

# Christians Must Perform the Truth - Part 3

by Stephen Olford

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*Christians must proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment and a service of involvement, using both the written and spoken word.*

**Duration:** 54:08

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Timothy 4:2, 2 Timothy 4:5, 2 John 1:12

**Topics:** "Truth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of proclaiming the truth of the gospel. He highlights the method of communication chosen by God, which includes both written (paper and ink) and spoken (face to face) forms. The speaker encourages Christians to proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment and a service of involvement. He also shares examples of the impact that spreading the written word (such as through tracks) and sharing the spoken word can have in leading people to righteousness. The sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to actively engage in proclaiming the truth of the gospel.

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## Transcript

Truth Triumphant. Turn with me, if you will, to the second epistle of John once more. Hopefully you've been reading this, and some of you may be wondering what is Stephen Oldford going to say about an epilogue, a final greeting from the Apostle.

I believe the Lord has a message for us and we're going to have a tremendous time here this morning. The second epistle of John, verse 12. Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink, but I hope to come to you and speak face to face that our joy may be full.

The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen. For those of you who may have just joined us, and especially in the extension television room, our theme has been Truth Triumphant.

And as Christians, we've learned from this precious little epistle, we must possess the truth first. We start with God. We must perform the truth.

That's the evidence that we have possessed it. By the outflashing of that truth through the power of the Holy Spirit, we demonstrate and indicate the authority and activity of God in our lives. We must protect the truth.

Part one, we must detect the teachings. Part two, we must reject the teachers. This morning is a thrilling one, and I think appropriately so because we're leaving Skegness to go back to our homes, our churches, our communities, our world, and our theme is we must proclaim the truth.

We must proclaim the truth. As we come to the end of this precious little letter, there are two extremes that we must avoid. On the one hand, we could overlook these last two verses as being just a salutation, a benediction, a goodbye, and that's all.

To me, this would be undeserving and undeserving of the treatment of a divine text. These two verses are part of God's inerrant revelation to people like you and me. And every single word counts in the word of God.

For every scripture, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be whole, perfect, mature, truly furnished unto all good works. On the other hand, we could overdo John's farewell and read into it far more than what it really says. But having made that observation, we must recognize that there's no passage of scripture which is of private interpretation.

And that has many, many interpretations by scholars, but one of them is certainly this, that no scripture stands alone. The Bible is a unity, a diversity in unity, and therefore any one particular scripture has support from a wider range of biblical revelation, and especially in this instance, from the writings of our beloved Apostle John. Not only his gospel, the three epistles, but the book of the Revelation.

But I'm thinking of John's gospel especially this morning, as well as his other two epistles. This beloved disciple was an evangelist. He was a teacher, and above all he was a pastor.

And we sense this, I do anyway, as I read these last two verses. And I hope you've read them over and over and over again. Here is a man who is bursting to share more of the truth with the elect lady and her household, whether she was a woman with a family, or whether that is a local church or house church, as we've already pointed out.

And he says, paper and ink are inadequate to convey all that is in my heart to share with you. He still has, and I want you to underscore these two little words right now, many things, many things to share with his little church. This elect lady and her household, the recipients of this epistle, many things.

And he cannot wait to meet them face to face. Now those two little words, many things, remind you of what? Think carefully. What do they remind you of? Let me hurry because of time.

They remind me of John's closing words in his gospel. Do you know how he finishes? He said, there are many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would have been written. Here's a man bursting in his gospel.

Here he is bursting in his epistle. He has many things that he wants to share. And John's passion was to proclaim the truth.

It's as simple as that. So in this farewell greeting he says, listen, and when it comes to the bottom line, yes, we must possess the truth. We must perform the truth.

We must protect the truth. But ultimately we must proclaim the truth. This calls for a threefold response from everyone in this great hall and the extension one watching me right now on camera.

Number one, Christians must proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment. Let me say that again. Christians must proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment.

Having many things to write to you, I hope to come to you. Even though John is now advanced in years and could justifiably take it easy, he never entertains the thought. His letter is not sufficient.

He must come. He must come to them, the elect lady and her children, and speak face to face. He has truth that he must share.

Now this sense of obligation to commitment is the genius of proclamation. When Paul walked through the streets of Athens and saw the city wholly given up to idolatry, his spirit was stirred in him. The New King James says, provoked.

