

Well, this morning we are going to conclude our study from the book of Titus. We are going to be in Titus 3 beginning in verse 12 to verse 15.

What we should not be doing with any parts of Paul's letters as he concludes is treat it as movie credits. Do not treat his closing remarks as movie credits. Do not think of them as the names that we are going to read from as just names to quickly skim over. What we ought to do instead is look closely at the ones that Paul will be mentioning here in this closing part of the letter to thoughtfully consider the individuals named, all four of them. Do not check out your mind like most people that leave the movie as soon as the closing credits appear. This is not a movie. Amen. These are real people living real lives for the gospel's sake.

Why does this matter? Why does it matter that we should pay special attention to the closing parts of Paul's letters? It is because we live in a culture that is the exact opposite in this way. Our culture increasingly encourages people to build lives exclusively for themselves. Sadly, this self-absorbed spirit often creeps into the church, turning believers into passive spiritual consumers who hoard grace rather than sharing it, which is the way God intends grace to be received. Amen. And we know as believers that the grace of God has a name. His name is Jesus. He is the grace of God and he would never want us to just have this relationship all for ourselves. We are to share what he has done in our lives. Namely, in our conversion, the very beginning justified by faith. And then we are to live faithfully sharing the good news to others, what he can do for them as well that are outside of Christ.

See, when a church becomes self-centered, this is all about me and Jesus, it becomes a life of unfruitfulness and a life of indifference to those that need to be rescued by Jesus. Eventually, death is soon around a church that lives this way. If our faith is only about our relationship with Jesus and not outreach, settling for personal comfort, me and my church mentality, we miss the radical gospel-shaped vision God has for a local church. I would even say this is my call for Calvary Road Baptist Church that we are to live this outward-centered gospel-shaped living.

See, there is a myth that goes around. I have heard this myth many times that you can live as a lone ranger Christian. In our culture, we celebrate this lone ranger mentality that comes from the world. In our culture, we celebrate the self-made individual. Which remains still a very powerful and popular cultural ideal today to be the self-made whatever. We can see this in the financial realm of success which terms it as someone who builds wealth through their own work instead of inheriting a family fortune through a trust fund. But even thoughtful leaders in the world and thoughtful thinkers in the world know it is a myth. There is no such thing as a self-made insert whatever that may be. Every thoughtful believer even in the world knows it was a collective effort. But in the Christian life even more clarity is given. Christian life is never about isolation. Never about isolation. Amen. It is nowhere to be found from Genesis to Revelation. You will not see an isolated person who is walking with the Lord.

You see, the danger is when trials hit or ministry gets heavy in a local church, which is what happens if you are a living and thriving church, trials will hit, ministry will get heavy. But we must not trust in our default instincts which often pulls us back from ministry, pulls us back from the

trials because we want to protect our time. We want to protect what we have. And that is never to occur in any believer's life. We do not handle things like it is our own. I gave a message on Friday about stewardship. Stewardship means we are not owners. We are caretakers of God's resources.

Yet, as we look at the closing verses of Paul's letter to Titus, we see this very striking reality. The Christian life was never designed to be lived, and the church as well was never designed to be built in isolation. Paul's ministry was woven together as a beautiful tapestry of all believers coming together and working as a body. As Jesus said, you never would say, I do not need the hand or the foot. No. Jesus wants all of the body. He sees every part of the body as important. And we have got to protect ourselves of that. This is me and my ministry. Know my ministry is part of the collective body. Amen. To discover what is then a vibrant, healthy, biblically gospel-shaped church. That is a long-winded way of saying a healthy gospel church. What does it actually look like? We are going to see with these verses. You see, Paul puts theology with boots on. Theology cannot just be in the head. It must shape the way we very act in our lives. That is true biblical theology.

If we examine then the instructions that Paul gives, his final instructions to Titus at this end of the letter, we are going to see how it is so applicable even for our church. So out of respect of God's word, please go ahead and stand up as we read from Titus chapter 3, beginning in verse 12. Beginning in verse 12 to the end, Paul writes to Titus, When I shall send Artemis unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them, and let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. God's people said, Amen. You may be seated.

