

A True Missionary Church: 1. Lives the truth

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to look this evening mainly at Titus that we read, but I'd be grateful if you would turn first of all to 1 Timothy, and to chapter 3 and verses 14 and 15.

And we'll read it in just a minute. My title this evening is this, A True Missionary Church Today Lives the Truth.

I want to begin a series this evening on some of the themes from these letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus, partly because, for various reasons, on Sunday evenings we're going to be a little bit broken up in the next weeks.

I'm going to be away once or twice, and we'll have some other preachers. But partly also because I want to tie in a little bit with what we're doing on Thursday evenings in the course on preparing for partnership.

And as I said, it's not too late to join that yet. We're focusing on what it means to be a church in partnership in gospel ministry. And so I hope this will be a special benefit for those who are coming on Thursdays, but also for all of us here on Sunday evenings too.

[1 : 1 4] Now these letters, often called the pastoral epistles, are often really rather misunderstood. They're called the pastoral epistles because they're thought to be about matters to do with pastors.

And of course that is true. They are about ministry. But it's not true that these are just letters full of rather dreary things about church order. In other words, who does what in church meetings and all sorts of rules about how to behave when we're actually at church.

No, no, not at all. I remember one minister I knew, and I was in that church at the time, and I remember saying to him, why don't you do a series on the pastoral?

And he said, oh no, it's so dull. Well, I learned a lot of things, a great deal of things from that man, but he was wrong about the pastoral epistles. Not sure if he really thought that or not, but that's what he said.

What the pastoral epistles really are is real, practical, missionary theology. These letters are powerful resources to tell us how to be the church today in very hard days, in tough days, in tough times.

[2 : 2 3] That's what Paul says the last days are going to be like. In 2 Timothy 3, if you read it, he says there will be terrible times of difficulty in these days in which we live. Now, isn't it wonderful that God has given us clear and authoritative instruction on what the missionary church is to be and do right till the end of time in these difficult and terrible days?

Isn't that great? You see, today in the church at large, there's all sorts of talk all of the time about how we are to be the church in the 21st century.

There's endless books and conferences and courses all about these sorts of issues. And you see, the assumption so often is that, well, the Bible can't possibly give us any really practical help about these issues.

So we need all sorts of PhDs and new theories and new ideas and all the rest. You see, the assumption is that the apostles, well, they lived so long ago they can't possibly know anything about our particular difficulties today because, well, life's so different.

And our problems are so unique to our age. We think that society has changed so much and we've lost all the kind of advantages that we used to have in a Christian, a so-called Christian society in terms of spreading the gospel.

[3 : 52] So we need all sorts of new ways and different ways and all kinds of things to think about in our thinking about mission. Well, of course, there is always a need to adapt and to be changing in terms of the specifics of what we may do, you know, the details about when we might meet together or where we might do certain things in order to get the message of the gospel out, of course.

But in the things that really matter in terms of mission, well, hardly anything has changed in the world since Paul's day. You just need to read these letters and that becomes absolutely obvious.

I mean, in 2 Timothy 3, for example, Paul says to us, in the last days, people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, lovers of pleasure instead of lovers of God.

That's a pretty good description, isn't it, of Western society in the 21st century. And whether it's the 1st century or the 21st century, all of these things are really at heart just exactly the same because the human heart hasn't changed in 2,000 years or 20,000 years.

And because Paul knew what the world really was like in the 1st century and what the world would still be like in the 21st century, he wrote these letters so that we would know how to be real Christian churches in ministry and mission and what our life would be marked by, whether it's then or now or next century or whenever.

[5 : 30] You just look at 1st Timothy 3, verses 14 and 15 there. You see, there's no guesswork to be involved, is there? He's writing these things, he says, so that you may know how you ought to behave in the household of God.

Because you see, it's this household, he says, that is the church of the living God. And therefore, this is the thing that is always to be the pillar and the buttress of the truth in the world.

