

Truth and Scripture

In Defense of Truth

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Bible Verse: John 17:17
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Well, this morning we come to the final message in a series that we've been doing on the topic of truth and we've chosen selected texts from the gospel of John in order to show how Scripture ties the very principle of truth to the very most foundational concepts of biblical Christianity. We started by defending the very concept of truth; we utterly reject the postmodern spirit of our age that says there is no transcendent truth, the truth is merely a matter of personal opinion. That is not true. That is a lie from the pit of hell. And so we addressed that in our first message in this series, and then if you'll turn to the gospel of John, I just want to remind you of the texts that we have reviewed as we looked upon this as we build up toward our climactic message in the series here today, all of these texts taken from the gospel of John. We saw the matter of truth in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 1:14. We read that, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Christ himself was an incarnation or is the incarnation and the manifestation of truth itself. The next week we looked at John 4:24, look over there with me, a foundational text on the matter of worship and the centrality of biblical truth in true worship. We're not free to make up our own avenues of worship, our own kinds of worship, God has revealed in his word how he is to be worshiped and we are to honor according to that pattern as even the first commandment and second commandment in Exodus 20 would remind us. But in John 4:24 we read this, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." We cannot make up our own God and we cannot make up our own pattern of worship. We must worship according to what God has revealed. Then the following week in John 8, turn there with me in John 8:31 and 32. We see how the the word of God is central in the manifestation of one who is a true believer. You don't become a Christian and then suddenly have no interest in the word of God; a true Christian continues in the word of God and without that there is reason to question severely whether one's salvation is real. If you live a life without any interest in the word of God, how could the Spirit of God be in you when the Spirit is the one who wrote the word of God? So we read in John 8:31 and 32, "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'" Then last week we looked at John 14:6 and considered the matter of the principle of truth and biblical salvation. We read this in John 14:6 where the Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the

life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." It is only through faith in Christ that a man can find forgiveness of his sins, it is only through faith in Christ that a man comes and enters into heaven, and it's by faith alone according to the truth of God revealed in Scripture, not by added tradition of other religions, not through other prophets, not through other so-called holy books, but through the 66 books of the Bible alone which testify to Christ alone, and the cross alone, is the place where alone sin can be forgiven.

These are central truths to biblical Christianity and today we come to our final text in this series, John 17, and I invite you to turn there. John 17 as we approach the word of God with just a spirit of gratitude for the privilege of reading and finding his mind in what he has revealed. Today we've come to a critical text in Christianity about Scripture itself. John 17:17 says,

17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

And then Jesus went on to say in verses 18 and 19,

18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

What I want to do here as we start, and if you want to just make this the first point in your notes if you're a note-taker, I simply want to look at the background of this text, the background of this text because it will help us understand and properly interpret the primary text that we are going to look at. T

This text that I just read is part of the high priestly prayer, what Jesus prayed on the eve of his crucifixion as he committed his disciples to God the Father, and looking forward to the time where he would be absent from them after he departed from this world, and he also commits himself to the work of redemption that he is about to accomplish on the cross, and he sets himself apart to what the Father appointed for him to do. It's a moment in time that is fraught with eternal implications and everything about the incarnation and all of the events of Jesus' life, and his miraculous conception in the virgin birth, and his perfect life, and his life of ministry and miraculous works and powerful teaching, it was all moving to this culmination point and so this passage throbs with redemptive significance and the moment is just filled with such intensity that you remember that it was in this time that Jesus was praying with such fervency that drops of blood came from his forehead, as we read elsewhere in Scripture. This is the moment which Jesus had been uniquely appointed for and what he is about to do in the work that he would do on the cross, is to open up the way, to open the path, to clear the road for men to be able to have access to a holy God. That is the work that he is about to do, but as he does this work the time has come where his disciples will have to face the world without his physical presence and you read that and you see where that is in Jesus' mind in verse 11 here in chapter 17. Leading up into it we read in verse 9, Jesus praying for his disciples in a text that is fraught with significance for the doctrine of particular redemption, Jesus says in

verse 9, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me." you see, he's not praying for the world in general, he's praying for the disciples that the Father had given to him, those that were chosen before the foundation of the world and uniquely and particularly praying for that circle of disciples that were with him on the eve of his crucifixion. Now Jesus earnestly beseeching the Father knowing the work that he is about to do and knowing the hard road and even the future martyrdom that lie ahead for 11 of the those 12 apostles, Jesus says in verse 9,

