

# Progressive Sanctification & the True Church Conference

By Jeff Noblit

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**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 4:16  
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## **Anchored in Truth Ministries**

1915 Avalon Ave.  
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

**Website:** [www.anchoredintruth.org](http://www.anchoredintruth.org)  
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Let's grab our Bibles and let's go to 1 Timothy 4:16. I want to build off of this verse again. I did this last Sunday night but as I was praying and meditating about this Sunday morning before our conference, ah, a truth jumped out at me that I want to develop from this passage and talk about this morning, "Progressive Sanctification & the True Church Conference." Let me go ahead and just define sanctification. Literally, simply it means to set apart, to set aside, and you know my favorite illustration is that when I used to say men, I think we're down to one guy now but there has been men and a man in our church who likes to crappy fish and he does quite well at it, and occasionally as he's bringing in a big old stringer of crappy, he'll start filleting those things and he'll start setting fillets over to the side for me. They are set apart. They are sanctified crappy. Sanctified doesn't necessarily mean a holy, spiritual word, it just means set apart. And so he's saying, "Well, I've set them apart for special," not because the pastor's more special than anyone else, it's just that he sets them apart for a different use than ordinary use. They go to my house and my family loves them. We enjoy them.

Well, that's what happens to you and I when we are converted, we are set apart for God. We used to be under the master of the world, the master of the flesh, and the master of the devil, but now we've been taken out of that domain and we're placed under God and the Master Jesus Christ. We're set apart. Now there is a positional sanctification, once you're truly converted you stand justified, we've already talked about that a few weeks ago, we have a new standing before God, it has nothing to do with our ethics, our morality, our behavior, no change, this is just a new standing, that's what justification is, and then after that standing or you could also call that a positional sanctification, now we stand as set apart from God but in this life in time and space history we are to be growing or progressing in sanctification, more and more yielded to, more and more honoring of, more and more treasuring of Christ, more and more committed to Christ and his church and that's the journey that every single truly born again child of God is on, progressing in sanctification.

That's what Paul I'm convinced is alluding to or out-and-out saying here in verse 16 of 1 Timothy 4:16. Let's read it together. Paul says to Timothy who is overseeing the church there at Ephesus. Timothy,

16 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.

Everything, I might not say everything but a large emphasis of the text from the original language is a continuing action. "Persevere in these things, Timothy, keep on doing them. As you continue in these things, keep on doing them." And even the word as they hear you, is a, is a present tense. It means to keep on hearing. It has the idea of going forward, progressing forward, continuing forward. "So Timothy, as you are faithful to take care of yourself, make sure you don't let yourself and your, ah, your own emotional, physical, mental, ah, constitution is worn out, make sure you take care of yourself, and also be faithful in your preaching/teaching ministry, then by that process continually you are saving yourselves and you are saving those who hear you." You say, "Pastor, I thought once saved, always saved." Well, that's just justification. Salvation includes justification and sanctification which we are to be progressing in, and glorification. So he's telling Timothy the preaching, the faithful preaching of the word will be the primary means, not the only but the primary means whereby, whereby you and your people will show forth they are truly God's children by progressing on in sanctification.

Now there are 1,001 things we can say about the ministry of preaching and how it affects us and prods us on, reproves us, rebukes us, instructs us, helps us to continue on in this progressive sanctification. But now I want to talk about progressive sanctification and the True Church Conference that we have coming up a week from Thursday and I want to talk in the sense that not only are you as an individual Christian being progressively sanctified, but us as a corporate body, a local church family, we are progressively being sanctified and, ah, you have to understand that a New Testament truth, actually in biblical truth, God always views us, always teaches us, always instructs us as we live out our lives in concert with, in this, um, reciprocal relationship with our brothers and sisters in a local church, the New Testament knows nothing of Christianity apart from that. Now certainly you live your individual home lives, your individual marriages, things out there in the world. I understand that. That's of God. God is glorified when you honor him in those areas, but all of that is inseparably linked to your communion, your fellowship, your oneness with your local church family. That's why many many, well, now, many decades ago when we began reforming our church to biblical health, that's so vitally important because we need in the church those who are truly God's so we can enjoy this connectivity, this reciprocal relationship and be pleasing to God and therefore glorify God.

