

Truth in Practical Life

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Bible Verse: Titus 2:1
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Well, this year we've celebrated the 10th anniversary of the founding of Truth Community Church. It was 10 years ago this week that my entire family arrived to settle into northern Kentucky and pursue the ministry long-term, and so it's kind of a time of reflection in my own life and for multiple multiple reasons, and when we first started the church, one of the early things that we did was we taught through the book of Titus and we wanted to do that to establish a foundation, a blueprint for a young church, we said. We were laying the foundation for something that we wanted to build on. Titus was a letter written by the Apostle Paul to his student, you might say, his fellow laborer Titus who had spiritual work to do on the island of Crete and Paul is giving him instruction on what needed to be done and what needed to be taught in order for the spiritual work on that island to flourish.

And so we taught through that book in 2013 from June to December, and the fact of the matter is that there has been a lot of change and turnover in our church since that time, and not only are a lot of you new to our church since 2013 but also even some of the young people that are in families that have been with us the whole time, the little ones have grown and now are in a position to understand and to receive this truth in their lives really for the first time even if they heard it when they were a wee one on their mother's knee. And what I want to do for the coming several weeks in the summer, is I want to restore that foundation and go back to those foundational truths for both those new and old, and we've already started that kind of unintentionally, you might say, when we looked at elder leadership a few months ago in Titus 1, and we've preached through several texts in Titus 1 in recent months, what I want to do now is to pick up in chapter 2 and chapter 3 and just go through that systematically through the rest of the summer. And what I want to do to start this new season, this new series of exposition at Truth Community Church, to start it I want to read the entire chapter 2 from the book of Titus and so if you'll turn there with me, our message this morning is only going to be from verse 1 but I want to set all 15 verses in your mind. So if you'll look there with me, beginning at Titus 2:1 where Paul says to Titus,

1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what

is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. 6 Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. 9 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. 15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

One of the things that should be immediately encouraging and a great incentive for you to approach this time in God's word not only today but over the course of the remainder of the summer, is that every one of you is personally and directly addressed by the teaching of God's word here. You know, there are two categories of people in the world, there are men and there are women. Full stop. There are no other categories. A few years ago you wouldn't have even had to say that but now today you do. But notice in chapter 2, verse 2, that he addresses older men and older women. Notice that he addresses young women in verse 4. He addresses young men in verse 6. And even if you are not at your age of majority, you are addressed also when Paul talks about how young women are to love their children. Starting at the base, you have children, you have younger men and younger women, you have older men and older women. Every one of you falls into one of those categories in one way or another, so that immediately you see that the word of God is very relevant and practical to your life with whatever it has to say in this text. Whatever it says, whatever it means, whatever the application is, we all come and we all find that there is specific instruction to our specific station in life.

So that's just a general observation to realize that this is speaking to us all very personally and very directly, and so I would encourage you to redouble your efforts to be with us as you are this morning, and to come with a sense of a receptive teachable heart to what God's word has to say, and what we're going to find is that much of it is very countercultural, much of this cuts against the grain not only of the way that the world thinks but the way that the church thinks and the way that the church lives, speaking broadly and I would not be faithful if I didn't say it even cuts against the way that many within our own body believe and the way that many within our own body live. The Scripture comes not only to teach us and encourage us but it also comes to correct us and to reprove us where our thinking is wrong, where our living is wrong, and we need to have the humility to come before God's word and say, "Speak, Lord, your servant

listens." Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" And beyond that, beloved, if Jesus is truly Lord in your life, then understand that he is Lord not only over what you do but he is Lord even over the way that you think. You are not at liberty to disagree with the Lord in what he gives in the positive instruction of his word. You're not at liberty to have segmented portions of your life that are not under the Lordship of Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. He's Lord of all creation because he created it all. He's the Master of it all. When the Lord saved you, he saved you to be his own.