9 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; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

Look at what he says in verse 11, he speaks as though, he uses the past tense to refer to the certainty of his coming departure. He says in verse 11,

11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

Jesus recognizes the key transition that is in place as he is praying. His time, the appointed time with his disciples has come to an end. His public ministry is over and now he will go to the cross, he will go to the tomb, he will be resurrected and shortly thereafter he will ascend into heaven. What this disciples had known in the prior three years of his time with them, all of that day by day walking with him and interacting with him and traveling with him and even ministering with him, it's done. Now something different in the redemptive plan of God is coming to pass.

So what Jesus is doing recognizing that he will no longer physically be present to care for the disciples, what he is doing in this prayer is he is committing them into the omnipotent hands of God the Father to care for them, to keep them, and to protect them as he departs. He asks God to keep them, in other words, "Father, I'm asking You to guard these. I'm asking You to guide them, to direct them, and to have Your hand upon them because, Father, they are in the midst of a hostile environment that will seek their destruction, even as the world is now about to destroy Me," Jesus says, in essence, he says, "God, protect these that You have given to Me that they might be able to continue on." And they need the protection of God himself, they need supernatural protection in the hours that lie ahead because of the threats to their security.

Look at verse 14 with me. Remember this is the background to the text that we're looking at here today. Jesus says, and we'll go back to verse 13, just the intimacy of this prayer, I want to just ask you to step back for a moment and just recognize that this is God the Son speaking to God the Father. We are on the holiest of ground in Scripture when we read this passage. This is the mind of God the Son communicating with the mind of God the Father. There is an intra-Trinitarian communication taking place here of the holiest kind. And I remember before I was a Christian, I remember specifically reading John 17 and

not being able to understand it. I read this and it made absolutely no sense to me whatsoever. Well, no wonder, how could the mind of a dead sinner read the communication between God the Father and God the Son and have any idea of what is being said. And so these are holy matters and if this does not make sense to you, it may well be because you're still dead in your trespasses and sins.

Jesus comes in verse 13, he says,

13 But now I come to You [speaking to the Father]; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.
14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Jesus speaking to his Father and rehearsing what the Father already knows, is that the disciples are about to be sent out into a world environment that hates them, and among unsaved men who will hate them just as they hated Christ, and as they speak for Christ the hatred that the world has for Christ himself will be transferred to them, the anger against Christ, the rejection of Christ, the humiliation of Christ would be transferred to the disciples as well. They would be imprisoned, they would one day be murdered for the sake of their faithfulness to Christ. And beyond that horizontal aspect of the world environment, you see Jesus saying in verse 15, "keep them from the evil one." The world is being motivated and that horizontal affliction and opposition comes because there is a spiritual dynamic from the adversary to their souls. They have a supernatural enemy in Satan, a supernatural enemy in the legion of demons that are under his command, and Jesus knowing all of this in ways that far transcended our ability to understand, mindful that Satan prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour and that he has strength that is too great for the disciples to resist, as Peter would find out soon after this in his three denials with curses, Jesus out of his love for his disciples, which by extension applies to those of us that are in Christ, you see the love and the genuine care and concern that Christ has for his disciples as he asks God, the omnipotent Sovereign of the universe, he asks God the Father, "Exercise Your care and protect them from that which they are being sent into because these invisible but very real spiritual forces will seek to destroy them and would destroy them apart from supernatural keeping."

And so as Peter's denials would soon show, these men were not up to the task in their own strength. Peter was the head of the band. Peter was, in a sense, representative of the other disciples who all left Jesus and fled, and so we see that for a time, for a moment God allowed their sin and their fear to manifest themselves so that it could be shown that the strength of the power of their ministry and their fidelity to Christ did not come from human strength or from human ability. How foolish it is to uphold Peter as so-called the first pope and head of the church. Peter denied Christ with curses. It could never be about the man Peter himself, and Peter was just the representative of the others who all, Scripture tells us elsewhere, fled. And so we see by the way that it played out in a few

short hours after Jesus prayed this way, that if there was going to be any advance in the kingdom of God, if these disciples were going to succeed in carrying out the Great Commission that Jesus would later give to them, if the keys of the kingdom were being given to them to proclaim them to men against hostile demonic forces, then they are going to need supernatural help in order to do it.