Now back to Paul instructing Timothy. As, as you look at Paul's instructions, all of them that is, not just this particular text, you find that Paul talks a lot about fighting. The pastorate is something of a fight. You fight your own flesh. You fight the world. You fight the devil and then you fight false teachers and false doctrines and divisions, and on and on we could go. Paul said, "I have fought the good fight," and then he he tells Timothy, "Timothy, you fight the good fight." And he's already told Timothy in, ah, these chapters we've already gone through that he's to fight against the false teachers and the false teachings and the endless genealogies and the myths and on and on we could go and

fight against women who are becoming feminists in the church. He's just dealt with lots of things.

Now I think what we need to understand is that as we progress in sanctification as a church, not only do we maintain our courage in our fight, what we must learn with wisdom where we are to be fighting. So many of us pastors and particularly young pastors, I used to be one of those, we just fight everything and they're not all bad fights, as a matter of fact they may all be good fights, they just may not be necessary fights. We have to grow in wisdom to find out now this matters and this matters and this matters, but those other 12 things, I don't need to worry, I just let that stuff go. It takes time to have courage balanced with wisdom.

So many of us, we just charge off into the battle, we're like old Sam Houston. Sam Houston was a Tennessee boy who was a member of the United States army, a young man. His commanding General was Andrew Jackson, another Tennessean. And how it went was Andrew Jackson was the Donald Trump of the day. He was not in the establishment. The Washington, DC and the East Coast elites kept the presidency within their circle until Andrew Jackson was elected and they thought, "What are we gonna do with this wild bull?" And Andrew Jackson was a wild bull compared to them, but they needed Jackson because every time there was a skirmish like the battle at New Orleans or an Indian uprising down in the southern region or territories, the guys up in DC in the Northeast would call up Andrew Jackson and he'd round up his Tennessee Volunteers and go take care of it. That's kind of how it worked.

Well, he became so popular later he becomes president, but at this point he's not president, at this point he's the commanding General of the army for the southern region and under him is a man named Sam Houston, and Sam Houston as a young man was a soldier of unusual courage and valor. On one occasion, Andrew Jackson was leading his forces to take vengeance on the Red Stick Indians. The Red Stick Indians had massacred a village in Mississippi and they were gonna go get them. And sure enough, Sam Houston, typical of Sam, rushed into the front line and he takes an arrow to his thigh and the arrow beds deep into his thigh and he tells one of his soldiers beside, beside him and said, "Man, pull that out!" And the guy tried to pull it out and it wouldn't come out. Sam Houston again said, "Pull that out!" And the guy tried again and it wouldn't come out. Then Sam Houston said, "Pull it out this time, if you don't get it out, I'm going to kill you." Well, the guy got it out, pulled it out and left a gaping hole, blood gushing everywhere. The minute he wrapped it up, he went right back into the front line and then he took a mini-ball to the shoulder and it fragmented. There's shrapnel all in his shoulder. That night after the battle, the medic operated on Sam Houston and he said to some of the other soldiers, he said, "I'm not gonna take all these fragments out because Sam Houston's not gonna live through the night anyway. I'm not gonna put him through it." Sam Houston said that was the longest night of his life. Cold, damp ground in Mississippi, but somehow he lived. A few weeks later he's convalesced to the point where he's at least able to travel but he's very weak and unable to do any fighting. He makes his way back to Washington, DC. It was during the Battle of 1812 and when he arrived in DC, his heart was broken in a thousand pieces. The British had burned down

our Capitol and had occupied the city and Sam Houston said, "Here I am. I'm weakened and broken and my nation's in peril and I can do nothing to help."

Historians tell us that after that event, Sam Houston was changed forever. He realized from that point onward not only must a man have valor and courage but he must balance that with wisdom and discernment, and not destroy and ruin his life in overzealous courage and attacks. Well, it's the same way in a church. So oftentimes we hear of this thing and that thing, this new front and that new front, this new approach and that new approach, and we charge off into all these ministries and we need to back up and not only just have courage and the conviction to go for things but to ask are these wise, or am I going to expend my energies over here and find out that wasn't the best way to use my energies to advance my cause and the cause of my Lord.