Look there again with me in verse 14. This is all so fundamentally important to understand that in his work on the cross, in the saving purposes of God, he was doing far more than simply trying to deliver you from hell so that you could live anyway that you wanted to here on earth in disregard to his Lordship. That is not biblical salvation at all, and what each one of us need to understand and to come to grips with that if Christ has saved you, he has explicitly stated his purpose in that in Titus 2:14. Look at it there with me, "[He] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed," we kind of get that, "and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession." He redeemed us from sin, from the penalty and he broke the power of sin in our lives when he saved us, now his purpose is to purify us, to sanctify us to gradually make us more and more like himself. So he's purifying us and cleansing us from remaining sin in our lives and the purpose of this is that we would be – look at it there in verse 14 with me – that we would be a people for his own possession, that he would own us, that we would be his slaves and he would be our Master, that he would be Lord and we would be his subjects. And as you're going to see, this is not only in what we do but it is in all that we think. Everything that we do and everything that we think comes under the comprehensive Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ.

So for some, that's an alien concept to the way that they think about salvation, and for many even if they embrace that in principle, they distance themselves from it in practice. Well, Titus 2 helps us to overcome all of those things and what we see in this chapter, beloved, is this: this is more than simply us coming to the word of God and trying to find things that will help us live rightly, okay? It does that and we can do that, but there's more going on here than that. It's not simply a matter of our self-improvement. When we come to this text in Scripture based on what we were just looking at from verse 14, what we see happening is this, is that the Lord Jesus Christ himself through his word is coming to us and asserting his supremacy over every aspect of our lives. This is Christ through his word asserting his will upon us and calling us to greater conformity, to come out from the world, to be set apart and to be devoted completely to his purposes so that we would be his people, his possession, zealous for him and zealous to do everything that he's called us to do. This is lofty. This is surpassing.

And you know, and I honestly, Nathaniel and I were talking about this just before we came in, just about the need for our church, need for our church to grow in all of these things, to grow in our actual desire for sanctification, to not just go through the motions and not just earn our living and just go through life and enjoy the good things that earth has to offer, but to come to the place where our hearts are burdened for truth, that we're

eager to know truth and eager to apply truth to our lives. And I'm grateful as I see the Lord bringing people to our church, new people to our church, new life, new blood, who have come for precisely that reason. We just want the truth, is what I've heard so many new people say over the past several weeks.

So as the Lord does this in our lives, you know, providentially he's going to use chapter 2 to advance his purposes in each one of us because it applies to every one of us, as we saw, this umbrella is comprehensive over all of us in Titus 2, but it's also over us corporately as well. And my prayer and my desire is that the Lord would use this to deepen our commitment to the truth that we committed ourselves to 10 years ago, to deepen that work and that he would transform us into a people that are even more for his possession, even more zealous for good works. And the question that I don't want a verbal response here in what I'm about to ask, but the question for each one of you is that your desire as well? Is this what you embrace for what you want? Or are you just comfortable and satisfied in your own level of attainment spiritually and not feeling much need to go beyond it of where you're at? Well, if that's the case, may the Lord stir in your heart and wake you up because we all stumble in many ways, we all need to be reprovved, corrected and trained in righteousness by the very word of God.

So we embark on this wonderful journey. Now as we come to chapter 2, just let me reset the context for you a little bit. Paul had just addressed in chapter 1 the need for Titus to refute false teachers. You see it in verses 10 and 11 of chapter 1. He had just set forth the qualifications for elders and emphasized the importance of elders doing this at the end of verse 9, they need to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Listen, a biblical ministry is going to repel people, certain people that have wrong biblical convictions, that aren't interested in sound doctrine, who contradict it either in their teaching or in their living. That is unavoidable in biblical ministry. There is a dividing line that comes in biblical ministry and elders are charged to press that and to make it clear. To build people up in sound doctrine, yes, of course that's essential, but also there is this element of refuting those who contradict, of dismantling and destroying their philosophies and speculations. And you will see even in chapter 3, that those who cause divisions are to be reprovved and rejected. In chapter 3, verses 10 and 11, there is an unavoidable element of that in biblical ministry. We must understand that, beloved. We must realize that the Lord separates the wheat from the tares, he separates the wheat from the chaff, and that is going to be an inevitable byproduct of biblical ministry. It could be no other way and it is stated very clearly here as a responsibility of elders to identify those issues and to make the teaching clear upon them.

