

“Final Instructions and Benediction”

Penetrating a Dark World

Titus 3:12-15

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Bruce: Gracious Lord Jesus, we humbly come to sit at Your feet this morning, trusting that You’ll be pleased to open our eyes that we might behold Your beauties once again. May it be so that You’ll be pleased, Father, to help us understand the significance of the gospel, what it means to us, just as much as what it means to the nonbeliever. The gospel applies to us, Father, just as much as to the lost. And may that be something we understand this day for Your glory, in the powerful name of Christ. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Okay, men. Let’s turn in our Bibles to the book of Titus. We’re going to finish it up today. I trust that this has been a good study for all of us. I’ve certainly enjoyed teaching it. And I trust that the Lord has been pleased to help us understand some of the significant things about our culture.

If you recall, the book can be basically divided into three divisions. The first portion was *the believer’s obligations*. That would be chapter 1—the believer’s obligation. There are certain obligations that we have to civil society. Paul’s admonition to Titus is to make sure that the people understand their responsibilities to the civil authorities. That’s one of the ways in which we can do good works to bring glory to God.

The second part of our study was *the believer’s motivation*. What is it that motivates us to do good works to the glory of God? Paul taught Titus to teach this to the people. Forget not your past. Function in your present. And focus on the future.

In other words, remember your salvation. Remember the glorious salvation that we have in Christ Jesus. The more you think about your salvation and see how it applies to you on a daily basis, the more motivated we’re going to be to do good works for the glory of God. We don’t need to go to motivational seminars or read motivational books or tapes. What we need to understand is just to go back and review our salvation.

Go back and review it. What did I used to be?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: What was I? Then review what am I now? And then who will I become in Christ, just as our brother Terry is doing now in the presence of the Lord.

Those three words that we talked about in motivation were *gratitude, grace* and *glory*—what I was, what I am, and what I will be. That’s the story of our salvation. Men, that’s what motivates us to understand, the glories of our salvation that we have with God the Father through God the Son.

And then in the last portion of the book of Titus we talked about *the believer’s reaction*. There are certain things that we need to do. We need to be sure that we do not participate in heretical activities. We need to make sure that we’re involved in preaching a Biblical gospel, not a fake gospel or an Americanized version. We need to make sure that we’re doing those things and that we do not embrace heretical thinking. It’s so easy for it to come into the church.

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One of the things that Paul talks about so much is how people can be distracted from the Biblical gospel. They're distracted and they depart from the doctrines of grace. We need to make sure that we do not respond to those types of activities, and we need to make sure that we have the right reaction.

We talked last week about church discipline and the seriousness of what that means. Remember, the three keys to the kingdom are these: the gospel, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and church discipline. Those are the three keys to the kingdom. If the church does not operate with three keys but only two keys, with two out of three keys you're going to be a suffering church.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And so we need to understand and make sure that we have the right reaction.

Now today we're going to finish this up with the last couple of verses, where Paul sends some greetings to the body of Christ. And I want you to take a look at this as I read this and go through this very briefly with the emphasis that he has on Christian community.

Men, we need to realize that we are a community. When you consider what the church used to be like 150 years ago compared to what the church is today, the government takes over most of those activities. With many of the church activities we used to take care of people. When people were sick we used to take care of them. When people were in need of food we took care of them. Now we have all these government programs. The church has vacated and oscillated and departed from part of our responsibility to be a community.

Now as we go through this today, I want you to notice How Paul's emphasis to Titus is on the community aspect of the body of Christ. So let's go to Titus chapter 3, verses 12-15. Chapter 3 of Titus, beginning at verse 12 through verse 15.

“When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen. In our previous verses, Paul reminded Titus to teach that which is profitable and to avoid that which is unprofitable. The contrast is between that which is profitable versus that which is unprofitable. The profitable aspect is teaching people the Biblical gospel as opposed to the heretical thoughts of departing from the doctrines of grace and coming into a new version of the gospel. We've got to understand that which is profitable, and that's what Titus has been learning from his mentor Paul. It's versus what is unprofitable. That's our contrast. The profitable teaching is the Biblical gospel that Paul has taught us.