Well, talking about progressive sanctification, let me give you some marks of progressive sanctification. Some marks. Now these things not only help you progress in sanctification but these are also indicators that you are indeed progressing in sanctification. Let me outline them this way. 1. An increasing humility. An increasing, you could say growth in humility. As we grow in Christ, as we study our Bibles, all the means and I'll talk about those in just a moment, but as we are progressing in sanctification there is an increasing knowledge of God or of the divine nature, and as we increasingly know of who God is, i.e.. means you need to be sitting under a preacher who is faithful to tell you what the book says about God, not what human sentiment and emotions feels about God. Did you hear me, church? We want to know who God is according to how God's revealed himself in the sacred texts, not by how you feel he ought to be, and as we learn about who he truly is among other things the glorious doctrine of holiness, that God is in every respect immeasurably superior to us in the communicable attributes he's given us, the things that he's given us that are somewhat like him, and then he has those glorious incommunicable attributes where God has things about him like he's spirit and he's eternal that are nothing like us, and in every way we're in all of this grand, immeasurable wonder, mystery and glory of the greatness of our God, and the more you learn of this God, the more correspondingly you are righteously and rightly humbled before this God. We do not preach and we do not serve and we do not treasure a God we can grasp. He's bigger than that. He puts us in awe. He stirs us with a trembling. "You are God alone," we just sang.

This increasing humility. In Isaiah 6, Isaiah gets a vision of the Lord and these angels are crying out, "Holy, holy, holy." They can't cry out anything else, even that in, in, in the human vernacular falls woefully short of the worthiness of who he is in his person and dignity. And what was Isaiah, the righteous Isaiah, what was Isaiah's first response to seeing God? "Woe is me! I am ruined. I'm a man of unclean lips," which means what comes out of the heart comes from the lips, "my heart is unclean and I'm ruined and I live among a people of unclean lips." Would you say with your pastor though far from perfect, like your pastor, that today you're more humble before the glory and awesomeness of this God then you were 10 years ago? 20 years ago? Whatever it might be? There's just a sense of when the Spirit helps me and I think on what the Scripture says about my God, I'm just kind of halted in my spirit and a sense of awe and reverence overtakes me. There's an increasing of that as you're progressing in revelation. No

wonder the Apostle Paul said, "I am the chief of sinners." Repentance is the first cousin of godly humility. We find ourselves repenting regularly, continually, of what we are before him and treasuring immensely that Christ is our adequate Savior that we might stand before him and even know him and be welcomed by him.

Well, an increasing humility. Secondly, there will be an increasing desire for the means of sanctification. I'm not listing all that can be said about progressive sanctification but some of the basic or essential things. Some of the means God has ordained, first of all, we have to start with his word, the word of God. John 17:17, Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth." Now getting into the word for your sanctification includes your reading the word of God. Are you reading the word of God regularly? It includes your study of the word of God. Don't, don't be an independent spirit and do all your studying on things you're interested in. Be a part of the, I'm not saying that's wrong, I'm just saying make sure you're studying your Sunday school lesson, studying where the pastor is going in his book preaching, his expositional preaching. Are you memorizing the word of God? You ought to always have a verse or two, always have a verse or two. Can I say it again, always have a verse or two you're memorizing in a week, and then meditating on it. Meditation has the idea of regurgitation, bringing it back up and musing on it. I would say the overwhelming majority of insights God gives me for preaching that seemed to really help you and really help me come not in my study but in my meditation after I've studied, reading it, studying it, memorizing, meditating on it, and of course, hearing the word preached. It's not one or the other, it's all the above. All these are the means of sanctification. As we are progressing in sanctification, we'll find ourselves with a deeper desire for these, a deeper and higher esteem of these. Psalm 1:2 says, "I delight in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

Prayer, another means of sanctification. When we neglect prayer or if we are heartless in our prayers, then our sanctification is severely hindered. You know, one of the true marks of sanctification, progressing in sanctification and even confirming your salvation, is that he is the one you run to in your trial. He's the one you run to in your prayer. Sanctification flounders in a prayerless soul. Have a biblical structure to your prayer. The model prayer is such a beautiful prayer to pattern our prayers after. Let me rephrase that, it's not just that it's beautiful, though it is, it's that it's true. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." You start with hallowing God, to glorifying God, to making much of God. The further you progress in sanctification, the more in your prayer life will center on a glory of God focus. I want to see God made much of in my marriage. I want to say, see God made much of in my, in my children. I want to see God made much of in our home. I want to seek God made much of in his church. That's like saying I want to drive an automobile. Of course God is to be made much of in all of our lives, particularly in our churches. To have to say that is almost ridiculous. Of course he should be. He's the reason we exist. It's all about him and his glory. I'll get on that in a moment, by the way.