And beloved it's the same for us today. There is no strength or power in a man who stands in a pulpit or in an evangelist who stands on the street corner. There is no power in you as you try to witness desperately to your families. We must understand that we need supernatural help for the advance of the gospel, for the advance of our evangelism or it will not happen at all. We will fall of our own accord and the forces against us would shred us to pieces. There are people who would like to have us gone and our voices silenced. This is just the nature of the environment in which we live.

And so as we see these words of Jesus in this background, we see that the disciples themselves had no ability to carry it out, and it should also be an admonishment to you and me in our love for Christ, our testimony for Christ, in the ministry of whatever the Lord has given to us, that we must be relying on Christ, relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us or all is vain. All the effort is wasted because only God can do the work through his word that is necessary to advance his kingdom in the hearts of men. And that's why Scripture calls on people to pray for their pastors and for their elders, and it calls on pastors and elders to pray for their people. So Jesus gives us by his example and by his prayer here, we see Jesus interceding for them so that their faith would not fail.

Beloved, if ever for a moment God withdrew his sustaining hand from our souls, if ever for a moment, for a moment he withdrew his preserving power from your soul, you would fall, you would be lost forever. It's not just that we needed Christ to die for us at Calvary, it's not just that we needed the Spirit of God to work in our hearts and to give us new life at the moment of our conversion, we need the ongoing work of the Triune God to preserve and keep us because we cannot keep ourselves. What a ridiculous thought to think that you're saved and then you keep yourself by works. It's just a total absence of understanding in that mindset of the frailty of our flesh, the remnants of sinful disposition in our hearts, and the hostile forces that are arrayed against us as Ephesians 6 so clearly says.

And so Jesus intercedes for his disciples and he goes on to say that in verse 20, I didn't read this as part of the text, but understand that when Jesus was praying for the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion, beloved, this is so powerfully encouraging and so greatly strengthening to us today to understand that Jesus had in mind all of his future disciples as well. He had us in mind as he was praying this way as well, because he says in verse 20, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone," in other words, "I'm not only asking for this circle of 11 that is around Me now that Judas has departed." He says, "but for," he says, "I am also praying for those also who will believe in Me through their word." In other words, Jesus says, "The apostles are going to lay the foundation for the church and,

Father, as people over the centuries come into the kingdom of God, as they enter into the family of God through the word of the apostles, Father, I want You to understand I'm praying for them as well." He's praying for all the future church in this, not just corporately but individually we are all the beneficiaries of what Christ has prayed here in verse 20. It's amazing to think about. You get a sense of the selflessness, the love and the omniscient mind of our Lord, he is about to go to the cross and suffer eternal pains at the hands of the Father, enduring the wrath of God against our sins against him, and in the midst of that his mind is not on his own suffering but his mind is on the well-being of those that God had given to him. What a wonderful Savior. What a magnificent Lord, not just that he accomplished redemption for us but that this is his heart toward us. This is no cold matter of mathematics and a mere rearrangement of people's eternal destinies. The heart of Christ is in this. The love of Christ is motivating this prayer as he prays and not just in the circle of time in front of him but for the sake of all who would come one day to believe. And if you're a Christian, beloved, understand you've come to believe through the word of the apostles. It's through the testimony of the New Testament writers that we know about Christ and his work is rightly interpreted to us. And we see the accomplishment of redemption in the life and work of Christ, the person of Christ, and it was through the Scriptures that we saw the call in response to the gospel to repent and to believe.

And so we believe through that word and so we just see the eternal scope of what we are considering here today, and in our text this morning Jesus is asking the Father, we're going to look specifically at verse 17 now, Jesus asks the Father to use his word to set his disciples apart so that they might ultimately be with Christ in glory. Let me say that again: Jesus in this verse that we're about to look at, is asking God the Father to use the word of God to set them apart so that they might ultimately be with Christ in glory. Jesus loves his people. Jesus loves those for whom he died and it is his desire, it is the will of the Triune God that the people for whom Christ died would all be with him one day in glory because he loves us and he's gone to prepare a place for us, and if he's gone to prepare a place for us, Scripture says, he'll come back for us.

