

A Biblical Church

Washer & Leiter – Denmark 2009

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[music]

It is a tremendous privilege for me and brother Leiter to be here with you, a tremendous privilege. And I have been given sort of a, kind of an insurmountable or difficult task of take an hour and preach everything that ought to be preached on a biblical church. And I think it would take much longer than an hour.

But we are going to look at a few things about... huh? Oh, well, be careful with that kind of statement. You may regret it.

But we are going to talk about church. And if you are here tonight, you are probably here because you have an uneasiness or restlessness about the way things are, about the spiritual decline in your country, in Europe as well as America, looking for something.

Well, let me just share with you. There are a lot of people and a lot of movements that can give you something. There are all sorts of things going on in Christianity today. It looks like a circus offering certain aspects of Christianity, certain power, certain joy, certain life. So many things, so many gimmicks, so many promises, healing, prosperity, life as you want it, your best life now, absolutely everything is laid before you.

What Jesus Christ lays before you is this: the promise of eternal life and a cross. What Jesus Christ lays before you is what really matters. And that is a character conformed to his image.

The writers of the New Testament, although they speak quite frequently about all the blessings that God can pour out on a man and the full counsel of Scripture tells us that the blessings of God are many, but for those who have come to know Christ, I think they have settled it in their heart that every blessing other than conformity to Christ is a lesser blessing. I want to be like Jesus. I want to be conformed to his will and not just in some

extravagant religious way. I want to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ in my personal relationship with God the Father and I want to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ in the relationships in my life, especially the most intimate.

Now I bring this up because it is so very important to me. I was preaching several years ago in Austin, Texas and after I finished my first sermon this pulpit committee, it is a committee in the church that is looking for a new pastor. It came up to me and it said, "Would you be our pastor?"

I said, "What?"

They said, "Would you consider being our pastor?"

And I looked at them and I said, "Are you crazy?"

And they said, "Why do you say that?"

I said, "You don't know if I love my wife or not."

The point that I was making is: You know nothing about me. The devil preaches well. But true Christianity is seen in the life, the hidden life of a man, of a woman and the dying to self and the giving one's self away in the name of Christ to God the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit and giving that life to others.

We hear a lot of talk today about doing everything for the glory of God and that is true. It is a true statement. But I am afraid we sometimes use it to forget the Second Command.

The first is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And the second is to love your neighbor as yourself in sacrificial, joyful service. So the Christianity that I am talking about tonight is not some gigantic religious show in a coliseum. It is not about you getting your best life now, the car you want, the house you want or perfect health. What it is about is this. It is knowing God the Father and knowing Jesus Christ whom he hath sent and being conformed to his image. What joy to be able—just think about this—to be able to love as he loves, to be able to represent him, just to know him. That is Christianity.

Now, we are going to talk a bit about church. Most of us have this ecclesiastical, organizational idea of church. We think of buildings with steeples on top of them and crosses on top of the steeples. We think of beautiful lawns. We think of old men preaching very boring messages. We think of all sorts of things when we think about church. But we need to understand what church truly is. It is none of that. Church is not so much an organization as it is an organism. It is a living entity. It is a creation of God through his Son and for his Son. It is relational. And I want you to keep that word in the forefront of your mind. It is relational. Church, like your own personal life, is about a relationship with God and a relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ.

You see, it is all about relationship. It is all about that. There is so much that is done, dressed in religious garb, but it really has so little meaning. God has called us into a relationship with himself. He has done that as we are individuals. He has done that collectively as a body and God has called us to be in relationship with one another, to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And so the first thing I want you to see is that when we talk about church we are talking about an organism, something organic in nature.

Now, there are two passages of Scripture and we are not going to spend much time there at all because we are going to look at several things tonight. But just for a moment I want you to go Jeremiah and I want you to see the origin of the Church, its divine origin.

Jeremiah chapter 31, just quickly. Now, if you look in verse 31 of Jeremiah 31 he says:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.”¹

Now the first thing I want you to understand is something about the nation of Israel. Do you honestly believe that everyone who came out of Egypt led by Moses was a believer? No, not at all. As a matter of fact, the great majority of them were idolaters. They were worshiping goat gods, demon gods, all sorts of things even in the desert as they are being led around by God.

We are looking at basically a physical nation that was called out of Egypt. They were of the blood of Abraham. But most of them did not have faith. That is why they died in the wilderness, all right? So they were basically a carnal nation doing carnal things who had to be subdued by laws and authorities and this and that. They had to be subdued, in a sense, by the whip in order to keep them in line.

And why is that? Because their hearts had not been changed.

Now I want you to think about something for a moment. Most churches today are that way, filled with a group of people whose hearts have not been changed. And pastors spend a great deal of their time doing what? Trying to motivate, manipulate, push, shove, coerce, throwing all sorts of little parties and all sorts of little gimmicks and this and that and so many other things just to try to keep a group of people together in Jesus’ name.

Behold the power of the gospel. Not much gospel power manifested there, is it?

¹ Jeremiah 31:31-32.

Countless people identified in this country, in my country with some denomination or some church, but it has no power, no sway over their life whatsoever, nothing.

The true Church is not that way. Your ideas of church as a building, as an ecclesiastical, organizational structure of half hearted people attending and having to be held together by manipulation and coercion and gimmicks, that is not the Church.

Now he is going to tell us what the Church is like. Look what he says. He says in verse 33, “ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it.’”²

Now you must understand God is not speaking here poetically. Now why do I say that? Because sometimes we hear such beautiful things in Scripture and we say, “Oh, that is nice,” but we are not considering what he is saying. He is saying in the church through the coming of the Messiah he is going to create a new people and they are not going to be a group of people who merely have some tablets of stone that they look at and disobey. He is going to create a group of people and he is going to transform their heart and he is going to put his will, his laws, his desires in their heart. Do you see that? They are going to be changed.