I think in our private prayers one of the things that has helped me so much through the years is praying through the book of Psalms, just praying the Psalms back to God. You'll find that it resonates with your own struggles and difficulties and joys and victories. It's a good thing to do. Group prayers and that centers here primarily in our small groups where

we bonded and learned each other and know each other's heart aches and burdens and trials and we, we, we, we commit together and to pray for one another and intercede for one another. And certainly in our families, in our marriages. Then something I call not only structured prayer but private prayers, group prayers, what I call lifestyle praying. And I think this might be, if I can say it this way, the height of progressive sanctification in your prayer life is when your communion with God is ready well without break. You pray without ceasing. As you go along in life, you just intercede and pray to God.

Well, the third thing, the means that I'll mention not only the word, not only prayer, but the church family. Your treasuring of, your embrace of the importance of the local church family to you. You begin to see it how God sees it. It becomes more valuable to you. Your love for it, the way you work with it, the way you support the church, the encouragement you get from it, the accountability you welcome from it, the reproofs, the disciplines, all the things involved in body life that centers here primarily in our small groups, as you progress in sanctification that becomes more and more special. You may know some good Christian brothers and sisters at school, young people, you may know some good brothers and sisters in your neighborhood, some good brothers and sisters in your family, and some good brothers and sisters in your work environment, and that's wonderful and praise God for that, but all of those things will eventually pass away but the church will not. There will always be a church. And our esteem, our treasuring of the local church is increasing as we're progressing in sanctification. These are the means of sanctification.

So as we progress in sanctification, being set apart from God, useful for God, yielded to God, we see a progression in this Gospel humility, I call it. We see a progression in grasping and employing the means of sanctification. And then thirdly, we see an increasing look to heaven. An increasing look toward heaven. There's something to this. Colossians 3:1 through 4, "if then you have been raised up with Christ," and here's the command, here's the instruction, "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Now this would include the, the wisdom and the principles of, of heavenliness that ought to be in our lives even though we're on the earth, but it also means the very place of heaven that we are increasingly as we progress in sanctification longing to be in. Verse 2, "Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

Our names are written there in heaven. Our citizenship is recorded there in heaven. Our place is prepared there in heaven. Our Lord and Savior is visibly physically present there in heaven. Our treasure is permanently stored there in heaven. You've got really more in heaven than you've got here. Have you thought on that lately? Well, progression in sanctification means that there is a growing yearning in your heart that cries out, "O Father, to be perfected with You one day in glory, that's the greatest of the greatest of the greatest to me." And if you're not longing for heaven, you're not going to like it long on the earth either because he's coming back here and he's making earth like heaven. So you gonna lose either way. You might as well get in on longing for it now because you gonna get it then, but if you don't know him, you won't last long in it when he gets back.

Hebrews 11:10. Abraham, speaking of Abraham, "for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." As Abraham was building a physical family and even kingdom, you would say, from his heart of hearts he was saying, "I'm looking for a greater one than this one, though." An increasing progressing looking toward heaven.

One effect of increasing sanctification is a weakening of the ties to this world and a strengthening of our ties to heaven. As the old song says, "And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." Paul writing here to Timothy says, "Timothy, as you persevere, as you continue on and they keep hearing the faithful preaching of the word of God, then they're gonna progress in sanctification. They will be being saved." It's a good theological way to say that, a good biblical way to say, you're not only saved, period, sealed forever, justification, you are being saved, sanctification. That's what he's talking about here. "Timothy, you will ensure that you and your people will keep on being saved from the powers of the world and the flesh and the devil. You'll progress in sanctification."

