

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God

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We're returning to our study of the book of Titus. We're finally going to finish this morning our look at the introductory four verses. We've seen over the past month how packed these verses are with great profound truth if we just take time to consider them and that's what we've tried to do and we've been encouraged by what the Lord has shown us out of his word about his work in the salvation of the redeemed, his love for his own Son. The Father's love for his Son as we saw last time, God loving his Son so much that before time began, he promised to his Son to give him a redeemed people who would praise him after the end of time, who would see his glory and praise him and worship him and give glory and honor and thanks to him, to be in heaven, to be with Christ, having been redeemed from their sins and for that to be the ground of their praise forever. All of that would show forth the great worth of Jesus Christ and so it was a glorious, glorious theme that we were able to be able to share in last week.

Now, as we come to the final two verses of this opening introduction, I frankly am just astonished at the side-by-side with that great theme of the promise of God the Father to God the Son from long ages ago. Let's read the first 4 verses of Titus together to help set the stage and then we will go through the last 2 verses together here this morning.

“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.”

The Apostle Paul is writing this letter of Titus in order to establish young churches in the faith, the young churches that were specifically on the island of Crete back in the first century. They were disorganized, they needed leadership and Paul writes to Titus to give him instructions on how to do that. As he writes and as he introduces this letter to Titus, we've seen that he establishes the authority by which he writes. He is a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is sent, Paul the apostle, is sent with divine authority in order to have this work and to establish these churches and he operates under the direct authority of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Now, as we saw last time at the end of verse 2, that Paul is writing about things that God promised long ages ago; that he promised before time began as we saw last week. And so, he's writing these great things about the great purposes of God that are going to be established throughout all of eternity and how is it that God is going to bring those things to pass. How is it that God goes from a promise made to his Son before the beginning of time so that those purposes are accomplished at the end of time? Well, it is not what you would suspect if you were going to write this up on your own.

Look at verse 3 with me again. Paul is showing that there is a progress in the revelation of God, there is a progress in the purposes of God. Yes, he made promises long ages ago at the end of verse 2 but in verse 3, we see that there is a chronological progression when Paul says, "God promised this long ages ago but at the proper time manifested even his word." And so, God established these promises but these promises were going to be fulfilled in time. They are going to have their outworking, their overflow in time in human history and Paul says, "This is manifested even as I proclaim his word which was entrusted to be me according to the commandment of God our Savior." This is spectacular and what this does, what we see revealed here in verses 2 and 3, in the hinge between verses 2 and 3, is we see the reality of evangelism in the context of the sovereignty of God.

How is it that sinful men and women like you and me, how is it that a sinful young person who maybe hasn't even reached their teen years, how is it that they are brought into the family of God? How is it that God determined, how did it please God to make sure that this redeemed people that he promised to Christ before time began, what was the guarantee, what was his method of bringing that to pass? He had a goal in mind. God had a goal for future eternity that he was certain to fulfill, how was that going to come to pass? Well, think about it this way: it's important for us to understand that God not only appointed the end which he intended to accomplish, God also appointed the means by which that goal would be reached. Think about going on a trip in your car, you're going to drive to Boston, Massachusetts for some reason. You determine in your mind, "This is where I want to go. I'm going to go to Boston and I'm going to drive there by car." Well, part of the means of getting from northern Kentucky or Cincinnati for those of you that live there, you've got to determine, "What is the path? What are the roads that I'm going to take that will lead to my destination?" You see, it's not enough for you simply to determine, "I'm going to be in Boston at the end of the day," you have to determine the means by which you are going to get there.

In a much more profound way, God determined that there would be a people that at the end of time would be praising his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he determined alongside of that the means by which those people would come to be. He determined the means by which those people would be redeemed. All of this part of his sovereignty, all of this part of his divine plan but what you and I have to understand because it has such profound, magnificent implications for us individually as Christians and also for us corporately as a young church starting to take root, is that we have to understand the means by which God wanted this to take place. God did not simply sovereignly zap people to become redeemed. He didn't just sovereignly snap his fingers, as it were, and say, "This group is now part of the family of God." It was much more rich. It was much more textured and he chose to do it through human instruments and we see that in verse 3 when Paul says, "God's promise from long ages ago is now being manifested in the proclamation with which I was entrusted." We see side-by-side God establishing eternal purposes and side-by-side with that, the means, the road map to get there, is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He works through the human proclamation of the gospel in order to bring about his sovereign, eternal purposes which he determined before time began. This is rich and magnificent and has very far-reaching consequences.