God has chosen the church to be the place of his dwelling, his sanctuary, if you like, on earth. The place where his spirit dwells, the place where he can be found, where he can be encountered.

And therefore, above all else, it's absolutely vital that we know not so much what we are to do as the church, but what we are to be as the church of the living God.

And he says, very plainly, doesn't he, in verse 15, we are to be a pillar and a buttress of the truth. Now, notice that the little phrase from this verse that's on the bottom of our service sheet every week.

[6 : 37] It's to remind us what we're here for. Because it's the truth, says Paul, that leads to salvation. 1 Timothy 2, verse 4.

It's the truth that leads to godliness. Titus 1, verse 1. And the church is to be a bastion, a bulwark, that stands for a witness to true thinking in the world, a world full of falsehood and lies.

It's to be a bulwark that is a witness to true living in a world of lawlessness and godlessness. That's what it means to be God's dwelling place, his household.

It means that, as the church, we're not a dead institution, but we are a place alive with the presence of the living God. The church is the household of the living God.

And our true ministry is, therefore, to be a faithful stewardship of this precious household. Paul uses that word at the beginning of Titus. Titus 1, verse 7.

[7 : 41] God's steward. That's the job of the overseer, to be a manager, to be a steward in the household of God. Now, that is such an important thing for us to grasp if we're ever going to understand what it means to be the Christian church.

We are the dwelling place of God on earth. Look over to 1 Timothy 6, verse 16. It's the verse that the words from our first hymn came from.

Paul speaks of God as being the blessed sovereign, do you see? The King of kings, the Lord of lords, immortal, verse 16, who dwells, that is, has his house in unapproachable light.

No one can see him. God dwells in the eternal heavens. He can't be seen by mortals on earth. He will appear, as verse 14 says, when Jesus comes at the last in his glory, but now, how can he be seen?

Well, the answer is, God manifests himself on earth to men and women through his earthly dwelling place, his church. That's where God can be seen and found today.

[8 : 54] The church of Jesus Christ is where the immortal, invisible God may be encountered and found and known and loved in this age until he comes.

God's church is his missionary household on earth. It's his showcase to the world of his grace and his glory. It's the very place where his salvation is to be found because it's a pillar and bulwark of the truth.

And that's why it's so important that the church must be what it's called to be. Remember in Ephesians 3, verse 10, we were looking at it a few weeks ago, God says that through his church, the manifold wisdom of God is going to be displayed to the heavens above and to the earth beneath.

And it does that, says Paul here, as it is a pillar and a buttress of the truth. It shines to the world just like Jesus said in Matthew 5, lights of the world.

That's what you are as the church. It shines as truth incarnate, not just truth in doctrine, but truth incarnate in living, in a living that demonstrates the power of the gospel of God.

[10 : 12] The church is to be the household that manifests truth for life and truth in life. And that's the dual focus, you see, that pervades these pastoral letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus.

Yes, of course, they're addressed to the Christian leader and they're focused, yes, on what he's to teach, but clearly they're to be read and heard by everybody because there's no distinction to be made between the life and lifestyle of the leader and all those in the church.

That's why they're preserved for us because the threats to the church's witness, the threats to the church's effectiveness in the world hasn't changed from the first century, has it?

The church's witness is always under threat from false teaching. It was then, it is now. That's the way 1 Timothy begins, telling people not to teach what is wrong. And that goes on all through the letters.

And the church is always at risk from false living. False living always goes along with false doctrine. That's just because sinful behavior always seeks to justify itself and therefore as we want to behave the way we want to behave we begin to twist the truth.

[11 : 29] That's what Paul says, we'll only hear what our itching ears want to hear. So Paul's words to Timothy and to Titus and their churches in Ephesus and in Crete are just as valuable for us today and just as vital.

so that we don't fall into the temptation of losing the truth in our teaching and also and just as importantly in our living.

So we're going to range through these letters over some weeks between now and the summer picking out some of these key themes of what it means to be the true missionary church of God the real pillar and buttress of the truth today manifesting his presence in the world.

