

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

Commitments of a Powerful Leader, Part 2

Scripture: Titus 1:1-3

Code: 56-2

We return in our study of God's Word to Paul's epistle to Titus...Paul's epistle to Titus. We're looking at the first four verses. Originally I thought we could kind of swing our way through these fairly rapidly, but I find myself getting bogged down in the immensity of truth that is here. I told you, you'll remember, this is a condensed vacuum-packed little book and as you open the lid on it, it tends to expand. And that is what my experience has been in my preparation.

We're looking at the first four verses which are a somewhat normal salutation, a little longer than most and a little more detailed. But this particular portion is more than just a salutation, it has more than just some historical interest, more than just a particular curiosity to Titus himself because in this opening, in this salutation, the Apostle Paul is presenting elements of his apostleship. He's dealing with features of his own life and ministry. And basically what he does is give us principles that control his ministry. This opening salutation then provides some excellent material for us to comprehend what made Paul so effective. There were some principles in his life by which he operated. In fact, I think it's fairly safe to say he was a man who functioned completely on principle.

And you might say, "Well what do we mean by principle?" Well, basically principle is truth that doesn't change. There were some unchanging, non-shifting, unvarying, foundational truths that he built his life on. He was not an individual who moved on his own whim or his own emotions or his own passion or the latest trend. Principles, you see, are not subjective, they are objective. They are not internal, they are external. Today you hear a lot of talk about values. "Values" sounds good, we talk about moral values, family values, personal values, Judeo-Christian values or whatever, but generally values carries the connotation of I value some things and I don't value other things and whatever I feel is valuable that's what I commit myself to. And they can be somewhat subjective and somewhat internal. Principles are not subjective, they are objective and they are external, they are outside the individual, they are fixed.

Paul never functioned on whim. He never functioned on his own passion or his own emotion. His whole life and ministry was built around a core of principles, absolutes that never changed, divine principles at that. That's what made him effective. That's what made him useful. It's what made him fruitful in his service to God. These principles were the core of his life.

And just thinking about that a little bit. If you operate on principle, if principle is at the core of your life, you always...you always have a fixed starting point. Paul had that. He never groped around to try to

figure out what to do, how to do it. He always knew because there was this core of principles in his life.

You need to have that and so do I. We need to operate off principle. Let me tell you what principle effects. It effects four things primarily in your life. If you can imagine a sort of a little diagram, the center of your life is a core of principles and some arrows are going out you could draw four of them. And the way those principles effect your life comes in a four-fold manner.

One is confidence. When you live by principle you live in confidence, you function with confidence. There's a certain security in what you do because you know it is built on something which is fixed. You know what is true and you're clear about what is true and you've committed yourself to what is true and so you act confidently in response to the truth. Confident people, like the Apostle Paul, are confident no matter what happens, it doesn't matter to them whether the result is good, bad or indifferent, whether people love him or hate him, whether there is affirmation or hostility. He does what he does with complete confidence because he's operating off of a principle that God has planted in his heart. So he has the assurance to act. There's no hesitation, there's no equivocation, he moves...he moves rapidly with confidence.

The second thing that comes out of a principled life is purpose. You know what you're all about. You're not only ready to act, you know what to do. You know how to act. The direction is laid down for you. You know exactly what is expected of you so you know what to do and you do it.

There's a third little thing that kind of shoots out of this core of principle and that is wisdom...wisdom. When you know principle and you act on principle, you discern and you have judgment and you know how things are to be done. You know enough to do something, you know what to do and you know how to do it because you have the principles that lay all of that out.

And I would think that the fourth thing is power...power. When you operate on divine principle you have power, you move with strength, you have the energy to act because you're acting in accord with divine principle, you have divine power, divine wisdom and divine discernment, divine direction. The motivation of your heart is clear and so you have divine confidence.

