

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Paul’s Letter to Titus - Lesson #1

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning, Bruce!

Bruce: Nice to be with you again.

Participant: Good to be here.

Bruce: Let’s quietly go before the Lord and know His omnipotence and His omnipresence, and let’s just rejoice in the fact that we can sit at His feet. *(Music)*

Gracious and sovereign Lord, may our minds be upon Christ this day for Jesus’ sake. Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Men, we’re going to begin a new study today. We’re studying the little book of Titus—three chapters, forty-six verses. It’s a wonderful little book. And the reason I selected this is because of the timing of where we are in our culture.

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Paul wrote the letter of Titus to his young ministerial protégé because he was in a very, very dark, difficult situation where he was called to serve. I think there are some great similarities between where Titus was serving and where we are now living in our country. And so I’m calling this study during the next several months “How to Penetrate a Dark World.” So we’re going to study the book of Titus verse by verse.

Today I’m just going to give you an overview of the whole context of the book so you’ll have the big picture of it. And then next week we’ll begin a verse-by-verse analysis of the study of Paul’s letter to Titus. So I would ask you to open your Bibles, please, to the book of Titus. I’m just going to read the first couple of verses of the introduction, and then I’m going to give you a quick overview.

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and at the proper time manifested in His word, through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command 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.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. Well the book of Titus is one of three pastoral epistles written by the apostle Paul, basically to give instructions to his young protégé in the ministry. The reason I’ve chosen this particular book is because he had some very difficult situations which he faced because of dark times. And so Paul writes this very encouraging letter to help his young ministerial protégé hang in there. He basically says, “Don’t give up the ship. Be diligent. Preach the Word.” So we’re going to examine this today with just a quick overview.

“Penetrating a Dark World”

These three pastoral epistles—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—form what I would call a *trinity of unity*. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are sort of a series of three, exhorting us to guard the precious deposit of the gospel. They all have to do with guarding the gospel.

So if you take a look at 1 Timothy, we’re to *protect* the gospel. That’s the book of 1 Timothy. In 2 Timothy we’re to *proclaim* the gospel. And then when we come to Titus we’re to *practice* it. So with the three things in this trilogy of the gospel preservation we are to protect it, we’re to proclaim it and we’re to practice it.

And so, as we read this little book of Titus, you’ll notice that the emphasis is on good works as an evidence of true saving faith. It’s not a means of gaining the faith, but it’s evidence of your true saving faith. And men, I think we need to understand this in the context of where we’re living in the dark ages of our country right now.

One could say that the key verse would be something like chapter three verse eight. *“Be careful to engage in good works.”* That could be a summary statement of the whole book. You might want to pick 2:14. *“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us away from our lawless deeds and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.”*

Now in the midst of a dark and gloomy situation, one of the ways in which we’re going to penetrate and protect the gospel and practice it is by doing the good works that we do as a result of our saving faith. And that’s why Paul writes to Titus and tells him how to do this. And so we’ll examine this verse by verse beginning next week.

I think the message of this particular little book is timely for where we are in the church of America today. This book has only forty-six verses and three chapters. Each chapter has its own emphasis. Chapter one deals with *orderliness in the church*. Chapter two deals with *godliness in the home*. And chapter three deals with *consistency in the world*. And so the way you could look at these three chapters would be leadership, learning and lifestyle.

Chapter one deals with leadership. Chapter two deals with learning. Where do you learn and what do you learn? And then chapter three deals with lifestyle. How do we give away and practice the gospel that Christ has given us?

And so the reason this book is so practical in its application for penetrating a dark world is because of the historical background that we need to examine. In your hermeneutical study there are three things you need to look at. You need to look at *historical background*, you need to look at *grammar*, and then *the context of the verses which you’re studying*. That’s what you would call a *hermeneutical analysis*. So I want to give you a little bit of historical background so you’ll understand the context of what we’re going to study in the next couple of weeks.

Participant: Bruce, could you define the word *hermeneutical*?

Bruce: *Hermeneutical* means the science of Biblical interpretation. There are three things you need to look at. You need to look at the historical background to see what’s going on in the context of what’s going on at that particular time. That has a tendency to protect us from reading things into the Scriptures.

The second thing is the grammar. We talk about word studies and verb tenses and things of that nature, which you hear me referring to all of the time.