So he says that at the end of verse 9 and he goes on and he addresses it in verse 10 where he says, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," meaning the Jewish influence in the church. And what are we to do with them? What was Titus to do with them? Verse 11, "who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain." And in verse 16 Paul goes on to say, "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." And so Paul has identified the need for elders and he has identified

specifically the contrary subversive elements that are in the church at that time that needed to be refuted and silenced in order to advance the health of the overall body of Christ, and to protect the people that come under the realm and the umbrella of the biblical ministry; part of the elders' responsibility is to silence those voices and to refute and redirect those influences that would undermine godliness in the lives of the redeemed. Why? So that Christ could have a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds. You see, this is intrinsic in biblical ministry. This is essential to biblical ministry and churches that try to just avoid that and just smooth over everything with everybody as much as they can and never engage in conflict and never fight for doctrine, never advance doctrine and say, "This is true and this is not true," are not fulfilling the spirit of New Testament ministry. So you and I here at Truth Community Church, you and I need to understand these things and realize the purpose of God as revealed in his word through what is happening.

So with that little bit of background, chapter 1 ended with this note of how you deal with wolves in the midst, now in chapter 2 there's a pivot point, there is a turning point. He's now going to address matters within the body of Christ and he turns to the positive instruction that builds up the church. We're going to see three principles just from verse 1, chapter 2, verse 1. Let's read that one verse again here. Notice the contrast. "But as for you," he's making a contrast now between the false teachers and the subversive influences that he was addressing at the end of chapter 1, now he's pivoted and said, "Now, Titus, I'm going to talk to you about what you do in the midst of this. As you are establishing elders, as you are establishing the church, here's what you are to do," he says. Chapter 2, verse 1, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine."

So we're going to see three principles from just that one verse actually, it's amazing how much God packs into a short passage of Scripture. But first of all, we want to see the good distinction, the good distinction that Paul is laying down for Titus. One of the things that I love about the book of Titus and about this particular point in the book is that it clarifies where the battle is, and it clarifies the instructions for the soldier of Christ. It gives him his marching orders and it makes it clear what is to be done, what is to be thought, and what is to be acted upon, and what Paul is doing here in chapter 2, verse 1, is he is emphasizing the constructive teaching that is to be put forward by Titus in his ministry.

That opening phrase there, "But as for you," it sets up a sharp contrast and one of the things that we have to do is we have to look at what's happening in the world around us and recognize the evil that is in it, we have to look at broad trends within the so-called evangelical church, recognize the good and recognize a lot of bad that's going on in it, and even coming in more personally, coming into the church and realizing that not everybody in the body of Christ is necessarily the greatest example for us to follow. We have to, beloved, we have to think and recognize what is going on so that we can distinguish the influences that we should embrace and follow and even the people that we should embrace and follow, and then the influences and people that should be rejected because they are not on the path that leads to godliness.

So Paul having outlined everything in verse 1 about the false teachers, comes to Titus and he says, "But as for you." Now what I'm about to describe is, you know, a little bit too harsh for the setting but it will make the point. It is as though Paul and Titus had been kind of looking around and surveying, picture them surveying the landscape around them and then Paul steps into Titus' line of vision, puts his hands gently but firmly over Titus' face and says, "Titus, look at me. Look me in the eye. This is what you are to do in the midst of this landscape, here's what you are to do." He's looking Titus straight in the eye and saying, "Now in light of all of this difficulty that's going on, here is your responsibility, young man. This is what you must do. I cannot do this myself. You have to do it. This is your charge from God for what you are to do." And now, beloved, for each one of you in the room, Scripture by extension is coming to you and gently but firmly putting the loving hands of a sovereign Savior against your spiritual cheeks, you might say, looking you straight in the eye and saying, "This is what you must do in response to what you see going around you." And remember, this is the Lord Jesus Christ communicating and commanding to his people what they are to do through his word.

Look at chapter 2, verse 15 with me again. We've seen that everyone is addressed by it, older men and women, younger men and women, children, everybody is under the authority of this text, and what Scripture says in verse 15, what Paul said to Titus and what carries over to the church today is this, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority," literally with all command. This is an authoritative word from God as to what you must do and, "Let no one disregard you." We are not free to take, pick and choose here what we like and what we don't like, what we'll be comfortable with the world and not bring us into too much conflict within the world, within the church. We're not free to that and so Scripture comes to us individually, it comes to us corporately, and grabs us and looks us in the eye and says, "Pay attention. As for you, this is what you are to do. This is how you are to respond." There is a distinction. There is a different standard, beloved, for you and me than what is in the world. There is a different standard than what is acceptable in a lot of so-called churches today. We come to Scripture directly and we say, "Lord, speak. Give me instruction. Tell me what You want and I will believe and I will have faith and I will do."