Now you might look at it this way, regeneration is birth, sanctification is growth. When you're born, you have a standing. You are So-and-so's son. That's just, you didn't, look, you didn't do anything about that, you just have that standing. All you did was pop out of the womb. You did nothing. But you took your father's name. That's your standing. That's like justification, and from that moment when you took your first breath outside the womb, that could be parallel to regeneration, life outside of the womb began, the rest of it is growth, the rest of it is sanctification. Hopefully as you, now using the human realm as a metaphor, as you grow in this life you'll live up to the man's name who gave you his name. So we spiritually want to live up to the name of the one who's birthed us and regenerated us spiritually and gave us new life.

Well, one final key evidence that is so important for where we are at Grace Life Church of the Shoals today and for this season leading up to the True Church Conference, and that is an increasing of wisdom. An increasing wisdom. Now, we want to be careful with how we define wisdom. It's, it's misunderstood and misused often. There is a wisdom of the world, I'll talk a little bit about that in a moment. We're not talking about that. There is, it's not the collection of knowledge. So often the intellectual are those who have collected a lot of knowledge and just have to have the brain capacity to bring it back up when they need it. Now that's a good gift but that's not necessarily anything to have to do with wisdom. Some of the most wicked fiends ever walked the earth would have been intellectuals and that's not wisdom.

I mean, we don't want to be like the foolish, fleshly, sinful, gullible women, some of which were in the church at Ephesus that Timothy is pastoring because Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:7 concerning these very fleshly, carnal, gullible women, they were easy prey for false teachers and false teaching. You see, these women are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. If I might exemplify a childish, immature, sinful, fleshly woman, it's like, "Oh, did you hear So-and-so? Oh, did you hear So-and-so? They got a new... Oh, did you watch So-and-so?" And just following their

emotions and they're just easy prey for the next new fad some false teacher brings up and they drive their pastors insane. It's your job to lovingly, affectionately, compassionately be the head of your wives and if you have a wife who's prone to chasing the next, "Oh, did you hear about So-and-so? She loves Beth Moore. She loves Jesus so much." Yeah, and she violates Scripture in everything she teaches. I don't care how passionate the emotion, is what they're telling you true? True to the word of God? You see, wisdom is not knowledge and wisdom is not passion and emotion, wisdom is wisdom.

Now for my purposes and perhaps there are many good definitions, maybe one better than mine but I'm going to give you a definition of wisdom this morning. Wisdom is knowledge or intellect rightly divided that glorifies God and achieves his purposes. Taking information, knowledge, Scripture or otherwise, rightly understanding how it works together, all to the end of God being glorified and we are actually achieving his purposes. I think that's a good place to put wisdom. You think, "Pastor, does that apply everywhere?" Well, where would it not apply? Your marriage is for the glory of God and to achieve his purpose. Your marriage is not about you primarily, it's about God. God defined marriage. The Supreme Court of the United States does not define marriage, God defined marriage and he hasn't changed his mind. So wisdom is taking the information and saying, "Okay, let's glorify God and let's honor His will revealed in His word or His purposes." That's, that's a wise person. That's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:20 reminds us, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the intellectual elite of the day? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the so-called wisdom of this world?" Take all that they come up with, all of their great learning, all of this stuff, all of the disciplines, all the studies, all the research papers, all the PhD's, when they are not God, when they are godless it just amounts to a bunch of mush in the end. God will make it all foolishness in the end.

In 2 Corinthians Paul talked about fleshly wisdom. So the wisdom of the world, it's, it's not that which comes down out of heaven as the Bible says, it's that, it's that earthly demonic wisdom that comes up out of the natural man. It's not wisdom at all, it's actually called wisdom but it's actually non-wisdom. You see, the wisdom of this world misses out on the only thing that matters. The wisdom of the world misses everything is for God's glory and to fulfill God's purposes. Period. Your business is on earth to glorify God and fulfill his purposes. Your marriage is to glorify God and fulfill his purposes. Your life as a single or a young person is to glorify God and fulfill his purposes and certainly God's local churches, how dare we ever think of anything but this, are to the end of glorifying God and fulfilling his purposes.

Well, a few verses, cross-references here to think on. Colossians 2:2-3, "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge," not just knowledge but a true knowledge, "of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself," verse 3, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Wow.



Ephesians 1:17, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." So all of a sudden the word of God says it all centers in Jesus Christ. Wisdom centers in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the treasury of true wisdom.