Well, we are going to look at the main emphasis of this wonderful, glorious ending of the closing letter is these words. When grace is received, good works are released. When grace is received, good works are released. Let us look at the power in the text beginning in verse 12 and 13. Let us examine what is in the mind of Paul beginning with these verses. We look here in verse 12 and 13 that gospel ministry has partnerships with other people. Let us look at it. We look at the very beginning of this epistle. Paul explains why he had left Titus behind in Crete following his own departure. So this is a full circle back to verse 5 of chapter 1. As you recall, he said these words for this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. Now Paul is reaching Titus to come to Nicopolis, a city, meaning a city of victory. That is the original meaning of this city. It is named after a historical naval battle in Actium which is off the coast of southern Greece which is the opposite side of Italy lower part which is a good place for winter. A lot of southern places are good for winter and so he plans ahead and back then you had to plan way in advance because you did not have planes you did not have cars or trains you had to do this in ships and he had multiple trips destinations using this form of transportation. So he is planning ahead of time. It must be sometime right a couple months before winter and urging Titus to travel before winter settles in. And if you recall, I gave a message way back where there are parts of the

Mediterranean Sea when it is winter time, it is impassible due to violent storms. People would just hunker down in their homes. It was just ripe for opportunities to share the gospel originally. But if you are going to travel out, you better do this ahead of time. And so Paul communicates this vital instruction regarding pastoral handover. Okay, Titus, it is now your turn to pass on the baton, as it were, to other elder qualified leaders. And so he communicates these specific instructions. And then he even gives instructions to how you are supposed to take care of those that are gospel partners who are missionaries who come and visit and if they are in need to support them. So we are going to see how we are instructed by Paul in these regards. The assignment then in Crete was never meant to be a permanent stay for Titus. Though he had Paul lay the foundations in planting these various churches, their departure revealed a very sobering scene which is this that churches struggling with organizational chaos and the corrosive influence of deceptive teachers who prioritize their agenda which is financial gain for their own part for their own gain over truth. We saw that in Titus 1 10 and 11. When we see these things, these are the main things that kills a church. When there are disordered loves, I gave that message a while back where there are false teachers being like wolves killing the flock as it were. So the specific mandate for Titus was to establish a legacy like it was not going to end with Titus his whole establishment of him being there was to build up strong godly leadership and we see that here in the final part of his closing letter. So he anchors down to the Cretan believers to live a lifestyle and we saw this to live soberminded. Do not let the world come in to your life and then affect the church body to think decisively to confront the spiritual counterfeits, those who are against the gospel and instead of grace saving us that somehow you can earn God's favor through your works, right? We saw that through the circumcision party, false teachers will always bring a false gospel with them. So he plans to send either Artemis or Tychicus to relieve Titus in Crete so Titus can join him in Nicopolis. So we see Paul never operates as a solo hero here. No, he always is thinking about other godly leaders just like him. He is not the only one. So he prepares Artemis. And by the way, this is the only time he is referenced throughout the whole New Testament. And just a side note here for myself. There is anyone among here who does not want to have a history behind what you have done. Here is a good example. He has no background. But yet, this is what we do know indirectly that he is someone Paul trusts that he says, Bring him. Bring him just like faithful fellow workers like Titus or Tychicus. Now we know more about him and let me explain now this individual. He is a faithful messenger who delivered several letters on behalf of the apostle Paul and it was many times during his imprisonment where he could not go to visit these specific churches such as in Ephesus and Colossae and he even accompanied Paul on a third missionary trip back to Jerusalem and not only that but he also accompanied an individual by the name of Onesimus. He was a runaway slave if you recall. He was back in Colossae and the book of Colossians is mentioned there and Paul's letter to Onesimus the employer which is his name is Philemon which is a book is written by the apostle Paul well Tychicus was the one that sent that letter as you recall Philemon was a fellow believer urging him to free Onesimus because he has become a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus Christ And in several of Paul's letters, Tychicus is described as a beloved brother, faithful, and a faithful minister in the Lord. Would not we all want to be called those attributes? Beloved, right? Faithful and then faithful minister in the Lord. See this is these individuals were to replace Titus so that the Cretan church is never left without strong godly leadership. So Paul shows that there are no such thing as territorial rights that this is my

