

Grace Energized Men in a Sin-Energized World

Titus 2:1-2

The eyes of the Lord are on a constant search for godly men this morning. His Word tells us that He is looking for those who have a heart for Him. As we open to II Chronicles 16:9 listen to the voice of God sharing His quest:

2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal¹ to Him...NKJV

The word loyal (NKJV) is rendered also: "**perfect** toward Him" (KJV); "**completely** His" (NASB); "**fully committed** to Him" (NIV). God is on the lookout for hearts that are turned His direction, completely His, and fully committed to do and be what He wants. Grace-energized men, who live for God in a sin-energized world is what we are starting to study today.

God's plan is to reach into every church, every marriage, and every home by changing the lives of men--who are the backbone, the God-designed leaders of the church, marriages and homes.

When the Lord wants to change a culture He works through the men and woman He changes one by one. The plan presented in Paul's epistle to Titus is a grace-energized man who lives and walks through this sin-energized world by the power of God—neither perfectly, sinlessly, nor effortlessly, but as a chosen path that is clung to by love for God, and by the grace He gives.

God Looks for Godly Men Every Day

This morning, as every morning--God is on the lookout for men who are sold-out, full-hearted, true-seekers of Him. This deep concern about what men are really like on the inside is one of the central truths of both the Old and New Testaments. To the very last book of the Bible the Lord is still reminding all of us that inside view of us He has:

"I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds" (Rev. 2:23).

As you sit before Him this morning—what does God see you really are on the inside? Does He see a longing on your part to be all that He wants you to be? Does the Lord see a careful attention to know and obey the pattern set down in His Word? The standard we

¹ This word is the adjective form of the Hebrew verb shalam. **8003 shalem**: perfect 16, whole 4, full 2, just 1, peaceable 1, misc 3; 27x in Old Testament : complete, safe, peaceful, perfect, whole, full, at peace; full, perfect; finished; **7999 shalam**; verb; be at peace; to be complete, be sound

are to follow, and for which we will answer is the clear list of character-choices laid down in God's Word.

That's why we have these 2,000 year old words Paul gave to Titus before us this morning. For this young, missionary pastor/church-planter serving on the Roman provincial island of Crete, the challenge to train men in godliness was foremost.

Cretan men, who descended from the Old Testament era pagans we know as the Philistines, were the raw materials from which God was going to make godly men. Titus had his work cut out for him. Paul's Spirit-given directives were clear—aim for the head. There is no other way to be godly than to have a mind-transformation. Spiritual warfare and spiritual growth both take place in our minds. What a man thinks he becomes—sooner, or later.

Paul already said in Titus 1:13 that this transformation had to include them becoming "sound in the faith". Now he says target the men first. Aim for their minds. Teach them what God expects, what God wants, what His grace can energize them to become—if only they will yield to Him.

Let's read the plan that God directed Paul to share was, give them healthy mind-food, truth about God that transforms. Stand/Read/Pray

Titus 2:1-2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; NKJV

Paul said, "Titus you need to teach what is consistent with God's truth—that is what will develop godly men". To transform Crete by the Gospel, Paul said aim first at the minds of the men. Paul didn't tell Titus to attack the system of worldly Roman culture, rather address the needs of individual men. Transform men, women, marriages, homes, and workers—from the inside out.

If You Believe Right You will Behave Right

Believers who are grounded upon right beliefs about God and His truths to live by will not be swept away by false teachers, false teachings, the changing circumstances of life, or even the alluring tug of sin. If we believe right, we will behave right. Wrong behavior is always tied to some lack of faith-prompted obedience to God's Word.

So Paul prescribed "sound doctrine" as the tool to shape a generation of former pagans now gathering in house churches around the island of Crete. What exactly is "sound doctrine"? Sound, healthy, or godly doctrine usually has four clear identifying marks:

- it comes from the Bible,
- it centers upon Jesus Christ,
- it produces right behavior, and
- it promotes spiritual growth, touching the heart and changing the life, not just the intellect.

Today's men have the same challenges that those of Crete faced two thousand years ago. The sins, temptations and pressures of all ages in the past have not changed—they are just compounded by the speed at which they travel towards us.

Sin is sin, the world is the world, the devil and his demons are not omnipresent—but, the exposure of modern men to media that carries sin-filled ideas, pointed temptations, and Satan's worldly-desires is nearly omnipresent. And all that media comes to men that are generally more stressed out than any other generation, partly because of information overload. We have too many choices in life, too many sources of information, too many facts to digest, coming in ever increasing waves so that we have neither the time or resources to respond. That produces the modern societal phenomenon called "stress".

This week, a contemporary look at men was released in the New York Times. Here is what the world describes as the state of men in late-2007.

STRESS MESS IN U.S.²

We're stressed out, we can't sleep, we're drinking too much - and it's getting worse. 48% of Americans report regularly lying awake at night because of stress... [and] stress continues to escalate...affecting every area of people's lives.

So what is it we're worrying about while we stare at the ceiling all night? Primarily two things: money and work, the main woes for nearly 75% of Americans. More than half of people polled say paying the landlord or making the monthly mortgage causes great stress.

The high stress levels that many Americans report experiencing can have long-term health consequences, ranging from fatigue to obesity and heart disease.

More than three-quarters of respondents say stress is making them sick...people feel overwhelmed and out of control...

Because of the increasing pressures of life just to live from day-to-day, it is getting harder and harder to think deeply about God. Stress has robbed many of even the ability to concentrate.

That's what makes our study of Titus 2 so timely. Titus was to call the men who had been believers for a while, to live up to God's standard. There were six specific behavioral standards, mental choices, acts of the will--each energized by the Spirit of grace, that were to be the goals of every older man in Christ; and as we'll see further into this passage, six more for every younger man.

This morning if you are a man who knows Christ—this should be the desire of your heart to be now (if you are an older man) or to become (if you are a younger man).

² STRESS MESS IN U.S., By MARK JOYELLA and ELAINE CHAN, October 25, 2007:

http://www.nypost.com/php/pfriendly/print.php?url=http://www.nypost.com/seven/10252007/news/nationalnews/stress_mess_in_u_s.htm

Before any of you excuse yourself, saying that it is too hard to change—don't you remember how tough a group this letter was sent to? Paul's letter to Pastor Titus, the missionary church-planter to Crete—gives quite a description of the cultural background of the congregation Titus served two thousand years ago.

Titus 1:12-13 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (NKJV)

What a miracle that an entire generation of believers were saved out of such a godless society. That is why I call this--

Grace-energized Living in a Sin-energized World

God says I have the power to make you able to be a godly man even when the whole world around you is ungodly! We need to underline again in our Bibles, those descriptive words of what Cretans were like culturally. Paul reminds us that they came from centuries of culture dominated by **total untrustworthiness** ('always liars'), **total out-of-control living** ('evil beasts'), and the **total undisciplined pursuit of personal lust-filled appetites** ('lazy gluttons').

But even in that type of atmosphere, permeated by sin, God's grace allows us to say no to sin and yes to walking in His Spirit. Just like the pioneer missionaries found in modern times, God can change lives even in cultures dominated for centuries by immense evil.

Whenever it seems like the challenge of training those steeped in sin, with the sanctifying work of the Spirit is too hard, I always remind myself of one of the heroes I have admired since childhood—C. T. Studd.

Modern missions history contains the record³ of what happen to those who allowed God's grace to energize them. Just over 90 years ago to a living legend named CT Studd went to uncharted regions of central Africa. After already serving 21 years in China and India, he went to invest his final years in the heart of Africa's vast, dark jungles among the fierce, cannibal, head-hunting pygmies.

By the hot, steamy summer of 1931 his congregation that sat for his Bible teaching numbered thousands of former headhunters. Their bodies, formerly the habitation of dark, foul fiends from the pit--are temples of the Living God. Before their beloved father in the faith they sit in an immense sea of white-toothed smiles. With faces turned heavenward they sing of the sweet by and by and that beautiful shore they will someday see.

Passed now are the years of darkness and savagery. The former enemies sit shoulder to shoulder. No weapons of war are left, only the bond of love. But these days in July would be the last sight of his dear saintly converts Studd would see on earth. After his

³ Born 1858, and went on after salvation to serve in China 1885-1900; then to serve in India 1900-1906; returning to organize a mission in England 1906-1908; and finally to expend his life in Africa from 1910-1931. His beloved wife Mrs. Studd died in 1929. And finally C. T. died July 1931.

message uttered between gasps for air, with every ear strained to catch each word, he is carried back to his hut. Exhausted, he rests for the day; though only his Savior knew it was his last.

In the night the Faithful Shepherd who had led him to China, then India and finally to the very heart of Africa - took CT home after a 21 year ministry in the Congo. In the morning only the shriveled earthly tent of his body was left. But around that hut and to the furthest reaches of the jungles and on mission stations around the world, the footprints of this giant can be found today.

In Africa at his death there were 30,000 fellowshipping in the churches, born again, baptized and disciplined saints whom C.T. found in 1910 as naked, murderous, grossly immoral cannibals butchering each other in the darkest jungles of Africa. That reminds me again that..

The Only Thing We Can Take To Heaven are People

Just think about what has resulted from the life-investment C.T. Studd made when he opened the Word, and taught the truths of grace-energized living to those people. Today, at this very moment, they all are singing around the Throne of the Lamb, clothed in white raiment and worshipping Jesus Christ with their spiritual father C.T. Studd. Can there be anything greater than taking people with us to Heaven that we have been a part of bringing to Christ? I don't think anything can compare to that hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing (I Th. 2:19-20) as Paul calls those we bring with us to Heaven! Look back at Titus 1:12-13:

Titus 1:12-13 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (NKJV)

Again we see from these two verses that when the Gospel of Jesus Christ entered the Roman world of the New Testament the landscape was very bleak. Christ's church was born into a sin-warped, sin-darkened world of mixed-up marriages, sin-scarred lives, and confused families.

I really believe that this insight into the Cretan culture can stir our hearts to glorify the amazing grace and saving power of God.

- If the Gospel of Christ can reach into a culture of people who were the descendents of the wicked, pagan Old Testament Philistines and build them into grace-energized servants of Christ's church—**He can work with any man, no matter what his past.**
- If God can make saints out of people who had so descended in their personal character until Paul describes them with this trio of disparaging words—**He can change any man no matter how weak, how wicked, how undisciplined.**

That is why Titus tells us that...

God has a Six Desires For Every Mature Man

What was the plan God had in mind to transform the men of Crete? The same plan He has for all the mature men of Christ's church! Six qualities are to become the life-priorities for grace-energized men. Listen to the first trio of godly choices in...

Titus 2:2 Teach the older men to be sober, reverent, temperate...

1. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD

v. 2a "sober"

2. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LIFE IN AN AMUSED WORLD

v.2b "reverent"

3. LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE IN A FOOLISH WORLD

v.2c "temperate"

Then Paul gives the second trio of qualities...**Sound in faith, in love, in patience.**

4. GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD

v.2d "sound in faith"

5. STAYING TENDER HEARTED IN A CRUEL WORLD

v.2e "[sound] in love"

6. FINISHING HOPEFULLY IN A DESPAIRING WORLD

v.2f "[sound] in patience"

Grace-energized men living in a sin-energized world is God's plan.

God is on the lookout for men who are sold-out, full-hearted, true-seekers of Him.

The standard we are to follow, and for which we will answer to Him is the clear list of character-choices laid down in God's Word. These six are what God expects, what God wants, what His grace can energize you to become—if only you will yield to Him.

As you sit before Him this morning—what does God see you really are on the inside? Does He see a longing on your part to be all that He wants you to be?

If not, why not surrender to Him right now? Bow your head and heart before the Lord and whisper to Him in your heart that you want to become the man He wants you to be starting TODAY!

Grace Energized Men Don't Waste Your Life

Titus 2:2

In Titus 2:2, God tells older men to make a choice: "You can invest your life, or waste your life—its up to you!" Think about those choices as we look at this crucial portion of Scripture for every man who knows Christ!

Paul asked Titus to be on the lookout for "older" men to enlist in the training of younger men. Before we examine that training course, who exactly would make up the list of "older" and "younger" men?

In Philemon, Paul describes himself with the same word we find in Titus 2:2. Let's turn there for a moment.

Philemon 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—NKJV

"Paul the aged" (Παυλος πρεσβυτης) is a place where we see the very same word as the one used in Titus 2:2. When the event in Acts 7:58 is recounted, Paul is there described as a young man [νεανιας] when he stood as a witness to the stoning of Stephen.

Acts 7:58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. NKJV

Who are the Older Ones in Christ's Church?

In Philemon, we know from the chronology of the New Testament that Paul is either at age 60 or close to it, so that means that when he speaks of the older man he may be using a cultural designation from his day that called men of 50+ "older men". In secular Greek literature we find Hippocrates (the father of medicine) calling men *presbutēs* when they are between the ages of 49 to 56 and *gerōn* (as in gerontology) after that.^{4[1]}

We also know that within Biblical parameters, God established that Levites would retire at age 50 to assist and mentor the younger priests^{5[2]} (Num 8:24–26).

Numbers 8:24-26 "This is what pertains to the Levites: From twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting; 25 "and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more. 26 "They may minister with their brethren in the

^{4[1]}Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1997, S. Phm 9

^{5[2]} Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and also of the priestly division of Abiathar (Luke 1:5; 1 Chronicles 24, esp. v 10) considered his wife and himself "old," πρεσβυτης [*presbutēs*] yet he stilled served in the temple (Luke 1:18–25)—but most likely as one who at age 50 had entered some form of retirement to mentor the younger men in the ways of God

tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties.” NKJV

If we follow the terms used in God's Word we find that “older” refers to men in the ages between 50 and 60+. In America, that translates to men at the peak of their careers, when they are no longer struggling with getting their career started. It is when they have mastered their work and reach the age when they can actually pour their life into all that they do because of the vast experience they have gained.

When the Social Security Administration analyzed two generations of withholding taxes, they concluded that for highly skilled and educated men the most common pattern was that they reached and maintained their peak earnings in the decade and a half starting at age 50.

This year marks the year that the birthrate of baby boomers peaked. In 1957 there were 4.3 million babies born. Those who have survived turn 50 this year—the largest group ever in our American history to turn 50 years of age.

Why is that significant? Because if they are normal boomers the average 50 year old has some big choices—start the final hard push for the best, most financially secure retirement possible, or do something else.

Just mentioning aging, finances, retirement and the Lordship of Christ over our lives as believers—in one sentence—is meddlesome at best for most people. But since Paul brought up the magic age of 50, we must pause and think about our lives. Either you are 50, were 50, or someday may get to be 50 years of age.

At age 50 God Wants You In a very Special Way!

In Biblical language, at 50--you have reached the place where you should be a recognized mentor of younger men or women in godliness. If you are an “older” man or woman, and you love the Lord with all your heart—your ears should be wide open right now.

God wants you to serve His church in an unusual and special way. He wants you to live a life that testifies that the Lord is good—good enough to obey completely, to trust implicitly, to follow faithfully, and to intentionally sacrifice my comfort, my security, and my convenience for His Cause!

Few writers have the gift of expressing truth as well as John Piper, the missionary-hearted, teaching pastor at Bethlehem Baptist of Minneapolis. Let me read an excerpt from a book everyone should read when they get anywhere near 50 called: ***Don't Waste Your Life*** (2003):

A Tragedy in the Making

You may not be sure that you want your life to make a difference. Maybe you don't care very much whether you make a lasting difference for the sake of something great. You just want people to like you. If people would just like being

around you, you'd be satisfied. Or if you could just have a good job with a good wife, or husband, and a couple of good kids and a nice car and long weekends and a few good friends, a fun retirement, and a quick and easy death, and no hell—if you could have all that (even without God)—you would be satisfied. That is a tragedy in the making. A wasted life.

These Lives and Deaths Were No Tragedy

In April 2000, Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards were killed in Cameroon, West Africa. Ruby was over eighty. Single all her life, she poured it out for one great thing: to make Jesus Christ known among the unreached, the poor, and the sick. Laura was a widow, a medical doctor, pushing eighty years old, and serving at Ruby's side in Cameroon.

The brakes failed, the car went over a cliff, and they were both killed instantly. I asked my congregation: Was that a tragedy? Two lives, driven by one great passion, namely, to be spent in unheralded service to the perishing poor for the glory of Jesus Christ—even two decades after most of their American counterparts had retired to throw away their lives on trifles?

No, that is not a tragedy. That is a glory. These lives were not wasted. And these lives were not lost. "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35).

An American Tragedy: How Not to Finish Your One Life

I will tell you what a tragedy is. I will show you how to waste your life. Consider a story from the February 1998 edition of Reader's Digest, which tells about a couple who:

"took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30 foot trawler, play softball and collect shells."

At first, when I read it I thought it might be a joke. A spoof on the American Dream. But it wasn't.

Tragically, this was the dream: Come to the end of your life—your one and only precious, God-given life—and let the last great work of your life, before you give an account to your Creator, be this: playing softball and collecting shells.

Picture them before Christ at the great day of judgment: "Look, Lord. See my shells."

That is a tragedy. And people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream. Over against that, I put my protest: Don't buy it. Don't waste your life.

"God created us to live with a single passion: to joyfully display his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. The wasted life is the life without this passion.

God calls us to pray and think and dream and plan and work not to be made much of, but to make much of him in every part of our lives."

What our dear gifted brother is passionately asking is whether or not we are going to see Jesus Christ clearer and clearer the older we get. Which makes us also ask--**How well do you see Jesus today?**

Remember, the very first thing that salvation does, according to Jesus Christ Himself—the Author of salvation—is that it opened our eyes to see the real world, the spiritual dimension, God and His Kingdom and His Word. Those were Christ's words in Acts 26:18:

Acts 26:18 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' NKJV

So we were saved to see.

What can keep us From Seeing Jesus in Daily Life?

Jesus answers that question in one of His most sobering postcards, the one to the final church called Laodicea. It was a literal church in the first century, and may well be a prophetic look at the very age in which we live. Here is what Jesus says to each of us who live in these dangerous times of great comfort, wealth, security, and freedom of unlimited choices.

*"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that **you are ... blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments ... that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and **anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see****" (Revelation 3:17–18).*

Jesus is warning us to be careful of three grave dangers, and especially for those who are 50+, these dangers are more virulent than melanoma or staphylococcus (both MRSA and VRSA). Here are three deadly spiritual pathogens^{6[3]}:

Danger 1— Beware of the sins of old age.

These sins (which can also occur at an earlier age) can erase Christ's "Well done!" Remember Solomon: he began by sacrificing thousands of animals and building the most beautiful worship place for the Lord, but he failed to finish well. He got to heaven *yet so as by fire*. (In today's language, we'd say that Solomon got into heaven "by the skin of his teeth.") What are these sins of old age?

^{6[3]} Excerpted from *Living Hope*, week 20

- § **The Lust for Comfort and Convenience:** This sin is epidemic. We continually lust for comfort. A life consumed with a lust for comfort and convenience like that won't finish well. (Rev. 3:17-18)
- § **Greed for Recognition:** Older people usually want to receive recognition of some sort. In fact, it seems that almost everyone lusts for the applause of others. We must beware of seeking approval from people and instead seek approval only from God. (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16)
- § **Covetousness for Security:** Our whole country has become security-obsessed. People want to know how to best secure retirement funds, how to secure college education funds, how to get job security, and how to secure their homes and other possessions. We are caught up in the pursuit of security, and are wasting valuable time and energy to protect things we cannot keep. (Isaiah 31:1)

These sins of old age—the lust for comfort, greed for recognition, and covetousness for security—*can erase Christ's "Well done!"*

**Danger 2—
Beware of the problem of exceptionism.**

What is exceptionism? It is thinking that your life is an exception to God's Word. Thus you excuse yourself from doing anything for heaven because of things like your past, pain, poverty, or poor self-image.

Think carefully on this: *you will never be in the future what you are not becoming today.* If you are not responding to and obeying God's Word now, and you feel like you're always an exception, that attitude will stay with you till the end.

**Danger 3—
Beware of unmortified pockets of pride.**

"Unmortified pockets of pride" means allowing pride to grow can make you secretly, inwardly proud of your **intellect** (thinking you are smarter than others), or proud of your **achievements**, or proud of your **goodness** ("I'm not as bad as they are"). Sin, in the light of sin, never does look bad, but sin in the light of God's holiness always looks bad. Pockets of pride in your life can erase Christ's "Well done!"

Helen H. Lemmel (1864–1961), the blind hymn writer, gave us this beautiful song (it is # 335). I invite you to turn your eyes fully upon your precious Jesus as I read the words to this great song. Its chorus packs a powerful message for today's church!

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus
*O soul, are you weary and troubled?
 No light in the darkness you see?
 There's light for a look at the Savior,
 And life more abundant and free!*

*Thro' death into life ever-lasting
 He passed, and we followed Him there;*

*Over us sin no more hath dominion—
For more than conq'rors we are.*

*His word shall not fail you—He promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!*

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.¹*

Ask Him here today to open your eyes.

Steps for continuing to grow spiritually to our final days^{7[4]}:

1. Don't retire. Change your occupation...to something you have always wanted to do.
2. Learn something new every day.
3. Set yourself to be gracious to someone every day.
4. Don't let yourself grow negative; be positive. Look around you for something for which to be grateful every day. Gratitude will become a settled habit.
5. Now that your bodily activities are slowing down, let your spiritual activities increase. Old age provides increased opportunity for prayer.
6. Keep laying up as the years come and go "the good store" of which Jesus spoke. This "good store" is the depository of every thought, motive, action, attitude which we drop into the subconscious mind. It can be the deep subsoil into which we can strike our roots in old age and blossom at the end like a night-blooming cereus.

As we turn back to Titus 2, note the plan that Paul shared:

God has a Six Desires For Every Mature Man

How can every man in this place keep from wasting the most precious years of your life? Listen to the grace-energized changes God wants to make inside of you so that you will be the man He can use to maximize His Kingdom, purposes and plan for this world!

These six qualities are to become the life-priorities for grace-energized men.

Titus 2:2 Teach the older men to be sober, reverent, temperate...

- 1. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD**

^{7[4]} 1. Oswald Sanders, *Your Best Years: Staying Young While Growing Old*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1982, p. 35.

v. 2a “sober”: God wants matured, godly older men in Christ's church to live a life that exemplifies Jesus to a watching world. These men are to model the life God wants, to encourage younger men, then the older men take time to mentor some of the younger men, and challenge them to abandon the temptations of youth such as reckless living, impatience with decision making, thoughtless communication, and the unreliability that often characterizes young people.

2. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LIFE IN AN AMUSED WORLD

v.2b “reverent”: God wants older men who model what its like to live life seriously. This man thinks deeply in an amused, shallow-thinking culture. This man never trivializes what God says is important; and lives a life that is not entertained by sensuality, never amused by vulgarity, and doesn't treat life superficially.

He won't laugh at others troubles, nor mock their weaknesses. As an older person who has seen hardship, misfortune, and injustice—life is real, pain is serious, and time with people is important. He is an older man in the faith who understands the brevity of life, the gravity of God's Word, and the reality of eternity.

3. LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE IN A FOOLISH WORLD

v.2c “temperate”: God wants older men whose lives are yielded to His control. This man's life is characterized by the Greek word **sophronas** which means, “self-controlled, restored to senses, earnest”. This one word is variously rendered into 4 different English words by the top 4 versions: “temperate” (KJV/NKJV); “self-controlled” (NIV); and “sensible” (NAS).

God wants a man whose life speaks louder than his words; whose character is noticed and prompts other men to examine their own lives and seek to emulate his joy, his peace, and his walk in the Spirit--in evident and practical ways. The Titus 2 older-man-in-the-faith's life is a pattern for others to use in shaping their own lives.

*Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but **to think soberly**, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. NKJV*

To capture the sense of this verse it helps to put in the word ‘estimate’ then it would say: “Don't overestimate yourself (**hyperphroneo** ‘super-think’) beyond a true estimate, but estimate yourself with a proper estimate”.

The godly older man cultivates a proper view of self that is honest and accurate. He has a realistic and Biblical view of his strengths, weaknesses, his God-given talents, and all his human deficiencies. After coming to an accurate appraisal of who he is and how God made him, he sees his place and purpose in God's program. This man avoids the two extremes, he neither thinks he is better

(pride and conceit) or worse (self-depreciation). Rather he thinks with wisdom from God above, through His Spirit within.

Then Paul gives the second trio of qualities...**Sound in faith, in love, in patience.**

4. GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD

v.2d “sound in faith”: **Sound** is from the same word (*hugiainō*) used in v.1 for Biblical doctrine, and refers to things that are healthy, proper, whole, and as they ought to be.

These godly older men, are as God describes them in Psalm 92:12-15. Their lives and words declare that God can be trusted in every way. They have learned not to question His wisdom. They hold fast to His goodness. They look and wait for His grace that comes with His divine plan.

5. STAYING TENDER HEARTED IN A CRUEL WORLD

v.2e “[sound] in love”: God wants men who have His love overflowing within making them personally loving towards others, not bitter. These godly men are not fault-finders, nor unsympathetic. They are open to new people, new ideas, and not frozen in their old ways. They grow more and more tender toward the views and the mistakes of those around them—instead of getting more and more inflexible and intolerant.

6. FINISHING HOPEFULLY IN A DESPAIRING WORLD

v.2f “[sound] in patience”: God wants men who persevere through all the hard times life will always bring—and then model that triumphant hope Christ alone can bring. Among the aged who are often characterized as fretful and down-hearted, they radiate hope.

“They are to exhibit the ability to endure hardship, to accept disappointment and failure, to be satisfied despite thwarted personal desires and plans.

They have learned to graciously live with such difficulties as physical weakness, loneliness, and being misunderstood and unappreciated.

They do not lose heart when things do not turn out the way they had hoped and expected, but have the perfect confidence “that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).^{8[5]}

Grace-energized men living in a sin-energized world is God’s plan.

God is on the lookout for men who are sold-out, full-hearted, true-seekers of Him.

^{8[5]}MacArthur, John: *Titus*. Chicago : Moody Press, 1996. electronic edition. in loc

Titus 2:2 Teach the older men to be sober, reverent, temperate...

1. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD

v. 2a "sober"

2. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LIFE IN AN AMUSED WORLD

v.2b "reverent"

3. LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE IN A FOOLISH WORLD

v.2c "temperate"

Then Paul gives the second trio of qualities...**Sound in faith, in love, in patience.**

4. GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD

v.2d "sound in faith"

5. STAYING TENDER HEARTED IN A CRUEL WORLD

v.2e "[sound] in love"

6. FINISHING HOPEFULLY IN A DESPAIRING WORLD

v.2f "[sound] in patience"

Please bow your hearts and heads before our Great God this evening.

To keep from wasting your life—present yourself back to God to be a grace-energized man.

If you've not yet done so--why not surrender to Him right now?

Bow your head and heart before the Lord and whisper to Him in your heart that you want to become the man He wants you to be starting TODAY!

If you did so just now or have done so today—would you just raise your hand before the Lord as a memorial to that great decision for Him?

Grace Energized Men: Maintaining a Balanced Life in an Obsessive/Compulsive World Titus 2:1-2

God wants balanced, anchored lives in His Church to lead and guide others to spiritual stability and maturity. As we open to Ephesians 4:14 this morning, remember how we all begin as believers. Paul reminds us that we all start out as babies not just physically, but spiritually. In Ephesians 4, Paul explained that one of the characteristics of our immature state is that we are unstable and tossed about.

*Ephesians 4:14 **that we should no longer be children ('infants' NIV), tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, NKJV***

Think of this picture Paul paints for our minds. Spiritually immature people are floaters. Without the depth and stability of an anchor in the Word, they drift along with things, swept away with ideas before they even know if they are true or Biblical. That is a strong reminder that spiritual maturity only comes as we are...

Anchored in God's Word

Well-balanced lives come from being anchored in God's Word. As Paul states in this passage, the goal of the pastor/teacher is to help these immature, driven this-way-and-that believers in to becoming solidly anchored saints. Note Paul's solution in v. 11:

*Ephesians 4:11-14 **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, NKJV***

Those two verses, v. 12-13 speak to the goal of Christ's church this morning--bringing believers to spiritual stability in Christ. Showing them how to think and behave in life so as to not be driven to and fro, and then modeling, teaching, and leading other believers to mature into grace-energized men and women with balanced lives.

How is this done within a local church? First Paul introduces us to the concept of the “equipping church”. This is something we all need to grasp so that we come to church and operate as a church in the way that God designed us to serve Him.