That was Paul. Paul was a man of confidence. Paul could say, "It doesn't matter to me what you say, I know what I have to do. It doesn't matter what's going to happen to me I know what I have to do. It doesn't matter that I lose my life, I will move ahead because I know what the principles are and I will act on them." It was Paul who had such purpose in his life that he could set his face like flint in some direction and move there and as we learn in the book of Acts, only the Holy Spirit by some miraculous means could stop him and redirect him. And he was a man of amazing wisdom. He applied that wisdom in a myriad of situations and he certainly was a man of supernatural power. All

of that really flows out of the principled core of his life. He had taken divine principles, he had acted upon them so frequently that they had become the very core of his behavior. And those principles, I think that controlled his ministry are revealed in this text. Here's the heart, here's the core of this man that made him confident, wise, purposeful and powerful.

Let me read you these four verses again. "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, in the hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised long ages ago 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 to Titus my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior."

There in those brief four verses you have a marvelous condensed insight into Paul's principled kind of behavior and therefore what made him confident, purposeful, wise and powerful. And we started to look into that a little bit last time and I suggested to you that the first principle that framed up his life and ministry was the principle that he was committed to God's mastery. He was committed to God's mastery. He introduces himself as Paul, and then he doesn't give a whole lot of credentials. I just picked up some mail on my desk and in it were two job descriptions, two sort of curriculum vita, they call them CVs, two...I don't mean job descriptions, two job applications, people looking for ministry and giving page after page after page after page of their credentials and their accomplishments and their achievements and all of that, and I wasn't able to receive it with the right frame of mind, having been prepared to preach on Paul who introduces himself as Paul, period...end of discussion, without credentials.

The only credentials he offers to us are that he is a bond-servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ. That's it. And what you see there is his commitment to God's mastery over his life. Bond-servant is doulos, it means slave and it carries all the connotations of slavery with it. The word "apostle," apostolos, is not a dignified elevated term, it simply means a messenger and a messenger was very often the function...messaging was very often the function of a slave. He says, "I am under God's mastery and my particular, specific task is to take a message that Jesus Christ wants me to take. I am a messenger. I am a slave who is delivering a message." His whole life was one of submission and yieldedness and slavery and servanthood. He was committed to that.

Consequently he didn't do things that could achieve his own goals and his own ends and his own exaltation that could fulfill his own will and his own plans and could lead him to achievements which would some way aggrandize his own life. He was committed to God's mastery. That principle in the core of his life effected everything.

Then we noted last time a second principle which we merely began to look at and we will continue this morning. He was committed to God's mission...he was committed to God's mission. We find that

in verses 1 and 2. He says in verse 1 that his slavery to God and his apostleship concerning Jesus Christ was for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness in the hope of eternal life. And we'll stop at that point.

There he addresses three things that comprise his understanding of his mission. His mission was to bring those chosen of God to faith, to bring to those chosen of God who had exercised saving faith the knowledge of the truth which is for the purpose of godliness and to bring to those who are the chosen of God and the saved the hope of eternal life.

Now look at the first one, we'll just remind you of what we said last time. He says, "My ministry is for the faith of those chosen of God, or to bring the elect, those chosen by God before the foundation of the world whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, those who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, the elect, to bring the elect to the point of saving faith." That was his mission.

In 2 Timothy 2:10 he says it there perhaps even more explicitly, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." Same idea. My mission is to bring the gospel which can in the power of the Spirit activate saving faith in the elect. He knew that that divine choice in eternity past is activated by faith, he knew that faith is activated by the Holy Spirit upon the hearing and believing in the gospel. So his mission was to bring the gospel which could insight faith in the elect. We would then say his mission was, first of all, evangelism...evangelism. He was all about evangelism. He was all about bringing the saving gospel.

Now let's go secondly to the second of these issues which we didn't discuss and we'll pick it up where we left off last time. Secondly he says, the mission he was given from God was to bring the knowledge of the truth which literally is for godliness which is for the purpose of godliness...to bring the knowledge of the truth, that's epignosis, gnosis the word for knowledge, epignosis adds a preposition on the front, compounds the word, has the idea of rich knowledge, deep knowledge, thorough knowledge, comprehensive knowledge, full knowledge. He has in mind the objective of bringing the clear rich experiential knowledge of divine aletheia, divine truth to people and knows that it will produce godliness.