And I use the word “desire.” I know it can be sort of dangerous, but there is a reason for it. When I say he puts his laws in your heart you can still have this mechanical idea that, yes, those laws are in there and I must obey them. But when I say “desires” he is not just revealing his will to you. He is changing your heart so that his will is your will and you desire to do what he desires. That is why John writes in his epistle that the commandments of God to the people of God are not burdensome. They desire these things. You see that.

That is what the Church is.

He goes on and he says, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”³

All throughout the Old Testament there is this impassioned longing that we see in the words coming out of the mouth of God in which he is constantly saying, “Looking forward to the future, one day they will be my people. I will be their God. I will have a people on this earth and I will be that people’s God.”

That time came with the coming of Christ. Through his death and resurrection, through the work of the Holy Spirit, God has created for himself a people.

Now, they are not a people who have simply turned over a new leaf. They are not a people who have simply decided that they want to live a higher lifestyle. They are not a people who just one day decided we are going to change and be better.

² Jeremiah 31:33.

³ Ibid.

No. They are people upon whom God has acted in his own power. He has transformed them.

Now, are you that people? Do you know, I still, as we all, I struggle with many failures, many weaknesses, many struggles in the Christian life. But there is no doubt the witness, my home, the people around me, the people who knew me 25 years ago, this guy is not even the same the person that I knew. I mean, I know my desires changed. I mean, one day just going from let's go party, let's get in a fight if we can, let's chase women, let's get drunk, let's do this, to the very next day I don't want to do all that anymore, what has happened to me?

I want Christ. I want to know him. I want to please God and be pleasing to God.

Do you know that as a reality in your own life? Is your religion something that you are just trying to do the right thing or has Christ transformed you so that you want to know him, you want to do his will, you delight to do his will? What has happened to you?

Brother Leiter says quite often that most people's Christianity is basically this. They are trying to do all the good things they hate in order to please God. That is not Christianity.

Christianity is when I want to do this. And you are not sad because you look at the will of God and think I have to do that. You are sad when you look at the will of God and realize you have fallen short. The burden doesn't come from obedience. The burden comes when we see we have disobeyed.

Why? We are transformed. We are new creatures. We are saints of God. We are children of God. We are sons of the living God. We are led of the Spirit.

Do you see? When he says, "New creature," when he says, "I will write it on their heart," he is not speaking metaphorically to the point where it no longer has meaning. He is not speaking poetically so it is just some beautiful nonsense. No. When a person is saved they become a new creature. That is what the Church is made up of.

Now he says this. "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me."⁴

That is not saying that in the Church there won't be teachers or pastors, evangelists and so on. But what he is saying is the people of Israel although they saw these magnificent manifestations of God they didn't understand them. I mean, they could see God part the water and then go worship a goat idol. They could see fire coming down from heaven and then make a golden calf. They didn't understand.

In witnessing to people—and I know many of you have had this same experience—you pour your heart out to someone about the grace of God and they don't comprehend at all.

⁴ Jeremiah 31:34.

Now you sit there and you go... someone says, "Sir, are you going to go to heaven when you die?"

"Oh, yes, I am going to go to heaven."

"Why do you think so?"

"Well, I am a good man. I am a good man."

And so you go through for the next 20 minutes every Scripture in the Bible that explains he is a wretched beast under the wrath of God. He says yes to every one of the verses and then when you say, "Sir, are you going to go to heaven?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I am a good man."

Now, that is where you would be. Do you understand that? Your darkness would be to that extent and even worse. But what has happened? This passage. He has taught you.

"They shall be taught of God."

He himself illumined your mind and changed the heart.

So many people walking around, especially these TV evangelists. I think we ought to put most of them on a boat and just ship them somewhere to an island where there is no people. But they are saying, "The supernatural nature of Christianity and the supernatural this and the supernatural that."

Supernatural? There is more of the supernatural power of God manifested in the regeneration of a single heart than in the creation of the universe itself, supernatural. We are not marveling at what is truly supernatural.

You say, "Well, brother Paul, do you believe God can heal people?"

I have seen God heal people in the mountains where there were no doctors, not frequently, but according to his will, his plan, his purpose. But I want to tell you something. I did not get excited in comparison when I have seen the Holy Spirit literally take a spiritually dead man and make him alive.

Do you see that? There is the supernatural nature of Christianity. But focus on what is truly supernatural and important.

Now, he goes on and he says this. Listen.

“For they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.”⁵

Now will they all know him to the extent that Jonathan Edwards or a Calvin or a Luther or somebody like that? No, I am not even in their league. So what does this mean?

Well, let’s go on. It says, “‘For they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”⁶

They will enter into a relationship with him knowing that he is the one true God and they will have a keen awareness that by his hand he has cleansed them, freed them from their sin. There will not be the smack of self righteousness there. They will not say, “God and I have worked this out.” They will have a keen awareness that God has taken care of their iniquity and he did it all by himself.

Now, another thing. Let’s go on. Just jump over really quick to verse 38 of chapter 32.

Again, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God.”⁷

And look what he says. “I will give them one heart and one way.”⁸

Have you ever seen these marches for Jesus, the unity marches that they have in which all these different denominations come together and they are trying to prove to the world that there is unity between them when, in fact, there is very little unity at all between them. And they are all marching together and singing kumbuya and we are proving to the world that we are one.