church or this is our church. No, this is Christ's church and God can use whoever he wants to. So it is Christ's church above all. And he says, No, I am not jealous over this godly leader or that godly. No, they are just like me. God is using them. They are ministers in the Lord and they are faithful. They are beloved by God and they can come in and help the church of Crete. That is the way all leaders should think. You should never be jealous. If any root of jealousy is there, do not bury it. Another way of putting it, Paul never buried it. He allowed whatever it may be to come up and say, you know what, let me deal with it. Let me actually put it into words and deeds. Here, leaders, come let us go. Let us help. That is how we should think. Never it is my ministry or our ministry. No, Christ gave us this as to be stewards of it. Amen. To be stewards of it and to treat his as his own. And we are managing what he has given to us for a short limited time. So he sees these ministry leaders and he sees that they are going to be mutual supports in the ministry that has already been established by him and Titus and will continue to further grow it in their leadership. You see they had all this shared as a mission rather than being competitive. No, we just I just want to see growth. If you think about growth in the local church, you will never have an issue with leadership. If you all focus in let us all grow in the body of Christ, let us lift up Christ, not about us, that is what changes a church from a dead church to a healthy, vibrant, gospel-shaped church. This is the So, this is an urgent need. This is an urgent request. Is an urgent instruction for all of us to hear because it is so practical. We are going to see it. So then he goes on in verse 13, he goes and asked for Zenas, the lawyer, similar to Artemis. This is the only time he is mentioned in the New Testament. He was someone again that Paul trusted as a gift from God. And he had a knowledge of the law. He was a lawyer. So he could have been someone that was useful to continue to protect the church from false teachers, those who brought the law in to the church instead of grace. So he could have been used for that. That is just my thoughts on that. And then we have Apollos, another individual where he is mentioned throughout the New Testament. He was a man mighty in scripture. We see this in Acts 18 verse 24. We also see in 1 Corinthians Paul was the one that planted the church in Corinth and then Apollos was the one that continued it and watering it. And then we thank God it is God that adds their increase. Amen. And so they needed specific practical needs which was funds to continue on their missionary journey. Right? And so they were provided a specific instruction by Paul to fund their ongoing journey. So he asked the Cretan church to diligently meaning labor for this put effort into this to supply their need to nothing. He says nothing be wanting unto them that they lack nothing. In other words, so a reminder to myself through reading all of these people's names is that there is a story attached to every single one here in this room. There is a story attached to everyone and single in this room. And maybe be a church that we recognize people. Not just, hey, there is a name here, but hey, what is your story? What has God done in your life? How has God been faithful to you? How have you been loved by God? And how is God faithfully using you to minister in his name? That is one way that we can look as well into these things that we just read. I want you to imagine, this is a really good way to visualize these four individuals with the 4x4 relay team. A 4x4 relay team. What is a relay team? What you see is a runner, even though he may be the fastest one out of the four, it is not dependent on one person. It is dependent on all four. So, what Paul does here is we are a part of a relay team. It is not about me. I am the best. I am Paul. You know, he puts everyone in the same grouping. We are all faithful. We are all beloved by God. And we are all being faithful ministers unto the Lord. That is the quality of this relay team as it were. But if they drop, if

anyone drops the baton, refuses to hand off the ministry as it were, the team, the whole team loses, the whole four collapses. So everyone has to pass on, pass on, pass on. Think of it as generations of this church. I am now the third pastor of this local body. May we continue to have successions of pastors, but also think of yourself, those that are ministry leaders. Do you have someone that is going to succeed you? And is that person going to then succeed by someone else? Think of this as a relay team. Does not matter if you are the fastest runner or the most theological or the most whatever. How do you see yourself as a team? How do you see yourself more clearly as a body of Christ? We all want to grow together. It would look weird if the arm was like deformed. It was like big and then the other arm was skinny, right? Or a skinny leg, one leg and big fat leg on the other. That is how crazy it is to think that our ministry, whoever is it is, is greater than someone else's.