And so this passage is just quivering and pulsating with the eternal purposes of God which are nothing but good for his people, even as he leads us through the wicked world in which we live. And so with that background, let's look at our second point here this morning: the prayer for sanctification. The prayer for sanctification. As we look at this key key moment, look at how Jesus prays there in verse 17 where he says,

17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

He's asking God the Father to do something to the objects of his prayer, for the subjects of his prayer, I should say. Those for whom he is praying, he is asking God to do something to them on their behalf that they cannot do on their own. And the word that he uses is "sanctify, sanctify them," not at this crucial moment heal them of their physical afflictions, it's far far beyond that.

He says to sanctify them. Now with those that have any acquaintance at all with Christian theology, we often think of sanctification as the process by which we become more holy in our Christian lives, and that is a proper understanding of sanctification in the right context. But that's not the context here. He's not asking God to make them more holy in what he is praying right here. Sanctification, that aspect, that progressive aspect of sanctification is an important part of redemption, but in this context it is not the primary focus that Jesus has in mind at all. The Greek verb that underlies this translation, *hagiazo*, it means to set something apart for the realm of God, in other words, set it apart for sacred use. Jesus is asking the Father to set his disciples apart for God and for the purposes of his kingdom.

The idea, I'll show you this as we go through, the idea of Jesus' prayer here is that God would produce a people that are devoted exclusively to loving him, to obeying him, and even to hating the things that God hates, as we have seen so often in the Psalms. You see, the fiery imprecations of the Psalms, it's because the psalmist is so devoted to the purposes of God that he hates what God hates, and in our weak, effeminate age, so many people react against that and want nothing to do with that kind of militant attitude and militant praying, and everything wants to be neutered and castrated away from that kind of virility of faith. Well, beloved, if we're going to love God and we're going to be his emissaries, his ambassadors, then isn't it obvious that the one that is identified with God and identified with his Son is going to have something of a love for what God loves and a hatred for what God hates?

Jesus says, "Sanctify him and set them apart for your own purposes." And as we said, they do not have the strength to do it on their own, and Jesus recognizes that the world and Satan conspire to thwart the noble plan of God. And so Jesus here in verse 17, Jesus is securing their safety, he is securing our safety with this appeal to his Father. In the context, it's easy to see that Jesus is not talking here about their progressive growth in obedience because as you read in the immediately following context, Jesus applies the verb "sanctify" to himself. Look at it here in verse 17 through 19 again. Jesus says, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." Now in verse 18 he says, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." He's drawing an analogy between the disciples and Christ himself. "God the Father, You sent Me," Christ says, "into the world. Now I am sending them into the world in like manner." So what does he say there in verse 19, he says, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."

Beloved, Jesus was not looking to grow in his obedience. Jesus did not need to grow spiritually. There was no progressive growth needed in Christ. He was perfect. His righteousness was absolute, it was impeccable, it could never have been any other way. He was the perfect manifestation of the holiness of God. There was no way for him to get better. There was no way for him to grow spiritually. And so when he says in the same context, "I sanctify Myself," it's obvious that he's not talking about progressive growth in spiritual character. He's using the word in a different sense. What Jesus is saying is, "Father, I set Myself apart. I sanctify Myself," in other words, "I set Myself apart." He's

saying, "I am setting Myself apart, I am stepping aside for the unique purpose that You appointed for Me before the foundation of the world." What's he talking about? He's talking about the fact that he is about to go to the cross, he is about to suffer for the sins of his people, he is about to undergo a work of eternal difficulty, a work of eternal punishment tasting the pains of eternal judgment for all of the sins of all of his people of all time. He says, "I set Myself apart for the work that You've given Me to do and I go to it with face unflinched, I go to it with a full determination of purpose, I go to it with a full engagement of My will and a submission of My will to the Father."

That's how he was set apart and that was the work to which he was set apart. He didn't need to grow spiritually, beloved, he was set apart for the work that was about to come because he draws a parallel between himself and the work of sanctification that he's asking God to do for the disciples, he's asking God to set them apart. Set them apart. The disciples, just as Jesus is about to fulfill his purpose when he goes to the cross, the disciples will have their own purpose in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, and they will need the hand of God on them decisively if they are to have success in the matter. Beforehand, like Peter, they had served in secular occupations. Peter was a fisherman. Matthew was a tax collector. They had their secular work that they had done beforehand, but now they were being set apart, taken away from that, taken away from that occupation, that vocation, and they were being taken away and set apart for something else, set apart for the work of God, set apart for the word of God, set apart for the people of God, set apart for prayer. Jesus even spoke about this early on. He said, Follow Me and I'll make you fishers of men. You've been fishing for literal fish, follow Me and I'll give you an entirely different purpose, you'll be fishing men not sea creatures."