The Greek has a word from which we derive the term paroxysm. We think of a paroxysm of rage, a paroxysm of love. Paul just couldn't remain silent.

He was bursting, especially when he saw the altar to the unknown God. And before long, before long, he was on Mars Hill, preaching to the men of Athens, proclaiming the truth. Even amongst the Stoics and Epicureans and those who mocked him and scorned him, he preached the truth alone.

He preached the truth, and there was a response. The important point to make here is that John and Paul were already bursting to communicate truth. They couldn't remain silent.

Whether Paul on Mars Hill or John here dictating this precious little personal letter, they all needed an opportunity and a platform. Give me an opportunity, give me a platform, and I'll tell you what's in my heart. Paper and ink can't even contain it.

I'm going to come and share it with you face to face. They had a standard of commitment which made them acceptable and available to God. And I want that to be true of you this morning, at the close of this wonderful week, and of me.

And I'm going to call you to commitment. What commitment? It's a commitment to the person of truth. There must be a commitment to the person of truth.

Having many things to write to you, I hope to come to you. And we ask, I wonder what was in his mind. I wonder what was in his mind.

What was it that he wanted to share? Now we've only got to read and study and inwardly digest the writings of John to appreciate what was uppermost in the apostle's mind, to share with the elect lady and her household. One of the key words in the gospel of John, in his epistles, and in this epistle, is the word truth. Truth.

That's been our theme. Truth. Triumphant.

It occurs some 40 times, almost half of all other mentions in the whole of the New Testament. And in this epistle right here in front of you, John uses it four times in five verses. Truth.

C.I. Schofield observes that the urgent message of this epistle centers in the truth in relation to Christian living. John means not only the body of revealed truth, the scriptures, but also the Lord Jesus Christ, who as the chief subject of the scriptures, is himself truth incarnate. You see, John perceived the Lord Jesus as the body of truth.

The incarnate truth. He's the only evangelist who actually quotes the statement of our Lord Jesus when he stood on planet earth and said, I am the truth. And in stating this fact, Jesus claimed deity, authority, sufficiency, finality.

He claimed deity because no one but God can say, I am the truth. No one but God. He claimed authority because truth is absolute.

He claimed sufficiency because there's no question in the universe that he cannot ultimately answer. He claimed finality because nothing can be added to or subtracted from what he utters. Truth is exclusive in that it denies and shuts out the opposite.

The greater the truth, the greater the realm in which it refutes rivalry. So Christ as Savior stands alone. He is God, and no other voice can tell us anything about God but God.

He alone is the body of truth. And our God has self-revealed himself in Jesus Christ. And through the Holy Spirit's inspiration, an inerrant word, we have the truth exclusively.

Don't forget that. John perceived this in every act, in every word, in every reflected thought of the Lord Jesus. There must be a commitment to the person of truth.

Are you committed to the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you totally committed? Settle that this morning. But there must be also a commitment to the practice of truth. Having many things to write to you, I hope to come to you.

John's many things included truth. We've seen that already. But it included another word, love.

Love. Notice how the play on those two words, truth, love, truth, love, right through this little epistle. If truth occurs some 40 times in John's writings, love is mentioned over 50 times.

John had learned what his master meant when he said, I've given you a new commandment, that you love one another. But you see, love is truth on fire. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

In other words, love is truth in action. And what translates truth into action but obedience. John said it already, this is love that we walk according to his commandments.

Verse 6, right there in your context. Indeed, he rejoiced that there were some who were doing just that, walking in the truth. Before we can proclaim the truth, we must perform the truth.

We've covered that ground. What we are is far more important than what we say or do. And indeed, if what we are doesn't satisfy his holy demands, what we say or do is virtually worthless.

Doubtless, he would recall the many occasions in which the Lord Jesus just fleshed out that love. Truth on fire. Truth on fire.

In everything he thought or said or did. So my first challenge to you this morning is, Christians must proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment. What is that standard of commitment? Commitment to the person of Christ.

Commitment to the practice of Christ. Living Christ day by day. Is Christ living in you? Is he looking through your eyes? Speaking through your lips? Thinking through your mind? Working through your hands? Walking through your feet? Loving through your heart? Radiating out through your personality? Christians must proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment.