I want to lay out three principles for you this morning that will help you see this and help us understand not only the purposes of God but the means by which he brings them to pass and what those implications are for us individually and as a church that it's taking root and we're going to be humbled by this, we're going to be awed by this and we're going to have a greater understanding of the way God works out his sovereign purposes in bringing to pass the salvation of men and women from every tribe and tongue throughout the ages. This is magnificent.

Point 1: the reality of election. The reality of election. Paul describes in verse 1, he describes the redeemed as "those who are chosen of God." Look at verse 1 with me, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ," now watch this, "for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." What the Bible teaches in the fullness of its revelation is that God, as he had established this promise to Christ, "I am going to give you my Son, a redeemed people." As God was doing that prior to the foundation of the world, God chose, God knew in advance who he wanted to constitute that people. God chose certain men, women and children out of the entire history of humanity to be the recipients of saving grace. He did this not through the works of what those people would do, not because he saw the future faith that these people would have, God chose these people out of his sovereign prerogative

for his sovereign pleasure so that he could deliver – watch this, this is really important – so that he could give to his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, exactly the gift that he wanted to give him at the end of time.

We have to understand that humanity in one sense is very secondary to God's purposes in salvation. The real purpose of God in salvation is for him to say, "My Son," God the Father speaking to God the Son, "here is the gift that I have for you." It's glorious. It's wonderful. It's magnificent. This is what God gets to do for his Son. He gets to establish the parameters of the gift that he gives and we must start, if we're going to think rightly about salvation, if we're going to think rightly about what God is doing as he works through the preaching of the gospel, we have to start there, that what God is doing is he is bringing to pass in time, at the proper time throughout the outworking of the centuries, he is working out exactly the gift that he wants to give to his Son, that he wants presented to his Son at the end of time and you and I as redeemed people, you and I as Christians, we're part of that. We get to be a part of that gift. We get to share in the outworking of these eternal purposes. We're part of what God is giving to his Son.

When you view it from that perspective, so much clarity is brought on the objections that are often brought to the doctrine of election. Why doesn't God give it to everyone? That's not fair! What about this or that? Well look, before you get to any of those human questions and the implications from man about the reality of election, you have to start and understand that God has the sovereign prerogative to do whatever he wishes with his gift of salvation and it is up to God, it belongs to God, to give the gift that he wants to give to his Son. Can you imagine those of you that are parents, can you imagine that you sat and you determined a gift that you wanted to give to you beloved daughter, to a beloved son, and you say, "I know that this is perfect for my son. This is the athletic equipment that perfectly fits what he needs and he will excel and it will be good for him. This is the clothing that my daughter loves and I'll give that to her and here's how I'm going to go about doing it. I'm going to get it from this place and give it to her at this date and I can't wait to see her face when she receives the gift that I have chosen for her out of my own choice." Can you imagine somebody hears you talking about this and steps in and starts to tell you that you should give her a different gift? Someone that doesn't even know you? Someone says, "That's not the right gift for your son and what about your cousins? Why aren't you giving gifts to your cousin at this time as well? What's the matter with you?" You step back and you say, "Who do you think you are? This is my family relationship. This is the son and daughter that I love. I know what will please them and I want to give them this. This is none of your business, to question the gift that I would give to my own family, that I would give to my beloved son. Get back in the proper place where you belong. This isn't yours to decide."

We have to view it from that perspective. Salvation, Jonah 2:9 says "belongs to the Lord." Salvation is his gift and first and foremost, it is the Father's gift to the Son and we as men and women who share in the redemption that he's planned are part of it. Now, I realize, it's no secret in our man-centered world that some people do not like this doctrine. It's no secret that people get angry when they hear this taught. It offends their sensibilities. It offends their human reason. It affects their sin-destroyed sense of fairness as if they were more fair than God is. Can you imagine bringing accusations against a holy God? That a man whose breath is in his nostrils knows better about what's good and righteous and just than what the holy God, the holy Creator of the universe does? Please. Please, that's totally inappropriate particularly when we see – watch this – it is so inappropriate for man to respond this way because the Bible clearly teaches that God chose who would be saved as an exercise of his sovereign prerogative. As the holder of the gift that he's going to give to his Son, God has the prerogative to be able to give it as he wishes.

I want you to see this in a few passages. We'll go through this rather quickly. Ephesians 1, I want you to see Ephesians 1, one of the cornerstone passages of this. Just after the book of Galatians; just before the book of Philippians in your Bible, in your New Testament. We must have the right perspective on this or we'll go wrong at every other point in the existence of Christianity. When this is clear, everything falls into place. When this is obscured or attacked or mocked or misrepresented, the clarity and the glory of God in salvation is proportionately diminished as well. Ephesians 1. The same apostle that wrote Titus is writing Ephesians and he opens up in verse 3 and notice how he is praising and blessing God, "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." This is just exactly what we've been saying all along in the last week and this week: God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Before time began, God chose those that he wanted to be the recipients of saving grace.