The good news leads to good people. The good news leads to good lives. The good news leads to good works. That's Paul's emphasis. And so if you're not preaching the right gospel, you're not going to have the right expectations or the right conduct. Our

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ethics are rooted in the gospel of Christ and in conversion to the gospel of Christ Himself. So our ethics and everything else really stem from understanding the Biblical gospel. And that is what is profitable.

So in these closing verses Paul conveys some very personal information to Titus. And he reminded him of the main theme of the whole book, which you can find in verse 14—3:14. The NIV describes it this way. *“Be sure to remind people to learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may profit and provide for daily necessities, and not live unproductive lives.”*

Now there you see the difference between unproductive lives and productive lives. One of the questions we might need to ask ourselves in application, men, is what do I need to do to have a productive life? What are the things that hinder my productivity? What are the things that I’m doing that might help me to understand that I’m doing unproductive things? That’s some of the application we need to take a look at because of one of his summary statements. His summary statement is this. Make sure to teach the people *“to learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities, and not live unproductive lives.”*

So let’s take a look at some of these instructions. First of all he gives some instructions to Titus in chapter 3 verse 12.

Now although Titus must do his best and work very diligently to do his utmost activity to meet Paul at Nicopolis, Crete must not be left without a good leader. The first thing that Paul reminds him is “Yes, do all you can to come visit with me in Nicopolis because I’m going to spend the winter there and I would enjoy the fellowship. But you’ve got to remember this. You can’t come until the right positions have been covered, because leadership is still necessary in the church of Crete.” Paul tells him that conditions were too serious to permit even a brief period of vacancy of leadership.

Now that says something about the church and how important church leadership is. And Paul reminds Titus. “Titus, I want you to come. It’s very important that you and I be together. However, you cannot come too soon, because if there is a vacancy of leadership, the church of Crete will not be able to become indigenous overnight. It needs to have its leadership and its mentoring. Come when you can, but don’t vacate the leadership responsibilities.”

Notice that Paul does not say, “The Cretans can easily take care of themselves.” He doesn’t say that. He basically says this. He realizes that churches cannot become indigenous overnight. They cannot be self-sustaining overnight. The critical aspect of church leadership is so important that Paul reminds Titus of this. He says, “Don’t leave until somebody can take over your place.” Paul reminds Titus that as long as leadership from the outside is necessary, it must be provided. As long as leadership from the outside is necessary, if the church has not been trained to take care of itself, you’re going to need to have outside leadership.

That’s why I’m such a strong proponent of a pastor doing several different things. I think that one of the roles of a pastor in a local church is to train church leaders.

Participant: There you go.

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Bruce: Preaching the gospel, edifying the saints, proclaiming the doctrines of grace and developing church leaders, because you never know what’s going to happen. And there’s a great reminder of Paul to Titus that says this. “Titus, I want you to come to see me, but don’t leave until the leadership vacuum has been covered, because church leadership is critical for the development of the church of Crete. The activities there are too serious and you can’t leave them without any leadership.”

Paul closes his brief letter with the travels of his associates, those men he was working with, his co-laborers. He informs Titus that reinforcements are coming to assist him in the difficult ministry to Crete. “I’m not going to leave you without leadership. I’m going to provide that for you.”

Now either Artemas or Tychicus would replace him so that he might join Paul at Nicopolis. He reminds him of this. Meanwhile Titus was to stay on the job until somebody arrived to complete the work.

Men, I think it’s important to realize this: that God does not destroy one ministry to build up another one.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He doesn’t destroy one ministry to build up another one. He should be involved in both of those. When He moves a servant, a leader, He has a replacement ready to come in place. If the replacement is not ready, it may not be the time to move. You see, the church cannot be left without leaders. Jim?