Look again at verse 12. Christians must proclaim the truth with a service of involvement. A service of involvement.

Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink. But I hope to come to you and speak face to face. Now, beloved, we dare not pass over those words lightly.

My heart just dances right now as I look at those words. John is saying something here which is highly significant. In those two phrases, he spells out two methods that God has chosen to communicate the gospel for all time.

Until we hear the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God and there's operation liftoff. Until that moment, these two things will always be used. You say, what are they? Paper and ink.

Face to face. The first symbolizes the written word. The second signifies the spoken word.

And there can be no proclamation without the written word and the spoken word. So you and I in this hall and you, beloved ones by extension, must commit ourselves to spread the written word. We must spread the written word.

Paper and ink. What would we do without the written word? The entire canon of scripture is virtually paper and ink. Oh, we can put it on video, on tapes.

It'll be on computer. Chips are being prepared for that already. We'll get watches soon and you'll touch a button and it'll go to Genesis chapter 1. And so on throughout the Bible.

All that I know. But you'll never supersede paper and ink. Never supersede paper and ink.

In John's day, of course, Egyptian papyrus was used for paper. The ink was commonly made of soot and water thickened with gum. Since then, we've come a long way.

The Bible is never off the press. It's still the bestseller in the world. Its translation, publication, and distribution constitute the ongoing miracle of God in self-revelation.

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the Bible is still the world's most distributed book. It has been translated into 1,659 plus languages. Verses 222 for Lenin.

And between 1815 and 1875, some 2.5 billion Bibles were printed, of which 1.5 billion were handled by Bible societies. According to the American Bible Society, at present rates of scripted distribution, assuming there was no increase in population. And alas, alas, that's catching up on us.

It will require the following years to reach each person with some portion of God's Word. North America, 13 years. 13 years.

Latin America, 16 years. Australasia and beyond, about 30 years. Africa, 75 years.

Europe, 90 years. East Asia, 97 years. West Asia and beyond and all those great far eastern countries, 370 years.

We need the spread of God's Word. Jehovah's Witnesses are doing it. The Communists are doing it.

And every other religion is doing it. Islam is doing it. Trying to change the laws of this country, if you please, to make Islam the religion of Britain.

What are you doing about spreading the Word? You Gideons here, I'll come to you in just a moment. But what about the rest of you? Gospels of John and so on. What are you doing about spreading the Word? This matter of the Word of God is an awesome thing.

I had the inestimable privilege just a few months ago to sit in Thomas Nelson's great palatial facilities there with about 8 Hebrew scholars, about 10 Greek scholars and some of us simple preachers going over the updating of the New King James Version. Trying to update it without touching its majesty, its unity and its authority. But at the same time trying to simplify its archaic words and make it a little bit more simple without all the jerky stuff of these other versions that somehow make me climb up the wall.

And you know I was suddenly so awed I began to cry. The 6 contributions I made after months and months of research, just 6 words, that's all, just 6 words. We won't stop them.

They were adopted. They were adopted, voted on by the group. And they'll be frozen for the next 100 years.

God's Word. And I just prayed that somehow or other we did the right thing. My mind went back to my boyhood days when I saw my beloved father who went out to Africa as a result of a great mission by Dr. Torrey in Plymouth.

Then met Fred Arnett and went out as a young man to be a full-time missionary for over 30 years in the jungles of Angola. It wasn't months after his arrival that his senior missionary died. Even before he had learned the language.

But this wonderful, wonderful man of God had taught my father a few sentences in the Achokwe language and one of them was, achi chika, achi chika, what is this? Father was a great soloist, musician, had a good ear and phonetically. He went around with a notebook and he looked into the faces of those Achokwe people and he would say, achi chika, and he would listen and he would write it down. And then he'd go somewhere completely different and he would ask the same question to see if they balanced out and produced his vocabulary and began to translate the Bible.

And the first thing he ever translated was the first epistle of Thessalonians in World War II. He wrote it with his copper plate handwriting on sugar paper because no other paper was available. He fastened it with chicken wire, stapled it with chicken wire and a little piece of canvas and it's in the British and Foreign Bible Society Exhibition Hall to this day.