So, we are not a ministry by no means a lone ranger ministry. We are a relay team and our strength is found in the mind of Christ, the head of the body who gives us the nourishment through his word, gives us specific instructions and how to lead a church well. Amen. So, do we see this here? So a healthy church does not rely on a single superhuman leader. We thrive rather in mutual support and we share each other's burdens amongst the body and we celebrate ministries as well. Talks about this in the New Testament just paraphrasing, right? Those that are experiencing joy, joy with them, but those who are sorrowing, sorrow with them. Share the burdens with each other. That is another way of looking at how we are to be as a body. We are mutually lifting each other up in our various times, seasons of life in the church. So, who are your ministry partners? If you are part of a ministry, who is your second man, as it were, or second woman in your ministry? How are you actively supporting the work together that God has given to you to steward for a moment of time? And time goes by fast, right? Let me just tell you, I was just ordained on August 9th. It has been a whole year. It goes by like that. So take notice. Pay special attention because God is doing a work not only through you but someone else. And may God open our eyes to see future leaders in our church and start planting those seeds so that we can see a harvest of leaders in our church. Amen. Let us look at verse 14. Verse 14. Paul explicitly commands here and let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses that they be not unfruitful. So here he is talking about the local church, the Cretan believers, that these people would not leave the ministry in the realm of just okay, we will take care of that need, but now he focuses on other needs in the local church. And he is saying immediately anchor yourself into tangible action, the actual practical needs of our church. So basically zoom out between your ministries and go, how do we all work together? Because somehow we are all working together. If you do not recognize that, how can my ministry help another ministry? How can this support this part of the ministry? We are all lifting each other up together in tangible ways. And this is what Paul is saying that good deeds are the essential part of a church to be effective gospel witnesses. That when the outside world who are lost amongst us and sees a church that knows how to seamlessly work together in communicating each other what the gospel means and how it all comes together to lift up exalt Christ instead of one particular part of the body a ministry that all of us are exalting Christ in our ministry what does that do that is what unity looks like amen that is what unity looks like we are all exalting the head, the Christ as our head. This is what gospel witness looks like. In context, Paul is urging the Cretan believers to fund and provide provision for Zenas and Apollos. And then now he