“Penetrating a Dark World”

And thirdly is the context of the verses. You don't want to take verses out of context. So let me give you some historical background to lay the groundwork for our study of the book of Titus. I think that once you do that, once you understand this historical background, you'll begin to see the correlation between our application and where the church is today.

So we see in verse five that Paul states the reason for his instructions. Look at verse five. *“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”* He left Titus in Crete to put things in order. Things were a mess. And so he asked Titus to stay there and put things in order.

Now Crete is an island off the southeast coast of Greece. It was an island that was 165 miles long by thirty miles wide. It has two major mountain ranges that run through the middle of the island. And so the island itself was filled with deep valleys, steep slopes, and numerous caves hidden among the rocky terrain.

It was a perfect place for the Romans to practice developing military warfare. When they had conquered the island, it became the primary military training ground because of all the valleys, the nooks and the crannies and the hills, and the steep slopes and the caves hidden between these valleys, a perfect place to develop military strategy. So it became their military training ground.

Because of its Roman occupation, there were more slaves on the island than there were Roman citizens. Now Roman citizens could manage their wealth by how many slaves they had. The average Roman house had four slaves per family. So if you had one thousand Roman citizens, you had four thousand slaves. There were more slaves on the island than there were Roman citizens.

So you've got this environment where young Titus is called to serve—very, very rough terrain, a military training ground for the Roman army to develop military strategies, and where there were more slaves than Roman citizens.

In addition, this was the place where aliens and prisoners were sent. They were the people who were part of the Roman Empire, but they were not citizens of Rome. They were participants in the Roman Empire, but they were not citizens.

Here's the way it broke down. This was sort of their Alcatraz. Crete was their Alcatraz.

So when you look at all the people there who Titus was called to serve, we see that they were the military, the lowest morality of people. The military was the lowest morality of people. Then you saw the slaves. They were the lowest social level of people. And then you saw the aliens. They were the lowest political level of people. So you saw low morals, low political status and low social status among the people whom Titus was called to serve.

It was into this group of people that Titus was instructed to set things in order, to get things shipshape, to take things in order. He does this by writing this letter to Titus, and he writes these three things—leadership, learning and lifestyle. That's how we learn how to penetrate a dark environment.

So in other words, Paul was saying this. The work is not done, so get things in order by establishing some strategic principles for the church so the church can be a vital

“Penetrating a Dark World”

witness to penetrate the darkness of this society on the island of Crete. So that’s what we have—leadership, learning and lifestyle.

In chapter 1, you’ll notice on your outline *Leadership in Congregational Life*. That’s orderliness in the church. Leadership in congregational life was the first thing he had to deal with to set things in order. And notice what he’s doing. The priority is to what? Get the church in order! If you’re going to penetrate the world and penetrate a dark environment, you’ve got to get the church in order! That’s the very first thing that requires leadership. We’ll talk about that in chapter 1.

Then the next thing is—*Learning and Family Life*. That’s godliness in the home. Once the church is well ordered, you need to emphasize learning in the home situation, orderliness in the home.

And then thirdly, *Lifestyle in Public Life*. That would be consistency in the world. You can see on page 2 the outline we’ll be following as we move through this in the weeks ahead. Chapter 1 is leadership. Chapter 2 is learning. Chapter 3 is lifestyle.

Now let me give you just a quick overview of these chapters. And then we’ll begin to do this expositively next week, verse by verse.

Now chapter 1 is *orderliness in the church*, dealing with leadership. Genuine leadership is described for us in chapter 1, verses 5-9. Take a look at that.

Transcriber’s Note: Titus 1:5-9. *“This is why I left you in Crete, that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you, if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”*

Bruce: I’m going to call attention to several illustrations of the Scriptures to help us understand what we’ll be studying in future days.

Leadership—ethical leadership, genuine leadership—is described in verses 5-9. And then you’ll notice that counterfeit leadership is described in verses 10-16.

Transcriber’s Note: Titus 1:10-16. *“For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.*

“To the pure all things are pure. But to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. But both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they defile Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.”

Bruce: You’ve got genuine leadership in verses 5-9, counterfeit leadership in verses 10-16. And we’ll go through all of this verse by verse in the weeks ahead.