That thrills my heart. Spreading the word! We've come a long way since then. The Wycliffe Bible translators, Uncle Cam was one of my dearest friends, Cameron, Townsend, all what they've achieved.

Then consider what the Gideons have done in the distribution of scriptures, also the organizations like Pocket Testament League, Tyndale House Publishers and the Living Bible, and on and on and on I could go. Consider likewise what God has accomplished through the ministry of pen and ink with tracts, magazines, books. Are you spreading the word? Have you got some tracts in your pocket? Or your handbag? Proclaiming the truth involves spreading the written word and until Jesus Christ comes back again, it'll be pen and ink! Pen and ink! We have this precious little epistle of 13 verses.

Why? Pen and ink! And I want to tell you, tract distribution is one of the most powerful, powerful means God has allowed us to use. The printed page is deathless. Do you know nobody can argue with it? It doesn't answer back.

It just says what I've written, I've written. You can destroy one, but the press can reproduce millions. And as often as it's martyred, it rises again.

The Bible has been mutilated many, many times. We still have it in our hands. And when you hand out a tract, you never know what's going to happen.

A man by the name of Lee Richmond dropped a tract on a pavement in England and prayed that a bad man would pick it up. And a bad man picked it up. He carried the tract with him to prison, he was converted, and guess what? He wrote Pilgrim's Progress, which has turned millions to righteousness.

His name was John Bunyan. Napoleon said, there are only two powers in the world, the sword and the pen, and in the end, the former is always the conqueror of the latter. We must spread the written word.

But by the same token, and this is where every one of you comes in this morning, we must share the spoken word. I hope to come to you and speak face-to-face. The expression face-to-face literally means mouth-to-mouth.

The same idea is used in the Old Testament. When God described his verbal intercourse with his faithful servant Moses, he declared with him, when will I speak mouth-to-mouth even plainly and not in dark speeches? Some things are better spoken than written. There are many things on John's heart, and he says, here's a little note, pen and ink, but I'm coming to share truth and love with you face-to-face.

The supreme example of face-to-face, of course, is the Holy Incarnation. The communication of God in terms of flesh and blood in Jesus Christ. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Greek word dwelt means tabernacled or lived in a tent. And while this is suggestive of the short stay of our Lord down here in his body, which he took with him to heaven forever, it does suggest something else. A tent, a tent in Hebrew thought, was the place where people talked business and pleasure.

It was in the tent, in the tent. Here is where Jesus met with people face-to-face. The Hebrew writer tells us, God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past by the prophets unto the fathers hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son.

Face-to-face. After the resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, As the Father has sent me, so send I you. Our task is to spread the written word to be sure, but it involves more than this.

We are to share the spoken word by life and by living. We must meet men and women face-to-face. There is no substitute for verbal interaction with men and women.

This is why the Lord Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, he said, Yes, don't you go, don't you go into the streets of Jerusalem, don't you dare open your mouths until my promise is fulfilled, until ye be endued with power from on high. And then he said, and ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses. All the emphasis seems to be on wonders and signs and so on.

Jesus said, I have said the Holy Spirit, so you will be a witness. And I want to tell you, any man who tells me he has known this or that or the other in terms of the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit in his life, and he can't show me people he's led to Jesus Christ, and he can't show me people who've been influenced by even the silence of his life in living Jesus Christ, is a phony! And I am charging so-called British conservatives who know better than anybody under the sun to hide behind the London Times or the Daily Telegraph or so-called reserved dispositions, to forget that absolute nonsense and eyewash and get out talking Jesus and the Lord Jesus and his saving grace. I want to ask you a question.

When did you last actually share your faith? The Jehovah's Witnesses are doing it, the Spiritualists are doing it, the Mormons are doing it, the Christians are sleepwalking. All for a mighty move of the Spirit of God out of Skegness this week. Giving that lifestyle, however, God has ordained that the sound of the gospel should go all around the earth, Romans 10, 18, quoting from the Psalms, and he's gifted people to do it in one of two ways.

How do we speak the word? Two ways, very simple. Conversation, that's private. Proclamation, that's public.

In the early church, the work of evangelism was chiefly done by lay people who gossiped the gospel. After the martyrdom of Stephen and the dispersion of the church except for the apostles in Jerusalem, we read that they went everywhere, everywhere, everywhere gossiping the gospel. And I'd like you to study Acts 8 as your homework today and read it very carefully, no less than seven times in that eighth chapter of Acts, we have the word preach.