That is not what Jesus meant, ok? That is not what Jesus meant.

You bring two Christians together, two Christians, and although they may differ in some things, but you bring two Christians together and, my friend, you will find unity. You will find spirit bearing witness with spirit. You will find joy.

It is amazing. I can sit down, for example, in an airplane in Zambia and sit down beside a person I have never met in my life and after a while pull out my Bible to kind of, you know, hoping this guy say something to me like, “What’s that?”

Sometimes I pull out my Greek New Testament so they will look at it and go, “What is that?” I can’t read it very well, but it really makes a great witnessing tool. No matter where I am in the Greek New Testament I read John 3:16 when they ask me to read something to them.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jeremiah 32:38.

⁸ Jeremiah 32:39.

But I can sit down with someone I have never met and we start talking and discover that we are both believers in Jesus Christ and I mean it is a party for the rest of the flight. We are one.

There is so much disunity in the Church.

No, there is not. There is a lot of disunity with a bunch of carnal people who are goats trying to act like sheep. That is the problem. But when you bring believers together there will be unity.

Does it mean that there will never be disunity? No, it doesn't mean because there is sin in all of us. It doesn't mean there will never be disunity. It doesn't mean that there will never be disagreements. But it means when you look at the full course of the relationship, there is a fraternal love, a unity there.

I remember one of the illustrations that I just love to use on this, I was traveling through the mountains years and years ago in a red zone that the Communists, the Maoists controlled. And we were lost and everything. It was pitch dark and we were scared, another missionary and myself. And we made our way into this little village and I kind of stood on the edge of it, my brother that was with me was a Peruvian. And he went in and he came back out. He says, "I don't see any military." So we kind of walked in and I kind of humped over so everyone would think I was short and we came up to this drunk and we said, [?], "Are there brothers here?"

And he said, [?], "The old woman over there. She is one of you."

And so I went over there and I knocked on the door. After a few minutes the door kind of creaks open. There is a little mud adobe hut carved into the back of a cliff. And this little woman, she is about this big, she opened the door with her lantern and looked. And I said [?], "We are brothers."

She knew what that meant in Spanish. We are evangelicals. We are Christian and we need help. And she went... I will never forget that face. She went... and she just grabbed us and pulled us in, took us down to the basement that they had carved out of the side of the hill there, put us down there. A little boy came. She gave him some instructions. All of the sudden he took off. He comes back running and then this man shows up. He has got two chickens and another little poor farmer comes up with some yucca plant and they start preparing. We stayed there all night.

All right, now they were won to the Lord by a group of Nazarene missionaries. The Nazarenes and I could sit down and debate some issues. We would. These were people who knew Christ and knew their sins had been forgiven and because I was a preacher in Jesus' name willing to risk their life.

There is unity.

Now, theology is extremely important. It is extremely important. But I will tell you this. I will not separate and break fellowship with someone who disagrees with me on some things.

Now I will separate with people who depart from historical Christianity, who preach another Christ and so on and so forth. But, you see, there is a unity there. They knew Christ. They rejoiced in him. That is what happens when you have a church and it is a church of people who have been converted, who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Will there be immaturity? Yes. Will there be problems? Live with me for a while. You will get your answer.

But will people be able to see there is something different about this group of people and that something is their love?

Jesus says, "They will know, the world will know you are my disciples by the love you have for one another."

Now, he says, "I will give them one heart and one way." And then, "that they may fear me."

Here is something about us as Christians. We can make a mess, but there is something that God has done to us. He has put his fear in our hearts. In a marriage relationship, my own, sometimes I will act like a jerk. Do you know what that word is? And not want to acknowledge it, not want to say to my wife, "I am sorry." And I will walk out there and I will go into my office, got a book to write, I got a sermon to prepare. It is like the Lord is there. That is fine. You are going to be doing it on your own till you get this matter straight.

But do you know what? There is a fear in me. There is a fear. There is an uneasiness, an unsettledness in my heart, a tremor. And I know I have got to go back and I have got to apologize and I have got to make this matter right.

You see, you have a group of people who have been given new hearts and in that new heart the law of God has been written. And not only the law of God has been written, but he has put his fear in us so that even when we have conflicts, disagreements and problems, it is the fear of the Lord that causes us once again to humble ourselves and to acknowledge our wrong and to work for restoration. That is the Church.

Now, I want us to go for a moment... Again, I said I would have to skip around. I want us to go to Matthew chapter 28. You know the Great Commission in verse 18.

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’”⁹

Oh this passage... last month I spent like three weeks on “All authority has been given to Me...”¹⁰

Oh, man, it just laid me on the floor. We have very little idea what that means. But I would encourage you to read Daniel chapter seven and Psalms chapter two, such authority has been given to him.

He has so much authority that all the kings, all their actions and decrees are inconsequential. They don’t even matter. It is as though they didn’t even exist. When his kingdom showed up 2000 years ago everything else came to an end. Oh, he is allowing the kings and the nations to still play as though they had life and power. But they have none. He rules over all.

Now, but it says this. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”¹¹

I am so glad that he did not put here, “Go therefore and preach the gospel.”

You say, “Well, why, brother Paul? I mean you... on You Tube that is all you talk about. You only have one sermon.”

Because it is so easy... now Adolphe Monod the famous French Reformed pastor he said, “Oh, the cross of preaching the cross,” meaning that preaching the cross was such a burden because of its grandeur, because a preacher could never preach the cross as it ought to be preached. But there is another sense in which the preaching of the gospel is a lot easier than making disciples.