Turn in your Bibles to the right toward the book of Revelation to 2 Thessalonians and what I want you to see is simply this and there is so much more that I could and probably should bring out but for the sake of time I won't, I just want you to see that this is not an isolated theme in the New Testament nor is it an isolated theme in the Old Testament. God chose the nation of Israel in the Old Testament to be the unique recipients and dispensers of his revelation. He chose a nation; he chose one nation amongst the nations of the world. This is his prerogative and we must, we must humble ourselves and acknowledge that if this is what God wants to do, then he has the complete freedom and pleasure to do that and it is not ours to argue with it, it is ours to submit and worship and give him glory and honor him for what he did. We must understand. We must understand who God is and who we are. If you get that straight in your mind that God is the sovereign, glorious majesty of the universe and we are creatures with a limited life span and a limited perspective diminished by our own sin, when you start from the right perspective then you don't think that you're going to bring God to account to what you think is fair, you're simply going to put your hand over your mouth and say, "If this is what Scripture teaches, then God has done all things well and I will submit and bow to him and receive this with humility."

2 Thessalonians 2:13, the Apostle Paul says, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord," they're the objects, they're the recipients of God's love, they are beloved by the Lord. Why should you give thanks for them, Paul? "Because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." God chose you from the beginning for salvation. Paul says, "And I am an apostle. I am a sent one of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sent in order to turn the Gentiles from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of light, and here you are, you're in the kingdom of light. I can see that Christ is carrying out his purposes and that gives me cause and grounds for thanks. I have been able to share in ministry to you. I see the Lord Jesus Christ saving you and bringing you to pass. I see the fruit of ministry and I know that it's simply a carrying out of the purposes of God from before the beginning of time and therefore I thank God for you." He chose you from the beginning for salvation.

Turn over just a couple more pages in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 2:10. Paul, who suffered much as an apostle and he's writing here in 2 Timothy at the end of his life, he says, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen." "They are chosen and I'm an apostle, I'm the one sent by Christ. I'm commissioned for the sake of the faith of these chosen ones and therefore in the wisdom of God, I understand that I suffer for this. I endure it all; I patiently endure these sufferings for the sake of those that God chose before the beginning of the foundation of the world so that they would be certain to receive the salvation that he appointed to them." And notice here in 2 Timothy 2:10, the end goal that is in mind from salvation. He says, "I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that," there's a purpose in that, "they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it," this is what we've been talking about the last two weeks, "with it eternal glory." "I endure these things so that they'll be saved not only in this life but they'll receive with it eternal glory. They'll be in heaven throughout all of time. They'll be in the eternal state loving and praising God. That's going to be glorious. They're going to see Christ. That's why I endure these things. It's inconsequential by comparison that I would endure a few years of suffering if I could carry out my commission," this is Paul speaking, "if I can carry out my commission from Christ. If I can fulfill that, God would save the ones that he chose and they would receive eternal glory. That's the point of it all, my personal suffering is secondary."

You see, the Bible teaches the reality of election and when you understand why God saves us, it's so that he can present something to his Son, then you realize that God should do exactly what he wants to do. It is not unfair. It is not unjust. It is not unrighteous that God did not choose everyone for salvation. That's entirely the wrong perspective. We need to remember that all of humanity is fallen, sinful and rebellious against God. You and I were born into sin and we lived out sin and we enjoyed sin and rebelled against God and did not thank him and did not love him and did not obey him. For some quantity of years prior to our conversion, it would have been righteous and just for him to have judged us and condemned us, to pour out his wrath upon us for our totally inexcusable rebellion and ingratitude toward him. That would be just and everyone in humanity falls under that condemnation. So what we see is that it's not unfair that God didn't choose everyone for salvation, what we see is that it's gracious that he chose anyone for salvation. The fact that some are saved is an expression of grace, not an expression of injustice. Perish the thought! Let such

profane things never come from our lips and bring an accusation of injustice against God! “Who are you, old man, that answers back to God like that?” Paul says in Romans 9.