That is in our English version, it occurs those eight times. Now, three different shades of meaning appear there in the original, that doesn't matter. But the term for conversational presentation is by far the more popular.

Five times out of eight, five times out of eight, it's one-on-one, one-on-one, each one, reach one, each one, reach one, each one, reach one. That's how the early church grew, every member of evangelism. Luke employs it five times, and when Philip the Evangelist was spirited out of a huge revival with everybody singing hymns on street corners in the fires of this great revival, in his quiet time he hears God speaking to him concerning a lonely soul, but a very, very important strategic man coming absolutely disillusioned out of Jerusalem with parchments he had already bought, one on Isaiah, and aloud he was reading from what we call the 53rd of Isaiah.

And Philip slips up to him and he says, you know what you're reading, and that wasn't unkind, it was the right thing to say. He says, how can I accept somebody should guide me? And stepping up into that chariot, he talked to him about Jesus and led him to faith in Christ, baptized him and sent him on his way rejoicing. He did this on one-to-one.

But with the method of conversation, God has called some to the ministry of proclamation. Here the key word is keruso, which describes the town crier, which means to preach, to public, to publish, to proclaim, especially divine truth. Jesus opened his ministry preaching the gospel of the kingdom, that's the herald.

He sent his disciples to preach the kingdom of God, that's the herald. Paul comes to the end of his life and he knows that the sword of death hangs perilously over his head. Soon that wonderful marred, scarred face and head are going to roll in the dust.

And he's handing the torch over to Timothy and almost the last word he says to him, Timothy, Timothy, preach the word! Preach the word! Preach the word! Be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all on suffering and doctrine. The time's going to come when people are going to run everywhere to hear the newest sign, the newest wonder, the newest thing, and they're going to have their ears tickled and anything sensational is going to get at them. But for goodness sake, forget that, preach the word! Do the work of an evangelist.

And I don't know how many young people, I wish all the young people were here, every morning, I would like to challenge you young fellows to consider the preaching ministry, and I mean expository preaching, the ability to take the word of God and the simple English Bible before you and exegete it, expound it, apply it, illustrate it, hammer it home. We need preachers of the word. No nobler task has ever been committed to the sons of men.

Thomas Watson, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Goodwin said, God had only one son, and he made him a preacher. I would fail to tell of the pulpiteers and evangelists who proclaimed fully Christ and him crucified through the centuries. As I speak at this very moment, a little farmer boy, lanky, shy, retiring, who eventually tried to overcome that by going door to door doing salesman work, has never been through a theological seminary, has only got an undergraduate degree from Wheaton, is storming Paris and every country of Europe into the Iron Curtain as well.

His name is Billy Graham. These servants of God have been varied in their strengths, styles, and speech, as Paul on the one hand, D. L. Moody on the other. We think of Paul as a man of outstanding intellectual powers, a passionate preacher, an able debater.

When we come to D. L. Moody, we have another man of great gifts of eloquence, humor, resourcefulness, and clear-sightedness. If he hadn't become a Christian as someone has written, he probably would have earned a footnote in history in some other way. Yet to many of the people of his time, he appeared to be weak and foolish, our own Lord Shaftesbury wrote, Moody is a simple, unlettered, untrained, unskilled man.

His voice is bad and ill-managed. But I have to admit, thousands confess the power of his preaching and cannot explain it. Monuments to Moody are all over the country.

God has used all sorts to speak his word face to face. And to the end of time, he will enlist, equip, and empower as many as are needed to reach the world and preach the word. Christians must proclaim the truth with a standard of commitment.

Christians must proclaim the truth with a service of involvement. It may be handing out cracks, pen and ink. It may be saying a word for the Master by life and by limb, face to face.

And until times no more, that's how John was coming to that precious little church. That's how we've got to go to the churches and the world of our day. Finally, I want you to notice the most thrilling part of this.

Christians must proclaim the truth with a spirit of fulfillment. The spirit of fulfillment. Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink, but I hope to come to you and speak face to face that our joy, J-O-Y, underscore that.

The two little things I want you to underwrite as many things, and here, J-O-Y, joy, may be full. Fulfillment. That's fulfillment.