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Now notice. When you look at those verses, 5-9, the leader must have a threefold blamelessness to lead in the church. First of all, there has got to be *domestic blamelessness*. That’s verse 6. There is *personal blamelessness*. Those are verses 7 and 8. And there is *doctrinal blamelessness* in verse 9. Six, seven, eight and nine. Blamelessness domestically, personally and doctrinally.

Notice that the primary requirement for leadership in the church is self-control. God qualifies leaders. We don’t qualify leaders. We just recognize them and set them apart. God is the One who qualifies the leadership.

You don’t vote on your leadership. You don’t vote on your elders. You just say, “Oh, there’s one! There’s another one! Let’s set them apart.” You see, God is the One who qualifies leadership. You don’t vote them into office. We may do that as a means of identifying them. But basically, God qualifies the leaders. And we’ll talk about how that happens over the weeks ahead.

So there’s a blamelessness domestically, personally and doctrinally. Notice this. A self-made man has no one to blame but himself.

Participant: Amen.

Participant: Say that again, Bruce.

Bruce: A self-made man has no one to blame but himself. We don’t make leaders. God qualifies them. A church can go only as far as its leaders take it.

In my judgment, besides prayer and proclamation of the gospel, the most important thing a pastor can do is to train leaders for the next generation. That’s a full time job right there. There are a lot of things that you need to do. People want you to do a lot of other things. But I think the priority for a pastor/teacher of the church is this: preach the Word, Christ and Him crucified, pray, and train leaders. We need to prepare the next generation of leadership. And we’ll talk about how we do that in the weeks ahead.

Once I was in a church situation. I was filling in as an interim and meeting with the staff, and a new senior pastor had just arrived. Now this was not Memorial Park. This was a church in Kansas. And the new pastor came on board and he said, “What do you think I should be doing?”

I said, “Well, I think you need to pray, I think you need to preach, and I think you need to train leaders.”

And he said, “Well, if that’s what I’m supposed to do, I won’t have time to do anything else.” (*Laughter*)

I said, “That’s correct.” (*Laughter*) “That’s what you should be doing.

He said, “I don’t have time to do anything else.”

I said, “That’s what you train leaders for. This isn’t a one-man show.”

You see, the critical ingredient is that what Paul is writing to Titus is that you’ve got to train leaders. You’ve got to identify the leaders for the sake of the church. If you’re going to have orderliness in the church, a church can only go as far as its leadership takes it. So that’s why chapter 1 has to do with orderliness in the church. It has to do with leadership. I think that training leaders is a critical component for the pastor/teacher’s role. Yes, Brian?

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Brian: Before you go on with that story, can you unpack a little bit about what orderliness looks like? What does an orderly church look like? Or is that going to be in the future?

Bruce: That will be next month.

Brian: Got it. *(Laughter)* At the first church that I pastored in Kansas City, there was a very well-known man who was running for governor, an excellent man. And the people said, “He’s needs to be one of our elders.”

And I said, “Based upon what?”

“Well, it’s who he is. He’s a leader. He does all of these things.” And they had all these identifications.

And I said, “Is he qualified according to the Scripture definition of what an elder is to be and to do.”

“Well, what does that have to do with it?” *(Laughter)* “He’s known in the community.”

So I said, “Let’s visit with him.”

As it turned out—long story short—the other elder in the church was the head mechanic in a Ford garage. So I said, “If he wants to become an elder, I’m going to have the man who’s the mechanic in the Ford garage spend a year with him, teaching him how to be an elder.”

Participant: Wow!

Bruce: So we had this man who was running for governor. He would meet every Wednesday morning with myself and the head mechanic of the Ford garage, and we would help him to understand what it meant to be a Christian leader and to be qualified. Was God going to qualify him? He did.

Participant: Wow!

Bruce: But look at the humility. The man who was running for governor met with the man who was the mechanic of the Ford garage.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You’ve got to have the right men, men! You’ve got to have the right people in the right slots. You need to have the right people at the right time to make the right decisions for the right reasons. That’s church leadership. That’s why it’s so important that we build church leaders and have orderliness in the church. That’s chapter one.

Chapter two is going to be godliness in the home. Titus is going to be learning from his mentor Paul that the primary learning center is to be in the home. The duties in the home are described in verses 1-10.