So here's what I want to do, I want to say, "Okay, time out then. If it's all centered in Jesus, He is the embodiment of true wisdom," then let's think for a second: what was Jesus all about? What was Jesus all about? Two things, in the broadest sense two things: glorify his Father, achieve his Father's purposes. Now you can break it down, oh, to save sinners. Yeah, because that was his Father's purposes for his own glory, but all, look, you've got to stop, start with God's glory and God's purposes and then the practical things that come under that and that's where people miss it, miss it, miss it, miss it.

Let me show you how prominent, we don't have time to do much, I'm gonna show you real quickly how prominent this is. Jesus was all about God's glory and honoring God's will or God's purposes. John 12:27 and 28. Right before the cross Jesus cries out to his Father and said, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour?'" Here we see that mystery we can't comprehend of the humanity of Jesus saying, "I'm not looking forward to the torment of death on a cross," but I think more than that he's saying, "I'm not looking forward to being separated from You on that cross." He's talking to his Father and again, be careful here trying to figure out all, you can't figure out the holiness of the communion between the Godhead at this point, but we can figure out the next phrase, "But for this purpose I came to this hour." That's why I'm here. This isn't one of several things, this is the thing I'm here for. This is it, everything else comes under this. Verse 28, "So Father, glorify Your name." There it is. It's about God's glory. Jesus dying on the cross for sinners is more about God than it is about sinners. Are you hearing me? It's more about God than it is about sinners. It's more about God being glorified that he can save wretches like us than it is us missing hell, as wonderful as that is. You start with God and his glory. You always start there. Don't, if you start anywhere else, you've warped wisdom. So his first statement is, "I've come for this purpose, this cross, so," verse 28, "Father glorify Your name. Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'" Now I just have comment on that. It's as if the Father is saying, "O Son, You, You need to understand something, I'm all about glorifying My name and, I'm gonna continue to be all about it." And the Father don't have to say, "So Son, I'm glad You're in agreement." He knows his Son's in agreement. It's just in the anthropomorphic expression of things, the Son is saying to the Father, "We're one on this, Father. We are one on this. We're together on this. It's all for Your glory and in Your wisdom to magnify Your power, wisdom and glory I'm going to a cross and saving for Us a people who will be Ours forever." Jesus was all about God's glory and achieving God's glory through God's will and God's purposes.

Boy, what a lot of us young pastors, I used to be one of those, a lot of church leaders and people get off this, "I'm gonna do this for the glory of God, I'm gonna start this ministry for the glory of God. I'm gonna do this for the glory of God. I am gonna do that for the glory of God." Well, wait a minute, is it in the book? You don't charge off to glorify God your way, you glorify God his way. That's why Jesus said, "Is there any other way that

this cup can depart from Me?" And the Father said, "No, this is the purpose and will of My plan. My wisdom is for you to die on a cross." "Very well then," Jesus says to the Father, "that's the way I'm going to glorify You, Your way, according to Your will."

John 17:1 and 2, "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come,'" this is before the cross, "'glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.'" So Jesus is all about the glory of the Father, "'even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.'" So the purpose: the Father must be glorified. The plan: I'm gonna redeem all those you give to me that they may have eternal life. The glory of God and the fulfillment of his will or his purposes. That's wisdom. That's wisdom.

John 17:9, "I ask not on their behalf, or rather I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours." And I've said this to you many times before in conjunction with this text, you may not believe in limited atonement, you can still go to church here and we'll still love you, but right here you have to believe in limited intercession because before Jesus goes to the cross he says clearly, you can't exegete that and make it mean anything else, "I'm not asking on behalf of the world but only those whom You have given Me for they are Yours." Now you may have sat under skipping exposition, skip over these things, but you, here's what happens, you miss that it's all about the glory of God, not the saving of souls. Now we ought to be about souls, we ought to be witnessing to all the people we can witness to, charging everyone we see to repent and believe the Gospel, and everyone everywhere who will repent and believe the Gospel, God will save them, but in our heart and motives, we understand the purpose of it all was that God, like Jesus, he had, the treasury of wisdom was in Jesus, and he was about the glory of God and accomplishing God's purpose and will to save those whom the Father had given, and that is, i.e. and build churches. For time and space history, the kingdom of God is organized into local churches and we're one of those.