This is what John desired as he anticipated to visit the elect lady and her children. His coming would be very different from the unwelcome false teachers. So he speaks of joy, and this is something the world can never give or take away.

This joy is distinctly Christian and is the fruit of the Spirit and can well up in the Christian's heart and life, whether you're in Skegness, in this comfortable hall, or in a prison cell. Paul was in jail when he wrote his most joyful epistle. With chains around his wrists, he could exhort the saints at Philippi to try to rejoice in the Lord always.

And again I say, rejoice! In this context, I want you to notice what John is talking about. He's talking first of all about the joy of fellowship. The joy of fellowship.

Coming to this dear lady and all of her household, or this little church, was to him the joy of fellowship. I hope to come to you that our joy may be full. John Stott comments, fulfilled joy is the result of fellowship.

The New Testament knows nothing of perfect joy outside of fellowship with each other through fellowship with the Father and the Son. Now, of course, the apostles already dealt with this theme of joy as fellowship in the previous epistle, epistle one. And I'd like you, for the sake of time, to read it, the whole first chapter.

Whole first chapter. And the purpose of proclamation of the gospel, listen carefully, the purpose of the proclamation of the gospel is not only salvation. This is a restricted idea.

In its widest embrace, it includes reconciliation to God with the Father and fellowship with God the Father and God the Son. I quote one of the learned expositors on this passage. So often we say that ultimate purpose in redemption is conformity to Christ.

That's only partly true. God's working a work in me day by day and you in progressive sanctification to make us more and more and more like Jesus. One day we're going to be like him when we see him as he is.

But that's only a means to an end. There's something beyond likeness to Christ. It's fellowship with God.

That's why he created man in the first instance. One leads to the other. But in the final analysis, the reason for our creation and redemption is what we might call fellowship with the triune God.

In the meantime, fellowship with them in heaven and with each other here upon earth. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And because of this, our joy will be full.

So we proclaim the truth. Why? Because we're bringing more into fellowship. More into fellowship.

More into relationship with God through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. And as that fellowship grows and grows, so our joy is growing and growing. And so there's the fulfillment of joy.

But there's something more than that. Not only the joy of fellowship, but the joy of fruitfulness. I hope to come to you and speak face to face that our joy may be full.

While the joy of fellowship is the joy of fulfillment, ultimate fulfillment, the result of all fellowship, did you know this, is fruitfulness. It's like a cycle. John Calvin puts it perfectly.

The secret of fullness of joy is the complete and perfect felicity and joy which comes by the gospel. It comes by the gospel. Show me a family, a group, a church where the joy of fellowship is truly experienced and I'll show you the fruitfulness of that family, that group, that church.

When the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost and they went out praising the Lord and had favor of all the people because of their joy, Luke says, the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Now, of course, as we think of fruitfulness, we think of fruitfulness in two ways, if you understand John's 15th chapter of the gospel, a beautiful chapter. John would have this in mind as he's bringing his truth, his love, to this little church and the elect lady.

He would remember what Jesus said in John 15 when Jesus said, Abide in me and you're going to know fellowship, oneness with me. That's fellowship. And out of that fellowship you're going to have fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

That's the fruit of character. That's love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. That is Jesus in his fullness living in me through me by the Holy Spirit.

That's fruitfulness. That's Christ walking again in the streets of Skegness and London and Manchester and Birmingham. But there's also fruit of service.

Jesus said, You didn't choose me. I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain and whatever you ask in my Father's name, he may give it you. This principle of fruit of character and service through union with Christ is summed up in a beautiful verse in a rather unusual context in Romans chapter 7 where we read, Therefore, my brethren, you have become dead to the law through the body of Christ that you may be married to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that you should bear fruit.

As I am united to my Savior in a rich fellowship, it's a marriage that produces fruit, fruit in character, fruit in service. I had the privilege of serving on the Executive Committee and still am on the Executive Committee for the itinerant evangelist congresses that were held in Amsterdam in 83 and just this year. It was a life-changing experience for me to meet those people from the third world.

And Heather and I had many a week just looking into the faces of people, of people we've never seen in our lives, but people who are the fruit of our ministry. God has given us this inestimable privilege I was talking about of speaking to four-fifths of the earth's surface every Sunday. One Sunday equals all my ministry probably in all the churches I've served, for all the years I've served, just one Sunday.