Let me give you another illustration to help you illustrate this. Nancy J. is sitting up here on row 3. Suppose that you're all watching and I'm interacting with Nancy after the service and I reach into my wallet and I pull out a \$20 bill and say, “Nancy, I want to give you a gift. I hope that this encourages you. Go and have a nice meal someplace or whatever you want to do but this is for you and I want you to have it.” Better yet, suppose that you gave that gift to Nancy and people are watching as you do. That would be a gracious gift on your part. Nancy has no claim on anything that's yours; nothing in your wallet belongs to her. You took what was yours and you gave it to her and said, “This is an expression of love to encourage you along the way this week.” You do that and it gives you pleasure to do that. That would be a good, loving, gracious thing for you to do. Nancy, don't get any ideas here. This is just an illustration not a promise. You give that gift to Nancy. Does that suddenly obligate you to give \$20 to everyone else that's in the room? Does the fact that you show kindness to one obligate you to show the same kindness to everyone? Obviously not. As you give one gift, you still retain possession and prerogative over everything else that you still own. If someone came up to you, if I came up to you and I said, “Hey, I saw you gave \$20 to Nancy. Where's mine?” You would look at me and say, “What is the matter with you? You're sick. It doesn't work that way. I didn't offer the gift to you. That doesn't mean I've wronged you, it simply means that I was gracious to Nancy. It's what I wanted to do.”

If somebody tried to insist, “No, you must give \$20 to everyone.” You would say, “I'm sorry, this conversation is over. It's time for you to go.” And you would be right and just to say that. Your gift doesn't obligate you to someone who makes demands who has no claim on you. You would automatically – listen, for those of you that have wrestled with this doctrine and are still not sure where you come out on it – if you put yourself in the position of the giver of the gift, you will automatically embrace God's prerogative to do what he wants with salvation because you would never tolerate somebody demanding that from you. You would recognize it for the greed and the ingratitude that it is. If I've been gracious to one, I haven't wronged you by not extending the same gift to you. My gift to one doesn't obligate me to give the gift to everyone. Salvation belongs to the Lord. It's his to distribute as he wishes.

That's the reality of election. Scripture teaches it. God is gracious and good and let me say one other thing here before we leave this topic. It's so hard to isolate one strand of these theological issues and just focus on them because you can focus on election and just think that it turns it into something cold and that's not the case of Scripture's teaching at all. What you have to understand is: although God has a particular redemptive love for his elect, it's not that he's suddenly ungracious to those who don't receive salvation. He is good to them: he send the sun and the rain upon them equally, the righteous with the unrighteous; he pours out goodness and they enjoy the graces of human love and human enjoyment and relationships. All the while, all the while, suppressing the knowledge of God and rejecting Christ and showing no regard for him, God is good to them all along anyway. They get to wake up and see a beautiful sunrise. They get to wake up and enjoy their families. They get to wake up and do other things that they find contentment in. All of this is an expression of the goodness of God upon their lives. The fact that he goes further with some does not mean that he's been unkind and ungracious to others. We need to see all of this from God's perspective and bow and honor and worship him in response. That's the reality of election.

Second point for this morning. What we see as we continue on in this opening passage of Titus is the requirement of evangelism. The requirement of evangelism. We've see the reality of election and now we're going to look at the requirement of evangelism and this will help clarify even more as we go along the justice and the righteousness and the goodness of God in all of these things. The requirement of evangelism. Look, the elect are not automatically saved in the sense that they are not saved apart from human means. In order for someone to be saved, they must hear the gospel so that they can believe. This is the means, this is the road map that God has chosen. He has chosen, he has established the means of evangelism and preaching to be the means by which sinners would hear of their lost condition, be called to repentance and faith in Christ so that they can be saved. This is the way God has ordered the spiritual universe, as it were, so that people would hear the gospel and respond and believe that it pleases God to save people through the medium of preaching and evangelism and people must hear the gospel so that they can believe.

Look at verse 3 with me now of Titus 1. Paul says, “but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God.” Okay, Paul is talking about the preaching, the proclamation of Jesus Christ that he was entrusted with. He was sent out to be a proclaimer of the truth of Christ. Now, go back up to verse 1 for just a moment as we try to keep all of these marbles in the same hat. I don't know where that particular turn of phrase and metaphor came from, marbles in the hat here, we're going to keep them in the same hat. Paul had said, “I'm an apostle for the faith of those chosen of God. It's for the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness. It's in the hope of eternal life. God promised this before the beginning of time.” Then he goes on and says side-by-side with that, in his mind, he had just spoken about eternity before time began and says, “This is brought to pass in the proclamation which I'm preaching now at the present time.” This God entrusted the message of eternal life to Paul and then commanded him to go and preach it. You see, the way that God brings about – watch this – the way that God brings about the salvation of the elect which he determined before the beginning of time is through the preaching of the gospel in the midst of time. That is how God brings it to pass. It's done apart from human means. God works concurrently; God works alongside; God works through human instruments in order to achieve his eternal purposes in the salvation of the elect.