What exactly does an equipping church do? Because we know God's Word teaches us that every word of God was inspired, we first study that word. The word “equipping” is **kartartismos** and is a noun used only here in the New Testament. But the verb form⁹ of this noun is very descriptive; and its meaning is most clearly seen in the way this word is used in our Bibles. Turn there with me to the first use of this word in the New Testament, Matthew 4:21.

*Matthew 4:21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, **mending** their nets. He called them, NKJV*

Did you see equipping? It is right there, only in this verse that word is translated “mending”.

If you want to circle the word “mending” in your Bible, and write nearby the word “equipping” you have just made a powerful discovery. The Holy Spirit led Paul to use this word in Ephesians 4:11. The verb **kartartidzo** is here translated “mending”, and the noun form is translated “equipping” in Ephesians 4:11.

Now the picture God's Word gives to us. Jesus found his first disciples sitting and doing what fishermen do, looking through each part of their nets and stitching back up any tears, mending any holes, and fixing anywhere the nets had started to unravel. Mending is what this word portrays.

To even broaden our mental picture, if we trace this word outside the Bible and into the culture of Paul's day, this word is used for setting broken bones. So mending nets and setting bones both speak of taking injured, damaged, or weakened things and getting them back the way they are supposed to be. Can you see the connection? An equipping church is all about...

Mending Lives

Now plug those usages into this famous passage about the purpose of Christ's church as we meet. Believers are out in life getting frayed, torn, and ripped by all the troubles and struggles we go through each day.

And think about the band of men Jesus called to start His church—mostly fishermen weren't they? And another man was in the sewing business that was heavily involved, a leather worker/tent sewing man named Paul. This picture of sewing, patching, mending, and repairing was so much a part of their lives. No wonder they had such powerful fellowship back then. They knew and felt in their hands what their task was to be. Mending lives so that those lives can be engaged as tools in Christ's hands building up, helping, exhorting, and discipling others.

⁹ Kartartidzo is used 13x in the New Testament. Mending is also used in Mark 1:19.

We each sustain some degree of damage through struggles at work, conflicts at home, and temptations nagging us when we are alone. We also are often just like a net as it gets dragged along in daily use—we have sustained wear and tear to our lives just with the daily pressures and stresses of living.

But now comes the wonderful part. This truth is what has strengthened Christ's church through all these centuries since Pentecost--when we gather obediently as Christ's church, He is present. And when Christ is present is uses us to do his work of repairing one another from the injuries of life's struggles.

- We gather to have the torn places in our lives mended with God's Word.
- We come together to see God fixing parts of life that have started to unravel like relationships, hope, confidence and assurance—by His Spirit, and through His Word, and using other believers.

Now with that picture in your mind, listen to the whole passage as we stand before God and He speaks to us in His Word:

Ephesians 4:11-14 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, NKJV

Pray

The church that offers these needed repairs is the church that is truly an “equipping” church.

How is your life? Is it in need of a little mending this morning? God's Word is available and in action this morning. Why not pause now and then while we study through the Bible and ask God to sew your soul, mend your heart, get back to normal your emotions that are frayed, and so on. That is what God wants to do here.

Mended Lives Get Tied to God's Word

What is the result of being mended? You get tied to God's Word. You see that His Word is the lamp that guides, the food that feeds, the comfort that cheers our souls--as it points us to Christ.

Being mended means finding that Jesus comes to us by His Spirit, through His Word and gives us the power to do what He asks. This power to do what He has told us to do in the Bible is grace. And God's process of changing us on the inside I love to call “energized by grace”.

As we move on to Titus 2:2 this morning, we see what God is watching for in the life of a godly man. We are examining the first of six character traits that describe a man God uses, a life that God rewards, and a grace-energized man of godly balance. This verse should challenge each of the older men in this congregation to heed God's call to maintain a balanced life in an increasingly obsessive-compulsive culture.

We've noted in Titus 1:12-13, that the Cretan culture was obsessed with the pleasures of the moment, and would grab them compulsively with no thought for the consequences. Things are the same today.

We live in a culture that often goes from one obsession to another—wanting something or someone so badly that they sacrifice the permanent for the temporal. We are surrounded by compulsive people who do things just because they felt like it at the moment. There is no stability or balance, just a wandering, restlessness always looking for some new attraction.

Please follow along in your Bibles as I read this message from God to older men in the faith.

*Titus 2:2 that the **older men be sober**, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; NKJV*

The word sober in Greek implies being unintoxicated. But it portrays far more than distancing your body from alcohol. There are so many powerful agents that can intoxicate and cloud the minds of men. Paul is also saying, if you are God's man you will be careful to stay unintoxicated by anything—whether comfort, convenience, security, money, work, sports, amusements, or alcohol.

So Paul tells us God has posted a want ad that reads:

Wanted: Men of Balance in An Unbalanced World

Grace-energized men live a balanced life while surrounded by people who are driven back and forth by fads, obsessions, trivial pursuits, lusts, and emptiness.

Paul first charges Titus with training the godly, "older" men.

These "older" man are defined in God's Word as men who are over 50 years of age. This age group of men often at their peak of earnings, at the top of their careers, and thinking more-and-more each day about what really matters in life. These older men are making decisions about the significance and the lasting impact of their lives.

If you are a man age 50 or older, and missed the message last Sunday evening please consider this. We studied God's clear and direct call to all 50 plus year old men who are believers, to invest their lives in Christ's church, and not waste these best years of their life.

If you missed that challenge from God's Word—I'd encourage you to go and check that CD out and prayerfully consider how you are spending these strategic days of your life from God's perspective.

God wants men of balance. The foundation of God's man that doesn't sway with the winds of life, and who life is not driven by the waves of the culture beating against him each day—is founded upon God's promises.

We only have two possible operating systems, God's or ours. We were born with ours. We go astray from the womb God's Word tells us. But when we are saved God implants within us His Spirit that wants to guide us and lead us in God's way instead of our own. And each man who systematically makes choice to anchor his life to God's Word grows into...

A Balanced Man

The balanced man of Titus 2 would be someone if you saw them around at work or church would be one of those 'cool, calm, and collected' types. They have a solid Biblical orientation that keeps them on even keel emotionally and spiritually. They know God is ruling all things from the galaxies down to their little world.

In each sphere of life the Lordship of Christ is evident: as a dad he would be a man who tries each day to be a caring, sacrificially loving husband and dad; as an employee or employer he would work hard at being diligent, consistent, and hard-working; as a believer he holds on to the consistent goal to stay in the Word, prayer, and ministry.

What others notice is that he is not given to extremes. This man neither wearies himself with the mistaken idea that he alone can solve all the problems of the world and those around him; nor does he go through life uncaring of all the problems. He is balanced, he tries to follow his personal Biblical priorities and encourage others that he can reach out to in his life.

Just briefly, listen to what I found by searching dozens of books on this word, and finding what many have said about this word through the centuries:

- This man has learned what is worth living for, he invests his time, money, and strength carefully, living by priority rather than the moment—and has become contented with fewer and simpler things.
- This man is balanced in that he has learned how to exercise appropriate emphasis upon the priorities he has concluded are his before God.
- This man is not given to overindulgence, knowing what God's Word that the pleasures gleaned from self-indulgence cost far more than they are worth.
- This man has mental sobriety exhibited in self-restraint, a freedom from the debilitations of rash decisions, words and behavior, as well as being stable, circumspect, and clear-thinking.

- This man is in charge of his priorities, is steadfast, morally decisive, and not under the sway of the various allurements of the world, his flesh, and the devil.
- The man is not controlled by outside circumstances but directed by inward convictions. In English we would say he is level-headed, clear-minded, well-balanced, and unwavering.
- In short, he is obedient to what Paul calls for ten times in the pastoral epistles, he is sober-minded just as we also see in the qualifications for a pastor in (1 Tim. 3:2). Titus 2:2's grace-energized well-balanced men are spiritually mature members of the church.

In a world that often yields to wild thinking, godly men and women must be sober-minded. They have..

A Balanced View of Life

This mature man is balanced. He doesn't swing from pole to pole in tangents. He displays a strong sense of security in Christ's will, and that leads to an inner peace and tranquility. In an increasingly obsessive and compulsive world he stands out. For example, as this man of grace-energized balance looks at life in 21st Century America he testifies that he is not staking his life on the future financial stability and prosperity of this world, rather he is a 'pilgrim and stranger' here.

God has never wanted his children to find their security in the nation they live in. As believers we are not called to "save" America, any more than Paul was called to save Rome. Paul commanded us to "honor the King" but he never advised the believers to do what ever it took to 'save Rome'.

Jesus warned us not to clean up the outside of the cup, it is the inside (the hearts) of men and women that need changing. Grace-energized thinking makes us realize that the most powerful way we can impact our culture and nation is to be all that God asks us to be in His Word. As we live out our calling we impact the people in our world and see them changing one-by-one.

Life is temporary and grace-energized balance in life keeps that truth before our minds. When Paul was teaching the new saints in Thessalonica he warned them about two extremes—one group seems to have already checked out of society, stopped working and were just waiting for Christ's coming. Paul said, get back into the flow of life, work and plan like you are going to live out a full life, but do so looking up every day for Christ's return (II Thessalonians 3). The other group seems to have bought the false security of the world that promises 'peace and safety' (I Thes. 5:2-3). To both groups Paul says the same thing—sober up, live balanced!

A Balanced View of Troubles

Another strength of a grace-energized man is his emotional stability. God's Word makes it clear that every believer will go through times in life marked by distorted thought, blurred thinking, and temporary confusion. Part of the fall is living in a fallen body with a mind that needs to be often renewed. Usually these confusing times of blurred thoughts come when our lives get piled high with problems, troubles, unexpected crises or just plain exhaustion.

When ever you face confusing times of blurred thinking remember Elijah. Confusion reigned in his life and God recorded two amazing details in the New Testament that should always strengthen us in similar times:

- Elijah was one of the mightiest saints in God's Word (he was raptured to Heaven without seeing death, he came back to stand with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration, and he is billed as one of the greatest examples of faith-filled praying in step with God's Spirit.
- Elijah was just like us New Testament saints. Yes, in James 5:17, the pastor of the first New Testament church in Jerusalem, our Lord's own brother James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said that Elijah was a man with "a nature like ours".

So make an equation out of those two truths and what happens next. Elijah was very close to God, very powerfully full of faith and obedience plus we are just like him. That means we can relate to all the struggles he went through and that his great walk with the Lord did not keep him from having.

In I Kings 19:4 Elijah the mighty man of God (just like David the man after God's own heart)—came to a point where he couldn't cope with life. He got overwhelmed to the point that he felt like life was not worth living, he wanted to die and end all the pressures he couldn't stand any more. He felt all alone in standing for God, while God knew there were 7,000 others (v.18) who also were resisting the false worship of Baal. What can we see from the Elijah equation?

First we see that Elijah's bottoming out was a predictable outcome of the times he faced. For over three years Elijah had lived under the constant stress of Jezebel's evil campaign to rid the land of true believers. Then came the "mountain top" experience of Mt. Carmel and the dramatic victory God gave over the false prophets, answering from Heaven with fire. But after all that Elijah fell apart. He became totally unable to go on physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He actually says that he "had enough" in v. 4. Elijah was depressed and frozen.

So what did God do with him? This time of depression was temporary because God prescribed proper rest, proper nutrition, and quality time with God. As soon as those three areas were dealt with Elijah returns as the clear-minded, obedient servant of the Lord he had been before. It is very important to note that God brought a faithful friend who was loyal and close into Elijah's life also at this time, named Elisha (v. 21).

The lesson is that even the best of us will go through dark times of life, confusing times when we get "down" emotionally. In fact with certain circumstances such times can almost be predicted. But they are always momentary compared to the direction and focus of our lives which grace-energized balanced thinking reigns.

Anchored in the Storms of Life

So, Paul compares our spiritual lives to living in the midst of gale-force winds and powerful waves that beat against us each day--waves of materialistic desires, waves of sensual desires, waves of doubt, waves of fear, waves of discouragement. Each wave and the powerful winds are testing how well we are tied to God's promises. How well tied are you this morning?

One of the most moving moments of our recent journey to the Land of the Book was standing at the tomb of Herod the Great (hidden for 19 centuries and only found this past summer)--it was such sobering sight.

Built near Bethlehem into the side of a man-made mountain called the Herodian, Herod's Tomb and Palace are visible for miles around Jerusalem. Today all that can be seen from below is a monumental 30 foot wide staircase that led up to the tomb. We stood there and remembered one powerful truth—death takes away from each of us everything but the promises of God to which we cling by faith.

Herod was wealthy, powerful, possessing the largest palace ever built in the ancient world—and he took nothing with him out of this world when he died? Why? Because death takes everything away from us except the promises of God!

What promises of God are you holding onto this morning? If everything you have on earth was suddenly snatched from you—family, house, money, job, health, friends, and possessions, what would you have left? Take it a step further, because that is what death does. So think for just a moment about the instant of your death.

At the instant of death EVERYTHING is stripped away from us, including our body—except for one thing. We still have one thing we can hold onto at death and that is God's promises. They can never be taken away from us.

Knowing God's promises give us what the author of Hebrews calls an "anchor for our souls" (Hebrews 6:19). That is what keeps us from being blown around, dashed upon the rocks by every storm of life or confused by every new teaching we hear.

Lives anchored in the Word of God are stable, balanced and usable for God.

With that in mind, how many of His promises are you holding onto this morning?

Promises like "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Heb. 13:5), or "I go to prepare a place for you...I will come back and take you to be with me" (John 14:2-3), or how about this one "your sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:11), "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin" (I John 1:7).

The Bible is full of promises, made by God to us, through his Son—and a grace-energized man is holding onto enough of them that his life becomes visibly stable. Why

not bow your heart before God, look inside and do a promise inventory. Quietly repeat to the Lord in your mind what you find that you are holding onto from His Word.

Those promises can never be taken from you.

Those promises are the anchor for you soul.

Those promises help you maintain balance in an increasingly unstable world.

Grace Energized Men: Living the Unintoxicated Life

Titus 2:1-2

God is looking to train a generation of unintoxicated men to lead and model Christ's righteousness in an intoxicated world. God wants men who do not succumb to the intoxicating influences that dull their mind. Any desire, unrestrained by God's grace can become an intoxicating idol. Things like: sober: comfort, convenience, security, work, sports, and amusements can be as deadly and powerful as addictions to alcohol, drugs, and sex.

That is exactly where Peter was when he used the very same word Paul used in Titus 2:2 when he called for grace-energized men of temperance. We are looking at the first word used by God to describe the grace-energized older men of the faith in Titus 2:2—temperate.

Peter, writing near the end of his earthly ministry explained that we as God's people, are called to be separate in mind from those who are not God's, holy-minded in an unholy thinking world, living in each generation of Christ's Church--according to the standards of our High and only King Jesus.

Living the Balanced Life According to Peter

To explain the grace-energized life of balance in an unbalanced world, Peter surrounds this word temperate (nephalios) with a series of commands we must heed if we love the Lord and want to be useful to Him.

1 Peter 1:13-2:11 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and

abides forever, 24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, NKJV

Pray.

Grace-energized Men Understand that they are Pilgrims

Look back at that last verse we read (I Peter 2:11). The grace-energized man never gets intoxicated by the error of the world that this world is my home and this is what I live for. Rather his life is anchored in God's promises to which he clings (as we saw last time) and his heart has an anchor stretching into Heaven (Hebrews 6:19-20) that tugs him daily toward setting his affections on things above not here on the Earth.

Peter explains for us the balanced-mind that God wants and that Paul instructs Titus to train up. Peter uses five, very targeted exhortations, in I Peter 1:13-16.

This passage as it was written by Peter has 5 exhortations in the form of 2 imperative commands surrounded by three participles. The NIV renders them all as commands, and that is the direction we will go this evening. The "sober mind" or "temperate mind" that we are examining is a mind that is governed by these truths.

- (1) **"gird up the loins of your mind"** (NKJV) or **"Prepare your minds for action"** (NIV). In Bible times men often wore long, flowing robes. When strenuous work or running was required they would pull up and cinch into their belt that robe to make what we would call shorts. Obedience is a conscious act of the will. Christians in conflict need a tough-minded holiness that is ready for action. The ancient practice of gathering up one's robes when needing to move in a hurry; here, it is metaphorically applied to one's thought process. The

meaning is to pull in all the loose ends of one's thinking, by rejecting the hindrances of the world and focusing on the future grace of God (cf. Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:2).

- (2) **"be sober"** (NKJV) or **"Be self-controlled"** (NIV) Is our word from Titus 2:2 is word from Titus 2:2 via the verb *νηφρομ* ("be sober") which is always used figuratively in the New Testament. This word describes a person free from every form of mental and spiritual "drunkenness" or excess; and one who resists the control of outside circumstances. God wants believers to be directed from within. As we've seen, this form of spiritual sober-mindedness includes the ideas of steadfastness, self-control, clarity of mind, and moral decisiveness. The sober Christian is correctly in charge of his priorities and not intoxicated with the various allurements of the world.

"The opposite of "be sober-minded" is "frenzy, madness." It is the Greek word mania, which has come into our English vocabulary via psychology. If we are sober-minded, we will be intellectually sound and not off on a tangent because of some "new" interpretation of the Scriptures.

We will also face things realistically and be free from delusions. The sober-minded saint will have a purposeful life and not be drifting, and he will exercise restraint and not be impulsive. He will have "sound judgment" not only about doctrinal matters, but also about the practical affairs of life.¹⁰

- (3) **"rest your hope fully"** (NKJV) or **"Set your hope fully"** (NIV). This balanced mind and holy life demands great determination. A believer's hope is to be set completely, unwaveringly, and without reservation solely by faith upon **God's grace**. Only His grace can energize an anchored mind.
- (4) **"not conforming yourselves to"** (NKJV) or **"do not conform to"** (NIV). Here we see Peter using that famous word from Romans 12:1 (*suschematidzo* "not squeezed into the mold of") **the evil desires** of their past sinful lives. Rather **as obedient children** (lit., "children of obedience") they were to mold their characters to God's Word and the renewed mind's desires implanted through the Spirit of God.
- (5) "be holy **in all your conduct"** (NKJV) or "all you do" (NIV). Grace-energized living brings a denial of the old life (their former **ignorance**), and a new walk in the Spirit that is set apart to the desires and wishes of God who gave us new birth and called us to be His own.

What would be one the strongest intoxicant this world has to offer? To understand, let's use the Bible to illustrate for us the dangers we face from this world. One of the strongest tugs on most peoples lives is a spirit of independence. Most humans, and even believers, seek to live as independently as we possibly can. We ponder personal goals, personal dreams, and cultivate personal ambitions—often without even realizing that as we do so that we are often just doing what we have decided is right. Note the very last verse of Judges with me.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. NKJV

Without a life anchored by God's Word self-determination and self-driven lives are the norm. Think about what you know about Israel entering the Promised Land. As the Jews entered Canaan they found it unbelievably lush, green, and productive. God had warned them repeatedly about the evil of the people of the land, the Canaanite pagans who God asked them to drive out and destroy.

Rather than get rid of them, Israel slowly began to think that maybe they knew more than God. Maybe their gods made the Land so fruitful. Slowly Israel conformed to think and act like the Canaanites. This whole decline is explained in Psalm 106. Look there with me at Psalm 106:34-36:

They did not destroy the peoples, Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, 35 But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works; 36 They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. NKJV

Canaanites seemed nice, they looked harmless, and they made great neighbors. But they did have bad habits, they did worship fertility gods and engage in sexual promiscuity, and they did reject the truth of God...but maybe the Canaanite gods really did bring prosperity and success. So Israel mingled and blended in with them.

God's Word warns us that each of us who know Jesus are...

Living Among Canaanites Today

The Canaanite snare to Israel that is played out in the book of Judges is probably a good picture of the autonomous lifestyles many American professing Christians are living these days.

The online source for many Americans named Wikipedia really does capture the essence of the current American's thinking:

"In general, the American dream can be defined as being the opportunity and freedom for all citizens to achieve their goals and become rich and famous if only they work hard enough."

This statement of the "American Dream" is the most frank definition of what may actually be our deeply rooted national form of idolatry. As believers we have become so American that we think God and the American dream somehow fit together. We are so steeped in our culture and life that we fail to fear the "Canaanite" danger all around us. We are in the very same dangerous place as Israel in the times of the Judges.

Our society offers us all manner of consumer goods, pleasure, travel and enjoyment, the good things of life--but we are asked to be "tolerant" of (and eventually to buy into)

the pagan idolatry which is everywhere around us. And when we do so, and the more we do so—then the terrible sickness and blindness of Revelation 3 takes hold of our lives.

Look with me at Christ's last letter to His church, the ones in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:14-22 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—18 "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' " NKJV

We live in the most intoxicating time in history. We live around the constant allurements of wealth, comfort and the false promises of security. When we give in to the "Canaanite virus" we slowly detach from the closeness to Christ and His church He calls us to and we drift around seeking our goals, plans, and ambitions.

One of the clearest signs of the Canaanite sickness in the church is the growing detached lifestyles we pursue. Listen to this piercing analysis of one very careful thinker.

"The fascinating book Bowling Alone by Robert D. Putnam (Simon & Schuster 2000) documents the erosion of social groups, associations, connectivity, social support groups, and close personal friendships in recent decades. We are increasingly a nation of disconnected, isolated, lonely individuals.

This is especially bad news for the church of Jesus Christ which is called to bond together locally on an intimate basis--closer to one another than one finds in most ordinary family groups. For the church the old saying "united we stand, divided we fall" is especially relevant. As our culture and American society fall apart, it is most important for us Christians to take vigorous steps in the opposite direction from the trends in our culture! If we each deal with the microcosm of our individual lives under God, we can leave the repair of the macrocosm to God.

In reading the letters of the Apostle Paul one can't help note the very large number of Christian brothers the Apostle knew, prayed for, and cared for--even though they were scattered about all over the Roman Empire. They were all "family." We see Paul frequently stopping to pray for them or send them greetings though they lived hundreds of miles apart. It was not exactly as if he had nothing else to do! Today it is not likely we have any clue about our Christians in other congregations even when neighboring churches are just down the block. And next

door neighbors? Many of us have no clue about them at all.

When the collective spiritual standards of a local church slowly slip away, the flame in individual hearts dies as well. There is a cure to this situation of gradual decline in the Christian community, but it depends on individuals who will resist the status quo, begin repenting on behalf of the rest of all of us, and renewing our own close daily walk with God by rearranging our priorities.

God has not given us Christians a plot of land, a temple, an earthly inheritance--things He did give to Israel in perpetuity. But He has given each of us a spiritual sphere of influence--the kingdom of our individual lives. Our invisible influence amongst our families, our friends, at church, at work, thrives only when we place ourselves under the authority and rule of Jesus, the King of kings. When Jesus rules in and through us, living His endless life through us, a lasting legacy is laid up for us in heaven--even though our position in the present world system may be obscure or unknown (Hebrews 11:32-40)¹¹.

How do we avoid the Canaanite tendencies of the "American Dream"? The best way to start is to remember again the seven ways Paul taught us to protect our Biblical contentment from I Timothy 6. Here they are again, if these aren't yet noted, why don't you jot them into your Bibles?

1. **Always remember things are only temporary.** 1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
2. **Only seek necessities, wait for the rest.** 1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.
3. **Avoid a consuming desire for prosperity.** 1 Timothy 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
4. **Flee materialism.** 1 Timothy 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.
5. **Cling to eternal life.** 1 Timothy 6:12, 15, 19 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.
6. **Pin your hopes on God.** 1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. **(I hope we have enough to...I hope that this investment will...I hope this job will last...)**

¹¹ Lambert Dolphin email NT #80 10/27/07

7. **Give until it hurts.** 1 Timothy 6:18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, and willing to share.

Grace-energized men live a balanced life while surrounded by people who are driven back and forth by fads, obsessions, trivial pursuits, lusts, and emptiness. He stays true to the Lord while living in the midst of the Canaanites of this world.

He is temperate, the first of six character traits that describe a man of God, a man God uses, and a life that God rewards. I challenge each of you older men in this congregation to heed God's call to maintain a balanced life in an increasingly Canaanite culture.

APPENDIX: A Balanced View of Troubles

Another strength of a grace-energized mind is stability. God's Word makes it clear that every believer will go through times in life marked by distorted thought, blurred thinking, and temporary confusion. Part of the fall is living in a fallen body with a mind that needs to be often renewed. Usually these confusing times of blurred thoughts come when our lives get piled high with problems, troubles, unexpected crises or just plain exhaustion.

When ever you face confusing times of blurred thinking remember Elijah. Confusion reigned in his life and God recorded two amazing details in the New Testament that should always strengthen us in similar times:

- Elijah was one of the mightiest saints in God's Word (he was raptured to Heaven without seeing death, he came back to stand with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration, and he is billed as one of the greatest examples of faith-filled praying in step with God's Spirit.
- Elijah was just like us New Testament saints. Yes, in James 5:17, the pastor of the first New Testament church in Jerusalem, our Lord's own brother James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said that Elijah was a man with "a nature like ours".

So make an equation out of those two truths and what happens next. Elijah was very close to God, very powerfully full of faith and obedience plus we are just like him. That means we can relate to all the struggles he went through and that his great walk with the Lord did not keep him from having.

In I Kings 19:4 Elijah the mighty man of God (just like David the man after God's own heart)—came to a point where he couldn't cope with life. He got overwhelmed to the point that he felt like life was not worth living, he wanted to die and end all the pressures he couldn't stand any more. He felt all alone in standing for God, while God knew there were 7,000 others (v.18) who also were resisting the false worship of Baal. What can we see from the Elijah equation?

First that Elijah's bottoming out was a predictable outcome of the times he faced. For over three years Elijah had lived under the constant stress of Jezebel's evil campaign to rid the land of true believers. Then came the "mountain top" experience of Mt. Carmel and the dramatic victory God gave over the false prophets, answering from Heaven with fire. But after all that Elijah fell apart. He became totally unable to go on physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He actually says that he "had enough" in v. 4. Elijah was depressed and frozen.

So what did God do with him? This time of depression was temporary because God prescribed proper rest, proper nutrition, and quality time with God. As soon as those three areas were dealt with Elijah returns as the clear-minded, obedient servant of the Lord he had been before. It is very important to note that God brought a faithful friend who was loyal and close into Elijah's life also at this time, named Elisha (v. 21).

The lesson is that even the best of us will go through dark times of life, confusing times when we get “down” emotionally. In fact with certain circumstances such times can almost be predicted. But they are always momentary compared to the direction and focus of our lives which grace-energized balanced thinking reigns.

A Balanced View of Life

Grace-energized men are balanced emotionally. He doesn't swing from pole to pole in emotional tangents. He displays a strong sense of security in Christ's will that leads to an inner peace and tranquility. In an increasingly obsessive and compulsive world he stands out. For example, as this man of grace-energized balance looks at life in 21st Century America he testifies that he is not staking his life on the future prosperity of this world, rather he is a ‘pilgrim and stranger’ here. God has never wanted his children to find their security in the nation they live in. As believers we are not called to “save” America, any more than Paul was called to save Rome. Paul commanded us to “honor the King” but he never advised the believers to do what ever it took to ‘save Rome’.

Jesus warned us not to clean up the outside of the cup, it is the inside (the hearts) of men and women that need changing. Grace-energized thinking makes us realize that the most powerful way we can impact our culture and nation is to be all that God asks us to be in His Word. As we live out our calling we impact the people in our world and see them changing one-by-one.

Life is temporary and grace-energized balance in life keeps that truth before our minds. When Paul was teaching the new saints in Thessalonica he warned them about two extremes—one group seems to have already checked out of society, stopped working and were just waiting for Christ's coming. Paul said, get back into the flow of life, work and plan like you are going to live out a full life, but do so looking up every day for Christ's return (II Thessalonians 3). The other group seems to have bought the false security of the world that promises ‘peace and safety’ (I Thes. 5:2-3)

Paul identified four objectives for Titus as he taught the older men:

7. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD

Stay Sober –

Don't Inhale.

Now you ask, what is the poison? Can it be analyzed for content? Yes, clearly... Five deadly elements make up this killer poison gas [Chuck Colson has found these five:].

Poison gas # 1

Secularism

Secularism - As an adjective, sec = "of this world" or "of the present age".

- ✓ It's the idea of life consists of merely the 'here and now', seize the moment, 'grab the gusto', only 60 around once...
- ✓ The results or effects are: instant gratification needed in sex, food, cars, vacation, clothes, drugs, things.... It's the motivation for all crime: "If I want what I want when I want it, why not take it!"
- ✓ It's the exaltation and desperate lunge for the momentary at the expense of the eternal.