That is the spirit in which this passage calls us to respond to the word of God and not everybody's there. Not everybody's there. Not everybody's earnest about these things. What will it be with you? What will it be with you as we come to God's word here today? You young people, even, are you going to take your cues from the way that your friends act, and take your cues from their carnal dismissive behavior, their indifference to the word of God? Are you going to blend in like a chameleon with them so that you can be accepted by them? Or will you stand apart from that and say, "No, no, God saved me that I might be zealous for good works, that I might be a people for His own possession, and whatever that means, I'm going to pay attention and when God looks me in the eye from Scripture, I'm going to look back and I'm going to stare into the eyes of Scripture and say, yes, I want the Spirit of God to conform my life to what God says here." You see, there are spiritual commitments here that are just running everywhere in every aspect of life, aren't there?

So what does Paul say to Titus here in verse 1? Well, Titus has a different standard and Titus here, the good distinction is what we're seeing, what Paul is saying to Titus, first of all, is that in this good distinction he is to be distinct in ministry. Distinct in ministry, that's a subheading under the first point, the good distinction. Titus is to be distinct in ministry, and what elders in particular but every Christian is to be distinct in, is that we must recognize false teaching and reject it decisively. We're not in a position, we don't have the liberty to just get along with everybody who teaches things or practices things that contradict Scripture. We're not at liberty to just say, "That's okay. They have their truth, I have mine." It's not like that in biblical life, in biblical ministry, in biblical thinking. Paul tells Titus, "You must stand apart from the false teachers that I've just been talking about. You must stand apart with sound doctrine, with healthy teaching."

Look at it there in verse 1, "But as for you, Titus, you speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. You think about what you believe and you contemplate what you say before you say it so that you know what the truth is and that you're mindful of the way that it is being articulated so that it will have a helpful impact on those who hear and upon your own soul." You see, church leadership not only condemns error but it builds people up in what the truth is, and you can see this in other pastoral epistles that Paul wrote.

Turn back just a couple of pages in your Bible to 1 Timothy 6:3 through 5 to start with. 1 Timothy 6:3, look at what the Bible says about false teaching, "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." He says, "Look at the false teachers," and Paul gives a Spirit-inspired analysis of their thinking, the impact of their teaching, and the motivations which cause them to do that.

Then he goes on in verse 10 as he describes and verse 10 becomes a bridge from the negative into the positive. He says, "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." Now look at what it does in verse 11. It is the exact same concept of what he's doing in Titus 2:1. He has spoken about false teachers and now he redirects the conversation, he grabs Timothy, as it were, by both sides of his face and he says, "Timothy, look at me. Look me in the eye, Timothy, and pay attention to what I am about to say because I am addressing you now." Verse 11 he says, "But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Elders, including those who aspire for spiritual leadership, you know, we have a lot of men in our church that are starting to devote themselves to serious reading, serious study in one way or another, and I'm very very encouraged by that. Elders, church leadership and those who aspire for church leadership must understand this crucial point that the responsibility

for church leaders is to speak the truth of God as revealed in Scripture, and to speak it with depth. God's word is to be taught with depth, not with superficiality.

I can't remember as I'm standing here where the church was or who it was that told me, but somewhere a few years ago there was a church that was going to start a big important series on the book of Ephesians. Well, that sounded great at the time and, you know, those who loved the word of God that were in the environment at that time said, "Okay, we're going to address things and, you know, I'm going to get to hear the truth from Ephesians and where our church stands on this." Well, it ended up being, what, a five or six week series that started in chapter 2, verse 15, skipping over everything about election and the Triune work of God in salvation in Ephesians 1, and the depravity of man in chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, and monergistic salvation in verses 4 through 10, and the necessity to live good works after coming to Christ in faith. Skipped over all of that. That's not serious, beloved. That's slicing and dicing the word of God to your own effect and your own desires. It's not teaching the word of God in-depth.