Now just to take that little phrase because it's very important, "the knowledge of the truth," and look at it a moment, I want you not to misunderstand it. Back to 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 4. In 1 Timothy 2:4 the Apostle Paul says, "God desires all men to be saved. God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Now most likely in that context the phrase "the knowledge of the truth" refers to a saving knowledge. That is to say a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ which saves. There he's not talking about a

full orbed doctrinal statement, he's not talking about knowing all there is to know about Scripture, he's talking about saving knowledge. The knowledge of the truth begins then at salvation.

Look at 2 Timothy, it encompasses also the knowledge of the gospel. That's where it starts. In 2 Timothy 2:25, Paul says that Timothy is to be able to teach and patient and gentle and all of that, in the middle of verse 25, so that God may grant certain people repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth. Now back in 1 Timothy 2:4, the knowledge of the truth was linked with salvation, here it's linked with repentance. In either case it seems to be a gospel knowledge, the knowledge of gospel truth, or saving truth.

Down in chapter 3 verse 7 we find that again where he talks about unbelievers, false teachers, those in come in the last days and are in error. And it says of them they are always learning and never able to come to...there's the same phrase...the knowledge of the truth. Three times then in 1 and 2 Timothy we see that phrase "the knowledge of the truth." It therefore has a gospel connotation. In other words, you can't be saved until you come to the knowledge of the truth of the gospel, that Jesus died and rose again and all that is involved in that.

But I don't believe that it ends there because what Titus 1 says, look at it again, is this, that his job was to bring about the saving gospel so that faith could be produced in those that are elect and then the knowledge of the truth which is for godliness. Now he is saying yes, the knowledge of the truth, of course, starts at salvation but it continues through sanctification. It produces godliness.

Now what is he saying. He is saying the first phase of my mission is evangelism, the second phase of my mission is edification. There is a certain amount of edification in evangelism because you have to know so you can believe, but that's not the ending, that's only the beginning.

Look at Titus chapter 2 for a moment. This is a very important component in the epistle to Titus and it shows up again, verse 11, "The grace of God has appeared and that grace has brought salvation and that grace has also, saving grace, has also instructed us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age." So there is initiated in the knowledge of the truth at salvation an ongoing source of instruction which leads to godliness, righteousness and the setting aside of worldly desires. That's because in verse 14 God has called a people for Himself to be His own possession who are purified and zealous for good deeds.

So Paul says, "Look, my first task is evangelism. My second task is edification. My first task relates to justification. My second relates to sanctification. My first is to bring the truth to the elect so that they might be saved. My second is to bring the truth to the elect so they might be sanctified." And again I note for you that you see the inseparability of justification and sanctification...they appear here, as so often in the Bible, back to back. Saving faith is an initial knowledge of the truth which opens a greater knowledge of the truth which leads through sanctification to glorification. And

glorification, by the way, is a component of his third feature in his mission in verse 2, that which relates to the hope of eternal life, we'll comment on that in a few moments.

In other words, what he is showing us here as always in Scripture, is there's an intimate connection between truth and godliness, the knowledge of the truth that saves leads to godliness. Saving grace, I just read you in Titus 2, instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desire and leads us into sensible righteous and godly living patterns. A vital possession of truth is always inconsistent with irreverence and ungodliness. Real truth never deviates from the path of piety. And any possession of the truth that does not lead an individual to live a godly life to one degree or another is a spurious profession. The objective saving gospel and the subjective godliness correspond to one another inseparably.

So Paul says, "My mission is not just evangelism, it is edification." That certainly is God's plan. You remember that Peter said, "If you've tasted the kindness of the Lord in salvation, then you certainly want to taste it in sanctification so lay aside all sin," and all of that other stuff in 2 Peter...or 1 Peter 2:1, "As babes desire the milk of the mother, you should desire the pure milk of the Word."

So Paul is saying here, "Look, I understand that my ministry is, first of all, two fold." You remember in Ephesians that he said that the Lord had given some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some teaching pastors for the perfecting of the saints, not just for their salvation but to bring them all the way to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ to make them as fully godlike and Christlike as they can be. Peter says, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." There are many, as you well know, who want to divorce justification and sanctification, they want to divorce salvation from holiness, but such is not the biblical way. That is a violation of God's Word and Paul is very clear about linking the two here. He insists on this connection.