And there are great things here about preserving the gospel against error about proclaiming the gospel against the silence that can be so easily put upon us because of shame.

Great themes about the need to suffer for the gospel the reality of a true church always having hardship. We'll look at all of these things but first I want to start with a key theme that earths it all in the reality of Christian experience.

[12 : 38] the truth of God is not just an intellectual thing not at all it's a living truth it's a relational truth and therefore it is a truth that must be lived by us God's people.

The lives of Christian believers and especially the life of the church must match the message of the church. In fact that's the real mark of true gospel truth.

It's not just something that can be heard it's something that can actually be seen. That's striking in the Bible. Truth can be seen it's visible. That's a key theme throughout these letters as I've said life and doctrine is absolutely inseparable.

Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 verse 16 keep a close watch on yourself that is your life and on your teaching because that is what will save you and others.

life and doctrine together. And there's always a very special focus on the impression that's given to the outsider. That's again something so clear here and it's so vital for mission isn't it?

[13 : 47] Because the one thing our world will not tolerate is hypocrisy. Isn't that true? And in Titus you see the message is very particularly on this. It gives some real insights into how it opens out and how it will look in the life of the church.

And the message is so very clear for us. I wanted to get it very clear in our minds. A real missionary church that displays God's truth to the world will be a healthy church.

It will be a church that displays in its flesh and in its life the healthy faith and love and steadfast endurance produced by the genuine gospel.

it will be seen. It will be a life that to use the lovely phrase in Titus 2 verse 10 adorns the gospel of God our Savior.

So here's the question how are we to do mission in the 21st century? What does it mean to be real partners in gospel ministry? Well together we are to nurture the health of the church the body of Christ that we're all members of so that our life together adorns the doctrine of God our Savior.

[15 : 06] Shines forth and showcases the marvelous beauty of the true gospel of God. That's what we're to be. A missionary church lives the truth.

I mean it makes sense doesn't it because people are so aware that the medium is absolutely bound up with the message. If you go to a shop to buy a fitness video to help make you fit and slim and healthy and all of these things you will not buy one will you if the picture of the instructor on the front is of a fat lazy slob?

Of course you won't. Well it's just the same for the church isn't it? Nobody's going to listen to what we say if what we say is utterly at odds with what they see. It's just basic.

It's a big challenge though isn't it? A challenge for me in my life and for you and for all of us together. Well I want to look at Titus now at chapter 2 and look briefly at Titus' prescription for health.

We saw that he uses that word healthy several times and he shows us three things that a healthy church will be. First it will have healthy minds that is our thinking will be reliable and wholesome and clear.

[16 : 17] Second we will have healthy manner and a healthy manners our life will be wholesome and reliable and manifestly godly. Thirdly that will be because we have a healthy motivation.

In other words we will truly have grasped the truth of the gospel. First then a missionary church begins with healthy minds. Look at verse 1 of chapter 2 but as for you teach what accords with sound with healthy doctrine.

Titus is to do what chapter 1 verse 9 says every Christian leader must do and that is to hold on to the trustworthy word so as to give instructions in sound doctrine and notice verse 9 rebuke those who contradict it.

Well the word is healthy as I've said it's used all the way through the Greek Old Testament to mean health and well-being and safety. It's used in the gospels of Jesus restoring people from sickness to health.

Here the point is that the trustworthy teaching of the true gospel is what creates and maintains health in the lives of Christians and in the lives of whole churches.

[17 : 32] By contrast look at chapter 1 verse 11 those who teach unsound doctrine unhealthy doctrine upset whole households. It almost certainly means here whole churches.

And that's exactly what ruins missionary churches isn't it? It turns healthy vibrant gospel churches into dead and decaying shells. False teaching corruption of the mind.

We all know that you just have to read church history to discover that. You just need to look at our own nation and the church in this land. Corrupting of the minds and the thinking of people with false teaching with unhealthy teaching it sowed the seeds of decay in our own land in our national church.