You see, someone hears a preacher like me on You Tube or you see me preach right now. But you don’t know me. Or, I know how to make sentences connect together. But do you really know me? Do you really know if I am a godly man? You see in preaching the gospel I can preach, go. I can stand in front of people and, boy, look like something very, very spiritual and then go and you never see my life. Do you see that? That is so easy.

But he says, “Go and make disciples.” And what does that mean? To make disciples that means you are going at least for a while to imitate me as I imitate Christ, to follow me as I follow Christ. I am going to teach you not only with my words, but I am going to teach you as you watch me live 24 hours a day. That is tough.

That is part of the work of the church.

⁹ Matthew 28:18.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mathew 28:19.

This has... you know, when I first was a missionary in Peru I just disciplined, disciplined and disciplined. And it was tough because people watched your life.

But I will tell you something that has been even more difficult. My three children, to disciple them, because, you know, they are just... they can, you know, "Dad, you said this. Why did you do this?"

You see, it is so humbling, but it is so good. I would rather be crushed so that the hypocrisy would be torn out of me than to put on a mask and make everybody think I am something I am not.

See, make disciples, it means that you live with people. You touch people. You get involved in their life.

I was evangelizing one day and boy did I have a rude awakening. I was out there, man. I was handing out tracts. And I was preaching and people were throwing the tracts at me and I saw this guy kind of look kind of a punk rocker guy and he took off kind of one direction. I walked up there and put a tract on him. I said, "Here, this is a tract of the gospel about Jesus."

He turned around and he goes, "You don't care about me."

And he is... I mean, he stopped me in my tracks. He goes, "Do you care enough about me to be my friend, to come to my house, to get to know me and my problems and my messed up life or are you just out here winning brownie points for God?"

Caring about people. That is why even be very, very careful in your evangelism. People can recognize just superficial, I want to just put another notch on my belt. Look at me. I am a preacher that everybody persecutes."

It is not about you. To disciple people you have got to enter into relationships with people and to have a church you are committing yourself to enter into a profound relationship with people.

That is why one of our missionaries said, "Brother Paul, we need to start a church in this area."

I said, "Well, why do you feel like we need to start a church?"

"We need to start a church here because if we start this church here, then we can start this church over here and we can use it as kind of a mother or a seed bed to plant other churches over here."

And I said, "Stop. You don't plant churches so that you can plant another church. You plant a church because you care about the people. And if you have any other idea about it, you end up using people to fulfill your vision."

You see church is for these people. These people. And I want you to think about some of the... some of those... some of the greatest writers among the reformers, the Puritans, the early Baptists. I want you to realize something. They never got on an airplane. They never traveled some of them outside of their country. Some of them even outside of their town. But as they pastored and their sermons, their writings, their life of pouring themselves into a flock has been used to change the world.

Adolphe Monod, the guy, I mean, he was so smart, his head must have been this big. He could do anything at the university. He could do critical studies in Hebrew. Then they would get him over here, critical studies in the New Testament. Then over here, history of the world and I mean just.... the guy could do everything. And they wanted him in the university so bad and he said, "No, I want to go pastor this little flock."

And the book that he wrote [?] *The Farewell*, are 19 sermons that he preached on his death bed to his flock. And the last few sermons he laid on his back like this and could only look up at the ceiling because he couldn't even turn his head to look at the flock anymore. That book is priceless.

Sometimes we want to do so much that we don't do anything. And sometimes we do so much and you can discern in there, man, you are all about creating a name for yourself. You are all about some great thing you are going to do.

I was preaching last year in a place and people were coming from everywhere, but it really wasn't of the Lord. It was celebrityism and it stunk. And I walked over in the corner and the pastor came up to me and he said, "Paul, maybe you just ought to go somewhere and die that no one will hear your name again."

And what he meant is, maybe you need to walk away from this entire circus and go pastor a little flock of people and just die there and walk away from this mess.

You see, here is what I want you to see. I am 47. I am not... I mean, I am like I am not as old as these two guys here, but I am getting older. I am not as old as him, but I am getting older. I am over the hill. And if figured out when you get over the hill you start going down a lot faster. I am getting older and I don't want to waste my life. And what I see is that a lot of the big stuff and big plans and big ideas and everything we have about winning the world is nothing but flesh sometimes, because we want to touch everybody, but we don't touch anybody.

And so he says, "Make disciples."

And then he says this. Look at this. He says, "Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."¹²

¹² Matthew 28:19-20.

Now think about this. He doesn't just say, "Teach them." He says, "Teach them to obey what I have commanded you."

You can't teach them to obey what God has commanded you unless you are obeying what God has commanded you. And so the Church gives us an opportunity to live to flesh this out, to live in obedience before other people and to be an influence with our life, with our lives.

And so the Church is a community of people who have professed faith in Jesus Christ and confessed his Lordship and have come together to worship him, but have also come together that they may mutually, might mutually encourage one another towards the goal of conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.

Now it is amazing. I was in Peru several years ago and a young American Marine, it was just a freak accident. He had his gun and he just turned... it went off and he shot himself in the head. And he laid there in the hospital basically brain dead for three or four days before they pulled the plug. And I didn't know this, but I show up to try to witness to him and there is these two Marines in full dress standing on each side of the door like this.

I asked somebody, "What is this?"

And the Marine says, "No Marine dies alone."

Wow.

Well, I started talking to somebody and I found out if a bunch of Marines are running the first Marine arrives when the last Marine arrives. They arrive together. So if you are running first and this guy is last, don't think about crossing that line until you get him and bring him with you.

We talk about an example of the Christian life. I am growing. And what about your brother? What about your sister in Christ?