Paul tells Timothy, look at it again in chapter 6, verse 12, it says, "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Look, beloved, look, the duty and the responsibility of a church if not every individual man of God, the responsibility of biblical ministry is to teach the whole counsel of God and to teach it accurately, to teach the whole counsel and not to pick and choose just with series of topical messages that never go through anything systematically, that avoid the hard truths of Scripture because it might drive someone away, someone might get offended, someone might get angry if they're called to repent from their sins, someone might get offended if a personal matter in their family is addressed as being ungodly and something that requires attention. Biblical ministry doesn't have the luxury of just passing over those things for the sake of what extends the broadest but the most superficial veneer that allows everybody to come in and be comfortable. That's not biblical ministry and, beloved, for those of you that love the truth, and I know that so many of you do, that kind of ministry should not even be attractive to you. It should not be appealing to you, to realize that those who avoid the difficult truths of Scripture are not giving you biblical ministry. If you love the word of God, if you love the word of God then you want it in all of its fullness and that's what Paul is speaking to these disciples as he is about to exit the world stage and pass the baton to the next generation.

Go back to Titus 2:1. He speaks to Titus and he says, "But as for you," can't tell it in the English text, in the Greek it's a singular "you." He's talking to Titus, you, not y'all, not you all. Not the plural, he's addressing Titus with the singular and Titus had a special ongoing duty for biblical teaching. And beloved, and speaking to my fellow elders and for those that aspire for church leadership in our body, we must understand this and even our deacons, some of whom do not teach, do not aspire to teach but this is your responsibility as well, to understand that we never outgrow our responsibility for sound biblical teaching, to support sound biblical teaching, to grow in our private knowledge of these things and to let them be the mark of our discourse in our conversation both on the platform and off the platform. This is to be the focus of elder leadership and we never

outgrow the responsibility. Sound doctrine is preeminent in church leadership priority. Sound doctrine should continually occupy the thoughts of men who are in leadership. That is the responsibility. And this can't just be, beloved – you know, you get into these things and you just start to, it all just starts to come out, you know, you poke a hole and it just all starts to leak out – this is not a passing matter. This is not something that we do for a while as a passing interest like some ladies take up quilting for a while and then set it aside and don't go back to it. This isn't a hobby. This isn't a weekend retreat. This is what godly men give their lives to. Even if they have so-called secular employment, the passion, the priority of their life is to know the truth, to grow in it, and to grow in obedience to it, and to lead others in it as well.

"Speak the things that are fitting for sound doctrine," he says to Titus. We never outgrow this. We never move beyond it. For spiritual leaders, this is why we exist is to uphold the word of God and that has consequences, you know, it has consequences for a pastor. It means that a pastor has to make preparation and teaching the priority of his life. The priority of his life. I remember years ago back in my prior ministry, it has nothing to do with anyone here. I think I've mentioned this a time or two, there was a man in my ministry who was about my age, and his demand on me, his desire for me was that I would be available for him whenever he wanted to call, whenever he wanted to meet, whenever he wanted a hamburger with me, I needed to drop what I was doing and go out with him at his bidding. And some pastors, you know, I think some pastors maybe live that way but that's not the biblical pattern, that's not the way that it works, beloved. A pastor has to make his preparation and his commitment to doctrine, commitment to biblical truth the priority of his life.

Go back to 1 Timothy again as these pastoral, different pastoral epistles help us to understand what Paul is saying to us. 1 Timothy 4 in verse 14, actually go back to verse 13. 1 Timothy 4:13-16. Paul tells Timothy, "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." Paul takes Timothy by the cheeks and says, "Timothy, pay attention. Here is your priority in life. Pay attention to your teaching. You have responsibility for your own soul and you have responsibility for the souls of those that listen to you, and you need to teach them rightly about the nature of salvation for their eternal good." Beloved, this is a big thick book that is not mastered on the sidelines. It's not mastered in an occasional devotional reading with your daily devotional at the side. This takes pain. This takes labor over years, and this is what Paul is saying to the men who would rise up after him, "Pay attention to your teaching because there's a lot that rides on it."

Look at 2 Timothy 2. Come out and be separate. Be distinct in your priorities. Be done with lesser things, is the command to those in church leadership. 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be

ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness."

Then as we've referred to often in recent weeks, chapter 4 of 2 Timothy, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Why? Why is it so important? Why must the man of God be absorbed in these things himself? Why must he have a clear commitment to them in his life priorities and what he gives his time and his lips to? It's because there is a subversive element that is continually at work trying to erode the foundation of biblical truth, of the foundation of the church. Verse 3. And the problem is found frankly in the pews. The problem is often found in the pews. Verse 3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." Who's the "they"? The people that come for teaching. They don't want sound doctrine, "but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."