Poison gas # 2

deconstructionism

Deconstructionism is to make society Antihistorical:

- ✓ This is the curse of our schools. It is currently called "revisionism".
- ✓ No objective truth, so-
- ✓ No objective meaning to language, literature, etc.

Result: look at the movies:

- ✓ Dancing with Wolves - dismantles history and rewrites it to suit secularist.
- ✓ Robin Hood - Costner finds the skill of Azeem in medicine, science and ethics to be superior. But, where did a Moslem come from in Sherwood Forest? It's rewriting history until it's eroded to meaninglessness.

Did you know Genesis is history? God wants you to know how you and everything else got here! Sin, government, the family and all! Have you been carelessly sniffing this poison?

Poison gas # 3

Naturalism

Naturalism (not humanism - we are past the man centered, now it is nature centered!)
If evolution were true then all life came from the same cosmic soup so owls, whales, trees and people are of equal value!

WATCH OUT. Creationism was a doctrine God established!

Poison gas # 4:

Utopianism

Utopianism - better and better. All are good basically, but it's why: Hitler and holocaust, Two world wars, Genocide, serial killers, rape, greed, horror and undesirable evil? Because all of us are victims.

WATCH OUT for blaming how you are on your parents, education, on Vietnam, poverty, etc. Start with real problem of personal sin...

Poison gas # 5

Pragmatism

Pragmatism - If it works it's okay! Therefore, Satan has made moral relativism the law so all humanity seems to have both feet firmly planted in mid-air and is lost in the cosmos without meaning or purpose.... What's the solution?

1 Pet. 5 (turn there please)

V. 5-11 Divide into three crucial points of truth.

V. 8-9 The warning (watch out)

1. "sober" - don't inhale, don't get intoxicated with the: moral relativism - not relative but absolutes; I think...my rights. Materialism - not here but heaven; hear Thou...me-ism - no me but Christ; me first. Secularism - not this moment but the eternal; live for now.
2. "stay awake": be vigilant, Rev. 3:2, watch for Christ; Phil. 3:20; Rom. 13:11-14; I Thess. 3:13.
3. "stand firm": resist, Eph. 6:13 - withstand; James 4:17 - resist devil; don't yield to the poison, breathe the air of heaven. Turn off TV, stereo, radio, and read, read, read. Pray, pray, pray.

Grace Energized Men: Getting Serious About God in An Amused World Titus 2:1-2

Are you reverent this morning? Reverence is feeling the “weight” of God in every part of our life and mind.

The word “glory” as in the Glory of God in the Old Testament is actually the word “heaviness”. God is so great, and those who reverence Him feel the weight of His holiness and glory. God is looking for believers who will revere Him, reverence Him, and live a life that shows the glory or weightiness of God touching and affecting every part of their life.

As you open to Titus 2, we are in the midst of an intense study of what God wants in men. In v.2, God starts with the older (50+ year old men) and gives them six indicators of the spiritual maturity He wants and uses. These six choices are possible when we ask, and surrender to God’s grace. That surrendered obedience is called a grace-energized life.

God asks men who want to serve Him to be reverent, serious enough about God to do what pleases Him and abstain from what does not please Him. As we see the Word of God is clear, the Lord has revealed His desires, there is no mystery about what he expects...

God has a Specific Desire For Every Believer Age 50+

There is no more vital Scripture for every man who knows Christ personally than this verse. God asks us to either respond to Him or realize that in going our own way and not His—we are wasting our life. Especially for every man 50 and over these verses put the rest of our lives into sharp focus.

Because God knows how strong the world, the flesh, and the devil can be—He offers his pathway to maximize the rapidly passing days of our lives. How can godly men keep from wasting the most precious years of life? By grabbing onto the grace-energized changes God wants to make inside of you, so that you will be the man He can use to maximize His Kingdom, purposes and plan for this world!

We are on the second of six qualities are to become the life-priorities for grace-energized men.

*Titus 2:2 "Teach the older men to be sober, **reverent...**"*

First we saw last time that God asks men to choose to obey Him by...

8. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD v. 2a "sober" is the Greek word *nephalios*

God wants matured, godly older men in Christ's church to live a life that exemplifies Jesus to a watching world. These men are to model the life God wants, to encourage younger men, intentionally take time to mentor some of the younger men. These older men challenge the younger to abandon the temptations of youth such as reckless living, impatience with decision making, thoughtless communication, and the unreliability that often characterizes young people. In other words, for them to maintain a life balanced by God's Word in an unbalanced world.

Then we find the second quality in v.2 which is the word "reverent" (NKJV) and also rendered "grave" (KJV), "worthy of respect" (NIV), and "dignified" (NAS). This word communicates the sense of...

9. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT GOD IN AN AMUSED WORLD v.2b "reverent" is the word *semnos*.

God wants older men who model what its like to live life seriously. These men think deeply about God in an amused, shallow-thinking culture. These men never trivialize what God says is important; and live a life that doesn't ignore God. That means they are not entertained by sensuality, never amused by vulgarity, and don't treat God's Word superficially.

This man won't laugh at others troubles, nor mock their weaknesses. As an older person who has seen hardship, misfortune, and injustice—life is real, pain is serious, and time with people is important.

Older men in the faith who understands the brevity of life, the gravity of God's Word, and the reality of eternity, know that there are...

Dangerous Distractions Godly Men Avoid

These grace-energized men, living in a sin-energized world are God's plan. God is on the lookout for men who are sold-out, full-hearted, true-seekers of Him. And here is the reason why—God has said that the "last days" in which we live, are terribly distracting days to live for Him.

Please turn with me to the world that God warns us to stay away from:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers,

without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away (present middle imperative)! NKJV

The end of days will be filled with people who are: self-absorbed, money-lovers, self-promoters, contemptuous, evil-speaking, disregarding parents, thankless, shameless in desires, affectionless, irreconcilable, their tongues used by the Devil, enslaved to lusts, savage, good-hating, traitorous, maniacal, inflated by pride, self-worshipping, and empty-hearted—keep yourself away from them! (My paraphrase)

Pray

God said people do not take Him or His Word seriously; rather they become completely wrapped up in self. They will disregard everything God says is important and turn away from Him into sensuality and rebellion. They destroy everyone in their way, live superficially, and are consumed with self-loving pleasures.

For centuries the church has bred deep-thinking, self-sacrificing men who led the way in the home, at work, and in ministry. But that is fast declining. What has decimated the men of the church? What spiritual enemy has sapped the church of its mighty men?

The Great Neutralizer

I have been teaching God's Word for over 30 years. I have watched those I teach over these years struggle with "the great neutralizer." When they go home from a Bible study, fellowship, class, or worship service, they sit down in front of the single most powerful mind-altering device on the planet—and within half an hour have forgotten almost everything they had just learned. What is that mind-altering device? The images and powerful messages of today's powerful media: television, MTV, video gaming, the internet and movies!

Professor Neil Postman, author of *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, reports that between the ages of six and eighteen, the average American spends some 15,000 to 16,000 hours in front of the TV or computer, whereas he spends only 13,000 hours in school. Postman says that during the first 20 years of an American's life, they will see over one million commercials, at the rate of about 1,000 per week!¹²

Media's effects are infamous. People who frequently watch TV have the following: a shortened attention span, reduced linguistic power, and a limited capacity for abstraction. Thus they struggle to think about God; they struggle to talk about God; they struggle to think about heaven; and they struggle to grow in Christ. What a negative impact!

What happens to a man whose mind is not musing (meditating) upon the greatness of God? A mind that doesn't muse gets amused, carried along, floating with the current of the world going away from God. This doesn't mean that a believer immediately goes

¹² Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (USA: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985), pp. 104-105.

against God; rather, it is a slow process of the Lord having less and less influence over the priorities of life. One writer expressed this condition well as he said:

"It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He has lost his saliency for human life.

Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider:

- *him less interesting than television,*
- *his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence,*
- *his judgment no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and*
- *his truth less compelling than the advertisers' sweet fog of flattery and lies.*

That is weightlessness. It is a condition we have assigned him after having nudged him out to the periphery of our secularized life.... Weightlessness tells us nothing about God but everything about ourselves, about our condition, about our psychological disposition to exclude God from our reality¹³."

God becomes weightless because we are...

Drowning Out the Holy Spirit's Voice

God speaks to us through His Word in what the Bible describes as a 'still small voice'.

God doesn't shout, nor does He push. He whispers and waits.

And what affect does daily media exposure have upon minds? One word—desensitization. Our culture keeps testing the waters and bringing new immoral depths to the screens of America. All the while, those watching are becoming desensitized. When that happens, we are headed away from God.

If your mind is being exposed to constant deadly spiritual viruses via digital media consider this ominous checklist:

- **Watch godlessness** — it will callous you to not seek godliness.
- **Watch sensuality** — it will defile you away from holiness.
- **Watch violence** — it will desensitize you to neglect Christlikeness.
- **Watch evil** — it will distance you from God.
- **Watch worldliness** — it will discourage your appetite for God's Word.
- **Watch Satan's mind** — you will forfeit Christ's mind in you!

Let me affirm and repeat what one pastor from Chicago wrote over ten years ago:

¹³ David Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a world of fading dreams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 88-90.

I am aware of the wise warnings against using words like "all," "every," and "always" in what I say. Absolutizing one's pronouncements is dangerous. But I'm going to do it anyway. Here it is:

It is impossible for any Christian who spends the bulk of his evenings, month after month, week upon week, day in and day out watching the major TV networks or contemporary videos to have a Christian mind. This is always true of all Christians in every situation! A biblical mental program cannot coexist with worldly programming¹⁴.

Today, choose to cultivate the mind God has willed us to have! There has never been a more crucial time for Christ's church, because we now daily face...

A Tsunami Of Sin

"Right now television has the culture by its throat", said Neil Postman. According to an article in Time magazine, the average viewer sees more than 9,000 scenes of suggested sex or innuendo on prime-time TV in one year. Is music any better? No, according to media analysts, secular music is filled with..."violence, the occult, rebellion, drug abuse, promiscuity, and homosexuality are constant themes," says U.S. News and World Report. Couple this with the fact that teens "listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music between the seventh and 12th grades alone just 500 hours less than the total time they spend in school over 12 years" and, well, you get the picture¹⁵.

We are being swept away by a society that, like the fool in Psalm 14:1, believes that "there is no God." I am not describing these evils so that everyone will burn their TV's and computers, and go hide in the mountains. Rather, it's to give you just a sampling of the powerful influences toward godlessness we all must contend with daily.

In the years ahead, we will live increasingly in the fictional worlds of human imaginations. We will turn on our virtual-reality systems and lie back, experiencing heavenly pleasures of sight and sound in a snug electronic nest. The real world will almost be totally blotted out from our experience.¹⁶

Movies continue their slide in the direction of violence, nudity, and objectionable language. Many blockbuster movies now have elements of all three. The tendency in this direction has been mainstreamed and seems to hardly elicit a yawn.

Children at younger and younger ages are drawn into the movie/video habit, especially with the common use of videos for baby-sitting. As parents become more overloaded, it is simply too tempting to put in a video and place the children before the set. They are well behaved and even entranced. And for busy, stressed-out, exhausted parents, there is nothing so attractive as quiet children—unless we seriously...

¹⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2001), pp. 71-82.

¹⁵ Charles R. Swindoll, *You and Your Child*, Anaheim, California: Insight for Living, 1993, p.97

¹⁶ Richard A. Swenson, M.D. *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998. Pgs 137-160

Consider the Spiritual Effects of Media Exposure

The ocean of media we sail through each day is slowly seeping into our spiritual operating systems. Before our eyes in the last generation the media has changed societal thought and behavior in profound ways. Here are only a few elements we can observe from this ever present negative spiritual influence. The following list was first published by a Christian doctor in Florida.¹⁷

- **Media Resets the Moral Acceptability Threshold:** what used to offend no longer does.
- **Media Resets the Shock Threshold:** what used to shock no longer does.
- **Media Resets the Boredom Threshold:** Children who are used to watching media on a regular basis can often feel “lonely” after just a few moments of their absence.
- **Media Results in Addictive Behavior:** It has become culturally acceptable to use media to keep kid’s attention, so that from their earliest memory children are conditioned to watch, enjoy, and want movies, music, and gaming. Because media has come to define our world, taking the media away is like having our world taken away. The absence of media makes people feel like nothing is left—because media has become so intertwined with all their relationships, comforts, enjoyments, and security.
- **Media Increases Exposure to Immorality:** The pervasiveness of media leads to an almost unavoidable exposure to sexually explicit material at every-younger ages. Teenagers watch an average of three hours of TV per day, listen to music for an additional one to two hours, and often have access to R-rated movies and even pornography long before they are adults. Add to that the thousands of commercials per year each teenager in America sees with implicit messages that sex is fun, sex is sexy and everyone out there is having sex but you; and you have a potentially life-dominating influence¹⁸.

So, this tsunami of sins crashes across us each day eroding God's Word from our lives, and bits of evil seeping in here and there. The question every man needs to ask is...

How Can I Reverse the Erosion of a Spirit-Filled Mind?

The only way to cultivate a Word-filled mind is by obedience to God’s command that we mortify our lusts, as Colossians 3:5, 8 tells us.

*Therefore **put to death** your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 8 But now you yourselves are to **put off** all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. NKJV*

¹⁷ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, Pgs 137-160.

¹⁸ Victor C. Strachburger, “Turning in to Teenagers.” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1997, p. 18.

To mortify means “to throttle sin and crush it in our lives, sapping it of its strength, rooting it out, and depriving it of its influence.” Mortification involves the cultivation of new habits of godliness, combined with the elimination of old sinful habits from our behavior.

The only way to recover from an eroded mind, a mind that has gotten neutralized, where evil seeps in a bit more each day, is to pursue personal sanctification:

- 1.

Grace Energized Men: Renewing a Reverent Mind

Titus 2:1-2

God's constant call to His servants in His Word is for their minds to be His dwelling place. That is why Paul called the early church to begin training older men in the godly habit of living reverently for God. That is the second character quality laid down for grace-energized older men in Titus 2:2.

Grace-energized men think and live reverently as they walk through each day of their lives. They are men who try by choice and conviction to worship nothing but God. Reverent men understand that nothing in life is neutral, nothing in life is harmless. Everything in life is either for God or against Him. Everything is either promoting God's Glory or opposing it.

Men, how are you doing at guarding your heart? Your heart (as the mind is referred to in the Bible) is the entry point of God's grace, the communication channel for worship and prayer, and the spiritual battle field. Is your mind daily placed under God's control—or not?

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. NKJV

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. NIV

A mind given to God is reverent, and God wants reverent men. Men regarding Him with awe, devoted to honoring and obeying Him—while living in a sin-energized world. Reverent men think much and often about God. Remembering what God's Word says: 'as a man thinks...so is he' (Pr. 23:7)

And since everything starts and ends with our minds, these reverent men start by keeping their minds under God's control, and that involves a life-long response to God's call to...

Guard your Mind

Reverent Minds are guarded minds. More than anything else God wants to saturate, influence, dominate and control your mind. If God has your mind--He will also have your body, your emotions, your appetites, your time, and your money . . .

Whatever controls your mind, controls you. The battle each day is for our minds. At salvation Christ began to dwell in our minds, and we were given the duty to guard, protect, and properly nourish our minds.

The world, our flesh, and the Devil all seek to neutralize our godly minds. Grace-energized men of reverence know that Christ wants to inhabit their thoughts; and they never forget Him as they assess the daily patterns and habits of life.

How does Satan neutralize believers? He attacks their unguarded minds. Please stand with me and listen to Peter's impassioned plea to all believers in I Peter 5:8-9:

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith... NKJV

Satan devours believers by way of unguarded minds. And never before has he had so many ways to do so. Take our current habits of entertainment.

According to media expert Dr. Ted Baehr, teenagers watch fifty movies a year in the theater and view another fifty a year on video. Eighty percent of these movies are PG-13 or R-rated.¹⁹

Brain researchers conclude that we have stored *three trillion “videotape” images in our brain* by the time we are thirty years old. Sadly, there is no delete button for our minds, and once the images are there, we must then live with the spiritual consequences of those stored images. Given the known content of much of the media that is being recorded into the minds of Americans, irrevocably loaded into the memory banks of our minds we need to do whatever it takes to renew and purify our minds.

⇒ What images, words, and feelings are stored among those three trillion memory video clips in your mind this morning?

⇒ And have you pondered what can Satan do with them?

Getting serious about God-honoring, reverent thinking means a mind that is guarded and purged of anything that invites Satan’s devouring powers to be at work. Here is a test to see what happens when every part of our life is not reverently God’s.

Symptoms of an Unguarded Mind

There are three regular ways that an unguarded mind gets attacked, and these are the symptoms of a mind being devoured by Satan.

1. **Have you lost your Spiritual Appetite?** When a believer is feeding their mind with spoiled, tainted, or poisoned food, they begin to show these symptoms:
 - Is it hard to read the Word after you watch certain movies?
 - Has your music collection become more precious than your Bible?
 - Do you seem to NEVER get anything out of the Bible or church anymore?
 - On any given day do you feel unable to stop thinking, imagining, and replaying thoughts that displease God?
 - Does God feel distant as His Spirit is grieved by your doubts about His Word, and your behavior as His child?
 - **Turn to Isaiah 33:15.** Are you often entertained by action packed movies or games that feature people shot, blown up, and blasted away—as well as grisly, bloodied action heroes that get beaten, tortured and end up taking out whole armies of opponents?
 - God says specifically for us not to enjoying looking upon gratuitous violence. Satan loves to kill and destroy. Who are you honoring by your movie watching and gaming—Satan or God? Beware of Satan the destroyer addicting you to violence. *Isaiah 33:15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil.*
 - As believers entrusted with guarding Christ's dwelling place in our minds, we should be very uncomfortable around horror images, sensual images, and occult images. And avoid capturing

¹⁹ Adapted and quoted from Ted Baehr, “Miracle on Main Street?” *Focus on the Family*, April 1995, p. 2

into our long-term mental storage movies that are foolish, course, filthy, and dishonoring the holiness of our Great God who lives within.

- **Solution: repent of any tainted or spiritually poisonous videotapes recorded in your mind, and ask God to fill you anew with hunger and thirst after the pure milk His Word.**

2. **Have you lost your Conviction over sin?** Here are symptoms of spiritual insensitivity:

- Have you slowly started to question whether some sins are really not that bad? Did words that used to offend you no longer offend you?
- Do images that used to trouble your conscience as displeasing to God no longer trouble you?
- Do places you used to feel dishonored the Lord no longer feel that way?
- Are you sitting in the gates of Sodom like Lot with evil just playing out in front of your eyes—without your righteous soul being vexed?
- Does the crowd you run with slowly get you further and further away from God? Is it harder and harder to say no to sin?
- Is there an endless list in your mind of things you wish you could get that others have? Like cars, houses, clothes, electronic gear, trips, money, and so on? Do you sit and try to find ways to get those things? Are you willing to sacrifice for them? Do you ever sacrifice time with God, time with the saints gathered at church, time in His Word, time in prayer—in order to get those things? Do the desires for those things sometimes push God right out of your thoughts?
- **Turn with me to the last verse of I John (5:21).** Idolatry is ANYTHING that takes God's rightful place in the life of His children. If work, entertainment, money-making, pleasure-seeking, collection-gathering, body building, beauty-enhancing, and so on have begun to erode God's place in your life that is idolatry. *1 John 5:21 Little children, keep (imperative²⁰; 'guard, protect, avoid, shun flee from') yourselves from idols. Amen. NKJV*
- **Solution: Repent of allowing yourself to get insensitive to God, and grieving His Spirit. Ask for a fresh cleansing and filling of His Spirit.**

3. **Have you lost your Longing for God's Presence?** Here are symptoms of being spiritually lukewarm:

- Have the godless entertainers in music and movies become heroes that you seek after and enjoy? If so, God says you are corrupting your mind (*1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*).
- Are you slowly accepting defeat in some areas of your life because it is just too hard to obey the Lord, flee from sin, and seek to discipline your body, mind, and emotions because of the torrent of sin that is all around us each day?
- **Turn to I John 2:15-17.** If we believe God's Word is the ultimate truth we are guided closer each day towards what God loves; if we are strangers to His truth then we are drawn further away from what pleases Him, glorifies Him, and magnifies Him. There are only two sources of wisdom—above and below (James 3). Where is yours coming from? Do you know how to test truth, verify truth, and confirm truth? Only God's Word is the unfailing source of all truth needed for pleasing God. If you are not being filled by God through His Word with His truth—then you are being filled with counterfeit truth, not from God, nor pleasing Him.
- Loving the world (anything that doesn't please God) is the sure road to confusion, corruption, and emptiness. *1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh (cravings of the body), the lust of the eyes (lustings of the eyes), and the pride of life (boastings of the mouth)—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. NKJV*
- **Solution: love God with all your heart, love God with everything you do, tell Him the most important thing is loving Him.**

²⁰ This same word phylaxo is used of shepherds watching their sheep (Luke 2:8) and Herod's soldiers guarding Peter (Acts 12:4)

This morning if your appetite for God's Word is waning, if your sensitivity to sin is lessening, and your passionate pursuit of God is a thing of the past-- I urge you to re-examine what you are thinking each day in life and why.

Hold up all of your habits, desires, hobbies, spare time, recreation, sports, pursuits, collections, appetites, and all else ***to the scrutiny of God's Word***. And then consider...

How to Reverse the Erosion of a God-controlled Mind

The only way to recover from an eroded mind, a mind that has gotten neutralized, where evil seeps in a bit more each day, is to pursue personal sanctification:

- 2. Grace-energized Men Abstain from Lust Promoting Activities** (1 Peter 2:11). If there are specific areas you know right now are sin, you must repent of them. **Stop now!**

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, NKJV

Grace Energized Men: Reversing the Erosion of A Reverent Mind Titus 2:1-2

God offers to all of us the incredible power of the Spirit to free us from the shackles of sin. Everything I will share this evening about personal sanctification can only be accomplished through the grace of God, by the Spirit of God—when you as a believer choose to obey.

God does not force our choices in personal sanctification, nor does He make them for us. He simply unleashes His power when we seek to obey Him. That power is described clearly in Romans 8, the premier chapter in God's Word about personal sanctification. Reversing the erosion of our minds by the world around us can be reversed by simple choices to obey in the power of the Spirit.

And what happens when we obey? We discover that the Spirit of God can set us free. I like to call Him the Liberating Spirit of God. Look with me at:

*Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
NKJV*

He lifts us above the law of sin. In 1983, as I led a team to minister in New Delhi, India we flew on Air India. Air India has a reputation for over filling the planes with people and cargo until it groans with the weight. At the New Delhi airport, we raced down almost every inch of the runway with cows at nearly eye level, until at last we felt our plane shudder, slightly groan and lift away from the ground. Our 899,490 pound Boeing-747 had been earthbound to nearly the end of the runway until a higher law than gravity, the law of lift took over and snatched us off the ground.

Just like the law of lift, aerodynamically teaches that the faster the plane moves down the runway the sooner the lift of the wings tear away the chains of gravity. So the Spirit of God teaches us that the faster we develop our grace-energized resistance to sin, the sooner we tear away at the anchors of sin and the flesh chaining us to mere earthliness, and we begin to regularly soar to even greater levels of fellowship with Jesus!

We are in the midst of our look at Titus 2, grace-energized men. The second quality described the man God seeks—he is an older man who model what its like to live life reverently. This man thinks deeply about God in an amused, shallow-thinking culture. This man lives a life that is not entertained by sensuality, and never amused by vulgarity. He is an older man in the faith who understands the brevity of life, the gravity of God's Word, and the reality of eternity.

Because the Tsunami of sin sweeps across our lives each day, this man always seeks to...

Reverse the Erosion of a God-controlled Mind

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Watch out for AMUSEMENTS that can **infect your mind to satanic ideas and stories**. We are all aware of attachments in email that can infect our computers with viruses. Often these programs lodge themselves deep in our hard-drives and wait, springing to life infecting, corrupting, and destroying precious data we need and use. That is exactly the picture of how Satan operates through media.

Some examples of media that has infected attachments that can harm you spiritually are:

- ⇒ Movies that follow the theme of sensuality, rebellion to authority, horror, or witchcraft.
- ⇒ Science fiction that portrays superhuman powers available from cosmic sources leave unguarded minds open to endless fantasies about what if this may be true, and thus a conflict with the authority of God's Word.
- ⇒ Television programs dealing with adultery, fornication, or vulgarity.
- ⇒ Music that popularizes eastern religions, satanic words and occultic mantras.
- ⇒ Games which encourage you to be involved in killing, facing horrific demon-like monsters.
- ⇒ Actual Occult Practices which bring with them demonic contact: black magic, astrology, fetishes, fortune-telling, séance meetings, witchcraft, palmistry, spiritism, ESP (extra-sensory perception), pictures of witches and occult propaganda, voodoo dolls, tarot cards, Ouija boards, crystal balls, black cubes and related occult practices. Each of these items causes contact with demons and should be avoided and burned! (This is the scriptural method of dealing with all such things that offend God, grieve His Spirit, and defile and ensnare us as believers.)

Godly believers should regularly repent of all evil amusements, exposures in their hearts and lives.

- 4. Grace-energized Men Starve their Flesh** (Romans 13:14).

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. NKJV

Cut all supply routes. If there are websites, TV shows, magazines, videos, and so on, that are less than Christlike, destroy them. If there are avenues that defile, such as cable TV/HBO and ungodly internet access, get rid of them. Do whatever it takes to starve the evil desires of your flesh, and those of your family. **Put on Christ by starving your flesh!**

- ⇒ Have a *no-television* week or month.
- ⇒ Read God's Word before email or online news each morning.
- ⇒ Pray in the car or meditate on a verse instead of listening to the radio.
- ⇒ Cancel the newspaper or magazine.
- ⇒ Create an intentional solitude.

5. **Grace-energized Men Hate Evil** (Rom. 12:9). As pilgrims in this world, and with the Tsunami of sin crashing over and around us each day, Paul prescribed one constant attitude—hate evil. **Abhor, turn away from, and hate evil!**

Evil, because of our ever present flesh, is always more interesting. This obviously is not a statement about the way things should be, but simply a statement of the way things are. Once we understand this, much that is mysteriously wrong in life becomes clearer. For example, if we had forty-nine stations broadcasting healthy, virtuous programming, and only one station broadcasting violent or sexual programming, most of America would be tuned into the one channel, even church people. Evil is always more interesting.

Understanding the allure of evil explains why we watch so much of it, even when it is so clearly destructive. The sheer volume of evil our nation is exposed to on a daily basis is one of the most disturbing effects of the proliferation of media. The only remedy I know is two thousand years old:

*Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. **Abhor** [hate so go away from] **what is evil**. **Cling** [go toward so stuck to, glued to] to what is good. NKJV*

The heart of the message Paul taught them is in Ephesians 4:22-24. Christ's Lordship must fill our lives displacing any places in our lives to the Devil. Three clear choices we must make!

*Ephesians 4:22-24 that you **put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and **be renewed** in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you **put on** the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

To apply all this, remember when Paul taught the Ephesian believers about anything tied to Satan in Acts 19:19-20, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact. Right now, if you have music, videos, games, books, posters, or other objects that are tied in any way to the occult, destroy them today.

6. **Grace-energized Men Look for God:** This is a daily, purposeful, and planned focus on pleasing the Lord in all things. Start your day crying out for Christ's help. **Look for Him!**

*1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.** NKJV*

This verse has a huge truth we need to stop and really lay hold of--**God is there all the time**. The longer we meditate on this verse, the more we see God's shadow. It is He who is standing over us always ready to deliver us if we but look to Him! He is not distant; He is never closer than when we are tempted!

God is there all the time. Have you allowed that truth to sink into your soul and become a part of your operating system? God has told us that He is faithful. Whenever we think we are alone, we are not alone. We never face the adversary, the prowling lion called the Devil—alone.

God has already measured and limited the attack upon us. He has already provided an escape route if we will only look for it and take it. If we were alone and facing temptation, we would be hopelessly defeated.

But God knows that already and so He is there, all the time, and every time. And He has the best way of escape marked for us. What a Mighty God we serve!

Pause and do something before you lose that truth.

- Why not bow your head with me. Now say in your heart, “I believe You Lord that You will never leave me”. Then tell Him thank you for being there with you right now.
- Now, with your heart opened before Him, tell Him that the next time you are tempted (you may even want to whisper in your heart to Him the temptation you most fear and often get defeated by)—that you will look for Him.
- Now, look up and say out loud with me—I WILL LOOK FOR GOD WHEN I AM TEMPTED!

Look for God! He is always faithful!