Jim: Bruce, it seems that so many in the churches today have policies set up so that when the pastor leaves, churches have to go through one, two, sometimes three-year processes to find somebody. It’s just so opposite of what you’re saying in Scripture.

Bruce: Exactly right. Several times in my church we’ve gone through that, and it’s so frustrating in my mind. I’m not involved and I’m not an elder. But it is so frustrating, Jim, because that is so true. A church becomes leaderless for 18 to 24 months because they’ve got to provide for somebody to do that, when you really ought to have some home-grown people who’ve been trained inside, because that’s what church leadership is. So you’re absolutely right. We’ve denominationally made it very, very difficult to replace a leader.

That’s the point I’m trying to make about community. We need to make sure that we have leadership in place so that when somebody moves, our leadership can step in place and not have a vacated position. It’s critical that church leadership be part of the development of the local body of Christ.

He gives instructions to Zenas and to Apollos in verse 13. Notice these. It seems that Zenas and Apollos were the ones delivering this letter to Titus. And so they were sent on a special mission by the apostle Paul. And Paul admonished Titus to assist them as they continued their journey, which was probably a very special mission assigned by the apostle Paul.

There are some things here that we need to understand about community, friends, as we take a look at these passages. These men must be provided for. Who is going to provide for them? It’s not going to be the government. It’s going to be the body of Christ. They must be provided for with food and lodging while they’re in Crete. They must be

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aided in every way they can in order to make their job easier, including making sure that they're able to continue their own travels.

I think this is where we have a responsibility. Not everybody can go to the mission field. Yes?

Participant: I would say that everybody is in the mission field.

Bruce: Well that's true. I'm talking about the foreign mission field. You've corrected me; thank you. Ministry is where we are, who we are. We're always involved in ministry.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: But I'm referring to is that not everybody can be foreign missionaries to leave this country. We have a responsibility. We can do our best to make sure that they are covered for and provided for and that their needs are met, so they can do the job that God has asked them to do. That's part of our community life. That's part of our responsibility, that every church is involved in missions. Mission is who we are, where we are. But we have a responsibility to make sure that those people are provided for to the best of our ability. That's part of our responsibility and part of our community living, part of our community life.

And Paul reminds him of that when he says, “Titus, make sure that the people in Crete understand that they need to provide for the provision of Zenas and Apollos to come, take care of them while they're here, and make sure that they have all their needs met adequately to be effective in their ministry.” That's part of our community life.

Christians ought to help one another as they go about their service. That can be our point of service.

Now we've got to be careful, though, not to assist those who teach false doctrine. In 1 John the apostle John says to test the spirits to make sure that they are from God. We need to make sure that is true.

Go to 2 John verse 9. *“Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God.”* Now notice. If they go ahead and depart from the gospel of grace and are not teaching the Biblical doctrine of Christ, they do not have God. *“Whoever abides in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”* We need to make sure that the people we support are the ones who are supporting the doctrines of grace, the doctrines of the Biblical Christ, not false doctrines or something heretical.

Then he gives instructions to the Cretan Christians. Here are some responsibilities that we have. Look at verse 14.

First of all, he gives instructions to Titus. He gives some instructions to the new men who are going to come in and help Titus, along with the responsibility they have to help them. And now he gives instructions to the Christian church at Crete.

Paul tells Titus, “Tell the Cretan Christians not to be lazy and not to be idle,” but to work industriously at honest trades, so that they may financially help Christian workers who have material needs. I call your attention to Ephesians chapter 4 verse 28, which says the same thing with Paul's admonition to the church at Ephesus. *“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone who has a need.”*

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Basically, he’s reminding the church of this. Part of your civil responsibility is to work hard. Don’t be idle. We have responsibilities to be hard workers. In my judgment, we as followers of Christ ought to be the hardest workers in any position we have, wherever we are, whether that’s in corporate America, in the ministry, in a non-profit organization or in the local church. We as followers of Christ ought to be the hardest workers, because it’s a reflection of our character and the function of our motivation of understanding our salvation in Christ. We ought to be the most superior workers we can be.