So Jesus makes it clear, "My death is not first and foremost about saving everyone that's possible," though he's given us the commission as the church to be about that, but from his perspective his death was not, first and foremost, about saving everyone that's possible but by glorifying God fully. Do you think Jesus would have had any problem with saving every person who ever lived if he chose to? Do you think Jesus would have any problems saving everyone who had ever lived if the Father's will had been for that to be the case? Don't come to me with an impotent limited Jesus. The effectual nature of his atonement and his saving work might be limited, I believe is limited, but he is not limited. He could have saved a million worlds of sinners had he wanted to. Because why, "Then, Jesus, what's Your main thing?" "My main thing is to glorify My Father and I do love sinners and I do wish that all would repent and believe but they won't. But the Father has insured that I not fail. He's marked out some whom He will work upon by His Spirit and they will repent and believe, and then we will build Our church out of all these local churches and they will be to the end of glorifying God and fulfilling His purposes."

So now we're Christians, we're little Christs. He saved us, he indwells us, he is the example for us, he leads us to walk in his wisdom, that is, to walk for God's glory and God's purposes, and God's glory and God's purposes are centered in God's local churches. Ephesians 3:21. It's always amazed me the horizontal or the, or the, or the level ground between these two. "To Him be glory in the church," conjunction, level ground, "and in Christ Jesus." Wow. I would put Jesus above the church and certainly biblical texts show us that's the way it is, but the Bible doesn't want us to separate the two because he's the head and we're the body. You don't separate the head and the body. That's, that's, that's, that's weird. That's warped. Jesus makes us one with him and he makes, the Father wants Jesus to be honored and praised along with the church he's redeemed and made one with himself. The church is about the glory of God. You can't glorify Jesus without wanting God to be glorified through the church too because he loves the church and it's connected to him. Now Roman Catholics take this and run off to fantasyland with it and make the church the means of redemption and that's wrong. Christ alone is. Christ's redeemed church is one with him.

Now real quick, don't you go to sleep on me yet. Listen to how we close this. So now do we at Grace Life Church embrace God's wisdom? Do we embrace God glorifying himself through the church? If we are growing, if we are progressing in sanctification and walking in a new humility if we're gaining biblical true wisdom, then we're going to embrace we want God to be glorified in his church. If that's the case, then this upcoming True Church Conference will be paramount in our hearts, our plans and in our resources. If that's true, then we must pray for the True Church Conference. We must attend faithfully. I know some of you can't come during the daytime sessions but the evening sessions are the law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be revoked. That's what the biblical text says. You've got to be here. If you're not here, we'll put your face up on the screen the next Sunday. I've been threatening that for years, haven't I? Pray, attend, come to encourage. You just don't know how desperately weak some of these pastors are. They want to know, "Can I continue on biblically? Will I make it?" You've got to hear me. I talk to these guys every week. You've got to be here, you've got to put an arm around them, you've got to shake their hand and you've got to say, "Man, we love you and we're praying for you." Come encourage. Pray, attend, encourage. Give. Give a one time gift for the conference and make a generous pledge on that envelope in front of what you'll do for missions on the next year. Here's my challenge to you again this year: just do at least a little more than last year. If it's \$0.50, if it's \$5, if it's \$25, if it's \$2,500, if it's \$25,000, at least say, "I'm just gonna do a little more than last year on my missions commitment this year."

You know, we could have never gone down this road, we could have never gone down this road, we could have just stayed focused on ourselves, wouldn't need some of these staff members, we could've just said, "No, we want our senior pastor to be here for us. We don't want, we don't want to give him up to be involved in all of these other pastor's lives and these churches." Of course, if you're gonna do that, you shouldn't have voted on our vision statement to be a biblical church God uses as a model for others. When you did that, you voted to give me away to some extent. Well, nobody's fussed and complained

but we didn't have to go down this road is what I'm saying but we did because you are embracing true wisdom, God's glory through his churches.