7. Grace-energized Men Saturate themselves With the Word (Joshua 1:8). After you read and ponder, work on memorizing key Scriptures that can help you have greater victory over sin, and then regularly meditate upon those verses. **Meditate day and night!**

Joshua 1:8 “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. NKJV

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. NKJV

Discipline Yourself in Reading God's Word

We can most readily get alone with God faithfully *reading* His Word. Since the Scriptures are the very voice of God, we must discipline ourselves to *listen* to Him. It is amazing that Christians imagine they can live a fruitful Christian life without regularly reading the Bible. It’s just not possible, because our minds do not retain what is necessary and must be refreshed again and again (2 Peter 1:12-15).

Since it only takes eighty hours to read the entire Bible, General Harrison’s commitment obligated him to just one-half hour daily to read God's Word. Let me ask you this: Can’t you also spare thirty minutes per day to cultivate the mind of Christ as General Harrison did? How about fifteen minutes to read God's Word through in a year? Or, at the very least, are you willing to devote five minutes a day to read the New Testament in a year?

		TOTAL HOURS	TOTAL MINUTES	DAILY MINUTES
THE BIBLE				
• OLD TESTAMENT	77%	62	3695	10
• NEW TESTAMENT	23%	18	1104	5
TIME TO READ BIBLE		80	3799	15
THE HARRISON PLAN				
• OLD TESTAMENT	1	80	4800	15
• NEW TESTAMENT	4	74	4419	15
MINUTES NEEDED		154	9219	30

Fifteen minutes reading per day makes it through the Bible once a year, and a half-hour equals two times. On a CD or tape, listening to the complete Bible in a year requires the same amount of time. Isn’t

God worth it?

I encourage you to not miss out on God's best for you. Plan to make the discipline of the Scriptures your way of life. Feast with God every day. Set aside 15 or even 30 minutes a day and say, "Lord, speak to me. Show me Your arrangements. Help me to know Your presence, yield to Your authority, and stay at Your right hand." On the authority of God's Word, I can say if you do you will live an unbelievable life—the life God designed for you to live.

Remember: God wants to invade every part of your heart, mind, and life. But He can only do so if you will say, "By Your grace, Lord, I purpose to *learn* Your Book, to prepare my heart to *live* Your Book, and to *lead* others in living and learning Your Word." That is exactly what God has put you on earth to do!

- 8. Grace-energized Men Stay in Constant Touch with God** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is the best, greatest, and most powerful way to touch your family's lives! **Pray without ceasing!**

Pray for wisdom, and seek God's direction for how to promote your growth in Christ's mind. Do not let another day go by without praying for your mind. Plan for purity; expose your mind only to the right things. Read the Bible to your family, and discuss it, so they also learn how to draw practical life applications from God's Word. It is by your walk with the Lord that you demonstrate that you love the Holy Scriptures yourself.

Pray for grace to stop the indiscriminate and endless watching of TV and videos, and starting systematic, prayerful reading and studying of God's Word. We all have the time to do what is right—we simply have to make it a priority. Today, let us each choose to cultivate the mind God has willed us to have!

- 9. Grace-energized Men Make Little Choices** (1 Timothy 4:7). This is a daily pattern of saying no to specific temptations, and saying yes to the Holy Spirit as He prompts you. One small choice is to turn your monitor so those behind you can see what you are viewing. If you struggle with images online this is a great accountability step. **Discipline yourself!**

Today we can make little choices to give to God what He desires from us.

- **Give Him your devotion.** Mark 12:33 "And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." NKJV

Have we offered our devotion up to Him irretrievably, completely, and lovingly—by giving Him time each day because we love Him; by giving Him our complete attention as we focus upon Him in His Word and in prayer?

- **Give Him your life.** Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. NKJV

Have we recently renewed that offering of all we are to Him? Have we repeated those simple words of the child Samuel, that the Lord so delights to hear from us, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!"

- **Give Him your service.** Philippians 2:17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. NKJV

Are we pouring out what we cannot keep--to Him so we cannot lose? Each time you serve, look up in your heart from the classroom, nursery, choir room, AWANA room or where ever you offer that service, and say to the Lord, "I am giving this time to you. I can't keep it, I could selfishly squander it, but instead I give it to YOU as an act of devotion and worship!"

- **Give Him your gifts.** Philippians 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. NKJV

What is the aroma ascending from our living before Christ's eyes today? Make more of your offerings by praying over each check, hold it in your hand as you mail it or place it in the offering and breathe out to God, "I give this to YOU as an offering of love and gratitude!"

- **Give Him your worship.** Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. NKJV

When is the last time we stopped and launched a wave of praise filled worship toward His Throne? Plan to burst forth in your car, or on a walk, or when you are all alone into a cry of love to the Lord. Say something like you sing, "I love YOU Lord and I lift my voice to WORSHIP you...!"

- **Give Him your good works.** Hebrews 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. NKJV

What acts of kindness have we premeditated and carried out this week? Plan to do intentional sacrificial acts of kindness for others. Do things unasked, unseen, and not expecting any thanks. As you do that act (like the trash, laundry, sweeping, mowing, what ever) lift you eyes above and say, "I am doing this in YOUR Name Oh Lord because I love YOU and I want to serve like You served!"

- **Give Him your prayers.** Revelation 8:3-4 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. NKJV

What do we have in the bowl of our collected prayers? If God loves our prayers so much that He collects them all (like notes from my wife & kids) why don't we send more? Up your times of prayers. Invite God into every praise and problem, every fear and frustration...your life will be revolutionized as you say to the Lord, "I need YOU in every part of my life!"

10. **Grace-energized Men Walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:16). Let the Word of God fill your life, and then pass it on to your family! **Walk daily!**

Those biblical commands are meant for each of us, as Christians, to obey. They are not something to simply pray about, and then get around to doing one day. No, they are for us to actively grab hold of and obey—right now!

Please turn with me to Ephesians 5:18-19:

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, NKJV

As we read, may we find the secret they knew and followed and like them, do the same! One word explains it all.

- IMPERATIVE
- PLURAL
- PASSIVE
- PRESENT

When the Holy Spirit picked the words to write down His message He was very specific. Perhaps no where else in all God's Word is the message of the grammar clearer than here!

IMPERATIVE An imperative verb means God is commanding. He is not offering a suggestion to us for our consideration! He is commanding us as Lord God Almighty. The filling of the Spirit of God into our life is our supreme obligation.

PLURAL A plural verb here means that God is speaking to all of us. When He says don't get drunk it is for all believers. The same for the filling. So the Spirit filled walk is the high calling and spiritual duty for every one of God's children.

PASSIVE A passive verb means God is asking us to open up to His filling. Passive means allow this to come into your life. Let the Spirit fill you is what God is saying. This is a call to unreserved yielding to God's control.

PRESENT The use of a present tense means God is offering a continuous filling. Another tense, the aorist, would mean a single action like [John 2:7](#) when Jesus said fill the water pots. But a present imperative means that the river of God's Holy Spirit wants to flow into and overflow out of our lives!

So God Almighty commands:

**All of Us
To Let His Spirit
Continuously Be Filling You!**

Grace Energized Men: Living Wisely in a Foolish World

Titus 2:1-2

Titus 2 is all about discipleship—learning to live the way God wants us to live. Men and women who seek out being mentored by godly examples within the church.

Discipleship is all about following our Master Jesus Christ and learning to live by the wisdom of His Word. When Jesus called His first disciples the plan was to spend time together with Him (Mark 3:14) and learn from Him. Christ called those men to obey, follow, and learn from Him. At the end of His earthly ministry Jesus met with those disciples and told them to spend the rest of their days going into all the world and teaching those who want to follow and obey Christ, how to be learners or disciples all their days (Matthew 28:19-20). We call that the Great Commission.

Titus 2 is just one link in that discipleship mandate left to Christ's church. Discipleship begins at conversion when we are born into Christ's family, it continues as long as we continue to learn of Him. We are to become life long pupils, learners, and followers of Christ.

The New Testament believers were first called disciples (from *mathetes*--“a learner who follows and obeys Christ”). In Acts, as the church spread, believers took on a new name (but kept the same description) when the disciples began to be called Christians in Acts 11:26. And to the end of the New Testament this term disciple (Matthew through Acts) and Christians (Acts to I Peter 4:16) described those who had been called to obey, follow, and learn from Jesus Christ.

This evening we begin our look at the third element of a grace-energized disciple of Christ as described in Titus 2—they are a sober, reverent, and temperate man who as a disciple who follows Jesus, is learning to live by Christ's wisdom.

Titus 2:1-2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; NKJV

Paul identified behavior that follows a proper understanding of God (or “sound Doctrine”). When Paul gave these clear objectives for Titus as he taught the older men, it was to show them how to “adorn the doctrine of God”. Their lives, if reflecting these qualities, would become a strong advertisement for God in a ‘crooked and perverse’ world. Here are the first two we have learned, and then the next one we begin tonight:

10. **Grace-energized Men are Sober disciples of Christ: MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD**

v. 2a “sober” (*nephalios*): God wants matured, godly older men in Christ's church to live a life that exemplifies Jesus to a watching world. These men are to model the life God wants, to encourage younger men, then the older men take time to mentor some of the younger men, and challenge them to abandon the temptations of youth such as reckless living, impatience with decision making, thoughtless communication, and the unreliability that often characterizes young people.

11. **Grace-energized Men are Reverent disciples of Christ: GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT GOD IN AN AMUSED WORLD**

v.2b “reverent” (semnos): God wants older men who model what its like to live life seriously. This man thinks deeply in an amused, shallow-thinking culture. This man never trivializes what God says is important; and lives a life that is not entertained by sensuality, never amused by vulgarity, and doesn’t treat life superficially.

12. **Grace-energized Men are Temperate disciples of Christ: LIVING WISELY IN A FOOLISH WORLD**

v.2c “temperate”: God wants older men who are wise in behavior, meaning their lives are yielded to His control. This man’s life is characterized by the Greek word *sophronas* which means, “self-controlled, restored to senses, earnest”. This one word is variously rendered into 4 different English words by the top 4 versions: “temperate” (KJV/NKJV); “self-controlled” (NIV); and “sensible” (NAS).

When Paul gave Titus the curriculum for Christ's church he said train men that are:

1. ***Temperate in an intemperate world.***

- This describes an attitude of mind that leads to prudence and self-control in life. It is the opposite of frivolity and carelessness that are based on ignorance. It is translated “sober” in Titus 1:8 and 2:4, 6, and 12, and “discreet” in 2:5.
- Seriousness of life and purpose are important in the Christian life, and especially to older saints who cannot afford to waste time, for they begin to realize that their time is short.
- This word describes wise living and thinking that has self-control, good judgment, discretion, common sense, sound-minded, discreet, and sensible, and able to keep an objective perspective in the face of problems and disagreements. Such wisdom tempers pride, authoritarianism, and self-justification.²¹

2. ***Sane in an insane world.***

- He says that we must be steady in mind. We might render it: “Preserve your sanity.” The verb Peter uses is *souphronein*; connected to that verb is a noun *souphrosunē*, which is formed from the verb *souzein*, ‘to keep safe’, and the noun *phroneusis*, ‘the mind’. A temperate man has the wisdom which “keeps safe his mind” to render this word literally.
- The great characteristic of temperate wisdom is that it sees things in their proper proportions; it sees what things are important and what are not. When men view their life from the perspective of eternity, then God is given His proper place, and everything else settles into its proper place.

3. ***Sensible in a senseless world.***

- These men slowly learn the discernment, discretion, and judgment that only come from walking with God for many years. They slowly learn to control their physical passions, to reject worldly standards, and to resist worldly attractions. Like Paul, these men when energized by God’s grace “think so as to have sound judgment” (Rom. 12:3).

And what does God’s wisdom, when followed by His obedient Titus 2 grace-energized disciples look like?

Wise in his Witness

God wants a man whose life speaks louder than his words; whose character is noticed and prompts other men to examine their own lives and seek to emulate his joy, his peace, and his walk in the Spirit—in evident and practical ways. The Titus 2 older-man-in-the-faith’s life is a pattern for others to use in shaping their own lives.

His life as we already saw “adorns” the doctrine of God. People see the message of God unmarred by unnecessary impediments. The Cross in and of itself is offensive—a godly saint shouldn’t be a distraction to the lost seeing Christ.

Wise in his Worldview

One whole area that these temperate men get disciplined in is the growing list of unbiblical beliefs, and the post-Christian rules by which America now lives. Just to name a few:

1. ***Our Foolish world is characterized by NARCISSISM or self-centeredness.*** Foolish people live for themselves. Remember Christ's story about the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21)? Foolish decision making always starts with a premise of "what is best for me?" Wisdom from God leads us to start all decision making with the desire of, “What is best for God?” and “What magnifies Him?”, and “What glorifies Him?” That is a man of temperate wisdom.
2. ***Our Foolish world is also characterized by PLURALISM or the belief in non-absolutes*** (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Foolish people think that no idea or belief is invalid. Foolish people think that there really isn’t any ultimate truth. Foolish people believe that there are many "true" systems of thought. Wisdom from God causes us to start with God as the source of Ultimate Truth (John 14:6). We see that Jesus is the incarnation of Truth and is the only One that can lead us into truth by His Word, and His Spirit of Truth (John 16:13) within us.
3. ***Our Foolish world is also characterized by HEDONISM or a “pleasure first” priority in life.*** For foolish people, the pursuit of pleasure becomes the meaning of their existence. Wisdom from God starts with “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mat. 6:33) and continues with “whether therefore you eat or drink—do all for the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31), and ends with “you are not your own...therefore glorify God with your body” (I Cor. 6:19-20). Christ's supremacy over life, pleasures, and even needs is truth.

God is looking for grace-energized men who will be disciplined into being:

Paul identified behavior that follows a proper understanding of God (or “sound Doctrine”). When Paul gave these clear objectives for Titus as he taught the older men, it was to show them how to “adorn the doctrine of God”. Their lives, if reflecting these qualities, would become a strong advertisement for God in a ‘crooked and perverse’ world. Here are the first two we have learned, and then the next one we begin tonight:

1. **Grace-energized Men are Sober disciples of Christ: MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD**
2. **Grace-energized Men are Reverent disciples of Christ: GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT GOD IN AN AMUSED WORLD**
3. **Grace-energized Men are Temperate disciples of Christ: LIVING WISELY IN A FOOLISH WORLD**

Grace Energized Men: Cling to the Promises of God

Titus 2:1-2

Open with me to James 4:14. As we enter this first Sunday of the New Year, we should each pause and reflect upon the brevity of our life; and how God wants us to live each day. "...whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

Two months ago I was doing that very thing as I stood with a group of Bible students at one of the most sobering spots in all of the Holy Land.

We had climbed up the artificial mountain built by Herod the Great as his tomb. That spot, called the Herodion, had hidden the exact burial place of Herod for 2,000 years—until May 7th, 2007; when an Israeli archaeologist's persistent thirty-five years of diggings finally found the spot.

King Herod, infamous for his murderous reaction to Christ's birth, had gained the whole world in his day. He was a trusted and rewarded friend of Augustus Caesar; and he was a world-wonder builder, still holding world records in architectural accomplishments. He was fabulously wealthy, held absolute power of life and death over his people—and did just about anything he wanted to do for his 69 years of life on earth.

But at his death, what did he take with him? Nothing.

Clinging to God's Promises

Death strips everything away from us except one thing—the promises of God to which we cling by faith. Nothing else stays with us. Our bodies are taken by death. All of our friends, family and possessions are left behind—and we hurtle out into eternity with nothing, except the promises of God.

I asked each of those Bible students standing on the dust and rubble of Herod's Tomb, "What promises of God are you holding onto today? What promises of God have you made your own by faith?" And, "Which ones would you cling to as you leave this life?"

You see as we get older, or when we get sick, or if we get terribly hurt in an accident and lay in a hospital bed somewhere, nearly everything is taken away. Health, strength, mobility, freedom all are gone for the moment. It is often then that we realize how frail, weak, and fragile we are. It is then, as we think through our life that we feel around for what we are really holding onto.

Don't wait for the doctor's office, or the emergency room, or the ambulance. Why not pause today at the start of 2008 and ask your self what promises of God's Word YOU are holding onto.

Here is the handful of promises that I personally cling to by faith:

- John 3:16 why not say that one with me now...

- Psalm 23:4, 6 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.
- Hebrews 13:5 ... For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
- I John 1:7: and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin
- Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

How do you get a collection of promises to hold onto? Two ways: trust others and use theirs or find them for yourself. And that brings us to Titus 2 and the grace-energized, Word-filled life God wants each of us to live.

Titus 2 Discipleship

Titus 2 is all about discipleship—learning to live the way God wants us to live, taught by men and women who seek out and mentor other believers by godly example and personal nurture times.

This morning we continue our look at the third element of a grace-energized disciple of Christ; as described in Titus 2—they are a sober, reverent, and temperate man who as a disciple who follows Jesus, is learning to live by Christ's wisdom.

Titus 2:1-2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; NKJV

Do you remember the first two we have learned?

13. **Grace-energized Men are Sober disciples of Christ: MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD**

v. 2a “sober” (nephalios): God wants matured, godly older men to model the life God wants, to encourage younger men; and challenge them to abandon the temptations of youth such as reckless living, impatience with decision making, thoughtless communication, and the unreliability that often characterizes young people.

14. **Grace-energized Men are Reverent disciples of Christ: GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT GOD IN AN AMUSED WORLD**

v.2b “reverent” (semnos): God wants older men who model what its like to live life seriously. This man lives a life that is never entertained by sensuality, and never amused by vulgarity, and doesn’t treat life superficially.

Then, we started on the third element grace-energized men learn.

15. **Grace-energized Men are Temperate disciples of Christ: LIVING WISELY IN A FOOLISH WORLD**

v.2c “temperate”: God wants older men who are wise in behavior, meaning their lives are yielded to His control. This man’s life is characterized by the Greek word *sophronas* which means, “self-controlled, restored to senses, earnest’.

And what does God's wisdom, when followed by His obedient Titus 2 grace-energized disciples look like?

First, Wise in his View of this World

One whole area that these temperate men get disciplined in is the growing list of unbiblical beliefs, and the post-Christian rules by which America now lives. Just to name a few:

4. ***Wise men see our Foolish world is characterized by NARCISSISM or self-centeredness.*** Foolish people live for themselves. Remember Christ's story about the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21)? Foolish decision making always starts with a premise of "what is best for me?" Wisdom from God leads us to start all decision making with the desire of, "What is best for God?"
5. ***Wise men see our Foolish world is also characterized by PLURALISM or the belief in non-absolutes*** (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Foolish people think that there really isn't any ultimate truth. Wisdom from God causes us to start with God as the source of Ultimate Truth (John 14:6).
6. ***Wise men see our Foolish world is also characterized by HEDONISM or a "pleasure first" priority in life.*** For foolish people, the pursuit of pleasure becomes the meaning of their existence. Wisdom from God starts with "seek first the kingdom of God" (Mat. 6:33) and ends with "you are not your own...therefore glorify God with your body" (I Cor. 6:19-20). Christ's supremacy over life, pleasures, and even needs is truth.
7. ***Wise men see our Foolish world is also characterized by SECULARISM or the practice of compartmentalizing life into boxes that have no impact upon each other.*** A foolish person believes that sacred things belong in church and that the rest of life is secular. For a foolish person seeking God's will and direction through prayer and God's Word is no longer practiced—that is for church not life. Wisdom from God teaches us that "of Him, through Him, and to Him" are all things (Rom. 11:36). We seek the gracious Lordship of Christ to invade all of our life.
8. ***Wise men see our Foolish world is also characterized by MATERIALISM or living for stuff.*** A foolish person measures their life by what they own, where they live, what they wear, where they go, and what they drive. A foolish person lives to gain more stuff, and ACCUMULATION has become their theme song of life. Wisdom from God teaches us that our life is a vapor, and that nothing material can be taken to Heaven, only sent ahead. A wise person realizes that happiness is a byproduct of obeying God and that greed is idolatry (Col. 3:5) in God's sight. Jesus told us that it is far better to give and inherit eternal possessions (Mat. 19:28-29) than to grasp onto getting as much as we can—and losing it all (Matthew 16:25-26). That is wisdom!
9. ***Wise men see our Foolish world is also characterized by RELATIVISM or ignoring essential differences.*** A foolish person believes there are no absolutes, and that everyone should be allowed to be their own authority. To a foolish person whatever works, feels good, or satisfies is okay; and so all the old rules are gone. And we form our own rules in the now as we go through life. Wisdom from God seeks out the "old paths" as God told Jeremiah (6:16). And as Christ's parable of the house upon the sand illustrates (Matthew 7:24-26), the wise man build his life upon the Rock of God's Word and His truth that is sure (Psalm 19:7).

Second, Wise in his Estimation of Himself

*Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but **to think soberly**, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. NKJV*

To capture the sense of this verse it helps to put in the word 'estimate' then it would say: "Don't overestimate yourself (*huperphroneo* 'super-think') beyond a true estimate, but estimate yourself with a proper estimate".

The godly older man cultivates a proper view of self that is honest and accurate. He has a realistic and Biblical view of his strengths, weaknesses, his God-given talents, and all his human deficiencies. After coming to an accurate appraisal of who he is and how God made him, he sees his place and purpose in God's program. This man avoids the two extremes, he neither thinks he is better (pride and conceit) or worse (self-depreciation).

Rather he thinks with wisdom from God above, through His Spirit within.

- 2 Corinthians 5:13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are **of sound mind**, it is for you. NKJV;
- 1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore **be serious** and watchful in your prayers. NKJV

Finally, Wise in the Investment of His Time

There was a fascinating book *Bowling Alone* written by Robert D. Putnam (Simon & Schuster 2000) which documents the erosion in the past few decades of American societal fabric. Putnam says this was caused by the diminishment of social groups, close associations, personal connectivity, chosen social support groups, and even close personal friendships. He goes on to war that we have increasingly become a nation of 'disconnected, isolated, lonely individuals'.

When we look around we see how true his conclusions really are. And if we ponder the ramifications we can see that this is especially bad news for the church of Jesus Christ. We have been called of God to bond together in local assemblies that share an intimate fellowship. In Christ we are to become closer to one another than what exists in most ordinary family groups.

For the church of today, the old American saying "united we stand, divided we fall" is especially relevant. The more rapidly our culture and American society fall apart, the more important it is for us as Christians to take vigorous steps in the opposite direction from the cultural trends of disconnectivity! Paul told Titus to have each man work on the microcosm of his individual life being under God's control; and then we can leave the repair of the macrocosm of both the American church and culture to God.

"In reading the letters of the Apostle Paul one can't help note the very large number of Christian brothers the Apostle knew, prayed for, and cared for--even though they were scattered about all over the Roman Empire. They were all "family." We see Paul frequently stopping to pray for them or send them greetings though they lived hundreds of miles apart. It was not exactly as if he had nothing else to do! Today it is not likely we have any clue about our Christians in other congregations even when neighboring churches are just down the block. And next door neighbors? Many of us have no clue about them at all.

When the collective spiritual standards of a local church slowly slip away, the flame in individual hearts dies as well. There is a cure to this situation of gradual decline in the Christian community, but it depends on individuals who will resist the status quo, begin repenting on behalf of the rest of all of us,

and renewing our own close daily walk with God by rearranging our priorities.

God has not given us Christians a plot of land, a temple, an earthly inheritance--things He did give to Israel in perpetuity. But He has given each of us a spiritual sphere of influence--the kingdom of our individual lives. Our invisible influence amongst our families, our friends, at church, at work, thrives only when we place ourselves under the authority and rule of Jesus, the King of kings. When Jesus rules in and through us, living His endless life through us, a lasting legacy is laid up for us in heaven--even though our position in the present world system may be obscure or unknown (Hebrews 11:32-40)".²²

The Most Important Investment You Can Make

Wisdom comes from God.

God speaks through His Word.

His Word is the only place to get His promises.

All we can cling to when we die are the promises of God—so what would be the most important investment we could make in 2008?

How about 80 hours of your life, totally given to God?

Since it only takes eighty hours to read the entire Bible, let me ask you this: Can you invest 15 minutes per day to cultivate the mind of Christ while living in this foolish world?

How about giving the Lord your promise of fifteen minutes to read His Word through this year, looking for your own set of promises to cling to through life?

THE BIBLE		TOTAL HOURS	DAILY MINUTES
• OLD TESTAMENT	77%	62	10
• NEW TESTAMENT	23%	18	5
TIME TO READ BIBLE		80	15

Fifteen minutes reading per day makes it through the Bible once a year, and a half-hour equals two times.

On a CD or tape, listening to the complete Bible in a year requires the same amount of time.

Isn't God worth it?

Grace Energized Men: Guarding a Healthy Faith in a Sick World Titus 2:1-2

Nothing is so precious as the faith we have in God, His Word, and Christ's work for us. That is why Paul sat to write the young church planting pastor named Titus, serving on the island of Crete. Paul's world was hostile to the truth of God; and Paul warned that days to come would increasingly be filled with false teachings about God, and false doctrines.

II Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Paul stressed a growing wave of spiritual deception, false doctrines, and strong delusion that surrounded false teachers. Paul continued this theme and even went so far as to warn the elders at Ephesus that the wolves were at the doors and soon would be attacking the church as soon as Paul left (Acts 20). He warned Timothy and all pastors after him (II Timothy 1:14), to guard the teaching of truth, and even described the false doctrines that were taught as deadly and destructive as cancer or gangrene (II Timothy 2:16-18).

Jesus had also warned of the faith of believers being assaulted by these waves of false teaching and teachers (Matthew 24). Jude and Peter repeated this theme and point out inroads that false teaching and teachers had made already in Christ's church. Then at the end of the New Testament era, John writes that the false teachers were teaching (I, II John), and their teachings had deeply impacted the local churches as Christ's letters in Rev. 2-3 point out. For all of these reasons Paul writes, Christ's church is to be filled with...

Men Sound in “The” Faith

That is why our look at the 4th element of a grace-energized disciple of Christ as described in Titus 2—men who are sound in faith, is so timely.

Titus 2:1-2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; NKJV

That leads us to this premise: **Grace-energized Men are Sound in Faith as disciples of Christ. They are GUARDING A HEALTHY FAITH IN A SICK WORLD.**

First, Paul says these men are to be “**sound**²³” which is the word *hugiainō* (ὑγιαίνω), meaning “to be sound, well, in good health.” The application is that those who teach God's Word protect their teachings from any error being mixed with truth. Paul is saying these men must believe and teach true doctrine, which is recorded in

²³ Sound translates a participle form of the verb *hugiainō*, which has the basic meaning of “being well and healthy” and is the term from which we derive “hygiene.” Paul uses a form of this word nine times in the pastoral epistles, five of those times in Titus, and always in relation to personal righteousness and spiritual well-being. He repeatedly emphasizes that sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) eventuates in sound faith and sound speaking (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:13; 2:2, 8). Healthy doctrine produces healthy spiritual living. (MacArthur, John: *Titus*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996. S. 90)

God's Word. These godly older men should know what they believe; and their doctrinal convictions and behavior should line up with God's Word.

This truth is emphasized by the next word, "**faith**" which in this verse has the definite article. It is not "faith" as in what is exercised, but "The Faith," which describes the content of Christian doctrine as revealed in the Scriptures.

Paul is in the midst of identifying the behavior that follows a proper understanding of God (or "sound doctrine"). When Paul gave these clear objectives for Titus as he taught the older men, it was to show them how to become a strong advertisement for God in a 'crooked and perverse' world (Phil. 2:15).

God's discipleship program for men was laid down for Christ's church right from the earliest days. It was focused upon guarding healthy faith—in a sin sick world. There is nothing more timely for us as we enter the end of days, because, as the end of the physical world approaches, so does earth's darkest spiritual hour²⁴.

Satan already knows from God's Word that God has plans to save "*a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands...*" (Revelation 7:9).

So, in to trying to thwart God's harvest of precious souls and to prevent the world from coming to Christ, Satan has deployed legions of liars. False sign posts—all pointing people away from Christ.

Falling Away from "The" Faith

Today, just as during the Tribulation years, there are only two types of people on the Earth—truth lovers and truth haters. Open now to 2 Thessalonians 2, and stand with me to see that dark hour.

*2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 **Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless *the falling away* comes first, and *the man of sin* is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and **lying wonders**, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that **they should believe the lie**, 12 that they all may be condemned who **did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

Pray

Love of the truth as we see in 2nd Thessalonians 2, is the proof of salvation. Lost ones never receive a love of the truth so they never seek out and find Christ's offer of salvation.

Beware of Shipwrecked Faith

Remember that Paul uses this word to describe those who thrust away sound doctrine and try to sail on their own and without Christ's way, truth and life.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, *concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck*, 20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom *I delivered to Satan* that they may learn not to blaspheme.