I can give you many illustrations of my time at PNC, where I felt that my job, as we talked about before, was to help my boss look good. Now that doesn’t mean I’m a brown-noser. It just means that my job is to work hard to make her look good, to help her become productive in her responsibilities, because that’s my responsibility to her.

Remember, the real issue in our corporate American life is this. Do I believe that God is bigger than my boss? And that dictates how we respond. But men, we ought to be the most diligent workers. We should not be idle workers. We should be very diligent, very industrious, very productive, very profitable, because that’s a reflection of who we are in Christ. Yes, Brian?

Brian: Go ahead and finish.

Bruce: Remember this. Paul taught Titus this. There are several ways that our salvation is made manifest. Regeneration is not something that is immediately evident. When we are regenerated, nothing happens externally. Regeneration is an internal working of the Holy Spirit. There are certain things Paul taught Titus that are the evidence of regeneration. In summary there are three of them.

First of all this: *our conversation*. When we are in Christ our conversation should change because we think differently. Therefore, we’re going to what?

Men: Act differently.

Bruce: Act differently and talk differently. What are the things you talk about? Jesus said, *“Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”* You see, if you’re a follower of Christ when you go into the labor force, we need to watch our language.

My first year, when I was in corporate America, my boss called me in and said, “Bruce, I love what you’re doing with your people. It’s been a wonderful experience to see how you’re leading your people. But I’ve got a problem.”

I said, “What’s that, sir?”

He said, “We’ve never heard you cuss.” *(Laughter)*

I wanted to say, *(silently mouthing a curse word. Laughter)* I wanted to say that, but I didn’t. *(Laughter)*

And he said, “You know, you’re very passionate about what you do. You have very strong convictions. But we’ve just never heard you swear to enforce that.” *(Laughter)*

And I said, “Well, quite honestly, sir, if I have to swear, if I have to cuss to bring about my passion and my convictions, that says more about me than it does the issue at hand.” You see, men, one of the things is going to be manifested by this. When we’re followers of Christ, understanding our salvation, our language is going to change, because we’re thinking about different things. We think on that which is pure, that which is holy. That

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reflects our conversation. Why do I talk about the things I talk about? Why do I use the phrases I use? That’s a reflection of who we are.

The second thing is *our conduct*. Our conduct is going to change because we are followers of Christ. It’s manifested as the evidence of your regeneration. Your conduct changes. That’s why so much of Paul’s emphasis in the book of Titus is good works. Good works are the evidence of their salvation. They don’t earn your salvation. They’re evidence of it.

And thirdly would be *your character*. Sanctification is a gracious and internal work of the Holy Spirit, conforming us to the image of Christ. And so our character changes. Paul told Titus that the evidences of our regeneration are these: conversation, conduct and character. That’s the evidence of our true saving faith. Yes, Brian?

Brian: I was going to say that I’ve been recently convicted and challenged with the fact that in the secular world you set all of these goals and drive to achieve and be smart, and you’re time bound and everything else. And in thinking through this and working hard, I’ve come to the idea—and I don’t know if this is good or not, so I guess I’m testing it out. You work diligently. You do everything that you can to glorify God. Yet you leave the results up to God and you realize that he’ll make up the difference. They might not be the results and the time line that you wanted. They might not be the results that you want. But ultimately, if you’ve done all that you can do, working as diligently as possible, putting God’s glory on display by displaying His skills that He gave you, then the results will be up to Him. Who are we to mess with that? Is that too *laissez-faire*? Is that a—

Bruce: No, I think that’s right on. That’s exactly correct.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We do the best we can and trust Christ with the rest. That’s what we do. I work as hard as I can. I do the best I can, using all the abilities that God gives me, all the talents that I’ve learned from my education, whatever it is. You work hard at that. You do the best you can. But you trust Christ with the rest, because my enough is never going to be enough, is it? Your enough is never going to be enough. Christ’s enough is always enough. So you have to just trust those results with God. “*Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” Trust Him with the results.