That's what happened with the liberalism of the 19th century. That's what led to the state of our national church today and many of the older churches in this land.

If you think back once it's true to say that the church of Scotland and the churches of Scotland had a great missionary zeal. You'll speak to believers in Africa especially East Africa Southern Africa and they'll tell you that the gospel was brought to them by missionaries from Scotland.

[18 : 46] Same in many parts of India Korea Southern Hebrides South America many many places. Today alas I can tell you that in the entire church of Scotland overseas board there are less than ten missionaries serving overseas.

What I heard recently which if it's true is even more calamitous is that the number of administrators in the home office supporting those ten missionaries is more than double that number.

Well that's what happens. Whole churches can be upset. Whole denominations can be ruined because minds become unhealthy because teaching that should not be given has been given and believed.

And that's why a great theme of the pastoral all through is guard the truth. We'll come on to that and speak about that another night. But the truth must be guarded because as verse 12 says well it's not just Cretans is it?

Who have an innate tendency to religious self-deception and corruption. We all do. We're just like the Cretans. Left to ourselves with no healthy input with no exercise with no stimulation our minds too will go all wrong.

[20 : 09] Any human mind will do that and all the more so with a Christian mind. But no says Paul a missionary church must be a real pillar of truth. Must begin with health in the mind with true instruction.

And that involves as I said look at verse 9 again. Instruction in what is healthy and rebuke of what is not. There are necessary negatives at the heart of the Christian gospel and it's essential in the Christian church that we face up to these things.

We don't like these things. We don't like having to say negative things. But the New Testament is very clear. It's full of warnings. There's a lot more we could say about that.

But tonight I want to emphasize the purpose of this healthy doctrine. The healthy mind. And that is to produce healthy living. Look at verse 13 of chapter 1.

He's to rebuke what's unsound and unhealthy that they may be healthy in faith. That's a way of saying their whole Christian lives should be healthy and right.

[21 : 20] See the Christian mind and the Christian walk again I say it again are absolutely linked. Truth pervades the whole of our lives but so does error.

Look at the second half of verse 15. Their minds and their consciences are defiled says Paul. See they profess faith, they profess to know God but they're contradicted by their words.

Their lives contradict their profession. You see genuine faith can be seen but so can spurious faith. That's why Paul says they're detestable, they're disobedient, they're unfit for any fruitfulness.

We know that don't we? Just in the human sphere a sick mind begins to lead very quickly to telltale signs in the body. It gets worse and worse doesn't it as a mind degenerates.

We know that. It's terribly sad. Terribly sad when we see it in older people. Sad when we see it in young people who have got some sort of degenerative brain disease.

[22 : 25] But so it is in the church, says Paul. You see, that's what happens when there's unhealthy minds. But by contrast, healthy doctrine leads to healthy lives of faith.

And that's what he goes on to describe here in chapter 2. You can see, can't you? Healthy minds, the gospel truth is where it all begins but because of this, a true missionary church will be marked also by a healthy manner.

Because the one produces the other, as sure as night follows day. Look at verse 1 of chapter 2 again. You see, he's to teach what accords with healthy doctrine.

The New Living Translation puts it this way, teach the kind of living that reflects right teaching. That is, the manner of life will be healthy.

It will be ordered, it will be wholesome, free from corruption, free from disorder and disease in the culture around. And what Paul does in verses 2 to 10 here, if you look at it, is to describe that kind of healthy life of faith that has the power to commend the gospel of God.

[23 : 37] It's a description of the healthy manner of a church that is, as verse 13 of chapter 1 describes, sound or healthy in faith. Look at that phrase, healthy in the faith.

Can you see how it brackets verses 2 and verses 10 of chapter 2? Verse 2a speaks about being healthy in faith and love and steadfastness.

That doesn't just refer to the older men, it comes here at the head of the list to show us that these things he specifically says about older men being sober minded and dignified and self-controlled are simply how these qualities manifest themselves particularly in them.