You see, without a church we can't do any of this. We can't do any of this. You want to have a biblical church? Why do you want to have a biblical church so that you can say you have a biblical church? Do you want to have a biblical church so that you, you know, I mean... so that you can start a bunch of biblical churches? Or do you just want to honor God and love people whether anything happens or not?

Now, it goes on and I want us to show us... I want us to go for a moment to just to Ephesians four.

I want to talk about leadership for a moment, chapter four... Speaking of Christ in verse 11.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.¹³

Now, this is both a beautiful text and a very dangerous text. What do I mean? He has given gifted men to the Church to do what? To equip the saints. But most of the time when this is preached, it is preached in a militant sort of way. What do I mean? It is preached to the... Look, in our church, man, we have got to get going. We have got to get doing stuff. Look, I train you so that you can go out and do the ministry and that ministry is winning people and making this church grow.

And what am I doing? I am turning this thing back again into a factory, into a place where the saints come to labor. Do you see that?

You are a worker in the beehive, in the anthill. We have got to go. We have got to grow. We have got to build. We have got to do. I train you, you go. That... people have asked me several times today, how is it that some churches start out wanting to be biblical and then eventually they just kind of go the way of all other churches? These are the reasons. They turn church life into almost some kind of a factory, a work house.

Now are we to do works of service? We absolutely are to do works of service. But I want you to look at this in a little bit different way. He has given us gifted men for the equipping of the saints. Now the equipping of the saint just doesn't mean so that they can go out and work and bring in more people. The equipping of the saint means also to prepare them, to grow them to maturity, to help them be able to enter in strongly in to a personal devotional life, into a personal walk with Christ. It is not just about training them to go out to do something. It is training them so that they can be something, to be like Christ. And also this equipping is for the building up of the body of Christ.

Now, of course, that includes evangelism. But I need to equip you not to just go out and win somebody and bring them in and they remain just as immature as the rest of us. I need to equip you to be able to minister to him, to minister to the body also, to help us grow into maturity. I need to equip husbands to do what? To minister to their wives, need to equip fathers to do what? To minister to their children. I need to equip women to minister to their husbands and their children.

You see how we will just take a verse and just automatically assume this is what it means? Get them all equipped so they can go out there and do a bunch of work. Get them equipped so that they can be like Christ, minister to one another and witness to the world, but not in a machine cog in a wheel factory sense of a beehive sort of thing or an anthill where everyone goes out, gathers and comes back in.

You see, again, look at what we are talking about, relationships, loving one another, caring about one another, not so concerned about coming across the line first, but coming across the line with our other brothers and sisters in Christ as a church.

¹³ Ephesians 4:11-12.

Now, he goes on and he says, “For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”¹⁴

And, look, you can see. “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”¹⁵

To be a part of a church is to make a commitment to be biblically, practically concerned for the other people in that body that they might become everything that God desires for them to be.

Now, let’s go on. I want us to go now to 2 Timothy chapter three. The Church, its doctrine, its practices must be founded upon the Word of God.

Now, he says here, “That from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”¹⁶

How does a person come to know the Lord? Through the sacred writings, through Scripture.

Let me share with you. We will maybe talk about this tomorrow about evangelism, but I have seen recently people come to know the Lord not as a result of a one time encounter or witnessing through a tract. I have seen people come to the Lord after eight months of Bible study, after eight months of the study in Scripture.

My brother-in-law, John Green, from England is a great evangelist. He doesn’t preach. He shouldn’t preach. But as far as one on one dealing with people... And he just recently brought a guy to my office that he had been dealing with for about eight months, Bible study after Bible study going through the Scripture, going through the Scripture.

Listen to me. Preach on the streets, yes. Witness to people, tracts, yes. Have you ever thought about entering into a relationship with some of these people, inviting to meet them at a coffee shop once a week, twice a week, going through Scripture, studying Scripture. Not just hit and miss like a sniper with a rifle, giving them one shot to come to know the Lord, but maybe saying, “I am going to pour my life into that person.”

And then he says:

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.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ephesians 4:12.

¹⁵ Ephesians 4:13.

¹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:15.

When I was in seminary several years ago my professor, he stood in front of the class one day and he goes, “Sh... sh, listen.”

“What?”

“Listen.”

“I hear footsteps.”

“Yes. They are the footsteps of Aristotle walking through these halls and they are louder than the footsteps of the apostles.”

The point he was making was much of what we were doing had more to do with Greek philosophy than it did with the New Testament saying it was wrong.

I want you to know something, not only walking through church, but walking through your mind and your heart is psychology, sociology, anthropology, doctrines of this age and they will destroy you.

We do not need to augment the Scriptures with the social sciences in order to have a church. A church is founded upon the Word of God. And it needs no help from any outside source.

I will give you an example. If I were to teach on, right now on the father’s responsibility to be the primary educator in the life of his child, many of you would be going... because that is not practiced here. Yeah. Or if I began to teach on the biblical submission of the wife to the husband, some of you women would probably grow horns and claws and attack me right now because that is not practiced here. It is hated. It is despised. Years and years and years of training in all the dark arts you have received.

You went to preschool. They did not teach you Psalms one. They taught you the ways of the world. You went to grade school. They taught you all the doctrines of this age. You went to high school and they did the same. As a child every time you turned on the television set they taught you in a manner completely contrary to Christianity. And now you wonder why it is so difficult to live the Christian life?

You see? There are things that Scripture teaches that if I taught them right now, maybe some of you would rise up in anger and just jump right through that window or throw me through that window because you can’t even begin to address the issue because you have been taught the contrary over and over and over. Do not bring those sciences into the church because social sciences are not sciences by the pure definition of science. And do not bring something into the Church whose major theories change about once every three years.