Now just a note about this. This becomes a key theme in this epistle. There is an address in this epistle clearly to false teachers. We'll see it as we go through. In fact, you see it in chapter 1, it's even alluded to in chapter 2, you'll see it again in chapter 3. So there's obviously very good concern here about false teachers. The key thing that I want you to note is the condemnation of false teachers in this epistle is related to the failure of their teaching to produce godliness. In other words, they must be wrong because their teaching doesn't lead to godliness. You can tell the truth by what it produces. You can tell error by what it produces.

Look at chapter 1 just as an illustration, verse 10. "There are many rebellious men, empty talkers, deceivers, especially those of the circumcision." Now how do you know these people who come along and some of them, of course, were teaching a form of Judaizing that you had to go through Mosaic Law to be acceptable to God, how do you know? How do we know that they are rebellious? How do we know they're empty talkers? And how do we know they're deceivers? Go down to verse

16, "They profess to know God but by their...what?...deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." You can always tell error because of what it produces. You can always tell a false teacher because of what he produces. That's exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 7, "You will know them by their...what?...their fruit." And that is a very important point for the Apostle Paul to make. If there is truth, saving truth, sanctifying truth, there will be godliness.

Go to chapter 3 for example, look at verse 9, "Shun foolish controversies, genealogies, strife, disputes about the law, they are unprofitable and worthless." Why? They don't produce godliness. They don't produce virtue. They don't bring that about. And that is the measure. And back in chapter 2, as I noted, in verse 12, the implication there is if truth doesn't come along and instruct you to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, it isn't truth...it isn't truth.

We were chosen to be holy. We were chosen to be blameless. We were chosen to become a chaste bride. And the evidence of our election is found in our justification. And the evidence of our justification is found in our sanctification. Saving faith is visibly manifest in holy conduct.

The Apostle Paul even instructed Timothy about this in 1 Timothy. First Timothy chapter 6, verse 3, "If anybody advocates a different doctrine and doesn't agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing." If his teaching doesn't produce godliness, it isn't true.

I can't resist another illustration of this. First Thessalonians 4 verse 7, "God has not called us for the purpose of impurity but in sanctification." He has called us with a view toward sanctification.

Peter put it this way, 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the deep true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." Then this, "In order that you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

Salvation is an escape from ungodliness, it is escape from the dominion of sin, it is escape from the corruption of lust. This is the purpose, Paul says, for my bringing to you the knowledge of the truth so that there might be an initial sanctification at the moment of salvation and an ongoing sanctification until the moment of glorification. So Paul says my mission is clear, to awaken saving faith in the elect and then give them the knowledge of God's truth so that they may live holy lives. And there is an ongoing element to that for sure and this precisely why the Apostle Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 4, "Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women, on the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things. You must discipline yourself for godliness."

You say, "Now wait a minute, I thought this was an inevitability. I thought salvation was unto godliness." It is. Just like election is unto salvation. But election, though it's unto salvation, doesn't become salvation until there is personal faith. And sanctification doesn't become sanctification until there's personal obedience. The pattern is the same. God elects, but that election never becomes reality until saving faith is exercised. And God saves unto sanctification but that sanctification doesn't become reality until there is disciplined obedience to godliness. And the means of this, of course, Paul tells Timothy, is to preach the Word, to prescribe the Word, to exhort with the Word, to give your attention to the Word, read the Word, explain the Word, apply the Word, as he says in 1 Timothy 4:13.

The Word and sound doctrine was absolutely vital because people aren't going to become sanctified without the Word anymore than they're going to become saved even though they're elect without the Word. So Paul says my mission is clear, awake in saving faith in the elect and bring about the deep knowledge of God's truth so that they may progress on the path toward godliness.

