse of the loveliness of Jesus Christ and want your church to give you anything out of this world? I want you to see him, not a, another ugly, vile, corrupted, polluted, sinful portrait of this world. That's why the Bible says we have a new song. We've got a new song. The old songs don't do for me what the new songs do. We've got new songs, the Bible says, because we're of a new covenant, a new agreement, a new contract, but it's stronger than that and it's initiated by God with us through his Son Jesus Christ. And the Bible says we've got a new heaven and earth waiting for us and a new Jerusalem.

Paul said, "My purpose given to me by God is to bring about, to bring into reality this new life for men who will then, of course, assemble together." Now look, once you've got the new life, you're not happy if you're not around other folks who've got the new life. You just, you just, you miss church some but something keeps drawing you back. "I've gotta get around those new life people. There's some weird ones down there but they've got the new life. They kinda joy in the joy God's given me. They kinda treasure the things God's causing me to treasure. They have the priorities that I now have that I have the new life." So you assemble in local churches and will assemble in those local churches until the day when all is consummated in the one glorious church as the glorified bride of Christ in the new eternal kingdom of God and there, the Bible says, we shall be with him and he shall reign forever and ever and ever.

The Apostle Paul says, "I want you to know something, Timothy, and this is laid out for all Christians of all ages, I'm God's apostle. I didn't choose it. I, I didn't nominate myself for it. God put me in it. I've unique authority and unique gifting. It's the will of God and my job is to lay out the truth of God, the foundations of the doctrines of the faith that last for time and literally for all eternity and that truth centers in that God is now forgiving men of their sins and imparting into them the life that Adam lost for us in the garden of Eden, and the life, the presence of God in us."

Let me close with a few thoughts called conclusions of practical application. I'm aware of the time and we're about done, all right? Let's renew our conviction on the authority and the sufficiency of Scripture. I mean, right there were you are, say, "God," in your heart, "God, I renew a conviction, the 66 books of the Bible are fully authoritative," now listen to me, "and wholly sufficient for all faith and practice." A lot of voices out there in evangelicalism today that are, in effect, Dr. Seal, in effect, telling us it's no longer sufficient. There's truth in there but we've got to dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. I don't need the dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah because this is sufficient. Have I not been screaming this for 40 years and you're still here. Our bills are paid. We're out of debt. Ladies, we're getting a

new parlor. I mean, God blesses the truth. Amen? And God willing, before I'm worn out we'll have a training institute for the Portuguese speaking world, that's a big part of South America and a part of Africa. We've got it in the Far East. Who knows what's God gonna... God blesses that conviction. This morning, let's reaffirm we hold to the absolute authority and full sufficiency of the word of God.

Now practically speaking, let's reaffirm that we honor or give high honor to the preaching of the word of God, that we understand somehow Paul, God didn't have to send apostles to preach and write but he did, and in our day he sends men to preach the word. Well, let's reaffirm. There's so much that needs to be said right here because there's a dire scarcity, a dire delinquency of men faithfully preaching the word, but there's even a more dire scarcity of congregations who honor the preaching of the word. Are you with me, church? I'm one of those rare pastor/teachers who have a strong majority of my people who highly esteem the preaching of the word that would say, "Pastor, we don't care if you sit on a bush-hog all week, we don't care if you stand on your head in the corner, get ready to preach. Get ready to preach." And I do other stuff but that's the one thing I feel like you'd want me to do. That's a high honor, the preaching of the word because you know God's ordained that as the primary means that you'll get to heaven, your babies will get to heaven, and your grandbabies will get to heaven. I don't know about you, but my, my grandbabies are in this church and if I don't get to be their pastor/teacher, you'd better put somebody over them that will preach them the undiluted whole counsel of God because their eternal souls are at stake. You hearing me?

So let's re... I know you're there but let's reaffirm it this morning. Let's reaffirm to give high honor to the office of pastor/teacher in the church. You live that reality and I appreciate that and I thank God for you. There's so many today who make the pastor/teacher job difficult for their pastors, and they're, they're a thorn in the side of their pastors and they talk about the failures and the, the weaknesses of the pastors, and by the way, God uses weak men but you've gotta get beyond that and say, "No, but that's what God says is primary so we're gonna do what Paul said in 1 Timothy and show double honor because of not the man but the office and how important it is."

Lastly, let's reaffirm to continue a lifetime plan. Now some of you've gotten older and you've gotten lazy and you gotta stop it. We need you old folks to have wisdom and help us, help the younger folks. So old folks and younger folks, let's reaffirm a continual lifetime plan of Bible reading, Bible study and Bible memorization and meditation. I started memorizing and meditating on Scripture over 40 years ago and this week meditating on this text God impacted my life. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, office, according to the will of God, holy calling. So spread the truth, the realization of the imparted life of God to men and we carry strong and fast to the end.