So, what we see here in verse 3 is that right alongside God's sovereign prerogative in election is the human responsibility of proclamation. This is a requirement of God upon his people and if you think about it just in practical terms, if you think about it in terms of your own life experience, you realize how profoundly true this is. Every one of you that is a Christian here today in one sense has a human obligation to someone who shared the gospel with you beforehand. You did not come up with it on your own. Perhaps it was a parent who raised you in the things of God. Perhaps, as in my case, it was a newspaper column that I read for a period of weeks that said you need to repent and believe in Christ as this human pastor was counseling people in a newspaper column, repent and believe in Christ. Perhaps it was a friend in college or something like that. You look back on your own life experience and you realize that someone brought the gospel to you in a human way and it was through that that God accomplished his eternal purposes of saving you. He did it in time through a human instrument.

Well, it's the same way. That's the way that it works. We teach and preach here Sunday-by-Sunday so that we can hear, so that we can communicate it to the next group of believers or that we can be equipped individually and we can go out and we can share it in a sphere of influence of people who will never darken the doors of this place. It's a requirement. This is the way that God does his work of salvation. He's chosen to do it, his road map to do this, was through human instruments. Look, I want you to step back and think about this for a moment because this magnifies the glory of God even more than if he simply zapped people as independent exercises of his sovereign power. If he just hit them with a spiritual lightning bolt and knocked them down and picked them up and they were saved and nobody else was involved with it, he could have done it that way if he wanted to but the fact that he chose to use human instruments more greatly magnifies his glory than if he had done it differently. Think about it with me: you and I are saved because some human being in some cases, in a lot of cases, we don't even remember, shared the gospel with us. For some of us its people who are dead now. They're not even here and they had no human ability to make you believe. For some of them, they had no human reason to love you, to care about your soul. There was nothing in you that prompted them to care about you and they're weak, sinful people in their own right and they just came and they humbly gave you the gospel in one manner or another. Look at that from a human perspective and you say, “This is all so weak. This is so liable to fail.” And for some of you including me, there were people that came and shared things with you and you mocked them. You laughed at them when they first started to share Christ with you or you resisted it and stubbornly said, “I'm not interested.” And God somehow through their persistence and overcoming and over-ruling your stubborn unrepentant heart brought about a new life and a new birth in your life.

How on earth does a manner of great eternal consequence that changes the trajectory of eternity for your life, how on earth does that come to pass through some simple person coming and opening up a Bible to you? You can't explain that humanly. Listen, you know from sad personal experience that it doesn't always work out that way. Those of you that are faithful to share your faith, you probably have more stories of people that have rejected you than people that have received the gospel and received Christ. Why is that? Why is it that so many have rejected you but some have responded? Well, it's obviously not therefore in

your power to bring it to pass or you'd save everybody that you could with the gospel. But you can't do that. It's outside your power to do it. How is it that you've opened up your heart and responded and believed after rejecting the gospel 10,000 times before? Listen, we should quiet our hearts in response to truth like this and in the recognition of the fact that the power of this must come from God when he pleases because we don't have it in our hands to dispense as we wish. It's not like we can swing a ball bat and hit somebody and that saves them, that would be in our power. This is not and the whole point of this is that because our human weakness is so evident, the fact that God achieves eternal salvation and fulfills a plan before eternity through us and in us, the fact that he does that with utterly impotent human instruments, shows how great his power is. He is able to accomplish what he wants through the weakest of human vessels.

There have been times for some of you where people have responded and received the gospel when you stumbled over the presentation and you would have flunked a theology exam if you had said it the way you did because the words just didn't come out right. God working, over-ruling, working through your weakness and thereby displaying his power. In a different context, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, "His strength is perfected in our weakness." He displays his power through our weak inability to save anyone and our stumbling, stammering words as we try to share the gospel. God's power is shown all the more in that he displays it through weakness.

Now, none of that was in the notes. That's alright. It's all true. What we see as we come back to Titus 1:3 is that God entrusted the message of eternal life to Paul. There was a human responsibility on Paul and, listen, it was a weighty responsibility and Paul was conscious of having an eternal message entrusted to him that he was to go and share. He realized that that placed a responsibility on his shoulders and he felt the weight of it. Look back to 1 Corinthians 9. Part of the reason that we so frequently turn to the Scriptures themselves is it's so vital for you to see this with your own eyes and to see the Scriptures for yourself and not simply take my word for it. There is a responsibility upon you as you hear the preaching of the word from this pulpit, you need to turn to the pages, you need to see the verses for yourselves. You need to not take my word for anything but to see it in the Scriptures and say, "Oh, that's true. I see it for myself." You have the responsibility to learn in that way.