What can cause a soul to be shipwrecked? False teachers and belief in a false doctrine. That was one of Christ's constant warnings. But are these individuals saved, or lost? Paul refers to them in such a way we must conclude that they are saved, so we know that they can't lose their salvation. One pastor clearly explains:

A good conscience is the rudder that steers the Christian life. Because they rejected the pangs of conscience and the truth, it is no wonder that the errorists **suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith**. Professing to be Christians and teachers of God's law (1:7), they were devoid of the truth. It is possible for a believer to have his faith "upset" (2 Tim. 2:18). Maybe that is another way to express the disaster of shipwrecked faith. It is all too common for Christians to wreck their usefulness, virtue, and sanctification by believing error.²⁵

Paul warns that false teaching can shipwreck your soul as well. That is why God wants men who are sound in the faith as teachers and leaders.

This is not new to our generation. False teachers have been a part of the landscape from the start. In fact, things were so bad one hundred years ago, that the greatest Bible teachers of that generation banded together to put up the flag of truth. They sat down and declared what were the non-negotiables of God's Word or what they called ...

The Fundamentals of "The Faith"

At the end of days, truth is under attack and lies will abound. Believers who are not grounded in healthy doctrine will suffer shipwreck, tossed about on the rocks of doubt and despair, wasting their lives and feeling hopeless.

That is why Jesus said watch out for false teachers and counterfeit religion. When faced with a similar situation at the turn of the century, evangelicals produced a work called the FUNDAMENTALS in 1909-1915. The writers read like a Who's Who of Christianity of the day: R.A. Torrey [of Biola], B.B. Warfield [of Westminster Seminary], J.C. Ryle [devotional writer], G. Campbell Morgan [an expositor pastor], C.I. Scofield [of the study Bible], James M. Gray [MBI], A.T. Pierson [devotional writer] and so on.

These men distilled down the fundamental beliefs that distinguish a true believer from a false or counterfeit one. They boiled down all theology into seven essentials. They then presented and explained these seven doctrines in a multi-volume set of books called "*The Fundamentals*". Here is a summary of their work into seven essentials that if not guarded can lead one towards shipwreck.

1. INSPIRATION: The Inspiration and Reliable Historicity of the Bible.

²⁵MacArthur, John F. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentaries*. (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983

2. CREATION: The error of Evolutionism and Darwinism.
3. DOCTRINE: The naming of the cults errors [Jehovah Witness, Mormonism, Christian Science, Spiritism, etc.].
4. DEPRAVITY: The reality of sin.
5. SUBSTITUTION: Biblical salvation by faith through the grace of God.
6. IMPUTATION: The errors of Roman Catholicism.
7. CHRISTOLOGY: The Deity, the substitutionary, vicarious death Christ on the cross, His resurrection, and the personal visible Return of Christ.

We who live in the start of the 21st Century are facing a crisis in the Church: Biblical illiteracy and incomplete Biblical discipleship.²⁶ That makes it imperative that we see that there is a critical need to preserve...

Healthy Doctrine in Christ's Church

Do you remember the story about the frog that landed in a pan of water and stayed until it boiled? If the water in the pan had been hot, the frog would have noticed and immediately hopped out. But the water felt cool at first, and the frog sensed no danger. As the water warmed, the frog just relaxed and conformed to the gradual change. Finally, when the water was dangerously hot, the muscles of the frog were subdued by the rising heat, and grew too sluggish to act. By the time the water boiled, the frog was dead.

The longer I live, the more alarmed I get at the growing trend of Biblical illiteracy and the lack of Biblical discipleship in today's church. Just as the decline in church attendance, Bible reading, and even Bible carrying can be seen in each new generation—the corresponding decline in even knowing the Bible (Biblical illiteracy), and obeying God's Word (Biblical discipleship) is showing up in the woefully powerless lives of so many believers.

Recently some findings that point to Biblical illiteracy and ineffective discipleship were published. This is what, Christian researcher and author George Barna reported as he surveyed people who considered themselves to be “Christians”:

1. Less than half of all adults can name the four gospels.
2. A majority of professing Christians struggle to identify more than two or three of the disciples.
3. 60 % of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments.
4. 82 % of Americans believe "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse.
5. 12% of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.
6. Over 50 % of graduating High School Seniors thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.
7. 60% of Americans reject the existence of literal angel named Satan.
8. 40% of Americans believe that when Jesus Christ was on earth He committed sins.
9. 50% believe that anyone who is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven.
10. 40% believe that the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths.
11. 70% of those identifying themselves as born again Christians said they do not believe in moral absolutes.
12. Only 10% of Christians base their moral decision-making on the principles taught in the Bible.
13. Finally, 54% believe truth can be discovered only through logic, human reasoning and personal experience.

²⁶ COREnet: a newsletter from CORE Discipleship Ministry

These statistics indicate a gradual change of temperature over time. In general, Biblical illiteracy is a growing trend and the discipleship that is being offered in churches is ineffective.

One British pastor insightfully wrote, "The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict half-built towers. The ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ's warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so.

The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so called nominal Christianity. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent but thin veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved, enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable.

Their religion is a great soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism." (John Stott)

What was the solution? Paul told Titus as he tells us today: each believer needs to be discipled into becoming a discipler. What is discipleship?

New Testament Discipleship

1. New Testament Discipleship is a life-long process by which we become servants and friends of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:14,15); and we find others along the way that either lead us closer to God, or whom we lead closer to Him (Titus 2:1-8).
2. New Testament Discipleship is always presented as having stages. Jesus trained the 12 for a number of years before they were qualified and released by Him to carry on His work; Paul spent years in preparation also (Galatians 1:15-18) being taught by the Lord and then being in his hometown; finally John even describes three levels of spiritual maturity (I John 2:13-14).
3. New Testament Discipleship focuses upon obedience to God's Word, not just head knowledge (John 15:14).
4. New Testament Discipleship can only start with a genuine relationship with God and always grows into a vital relationship with others (Matthew 22:37-40); discipleship must be both vertical and horizontal (II Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:1-8).
5. New Testament Discipleship recognizes that one is to be qualified as a teacher and the other is a student, but both must be mutually submitted to one another, both must be on the journey—learning to walk as Jesus walked (Phil. 3:17).
6. New Testament Discipleship recognizes that learning involves transparency, safety, confidentiality, content, environment, experiences and relationships (I John 1:7). An effective discipleship process is built upon strong foundational biblical principles (I Tim. 4:6).
7. Discipleship creates an environment where no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone (I Cor. 12:12).

Paul details in Titus 2 the behavior that follows a proper understanding of God (or "sound doctrine"). When Paul gave these clear objectives for Titus as he taught the older men, it was to show them how to become a strong advertisement for God in a 'crooked and perverse' world (Phil. 2:15).

God's discipleship program for men was laid down for Christ's church right from the earliest days. It was focused upon guarding healthy faith—in a sin sick world.

There is nothing more timely for us as we enter the end of days, because, as the end of the physical world approaches, so does earth's darkest spiritual hour. Be sure that you are in that life-long process of discipleship; look for the evidence of your progress (I Timothy 4:15); obey God; share your life with others as you walk with them and Christ through life.

Disciples of Christ Can Spot a False Teacher

These men were making a “most wanted” poster for believers—showing who the enemy was of the truth. So how do we spot these false teachers? What do these signposts pointing people in the wrong direction believe and teach? What is the message promoted by Satan’s legion of liars?

Often it is not what they say—but what they don’t say that identifies them! What do false teachers deny? How do you spot a false teacher? There are clear signs of an apostate or false teacher:

1. THEY DENY CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY. 1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some **will depart from the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,
2. THEY DENY OUR LIBERTY IN CHRIST. 1 Timothy 4:3 **forbidding to** marry, and **commanding to abstain** from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
3. THEY DENY DIVINE POWER. 2 Timothy 3:4-5 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness **but denying its power**. And from such people turn away!
4. THEY DENY BIBLICAL TRUTH. 2 Timothy 3:8 *Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;*
5. THEY DENY THE NECESSITY OF SOUND DOCTRINE. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*
6. THEY DENY THE DEITY OF CHRIST. 2 Peter 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -- bringing swift destruction on themselves. (NIV)*
7. THEY DENY THE REALITY OF CHRIST COMING AGAIN. 2 Peter 3:3-4 *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”*
8. THEY DENY THE NECESSITY OF PERSONAL HOLINESS. Jude 18 *how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.*
9. THEY DENY THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Jude 19 *These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.*

Another element of Barna's report states, "Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources. Because we remain a largely Bible-illiterate society, few are alarmed or even aware of the slide toward syncretism - a belief system that blindly combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives."

Syncretism is Deadly

This direction of syncretism was seen in the Old Testament as the people of Israel were commingled with pagan they mixed parts of the truth of the Bible with false worship of paganism and came out with a blend that disgusted God. Diluting God's Word and adding error is dangerous and to be avoided at all costs.

Two passages clearly show us this syncretistic pattern in the Old Testament.

II Kings 17:7-12

Psalm 106:34-36

There has always been the same struggle within the church. A hundred years ago it was seen in what was called liberalism, today it is seen in what is called the emergent church. Both were syncretistic, both end of denying the truth by mixing it with error. The three biggest dangers of the EC are:

Danger #1: The Cross

A first area of concern with the ECM is the cross. Here we ask questions like "What is the meaning of the atonement"? And "Did Jesus actually pay for or purchase anything on the cross?"

Matthew 20:28? "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus knew why he had to die; and we cannot read the New Testament and conclude otherwise.

But some ECM writers teach that the cross simply serves as a profound demonstration of the love of God. On the cross, Christ "absorbed all the pain, all the suffering caused by the breakdown in our relationship with God and in doing so demonstrated the lengths to which a God who is love will go to restore it." (Chalke)

The doctrine of penal substitution--the understanding that, on the cross, Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin—is thus rejected.

One of the most visible leaders and ECM writers says, "The Christian faith should become a welcome friend to other religions of the world, and not a threat." He goes on to write that not all people need to be Christians to follow Jesus. Some may be able to be "Buddhist or Hindu followers of Jesus." (Brian McLaren)

But a true disciple of Jesus Christ who knows God's Word sees the reality of sin, and the necessity of personal salvation, and doesn't lose the simplicity of the gospel which is in Christ; and all that is rooted in a proper, high view of Holy Scripture. When the Bible is lost, and when sin and salvation through Christ is no longer important, that there becomes a loss of witness, a loss of conviction—and a shipwrecked faith.

Danger #2: The Authority of the Bible

ECM error centers upon a rejection of the absolute authority of the Bible. Here we ask

questions like "Is the Bible inerrant?" And "In what sense the Bible is God's communication to us?"

Examples of this total loss of holding onto God's Word as authoritative can be seen in some of the ECM's leaders irreverence which includes referring to God as a chick, and as a Cosmic Child Abuser (describing the crucifixion of the Son at the Father's will). The negation of the authority of God's Word causes ECM writers to question God's sovereignty over and knowledge of the future, as well as a denial of the substitutionary atonement at the cross, a denial of the sin of homosexuality, and a denial of hell.

Danger #3: The Nature of Truth

A third concern with the ECM is concerning the very nature of truth. Here we ask questions like "What is truth?" and "Does Christianity give us an accurate picture of the way the world really is, and can we know it?"

Carson explains that the fundamental issue is epistemology--i.e., how we know things or think we know things. EC leaders say that we can't be dogmatic, authoritative, or even sure about doctrines that have always been believed by evangelicals throughout all of Church History.

Should we Reject Everything Coming Out of the ECM?

Our answer is a resounding no. Indeed, we should share their dissatisfaction with certain abuses or deficiencies within Evangelicalism. We should resonate with their criticisms of consumerism, their emphasis on an authentic lived-out faith, a move toward decentralized leadership within the church, and with what many consider the heartbeat of the movement, their passion to be missional.

"The church should stop mimicking the surrounding culture and become an alternative community, with a different set of beliefs, values and behaviors.

Ministers would no longer engage in marketing; churches would no longer place primary emphasis on programs to serve members.

The traditional ways of evaluating 'successful churches' – bigger buildings, more people, bigger budgets, larger ministerial staff, new and more programs to serve members – would be rejected.

New yardsticks would be the norm: To what extent is our church a 'sent' community in which each believer is reaching out to his community?

To what extent is our church impacting the community with a Christian message that challenges the values of our secular society?"²⁷

One writer describes the missional church "as a body of people sent on a mission who gather in community for worship, encouragement, and teaching from the Word that supplements what they are feeding themselves throughout the week."²⁸

²⁷ In an article titled, "The 'Missional Church': A Model for Canadian Churches?" David Horrox writes,

²⁸ Dan Kimball in "The Emerging Church" (Zondervan, 2003)

Detached from Truth— People Shipwreck

So how do we stay safe as these dark days cast their shadow across society, media, culture, and every other realm of daily life? Only one way—check the anchor of your soul.

When the *world darkens, culture crumbles, and truth dies—you know the end of the world is near.*

It is then that Jesus warned that the church would fill up with fruitless counterfeits.

When that happens it is time for believers to brace for the storm that we know is coming. The waves will only increase. Spiritual darkness will only deepen as deceptions grow.

These are days when we who know and love the Lord Jesus should reach into our hearts and grab onto our anchor line and feel it strongly holding us securely—tugging us homeward.

Jesus is our Anchor

*Hebrews 6:11-12, 18-20 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance (plerophoreo – to overflowing wear or hold or possess or have) of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have **fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope** set before us. 19 This **hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where **the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.** NKJV***

Grace Energized Men: Guarding Healthy Faith By Biblical Discipleship Titus 2:1-2

This evening we are living through days so much like those when the aged Paul sat to write his young disciple named Titus. His days like ours are increasingly filled with false teachings about God, and false doctrines.

For times just like those in which we live Paul writes, Christ's church is to be filled with...

Men Sound in “The” Faith

Our look at the 4th element of a grace-energized disciple of Christ as described in Titus 2—men who are sound in faith, could never be more timely.

*Titus 2:1-2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, **sound in faith**, in love, in patience; NKJV*

And how does Christ's church find men sound in the faith? They are nurtured, and personally disciplined by older men, who are already sound in the faith.

God's discipleship program for men was laid down for Christ's church right from the earliest days. It was focused upon guarding healthy faith—in this crooked and perverse world. There is nothing more timely for us as we enter the end of days, because, as the end of the physical world approaches, so does earth's darkest spiritual hour.

Nothing can more clearly be seen as the marching orders for Christ's church than this discipleship flow. Paul told Titus as he tells us today: each believer needs to be disciplined into becoming a discipler. What is discipleship? As we turn to Colossians 1 we will find what may be the missing key to Biblical discipleship today. Paul explains that...

Discipleship is for All of our Life

As we read Paul's description of the goal of discipleship in Colossians 1:9-12—let God speak to your heart. Be sure that all of your life is open to His working so that every part may please Him, bear fruit for Him, and produce good works for His glory.

Stand/read/Pray

Please look closely as v. 10.

**"So that you may
walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please [Him]**

**in all respects,
bearing fruit
in every good work and
increasing in the
knowledge of God."
Colossians 1:10 (NASB)**

Paul considered every area of life to be on the pathway to becoming pleasing to Christ. Discipleship produces a mature Christian disciple, who has been deeply touched by Christ in every aspect of his life. Mature disciples bear fruit and overflow with good works.

Just as Robert Boyd Munger describes in his book, "My Heart Christ's Home"—It is only when Jesus can move through every room of our house that we see our lives become conformed to His likeness. This evening if your spiritual life has stagnated, or if you are longing to grow and just keep hitting brick walls, ask yourself if Christ has all of your life.

How do we know He has all of us?

1. When God is the center of our lives, we live to please Him.

The supreme desire of a believer's life is to please Christ by all the aspects of our lives. When one sector of life is displeasing Him that impacts all we are and do for Him. Look at I Thessalonians 4:1.

Nothing is off limits to Christ's Supremacy when we understand that it is idolatry to treat anything or anyone with more respect than God.

2. When we please God, we want Him to influence each area of our lives. This is discipleship.

Discipleship must touch all parts of our life to be truly effective. We must daily shine the lamp of God's Word into every corner of our hearts and minds.

The Great Commission thrusts each believer into the calling of helping to develop the believers God places around us. How far into our hearts and lives have we allowed God's Word to penetrate by His Spirit?

Five Misconceptions about Biblical Discipleship

- **Discipleship only can take place when people attend a program at church.**

Although so much wonderful training takes place at church, only a small group can focus on individual changes and growth that is needed. Jesus took the twelve away to be with Him (Mark 3:14), just as Paul had to go off to the Arabian wilderness, and himself always had a group tagging along. Discipleship is not information, it is lifestyle. Students get just facts, disciples get patterns of obedience and conviction.

No, New Testament Discipleship is a life-long process by which we become servants and friends of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:14,15); and we find others along the way that either lead us closer to God, or whom we lead closer to Him (Titus 2:1-8).

- **Discipleship just happens over time.**

Unless someone closer to the Lord gets near enough to see how you really are walking through life, no real discipleship can take place. Disciple makers live out the Christian life before those we are nurturing. We show them not just tell them.

New Testament Discipleship is always presented as having stages and taking time. Jesus trained the 12 for a number of years before they were qualified and released by Him to carry on His work; Paul spent years in preparation also (Galatians 1:15-18) being taught by the Lord and then being in his hometown; finally John even describes three levels of spiritual maturity (I John 2:13-14).

- **Discipleship is just for baby Christians.**

Paul wanted everyone to follow him as he followed the Lord. We all need to be involved in a life long walk down what is called “The Way” in Acts. Once a disciple, we should always be a disciple.

New Testament Discipleship focuses all believers of all level of spiritual maturity, upon ever deepening obedience to God’s Word, not just head knowledge (John 15:14).

New Testament Discipleship recognizes that one is to be qualified as a teacher to nurture a student; but both must be mutually submitted to one another, both must be on the journey—learning to walk as Jesus walked (Phil. 3:17).

- **Discipleship is just another program.**

No, discipleship is to become our lifestyle. Every true believer becomes Christ's disciple, and their Christian life is a lifelong calling to learn and live like Him. We are going to need growth and change as long as we live this side of Heaven.

New Testament Discipleship can only start with a genuine relationship with God and always grows into a vital relationship with others (Matthew 22:37-40); discipleship must be both vertical and horizontal (II Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:1-8).

- **Discipleship is only for some parts of our lives.**

No, Christ wants us to learn His Supremacy over everything from attitudes to appetites; He wants to be seen through both our parenting skills and our handling of finances. Unlike false cults which make your decisions for you, God wants you know how to make your own decisions!

New Testament Discipleship recognizes that learning involves transparency, confidentiality, content, experiences and relationships (I John 1:7). An effective discipleship process is built upon strong foundational principles taught from the Word (I Tim. 4:6). This type of life-sharing discipleship creates an environment where no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone (I Cor. 12:12).

So where do we begin?

The Process of Christian Growth (1 John 2:12-14)

1 John 2:12-14 uses the analogy of physical growth to describe three stages of Christian development.

Child	Young	Adult
12) I am writing to you, little children , because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. 13) I have written to you, children , because you know the Father.	13) I am writing to you, young men , because you have overcome the evil one. 14) I have written to you, young men , because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.	13) I am writing to you, fathers , because you know Him who has been from the beginning. 14) I have written to you, fathers , because you know Him who has been from the beginning.
Children are unstable and need security.	Young men face special temptations that must be overcome.	Fathers step closer and closer to God in order to find life solutions.
The new Christian learns about what the Christian life is and how to live it.	The young Christians master the fight over the world, Satan and flesh by God's Word.	The mature Christian develops a deep and strong faith to carry out God's work.

From 1 John 2:12-14 we know that new Christians (the children) need clarification on their belief in Christ. They get confused about three things: sin, forgiveness and their belonging to God's family. Any training that we give new Christians should include discussion on these topics so that they can grow and be strong.

The young Christian's (literally 'young men') greatest challenge is meeting temptations. They can get so discouraged in life through their failures. They will wonder if they have any chance in successfully battling the evil one. They need to be trained (think disciplined) on how they are already winners and how God's Word helps them to be victors in different areas of their lives. (Paul J. Bucknell)

The Purpose of Training (Ephesians 4:11-14)

God's eternal plan is that all believers serve Him. Both Peter and John (1 Peter 2:9 and Revelations 1:6) call each of us His 'priests.'

The Reformation went far in teaching about the priesthood of the believers but didn't sufficiently train them or utilize them in service. This is not a criticism, just an observation from history. The plan is already laid out in Ephesians 4:11-14.

Ephesians 4:11-14	Comments	Future Action
4:11 <i>And he gave some [to be] apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;</i>	God has a plan and sends those He has gifted to work His plan	God calls and gifts individuals for each generation; seek Him and find His plan that He has for the rest of your life.
4:12 <i>for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:</i>	God's plan is that every saint be trained in serving other saints—disciplined into discipler makers.	Leaders are responsible to monitor whether the church is raising up discipler makers, or just listeners.
4:13 <i>till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the</i>	We must keep the focus upon our mission, not the bumps along the	People need to see God's plan, and be pointed down a path they can

<i>knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:</i>	way. The goal is "all" equipped to disciple.	follow.
<i>4:14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error.</i>	Without personal trainers alongside believers, the work doesn't get done, believers are weakened by sin, and the church stagnates.	We never know everything, but everyone can know enough truth to walk in the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:11-14 then clearly teaches us that the key to keeping believers from being tossed around in life (4:14) is to train them up (4:11-13). Only when believers are in the flow, and growing from disciples to disciple makers, do they fully become all that God designed them to be.

We must be trained to be trainers in spiritual growth. Sadly, most believers never get beyond the baby stage. But God has asked us to all do our part because...

Training Brings Growth (I John 2:13-14)

"Intermediate discipleship (young men) is for those who have received basic spiritual training. Most Christians, sadly to say, never get beyond this point. This stage of discipleship is like adolescence, a temporary stage involving tremendous growth. The phrase 'never grew up' can be aptly used to describe many Christians who never received training at the intermediate stage.

"Perhaps one can call them worldly, but one thing is clear. They face all sorts of unneeded difficulties in life. What difficulties? Worry, bad relationships, bitterness, lack of patience, loneliness, sickness, lust, addictions, poor marriages, problems raising children and tempers are just some of these troubling points. These problems can be deep-rooted in our hearts. Sometimes, they manifest themselves in physical symptoms, and we often seek doctors and psychiatrists for healing. God has a clearer way.

"As the Spirit uses God's Word to bring them to victory over their sins, the Christians begin to grow in faith. They learn how to use God's Word to overcome problems which can then be used to help them in other areas of their lives. And, of course, they can share what they have learned with others. Do others want to hear? Sure, they do. Those who have experienced God's powerful Word at work in their lives share personal testimonies on how the Lord led them from defeat to victory. And so with each victory, they are touched more and more by God's love and find freedom and desire to serve others.

"Most Christians, unfortunately, have no clue that they can overcome these things. God makes them aware of their problems that they might seek Him for answers. But all they hear are things like, "What do you expect? You are human aren't you?" And so, they just accept these problems as normal rather than areas needing breakthrough.

Many Christians today do not have the stamina or motives to serve. They are fighting too many problems in their own personal lives or at home to 'take on' anything else at church. Or they just lack the faith to step into service. They feel very insecure about their defeated Christian lives. This is, perhaps, all they know and feel. Who can blame them for lack of commitment?

"This intermediate stage is a process. But the changing point happens when they can see their faith grow by how God has led them into victory over their sins. God, their Savior, is really alive and personal by rescuing them from the influences of sin in their lives.

"Worship for the new Christian is based on forgiveness of sin through Jesus. But the Christian in this stage will find a fuller sense of worship because they are constantly reminded how their loving Lord led them out of their personal sins that brought pain wherever they turned.

"The confusing part is that there are so many areas in our lives that we need to grow in and learn how to apply the power of God's truth to.

The key is to focus on one area at a time and keep pursuing growth in that area by using God's Word.

Once a man or woman has been brought through this stage, they are not easily defeated by the evil one.

Of course, there are temptations as long as we are on earth, but they are of a different nature.

Those that have seen the powerful work of the 'sword of God' (the Word of God) are not easily covered into a corner.

They have learned to fight the world, their flesh, and the Devil! (Paul J. Bucknell) And now they know enough to bring someone else along as they continue to grow.

That is what every one of us tonight should want to do and to be.

Sound in the faith and discipling another for the glory of God.

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These men were making a “most wanted” poster for believers—showing who the enemy was of the truth. So how do we spot these false teachers? What do these signposts pointing people in the wrong direction believe and teach? What is the message promoted by Satan’s legion of liars?

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Syncretism is Deadly

This direction of syncretism was seen in the Old Testament as the people of Israel were commingled with pagan they mixed parts of the truth of the Bible with false worship of paganism and came out with a blend that disgusted God. Diluting God's Word and adding error is dangerous and to be avoided at all costs.

Look with me at Psalm 106:34-36.

There has always been the same struggle within the church. A hundred years ago it was seen in what was called liberalism, today it is seen in what is being called the emergent church movement (ECM). Both were syncretistic, both end of denying the truth by mixing it with error. The three biggest dangers of the EC are:

Danger #1: The Cross

A first area of concern with the ECM is the cross. Here we ask questions like "What is the meaning of the atonement"? And "Did Jesus actually pay for or purchase anything on the cross?"

Matthew 20:28? "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus knew why he had to die; and we cannot read the New Testament and conclude otherwise.

But some ECM writers teach that the cross simply serves as a profound demonstration of the love of God. On the cross, Christ "absorbed all the pain, all the suffering caused by the breakdown in our relationship with God and in doing so demonstrated the lengths to which a God who is love will go to restore it." (Chalke)

The doctrine of penal substitution--the understanding that, on the cross, Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin—is thus rejected.

One of the most visible leaders and ECM writers says, "The Christian faith should become a welcome friend to other religions of the world, and not a threat." He goes on to write that not all people need to be Christians to follow Jesus. Some may be able to be "Buddhist or Hindu followers of Jesus." (Brian McLaren)

But a true disciple of Jesus Christ who knows God's Word sees the reality of sin, and the necessity of personal salvation, and doesn't lose the simplicity of the gospel which is in Christ; and all that is rooted in a proper, high view of Holy Scripture. When the Bible is lost, and when sin and salvation through Christ is no longer important, that there becomes a loss of witness, a loss of conviction—and a shipwrecked faith.

Danger #2: The Authority of the Bible

ECM error centers upon a rejection of the absolute authority of the Bible. Here we ask questions like "Is the Bible inerrant?" And "In what sense the Bible is God's communication to us?"

Examples of this total loss of holding onto God's Word as authoritative can be seen in some of the ECM's leaders irreverence which includes referring to God as a chick, and as a Cosmic Child Abuser (describing the crucifixion of the Son at the Father's will). The negation of the authority of God's Word causes ECM writers to question God's sovereignty over and knowledge of the future, as well as a denial of the substitutionary atonement at the cross, a denial of the sin of homosexuality, and a denial of hell.

Danger #3: The Nature of Truth

A third concern with the ECM is concerning the very nature of truth. Here we ask questions like "What is truth?" and "Does Christianity give us an accurate picture of the way the world really is, and can we know it?"

Carson explains that the fundamental issue is epistemology--i.e., how we know things or think we know things. EC leaders say that we can't be dogmatic, authoritative, or even

sure about doctrines that have always been believed by evangelicals throughout all of Church History.

Should we Reject Everything Coming Out of the ECM?

Our answer is a resounding no. Indeed, we should share their dissatisfaction with certain abuses or deficiencies within Evangelicalism. We should resonate with their criticisms of consumerism, their emphasis on an authentic lived-out faith, a move toward decentralized leadership within the church, and with what many consider the heartbeat of the movement, their passion to be missional.

"The church should stop mimicking the surrounding culture and become an alternative community, with a different set of beliefs, values and behaviors.

Ministers would no longer engage in marketing; churches would no longer place primary emphasis on programs to serve members.

The traditional ways of evaluating 'successful churches' – bigger buildings, more people, bigger budgets, larger ministerial staff, new and more programs to serve members – would be rejected.

New yardsticks would be the norm: To what extent is our church a 'sent' community in which each believer is reaching out to his community?

To what extent is our church impacting the community with a Christian message that challenges the values of our secular society?"²⁹

One writer describes the missional church "as a body of people sent on a mission who gather in community for worship, encouragement, and teaching from the Word that supplements what they are feeding themselves throughout the week."³⁰

Detached from Truth— People Shipwreck

So how do we stay safe as these dark days cast their shadow across society, media, culture, and every other realm of daily life? Only one way—check the anchor of your soul.