goes in and talks about the local church and all the various ministries that they must have had. See, true religion is practical. And the early church understood that active benevolence that is the word for giving physical needs of the ministry is a natural fruit of God's grace. Remember I said earlier grace is received grace is released. See grace freely is him giving us and then we freely give. We do not say he freely gives and then okay what are you going to give to me for me to give you the grace? Does not make sense. Grace is freely given then grace is freely to be released. So let us live in that way just like blood flows right if there was a clot right what would what would start happening the heart will not pump as strong to the other vital parts of the organs. One clot can destroy the whole bodily system just like one part in our brain stroke can destroy the whole mind. So let us quickly deal with the situation. It is interesting how even in the real world if you do not deal with the stroke or deal with the heart attack it can lead to death right. It can cause more destruction. And so these are things we have got to quickly change in order for the vitality, the healthiness of the church to continue to flourish in all parts of the body of Christ. This is how God's grace operates just like blood does in our body. See, they did not want they did not wait for someone else to step up. No, they are like we are going to be active. That is what the word diligent. Do you see the word diligent? So repeated twice. Once in verse 12, another times in verse 13, and then in 15 says, Let us learn to be like this in our local church. Be active. Do not be passive. That is why I actively call upon all the ministry leaders to speak with me. I do not wait till something bad happens. That is not a good leader. And you should take notice of that. Now you know why I do it. Because it is an active approach. It is be diligent. Labor for this, make effort in this. Okay, it is going to take up a lot of my time. Good. It should take up my time and it should take up your time. This is an important part of ministry. That is how important it is for us to meet. I need to know what is going on and you should as well know what my heart is for these things. So, they did not want anyone to to just wait to step up. No, they took this seriously. They saw the pressing financial and physical needs as a direct call to be fruitfully obedient. That is what you should think about. Am I being fruitful in my obedience or am I being unfruitful by disobeying? No, I want to cheat this as my own ministry. No, I do not need your help. That should never be in our words, in our actions. Another way of thinking of it is that we do not call the church a hotel, do we? We call it our church home. We call it our church home. What is the difference? You see a hotel, tourists come and treat the building like a place to consume comfort. You come in, something is broken, you tell someone else to fix it. You do not go and fix it because now you are home. Someone else's job to fix the problems. But a homeowner in this case, let us let me use the word steward of God's home. Well, that is different. You treat things much differently. You see a problem, you go and fix it. You are the one that saw the problem, you fix it, right? Is not that what you do when it is kind of your home? You go and fix it. Do you go there? Do you come to your home just for comfort? No. It is a place where ministry can happen. Do you invite people over to your home? And both lost and the saved. Do you care about the lost? Do you invite them to your home just as much as those that you spend a lot of time with, but you should not spend so much time that you forget the lost? You make your home. And I gave a message a while back. We are not a castle that just retreats our doors and close up shop. This is me and my home. No, we are it is an open door. You come in freely. This is not my home anyways. God gave me this home and he wants me to use it for ministry purposes. Do you see it that way? It is radically different way of thinking of things. I also get the expression of the cruise ship versus the battleship, right? Similar to hotel,

right? In the battleship you tell I mean in the cruise ship you ask the people to fix things in your room but in the battleship you work together as a rescue team and you go and rescue people that are outside. That is how we should think. We should roll up our sleeves as it were and maintain good works. You see that word maintain good works. So there was good works there. Now you have got to maintain it. Maintaining is an active word. If you do not maintain it, it can turn to bad works because no one is working on it and it can just die and God will let it die if no one maintains it. So let us maintain the works on God's house. Faith without works is dead. That is what James says. And grace never translates into practical generosity. Generosity as an illusion meaning, oh, it is someone else to take care of. The money will come out somewhere. No, God will burden you to give and be better at that. Please be better at that. Do not just go, Okay, I got a new promotion. Now I can go and use this money for myself. Oh, I got more money at my job. Now I can comfort myself more. No. Even the world knows do not spend more than you take or I mean the more you give. How about five guys? I just totally cannot even get this concept. Do not spend more than you make. There you go. Thank you. So the world understands how much more us as a church. Amen. That the more God gives to us is because he trusts you with more. But he trusts you to give it to others. You have already been taken care of. That is why he is giving you more. That is the point of generosity. And that is going on in our lives right now. Me and my wife, we are grateful. He is providing and going, No, we are going to maintain how we live because we already settled it. This is our lifestyle. Whatever extra I make, it is extra for God's work. Plan ahead to do that instead of, oh, I got that promotion. What do I do now? No, we already planned that way back. Long time ago, many, many years ago, we already planned that out. That is how you are effective for God's kingdom.

So, there are pressing needs all around us in our church body, our community here in Monrovia and the uttermost parts of our global missions. We are not to ignore them because we should never compartmentalize our faith. Meaning, okay, it is our church and then their church and their ministry. No, it is just it is what is God doing and how can we all be part and integral. So, I have been focusing a lot on our local church, but how can we think, how can we partner up with other churches? And of course, pray for me that I would have the discernment and the ability to acutely be aware of is this a gospel-shaped church like the way we want to and how can we work together and then how can we be generous and supportive. Let us go in verse 15, shall we? Verse 15, Paul closes his letter with personal greetings and a profound final blessing here. I will read it in its totality. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. Here in the ancient Greek or Roman world, the common greeting was often a wish for physical health. Physical health, life of the flesh. But Paul elevates the Cretan believers to a greater plane. He does not just wish them temporary health or temporary happiness. No, he invokes grace here. The unmerited favor and sustaining power of God to rest on all of them. You see like saying how well is your soul? It is another way of saying it. How has God been blessing your soul? Is there so well? See, ourselves takes presence over our physical well-being. The world will emphasize the outward appearance. Oh, you look so good today. Oh, how is the home? Oh, how is the car? Oh, how is the work? We as believers in Christ, our main emphasis, what has God saved you from, believer? What actual sins has he been saving you from? Yes, there is a subjective truth to that. God is doing a work in your life where he is putting to death the sins in your life and made alive in Christ. Putting on Christ in your life. That should