But it's the phrase that Paul uses so often, faith and hope and love. Here, instead of hope, he uses an alternative, steadfastness or endurance, but it's his favorite trilogy, faith and hope and steadfastness.

Look down to verse 10 and you've got the shorthand, do you see? Showing all good faith. See, the whole section, verses 2 to 10 is all about what that means, what faith and hope and steadfastness and love looks like in the flesh, in the church.

[24 : 53] It's applied truth. It's what a real missionary church looks like. What's Titus to teach? Well, he's to teach the healthy Christian life that lives out the true and healthy Christian gospel, the life of faith that accords with healthy doctrine.

And that is the life of faith and love. And steadfastness. And when this healthy manner is evident and manifest in the church, shaped by healthy minds that understand the gospel of God, then it will be a real missionary church.

It will be a church that makes the gospel of God actually visible as well as audible. The God who dwells in inapproachable light in the highest heavens is manifested.

He's made known in the world as his spirit is at work in his earthly dwelling place, the church, to shine out through his household the truth embedded in our lives.

That's what a missionary church is. Of course, alas, it's so often not the case, is it? And there's nothing that the world loves more than to show up in consistency and hypocrisy in the church.

[26 : 10] church. It's a tragedy when that happens, but it's always been right from the beginning. Remember, in the Old Testament Isaiah says, for the people of Israel, God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

Counter evangelism from God's people. Paul picks up exactly the same thing. He quotes that, doesn't he, in the letter to the Romans. And it's sad that too often throughout the history of the church, and indeed, alas, today, we give ammunition, don't we, to the enemies who want to knock down the church, to the Matthew Parrises of this world.

I don't know if you read his piece in the Times on Saturday, or the Richard Dawkinses, or all the enemies of the faith. They love the point of hypocrisy and inconsistency. But you see, Paul says, where healthy minds, where true teaching produces a healthy manner and healthy manners, true living and lived-out faith, then, look at verse 5, the second heart of it, negatively, the word of God will not be reviled.

Look at verse 10, he puts it positively, the gospel of God will be adorned as a living witness to the truth. That's a real challenge, isn't it?

That's a real challenge to live the truth, especially if we are, and I hope we are people, who, well, maybe pride is the wrong word, but take seriously our doctrine, the health of our minds.

[27 : 44] Well, truly healthy minds, says Paul, will have a healthy body, healthy manner. See, some churches are very proud of healthy minds, very focused on right doctrine, and yet there may be precious little evidence in the manner of their life.

some Christians, and it's easy for all of us to be very focused on what we believe, but have precious little evidence of godly manners in the way we live our life.

But Paul is absolutely clear, isn't he? Healthy manners adorn the gospel of Christ, and an unhealthy manner causes the gospel, by contrast, to be reviled.

It's anti-evangelistic. We haven't got time to go into detail to these verses 2 to 10 tonight. We've looked at them actually quite recently in another context, but I want you to note one or two points.

First, it's all about right behavior, isn't it, and right relationships. And secondly, it involves everybody, doesn't it? All ages, do you see that? Old men are addressed, young men are addressed, older women, younger women, even the most menial, the slaves.

[28 : 59] That's a clear recognition, isn't it, that every single one of us in the church is involved in this missionary task, living the truth. It's a recognition that all of us have a role to play in ensuring that the gospel is not reviled because of us, but is rather adorned because of the way that we live.

It's also a clear recognition, isn't it, that all of us have struggles to live like this, and therefore we all need the continuous teaching of healthy biblical truth to keep us healthy.

See, if you're a young man, you're not to think that a time will come when, well, godliness will be natural to you, where self-control and all these things will suddenly be easy.

Now, you might think, looking at some of the stalwart, revered, godly older men of our congregation, that that is not true. You may think, as you look at, well, I don't know, let's look at Tom McGill and Norrie down here.

You may think, looking at these men, that godliness comes as second nature to them. When I can tell you, it doesn't. Dignity and self-control isn't easy for them, just as it's not easy for me or for you.