You know, if I were sitting in a pew right now instead of in the pulpit, you know, I often speak of the terror that I feel when something strikes me as I'm preaching. Well, I hope that there's a sense of fear and terror that strikes you in the pew, recognizing that the pew is often driving and providing a counter-influence that is not in accordance with sound doctrine, that's not in accordance with sound teaching. You wouldn't want to be a part of that, would you, that's undermining the work of the word of God because of the demands that you make on a pulpit, that it teach what you want to hear? I have people that tell me that, "Here's what you need to teach on." They want to dictate to the pulpit from their carnality what the church ought to teach. They want teaching in accordance with their own desires. Beloved, that's not biblical. That's deeply sinful and it results in people turning away from the truth so that they can have myths that make them comfortable. But for the man of God, for the elder, for those that aspire spiritual leadership, and I know that there are some of you that are like that and I thank God for your presence in our church, we need you and we need you to grow. We need you to continue on that path and not just making it a passing intellectual interest. We need men that want to live like elders even if they don't have the title. That's what we need. Listen, let me say that again because that's really really important. We need men who want to be elders whether they have the title or not, men who are devoted to truth whether they have the title or not, whether they have a platform to teach or not. That's what we need. That's what every church needs is men like that, and those of you that are on that path, I thank God for you. Just keep doing what you're doing and let the Lord work out the timing of what opportunities are for you. Settle it in your heart that you're going to set your heart in this direction.

Then verse 5, you see the call on spiritual leadership, "But you," there's the contrast again. The world is like this, carnal people in the pew are like this, "But you, Timothy, here's what you do, you be sober in all things, you endure hardship, you do the work of an evangelist, you fulfill your ministry." Why? For Paul, "I am already being poured out.

I'm about to go. The end of my life has come, Timothy, and now the responsibility devolves upon you to take up this responsibility and be faithful to it for the purposes of Christ, for the purposes of the word, and for the good of the people of God that He redeemed to be a possession for His own good name." High, lofty things that we're seeing here from the word of God.

Now listen, beloved, that kind of teaching ministry doesn't just happen. This is not something that a man can put together in a couple of hours on a Saturday evening and then come and step and deliver the word of God clearly and with authority and with accuracy. It doesn't work like that. It requires the man to give his time and focused attention to it over the course of life. Listen, listen, a biblical pastor gladly serves his people, gladly enters into their sorrows, their joys. Biblical elders, I'm not just limiting it to the office of the teaching pastor here, he gladly does that. But do you see that a biblical pastor, a biblical elder, cannot let his social calendar, as good as it might be in and of itself, he cannot let a social calendar compromise his primary duty to study and teach. He can't do that. He can't do that. He has to give his attention to these things, be absorbed in them so that progress would be evident to all. A local congregation, a church congregation that affirms that priority for their pastor, I'm speaking beyond Truth Community Church here in this moment, a congregation that affirms that priority for its teaching pastor and respects his study time is a church that receives the long-term benefit of it in return.

Now I said we're in our 10th year anniversary time here at Truth Community Church, let me just say with gratitude to God and to those of you that are responsible for it, that Truth Community Church has shown that kind of consideration to its most unworthy pastor, and that pastor appreciates what the spirit of commitment that the body has shown toward that priority. You know, Acts 6:4, we must devote ourselves to the word of God and to prayer. A pastor can only do that if he has a congregation that understands, supports, and allows him to do it. So there are decisions that congregations have to make. Another thing that Nathaniel and I have talked about a lot in recent years, in recent months, I should say, you know, is just that there are people that just as I was alluding to the guy who wanted me to go out to get a hamburger whenever he wanted, there are people who think the duty of the pastor is just to be their relational buddy, and their approach to ministry is that, you know, it just has to be entirely relational. They don't understand. They don't understand that that persistent demand has the ability to undermine biblical ministry. If dozens, if hundreds of people bring that same expectation, it crushes church leadership under an expectation that they can never meet and requires them to compromise their preeminent priority as defined for them by the word of God itself.

So a church has to decide what it's going to stand for, what it's going to be, what is its preeminent priority going to be. Scripture has defined it already for the people of God. Go back to Titus 2:1, that there is to be a distinction, a good distinction in ministry and a distinction in commitment, I don't know if I said that second point, but the distinction in commitment is for Titus to recognize his responsibility to be devoted to biblical teaching.