When the *world darkens*, *culture crumbles*, and *truth dies*—***you know the end of the world is near.***

It is then that Jesus warned that the church would fill up with fruitless counterfeits.

When that happens it is time for believers to brace for the storm that we know is coming. The waves will only increase. Spiritual darkness will only deepen as deceptions grow.

These are days when we who know and love the Lord Jesus should reach into our hearts and grab onto our anchor line and feel it strongly holding us securely—tugging us homeward.

²⁹ In an article titled, "The 'Missional Church': A Model for Canadian Churches?" David Horrox writes,

³⁰ Don Kimball in "The Emerging Church" (Zondervan, 2003)

Jesus is our Anchor

*Hebrews 6:11-12, 18-20 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance (plerophoreo – to overflowingly wear or hold or possess or have) of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have **fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope** set before us. 19 This **hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where **the forerunner has entered for us**, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. NKJV*

The Living Commentary

“Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance” (Titus 2:1-2).

Titus 2:2 "Examination of How We are to Live," page 3/4 of the Titus 2:1-2 Living Commentary, specifically challenges the older men to live by six standards: temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, love and perseverance. Detail discussion follows each one with diagrams. A Bible Study is included at the end of the series.

[Intro to Titus 2:1-2](#) | [Titus 2:1 Examining our Beliefs](#) | [Titus 2:2 Examining our Lives](#) | [Titus 2:1-2 Bible Study Questions](#)

There are two purposes as said in verse 14: (1) Redemption from every lawless deed and (2) Purifying for Himself a people for His own possession. Many of talk about getting forgiveness of sins. That is the first point. But we need also to speak of the later, the purifying of our lives. So let us now turn to think about these men.

B. An Examination of how we are to live (Titus 2:2)

We have closely followed Paul's six items by which men are to judge themselves. Their real value becomes apparent when we also observe what it like when a man does not have these qualities. These character qualities should be set before every man and boy. This is where God wants to take us. We will go through each one separately.

1. Temperate (nephaleos)

The temperate man stays alert. He is sober. The associated meaning is that he abstains form drugs, alcohol that brings a dullness of mind. The meaning does not mean to not drink at all, though some take it to mean this. It can mean this. But in the bare minimum it never affects his perception. God has made this world for our good, but once the things are used in such a way that we cannot make wise decisions all the time, then we cannot live out God's standards.



Just think of what of having a colleague who was half drunk all the time. What good would he be? His mind is somewhere other than on the work. Let us put this in kingdom

perspective. That is, let us see why this trait is so important to older men who serve the Almighty King.

Men need to be alert and attentive to whatever God calls them to. If they pay attention to pleasures, then they will not pay attention to the King's pursuit. God is not against pleasure. He has built this into our lives. We enjoy food, relationships and many other things. God has made pleasure cells in our body. But all is to be constrained under God's purpose. Obviously, God made grape juice. But it can be addictive and interfere with man's judgment. Many wife beatings are closely linked to drinking and drugs.

My recommendation is to stay away from them completely. Life becomes much easier this way. Satan can't easily tempt you. If you use them, then they should be used in such a way that you never lose any judgment. If you do, then you need to completely abstain from them. There is no sense toying with God's standards. You have kingdom work. Instead of trying to feel like everyone else at a party, think of yourselves as God's agent. You are praying for people, trying to discern if God has a special appointment set up for you that evening. We stay alert so that we can be attentive to God's work.

I recently heard of one personal testimony on how a man associated with men high up in a communist government and military. He attended their parties. He even held a little glass with liquor. He did not want to offend. But he didn't drink. He was on God's mission. He prayed and sought out who he could share the gospel with. His life was totally differently oriented than the typical person going to these parties. He was God's ambassador and kept himself fit for the job.

What about you? Are you drug free? For what purpose? What testimony do you have? Who does God want you to share the Gospel with? we do not keep drug free to merely have good research but to serve the Lord.

2. Dignified (semnos)

This word marks off the man from any typical person you might meet. This person is dignified. His very person calls others to respect him. In this context, we can be sure it doesn't mean he impresses people with what position he has or what possessions he has but by his person.



The opposite would be the typical or unimpressive.

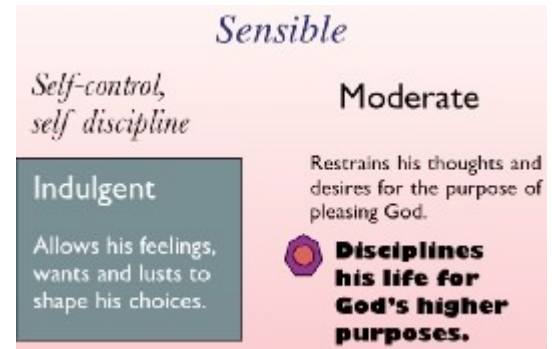
There is nothing about that man's life that causes one to look up to him. Remember, this is not just for elders (see the [standards for elders](#)). It is for every man. Did you every see a male cardinal? Those are the bright red birds. They stand out. They are noticeable. One's eyes are brought to look at them.

What is it that causes you to look up to different individuals? Think back to when you were growing up. Who did you admire? Why? We are not saying that they do not have riches or high position. The two often go together because he acts wisely. God wants men that stand out from others.

If you are a man, how are you going to be dignified? What steps can you take? I think you need to focus on what God has made you for. Discover that. Excel in those things that you do. Always be honest, a man of integrity. Server the Lord, not others. Only by staying close to the Lord will the Lord's presence in your life make you excel in what you do. Don't fritter your time away with games, toys and entertainment. You have a higher purpose. Keep focused.

3. Sensible (sophronas)

This word is better understood by the English word self-control. God's man exercises self-control in his life. If temperance means we restrain what we bring or introduce to our bodies, sensible speaks more to the restraining of his desires. He curbs what his fleshly heart might want so that he can accomplish God's greater purpose.



Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." 1 Peter 4:7. A man of self-control does not live a life in good Buddhist fashion of curbing his desires. This doesn't work. Instead we are to focus on the good that we are to do. As Peter said, we can pray. Once a man spends his time thinking about sexual pictures, he becomes useless for God's purposes. He has not curbed his thoughts from thinking about pursuing his pleasures.

Pornography is not a small problem. Internet pornography, gambling have corrupted many. The opposite, of course, is to be a man that is tied to his desires. He is enslaved to those entices that arise about him. In the end, he follows his desires. There is no in-between. If you are beginning to think that you can manage these desires, forget it. It is Satan's lie. Unless we bridle our lusts, they will destroy us. Listen to Jesus' own words.

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37-39).

"And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved." (Matthew 24:12-13).

Do you see, your willingness to follow your desires is a statement whether you love God and man, or like the world chase after pleasures. I know, many a professing Christian will say that he is addicted or lacks self-control. They should wake up to reality. God's kingdom is of power and purity. Without it, they are just bluffing.

Lawlessness is increasing. People are doing things they shouldn't. It tempts us. Unless we have resolved to clearly live for kingdom purposes, we will fall in with the crowd and perish with them.

4. Sound in faith

This becomes the first of a triad. The 'sound' of faith, love and perseverance. This word 'sound' is exactly the same word that he used when describing 'sound doctrine' in verse 1. The word comes from the now common word 'holistic.' By its full, whole and proper sense, it is best for a person. It means that nothing is left from it. Obviously, his use of it should alert us to the fact that some have a less than complete faith, love and perseverance. Let us look at each of them.



Our faith must be whole. This means that some men's faith is partial and therefore incomplete. An incomplete faith is one which is ultimately defective. This might have to do with doctrine. That man goes to church every Sunday, but he never really came to repentance and faith in Christ. He might say he believes. Another might say, "I believe. It means so much to me." But somehow he is not baptized. He knows of Christ's command to believe and be baptized, but he thinks believing is okay for his circumstance.

1. **Temperate**
2. **Dignified**
3. **Sensible**
4. **Sound in faith**
5. **in love**
6. **in perseverance**

Some might think they are going to heaven even though they do not think Jesus came physically alive. His faith is incomplete. It doesn't save. Or as we look in these verses, and probably what is most on Paul's mind, some men have made excuses for part of their less than ideal life. They make excuses for their thoughts. How can a man say that He knows God when he does not forgive his brother. It is so inconsistent with everything Jesus says, that he should see that his so-called faith in God's grace is so shallow that it has not even made him gracious and forgiving.

Many have an incomplete faith. Whenever God's person and purpose does not affect our thoughts, minds and attitudes, we can say that our faith is unsound. It is defective. If it does not make your pure on earth, you can be sure it will not assure you of Christ's righteousness at Christ's return.

Did you every hear of fool's gold? It isn't really gold. It fools people. They are willing to pride themselves in their discovery only to find out later that it is not real gold. It does not have the value of gold. In our context, it is an incomplete faith, a fool's faith.

5. Sound in love

Our love can also be unsound, that is incomplete. This is the fifth characteristic God has challenged His men to be shaped by. We all know what love is. But do we know the incomplete love? I suppose we do, but we never seem to be able to clearly identify it so. Let me give you a few examples.



There is a council meeting. One man wants his own way. He intimidates some, fools others and behind talks behind the backs of others. I don't care how biblical he thinks this decision is, he is clearly not loving. Love does not seek its own. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. Love does not act unbecomingly. Such incidents happen again and again in church meetings and just tolerated. "Oh, that is the way he is." That man's love is not sound. Be wary!

Or what about the man that yells at his wife? When she does one thing that doesn't please him, he rants, raves and shouts her down. This is not love. If you ask him, he will say that he loves his wife. Don't agree with him. He doesn't love his wife. If he did, then he would not do such things. He instead would be tender, compassionate and ever so patient. If you want, you can say that man has an incomplete love. What does that mean? It means that he is not sufficiently touched by Christ's love. Truth has not touched his heart.

The thing to be careful of is that many people will tell others of these spiritual experiences. They will tell how God saved them. But we are here told to be careful. For if that conversion did not expose him to God's love, then what actually happened at his conversion, anyway?

6. Sound in perseverance

There is one more way that these men can be incomplete or unsound. The last one says that men should be sound in perseverance. If a man is complete in perseverance, this means that he goes all the way. He is focused on Christ's return. He doesn't turn back.

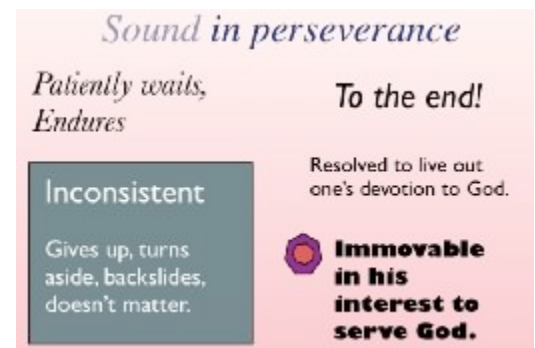
Jesus warned, on the other hand, that many would turn away. Will you? John writes so clearly about this in his first epistle.

"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19).

Perseverance is not complete when it does not persist. Perseverance by definition means that one endures to the end. "Most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved" (Matthew 24:12-13).

I have recently been reading through the Old Testament historical books. We read of these great people. But some of them don't end well. King Asa, for example, is a poor example of a complete spirit of perseverance. He did many great things as said in 2 Chronicles 15. It even says that "And whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman" (2 Chronicles 15:13). They were radical, but he did not persist in what pleased the Lord.

King Asa did well for 36 years. But something changed. The incompleteness of perseverance was exposed. God warned him that he should not use his wealth to hire



soldiers, but he went ahead anyway. God sent a seer, Hanani, to rebuke him. That was gracious of God. He said,

“At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand. “Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. “For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.” Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time” (2 Chronicles 16:7-10).

If he turned from his prideful ways, he could have repented. But he didn't. Oh, May God give us sensitive hearts to obey Him. King Asa would soon die. God sent a disease.

“And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians” (2 Chronicles 16:12).

What about our own lives? We need to be men that are running for the eternal kingdom. It is no good if we run a race part way, even if we are faster than all the others, feel good about ourselves and quit. What a shame!

My brothers, you will be tempted. You might need to suffer for Christ's Name. But never never turn back. Endure to the end. Be one of those faithful ones. Jesus gives us a very picturesque story highlight both the reward of the faithful, read persistent and the unfaithful, the one with an incomplete persevering spirit.

Conclusion

“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. “Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. “But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51).

Christ is soon returning. He is watching how we serve Him. Did you notice that the one who began preoccupied with your own pleasures. Don't be one in which you find that you are not carefully governing what you eat and drink. Do not be one in which your faith in Christ's return is minimal and therefore ignore His instructions.

Upon Christ's return, his failure to live consistently with his profession will cause him to be cast with the hypocrites. There will be great weeping there. Will you be such a man? What will make you different?

Paul calls our attention to live rightly, consistent with God's own person and purpose. This one, Jesus says, Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions." Let us boys and men all run to be these kind of men where doctrine is not only something we talk about but we live. Let us be temperate, dignified, self-control, sound in faith, in love and in perseverance.

Let us now look at the [Bible study guide](#) that comes with this section on Titus 2:1-2.



The Biblical Convictions of Grace Energized Men

Titus 2:1-2

Last week we began a look at how to apply the Scriptures to our current moral and political climate in American society. I shared that the Lord has revealed His convictions very clearly in His Word. God is Pro-Life, Pro-Marriage, Pro-Justice, and Pro-Work.

We then defined those convictions as the Bible does, that God is:

- **GOD is Pro-Life**—God is opposed to Abortion and Euthanasia.
- **GOD is Pro-Marriage**—God is opposed to Gay Unions, as well as divorce, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, and every other form of immorality.
- **GOD is Pro-Justice**—God is opposed to murder, violence, discrimination, prejudice, and abuse of the weak, poor, and unborn; He invented capital punishment, and commands societies to have a just legal system.
- **GOD is Pro-Work**—God is against indolence, sloth, unbiblical entitlements, oppression of the poor by the rich, and every form of false hope produced by gambling and lotteries.

This morning we are going to look at how a grace-energized man develops his convictions from God's Word. Each day we all have to live and work in a world so much like the world of the First Century. When the aged Paul sat to write his young disciple named Titus, his days like ours were full of both false teachings about God, and wrong behavior among the believers.

As Paul sat to write perhaps the clearest words on how to live a life governed by Biblical convictions in Titus 2 —it was sometime between A.D. 62–64. Paul was serving the churches of Greece (ancient Macedonia), after his release from his first prison time in Rome; and before his final Roman imprisonment.

Paul had to live and serve under an Empire that swarmed with citizens, slaves, and commercialism. Rome and all its blatant materialism reigned over nearly the entire known world of Paul's day.

How were Christians to live in the world of the New Testament? That question was especially vital to believers in the culture of Rome—rife with greed, gambling, and constant oppression of the poor.

Paul sits down to write to that very challenge the saints faced as they also had to live, work, and vote. For times just like those in which we live Paul writes, Christ's church is to be filled with...

Men Sound in "The" Faith

Our look at the 4th element of a grace-energized disciple of Christ as described in Titus 2—men who are sound in faith, could never be more timely.

*Titus 2:1-2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, **sound in faith**, in love, in patience; NKJV*

God's discipleship program for men was laid down for Christ's church right from the earliest days. It was focused upon guarding healthy faith—in this crooked and perverse world.

"Sound in faith" means knowing how to apply God's Word to issues of living for God in an ungodly world. Which is just another way of saying...

Living with Biblical Convictions— as a Citizen of Heaven still living on Earth

Paul had already described the goal of discipleship in Colossians 1:10. As we remind ourselves of this passage—let God speak to your heart. Be sure that all of your life is open to His working so that every part may please Him, bear fruit for Him, and produce good works for His glory.

Stand/read/Pray

*"So that you may **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please [Him] in all respects**, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1:10 (NASB)*

Paul considered every area of life to be on the pathway to becoming pleasing to Christ. Discipleship produces a mature Christian disciple, who has been deeply touched by Christ in every aspect of his life. Mature disciples bear fruit and overflow with good works.

Discipleship is to touch All of our Life

Remember God is Pro-work. Do you share His convictions?

Do you believe and practice His conviction against: indolence, sloth, unbiblical entitlements, oppression of the poor by the rich, and every form of false hope produced by gambling and lotteries?

True teachers of God's Word have always sought to share God's revealed convictions. On our topic this morning Saint Augustine once said, "The devil invented gambling."

John Calvin outlawed gambling in the entire city of Geneva. Martin Luther said, "Money won by gambling is not won without self-seeking and sin."

But never has the availability to gamble been more pervasive than it is today.

America has become a nation selling hope for money. Tragically that money in exchange for hope is taken from people who can not afford to buy it. The hope offered by gambling and lotteries is unreal, impossible, and destructive. "

Lotteries, like drug addiction and drunkenness, offer what only God can give freely!"
(John Piper)

America, it's fair to say, is wild about gambling. In 1962, American place about \$2 billion in bets. By the year 2000, that number had grown to \$866 billion. And now, the country is headed for a staggering trillion dollars a year in wagers. These bets take place in over fifteen hundred casinos and other gambling places nationally; and in vast lotteries embraced by state governments as revenue godsend; and at horse tracks and dog tracks and sporting events; and on 35,000 internet sites devoted to gambling. Imagine it. Americans spend \$22 billion a year on all movies, plays, concerts, live performances, and on all sports events; but nearly a trillion dollars on gambling."³¹

A History of Gambling in America

How did we get so captivated by gambling? The history of gambling in America is startling if you have never studied it.

America was colonized with a lottery. In 1612 the British government ran a lottery to assist the new settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. The father of our country, George Washington, wisely declared, "Gambling is the child of avarice (or greed), the brother of iniquity, and the father of mischief." We certainly agree with George; however, he himself kept a full diary of his own winnings and losses!

America was founded as a nation upon a lottery. In 1776, the First Continental Congress of the United States sold lottery tickets to finance the American Revolution. President Washington himself bought the first lottery ticket to build the new capital called, "Federal City," now known as Washington D. C..

Our nation was filled with gambling for over 100 years, until 1894. From³² 1790 to 1894, 24 of the 36 states sponsored government run lotteries. Many schools, universities, colleges, and hundreds of churches conducted their own lotteries to raise funds for their own buildings.

³¹ **The Business of Gambling: Testing America's Luck** Aired: Wednesday, September 18, 2002

http://www.onpointradio.org/shows/2002/09/20020918_b_main.asp

³² Drawn from Didier Sornette *Why Stock Markets Crash: Critical Events in Complex Financial Systems* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003 (421 pp). ISBN 0-691-09630-9 (Google Book online edition)

So, our nation was colonized by a lottery, our War for Independence was financed by a lottery, our capital city was financed by a lottery, and our first hundred-plus years as a nation was filled with lotteries and gambling..

The Church struggled a little bit in dealing with gambling because they couldn't point to a verse that said, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Thy shalt not gamble.'" But they did denounce it as socially harmful and inconsistent with the biblical view of God and with a Christian's understanding of good stewardship.

Methodists and Baptists, Puritans and Quakers began some evangelical activism and began to attack this government sponsored gambling. Under this attack, and because of the increasing corruption of the gambling, by 1894 there was no more government sponsored gambling--it ended in corruption and in a financial fiasco.

Public gambling at any level was stopped cold at that time because John Wanamaker, the Postmaster General of the United States and an evangelical, barred "all letters, parcels, postcards, circulars, lists of drawings, tickets and other materials referring to lotteries, from the mail".

So, government sponsored gambling came to a halt for the next 70 years. In 1964 it was reintroduced by the state of New Hampshire, which became the first state to offer a lottery, and now there are only 8 states that do not have government sponsored lotteries, and only three states that do not offer casinos. There are over 1,500 casinos and other gambling places across the nation, mostly on Indian reservation land, where the government allows them to just about do anything they want to do, tax-free.

In 1974, ten years after the first lottery in NH, a Gallup poll indicated 61% of Americans gambled, wagering 47.4 billion dollars annually. In 1989, 71% were wagering \$246 billion. In 1992, \$330 billion was being wagered.

By 2007, studies indicate 95% of Americans gambled, 82% play the lottery, 75% play slot machines, 74% frequented casinos, 50% bet on dogs and horses, 44% on cards, 34% on bingo, 26% on sporting events; and 89% approved of gambling--that means there was 6% who didn't approve, but gambled anyway.

God is Pro-Work

But God is Pro-Work and thus opposed to gambling. Why is God against Gambling? I believe there are three simple reasons anyone can find who looks in God's Word.

1. God is opposed to Gambling because it is built on the sin of materialism.

Materialism is measuring life by possessions. The whole appeal of gambling is that you can get rich, because you need more material things.

1Timothy 6:10, [says,] "The love of money is the root of . . ." what? Loving money leads to all kinds of evil.

"The love of money," is just another phrase for materialism, and gambling is built on the "love of money."

"Win money. Win money. Win money." That's the essence of the appeal of gambling to our sinful materialistic lust.

2. God is opposed to Gambling because it is built on the sin of greed.

Greed is the idea that whatever you have is not enough. Lotteries and gambling appeal to our greed with their outrageous monetary prizes. Lotteries wouldn't be appealing without staggeringly payouts. Gambling and lotteries appeal to greed with their outrageous potential winnings, and the Bible has so much to say about greed.

Proverbs talks so repeatedly about what happens to greedy people.

Jesus talked about what happens to greedy people in Luke 12:15 which says,

"Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed, for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Jesus said, avoid greed, because even when you get what you have been greedy for, you haven't really gotten anything.

3. God is opposed to Gambling because it is built on the sin of materialism, greed and finally—Gambling is built on the sin of discontent.

Discontent—is my internal attitude that I don't have enough.

It's the very opposite of Philippians 4:11-13, where Paul says,

"Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Paul says, "If I have it, I have it; if I don't have it, I don't have it, and that's fine. In either case whatever God chooses to give me is enough; I will not be discontent." Gambling is predicated on discontent.

Five years ago John Piper wrote an open letter to his church and anyone else who cared enough to listen. Let me read a few lines to you:

Don't Play the Lottery for Me!

By John Piper

January 1, 2003

We are followers of Jesus. He had no place to lay his head and did not accept the demonic temptation to jump off the temple for the jackpot of instant recognition. The Calvary road is not paved with Powerball tickets, but with blood. The Church was bought once by One who refused the short cut of instant triumph. It will never be bought by those who dream of riches.

The lottery is another opportunity to pierce your soul with many pangs, and lead your children into ruin. The Bible says, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. . . . Some by longing for it . . . and pierced themselves with many a pang (1 Timothy 6:9-10). In other words, the desire to be rich is suicidal. And endorsing it is cruel.

It is wrong to wager with a trust fund. And all we have, as humans, is a trust fund. Everything we have is a trust from God, to be used for his glory. "[God] himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25). Faithful trustees may not gamble with a trust fund. They work and trade: value for value, just and fair. This is the pattern again and again in Scripture. And when you are handling the funds of another, how much more irresponsible it is to wager! Keep your life free from the love of money.³³

Healthy Convictions are Drawn from God's Word

A grace-energized man as he reads through God's Word would see that:

- **The Materialistic Greed of Gambling Destroys a Biblical Work ethic.** Work has been part of God's design for mankind from the very beginning. We are to invest our time and energies into labors that supply our needs and those of our families (Proverbs 31, 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 1 Timothy 5:8) and that allow us to share with others (Ephesians 4:28). Scripture is replete with exhortations toward industriousness and admonitions against slothfulness. Gambling, meanwhile, portends something for nothing. Indeed, gambling advertising and marketing frequently belittles hard work and diligence.³⁴ For example, in Chicago one sign read: "This could be your ticket out." That is shameless. Other promotions mock the virtues of hard work and serious study as a way to make a living. Plan A: Study hard, save money, get old. Plan B: Play the lottery.³⁵
 - Exodus 20:9 **Six days you shall labor and do all your work,**
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:10 *For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: **If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.***
- **The Materialistic Greed of Gambling Always Denies Biblical Stewardship.** Christians are responsible before God for how they invest the resources entrusted to them, as the parable of the talents makes clear. In many cases, money spent on gambling is money that should have gone to provide for the well-being of one's

³³ John Piper, Don't Play the Lottery for me, January 1, 2003.

³⁴ These points drawn from Focus on the Family at www.family.org/cforum/research/papers/a0008570.html

³⁵ John Piper, Don't Play the Lottery for me, January 1, 2003.

family or the advancement of a worthy cause. In all cases, it is an unwise investment with an almost-certain negative return. More importantly, such spending propagates an immoral, predatory and exploitative industry³⁶.

- Matthew 25:14, 19, 27-30 *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them....27 **So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.** 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
- Romans 14:12 *So then **each of us shall give account of himself to God.***
- Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*
- **The Materialistic Greed of Gambling is driven by the sin of covetousness³⁷.** The 10th Commandment (Exodus 20:17) prohibits Christians from coveting another's possessions. Gambling is precisely the attempt to obtain the resources of others without providing anything of value in return. Some have rightly described gambling as consensual theft.³⁸
 - Exodus 20:17 ***"You shall not covet** your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."*
 - Luke 12:15 *And He said to them, **"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."***
 - Colossians 3:5 *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, **and covetousness, which is idolatry.***
 - Hebrews 13:5 ***Let your conduct be without covetousness;** be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

A man's life doesn't consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." I mean, we are warned about that repeatedly, over and over and over again. Whatever you have is what God has provided for you, and whatever you don't have is what He hasn't provided for you.

But gambling makes a persistent appeal to covetousness, and it is fundamentally opposed to the unselfishness, which was taught by Jesus Christ, and by the New Testament. The attempt, inseparable from gambling, to make a profit out of the inevitable loss and sufferings of others is certainly the antithesis of loving your neighbor as yourself. If we are ever going to curb gambling, we are going to have to curb

³⁶ These points drawn from Focus on the Family at www.family.org/cforum/research/papers/a0008570.html

³⁷ This point is drawn from a transcript of a message preached by John MacArthur, "Gambling" in 1997.

³⁸ These points drawn from Focus on the Family at www.family.org/cforum/research/papers/a0008570.html

covetousness—a pretty formidable task. Greed, materialism, a love of money, they flourish in a gambling environment.

Gambling, built on covetousness, is an act of unfaithfulness to God, because it assumes that God has not given us what we ought to have—he hasn't given us enough, and it assumes that more is a good thing. Is it?

God knows you, and he knows me, and He knows what we need, and He knows what we can handle, and He knows what tests He wants to bring into our life, and He has defined the stewardship and the character of that stewardship for each of us. I don't want yours and I hope you don't want mine.³⁹

³⁹ This point is drawn from a transcript of a message preached by John MacArthur, "Gambling" in 1997.

Other insights are:

- **The Materialistic Greed of Gambling always exploits the poor.** Gambling preys on the desperation of the poor. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission found that those with incomes less than \$10,000 spend more on lottery tickets than any other income group. High school dropouts spend four times as much as college graduates. Scripture exhorts us to look out for the poor and disadvantaged, and issues strong warnings against taking advantage of their plight.⁴⁰
 - Proverbs 14:31 **He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker**, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy. [Lotteries reproach God!]
 - Zechariah 7:10 **Do not oppress** the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.'
- **The Materialistic Greed of Gambling denies the love of our neighbors.** Jesus commanded, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Gambling, meanwhile, is predicated on the losses, pain, and suffering of others. For one to win at gambling, others must lose. For many, the ramifications attributable to their gambling losses are profound. Families touched by a gambling addiction are at greatly increased risk for such negative outcomes as divorce, bankruptcy, child abuse, domestic violence, crime, and suicide. More than 15 million Americans already struggle with a gambling problem, and the number continues to grow as gambling expands.
 - Matthew 7:12 Therefore, **whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them**, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
 - Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem others better than himself**. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
- **The Materialistic Greed of Gambling always Promotes more greed.** Gambling is founded on greed and under girded by a "get-rich-quick" appeal. In a recent national poll, two-thirds of respondents stated that the reason they gamble is to win money.⁴¹
 - Proverbs 15:27 **He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house**, But he who hates bribes will live.
 - 1 Timothy 6:9-10 **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.** 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

⁴⁰ These points drawn from Focus on the Family at www.family.org/cforum/research/papers/a0008570.html

⁴¹ These points drawn from Focus on the Family at www.family.org/cforum/research/papers/a0008570.html

APPENDIX:

Biblical Convictions start with the Bible, because— We are Citizens of Heaven

The clearest word for us as we face on election day in the USA is when God's Word speaks to us.