¹⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

We are to find, we are to found the Church upon the Scriptures and the Church and the Scriptures need no outside help.

Let me give you a perfect example of this.

You go to a Christian counselor who is also a psychologist and you say, "I need some counseling."

He goes, "Ok."

You walk in. You say, "Now, before we get started, I understand you are a Christian psychologist. What is your basis of authority?"

Now that is a proper question in debate, apologetics, secular philosophy, ok? What is the basis of your authority? I mean, you are going to start telling me things. What is the basis of your authority?

And so you say, "Well, the Bible."

I go, "What are all these other books?"

"Well, I just... you know, the truth of Scripture, but all truth is God's truth, so the truth we also find in these books are true, too."

"Well, I got a problem."

"Well, what is your problem?"

"Well, I see there Freud, Rogers and Skinner, three main guys in the West with regard to psychology."

"Yes, so?"

"Well, Freud said that Rogers and Skinner were idiots. And Rogers and Skinner said that Freud was a pervert. And Skinner said Rogers didn't know what he was talking about and everything Rogers wrote contradicted Skinner. So now here is my question. If all three of them contradict each other and all three of them contradict the Bible, who is the authority?"

And he goes, "Well, I chew... you know, the Bible, of course, is the authority. And then I choose out of these men what is true."

"So now you are the authority."

Do you see the problem?

There is one authority and it is Scripture. If they speak not according to the law and the prophets there is no light in them.

But it has become the religion of the age and one of the greatest hindrances to biblical church, a great hindrance.

Now I realize that I may have made people mad and if I did so by my attitude I apologize, but what I said I do not apologize for. It is true. Churches today are overrun with the ideas of anthropology, secular anthropology, secular psychology and secular sociology.

Now, don't think you are going to have a biblical church by purging that out of your evangelism. You have got to purge it out of your marriage, your idea of man, your idea of truth. You have got to purge it out of everything.

God's Word is true. And if something does not line up with God's Word, it is not true. And it is not additional truth. You see, many of you... let me ask you a question. You would possibly say, "Yes, brother Paul, I believe in the inspiration of Scripture. I am a conservative Christian. I believe in the inspiration of Scripture, that Scripture was God breathed, that it is infallible, inerrant. It is a faithful communication of God's truth.

Ok. You believe in the inspiration of Scripture. You have only won half the battle. Here is the next question. But do you believe in the sufficiency of Scripture? Do you believe that the Scripture is sufficient to make the man of God adequate for every good work or does the man of God also need Freud, Skinner, Rogers and everything else in order to counsel God's people, in order to train God's people?

You see, this is what Scripture is saying. This is what it is saying.

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.¹⁸

Every good work that needs to be done in the body, every good work, the Scripture can adequately prepare us for that. Everything the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter one, 2 Peter chapter one, everything that we need for life and godliness has been granted to us. Everything we need to direct our marriages have been granted to us in this book. Everything we need to raise our children have been granted to us in this book. It is found there. It is. You have to make a decision. Do you want a biblical church or do you want a halfway biblical church?

There is no, like the philosopher said, "What does Athens have to do... what does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?" What does Christianity have to do with all these doctrines of the age that give no light and bring no blessing and kill all fruitfulness in the life of the person?

¹⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Now, I want to go to one other thing and then we will bring this to a close, because I know I have gone on very long.

Let's just look for a moment at body life. I want us to go to chapter 12 of the book of Romans verse three.

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”¹⁹

Listen. As you grow in your Christian walk, you are going to come across true, honest believers that are not quite as mature, that are rather problematic. You need to constantly be asking yourself this question. What do I have that I have not received. And if I have received it, why do I boast?

Who made you what you are? By God's grace you have been saved. By God's grace a work of sanctification continues in you. There is no room for boasting in the Christian life. And there is no room for comparison of setting one saint against another.

I remember one time a woman who had done a great deal of damage with her wickedness in the Church and one morning she came just running down the aisle. I was preaching and she was weeping and she just fell on the steps of the platform and she was crying out to God for forgiveness. And I looked up and I saw the faces of the people in that crowd. And I mean they were like unbelieving, unforgiving. The woman had done some bad things. And I went down and I put my hand on her shoulder and I prayed for her.

Afterwards some people came up to me and they said, “How could you touch that woman?”

And I said, “Because if she doesn't get forgiven I have to go to hell, too.”

You see the point? Mercy... you know, if you need evidence that we are not perfected at the moment of our conversion, if you need evidence of that, then just listen to this one statement by Jesus Christ.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”²⁰

That changed me, that verse and I will tell you why. A man like me who has received such mercy, I have to be told to be merciful. I have to be reminded to be merciful after the mercy I have received, after the things I have done and been forgiven. I have to be reminded to be merciful. That is pathetic.

And so body life is, again, built around humility. It is built around a mercy. It is built around thinking more of others.

¹⁹ Romans 12:3.

²⁰ Matthew 5:7.

And he says:

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.²¹

Now, the... in Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians Paul deals with this in greater length and I didn't want to go there because I didn't want spend the entire night having you just sitting here.

Sometimes I look at my wife and, you know, men are really bad in that we begin to think at times that our wives are an extension of us and our children are an extension of us. We forget that they are persons in their own right.

There will be things between our wives and Christ that we know not of. But sometimes I sit there and I try to remember this. She is God's daughter.

Now I don't know if any of you have daughters. I have a little daughter. I don't know where my Christianity would go if somebody tried to hurt her. But I would do everything in my power to stop them. I mean, if you really don't want to be my friend, then do something bad to my daughter. I mean, I can't even imagine. Someone would have to restrain me if somebody did something to my daughter.