Here in chapter 9, verse 16 of 1 Corinthians, Paul describes the responsibility that he feels as a proclaimer of the gospel, as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He says, "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, "There's responsibility on me that I must fulfill. I have to fulfill this or it's not going to be good for me. You know, Christ commissioned me to be an apostle of Christ. I have to fulfill that. I have to obey that or I will be held greatly accountable." He felt the weight of his apostleship. It's a weighty responsibility.

God saves people through the preaching of the gospel. Turn to Romans 10. You see, what this second point teaches us is that we should not view election abstractly. We should not be having abstract discussions and speculations about election unless it brings us into a recognition of the responsibility that we have. Romans 10:13, Paul says, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Right there you see that we should not try to restrict our preaching to the elect alone. We preach the gospel, we announce salvation to anyone and everyone that will hear and we say with all sincerity and scriptural authority, "Whoever will believe on the name of the Lord will be saved," and therefore we preach broadly even though we understand that God is not going to save everyone. We announce the gospel, we preach it to everyone and we gladly, gloriously proclaim, "If you will call on the name of the Lord you will be saved even if you've been rejecting him for decades. His grace and his arm of mercy is still extended to you through the gospel, through the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now in verse 14, what we see here is that we don't look at that and say, "Oh, but God has chosen who will be saved and therefore we don't have to worry about it. There is no responsibility on us. There is no requirement on us." Paul says, "Don't be ridiculous. Don't be ridiculous. These things aren't meant to be viewed abstractly, they're meant to be lived out." He says in verse 14, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" If they're going to believe on Christ, don't they have to hear about him? Well, God has entrusted the speaking of that to the church. He's given us the responsibility to go out and proclaim it. He says, "They're not going to believe if they don't hear so go and preach." Continuing on in verse 14, "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?" How will the preachers preach if someone doesn't send them? Woven throughout all of this is the reality of human responsibility: on our part as the church to evangelize, to preach the gospel; on the part of those who hear, to believe. He wraps it up in verse 17 and he says, "So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ."

No one can say they are elect until they personally believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your belief in Christ is proof of your election. If someone is not saved, if someone does not believe, their responsibility, the obligation upon them, God's command to them is to repent and believe in the gospel and that's what they focus on, that's what we bring to their attention. Look, the gospel says that you are required to repent and believe in Christ or you will suffer eternal judgment and so I ask you, I invite you, I plead with you: come to Christ for your personal salvation; believe on him so that you can be saved; you must call on him for the forgiveness of your sins. The only way that that's going to happen is if someone evangelizes them and shares the gospel with them. So, what we see is that God has linked the accomplishment of his eternal purposes of the salvation of the gift that he wants to give to his Son, he has linked it with the human preaching of the gospel in time. This is the manifestation of his will.

Charles Spurgeon said in a print that I have gladly displayed in my study, Charles Spurgeon said and I quote, "If it had not been for earnest teachers that beckoned us to come to the cross, we had never come." We never would have come to Christ if someone hadn't called us to do that. Well, now that you're in Christ, now that you've been on the receiving end of that, now it's your responsibility and opportunity and privilege to be on the giving end of that, to be the one who gives the message now that you have received it.

Look back at 2 Thessalonians 2. Remember, we just looked at verse 13 a little bit ago. "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." Watch what happens, linked right to it in verse 14, "It was for this He called you through our gospel." They received the salvation through the fact that the gospel came to them through the Apostle Paul. It was through his preaching; it was through the preaching of the gospel that they came to that. Look, I love this at the end of verse 14 in light of what we've been talking about the last two weeks, "He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." God had chosen them from the beginning. Paul preached the gospel in time. They received salvation and coming later for them was going to be the inheritance of eternal glory.

Turn over one last passage on this point that I want you to see. The requirement, the responsibility of evangelism. The requirement or responsibility of preaching the gospel. 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God," look at this, "God was well-pleased through," there it is again, there is that word "through." He had appointed his eternal intentions but he brought them to pass in time "through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

Election and preaching are handmaidens to the same goal. It is the reason that preaching can succeed is because God has appointed what he wants to happen. We offer Christ to all men and promise them that a gracious God will forgive their sins if you believe in Christ. Think about it differently: God hasn't given us a roster of the elect and then we just go out and find them and check off names as we go. We go and preach indiscriminately the gospel of Christ and through a message that the world rejects, God redeems his own. That's why we preach. It's the means that God has chosen to accomplish his design of election amongst his people so that he can give a gift to his Son.