[30 : 11] It's a struggle. They are so because they keep their minds healthy in God's word. Younger women are not to look at our older sisters and their saintliness and envy them and say, oh, it's easy for them to be reverent and not gossiping and not being slanderous.

Well, no, it isn't. It's not easy for them to be like that. That's why Paul says these things. It's also easy, isn't it, for older men and women to look down on the younger ones and so on and so on.

But the reality is it's hard to be holy. It's hard to adorn the gospel in your life, whether you're 21 or 91. And it always will be.

That's why healthy teaching is constantly needed for all of us. The struggles, of course, may differ in the particular nature depending on our stage of life, our situation and so on. But not the essential struggle to be healthy and in faith and in love and steadfastness, to show all good faith in our whole Christian life.

But, you know, that struggle, although it is a struggle, that struggle is infinitely worth it. It really is. And, let me tell you this, it is possible. It might seem impossible to us, but no, Paul ends this chapter by giving us the reminder that a true missionary church also has a truly healthy motivation.

[31 : 40] In fact, it has a powerful and wonderful motivation. We want to live out this healthy manner and we are enabled to live out the life of faith that flows from healthy minds because, look at verse 11, because, for we know the grace of God has appeared to bring salvation.

Verse 14, we know that our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, gave himself to redeem us, to make us as a people, a possession for himself, a people for his own possession, he says, who are zealous for good works.

Our motivation is that we know the amazing grace of God our Savior. We know what it means to be rescued from lawlessness and for, notice, for God himself to be his treasured possession, his peculiar people, as the old King James version puts it.

And so our motivation above everything else is that we are to live lives of healthy faith so that we live lives that are worthy of the Savior that we love and adore.

There's no higher motivation for you to struggle with holiness, is there? Or for me? And to do it for the joy and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, our God?

- [33 : 07] We are his treasured possession, he says. We want to be that treasured possession for him. We want to fill his heart with joy and with gladness. While we wait, as he says in verse 13, for the blessed hope for the appearance of our God and Savior.
- But you see what it is that pleases him now. It's there in verse 12. Verse 12 is sandwiched between verses 11 and 13. Can you see? Verse 11, what does it speak of?
- His appearance. The appearance of the grace of God in the world. When God came down to reveal himself as Savior and the person of his Son, our Lord Jesus. And then verse 13 speaks again, doesn't it, of his appearance.
- The appearance of Christ in his glory when he comes again and every eye will see him. But in between, look at verse 12, what it calls the present age.
- Well, it's the age when God appears to men and women and to boys and girls. Not in his earthly flesh as Jesus of Nazareth. Not in his glorious presence of his coming in glory.
- [34 : 15] But through his earthly household. Through the place where he's chosen to dwell. His church. His people. As we, his people, as Paul says here, renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and live self-controlled and godly and upright lives in this present age.
- And as we do that, we show good faith. Literally, we adorn. We show the beauty and the power and the loveliness of the gospel, the doctrine of God our Savior.
- And it's that demonstration of the transforming power of the gospel of God through the power of God's spirit at work within us that authenticates the true converting power, the revealing power of the gospel that we proclaim.
- The truly missionary church is to be a beacon of health in a world of decay and disease that shows the gospel as well as proclaims it. Read through the letter to see the total contrast that there is in the manner of life that Paul lays out here.
- The manner of health and holiness. A total contrast with the confusion and the decay that's all around us in society. To our world, of course, now has less and less respect for elders and for parents and for employers.
- [35 : 39] More and more it's on about every one of us asserting our rights and speaking up for ourselves. But no, says Paul, not so among you. He speaks about respect. He speaks about honesty, about hard work.
- Our world is increasingly casting off moral restraint, isn't it? Decency. Just do and live any way you like. Do whatever gratifies you.
- But no, says Paul, not in the church. Verse 12. He's taught us to renounce, to say no to worldly passions. To live self-controlled lives, upright lives.
- Our world says, well, your private life and your family life and your sex life and so on, that's out of bounds. As far as public life is concerned, it doesn't matter what you do at home.
- Politicians can do what they like. It doesn't affect their standing in the world. Well, not in the church, says Paul. Christian leaders, chapter 1, verse 7, are to be above reproach. Chapter 2, verse 7, a model of all good works.
- [36 : 42] Our world rejects authority. It descends, doesn't it, increasingly. And we are into cynicism, into slander. But no, says Paul, not in the Christian church. Look at chapter 3, verse 1.
- You're to submit to authorities. You're to speak evil of no one. You're to have perfect courtesy to all people. Goodness, that's a challenge, isn't it? Our manner is to show the health of truly biblical minds and truly biblical motivation to love our Savior.
- So that the world outside can see the truth of God incarnate, lived out in our midst and through us. Of course, that doesn't mean that we're just to do anything at all that might try and make the gospel attractive to the world.