- **This world is only my temporary home.** *Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*
- **God rules over every part of this world.** *Daniel 2:20-22 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. 21 And He changes the times and the seasons; **He removes kings and raises up kings**; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. 22 He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him.*
- **God selects the rulers of this world.** *Daniel 4:17, 25, 32, 34-35-35 -- 17 'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the **Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.**' 25 They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, **till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.** 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." 34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. **No one can restrain His hand** Or say to Him, "What have You done?"*
- **God allows the rulers of this world to continue in power.** *Daniel 5:18-23 O king, **the Most High God gave** Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. 19 And **because of the majesty that He gave him**, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, **till he knew that the Most***

High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. 22 *"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. 23 And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.*

- **God gives them any temporary success rulers may have for a purpose within His plan.** Psalm 75:6-7 **For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. 7 But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another.**
- **God picks the rulers by His standards.** Jeremiah 27:5, 8 *'I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me. 8 And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,' says the Lord, 'with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.*
- **God allows rulers to do what is perceived by us as evil (crucifying Jesus) to accomplish the larger purposes of God (the redemption of sinners).** John 19:11 *Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."*
- **God tells us our primary responsibility is to PRAY, that is how we influence the outcome of any current political situation.** 1 Timothy 2:1-3 *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,*
- **God tells us the outcome in advance.** Revelation 1:5 *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,*

MY CONVICTION— BE A DANIEL

The challenge of our new century in which we live is to bring leaders of great moral conviction to the forefront of our nations government without the baggage of moral imposition. The greatest example of this is in the trio of great politicians from three of the greatest empires of ancient history. These men are so great they are known by their first names: Joseph of Egypt, Daniel of Babylon, and Nehemiah of Persia. Each of these men was of unwavering Biblical integrity. Each of these men had convictions they would

stand for, suffer for, and even go to death for. But none of them ever imposed by way of legislation, those convictions upon those they governed.

There is a revealed civil code God laid down after the flood – human government in Genesis 9. It is basically restated in the 2nd half of the Law of Moses (commandments 5-10) and is known in one way or another around the world. Basic laws against murder, theft, lying, and so on make up the laws for mankind's good. But these statesmen - Joseph, Daniel, and Nehemiah, did not impose all the rest of the religious laws of Israel upon society.

One of the great needs of American governance is to see men who can be trusted as men of integrity, yet who will not be seeking to impose morals upon the citizens that are not the black and white clearly written laws of God for SOCIETY. The clear laws are against murder of the born and unborn, sodomy and all other clearly described sexual perversions, and witchcraft, which is always linked to drug abuse in the Bible. The rest of the areas of society such as blue laws, alcohol, gambling, lotteries, and so on, are not part of the laws of society, they are for the individual not the society. They are matters of personal conviction, not of government imposition.

If we can have deeply religious leaders who are not bringing their convictions to bear on other individuals through policies, laws, and legislation, then the character of government will be less partisan, the people will be more open to the persuasion of those individuals who live out their personal convictions, and government will not get confused with the church.

Grace Energized Men: Grounded in The Truth Titus 2:1-2

Have you ever wondered how God looks upon us as we come together each Sunday here at TBC? God has said that He looks at us as His family or household, gathered as pillars solidly grounded in a foundation of truth. That is how He sees us, and we should remember that as we gather.

Please open with me to I Timothy 3:15.

1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God [lit. 'household'], which is the church of the living God, the pillar [Timothy was pastoring in Ephesus that had the Wonder of the World, Temple of Diana (Artemis) with 127 gold covered columns] and ground [only here in N.T. and means foundation] of the truth. NKJV

This morning we have gathered as Christ's Church. We are members of God's household and part of His family; and our purpose is to uphold by what we live and say God's Truth as recorded in the Bible. We are to know, believe, live, and proclaim truth as Christ's church. We are indwelt by the Spirit of Truth, and hold a copy of the inspired Word of Truth. Note what Paul said in v. 15 "how you ought to conduct yourself"? That is exactly what we are looking at this morning, the way saints conduct their lives.

Please turn onward in your Bibles to Titus. In Titus 2:2 we are in the midst of a look at the grace-energized men of Christ's church who have healthy (are sound in the) faith—they are grounded in the truth. Just as God is Love, and is Holy, and is Righteous, so also God is TRUTH.

Truth is defined by our dictionaries as:

Truth: "conformity to fact or actuality; proven to be or accepted as true; reality; actuality; often truth is defined as that which is considered to be the supreme reality and to have the ultimate meaning and value of existence." (The American Heritage Dictionary)

Our God is a God of Truth

We worship a God who calls Himself the **God of Truth** (Deut. 32:4; Psalm 31:5).

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He. NKJV

We trust a Savior, God the Son who calls himself **The Truth** (John 14:6), and came to us **full of grace and Truth** (John 1:14, 17).

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV

We are indwelt by God the Spirit who calls Himself the **Spirit of Truth** (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

John 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. NKJV

We read and study God's Word which is called the **Word of Truth** (Psalm 119:43); and as God's children are called followers of the **Way of Truth** (Psalm 119:30); because we were born again by the **Word of Truth** (Eph. 1:13; James 1:18; I Peter 1:22).

Psalm 119:43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I have hoped in Your ordinances. NKJV

Psalm 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me. NKJV

Ephesians 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, NKJV

I Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, NKJV

Our entire life in Christ is to be built upon the solid rock (Matthew 7:24) of **Christ's Truth**. Jesus came **full of grace and Truth** (John 1:14), to lead us to the God who **can only be worshipped in spirit and Truth** (John 4:23-24).

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: NKJV

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. NKJV

John 4:23-24 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." NKJV

As believers we are to: **speak Truth** in our hearts (Psalm 15:2); and live lives that have been set free from slavery to sin **by The truth** (John 8:32); as we become more and more **sanctified by Truth** (John 17:17, 19); and always growing that **the Truth is in Christ Jesus** (Eph. 4:21).

Psalm 15:2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; NKJV

John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." NKJV

John 17:17-19 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. NKJV

Ephesians 4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: NKJV

We were saved by **the Word of the Truth** of the Gospel (Col. 1:5) and all who are saved have **received the love of the Truth** (II Thes. 2:10); and live a life of purifying their souls through **obeying the Truth** (I Peter 1:22).

Colossians 1:5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, NKJV

2 Thessalonians 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. NKJV

I Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, NKJV

Salvation comes through sanctification of the Spirit and **belief of the Truth** (II Th. 2:13).

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, NKJV

But God's Truth has been under attack from the beginning. God's enemy and ours is the Devil who **abode not in the truth** (John 8:44), neither can he because he is a liar and the father of lies. Our enemy wants to **snatch the truth** (Matthew 13:19) from our minds.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. NKJV

Matthew 13:19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. NKJV

Satan: the Truth-obscuring, Mind-blinding Devil

So we all face a dangerous truth-obscuring, mind-blinding Devil who can influence people to:

- **resist the truth** (II Tim. 3:8); *2 Timothy 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; NKJV*
- **spread error concerning the truth** (James 5:19; II Tim. 2:18); *2 Timothy 2:18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. NKJV*
- **turn away their ears from listening to the truth** (II Tim. 4:4); *2 Timothy 4:4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. NKJV*
- **hold down the truth in unrighteousness** (Rom. 1:18); *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, NKJV*
- **change the truth into a lie** (Rom. 1:25); and twist it to their own destruction (II Peter 3:16). *Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. NKJV; 2 Peter 3:16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. NKJV*

So that is why God always seeks to ground His children in truth. God wants firmly holding onto His truth. The Scriptures open with Satan twisting and negating God's truth with his lies in Genesis 3. By Genesis 6, just 3 chapters further, God destroys the whole world of sinners except for 8 and puts up a global reminder of His truth in the sky called a rainbow. God wants people to be reminded of the truth of their Creator and His expectations.

By the second book of the Bible, Exodus, we see God chose a nation to be His light in the world. He commanded that a tent that taught the people about the ways of the Lord be built right in the middle of the camp of Israel. The advertising system God designed was amazing, with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night hovering over that tent—to remind them all day and every night that He was there and they needed to live like they belonged to Him. God wanted them to grow by regular exposure to His truth.

Later, an exquisite, golden Temple followed and three annual trips to Jerusalem with preparations to meet with the Lord were required of all families. God wanted them to grow by regular exposure to His truth.

Centuries of festivals in Jerusalem three times a year supplemented by a stream of prophets, priests, and kings followed. All these measures, instituted by God were for spiritual growth. God wanted them to grow by regular exposure to His truth.

Jesus is the Ultimate Expression of Truth

Then the Truth Incarnate, the Living Word of God is wrapped in humanity and sent to earth. Jesus is the exact and true representation of God (Heb. 1:3). If you see Jesus you have truly seen His Father.

The only link we have to God comes by faith in His Word (Romans 10:17). God's truth saves us, sanctifies us, and defends us from all attacks. Truth is of the essence. It is what we build our lives upon and place our hope in. God is Truth, Christ is the Truth, and His Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. Lost people never receive the love of the truth. And sadly, in the last days (in which we live) many will turn away their ears from listening to truth.

Paul's world was hostile to the truth of God; and Paul warned that days to come would increasingly be filled with false teachings about God, and bad behavior by believers.

*II Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And **they shall turn away their ears from the truth**, and shall be turned unto fables.*

For times just like those in which we live Paul writes, Christ's church is to be filled with men who are sound in faith.

*Titus 2:2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, **sound in faith**, in love, in patience; NKJV*

You can't separate growth in truth from God's Word. Growth is a part of sanctification, we are sanctified by God's Word, and God's Word is Truth (John 17:17). So discipleship is to be the constant focus of the church because...

All Believers are to be Grounded in Truth

God's eternal plan is that all believers serve Him as truth beacons in a world of lies. Both Peter and John (1 Peter 2:9; Revelations 1:6) describe our calling to that life of worship in spirit and truth as each of us being 'priests' to God.

The Reformation went far in teaching about the priesthood of the believers but didn't sufficiently train them or utilize them in service. This is not a criticism, just an observation from history.

God's plan for training each believer in their ministry of offering worship in spirit and in truth is laid out in Ephesians 4:11-14.

Ephesians 4:11-14	Comments	Future Action
4:11 <i>And he gave some [to be] apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;</i>	God has a plan to spread His truth and sends those He has gifted to declare and teach His truth.	God calls and gifts believers for each generation; and asks us to seek Him and find His plan that He has for the rest of our life.
4:12 <i>for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up</i>	God's plan is that every saint be trained in living and sharing the truth with other saints—and	Leaders are responsible to monitor whether the church is raising up disciples in God's truth, or just

<i>of the body of Christ:</i>	disciple them into discipler makers.	servicing listeners.
<i>4:13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:</i>	We must keep the focus upon our mission, not the bumps along the way. The goal is "all" equipped to disciple others in the Truth.	People need to see God's plan, and be pointed down a path they can follow to grow in His Truth.
<i>4:14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error.</i>	Without personal trainers alongside believers, the work doesn't get done, believers are weakened by sin, and the church stagnates.	We never know everything, but everyone can know enough of the truth to walk in the Spirit.

Grace Energized Men: Equipping Means Mended by The Truth Titus 2:2

As we open to I Timothy 3 this morning, turn your minds towards one of the most amazing parts of our faith—the new relationships God gives to us.

- First, all of us in Christ this morning are brothers and sisters (I Tim. 5:1-2); and that even includes our children, our parents, and our marriage partners, if they are believers. And that list of relatives extends up and down the streets of Tulsa, across the country, and around the world. We have blood relatives in every part of this world. The key is, if they are born-again believers—they are our siblings.
- Second, God is our Father (Mat. 6:6-15). We have a perfect, always-there Dad who loves us without any conditions, who will never change, pull back, leave home, or divorce our mother. He knows what's best, gives us everything we need, stays in touch constantly, and goes with us everywhere we are.
- Thirdly, Jesus Christ has become our brother as well as God and Savior (Hebrews 2:11-12). That means He knows all of our struggles, pains, weaknesses, and temptations—and is right there with us as we go through them.
- Finally, we live in God's house (I Timothy 3:15), His Church, and as family members the Bible, God's Word is the plan He has for us how we are to behave, all of our family duties, and so on.

This morning we are the house of God. Each of us are a spiritual piece of that building. We are built upon the foundation of truth that is in Christ Jesus. Listen again to what Paul said in I Timothy 3:15:

*“...but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God**, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of **the truth**.” NKJV*

We are in the midst of a study of Titus 2:2, where Paul explains the “house rules”. All believers are called saints. And those saints who believe right and behave right are “sound in faith”. A believer, who has healthy faith, believes truth and lives truth.

As we will see, grace-energized men and women are to be mended (equipping) and built up (edification) by the truth, to function properly in God's Family.

Only spiritually healthy people can men and build up others. Are you functioning as a healthy member of Christ's church this morning?

For just a moment remember that there are no less than twelve metaphors in God's Word for the Church⁴². Each metaphor is a powerful way for us to see how God looks upon us who are Christ's church. Let me just list them off for you.

We are—**A family** (I Tim. 5:1-2); **The Bride of Christ** (II Cor. 11:2); **Branches on a vine** (John 15:5); **An olive tree** (Rom. 11:17-24); **A field of crops** (1 Cor. 3:6-9); **A new temple** (1 Peter 2:5) built with “living stones”; **A new group of priests** (1 Pet. 2:5), that can offer “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to

⁴² Adapted from Wayne Grudem: *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, p. 858

God”; *A building* (1 Cor. 3:9); and *God’s house*: (Heb. 3:3,), with Jesus Christ himself viewed as the “builder” of the house; *The pillar and bulwark of the truth* (1 Tim. 3:15); *A harvest* (Matt. 13:1-30; John 4:35); and *The body of Christ* (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Our Responsibilities to Christ’s Church

We are responsible as believers, to apply each of the metaphors used for the church into our daily lives. As we do so we begin to appreciate more of the richness of privilege that God gave us by placing us into His church. Stir up your mind by thinking about these truths.

1. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a family**—*should increase our love and fellowship with one another.*
2. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the bride of Christ**—*should stimulate us to personally strive for greater purity, deeper love for Christ, and swifter fuller obedience to Him.*
3. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **branches of a vine**—*should cause us to rest in Him more fully.*
4. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **an agricultural crop**—*should encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life and obtaining for ourselves and others the proper spiritual nutrients to grow.*
5. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **God’s new temple**—*should increase our awareness of God’s very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet.*
6. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a priesthood**—*should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to Him (see Heb. 13:15-16).*
7. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the body of Christ**—*should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body.*
8. Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a house that is being built**—*should stir each of us to be a part of the process of building up, edifying, and discipling one another.*

This morning if I could ask each of you to remember just one concept from this entire message it would be this:

Are you doing what God made you to do?

God looks to each one of us to do our part in His Church that He is building; and each of us is a unique tools in His Hands; and each of us can do something God designed only for us to do. In other words...

Are you a part of His Team?

All of us have a responsibility to be a part of God’s building process. It was 13 years ago that we began constructing our home here in Tulsa. Like many of you we followed the same process.

We had to choose a builder, buy a lot, then watch as the land got cleared and ready, the slab or foundation was prepared and poured, then the framers came, the windows were put it, the electricians showed up and strung wires, plumbers, sheet rockers, cabinet makers, trim carpenters, painters, flooring specialists, and on and on it went.

The whole process took months, and all the various workers came and went from our house and each did something whether large or small that was a part of the construction process.

We all know this is true about our houses, but do you understand the same is true about Christ's church? Just as it took an army of different craftsmen and workers to construct that house—God has the same planned for His Church.

Each of us has a different giftedness for use in building and maintaining Christ's House.

To construct and maintain a house we can't all be electricians, or where would we get the plumbing done. We can't all be painters or how would we get the roofing done?

In house construction, each one does a different part, *and all must work together*.

In Christ's church each of us has a different giftedness God wants to use in His construction of the Church. If you come to the building site and do not do what He made you to do—the entire process of building up the Church suffers. And that brings us to the essence of our study this morning. All of us are to be a part of God's two part construction plan. Open with me to Ephesians 4:11-13.

Last week we left off in this passage explaining how to apply this message of believing and living the truth. Stand/Read/Pray

Ephesians 4:11-13 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. NKJV

Mended and Built By The Truth

Did you notice the two words Paul emphasizes in v. 12? Equipping and edifying. That verse contain God's goal for all of us in Christ's church this morning—bringing believers to spiritual health and spiritual growth through truth in Christ. Do you really understand why you are here?

Let's get a hold on these twin truths of Ephesians 4:12. First look at the words God chose to use to describe our purpose:

Ephesians 4:12 "...for the equipping (Gk. # 2677, n. from v. #2675 lit. "mending"; KJV 'perfecting') of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying (Gk. #3619 lit. "building up") of the body of Christ..." NKJV

How is this done within a local church? Paul introduces us to the twin concepts of the "equipping church" and the "edifying church". Both ministries are vital. We all need to grasp our responsibility, so that we come to church and operate as a church in the way that God designed us to serve Him.

What exactly is equipping? Earlier in our Titus 2 study we bumped into this concept, but today we want to dwell on it and soak in this life changing truth.

Because we know God's Word teaches us that every word of God was inspired, we first study that word. The word "equipping" is *kartartismos* and is a noun used only here in the New Testament. But the verb form⁴³ of this noun is very descriptive; and its meaning is most clearly seen in the way this word is used in our Bibles.

⁴³ Kartartizo is used 13x in the New Testament. Mending is also used in Mark 1:10.

2675 katartizo { kat-ar-tid'-zo }: v; AV - perfect 2, make perfect 2, mend 2, be perfect 2, fit 1, frame 1, prepare 1, restore 1, perfectly joined together 1; 13x in N.T.

Definition: to render, i.e. to fit, sound, complete; to mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair; to complete; to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust; to fit or frame for one's self, prepare; ethically: to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be.⁴⁴

Turn there with me to the first use of this word in the New Testament, Matthew 4:21.

*Matthew 4:21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, **mending** their nets. He called them, NKJV*

Did you see equipping? It is right there; only in this verse the word for “equipping” is translated “mending”. Turn on the Mark 1:19.

- *Mark 1:19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat **mending** their nets. NKJV*

If you haven't yet done this, you may want to circle the word “mending” in your Bible, and write nearby the word “equipping”. When you do that, you have just made a powerful connection. The Holy Spirit led Paul to use this very same word in Ephesians 4:12. The verb *kartartidzo* is here translated “mending”, and the noun form is translated “equipping” in Ephesians 4:12.

Mending Lives is God's Plan for all of us

Now let this picture God's Word gives to us, sink into your heart and mind.

Jesus found his first disciples sitting and doing what fishermen do, looking through each part of their nets and stitching back up any tears, mending any holes, and fixing anywhere the nets had started to unravel. Mending is what this word portrays.

To even broaden our mental picture, if we trace this word outside the Bible and into the culture of Paul's day, this word is used for setting broken bones.

So mending nets and setting bones both speak of taking injured, damaged, or weakened things and getting them back the way they are supposed to be. Can you see the connection? An equipping church is all about helping people from where they are to where God wants them to be. We all need help, and we all are to help each other. Now plug those images into the purpose of Christ's church as we meet.

And think about the band of men Jesus called to start His church—mostly fishermen weren't they? And another man was in the sewing business that was heavily involved, a leather worker/tent sewing man named Paul. This picture of sewing, patching, mending, and repairing was so much a part of their lives. No wonder they had such powerful fellowship back then. They knew and felt in their hands what their task was to be.

Mending lives so that those lives can be engaged as tools in Christ's hands building up, helping, exhorting, and discipling others.

⁴⁴ *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995

Believers are out in life getting frayed, torn, and ripped by all the troubles and struggles we go through each day.

We each sustain some degree of damage through struggles at work, conflicts at home, and temptations nagging us when we are alone.

We also are often just like a net as it gets dragged along in daily use—we have sustained wear and tear to our lives just with the daily pressures and stresses of living.

But now comes the wonderful part. This truth is what has strengthened Christ's church through all these centuries since Pentecost—when we gather obediently as Christ's church, He is present; and when Christ is present He uses us to do his work of repairing one another from the injuries of life's struggles.

- We gather to have the torn places in our lives mended with God's Word.
- We come together to see God fixing parts of life that have started to unravel like relationships, hope, confidence and assurance—by His Spirit, and through His Word, and using other believers.

Mending means the Application of God's Truth

Mending means the application of thread to the torn place, or the application of calk to the leaking place, or the application of glue or a nail to the loosened place. Note the reoccurring use of the word “application”?

Can you imagine the disciples in Christ's day going to classes on mending nets where they watched great fishermen mending their nets, and they were able to hold and admire nets that were expertly mended; and there were spools of strong thread passed around; and there were shiny, sharp needles displayed—and never actually mended a net? That would be ludicrous. They would have laughed. No, they learned to mend sitting next to an old fisherman, most likely their dad. And they held a net and a needle and mended right along with him until they knew the art of mending.

For a moment ask yourself, “Do I learn about things God wants me to do, that I never do?” Is an equipping church only a classroom with no accountability for actual participation? Can we have any class without half of the class being the actual doing?

Are we an equipping/mending church if we only STUDY well-mended nets, strong threads, sharp needles, and admire the great menders of the past and present—but never actually require individuals to actually mend another person's life?

For decades in America we have equated a healthy church with hearing and optional doing. But that was never the model in Christ's Church from the start. James said those who merely heard and were never required to do were deceiving themselves.

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. NKJV

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. NIV

Mended Lives Get Repaired by God's Word

The church that offers these needed repairs is the church that is truly an “equipping” church, and that is what we see as we follow this word through the rest of the New Testament. Continue with me to:

- **We need our unity constantly mended.** *1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgment. NKJV*
- **We need our peacefulness constantly mended.** *2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. **Become complete.** Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. NKJV*
- **We need our triumph in Christ constantly mended.** *Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual **restore** such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. NKJV*
- **We need our faith constantly mended.** *1 Thessalonians 3:10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and **perfect** what is lacking in your faith? NKJV*
- **We need our ministry focus constantly mended.** *Hebrews 13:21 **make you complete** in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. NKJV*
- **We need our endurance through affliction constantly mended.** *1 Peter 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, **perfect**, establish, strengthen, and settle you. NKJV*

Through suffering God restores us. This is our same word *kartarizein*, the word commonly used for setting a fracture, the word used in Matthew and Mark for mending nets. It means “to supply that which is missing”, and “to mend that which is broken”. So suffering, if accepted in humility and trust and love, can repair some weaknesses of our character and add the greatness God wants us to have that before the suffering wasn’t there.

How is your life? Is it in need of a little mending this morning? God's Word is available and in action this morning. Why not pause now and then while we study through the Bible and ask God to sew your soul, mend your heart, heal your emotions that are frayed, quiet your mind that is spinning or darkened or saddened, and get you back on track with the Lord. That is what God wants to do here in and through His Church.

What is the result of being mended? You get tied to God's Word. You see that His Word is the lamp that guides, the food that feeds, the comfort that cheers our souls--as it points us to Christ.

Being mended means finding that Jesus comes to us by His Spirit, through His Word and gives us the power to do what He asks. This power to do what He has told us to do in the Bible is grace. And God’s process of changing us on the inside I love to call “energized by grace”.

And all that was to happen within the context of grace-energized, truth-filled lives of those called to be menders.

We all are to allow God's Word to mend us and share that Word into the lives of others who are frayed by the trials and struggles of life.

Grace Energized Men: Edification Means Built by The Truth Titus 2:2

Grace-energized men get “sound in faith” when they are mended (by equipping) and built up (through edification) by the Word of God’s truth. Then they go through life building others up (edifying them) by God's Word.

In Christ's church each of us has a different giftedness God wants to use in His construction of the Church. If you come to the building site and do not do what He made you to do—the entire process of building up the Church suffers. And that brings us to Ephesians 4:11-13.

*Ephesians 4:11-13 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 **for the equipping** of the saints for the work of ministry, **for the edifying** of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. NKJV*

Mended and Built By The Truth

How is this done within a local church? Paul introduces us to the twin concepts of the “equipping church” and the “edifying church”. Both ministries are vital. We all need to grasp our responsibility, so that we come to church and operate as a church in the way that God designed us to serve Him—***mending lives so that those lives can be engaged as tools in Christ's hands building up, helping, exhorting, and discipling others.***

First, mending means finding that Jesus comes to us by His Spirit, through His Word and gives us the power to reach out and mend others with His Word. This power to do what He has told us to do in the Bible is grace. And all that was to happen within the context of grace-energized, truth-filled lives of those called to be menders.

Secondly, we need to examine the other half of our calling. Look again at Ephesians 4:12.

*Ephesians 4:12 “...for **the equipping** (Gk. # 2677, n. from v. #2675 lit. “mending”; KJV ‘perfecting’) of the saints for the work of ministry, for **the edifying** (Gk. #3619 lit. “building up”) of the body of Christ...” NKJV*

The second half of the plan is “edifying”, or being—

Built up by The Truth

What exactly does an edifying church do? Again, we learn that by seeing the early church in action through the New Testament. And, as we do so, go back to that house-building picture.

Think of what it takes to build a house: a succession of skilled workers that work together with a common goal, following the same plans, and guided by the master builder/contractor who is doing the bidding of the owner. Now think about that.

We are all individual workmen, as Paul told Timothy ‘rightly dividing’ the plans in God's Word.

The project managers are the elders who are to make sure that everyone is mended and spiritually healthy and as soon as they are—make sure they are helping out in the building.

The Owner is always present and observing our work—and of course that is the Lord.

Edification is just building the house according to the plans God left us. Pleasing Him as we do so.

Now let's do another word study, this time it is on that second half of Ephesians 4:12

Ephesians 4:12 “...for **the equipping** (Gk. # 2677, n. from v. #2675 lit. “mending”; KJV ‘perfecting’) of the saints for the work of ministry, for **the edifying** (Gk. #3619 lit. “building up”) of the body of Christ...” NKJV

3619 oikodome { oy-kod-om-ay’}: n f; AV - edifying 7, building 6, edification 4, wherewith (one) may edify 1; 18x in the N.T.

Definition: (the act of) building, building up; metaphorically= edifying, edification; the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, holiness; a building (i.e. the thing built, edifice)⁴⁵

- *Matthew 24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the **buildings** of the temple. NKJV*
- *Mark 13:1-2 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, see what manner of stones and what **buildings** are here!”² And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” NKJV*
- *Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may **edify** another. NKJV*
- *Romans 15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to **edification**. NKJV*
- *1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's **building**. NKJV*
- *1 Corinthians 14:3, 5, 12, 26 But he who prophesies speaks **edification** and exhortation and comfort to men. 5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive **edification**. 12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the **edification** of the church that you seek to excel. 26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for **edification**. NKJV*

- *2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a **building** from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. NKJV*
- *2 Corinthians 10:8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for **edification** and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—NKJV*
- *2 Corinthians 12:19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your **edification**. NKJV*
- *2 Corinthians 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for **edification** and not for destruction. NKJV*
- *Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole **building**, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, NKJV*
- *Ephesians 4:12, 16, 29 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the **edifying** of itself in love. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary **edification**, that it may impart grace to the hearers. NKJV*

Before we go any further, let me just explain a life long building ministry we should seek to be a part of. I like to call this—

4 Types of Edifying Friends Every Believer Needs⁴⁶

Tragically, many believers are among the loneliest people on the face of the earth. But that is contrary to all that God has planned for His Church. Edifying friendship is a vital part of New Testament ministry and leadership. Without quality, biblical friendships, we are modeling a flawed Christian lifestyle for our church members. Yet, for many, the difficulties of close friendships outweigh the benefits.

Many believers find themselves in an unhealthy relationship where their marriage partner is their only friend and counselor. I believe our partners should be our best friend, but not our only friend.

If you are a typical believer without close friendships, I urge you to seek out one of each type of these Christians who can build you up by only one thing God blesses—His Word.

God's Word is the tool with which all spiritual building is done.

⁴⁶ Adapted and mostly quoted from the 2001 article written by Ike Reighard, the Founding Pastor of [NorthStar Church in Kennesaw, Georgia](#), redone in a LifeWay article adapted by Craig Webb from the previously published article and found online at [www.CrossWalk.com](#)

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

That is the tool with which every believer should be skilled, and should share.