Now, final point for this morning. There's a sense in which, a very real sense in which we should feel the utter inadequacy that is ours to be involved with such a task. Who is it, who among us is worthy and powerful enough to be an instrument like this? Do you realize that when we talk about the gospel, we're talking about the most sacred message in the universe? Forget everything that you see on the internet this past week or in the week to come, forget all of the news headlines that you see about silly news stories. It's all going to fade away and go away and amount to nothing at the end of time. No one is going to remember

Obamacare at the end of time. No one is going to be talking about Treyvon Martin at the end of time. All of the things that are dominating national discussion right now are going to be utterly inconsequential. What's going to matter is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, what God did for the salvation of his own and that is what is going to stand and be the proof that stands the test of time and stands the test of eternity, for that matter. This is what's great. This is what's glorious. This is hidden, in a sense. This is not appreciated by the world around us. We hold a message that the world despises and we hold a message that was born out of the sacred desire of God the Father to give a gift to his Son that he intends to use to save people throughout ages and across cultures until the end of time. And you and I with our sinful lips, with our sometimes indifferent hearts, with our prayerless approach to ministry and life, we're the ones to bear that message? We're the ones as we speak to a lost individual or as we speak to a lost group that heaven and hell are the consequences for them based on how they respond to this message? We weak human instruments of clay are going to be the instruments of this kind of glorious message?

Turn to 2 Corinthians 3:5. Paul says we don't consider ourselves adequate as coming from ourselves, "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," but in myself who is adequate for these things? My inconsistent life and my sinful lips would be instruments of God saving his own to present them to Christ at the end of time? You see, the majesty of this exposes our inadequacy and our unworthiness to be involved in such a sacred task and yet it's what God wants from us.

Look over at 2 Corinthians 4:5. Paul says, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. God is the one who has shone in our hearts to get the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." He says in verse 7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves." You see, that's what we were saying earlier: the fact that God takes this message and uses weak human vessels like us displays his power, his greatness, when by every human calculation this should have failed and been forgotten back in the first century. There is no human way, there is no human explanation to stand before me and say, "A man crucified on a Roman cross in shame and disgrace is the only Savior of mankind throughout all of humanity." There is no way that that message makes sense. That's incomprehensible. He was judged on a cross by, admittedly, godless human men but there he was crucified like a common criminal, like 10,000 others were and more throughout the centuries and you're going to tell me that this man, this man from a forgotten race of the Jews in a remote corner of the world called Palestine, that he alone is the Savior of mankind, he alone is the one to whom you must bow your knee and plead for forgiveness for the salvation of your soul? That's the message that we preach. Humanly speaking, that's ridiculous. But it is that message that alone is true. It is that message that alone is the power of God and because the message by human standards is foolishness because the instruments are human and weak. The fact that God achieves salvation through a message like that, through instruments like that, show that the power of it is real and it belongs to him alone.

So, while we see our requirement for evangelism, we have to remind ourselves, third point here, of the resource for our effectiveness. The resource for our effectiveness. You know, I have no patience for so-called preachers who stagecraft everything and they're really slick and everything is choreographed and there are lights, not that these lights are bad but, you know, light shows and all of that that surrounds their preaching. The whole point of preaching, the whole point of the gospel is to minimize the human instrument and maximize the person being proclaimed, the Lord Jesus Christ and when men make it about themselves, when men wrap themselves up in human attention and glory, they are diminishing and taking away the one thing alone that can give their preaching power.

We need to see the resource for effectiveness. Titus 1:4. In his opening greeting, Paul providentially under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows us what we must remember. This great glorious cause of God to redeem his own. This great responsibility of evangelism and our own incalculable weakness and unfitness for the task humbles us, brings us to our knees and makes us grateful for what we see in verse 4. Paul, "To Titus, my true child in a common faith." Titus is spoken about in the New Testament, especially in 2 Corinthians you see his name mentioned prominently, apparently one of Paul's own converts and Paul is writing to him about to give him instructions for the building of the church on the island of Crete and he opens with this greeting, "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Here in this

little greeting, we are reminded of the only thing that we can depend upon as we carry out our ministry. We are reminded, we are brought face-to-face with our own inadequacy and our utter impotence to be able to accomplish this great glory on our own. You can gather crowds around with lots of promotion and lots of fake signs and fake wonders and you can gather people around but you can't convert a one of them through that kind of stuff. The only thing that's going to bring about the conversion of men, of changing sinners from death to life, is the power and grace of God.