be our main emphasis. What is he showing you in your life? What is he not showing you in your life? What is he doing in your life? What is he not doing in your life? What has he shown you to deny? And you have seen that when you do deny, right? It brings you greater joy in the Lord. It is good to put down sin. Amen. And replace when you get more joy in the Lord, more peace in the Lord because sin will always bring destruction. It will never bring you peace.

Understand the worth of the worthiness of Christ because when you obey him and I gave this on Wednesday as well it is all kind of interweaving Christ always calls us to obey before he helps us understand and think of it as a parent you do not tell your child understand me child this is the reason why you are supposed to do this and this and this no you say obey me because I am your dad obey me because I am your mom and then I will help you to understand Christ always works like this in the believer's life. He says commands first. Obey, deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow me. And when you do that, when you are following Christ, he will help you to understand. He will help you understand why it is so good to obey. But he will never show you before. The rich young ruler as an example. So he ends here. What a wonderful thing that grace encompasses all leaders, all true godly gospel shaped leaders and even new believers as he is talking with the new believers at Crete and all those that are struggling that are still without trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior and lord. He unites all of this under this common canopy as it were to all of these people with God's grace. God is the one that gives you everything and he is the one that protects you as well by his mercy. You see, grace is the entire wealth of the gospel. Entire wealth of the gospel and it is all compressed in this single benediction. That is why Apostle Paul uses this word over or this phrase over and over again at this end of his letters. Grace be with you all. Grace be with you all. Grace be with you all. You will see this repeatedly throughout his letters. It is the gospel compressed in those few phrases. Think of how we are to live. Then we cannot manufacture then any unity by God's grace. We cannot sustain good works without God's grace. We need him daily. Grace upon grace as waves. Picture waves. Us grace upon grace to envelope us as a canopy that will fuel every partnership and every act of service. Think about it. If we are where we are right now and we ask for more or we depend more on God's grace rather, think of how much more will be given to us. Because if it is not about our own strength, our own effort, then we have got to depend upon him for him to add the increase, right? So whatever you are thinking of right now, what is it that you want to see God increase in your life? Depend on God's grace. He will provide. He will provide. He will always provide for his mission. It is his mission. It is his purpose that he will use his grace, not for anyone else's purpose. I use the expression a gift, right? A gift, you do not just give a gift without someone's name on it, right? You put from and to. From grace is God always. And then to is to you specifically. Specifically, specifically a gift is never intended to be for everyone. Meaning that God specifically if you see scripture you see Paul lives a totally different life under God's grace than let us say Peter or a totally different life from Peter's life to James and a totally different life from John in fact Jesus said this to Peter because Peter was like okay I know what is about me I am going to die in the cross but what about John and what did Jesus say it is not for you to know it is not for you to I am going to give him specific grace for his name on it. You are given a specific grace for your name on it. That is how we are supposed to live. Then you will not live in comparison because everything is a gift. Everything is a gift. So how do we grasp this? Because it is a lot to take in. How do we avoid the lone ranger Christian, the lone ranger