Thirdly, not only evangelism and edification but the third component in his ministry was I guess what you could call encouragement, to stick with the alliteration, encouragement. In verse 2 he says another component is to produce in people the hope of eternal life. The context of this faith and knowledge is in the hope of eternal life, that's sort of a pervading reality. There's a past component here and the past is election and salvation, in the present is edification and sanctification, in the future is anticipation and glorification. Paul says I'm all about all of those. My mission is to give the saved and the sanctified hope, to provide the context of hope for them to live in, to preach...what do you mean preach hope? I'll tell you what he means, to preach an eternal heaven, to preach an eternal salvation, to preach a returning Christ. That's what he means. A real heaven, a secure salvation and a returning Christ. As he says in Titus 2:13, there is in the very heart of the gospel, right in the heart of it, the looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. That's right at the heart of our faith. Even in chapter 3 and verse 7 he talks about the fact that we've been justified by His grace in order that we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Now you say, "Well what does it mean to hope in eternal life? Is it a wish?" No, we say "I hope something's going to happen," we mean we wish it would happen. That's not what the Bible means. Hope is not a wish, hope is not something uncertain or something doubtful or something possible or something maybe, hope is believing what is not yet yours but will be. That's what hope is in the Bible. It is believing what is not yet yours fully as a present possession, but is absolutely unequivocally certainly unchangeably guaranteed to be yours some day. And that's heaven and that's eternal glory. And that's a coming Christ. And that's a place to live in the Father's house. And that's an eternal reward. And that's eternal service and eternal praise and eternal worship and eternal blessing. It's all promised to us. That promise is absolutely secure. We have the Holy Spirit as the down payment on

that promise, the earnest of our expectation and our hope. We have the intercession of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God as our high priest and no one can accuse the brethren successfully, no one can lay any charge to God's elect, God has already justified us and Christ continues to intercede for us on our behalf against the accusations of our enemy.

You say, "What's the value of knowing that the Lord is in heaven preparing a place for us? What's the value of knowing all of that?" The value of it, Paul is saying here is that hope of eternal life becomes an encouragement in a multiplicity of ways. First, it's an encouragement toward holiness. First John 3 says in verses 1 to 3 in that wonderful little section, "It doesn't yet appear what we'll be, we know when we see Him we'll be like Him...and he says...the man who has this hope in him purifies himself." It's a purifying hope. If I know that I'm going to face Christ, that I'm going to live in His eternal heaven, that I'm headed for glory and the perfection of a sinless...of a sinless environment forever, that purifies my life. That puts back pressure on me to live a holy life.

Further, it encourages me toward service. When I understand that some day I'll stand before Him to receive a reward for the things done in my body, whether they be good or worthless, and that they can be gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble, the knowledge of that causes me to be motivated and encouraged toward faithful service. Does it not? That I might hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Furthermore, the knowledge that some day I will be delivered from sin and sorrow and sickness and illness and pain and disappointment and problems and death encourages me to be able to endure anything in this life...so it encourages me in suffering. I know that some day this vile body shall be changed and made like His glorious body...as Paul told the Philippians in chapter 3. I live in that hope. That is an encouraging hope. It encourages me to holiness. It encourages me to service, it encourages me to endure through the difficulties and the sorrows of life. And so, like Paul said in Romans 12:12, "I can rejoice in hope. I can't always rejoice in my trouble, I can rejoice in hope, he says, and thus I can persevere in tribulation."

This is the hope that sustains me. This is the hope that inspires me to holiness, to service and through suffering. Why? Because I know precisely what Paul says in Romans 8 is indeed true. Listen to these words, "I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." There's no comparison between the pain here and the glory there. And so we hope for what we have not seen and with perseverance we wait eagerly for it, verse 25 says. Thus verse 24, "In hope we have been saved."

Paul's mission is very clear. He was to bring the elect to saving faith by the gospel. He was to bring the saved to sanctification by teaching them the full knowledge of God through sound doctrine that would lead them to holiness of life. And he was to make crystal clear in their minds the reality of eternal life that great and glorious hope that motivates toward purity and motivates toward service

and galvanizes them through all the sufferings and struggles of life because they anticipate the eternal heavenly glory. There is the sum of all his ministry, and all my ministry and all your ministry packed in those simple and straight forward words. He was committed to God's mission which was clear in his mind...evangelism, edification, encouragement.

Thirdly, he was committed to God's message...he was committed to God's message. Verse 2, "All of this," he says, "which God who cannot lie promised long ages ago but at the proper time manifested in His Word." It's an obvious corollary to the last point, all that God's mission required of him was revealed in God's Word. Whatever he had to preach that would bring the truth to the elect, whatever he had to preach that would bring the elect and the saved to sanctification, whatever he had to preach to give them hope would come out of the Scripture. That's what he's saying. All of this mission is tied to the message which God who can't lie promised long ago and at the proper time manifested it in His Word.