Let's go to the second point here today and realize the emphasis on good deeds, on good deeds. You have a good distinction, Titus' ministry is to emphasize good deeds. One of the things that you see about the culture in which Titus was ministering is that I was very much like our culture today. He was ministering in a culture that was deceitful, lazy and rebellious.

Look at chapter 1, verse 10. He says, "there are many rebellious men," Titus 1:10, "there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers," verse 11, "who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves," Paul is going to quote a secular poet of the time. "One of themselves, a prophet of their own," this is one of their own people says this about them. He says, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." That's our culture. Watch the commercials for any sporting event and what it drives people to do, what it calls people to do. Well, the church in the first century was born into that culture and the people needed to grow in that. They needed to grow in lifestyle, come out of that lazy, rebellious lifestyle and into the productive living of a child of God.

So Paul tells Timothy what it is that he is to speak. He assigns to him that content of his teaching. Verse 1, "you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." You see, beloved, and a lot of people don't have the patience for this but they pay a long-term price for their rejection of it. God uses sound doctrine to cause believers to grow in grace. We'll see this more in a moment. Paul explains what he means by the things which are fitting. This is really important for what's going to come in future weeks here from our pulpit, really really important to understand. Paul says, "you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine," and then he goes and he tells them, "You speak to these various categories of people within the church, the men, the women, and the children, and you give them these specific instructions." That, what follows, are the things that are fitting for sound doctrine, and it's amazing in that lazy, evil culture how much Paul emphasizes that there are to be good deeds brought forth by men and women in the church.

Look at the emphasis on good deeds quickly in verse 7, chapter 2, verse 7, "in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds." Verse 14, Christ "gave Himself to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Chapter 3, verse 1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." Verse 8, "This is a trustworthy statement; I want you to speak confidently about it, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds." Verse 14 at the end of the letter, "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful." We'll look at this more in detail in coming weeks but what I want you to see is that there is a very practical element to what Paul is saying. There are deeds that are good, qualitatively righteous, and there's everything else. There's that which is lazy and rebellious and a waste of time. "Titus, you come and you teach them how they are to live and you speak and exhort with all authority, let no one disregard you."

This isn't optional teaching, beloved. This is not optional in the eyes of God and it is so important that it is emphasized repeatedly in the context. And as I like to say, it's not complicated, good deeds are not complicated in the body of Christ. It's as simple as this: see a need, meet a need. See a need, meet a need. Beloved, you do not need a spiritual gifts test to be useful to people and those kinds of tests not only are a waste of time, they are counter-productive. They teach people to say, "This is my gift. I don't do the other stuff." That's wrong. If you see a need which is in your capacity to meet, you don't need to ask, "Well, am I gifted for that or not?" If you have the ability to meet it, meet it. Accept it as a providential opportunity from the Lord.

I'll say this other thing as well and this needs to be emphasized too. You don't need a spiritual gifts test to be useful to people. You don't. Just be sensitive and available and a servant, that will take you a very long way. But what you do need to do, you do need to set aside with concern over the perceived wrongs that someone else has done to you. You need to set that aside and not be preoccupied with an unforgiving bitter spirit that, "So-and-so did this to me," and just start to separate and drawn back and, "Oh, there's an exit behind me. I'm going to turn out and go." That's not biblical living. That's not biblical thinking. That's not being engaged in good deeds. The word for that is selfish and bitter and resentful.

You see, biblical ministry transforms you and makes you productive. Here's a little test you can give yourself. You want to know how you can know if you're responding to a biblical ministry, not whether you're under one, whether you're responding to one? You'll know that you're responding to a biblical ministry when you find yourself saying, "My life is changing. You know, something's happening to me. My life, there's a different power that's at work in my heart and my affections and my desires are changing, and the things that I used to love I no longer care about, and the things that I used to ignore, those are the things that I find pleasure and joy in." That's when you know you're responding to a biblical ministry, say, "My life is changing," because you find yourself developing a course of pursuing the good deeds that God performed and put into your life. But what you must understand, beloved, is that that kind of biblical change in your life doesn't just happen in a vacuum. Biblical change, good deeds come from a different source. They come from another source. What you live is a reflection of what you believe. Not what you say you believe, not your affirmation of our Confession of Faith, what you really believe is shown in the way that you really live on a day-to-day basis.