church? How do we live from being selfish to completely selfless? How can we press on to what the needs are that God wants us to give out of his grace? We must look at the ultimate provider, the ultimate provision in our life, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. If we could ever fund a missionary or partner up in a ministry or perform even a single good deed, Jesus Christ looked at our condition. We were bankrupt. We were dead in trespasses and sin. We were helpless. We needed rescue. Alienated from God. Did not know how to treat others as our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. He saw everyone as competitors. You see, he left heaven's glory. He became poor that we might become rich in God. He made the ultimate sacrifice to meet our most pressing eternal need. We saw this back in Titus 3. Remember he said, But after that the kindness and love of God, our savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us. Amen. Our ministry partnerships and good works are never a ladder we climb to earn God's favor. No, they are the overflowing fruit of the heart that has already been captured by his grace, namely in the Lord Jesus Christ. You look at him, you depend on the saving work of Christ in your life. And watch how the more you surrender, the more he uses you. It is a flip of the world. The more you get, the more I can do. No, actually, it is a paradox. The more you surrender, the more he gives. The more he gives. So, are you truly surrendering your whole life to the one who surrendered all for you? The Lord Jesus paid for all our sin, not just partially. He gave you all of his righteousness. Not partially. He gave you not partial life. He gave you eternal life. And all of this is how you respond to God's message, the gospel. When the seed, the word of God lands on good soil of the heart that God opens in you. It then is one that is a heart that hears more and obeys more. That is what it looks like to be in the good soil. Hears more and obeys more. God, what do you want more to do? I am hearing you. What more do you want me to do? More opening. It represents a receptive heart that understands more after obeying. Oh, your maturity starts to increase because now you understand because you took the first step and the second step and the third and so on of obedience. He gives you more understanding and out of that you act even more upon the good message of the word of God that produce then more harvest yielding 30 and 60 and 100fold as Jesus promised to the one that is on the good ground the good soil the word of God will go further than anything produced by man in this world. Amen. This ancient letter, it is an ancient letter, but it is still so practical because it is not the only the written word. Not only the written word, but it is the living word. Amen. And it speaks directly to our hearts because the Holy Spirit is the one that breathed it in the written word and it breathes to us. How is God's spirit working in you right now? Are you convicted? Are you comforted? Are you strengthened? Are you encouraged? Where are you with God right now? He is speaking to you right now. His living word. Because this is the direct blueprint of a healthy church family today. Not just for the Cretans back then, but for us today. Let us be a church that embraces this kind of vision. Not a new vision. This kind of vision that is gospel-shaped, that is gospel saturated, that is gospel dependent, that kind of church that never lives on an island, but rather thrives through intentional ministry partnerships, urgent, practical generosity to maintain good works, and then to continue to share the reliance of God's sustaining grace to the uttermost parts of the world until Christ comes back. Let us embody this vision this week. Listen, this is the vision for our church at Calvary Road. What God has already said in his word, God is calling us to move beyond casual attendance. Let us put the boots on the ground. Do not count how many times you attend our church. Do not use that as a marker. Oh, I am in a good place. I am like what

Paul's saying. No, no, no. You do not see that here. It is not a hotel where you come in and go out. Come in and go out. Do not depend upon your attendance. No. A vibrant gospel-shaped person calls this their church home, their church family. Starts with membership. It starts with understanding that first and foremost you are a believer in Christ and you want to be plugged in to our church as a member and you want to represent the gospel because every member represents the gospel. That is why membership is so important. We are not called to drift through our faith and isolated consumerisms. Do not let the world come into our church, please. We are called to look lock arms in ministry partnership. Look outward to meet the pressing needs of our community and our world and let our good works display the reality of Christ. How are you serving in this church? How are you connected as a disciple of Christ in discipleship groups? How are you doing? When you can serve, when you converse with the members of Calvary Road, this is my vision, okay? Is what I see as members of Calvary Road that visitors come in, they leave with the understanding we are not our own. We are recipients of God's grace and what we have received freely, we give freely. You sense God's presence in each one of us. You treat us as an image of God. If you have not taken the next steps with the use of the connect card, this is your opportunity to do so. By the way, God is calling you to something in this church. That is your opportunity to take the next step. That people will be so in tune with our church and seeing how God is working that they want to be part of this church family because they are speaking into their lives, too. Is not that what we want? That Sunday services are an external confirmation of what God has been doing internally throughout the week. You are not coming here because you are starving. You are so well fed during the week because you are part of the discipleship groups. You are coming for the prayer meetings. You are coming and serving that you are coming here as an external confirmation of God's goodness. Is that how you see your life? How do you show up here determines who has shown up the rest of the week? How has God shown up in the week? Or do you just depend on God, show up this week or else? Do you leave it to that or else? Or do you go, God, you are we are working so much in my life. I want to I want to be a blessing to others. I want to share the good testimony that you are doing in my life. Yes, we might be going through something in this church and you are sharing that as well. Sorrows and joys. Amen. We are part of a body. How you show up here determines who has shown up already the rest of the week. Whose presence you have been spending time with the most is the one who takes true priority in your life. Who is our priority is Jesus and God. When you have his presence as priority, that means he is the most important. How is your time with him? How is your time with him? Who is it that takes control of your heart, the command center of your life? What is flowing out of your life right now will determine what comes out of your life. When Christ truly lives in you in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the life looks like the fruit of the spirit. Jesus saying to you, Trust me more. Obey me more. And you will understand what it means to bear 30, 60, 100fold. Did not you ever think about that when you became a believer? God, God, am I going to be that one? Am I going to be the one that bears 30, 60, 100fold? Or are you the one that the three other soils? Only you and God knows that. That is between you and the Lord.