And I always try to remember my wife in that context with her Father. She is God's daughter. I am going to mess with her? I am going to hurt her? If I being evil can love my daughter so much that I would throw myself in front of a train for her or fight any man on the face of the face of the earth at least for two seconds before he knocked me out, am I going to suppose that I want to deal with God in that way treating harshly his daughter?

Now let's take that farther.

You see, C S Lewis said this one time and I can't quote him directly, but he said, "There..." Basically he said this. "There are no common people. Every person you meet will either be one day a monster in the bowels of hell or will be a creature so splendid and glorious that if you could see them now in that future state, you would fall down on your face and have a tendency to worship them."

All right, now I want you to think that about your brother in Christ for a moment, your sister in Christ. Don't deal with this person in a harsh manner. Realize what they are. Realize what has been paid for them. Realize what they are going to become. Realize the relationship they have with God and you will begin to treat them differently. Do you see that? They are not just some common little believer who attends church. They are God's and one day they will be more glorious than anyone could even imagine.

²¹ Romans 12:4-5.

That is church.

And he goes on and he says that we are members. I am told that I am one with my wife and that only an insane man tears at his own flesh. Only an insane man practices self mutilation. I mean, we all now that. When you see a man on the side of the streets, you know, and he is ripping his arm off you don't say, "Hey, how is it going?" I mean, you say, "That is a very problemed person."

All right, now, to attack my wife is insanity, the worst form, to rip at her.

Brother and sister in Christ, same thing, members.

And just remember this. You are not just ripping at one of your members. You are ripping at one of Christ's members, part of his body. The Church in Corinth was sternly warned that anyone destroys the body, God will destroy them.

You see, you need to have a heightened view of God. You have heard that over and over. We need to have a heightened view of God. That is true. But do you know what else, though? You need to have a heightened view of other believers, of what they are, what they will be, what was paid for them. And we are members.

Now, gosh, I can do this in America, but here in Europe you guys are a lot more civilized. But I am going to do this anyways.

Let's see. Who has got tennis shoes on? Who wants to volunteer? Who is really brave? Is anybody brave? You don't need tennis shoes. You can do it in socks.

Ok, stand up. And, really, gosh, if I am out of line, just realize I am an American, I am from the South. I have no culture, ok?

Now I want you to run over to that rail as fast as you can and then run back as fast as you can. Go.

Ooh, I should have got tennis shoes on him. He almost went out the window.

Ok, now I want you to grab one foot like this and I want you to run over there half way and then come back. Halfway, yeah, just half way. We won't want you going out the window.

Ok.

Slower, right? All right. Now grab this foot like this. And grab the other one and pull it back. All right... thank you.

Now look. I removed one member and he could not move as fast, as quickly and definitely he wasn't as graceful. I removed one member. I removed two members and I incapacitated him completely. He couldn't even walk.

Now, do you think every member in the body of Christ is important? This is not only an encouragement for every saint to come to understand their giftedness and their part in the body of Christ, but it is also necessary for us to appreciate every saint and to encourage them to be a part of the body because we need them.

Now, if you tell saints, "Look. We need you to just minister according to your gifts. We need you to be a part of this body because, man, we are out to do this." Again, that is mechanical. We just want you to be part of the factory.

But if you say, "We need you in this body to minister to your gifts because we as a body need you. We need you. We need your giftedness. We need what God has done in your life. We need you as a person. We need you."

That is church, see, that is church, that we are members of one another.

And then he goes on and he says this... I want to just run down to nine because of the lack of time. It says, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another."²²

So you want to have a church? Are you willing to be devoted to one another? I am not talking about showing up on Sunday, listening to a sermon and running away. I am talking about actually entering in to relationships.

You see, Christianity, especially now in reformed circles in many ways has become like almost going to the theater. People got their favorite preacher and their favorite worship and so they go in and they take their seat in the church. We ought to get a thing with a popcorn holder and a place where you can put your Coke to watch your favorite preacher, to watch your favorite worship guy and then to say good bye. And the best part is it is free unless you are in a Baptist Church and then they make you pay a tithe. It is free.

That is not church. I hear ministers say all the time. The Bible says, "You shall not forsake the assembling of yourselves together."

And what he is saying is, "Listen, you need to come hear me preach."

But what it is saying is you don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together so that you can minister to one another, exhort one another, encourage one another. That is why at least there is less obstacles in doing this sort of thing in a small fellowship. And if the fellowship grows larger to either some of the members that are in that fellowship that are from a certain part of town, send them over there to start another church, or at least break

²² Romans 12:9-10.

this thing up in some sort of house churches and things like that so you can actually get involve din ministering to one another.

Another thing that is very important. I was preaching down in a place in Alabama a few weeks ago to a group of people in Tharptown, Alabama. And I just love these people. They are just wonderful. And I was preaching and it was going a little bit long. I know you can't believe that, but it was going a little bit long and I said, "Now, stop that."

They all kind of looked up.

I said, "I know what you are thinking. You are all thinking about leaving here and going to El Rancho."

El Rancho is the favorite, most favorite Mexican restaurant there near the church. As a matter of fact, it is the only restaurant in the whole entire town. So...

And I said, "I know what you are doing. You are not thinking about church anymore. You are thinking about going to El Rancho."

And they were like, you know, all feeling guilty.

But I said that because I wanted to teach them something. I said, "Now, stop. Ask yourself right now. Are you doing church or whatever you call it? Are you doing church?"