This is a tremendous statement here and I want you to think with me...we're not going to get beyond this point but I don't want you to miss this one. He is saying the truth which is the content of all my mission, the content of my evangelism, the content of my edification and the content of my encouragement, this truth comes from God. That's more than I can say for the error that the false teachers are propagating, that's more than I can say for the lies of the Cretans who are liars, as he says down in verse 13...or verse 12. That's more than I can say for the false teachers. Furthermore, not only does this come from God who can't lie, but it was promised long ages ago which is more than I can say for all that false teaching which just popped up in people's minds recently. And this truth which comes from God was at the proper time manifested in His Word. So he is saying my message is confined to the Word of God which is the revelation of a plan that God has prepared long ago. All that pertains to the hope of eternal life, all that pertains to the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, all that pertains to the gospel that saves the elect is found nowhere else but in the Word.

So, let's take those little pieces that I've shared with you out of that point and let's break them out a little. He says, "God who cannot lie," obviously if you read your Bible you know that Scripture affirms this, you can read 1 Samuel 15:29 and it will introduce you to the God who cannot lie. You can read Hebrews 6:18 and you will hear that it is impossible for God to lie. Satan, of course, in John 8:44 is designated as the father of liars and a liar if anything. But here is the God who cannot lie, the God who always speaks the truth. So whatever He says is absolutely right and true.

Notice, please, this God who cannot lie put all of this together long ages ago. Now let me give you the literal Greek, "Before the times of the ages...before the times of the ages." Now if you take that literal rendering then you have to ask the question...if God promised this before the times of the ages, if He promised it before time, then He had to promise it in eternity. Now you ask yourself the question...to whom did He promise it? Not Moses, not Abraham, not Adam, not any of the patriarchs.

To whom did He promise this? "Before the times of the ages." Interesting question.

Second Timothy 1:9 gives us a hint. It says that God saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all...what?...eternity. Now we're learning that whatever He promised before time in eternity related to the one we know as Christ Jesus. It is now revealed but it was promised from all eternity.

Listen carefully, the covenant of redemption, the covenant to redeem man was ratified before creation. It was ratified before time. Look at Hebrews 13, now keep following, Hebrews 13 verse 20, this is a benediction, a wonderful one, "Now the God of peace who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep...that's Christ...through the blood of the...what kind of covenant?...eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord." The God of peace, the same God who resurrected Jesus Christ through the blood of the eternal covenant...there was an eternal covenant that God made before time began which was a covenant of redemption.

Now look at John 17 and you'll see the nature of this covenant. John 17, John's gospel, 17 verse 24, this is such a marvelous truth. "Father...John 17:24, Jesus is praying here...Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." Who are these? What do you mean? I want You to give Me the ones You have given Me to be with Me where I am in order that they can behold My glory which You've given Me, who are these people whom You have given Me that He's talking about? Believers...believers. Jesus is saying this, "Father, You have designed to give Me a redeemed humanity, You promised You were going to give them to Me. Father, I want them to be with Me in My glory."

Go back to John 6, the last text in this little look and then I'll pull it together. In John 6 verse 37 Jesus says, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and the one who comes to Me I'll not...certainly not cast out." Why? Because anybody who comes to Christ is a gift from God. That's right...is a gift from God. Verse 39, "This is the will of Him who sent Me that of all that He has given Me, I lose nothing but raise it up on the last day." The Lord says when they come I won't turn them down and once they've arrived I'll keep them because the Father is sending them and He wants me to hold on to them.

And verse 40, "This is the will of the Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." And verse 44, "No one comes to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I'll raise him up on the last day."

Here's the covenant, here's the eternal covenant. The Father God says to the Lord Christ in eternity past, "I love You, I love You so much I want to give You something and what I want to give You is a redeemed humanity, I want to create a race of people and I want to redeem them and I want to give

them to You as a gift and I want to give them to You to love You and adore You and honor You and praise You and worship You forever and ever." That's why there is a salvation because God predetermined in eternity past to give a love gift to the Lord and everybody who is saved is a part of that elect and chosen, predestined group of humanity that is going to be the love gift from the Father to the son. That's why nobody ever gets saved unless the Father draws them because the Father knows who it is He's giving the Son. That's why the Son never loses the ones who comes because He holds on with tenacity to the precious gift that God the Father has given to Him.