And so their purpose would be expressed in the teaching of God's word and the making of disciples as we see in Luke 24 and Matthew 28. They're being set apart, beloved, set apart, necessary tasks but common tasks will no longer occupy their time. They've been set apart for a higher purpose in the eternal plan of God, and you see the apostle speaking this way in the book of Acts, we won't take the time to turn there, but in Acts 6:4 early on in the early church they understood this, There was a dispute, there was dispute about the care of some of the widows in the church, and the apostle said, "We cannot give our time to this. We have something else to do so appoint men who can take care of that task for you, but as for us as apostles," they said, "but we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." They had been set apart for that. There were others who could do the necessary tasks of caring for the widows in the church, but the apostles could not do that and also do the work that they had been set apart for. They had been set apart for eternal priorities, to travel about on missionary journeys, and to go places to preach, to uphold the word of God, to raise up new leaders, Titus Timothy, you see in the life of the Apostle Paul. They'd been set apart for a spiritual work by spiritual means with spiritual goals in mind.

And so in light of those eternal priorities that was going to devolve on these weak, sinful, fearful men who would show their fear, I'm repeating myself but it's so important for you

to understand this, these men who within hours would flee from Christ showing that they had no natural capacity, ability or strength to do what God required and called them to do. That's why Jesus is praying this way and saying, "God, set them apart and have Your hand upon them. They cannot do it and so, Father, the strength must come from You and I'm about to depart from them Myself," Christ says. And so he says, "Give them a heart that is devoted entirely to Your word. Set them apart with a special measure of Your protection and strength so that they can do what You've set them apart to do." And then this word "sanctify" is so pregnant with meaning, Jesus not only knowing the nature of the men but also knowing the nature of the task, implied in this, "Father as You set them apart, also order their lives so that they could fulfill what You've set them apart to do."

Look at Ephesians 2 with this spirit of things in our minds. This gives great conviction and courage to Christians, it gives great conviction and courage to men of God to rise to the occasion even in the face of hostile opposition, whether it's from close within the family or outside from the world. You know, when you understand that God has set you apart for a purpose, to live for him in the life that the Lord has given to you, then it clarifies your priority and it gives strength to your soul as you realize what Christ has done and what Christ has called and the provision that he has made through his own prayers for you.

Ephesians 2:10, thinking about this in the context of these disciples, Ephesians 2:10, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." It's another way of saying that God has set his people apart not only in salvation but he is also set them apart for a purpose by which they would live for his glory and live unto obedience to him, and walk in the good works that God had prepared for them. And understand, beloved, what this Scripture is teaching us is that God has given you the life that you have right now, that life that God has given you is the life in which you will find the good works that he has prepared for you to do. Your life circumstances are not an accident, they are ordained by God. He has set you apart to glorify him, to serve him, to proclaim him right in the midst of what you are doing now. And so you don't need, if you're wanting to know the will of God and how you serve God, you know, there's a time and place for saying, "What am I going to be doing years from now," but there's also a time and place to say, "What's in front of me today? How do I obey God in the mundane routine circumstances that He's given to me today?" That beloved, is what he's set you apart for today to do; that's what you've been sanctified to do today.

And so Jesus says, "Father, sanctify them, set them apart in their hearts. And Father, continue to orchestrate by Your providence and by Your perfect will the the works that lie ahead for them. Set them apart for the works that You've set apart for them particularly and specifically to do." And this has application for us. If God saved you, beloved, he has set you apart. Why do you exist? You know, one of the things about the whole transgender stuff and all of the confusion that's all around us in the collapse of thought in the world around us, is there's this awful hopelessness and aimlessness of people not even knowing who they are, not even being able to look at their physical

anatomy and determine whether they're a boy or a girl, a man or a woman. "Who am I? What is a woman? What is a man? What am I here for?" When you cut the legs off from the most foundational aspects of identity, the only thing that is left is ultimate hopelessness and a complete loss of any sense of why you exist. Well, beloved, none of that should infiltrate into a Christian mind, none of that, "Why am I here and who am I?" Listen, beloved, if you are in Christ, you exist to know him, to know the will of God and to do it. That's why you exist. And the outworking of that, I mean the general parameters of it for us all are the same as revealed in Scripture. The specific details of it day by day are determined by the providence that God has ordered for your life, that's what you've been set apart for.