Brian: I found that by putting time constraints, putting specificity to it, it started to become an idol and it changed my character. I became angry and frustrated, and I wasn’t displaying Christ in it. And that’s what really started convicting me.

Bruce: Well I appreciate your honesty, Brian. Thank you. I think we can all say the same thing. We make idols of those things. What is an idol? An idol is trusting someone or something to give you only what God can give you. It’s trusting someone—a relationship—something—a job, a goal, a task, an objective—something to give you what only Christ can give you. That’s what an idol is.

Now I’ve just been convicted over the years of the tremendous idolatry that I have in my life because of the very things Brian just mentioned—getting all of these things accomplished, the goals. Do I make those things an idol? We have to be very careful.

Remember, Jesus’ instruction in John 5 and John 8 is this. “*I do nothing on my own initiative. I only do those things I see the Father doing, or say those things I hear the*

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Father saying.” He became an aggressive responder. And the best thing we can do is to work diligently and trust Christ with the rest, be aggressive responders to the results that He is pleased to bring about, and trust Him for His glory. Thanks for that reminder, Brian. That’s excellent.

Also, take a look at some of the instructions to the Cretan Christians. In addition to working hard, they must financially help other workers so that they will have no material needs. Look at Ephesians 4:28. I just gave you that verse. *“Let the thief no longer steal, but let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anybody who is in need.”* They ought to freely assist Titus in supplying the travel needs for these two other men coming in to help them with the leadership of the church, and while they’re there to take care of them.

The first church that I pastored was in Kansas, a little country church with about 150 people. There was a car plant that went broke, one of the Ford plants in Kansas that laid off a bunch of people. About 20% of the church was laid off because they worked at that factory.

Do you know what happened in our church? Our giving went up, because I tried to teach them that we had a responsibility. Since 20’5 of the people were not working, we had a responsibility to them. The government isn’t going to take care of them. The state of Kansas isn’t going to take care of them. We have that responsibility as the body of Christ. That’s exactly what Titus is learning from Paul. Make sure that they work hard so that you can share with people who have a need.

Our giving went up, because those who were employed and working hard gave more because they had more. We had families who never went into debt, because we helped them with that. They weren’t handouts. We did a lot of things. There was a lot of sweat equity. We were involved with building some of the church, and modifying and remodeling some of the church. Some of these men began to work and we assigned them sweat equity. They worked for this and we gave them money from the church as we increased our giving.

And then, about a year-and-a-half later, those people were employed in other positions because new management came into this factory, making parts for the Ford company. When they came in, guess who our greatest givers became? The people we took care of.

Participant: Yep.

Bruce: Our original giving never went back to its original state. Let’s just say that it was x before the layoff. It went $x+1$. Eighteen months later it went to $x+2$, and it never went back to x , because people understood this. We have a responsibility to the body of Christ. That’s part of our community life. We need to make sure that we are working diligently so that we can take care of the needs of our people.

You see, men, that would transform our society if the churches bought into that idea, rather than saying that it’s all the government.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That the government provides all this. Yes, the government provides certain things. But the government is never enough. It will never be enough. We have a responsibility in the great body of Christ. Yes, please?

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Participant: I’ve read a lot about the turn of the century in this country, where people were kind of pushing into other areas. And the overall Christian theme for the community was that people weren’t really concerned when they got older because they remembered the church. And it basically described that if anybody ran into hard times, say, like the crops on this group’s farm failed, everybody from the community went over and helped that person. So there wasn’t even any fear to that. People didn’t have Social Security, so they just didn’t even have that concern, because they already knew that the churches in their community would gather around them.