Transcriber’s Note: Titus 2:1-10. *“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*

“Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech

“Penetrating a Dark World”

that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

“Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well pleasing—not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”

Bruce: These sections in chapter two teach us what we are to do and how we are to do it. Let’s examine this briefly.

The term *older* does not mean age, but it means maturity. Notice. The more mature men and more mature women are to be the instructors of the less mature men and less mature women. That’s the context in which this is to occur in the home, and it starts and carries over into the church today.

Notice the five characteristics for men. They speak of balance. A mature man of faith is a man balanced in his faith. He has the combination of both grace and truth. Truth without grace is a half-truth. And grace without truth is no grace at all.

Men who are balanced, worthy of respect, self-controlled, men who have conviction, compassion and commitment are to teach younger, less mature men.

Likewise,. Notice the characteristics of a mature woman found in verse three. The characteristic of a mature woman is that she is to teach less mature women. The three characteristics of a mature woman are *consistency*. And they are to watch what comes out of their mouth and to watch what they put in their mouth, so they can teach what is good. You see that in verse three.

What is good is defined in verses four and five. You’ll notice that in chapter two. Look at verses four and five of chapter two. *“And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of the Lord may not be reviled.”* That’s what they’re to teach them.

Where does this start? It starts at home. And that’s reinforced in the church, part of the orderliness of the church.

Now notice this. When you educate young men and women in the mind only, and not in Christian graces, you create a menace for society. When you train people only in the mind, intellectually, and don’t train them in Christian graces, according to the outline in chapter two, you’re creating a menace for society because they will not understand the graces of God at all. They will not be participating in their lives.

Next, we look at *consistency in the world*. First of all orderliness in the church—leadership,--godliness in the home—learning,--and now, quickly, consistency in the world—lifestyle.

Notice the sequence of these verses in chapter 1 and chapter 2 that lead to chapter 3. Where there is orderliness in the church and consistency in the home, you will have consistency in the world. There’s a sequence.

I was in a conversation recently when I was at the Naval Academy with some friends who were asking me some questions about why all the drug addiction, all the stuff that’s going on in America, penetrating this dark environment that we’re trying to talk about. What’s the cause of it?

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Well there are many, many causes. But I said, “In my judgment, I think one of the greatest causes is the breakdown of the family.

Participant: That’s right.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Because that’s where it all starts.

Participant: Yes it does.

Bruce: You see, the church is not to be the primary teaching center. The home is! The church supports the home! The home doesn’t support the church! The church needs to be supporting what’s going on in the home. It all starts in the home. That’s what chapter two is all about.

And so if you have this sequence of orderliness in the church and godliness in the home, you are going to have consistency in the world, because you’re practicing your faith. That’s how you penetrate a dark environment.

So what does consistency in the world mean? Notice that verses 1 and 2 of chapter 3 describe *the believer’s obligation*.

Transcriber’s Note: Titus 3:1-2. *“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.”*

Bruce: Chapter 3, verses 3-7, describe *the believer’s motivation*.

Transcriber’s Note: Titus 3:3-7. *“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs of the hope of eternal life.”*

Bruce: And in chapter 3, verses 8-11, *the believer’s reaction*.

Transcriber’s Note: Titus 3:8-11. *“The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.*

“But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

Bruce: Now because of the time we have today and it’s brevity, I’m just going to give you one little review of something here that we’ll talk about later. But I want to talk about dealing with our motivation. What is our motivation to serve Christ in penetrating a dark world that needs to be penetrated by orderliness in the church, godliness in the home and consistency in our lifestyle? What is our motivation to do that? Let’s go to chapter 3, verses 3-7.

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating

“Penetrating a Dark World”

one another. But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Now men, let me walk you through this motivation. I think that passage is one of the most motivating passages that you and I have to motivate us to penetrate the environment of this world, so we can penetrate the darkness of this world by living out good works. Let me walk you through this.

I would say there are three things that we see in that passage. First of all, those verses teach this. *Forget not your past.* Secondly, *function in the present.* And thirdly, *focus on the future.*

Now let me walk you through that. First of all, *forget not your past.* Notice how he describes who you and I used to be B.C. *“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.”*

Men, that’s who you used to be! That’s who you were! When you see somebody in the world who acts like that, you’ve got to remind yourself “that used to be me. And I would be just like that if it weren’t for God’s grace.” You see, you can never forget your past! You’ve got to remember that! Remember what you used to be like before Christ.