Now let's just step back for a moment. I'm kind of fired up this morning. You know yourself to some extent, you know how – I'm speaking to believers here – you know how weak you are in the flesh, how easily you are provoked. You know how you carry bitterness in your heart against other people, and the evidence, if we just take the time to look at it in our own hearts, the evidence of our own weakness and poverty of spirit is abundantly available if we would just look for it and set aside pride long enough to acknowledge it. You know from whence you came. Aren't any of us here that come from noble stock, not many noble, not many wise. You know how easily you're intimidated at the first sign of someone challenging your testimony. You know how easily you're discouraged when life becomes adverse to you, and how easily questions and a lack of faith stir up in your mind, how easily you would collapse under the weight of adversity. It's our common lot and when you realize the lofty purpose for which you have been saved, to know Christ, to obey him, to know the will of God and to do it, we're left with the words of the Apostle Paul, "Who's adequate for these things? Who is adequate to do, to fulfill a supernatural calling in a natural body? Who's adequate for that?" Just in philosophical principle who's adequate, and then we know and we walk through life and we see our own sins and failures and inconsistent commitment, and we would shrivel back from the task. Where can we be equipped for such a transcendent task?

Well that brings us to our third point this morning: the means of sanctification. The means of sanctification. What is it that secures the well-being of the disciples? What is the source of their empowerment as the Spirit of God works in their lives? Well, go back to verse 17 with me. He says, "Sanctify them in the truth." Ah, we've come back to our whole theme of the past several weeks. Sanctify them in the truth and then he explains and expands what he means by the truth, he says, "Sanctify them in the truth' Your word is truth." Twice in that very brief text the word "truth" occurs.

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth," and truth is obviously the emphasis of what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus had given them the truth in his teaching during his earthly ministry. Look up again at verse 14, he said, "I have given them Your word, I've given them Your word," now in verse 17 he says, "Your word is truth. I've given them the truth. I've told them what truth is. I've taught them the way things really are." Now here in his prayer, his teaching ministry in his earthly life, his teaching ministry has come to an end as it does for all teachers of God's word, sooner or later it comes to an end and so

you have to live for more than just the act of teaching. Jesus had given them the truth in his teaching and now the truth is going to carry on even though the physical presence of Jesus is not. So he asks God to cover them in that truth for their protection, and that he would use the truth in their lives to fulfill the purposes of God, and it is right here, beloved, that we see how crucial Scripture is to everything else. It is why I say this kind of thing so many times, it is why we put the word of God front and center in everything that we do, it's because there is no other source of power, there is no other source of equipping that is given to us other than the word of God that has this kind of spiritual supernatural power.

Beloved, God sets his disciples apart to accomplish a mission on earth. You and I in our natural wisdom, in our natural education, we have no idea what that is, we have no knowledge of the will of God apart from what he has said in his word. The foolish dreams that people talk about, the foolish motions of what they think in their mind and what they think in their heart and, "God spoke to me apart from Scripture and said this," that's all nonsense and none of it is from God. None of it is in terms of being a revelation of his truth. God has given us his word in order to be the means of our sanctification, and so the purpose of the word is this, the purpose of Scripture is to renew our minds, to inform us and instruct us and command us to change the way that we think, to change the way that we feel, to renew our will and to renew our volition so that we think like God does, in accordance with his word, so that we love the things that he loves and hates the things that he hates, and having our minds and our hearts informed in that way, we go forth and obey what he has done. We do what he instructs us to do.

So the word is the fountain of all of that. Look at Romans 12:2, for example. Romans 12, Paul after having expounded on biblical salvation and its implications for the nation of Israel in the first 11 chapters of Romans, says this in verse 1, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." Now look at verse 2 with all of this context from today, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." In light of everything that's true about salvation, have your mind renewed by the ongoing submission and submersion of your mind into the truth of God as it is found in the 66 books of the Bible.