It's the miracle of communication. But I'll never forget 83. I was sitting one night very quietly as we tried to move around the crowd off on the left side or right side of the big podium platform.

Cliff Barrows was leading the singing and we were actually in an act of worship before the service started. And I looked around and I saw an enormous African. I mean, he was huge.

And he had his national garments on, his national attire, his faceless beanie. And like we did all through the week, I just turned around and shook him by the hand. And I said, Greetings, brother.

God bless you. He looked at me. He said, you Stephen Holford? I said, yes, yes.

I want to tell you, Cliff Barrows, platform, villagram, everything, didn't matter. He got up, picked me up in my seat. He put his arms around me.

I heard crush. And then he started an African dance with me. I said, brother, the service has started.

He couldn't care less. I pulled him down. He sat down.

He plunged into a satchel and he pulled up an old ragged notebook. He said, look, do you see this? Do you see this? Yes. All my points starting with P and Z. He said, I want to tell you something.

I have preached these all over the Cameroons. I am the bishop. And I want to thank you from my heart.

I want to tell you my heart just burst. The joy of fellowship, the joy of fruitfulness, fruitfulness. And Heather will tell you how many times we wept standing with 20, 30, 40 Africans, South Americans from India, just a few weeks ago when they stopped us in the street, all gathered around in five minutes.

It was like ants. Five minutes. And they said, brother, Alfred, have your word from the Lord.

Have your word from the Lord. Then they'd step out to shake hands. Then they'd go on and they'll talk about, listen, the only school we've been to, is listening to your tapes, listening to your broadcasts, preaching what you have taught us.

The joy of fruitfulness. Well, God's given us that privilege. But you know that can happen next door with you.

Next door with you. It's unbelievable. If all the unsaved people in the world were to line up in a single file at your front door, the line would reach around the world 30 times.

And what's worse, this line would grow and grow and grow at the rate of 20 miles per day. If you should drive 50 miles an hour, 10 hours a day, it would take you four years and 40 days to get at the end of the line. And by the time you reached it, it would have become 30,000 miles long.

Jesus said, this begins at your front door. Ye shall be witnesses unto me. In your Jerusalem, your Judea, that Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.

It all starts at your front door. We have a truth to possess, a truth to perform, a truth to protect, but a truth to proclaim. Are you ready? I want to ask you.

Are you ready for that commitment standard, that involvement service, that, listen, fulfillment spirit in proclaiming the word? If you are this morning, I'm going to challenge you. Some of you I won't be able to see because you're in the extension service by transmission of this message on a screen. But whether there or here, if you're able, and you're saying, I've heard all the ministry of the mornings, I've heard all the ministry of the afternoons, I've heard all the ministry of the evenings.

I can't go back as I came before I take the bread and the wine that bespeak the passion of our Savior. He came to die for a gospel to be preached to the far ends of the earth. I'm going to resolve, by God's grace, to be a proclaimer.

Whether by conversation or by proclamation, I'm going to be a witness to Jesus Christ. I know you've made many commitments of one sort or another during this week, but I'm talking about proclamation, a witness for Jesus Christ. And you're going to say, as God shall enable me by the Holy Spirit, I am going to say something to someone every day of my life until Jesus comes or Jesus calls.

And I'm making that commitment here this morning. Stand to your feet right now. And let's just be still before God.

In a day of compromise and complacency, are we prepared to face this challenge? Are we willing to say with Jesus, listen carefully, I've quoted this again and again, are we prepared to say with our Lord Jesus, as He faced the cross, for this cause was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth. I want to read some words I have written, and I want you to listen as we bow in a commitment. Truth's triumphant stood that day to bear witness, cost what may.

He was born to set men free, so He went to Calvary. On the cross, He gave His all to redeem us from the fall. Then He conquered death and hell to assure us all was well.

Now ascended He imparts His sweet spirit to our hearts with a mandate to proclaim saving truth through His strong name. To this Master who is truth, we must yield our lives, our youth. He gave all.

We can't give less if we know true blessedness. Truth's triumphant glory be to the Christ of Calvary. Truth's triumphant, we agree, He's the Christ of victory.

Amen. Lord, take us, cleanse us, fill us, use us until Jesus comes.

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