You remember Sam Houston? After Sam Houston goes to DC and he sees what the British have done to our Capitol, burned it to the ground and occupied it, Sam Houston changed his view of things. A little bit later, he becomes governor of Tennessee and then goes through his third divorce and after his third divorce he falls in disrepute with the people of Tennessee, and he leaves to go where a lot of men went to go for a second chance and that was Texas. It wasn't a state yet, it was just Texas. Davy Crockett did the same thing. From Lawrence County, Tennessee, he wasn't voted back into office, people of Tennessee voted him out of office and he said, "You can go to you know where, I'm going to Texas." What he said. William Travis, Jim Bowie, all those guys, many of them had their own volunteer band of fighters, they all go toward Texas.

Well, Sam Houston becomes the commander of the army of Texas. Santa Ana and his Mexican forces are marching north out of old Mexico, wanted to claim the entire region for Mexico. Well, Davy Crockett, William Travis, who was the commander at the Alamo, and Jim Bowie, had a big bowie knife, all were the leaders of the Alamo effort. They were in that little, ah, ah, mission church in, in San Antonio called the Alamo and General Sam Houston told Davy Crockett, William Travis, told those guys, "Get out of there. Retreat back. You can't overcome Santa Ana. He's too mighty. His army is too strong." They said, "We're gonna fight right here and die." And that's what they did. Santa Ana forces collapsed on San Antonio, commandeered the Alamo and executed everyone there, and Santa Ana was a bloodthirsty murderer. He kept marching north and every time he came upon some of the Texas forces, he just executed them even though they'd surrendered.

And so his legend grew and Sam Houston, the man of unusual courage and valor did something very unusual. Every time Santa Ana's forces would go north, he'd call his, ah, ah, Texas army together and they would retreat north further. Santa Ana would go a little further north, he'd retreat further from them. They'd go a little bit further north and, and Sam Houston would retreat his Texas army further away from them, so much so, he did it so many times that his commanders and many of his soldiers said, "You're a coward! Let's stand and fight this guy! He's destroying our brothers and slaughtering our women and children." Sam Houston didn't mention a word of what he was doing. He retreated again, Santa Ana came forward, he retreated again, and finally an advance scout came back to Sam Houston and said, "Santa Ana has split his army into three divisions and the middle division is marching straight for us and it's led by Santa Ana himself." And Sam Houston said, "That's what I'm waiting for." There in San Jacinto he drew a line in the sand, he rallied his troops and said, "When Santa Ana and his forces get here, I'll give the command and here's all I'm telling you men, 'Remember the Alamo.'" He gave the command, they charged against Santa Anna's forces at this time divided down into a third, and they defeated the Mexicans in 18 minutes.

Sam Houston, he's known for taking bullet shots, he'd taken a shot to his leg, he had a mini-ball stuck in his ankle. So they've got him propped up under a tree. The battle has

been won. All of a sudden he hears this loud commotion and his men come up dragging old General Santa Anna with them shouting and screaming, "We've got him! We've got him! Let's hang him up! Let's execute him right here!" Sam Houston said, "No, no. No, no, an alive Santa Ana is better than a dead Santa Ana." He said, "You want Santa Ana, I want Texas." He got out the formal papers and had Santa Ana sign over all the property north of the Rio Grande to Texas. A few weeks later he had Santa Ana go to Washington, DC and declare to our government that he had seceded all the rights to all that territory to Texas. He even had to go back to Mexico and tell the Mexican government, "I've given it all to the people of Texas." Later it became a state.

What's the difference in the Sam Houston who retreated until it was right and the young Sam Houston who charged the Red Sticks and almost died? He still had the courage and valor but this time he had wisdom. Brothers and sisters, what God's laid before us as a True Church Conference is not just one more thing to charge blindly, this is God's wisdom. If you can impact this many pastors, you'd better not go to the judgment bar of God and say, "I coasted on that one." That would be like Sam Houston saying, "Now that they're finally down to where I want them, divided into thirds, I can take them." So let's lose none of our valor for our Lord, none of our courage for our Lord, but let's utilize wisdom. If we can impact church leaders, we impact multiplied millions for the glory of God. And by the way, Sam Houston didn't make Santa Ana march up that river's bank, it just happened. We didn't ask these guys to come, they asked to come. We're just doing what God's laid before us. Let's give our best for God's glory at this year's True Church Conference. It's not just a conference, it's impacting pastors of local churches. And by the way, Christ is the treasury of wisdom and he's all about the glory of God and God's purposes which is to build the church for his glory. So we're right in line with Jesus in our emphasis.