In like manner, the Apostle Peter in his first letter said in chapter 2, verse 1, you don't need to turn there for the sake of time. He said, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander," in other words, putting aside the sins of your natural man, "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." Beloved, the word of God, the 66 books of the Bible and no more, the Apocrypha is not part of the word of God, the word of God is at the very heart of his purpose for your life and the transformation of your life. The word changes our thinking from our worldly environment and into conformity with the mind of Christ. And beloved, it is only by a transformed mind that you can fulfill the purposes of God. It is in Scripture as you read it in your private devotions. It is only in Scripture as

you hear it taught by biblically qualified men from a pulpit, that God immerses you in an understanding of Christ in the purposes of redemption. And with that renovated mind, you are now able to discern the false philosophies of the world and to train your heart away from the sinful enticements and temptations of the world. It's because your mind has been transformed that you've been set apart and you've been set apart so that your mind would be transformed.

Here's the point, beloved, from that position of mental strength with a renewed mind, then you are in a position to understand, assert and defend the truth of Scripture despite the hostile forces that surround us. The word of God makes you strong in Christ to be able to do that, and with a renewed mind, with a will that is renewed, in accordance with that renewed mind, then you have the resolve necessary to overcome the obstacles and to stand firm in the fight of faith, to stand like a rock in the midst of the waves of adversity, to stand like a man in the face of criticism and rejection, to stand like a man in the midst of the routine mundane course of life ennobled, instructed, enabled by the power of the word of God to fulfill the purpose that you've been set apart for. "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

So we must never forget the treasure that we have in God's precious word, and in spirit if not in physical reality, to hold it close as the most precious thing that we have. Turn to 2 Timothy as we close. 2 Timothy 3:14. Paul, I love the way Scripture fits together. I love the way that you can look at passages that are expressed with different vocabulary but identify the underlying principle that makes the common principle clear. Paul speaking to Timothy and notice this, beloved, this just crossed my mind in the moment. I love it when that happens too. Christ as he was about to depart, looked at his disciples and said, "Father, sanctify them in the truth." Now Paul in his last letter of 2 Timothy, looks at his disciple, Timothy, he's doing the exact same thing, he is sanctifying Timothy, he's setting Timothy apart to the word of God so that after Paul is gone the word would continue on in Timothy. Just as when Christ was gone it would continue on in his disciples. Same thing, Paul, the apostle, leaving, the word continues on.

Look at chapter 3, verse 14. "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known," what? "The sacred writings. You've know the word of God, Timothy, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." And what's the consequence of that, then? In light of what Timothy knows to be true about the word of God, in light of what the word is in and of itself, what, then, is Timothy to do? What are you and I to do? What is Truth Community Church to do in light of these great principles that we've seen from God's word today? Well, the word of God is not joking around here. This is not a moment of entertainment or seeker sensitivity, appealing to the carnal desires of unsaved men. No, we're on solemn ground here. Chapter 4, verse 1, in light of these things and Paul knowing that he, himself, is about to depart soon enough, he says, "Timothy, 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. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. Timothy, this is not going to be popular when you do it. Do it anyway. Do it in season and out of season. Do it all the time. This is your charge. Timothy, this is why you have been, this is that unto which you have been sanctified. You've been set apart to this. It does not matter if the world rejects you. It does not matter if the world does not receive your teaching. Do it because this is the purpose of God unto which you've been sanctified." And by extension it's what we all do, transformed and equipped by the word of God, we do this, beloved, this is why you and I exist as believers in Christ, we submit our lives, we submit our desires, we submit our wills, we submit everything about ourselves individually and corporately as a local church, we submit our lives to the honor and glory of the one who set us apart for his purposes in Christ, and with that defining purpose of life clear in our minds, we are enabled also to pursue the purification of sin from our lives.

But mark it clearly, the only growth in service of God comes from those and happens in those who read and study the word of God. Beloved, that is why you must prioritize Scripture in your day-to-day life, to have an ongoing feeding of the word of God in your own life. That is why we emphasize Scripture at our church. That is why, beloved, we call ourselves Truth Community Church.

Let's pray together.

Father, what can we say except sanctify us in the truth, Your word is truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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