We are that redeemed humanity. And that is precisely the plan of redemption that is revealed in Scripture. Wonder of wonders, the day will come when God the Father will have drawn all of the predestined and elect humanity, they will have come to faith, they will embrace Christ, Christ will hold on to them and all of them together will arrive in glory. And they will be the love gift from the Father to the Son. And they will spend all eternity praising and honoring and serving and glorifying. And you know what is especially wonderful and remarkable? According to 1 Corinthians 15:28 it says the Son takes them all and gives them back to the Father so that God may be all and in all.

Do you understand that we frail little human beings are really caught up in an immense and eternal covenant that two members of the trinity have made between each other to demonstrate the profundity and the extent of their love? It is this plan, Paul says, it is this covenant which was promised before time began by God who can't lie that has been at the proper time manifested both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament through the Word of God. That's my message. My mission and the content of it is defined in the Word of God which reveals God's eternal covenant. Whatever I want to preach about evangelism I have to get out of here. Whatever I want to preach about edification I have to get out of here. Whatever I want to preach about encouragement I have to get out of here because this is the manifestation of the truth regarding the eternal covenant. And then you ask yourself the very obvious question...how in the world can people stand up and preach anything but the Word of God? What else is there? What believers experience as to salvation, what they experience as to sanctification, what they experience as to glorification is because God made an eternal promise to the Lord and revealed that eternal promise in His Word so that we could understand it.

The plan was designed by a trustworthy God, given as a promise to the Lord and then in being fulfilled in all eternity will be given back to God reciprocally.

This great eternal plan we know about because at the proper time in due time, in God's own kairos, in God's own season, in God's own era He revealed it. And He manifested the realities of that eternal covenant. How? "Even His Word...that's where it's contained, in His Word, Old Testament, New Testament. God at sundry times and diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets has now spoken unto us by His Son...Old Testament prophets and the fathers, New Testament the Son and the Apostles. Listen, no false teacher ever had that kind of message. The

message of the false teacher doesn't come from the God who can't lie, it comes from the devil who lies all the time. The message of the false teacher wasn't...wasn't an eternal covenant made before time began before anything was ever created, that...that covenant, that promise, that message that comes from the false teacher was concocted by the mind of man in time or demons. That which comes from the false teacher never comes through the Word because the Word is pure and it manifests only God's truth.

And so, Paul says, "My message is the Word." That's why he so clearly expresses the fact that the Word of God, the Word of God is inspired, every part, every part, so that the man of God may become perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. That was his passion.

The man functioned from principle. The driving principles at the core of his life, very clear...committed to God's mastery, God's mission, God's message revealed in Scripture. And it was because of those principles that this man operated the way he did, confidently, purposefully, wisely and powerfully. And it really is the way we need to operate. Certainly those are the things that should be true of my life and yours...you're to be under God's mastery, you're to be evangelizing, edifying and encouraging at whatever level God has allowed you to have influence. And you're certainly...you're certainly to be one who proclaims and articulates the Word of God. Live your life according to those commitments and you'll be effective and useful and fruitful.

Well there's two more points but we'll have to keep those for next time.

Father, again this morning we are overwhelmed by the power of Your truth. We are literally carried to levels of comprehension that defy our understanding when we think that some time before there was creation, once before there was even time You wanted to show Your love to the Lord Christ and so You made an eternal promise to redeem some out of humanity to give Him as a gift of love and You chose us. We'll never know why, we don't deserve it, we're astounded and we're grateful. And then, Lord, thank You too for committing unto us the task of serving You, being under Your mastery, fulfilling Your mission to bring the gospel to people and to bring the edifying truth that leads to godliness to people and bringing encouragement and doing that through Your message, the Word. Give us a humble heart of a slave, the faithfulness of a messenger who knows the message, the loyalty to Your Word that being effective demands so that we can live by those principles and be powerful and wise and purposeful and confident as we give our lives for You for Christ's sake. Amen.

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