Bruce: Exactly right. All I’m trying to emphasize, men, is that we need to make sure that we have a community spirit in the body of Christ. It’s critical for us to do that. And that includes our small group right here. How can we take care of the needs that we have for each other? We need to make those needs known. And we need to provide for those people when we can. It’s part of our Christian experience in the body of Christ.

Paul reminds the people of Crete that the local Christians ought to assist Titus in his work and in his ministry of helping others on their way. Look at Colossians 1:10. *“So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* We need to make sure that we’re taking care of the people for the glory of God to the best of our ability.

And lastly, look at Paul’s benediction in the last couple of verses. His farewell greeting consists of a benediction that has three different parts. And notice the emphasis on community life.

First of all, he says this. *“All those who are with me send you greetings.”* All the fellow workers who are in the company of the body of Christ with the apostle send greetings to Titus—2 Timothy 4:21 and Acts 20:34.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Timothy 4:21, NKJV. “Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.”

Acts 20:34. *“Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.”*

Bruce: He’s essentially saying this. I’m not alone. I’ve got other people surrounding me. And all the people who are with me send you their greetings in Christ. The emphasis again is on the body of Christ, the community life that we have.

The second part of the benediction is this. *“Greet those who love us in the faith.”* Now he turns it around and says it to the other side. *“Greet those who love us in the faith.”* Titus is asked to convey the greetings of Paul and all of his coworkers, to those who are filled with affection for them in the sphere of the Christian life. In other words, he says, *“Those who are with me send their greetings, and those who with us share their faith in Christ send all of their greetings.”* That’s part of the emphasis of community life.

And the third thing is this. *“Grace be with you all.”* Here’s the third phase of that. And that literally means this. Upon all the believers who hear this letter, whether it is read to them or read by them, God’s favor in Christ for those who have not deserved it is pronounced. Grace be with you. God’s favor is pronounced upon those who don’t deserve it. What a great conclusion of his benediction!

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Men, in the next couple minutes I would just like to ask one question for ourselves as we take a look at this section. How does the productive Christian life emerge? What am I going to do about what I’ve just learned? The question could be this. How does the productive Christian life emerge? Paul says this. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good. The key words here are *learn* and *devote*.

What is it we need to learn?

Participant: What Christ has done for us.

Bruce: Our salvation. Remember this, men. The gospel of Christ is as much for the believer as it is for the unbeliever.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Have you ever stopped to ask yourself the question? What are the gospel implications in my life personally? Not in the life of the unbeliever, or the person I’m going to share Christ with, but to you personally? What does the gospel of Christ mean to me personally? What am I going to do about it personally? Have you ever thought about that? You see, that stops the counterproductive life. We need to remember our salvation. Think about that. It is applicable to us just as much as to the unbeliever.

Most of us never give much thought to the fact of what the gospel means in my life specifically, and how I’m going to act it out and what I’m going to do about it. How am I going to apply what the gospel means to me? We need to learn that.

Secondly, it’s to devote. What are we to devote ourselves to? He said that *learn* and *devote* are the two verbs. What do we need to devote ourselves to?

Participant: Good works.

Bruce: Give yourself to good works. That’s what Paul says. Devote yourself to good works. You see, when you understand the motivation of the gospel, which is the believer’s motivation, that is what motivates us to good works. It’s in doing those good works that God is glorified. So Paul says this. Grace to all those people who don’t deserve it. And that means us, in Christ Jesus. Yes, please?

Participant: I recently saw a short video by a guy named Ken Gillette, an atheist. And he says, “You know, I don’t believe this stuff. But how much would you have to hate somebody not to share the gospel? If somebody was out in the middle of the road and a car was coming, wouldn’t you tell him that the car was coming?” As a Christian, you have to share the gospel. These implications are far greater.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: This atheist says more clearly than anybody who we need to be. I thought it was amazing.

Bruce: Amen. Good point. Any other observations on the book of Titus before we wrap up here, men?