We live what we truly believe, not what we say we believe and that leads us into our third and final point about good doctrine. Good doctrine. We've seen a good distinction, good deeds, and now we're going to see good doctrine and let me introduce this point with a brief quote from John MacArthur's book "The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness." He says this on page 8, he says, "I have often defended the notion that doctrine is inherently practical. What we believe determines how we think, how we behave, and how we respond to life's trials. Abstract beliefs never remain abstract, they inevitably manifest themselves in behavior. A right belief system therefore lies at the foundation of all truly righteous conduct."

Good deeds flow from good doctrine, not the other way around. Look at verse 1 with me again, chapter 2, verse 1. Paul says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you could equally say God says, "as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." That word "sound" has the idea of being healthy. Titus must teach things that promote healthy spiritual life and it is easy, beloved, especially in the foolish rebellion against God's order for men and women in the church that is so prevalent in other circles, and just focus on the roles for men and women that are outlined in chapter 2, they are there but it's easy to miss what they stand upon, it's easy to miss how central doctrine is to this entire chapter 2. I want to show you this just very briefly. Chapter 2, verse 2, "Older men are to be sound in faith." Verse 3, "Older women are to be," end of the verse, "teaching what is good." Verse 5, the young women are to live this way, "so that the word of God will not be dishonored." Verse 7, "in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine." Verse 10, slaves, employees are to live this way, end of the verse, "so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." Verse 11, "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires," and on it goes. Six times in those brief 11 verses you see an emphasis on doctrine, on teaching, on instruction. The word of God is central to these biblical roles that we're going to be considering. That's why it's so important that it be taught properly and accurately and that the man of God give himself to get it right, to cut it straight so that it lines up with the way it is to be.

And beloved, you see, you can't tinker with the gender roles without overthrowing the doctrine that underlies them. To oppose the gender roles described in Titus 2, the sexual biological sexual roles, is what I mean by the word "gender" there, is to oppose the teaching itself. The two are interlinked. They cannot be separated. And the truth of the matter is this, is that God assigns different roles to men and women in the church and the roles are there to illustrate, to make plain, to testify to, to advance the biblical teaching that underlies them. And so men, when Scripture calls you to be this way with these kinds of priorities, the word of God is behind it and you have a responsibility to live it out in order to honor the word of God that defines your role and your place in the universe. Same way with ladies, and this is absolutely contrary to the feminist spirit of our day. The word of God gives women and defines for women what their roles are to be.

Beloved, sound doctrine is foundational to life and to the church, and as a result of that, it is important for you to read Scripture for yourself, it is important for you to be at your church consistently under the word of God, letting the word of God feed you, wash you, cleanse you, conform you to what it wants you to be. People, you know, people miss for various reasons especially in the summer, my own wife isn't here today, out with a family on a family thing. I say that simply to say I get the fact that life takes us away from time-to-time and that's cool but, beloved, as we've said so many times, you need to examine your heart and see where the priority of the church in your life really lies. For so many, it's so easy to see that that priority is set aside for other things that really aren't urgent, really aren't necessary, are just a matter of personal pleasure, enjoyment or preference and, beloved, that pattern developed over time.... And here's the thing, decades ago I had a friend who made this observation to me and I've never forgotten it. He said people that are like that think that they're being faithful. They think they're being faithful. They don't

realize that they're gone 20 Sundays a year because they're not keeping track. They just have it in the mind that there's a general priority that I have for the church but they're not living it out, and the result of their unfaithfulness and the result of their sporadic attendance is they're not being built up and established in sound doctrine.

So it is important for you to read Scripture on your own. It is important for you to be at your church consistently so that you could participate in this biblical priority of emphasizing good doctrine that Paul calls upon all of the church to devote itself to. Sound doctrine builds healthy lives that bring glory to God.

So we're 10 years into it. By grace, do you know what we're going to do for the next 10 years? We're going to continue to teach sound doctrine and ask God to bless it to our souls and to the glory of Christ.

Let's pray together.

O God, O Christ, O Holy Spirit, help us attain to this sound living by Your kind grace. And to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be glory, power and honor now and forever and world without end. Amen.

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