That’s one of the greatest assurances of your salvation. You see increased righteousness in your life. I’m different than I used to be. That’s what I used to be. I’m not that way anymore by the grace of God.

And so when you see somebody who is acting like a twit, (*laughter*), first of all you shouldn’t criticize them. You’ve got to remember that it used to be me. That was me. I was that twit. I was acting that same way.

Sometimes people ask me the question. How can they do that? If they’re not in Christ, they can’t do anything else.

Participant: Yes, right.

Bruce: Do you understand that? They cannot do anything else! By nature, they can’t do a thing! Until God is gracious to regenerate them and give them a new nature, they can’t act any other way than that! That’s the way you and I were! You can’t forget your past. Don’t ever forget that. The moment that you forget your past, you’re not going to function in the present.

I grew up in Fairmont, West Virginia. Back in 1950 there was an article, I think, in *Life* magazine or *Punch* magazine that my parents showed me. My dad was the chief federal probation officer for the state of West Virginia. He dealt with hard core federal criminals.

I remember that when I was in grade school there was an article on my county in West Virginia. And the article said this. *“This county leads the nation in three things: the highest rate of illegitimate babies per capita, the lowest rate of education, and the highest number of people moving out of the county.”*

Now folks, I never want to forget that.

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Participant: There you go.

Bruce: I need to remember that, because it reminds me of the sacrifices of my folks that my folks went through to put me in a position where I could go to the Naval Academy.

Participant: Wow!

Bruce: And I’ll actually never, ever forget that, because it reminds me of the sacrifices of my mom and dad, what they did for me. They were called to work in that environment. But I should never, ever forget that.

Periodically, every three or four years, I’ll just drive back and look at the three houses I lived in in Fairmont, just to remind myself. That’s what I used to be. But that’s now who I am now.

You see, men, the first thing that you’ve got to remember is this. Don’t ever forget your past. You used to be verse three. And if it were not for the grace of God, that’s exactly where you would be. Yes, Brian?

Brian: I think it’s wise counsel, like you said, not to forget your past. But Paul also tells us not to dwell on it. I think it’s in Philippians where it talks about “I do not look behind me, but I look to what’s forward.” So remember who you were in the past for humility. But don’t dwell on it, because it’s going to keep you going forward. There’s that fine balance there.

Bruce: Well, that’s my next point. *Function in the present. (Laughter)* You forget not your past, but you function in the present. You don’t function in the past. You function in the present. So thank you for that lead-in, Brian. *(Laughter)*

Remember who you are in Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:7. *“We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”* Do you realize that? You, the earthen vessel, have the treasure of the life of God in you, *“to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God and not from ourselves.”*

Men, you are a walking treasure! That’s who you are. You need to function in the present. The all-surpassing power comes from God and not from ourselves. You’ve got all the power that you’ll ever need to live a life and penetrate the darkness of this present world, because that’s who you are in Christ. You need to focus on that. Remember who you were, but function in the present.

Romans chapter 8 verse 1. *“For there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* That doesn’t mean that we’re not worthy of condemnation. It means that you’re not condemned anymore! Do you realize that?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I used to be in Titus 3 verse three, but I’m not condemned anymore because of God’s grace. No condemnation.

Romans chapter 8, verses 35-39. There’s no separation.

Transcriber’s Note: Romans 8:35-39. *“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the One who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”*

“Penetrating a Dark World”

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine or nakedness, or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, or anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Bruce: No one can separate you from the love of God. Function in that reality. Take that to the office every day. No one can separate me from the love of God, because what I used to be is no longer me. I now have the treasure of the earthen vessel in my life and the all-surpassing power comes from God. And the reason that we have no separation is because there’s no—

Participant: Condemnation.

Bruce: There’s no separation because of Christ’s intercession. Christ is interceding for us right now, men. Function in that reality. Do you realize that right now Christ is at the right hand of God the Father interceding for us who are meeting in this little hall? He’s interceding. He’s saying, “Father, there’s a group of men right now. Let’s give them the grace that is needed through the Holy Spirit to be the ones who will penetrate a dark and disastrous world.” So don’t forget your past, men. But function in the present.

Now I would say that the third thing for motivation is this. Believe it. Live it. Rejoice in it. Function in the present. Believe it, rejoice in it, live in it.