The NIV translates verse 10 like that, trying to make the gospel attractive. It's a very unhelpful translation. The point that Paul's making is that truly biblical faith lived out in the world is attractive and powerful, even if people resent it, even if people don't like what they see.

And often they don't like what they see because, of course, the essence of sin is to try and suppress the truth. But lives that are lived in line with God's command are attractive and supremely attractive to those whose eyes God is opening to his truth.

[38 : 09] So, for example, living out what he says here controversially about the complementary roles of men and women. That's something that's very unacceptable in our world today. The world doesn't like it.

He wants to say there's no distinction at all between men and women. Well, the Christian way, as Paul expounds here and elsewhere, is offensive to our world in that regard. But where there is a true biblical relationship between the sexes in marriage, not a perverse chauvinism, but a truly biblical complementary love and honor and respect, then there is a powerful witness to the love and to the stability and to the harmony of God's way.

There's a total contrast to the gender rivalry and the chaos that there so often is in our society and rebellion against God's order. It's God who tells us what makes truly healthy minds.

It's his word that informs us. And it's God who tells us what makes for healthy manner in the faithful life. And the motivation in all of it is that we do it for him.

We do it as a glad response to his saving grace that has appeared, that has redeemed us, that has made us his treasured possession forever and today, even before he comes.

[39 : 34] So, friends, a church may have everything in terms of possessing the truth. But God's truth is living truth and efforts to be lived.

And that means that real partnership in the gospel means living the truth together, old and young, male and female. We all have a part to play, every single one of us. Challenging ourselves and challenging one another to the gospel partnership, a real, true missionary church that lives the truth.

A real missionary church will be a healthy church in mind and in manner and in motivation. That's a church that displays in the flesh the presence of the immortal, invisible, only wise God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

That's a church that adorns the gospel of God with a living truth that shows forth a gospel that is the power of God for salvation.

So, let's take verse 15 to heart. Can you see it? That's a word for all of us, I think, as well as for Titus. Let's all of us declare these things and exhort and rebuke one another with all authority that we here in St. George's Tron will be and will always remain a true missionary church that not only knows the truth, but lives the truth.

[41 : 11] So that the city of Glasgow and the street of Buchanan Street and the people that you know and the people that we love and are trying to reach with the gospel, so that they not only hear our words, but they see it lived in the flesh in front of them.

And then they will know that this is the transforming gospel of God that has called us out of darkness into light, that changes lives from lawlessness to godliness, that is the word of power and the way of hope.

A true missionary church lives the truth. Let us pray. Let us pray. God our Father, as we think about these things, we are brought to our knees because every one of us knows that our great struggle in life is to live your truth.

Help us, we pray, to have healthy manners that flow from a healthy mind steeped in your living truth. And in our hearts, the great motivation of love to our Savior who rescued us and made us his own.

Help us each one and help us to help one another. That old and young, male and female, greatest to the least, we may together be partners in the glorious gospel of our great God and Savior.

[42 : 46] And adorn his gospel for all to see. For we ask it in his name. Amen.