Participant: I’d like to say something. I got stuck on that question of why you never cursed. And the thing that’s happened to me in my life, it was when somebody said in the 90s that it all depends on what you mean by *curse*. That person said, “It all depends on how you define *is*.” *(Laughter)*

And when I was asked that, I said, “Oh!” When I say, “Pshaw,” when I say, “Golly gee whiz,” you don’t think those euphemisms are substitutes for the words? *(Laughter)* And I

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said that it’s all about self-control. I’m not bragging that I have it all. But I have to work hard at it.

Bruce: Yes, you do.

Participant: I’ll never forget. Twenty-two years ago, when I started teaching at Community College of Beaver County, I was trying to write on the white board. And my pen fell out of my hand because I was so nervous and jittery. It fell right to the floor and I went, “Pshaw!” I said,. “It’s p-s-h-a-w. Look it up.” It took me years to develop the discipline to say that instead of the other word.

Bruce: I understand. That’s a good point. When I was at the Naval Academy, in a little group of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, we would get up at 5:00 in the morning, the only time we could meet. We decided to deal with that, the very issue of our conversation and cursing and our swearing. So we made substitutes and we would do something like this. When something would happen ,we’d say, “Irritation!” (*Laughter*) We’d say, “Anger!” (*Laughter*) “Perturbation!” (*Laughter*) “Frustration!”

And we had a little collection. Any time you got caught cursing in an athletic event because of a game that was going on, or something like that, you had to put a quarter in this little bowl. And I remember playing Penn State. I threw an interception and we lost the Penn State game. And I was not pleased. (*Laughter*)

And there were two guys who I met in the FCA at Penn State. We’d go to a summer conference together. One of them was a linebacker who came in and clobbered me once. So I got to pass off and he picked me up and said, “Oh, that was a lovely pass!” (*Laughter*) And then I threw the interception to a defensive back and I tackled him out of bounds. And my friend who was a believer said, “Christians aren’t supposed to tackle out of bounds.” (*Laughter*)

And I said, “Well, Christians aren’t supposed to intercept other Christians’ passes, either.” (*Laughter*)

So we agreed to do this with Penn State and Navy. And both of us at the same time said, “Irritation!” (*Laughter*) That’s how we did it. We just worked on the same thing. It takes discipline. We had to purposely choose to do that, not using colloquial phrases that mean the same thing as a cover-up. We wanted to say something that was totally different, and so we used those nouns—irritation, anger, perturbation, frustration, whatever it may be.

I remember that one of our guys played basketball and he missed a foul shot. And he went like this. “Anger!” (*Laughter*) I knew what he was doing. Everybody else wondered, “what’s going on?” (*Laughter*) That was just part of our commitment to each other.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Anything else before we leave, men? Yes?

Participant: I just think that when you were talking about the mission field, all the excellent training you’ve given us to go out and be in the mission field. How praiseworthy God is! We can only praise Him for all the instruction you give us, the dedication you’ve given towards us, and the accuracy of your teaching. It’s all Scripture based. And so, while we’re going to miss you for the next six weeks, or eight weeks—

“Final Instructions and Benediction”

Bruce: Say eight.

Participant: Okay. Let’s just pray for God’s blessings over Bruce.

Second Participant: Amen.

First Participant: Father, we can just never thank You enough for all the instruction and growth we have here every Friday. We ask You, Lord, to give Bruce’s body the strength to get ready for the operation. We pray that you’ll give the doctors and the medical team the wisdom and insight and knowledge to do it correctly, that everything goes well. We ask You for good strength as he recuperates, and keep Him in the knowledge that he is in our prayers each and every day. Be with Becky, that she trusts You, and she knows that her husband is going to return stronger and better. We just thank You for all that we receive. Be with Bruce. Thank You so much for Him. And we pray all this in the name of Your sacred Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Thank you. Grace be with all of you. (*Applause*)