Self-esteem is the disease, not the cure. We need to think about who God says we are. The real battleground for us as men is who do I believe? Do I believe what the world says about me? Or do I believe what the Scripture says about me? We need to function in the present. Believe it, rejoice in it, and live it.

And then lastly, *focus on the future*. Look at verse seven. *“So that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

“According to the hope of eternal life.” Look forward to heaven, to being with Christ. Look forward to that. I’m not saying that we should rush it on. But I’m saying look forward to it.

In all of my study of the great Puritan preachers when I was at Oxford, they had a great anticipation of heaven. That’s why they made such an impact upon the world. That’s why we talk about them today, because they had such a heavenly attitude. Let me give you a couple of Puritan quotes about heaven, about thinking about the future, focusing on the future.

Matthew Henry says this. *“Our duty as Christians is always to keep heaven in our eyes and the earth under our feet.”*

Thomas Watson says, *“No man can go to heaven who has not set his heart there beforehand.”* No man can go to heaven who is not already set his heart there beforehand.

And then Thomas Manton, *“The more of heaven we cherish, the less of earth we covet.”*

Participant: Amen.

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Bruce: The more of heaven that we cherish, the less of earth we will covet. We need to focus on the future.

So what’s our motivation? It’s our salvation. Our motivation is understanding our salvation.

Let me walk you through verse three. First of all, in verse three we see this. We see *our need for salvation*. I’m going to have you guys read this. Would somebody read verse three? This is our need for salvation. I’ve read it twice. I want you to read it once.

Participant: *“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”*

Bruce: All right. There’s your need for salvation. That is our treason against God. The reason that we have a need for salvation is because of our cosmic treason against God and our sinfulness. It starts with our need.

Verse 4. *The source of our salvation*. Read verse four.

Participant: *“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*

Bruce: Amen. The source of our salvation is God alone. God alone is the source of our salvation—not my works, not what somebody else says about me. God alone is the source of our salvation. The need for our salvation is our treason against God. The source of our salvation is God alone. God alone is the source of our salvation.

How about *the basis of our salvation*? Verse five.

Participant: *“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”*

Bruce: Men, don’t ever forget that the basis of our salvation is God’s mercy. That’s why we are mission-minded members of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We’re m-8s. Remember, the basis of it is God’s mercy. Do you realize that? In 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul says this. *“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”* Do you realize, men, that ministry is not the result of human achievement, but the result of divine mercy? God is merciful not only to save us, but to let us be a part of His ministry. We are ministry-motivated men because of mercy. That’s the basis of our salvation.

Next, look at verses five and six—*the means of our salvation*.

Participant: Four, five and six, Bruce?

Bruce: Five and six, please.

Participant: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”*

“Penetrating a Dark World”

Bruce: The means of our salvation is God’s regenerating power of the Holy Spirit when He gave us new life. God regenerated us and gave us new life. That’s the means of our salvation.

How about *the goal of our salvation*—verse seven?

Participant: “*So that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life.*”

Bruce: The goal of our salvation is to become joint heirs with Christ. What a great, great litany we have to look forward to, to be joint heirs with Christ, to be His children! And lastly, *the evidence of our salvation*. The evidence of our salvation is verse eight.

Participant: “*The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable.*”

Bruce: Men, that is the description of our salvation, those verses in Titus chapter 3:3-7, our motivation. Forget not your past. Function in the present. But focus on the future, because the need for our salvation is our sin. The source of our salvation is God alone. The basis of our salvation is God’s mercy. The means of our salvation is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. The goal of our salvation is to be joint heirs with Christ. And the evidence of our salvation is good deeds.

And men, I would say this. When you and I remember those outline notes of our salvation, and we commit ourselves to them, we will penetrate a dark world for the glory of God. May it be so for His glory.

Let’s pray. Father, there is much that we can learn from this small letter of Titus, a young man who was called to serve in a very, very difficult environment. Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit would go before us to prepare our hearts for what You have to teach us, that we might learn how we can forget not our past, how we can function in our present, and how we can focus on the future. Help us understand the value, the joy, the clarity, the power, the significance, the mercy and the majesty of our salvation. And may it be so, Father, that we would do good works as evidence of the fact that we have true saving faith, to the glory of God. And all God’s children said, “Amen!” (*Applause*)