Take that parable of the sower seriously. He said if you do not understand this parable, you will not understand any other parable. Take the Lord Jesus seriously. That is what it looks like to be a faithful steward as you see in the parable of the talents.

So this week, identify then practical ways to live this out. Whether supporting a ministry partner or reaching out to a tangible need, someone who is really physically struggling, you actually you take notice is it then go and take maintain it. Do not be oblivious to what is going on in our church. If God is showing you something in our church, he is probably using wants to use you and watch his grace pour into you and to that person. Amen.

This is how our church family, this is how I envision Calvary Road. Do we meet direct needs and we pray profusely just all the time asking God I cannot do this in myself I need you that back and forth yes you cannot do it in yourself yes remind yourself of that but yes depend upon God and strength depend upon his grace imagine what God can do through this kind of understanding to refuse to live for yourselves, to live more plugged in to our church and hating that you are attending without being part of this local church that you will be a fragrance in your prayers. That when you are praying, God actually wants to listen to you instead of going, you are a noisy bang and clinging cymbal. I do not even want to hear your prayers because you are not going and helping anyone. You just want to help yourself. See, without Christ's love, there cannot be any of this. That is why focus on Christ's love for you and watch how you focus on his love for you and how that love is passed on to everyone else around you. That is a true fragrance to God. And you will see your answers to prayers like unbelievable. I mean, I am just blown away by how God has answered the prayers that I made to him in such specific ways. It is unbelievable. So what I am telling you is truth. It matters so much. Information just taking this in without application leads to spiritual decay amongst believers and it leaves you dead as an unbeliever. Let us not hoard the resources God has given to us and ignore the urgent needs around us. Let us never become unfruitful. Let us never be disobedient. Let us never be spiritual dead ends. That we will be an outpost to heaven. People know what it is to go to heaven. They know the gospel is the only way. Jesus Christ is the door. He is the only way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the father but by him. John 14:6. When we step in this way, we will have victory and more victory because of gospel saturated church. Amen. Let us pray. Father, I so much I wanted to say, so much I neglected to say, but Lord, you it seems it was you, Lord. You wanted to take control of this service and I just need to stay back and watch you move. But it is not good enough that I am moved by you, Lord. I want everyone in this room to be moved by your presence. What you are speaking to them clearly on what the next steps are. God, only each one in this room knows what that is. I do not know, but I pray and I have made it clear to them. If it is that they are lost and they need to trust in Jesus Christ, I pray that they would know that. They would know that he is the Savior and the Lord. For those that are Christians amongst us and they have not been maintaining good works in the way that is shown through this letter. I pray that you would convince them what the next step is for them as well. Pray for your presence. I pray for your glory, Lord. I pray that you have been pleased with this time of worship. To this end, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.