So, we're reminded as we see here as Paul says to Titus, "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus," we are reminded that if we are going to have any success in evangelism, if our church is going to have any lasting impact, if our church is going to be used at all to save any single soul, we have to despair, we have to forfeit, we have to surrender any claim of ability, power or ingenuity in order to be able to bring that to pass. We have to surrender ourselves and humble ourselves before the grace of God alone to be the operative principle that would give success to anything that we do. If conversions take place through the ministry of Truth Community, it's not going to be through your power or the power of your pastor. Your pastor is utterly impotent. Your pastor has no power in himself. We are all collectively weak and inadequate for this task.

How is it then that we get up in the morning to pursue it? How is that we open our mouths before people who have rejected the gospel for so very long? Why is it that we set our hands to the task of establishing a work here? It's because we believe in the grace of God. We believe that God graciously over-rules and works through our weakness and our incompetence in order to achieve his eternal purposes. We do it because he has required us to do so. He's commanded us to go and we look and we say, as it were we say, "God, you command us to go? Okay, I'll go. I'll go, God, but you must go with me if this is going to matter, if this is going to produce any fruit." As you go to share the gospel with your loved ones, you must do so with a conscious dependence on the enabling sanctifying grace of God to give fruit to your work or it will all be in vain. The greatness of our responsibility and our utter weakness remind us of the fact that we must fall on our knees and ask God to bless it because if he withholds his blessing, we open our mouths in vain. The greatness of the task and the weakness of the instruments throw us upon the grace of God as the one operative principle, the one operative dynamic that could ever make it have any use, otherwise we're clanging cymbals restlessly bouncing against each other in the wind producing sound briefly but achieving nothing.

Beloved, we've got to come to the end of ourselves and realize that this is something that God must do. We must rely on Christ, not our own strength, if we're to succeed in the task that's given to us and that means something for you and for me. I'm glad to have you visitors with us. I'm glad you're here. Those of you that are here and you consider Truth Community your church home, what I want you to see is that this should produce in us a deeper, more profound, sense of dependence and drive us to prayer and say, "God, have mercy on us. God, help us. Human ingenuity is going to take me nowhere. God, you've got to show grace and make this happen if it's going to matter. You've commanded us to speak, now be with us in the task and bring about the fruit that only you can do. Our resource for effectiveness is found in your grace and if you withhold your hand we labor in vain." And so we see from our responsibility of evangelism that we need grace for the task and we labor knowing that God will be faithful to his word. We share the gospel individually just wanting to be faithful, knowing we can't produce the result but we'll be faithful and trust God to do with our labors what he wishes.

J. I. Packer says and I'm closing with this quote, wrestling with the issue of God's sovereignty and our responsibility for evangelism, he says this and I quote, "Far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless for the sovereignty of God creates the possibility, indeed the certainty, that evangelism will be fruitful." It doesn't depend on you to save somebody. You can't do that but you evangelize trusting God and knowing that he can and when you're conscious of that, it makes you pray, it makes you plead, it makes you urgent before God. You say, "God, help us! God, help me! Help this loved one who is not responding to the gospel. God, you've got to help!" And the lack of urgency in your prayer life is a reflection of the fact that you haven't quite grasped this as deeply as you need to yet, for if we grasp this at the level of which Scripture teaches us, we would be on our face before God pleading for help rather than strutting around in our boastfulness about what we can or cannot do.

Let us remember two things as we close. Let us remember that God does the work of salvation and trust him for that. Secondly, let us remember that God commands us to speak and obey him.

Let's pray together.

Father, we just present our lives and our ministry to you and ask you to bless them according to your will. Father, we've just been in and around and through the gospel here and there are people here who still do not know Christ. We ask you, Father, that you would save them and open their hearts to believe the things that have been spoken. Father, we ask you to bless our church and we ask you especially, Father, for those loved ones that are on our hearts. We ask you to save them, to help us speak and use our words to accomplish your salvific purposes in their lives. Father, it's no empty ritual, it's no formality that we go through.

People are saved when we speak the gospel and you bless it to their hearts and so help us to speak and as we do, Father, give us visible, tangible, obvious fruit to our efforts that would give us tokens, visible tokens of the fact that you are aware of what we're doing and that you're blessing it. Father, it's not that we question that, it's just that we want to see the fruit. Father, why would we plant fruit trees in our yard if we were never going to taste the fruit? Why would we plant gardens, Father, if we weren't going to taste of what the garden is supposed to produce.

O God, O God, give fruit in our individual witness and in our corporate witness and in the preaching from this pulpit. Give fruit not that Christians would be able to debate things better, Father, we don't care about that. There is enough debate and enough books to go around for the world for the next 2,000 years. We don't need that, Lord, what we want is the fruit of souls that you have brought into your kingdom and that you would help us to that end. Only you can do it, Father. May your grace and peace attend every motion of our ministry from this day forward until the end of time. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.