No. I said, "I want you to look at something a little bit different. Right now you are sitting under the preaching of the Word of God. We have worshipped collectively and we have prayed collectively. Now you think you have done something spiritual and then you are going to leave and you are going to go to El Rancho and do something not so spiritual." I said, "Actually, the way you need to look at it is you are leaving here to go to church."

And they are like, "Well, what do you mean?"

I said, "Now, if you go there and talk about your favorite football team or something, not necessarily." I said, "But do you realize, you are not talking to each other right now. You are not ministering to one another. You are listening to a sermon, which is necessary. You have worshipped collectively and prayed collectively which is all necessary and good and it is part of church. But what do you say now that as soon as I dismiss this we all go over to El Rancho and have church?"

We go over there, sit down at a table with a fellow believer, talk to them, get to know them, find out what is going on in their life, eat some chips. God is good and just get to know one another, to love one another, to bless one another.

You see, their whole idea of church revolved around coming into that place, worshipping collectively, listening to a Bible study and then leaving. That is not Church. That is a very essential part of Church. But, see, there you go, again, just identifying it with a service, a meeting, a meeting place. It is you collectively caring for one another.

There was a pastor down in Argentina and he had grown the church to about 600 and that is the language he used he said, "Because I had grown the church to 600."

And he said, "I was miserable." He said, "Finally I came under such... I didn't even know why. I was just knew something was wrong, knew something was terribly wrong." So he set aside time for prayer and fasting and studying the Scriptures and it just seemed that the Lord impressed upon his heart through the study of Scripture that everything he had built was just hay, wood and stubble, that he needed to start again. He is a really personable guy, a really great speaker, knew how to do things and I mean people were coming to that church in the droves. And God was saying...

So this is what he did. The next Sunday, you know, they got the big worship service and everything and the music director goes, "And now, pastor Ortiz," let's say, "is going to come and give us the Word of God."

And he got up. He walked over there and he goes, "Love one another as Jesus loved you."

And he sat down. And the music director hopped up and said, "We will have another song now before the main sermon."

So he sings another song and then, "Now our pastor will come and..."

He goes, "No, really. Love one another as Christ loved you."

He did that. He said he did that for six weeks. And he said on the sixth week two of the deacons sitting in the front pew, one in the front pew, the other one in the second pew, the one in the front pew turned around and he said, "As soon as I got through saying, 'Love one another,' the deacon turned around and goes, 'Hey, I think I know what he is trying to tell us.'"

And what happened was they started serving one another, caring for one another. The men started... the Spirit of God began to work. Men started... the deacons started searching out the widows in the church who were alone. I mean just all kinds of things.

Do you see? This is church. That is church.

Now, he says... he goes on and, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor."²³

²³ Romans 12:10.

Boy. We are not a people who know much about honor. In America we pride ourselves. We don't have a king and we are never going to have a king. And I don't care who you think you are. I am just as good as you are. That is our mentality. Independent spirit. I bow my head to no one.

That is not Christian. He says, "Give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."²⁴

Look. But this lagging behind, look what it is in. Don't lag behind in being devoted to one another. Don't lag behind in giving preference to one another.

"Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,"²⁵ for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

"Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."²⁶

Do you do that? Do you practice hospitality? Invite people into your home, feed them? Call over other believers? Hey, come on over to my house tomorrow. I am going to put a pot of stew on and we will just talk about the Lord. Do you open your home? Do you know it is one of the qualifications of an elder? He has to be hospitable. He has to open up his home. And if he doesn't, he doesn't qualify. I don't care if he is the best teacher on the face of the earth.

Do you see? You can say, "Oh, we can look past that, because, man, he is a great Bible teacher.

No, you can't.

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."²⁷

Now, I want you to just think about this for a moment. A guy says... I will put this in the context of marriage. A guy says, "I can't love my wife."

He is a Christian. He is in the wife. He comes to the pastor and he says, "I can't love my wife."

Ok. You can't love her as a wife. Can you love her as a fellow believer?

No.

Can you love her as a lost person?

²⁴ Romans 12:10-11.

²⁵ Romans 12:12.

²⁶ Romans 12:13.

²⁷ Romans 12:14.

No.

Can you love her as an enemy who persecutes you and curses you?

No.

Christ has commanded you to love her in all those ways.

See, you are not just called to love your brother. You are called to love your enemy who persecutes you and curses you and wants your eternal condemnation. So if you are called to love that guy, most certainly you can love your brother. Do you see that?

Do you know, honestly, what my goal is in life? I mean, I kind of have a little... I figured I wasn't going to get every... you know, I wasn't going to be able to accomplish everything, so I thought, "I am going to set out one goal." But it is kind of an all encompassing goal.

If I can grow in my love toward my wife, if I can manifest Christ like love toward her that is my goal.

You say, "Well, that is kind of puny."

Obviously you are not a husband.

But look at this. If I can love the person with whom I have the closest, most intimate relationship, she seeing all my flaws and I having to bear with all of hers, then love is not going to be a problem with everybody else, is it? I am so tired. I told someone. They said, "Why are you going to plant a church somewhere?"

I said, "I am tired of preaching Christianity. I want to go live it somewhere."

You know, guys, if this is a church and if this isn't your goal, then what you are going to do is you are going to go out and bring in people and make them two fold sons of hell like yourself.

But this goal is to be like Christ and to follow him. That is a church, a group of people devoted to Christ, devoted to one another. That's it.

So you can have all those other things and elders and everything else, but if you don't have this, then you don't have a church, ok?

All right. Let's pray.

Father, I come before you and I pray, Lord, that you would help us to understand and to apply these truths, to be transformed by them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[music]