In my over 30 years of ministry, I have learned that every believer needs at least four types of friends around them who are skilled in using God's Word:

1. **We Need to be Edified by The Developer:** Your best friend will always be the person who brings out the very best in you. According to Billy Graham, he wouldn't have made it as an evangelist if he had to minister alone. In 1948, Billy Graham met his staff and best friends: Cliff Barrows, George Beverly Shea, and Grady Wilson. These three men protected him, strengthened him, counseled with their wisdom, and corrected him when he needed it. He is convinced that without these friends he would have burned out within a few years after his first groundbreaking crusade in 1949⁴⁷. Developer friends will bring the gift of encouragement to your life and bring out the very best in you.
2. **We Need to be Edified by The Designer:** We tend to think of mentors as a personal, hands-on coach. The Latin and Greek define them more as "advisors" or "wise men." Jesus was a master mentor. He ministered to thousands, trained hundreds, equipped twelve, and had an intimate friendship with three men. The designer mentors us in our marriage, ministry, child-rearing, civic involvement, business acumen, or any area where we need a model. Designer mentors may live near or far, be acquaintances or strangers, or may even be dead. They "design" our lives through Scripture, books, tapes, articles, or seminars.
3. **We Need to be Edified by The Disturber:** We need friends who will shake up our status quo. Disturbers ask us difficult questions, forcing us to take a closer look at motivations and ambitions. Disturbers know when we have retreated into our comfort zones, and they call us out to greater effectiveness. God uses disturbers in our lives to become the object of greater force that breaks inertia and propels us to greater achievement. A biblical picture of a disturber is in Deuteronomy 32:11. In this passage the mother eagle tears up the soft nest to reveal sharp thorns that bring discomfort to the eaglets. Because of discomfort, the eaglets leave the nest and learn to fly. The mother develops her young by repeatedly pushing them out of the nest and catching them until they become skilled flyers. Eagles were never meant to stay in the nest, and neither were we. The disturber pushes us to learn to fly.
4. **We Need to be Edified by The Discerner:** In a lifetime of relationships, perhaps only a handful of people are willing to play this vital role because it requires mutual vulnerability. More popularly known as accountability partners, discerners bring the gift of spiritual insight into our lives. They know how to speak the truth in love. They know how to exhort and rebuke, seeking to keep their friend on the right track. They are also vulnerable—the

⁴⁷ Just as I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham, pp. 125, 129.

true friends who will walk into the room of your life while everyone else is walking out. Proverbs 27:6 reads, “The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive.” Always be slow in choosing your discerners and even slower in leaving them.

Now, back at the construction site, here are the job descriptions of—

Construction Workers God Always Wants and Uses

Spiritual gifts are the empowerment God uses to build up His Church. There are several New Testament lists of the construction workers God deploys at each building site. The two main gift lists are Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12.

The easiest way to look at these lists is to say that the Corinthian list is primarily pointed at temporary sign gifts and the Roman list is pointed at ongoing gifts that we see today.

For our construction site visit, we’ll focus on the list in Romans 12.

*Romans 12:4-12 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;⁷ or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering; he who **teaches**, in teaching;⁸ he who **exhorts**, in exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; NKJV*

This passage in Romans 12 gives us seven amazing types of gifted people God wants to use in every church. Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two of the gifts (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and another two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. So, these seven seem to resonate as a complete set that God loves to use. But whatever gift, or blend of gifts, you have been given, exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

At every construction site where Christ is at work building His church, He will be sending believers that He has gifted for the following construction “jobs” or “duties”:

1. **Workers gifted in Speaking Forth God's Word or “prophecy” (Romans 12:6).** This Gr. word means “speaking forth” and does not necessarily have to involve prediction of the future or any other mystical or supernatural aspects. When used of a non-revelatory gift, this word “prophecy” simply identifies the skill of public proclamation of the Word of God (*1 Pet. 4:11*). This person may be random, or may be systematic—but they love to proclaim the Word. But the key that tests the prompting of the Spirit is that a person’s “prophesying” is to be done **in proportion to the faith**, a better translation would be “in agreement to the (not his) faith.”
2. **Workers gifted in Serving God’s People or “ministry” (Romans 12:7a).** From the same Gr. word as “deacon,” “deaconess” come from, it refers to those who serve. This gift, similar to the gift of helps (1 Cor. 12:28), has broad application to include every kind of practical help (cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 12:28). This person never needs to be pointed towards a job, they are always looking for things to do for others.

3. **Workers gifted in Explaining God's Word or “teaching” (Romans 12:7b).** The ability to interpret, clarify, systematize, and explain God’s truth clearly (cf. Acts 18:24-25; 2 Tim. 2:2). Pastors must have the gift of teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 4:16), but many mature, qualified laymen also have this gift. This differs from preaching (prophecy), not in content, but in the unique skill for public proclamation. This person is very systematic and able to clearly communicate truth, even though they may be quiet and even prefer a small group.
4. **Workers gifted in Inspiring others to obey God's Word or “exhortation” (Romans 12:8a).** The gift which enables a believer to effectively call others to obey and follow God’s truth. In a negative sense this person may love to admonish and correct others regarding sin (2 Tim. 4:2), or in a positive sense, this person may be always drawn to encourage, comfort, and strengthen struggling believers (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3–5; Heb. 10:24, 25).
5. **Workers gifted in Pouring out what they have for others or “gives” (Romans 12:8b).** This denotes the sacrificial sharing and giving of one’s resources and self to meet the needs of others (cf. 2 Cor. 8:3–5, 9; 11; Eph. 4:28). This person has a simple desire, to just offer to others a single-minded and openhearted generosity. Contributing is to be done with generosity (en haploteuti), not skimpily (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). Prompted by the Spirit, they will give with no desire for thanks and personal recognition, but to glorify God (see also Matt. 6:2; Acts 2:44-45; 4:37–5:11; 2 Cor. 8:2–5).
6. **Workers gifted in Showing others the best way or “leads” (Romans 12:8c).** The Greek word means lit. “standing before”, and when Paul describes this gift to the Corinthians he calls it “administrations” (1 Cor. 12:28). This word also means “to guide” and was used of the pilot who steered the ship (Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). In the NT, this word is used to describe only leadership in the home (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12) and the church (1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). This managing, leading, or administering is to be done **diligently** (en spoudeu, “in eagerness, earnestness”), not lazily or halfheartedly.
7. **Workers gifted in Incarnating Christ's Compassion or “shows mercy” (Romans 12:8d).** This person loves to actively show sympathy and sensitivity to those in suffering and sorrow; and they give both the willingness and the resources to help lessen the afflictions of those in need. Frequently, this gift accompanies the gift of exhortation. But when prompted by the Spirit there is also an evident **cheerfulness**. This spirit-energized attitude is vital to ensure that the gift of mercy becomes a genuine help, not a discouraging commiseration with those who are suffering (see also Prov. 14:21, 31; Luke 4:18-19)⁴⁸.

Edification is God’s Plan For All of us

The terms edify and edification, were some of Paul’s favorite words, when describing our ministry in Christ's church as believers. These words come from the realm of building and architecture and mean literally “to build up”. Even today we get the term popular in health clubs of “body building” and the disciplined usage of exercises to accomplish that goal. Paul lived in a world where athletics and body building were paramount, so using the words of his culture he called saints to action.

The basic meaning of the Greek word for **edify** (oikodomeo) is “to build a house” and by extension led to mean the building of anything. When used in our New Testaments it took the meaning of growing spiritually and helping others to grow up in a spiritual way. Anything that contributes to spiritual growth was said to edify.

Peter exhorts everyone at the end of his epistle to “grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ” (II Peter 3:18), and to do that we can find in God's Word at least three basic means that God uses through us to grow others:

⁴⁸ This list has been abridged, edited and adapted from John E. MacArthur, Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997

1. **God's Word.** As Paul was leaving behind the beloved church he had invested his life into for over three years, he told the elders of the church standing with him at the port city of Miletus, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). The Bible, God's Word, is the key tool that the Lord uses to build our spiritual lives (John 17:17).
2. **Preaching and teaching.** Later in this letter to the Corinthians Paul tells them that, rather than being so concerned about speaking in tongues, they should focus on prophesying, or preaching, which "speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation." The "one who prophesies edifies the church" (1 Cor. 14:3-4).
3. **Obedient Ministry prompted by Love.** Our purpose as believers is to do "the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12); and as Paul reminds us only with love can this edify others, because only "love edifies" (1 Cor. 8:1).

The conclusion is that every believer is called to be an edifier.

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself" (Rom 15:2-3).

"Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).

Grace Energized Men: God, Gifts, and God's Building Project Ephesians 4:12

This morning the God of the Universe is seeking something—God is looking for individuals who will worship Him. We were all born, alienated from God, by our sin. But Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost by taking our place on the cross and paying the price for our sin.

The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus did all that needs to be done to take away the penalty and power of our sin so that we can worship our Creator.

Open with me to Christ's words in John 4:22.

John 4:22-28 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." NKJV

This morning salvation is turning towards Christ in faith and away from sin. At the instant of salvation, as Jesus told this woman at the well, we become worshippers. But we have so many hindrances all around us to fully offering that worship that God the Father seeks from us. That is why we are studying edification this morning. We need to be:

Edified (Built up) To Worship

Now, turn with me to I Peter 2:4 and listen to what we all need this morning.

*1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are **being built up** (there is our word "edified") a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

In order to offer worship as God desires, we all need to be a part of a lifelong building project that God has called the Church.

There have been some amazing building projects in history. Noah building the ark; the Pharaohs building the pyramids 500 years before Abraham; and Solomon building God's first temple a thousand years before Christ's Birth; Herod the Great building the Temple Mount of Christ's day; the Great Wall of China; and even recently the us governments interstate highway system...these all were monumental building projects.

But, the greatest construction project of all time has also been going on the longest. For 2000 years God has been building up Christ's church using gifted workers with a blend of seven skill sets to make holy temples out of living stones that are sending clouds of worship before God's Throne in heaven.

This morning you have come to the greatest construction project on Earth. Christ's Church is God's massive building project. It stretches across our land and around the world and extends all the way up to the Sea of Glass surrounding God's Throne.

An old hymn used to remind believers of what God was doing to us through the church. The hymn was "O To Be Like Thee" and had one clear statement of edification when it says, "fitted for life and service above". Every day we need to be built up in our walk so that we can be better fitted for life and more prepared for the worship we offer now and will be offering forever above.

The Church as God Sees Us

Down here we only see the construction, but up there we see the offerings of worshipping saints. Look with me at the finished product, what all of the edification or building up that we are to be each involved in doing, is for. Turn with me to I Peter 2 where Peter shows us the Church functioning as God sees us and desires us to serve.

1 Peter 2:4-10 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. NKJV

Do you see what God is doing? He is taking each of us as we are saved and placing us into Christ's church. There we are to be offering our lives as living sacrifices of worship. Just as we are to do forever in Heaven (worship Him) so we are to be doing now as we go through our earthly lives.

Peter wrote to people living and working in the Roman Empire. This letter went to the Roman Province of Asia (modern Turkey) where there was a very high degree of civilization. People had to work just like today just to survive. But Peter said, as you go to work—you are to worship. As you go through life—you are a priest to God.

Becoming a temple of living stones that each is offering worship and collectively are a temple to God is not easy. That is why Peter surrounds this description of what God wants and how we are to offer Him worship with all of these exhortations. Note all the struggles these believers faced.

- They had to be reminded to put away the old life (2:1).
- They had to be encouraged to eat spiritual food (2:2-3).
- They had to be often reminded that this world is not their home (2:11a).
- They needed strong exhortations to abstain from feeding the flesh (2:11b).
- They had to be reminded and taught how to be living a lifestyle that pointed to the Lord (2:12).
- They had to be submissive to the laws of society around them (2:13-17).
- They had to learn to work hard for their employers (2:18).
- They had to learn to go through hard times or suffering affliction and not quit (2:19-21)

When saints are out of fellowship with the Lord, out of harmony with each other, out of line in their spiritual lives—we can't offer pleasing worship. Only a clean, humbled, and Spirit-filled saint can offer acceptable worship. So we are all called to be some part of mending and building up other believers.

That is why every one of us has a spiritual gift set, just right for what God wants us to do. To help us remember exactly what God wants each of us to be doing, we need to examine another passage of Scripture. As we turn to Romans 12 we find the job descriptions of—

Construction Workers God Always Wants and Uses

Spiritual gifts are the grace-energized empowerments God uses to build up His Church.

There are several New Testament lists of these gifted believers, or construction workers God deploys at each building site. The two main gift lists are Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12.

The easiest way to look at these two lists is to say that the Corinthian list is primarily pointed at temporary sign gifts and the Roman list is pointed at the ongoing gifts that we see today at work in local churches.

For our construction site visit, we'll focus on the list in Romans 12. Please join me in v.4 as we see what God has given each of us and wants to do with all of us:

*Romans 12:4-12 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;⁷ or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering; he who **teaches**, in teaching;⁸ he who **exhorts**, in exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; NKJV*

This passage in Romans 12 gives us seven amazing types of gifted people God wants to use in every church.

Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two of the gifts (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and another two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11.

So, these seven seem to resonate as a complete set of workers that God loves to use to build up the individual members of Christ's church into fully functioning worshippers. But whatever gift, or blend of gifts, you have been given, exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

Seven Gifted Believers that are Building up other believers

At every construction site where Christ is at work building His church, He will be sending believers that He has gifted for the following construction “jobs” or “duties”:

8. **God has workers gifted in speaking forth God's Truth; and that is the word “prophecy” (Romans 12:6).** This gift energizes a believer to be “speaking forth” (as the Greek word means)

- and does not necessarily have to involve prediction of the future or any other mystical or supernatural aspects. When used in this non-revelatory way in the New Testament, this word “prophecy” simply identifies the skill of public proclamation of the Word of God (as in *1 Pet. 4:11*). This person may be random, or may be systematic—but they love to proclaim the Word. But the key that tests the prompting of the Spirit is that a person’s “prophesying” is to be done **in proportion to the faith**, a better translation would be “in agreement to the (not his) faith.”
9. **God has workers gifted in Serving God’s People; and that is the word “ministry” (Romans 12:7a).** This gift energizes believers to look for and want to do every kind of practical and helpful task (cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 12:28), and is similar to the gift of helps (1 Cor. 12:28). This person never needs to be pushed towards a job, they are always looking for things to do for others. “Ministry” is actually the same word used of “deacon,” and simply means those who serve others. These believers are energized by God’s grace to love to be servants to the needs of the individuals in the Body of Christ.
 10. **God has workers gifted in explaining God’s Word; and that is the word “teaching” (Romans 12:7b).** This gift energizes believers with the ability to interpret, clarify, systematize, and explain God’s truth clearly (cf. Acts 18:24-25; 2 Tim. 2:2). Pastors must have the gift of teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 4:16), but many mature, qualified laymen also have this gift. This differs from preaching (prophecy), not in content, but in the unique skill for public proclamation. This person is very didactic and able to clearly communicate truth, even though they may be quiet and even prefer a small group.
 11. **God has workers gifted in inspiring others to obey God’s Word; and that is the word “exhortation” (Romans 12:8a).** This gift energizes believers with the ability to effectively call others to obey and follow God’s truth. Many of the areas believers struggle with are attitudes and emotions that are not pleasing to God and that are not helpful to others believers. In a negative sense this person may love to admonish and correct others regarding sin (2 Tim. 4:2), or in a positive sense, this person may be always drawn to encourage, comfort, and strengthen struggling believers (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3–5; Heb. 10:24, 25).
 12. **God has workers gifted in pouring out what they have for others; and that is the word “gives” (Romans 12:8b).** This gift energizes believers with the desire and ability to sacrificially share and give their resources, and even them self to meet the needs of others (2 Cor. 8:3–5, 9; 11; Eph. 4:28). This person has a simple desire, to just offer to others a single-minded and openhearted generosity. Contributing is to be done with generosity (*en haploteti*) which means not sparingly (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). This Spirit-energized ministry occurs with no desire for thanks and personal recognition, but only a longing that God be glorified (see also Matt. 6:2; Acts 2:44-45; 4:37–5:11; 2 Cor. 8:2–5).
 13. **God has workers gifted in showing others the best way; and that is the word “leads” (Romans 12:8c).** This gift energizes believers with the ability of managing, leading, or administering. The Greek word means lit. “standing before”, and when Paul describes this gift to the Corinthians he calls it “administrations” (1 Cor. 12:28). This word also means “to guide” and was used of the pilot who steered the ship (Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). In the NT, this word is used to describe only leadership in the Christian home (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12) and in the local church (1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). The Lord adds that this leading is to be done **diligently** (the Greek words *en spoude* means “in eagerness, earnestness”), not lazily or halfheartedly.
 14. **God has workers gifted in incarnating (living out) Christ’s Compassion; and that is the word “shows mercy” (Romans 12:8d).** This gift energizes a believer to minister to the emotional needs of other believers. They are energized by His grace in actively showing sympathy and Christ’s compassion to those in suffering and sorrow; and they give both the willingness and the resources to help lessen the afflictions of those in need. Frequently, this gift of compassion or mercy comes with the gift of exhortation. But when prompted by the Spirit there is also an evident **cheerfulness**. This spirit-energized attitude is vital to ensure that the gift

of mercy becomes a genuine help, not a discouraging commiseration with those who are suffering (see also Prov. 14:21, 31; Luke 4:18-19)⁴⁹.

What is Your Skill set?

So which workman are you this morning? What “job description” did God give you when He invited you to come to the construction site of His church?

1. v.6 if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;
2. v.7 or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering;
3. he who **teaches**, in teaching;
4. v.8 he who **exhorts**, in exhortation;
5. he who **gives**, with liberality;
6. he who **leads**, with diligence;
7. he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

These are the tools that we use to mend and build up, to equip and edify. This equipping (mending lives) and edifying (building up lives) is all part of fulfilling our calling in the Great Commission. Christ's final words to us after His earthly ministry were that we invest our lives “making disciples”. The seven types of gifted people within the church deal with this entire process of discipleship as they mend and build up each other.

A discipling mender first helps a fellow believer get back in step with the Lord with a clean heart and a clear mind so that worship will flow. Then that discipling edifier will help them see how to be built up into a fully functioning worshipper of God.

If you look closely at the list of gifts and their application, there is so much more than just the content of true doctrine and salvation that must be carefully watched over in the church.

- First, two **gifts focus on the ministry of true doctrine** (#1 “prophecy” & 3 “teaches”);
- Then three **gifts focus on meeting physical needs** (# 2 “ministry”, 5 “gives”, & 6 “leads”).
- Finally, there are **two gifts that God uses to minister to the emotional needs** of a believer (#4 “exhorts” & 7 “mercy”).

This morning God has deployed us as skilled workers. Some of us are going all over this house of worship with the gifts that lead to training and teaching everyone in the Word of God’s Truth. Others are going about ministering to physical needs, and still others are gifted to work with the emotional needs of believers. All of us have needs and all of us are to minister our gifts.

Spirit-energized Edification is God’s Plan For Each of us

Now back to Ephesians 4 where we launched last week into this look at edification.

Let’s get a hold on these twin truths of Ephesians 4:12. Remember the words God chose to use to describe our purpose? All of us have a two part calling directly from the Lord Himself. What a thrill it is to know what we were created to do for God—and to do it!

⁴⁹ This list has been abridged, edited and adapted from John E. MacArthur, Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997

Ephesians 4:12 “...for **the equipping** (Gk. # 2677, n. from v. #2675 lit. “mending”; KJV ‘perfecting’) of the saints for the work of ministry, for **the edifying** (Gk. #3619 lit. “building up”) of the body of Christ...” NKJV

The terms edify and edification, were some of Paul’s favorite words, when describing our ministry in Christ's church as believers. The basic meaning of the Greek word for **edify** (oikodomeo) is “to build a house” and by extension led to mean the building of anything. When used in our New Testaments it took the meaning of growing spiritually and helping others to grow up in a spiritual way. Anything that contributes to spiritual growth was said to edify.

Peter exhorts everyone at the end of his epistle to “grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ” (II Peter 3:18), and to do that we can find in God's Word at least three basic means that God uses through us to grow others:

4. **God’s Word.** As Paul was leaving behind the beloved church he had invested his life into for over three years, he told the elders of the church standing with him at the port city of Miletus, “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). The Bible, God’s Word, is the key tool that the Lord uses to build our spiritual lives (John 17:17).
5. **Preaching and teaching.** Later in this letter to the Corinthians Paul tells them that, rather than being so concerned about speaking in tongues, they should focus on prophesying, or preaching, which “speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” The “one who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Cor. 14:3–4).
6. **Obedient Ministry prompted by Love.** Our purpose as believers is to do “the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12); and as Paul reminds us only with love can this edify others, because only “love edifies” (1 Cor. 8:1).

The conclusion is that every believer is called and gifted to be an edifier. Either we are or we are not. Either we obey or we disobey. I hope that you want to do what God made you to do in Christ's church!

“Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself” (Rom 15:2–3).

“Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).

At the instant of salvation, we become worshippers. But we have so many hindrances all around us to fully offering that worship that God the Father seeks from us. That is why we are studying edification this morning. We need to be:

Edified (Built up) To Worship

So, God gifts a complete set of workers to use to build up the individual members of Christ's church into fully functioning worshippers. Whatever gift, or blend of gifts, you have been given, exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

When saints are out of fellowship with the Lord, out of harmony with each other, out of line in their spiritual lives—we can’t offer pleasing worship. Only a clean, humbled, and Spirit-filled saint can offer acceptable worship. That is why every one of us has a spiritual gift set, just right for what God wants us to do.

So we are all called to be some part of mending and building up other believers into consecrated worshippers!
Are you doing what God has called YOU to DO?

Today -- you and I are God's priest's in this temple of living stones, offering to Him our worship that He receives in Heaven.

- ***Our devotion to Christ is our burnt offering:*** Mark 12:33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Have we offered our devotion up to Him irretrievably, completely, and lovingly?
- ***Our life given back to Christ is our spiritual sacrifice of worship:*** Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 15:16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **Have we recently renewed that offering of all we are to Him?**
- ***We pour out our service like a drink offering:*** Philippians 2:17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. Are we pouring out what we cannot keep – to Him so we cannot lose?
- ***We offer our gifts as a fragrant freewill offering:*** Philippians 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. What is the aroma ascending from our living before Christ's eyes today?
- ***We offer our worship as a praise offering:*** Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. When is the last time we stopped and launched a wave of praise filled worship toward His Throne?
- ***We offer our deeds as a spiritual sacrifice:*** Hebrews 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What acts of kindness have we premeditated and carried out this week?
- ***We offer our prayers as an incense offering:*** Revelation 8:3-4 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. What do we have in the bowl of our collected prayers? If God loves our prayers so much that He collects them all (like notes from my wife & kids) why don't we send more?

Grace Energized Men: Healthy Faith vs. Unhealthy Faith Titus 2:2

Please open to Titus 2, where we find the marching orders for all men in Christ's church.

This chapter lays out God's expectations for all men young and old, as well as we already have seen, for all women young and old.

We have come to the 4th quality of grace-energized men that the Spirit of God moves Paul to record in this letter to Titus. Paul tells him that men who are energized by His grace, are characterized by what God calls "soundness in faith". This sound faith or literally as the word *hugaino* means, "healthy faith" is a most precious commodity in a believers life.

Sound⁵⁰ is from the same word used in v.1 for Biblical doctrine, and refers to things that are healthy, proper, whole, and as they ought to be. So, grace-energized men have a faith that is healthy, proper, and whole; and a faith that is as God designed it to be.

Faith is Vital to God

God's Word talks much about faith. The word "faith" occurs in our Bible no less than 245 times (in the NKJV translation of God's Word)⁵¹. The Bible describes faith by many different words.

- There is "weak faith" and "little faith" that should be avoided at all costs because it leads to unhealthy faith that is devastating as we'll see this morning.
- Then there is "healthy faith" (Titus 2:2) that is described in God's Word as "strong" faith, "bold" faith, "rich" faith, "abiding" faith, "steadfast" faith, "precious" faith, "common" faith, "unfeigned" faith, "working" faith, "obedient" faith, and "great faith". Each of these 12 types of faith is commended by God and should be sought after and imitated.
- And finally there is that one last dreadful strain of faith, God's Word often warns us about, called "dead" faith that should be carefully watched out for as we go through our life-long spiritual pilgrimage, waiting for our Savior's coming or calling for us.

Biblical faith is not a feeling of "hoping so" or some blind optimistic attitude; neither is it merely assenting to a list of facts or teachings; neither is it superstition, which is the believing in something despite evidence to the contrary. Rather, faith described in God's Word is:

⁵⁰ Sound translates a participle form of the verb *hugainō*, which has the basic meaning of "being well and healthy" and is the term from which we derive "hygiene." Paul uses a form of this word nine times in the pastoral epistles, five of those times in Titus, and always in relation to personal righteousness and spiritual well-being. He repeatedly emphasizes that sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) eventuates in sound faith and sound speaking (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:13; 2:2, 8). Healthy doctrine produces healthy spiritual living.

⁵¹ And 247x in the KJV; and 250x in the NASB; and 270x in the NIV. Amazingly in my electronic library of over 350 reference books the word faith shows up

“True Bible faith is confident obedience to God’s Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Listen to that last sentence again and let it soak into your mind and heart.

This faith operates quite simply. God speaks and we hear His Word. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be. The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown; but we obey God’s Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and what is best”.⁵²

We will end this brief study with God’s warning about dead faith. But, to begin with our study of healthy faith, open now with me to Ephesians 4. Healthy faith as Paul told Titus that God wants in all men, is contrasted in these verses.

Symptoms of Unhealthy Faith

Paul describes here, in his letter to the church Timothy pastored in Ephesus, what unhealthy or incomplete faith looks like in v.14. Those who are not grounded in truth, growing a sound or healthy faith get driven and tossed through life.

In everyday life unhealthy faith in the lives of believers causes them to unnecessarily struggle through just about every realm of their lives. The signs of a lack of the healthy or sound faith that Paul told Titus about, can be seen in the unhealthy and unsound faith that he describes to Timothy—fleshed out in the tossed and driven lives of people.

*Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;14 **that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,**15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. NKJV*

Believers with unhealthy faith are sometimes called “worldly” Christians, because they seem to act so much like unsaved people. Their lives are, as Jesus said, like the pagans (Matthew 6:32), in that they are people constantly prone to worry, who go from one bad relationship to another, often struggling with growing bitterness, and often experiencing a great lack of patience, or even struggling with endless loneliness, lust, and addictions.

These believers can also show their unhealthy faith in poor marriages, endless problems raising their children, and often their out of control tempers. Each of these are symptoms of unhealthy faith; and each of these life-symptoms are described in God's Word as problems that are rooted deeply in our hearts.

Many of these symptoms of unhealthy faith can also cause related physical and emotional problems. Sadly, many unhealthy believers merely go to physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists with these life-crippling problems instead of also going to the place where real and lasting change can come which is to God--the only One who can heal us spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

God’s Recovery Program is

52 Quoted from the Hebrew 11 portion of Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997

Always Sanctification

Always remember that God’s recover program, as described in the Bible is called sanctification. As Jesus said when He prayed to God the Father for you and me in the Garden of Gethsemane, two thousand years ago:

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. NKJV

The only way to healthy faith; and the only road out of unhealthy faith that manifests itself so often with emotional and physical symptoms—is faith in God, whose recovery program in His Word is called sanctification.

So once again we see that in Titus 2:2, Grace-energized Men are in a life-long sanctification program which leads them to become sound in faith. As a disciple of Christ they are constantly **GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD**.

These godly men, by their lives and words declare that God can be trusted in every way. They have learned not to question His wisdom. They hold fast to His goodness. They look and wait for His grace that comes with His divine plan.

*“What is true of individual believers is, of course, also true of the church as a body. A church that is grounded in spiritual truth and protected from spiritual falsehood is to be spiritually healthy and productive through the way in which its members live. The fruit of right doctrine is righteous living”.*⁵³

All Believers are to be Sound in Healthy Faith

God’s eternal plan is that all believers serve Him with healthy faith, and live as truth beacons in a world of lies. The Reformation went far in teaching about the priesthood of the believers but didn’t sufficiently train them or utilize them in service. This is not a criticism, just an observation from history.

God’s plan for training each believer in their ministry of offering worship in spirit and in truth is laid out in Ephesians 4:11-14.

Ephesians 4:11-14	Comments	Future Action
4:11 <i>And he gave some [to be] apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;</i>	God has a plan to spread His truth and sends those He has gifted to declare and teach His truth.	God calls and gifts believers for each generation; and asks us to seek Him and find His plan that He has for the rest of our life.
4:12 <i>for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:</i>	God’s plan is that every saint be trained in living and sharing the truth with other saints (equipping and edifying)—and discipling others into discipler makers.	Leaders are responsible to monitor whether the church is raising up disciples who equip and edify (the two parts of discipleship), or are we just assembling a group of listeners.
4:13 <i>till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,</i>	We must keep the focus upon our mission, not the bumps along the way. The goal is “all” equipped to	People need to see God’s plan, and be pointed down a path they can follow to grow in His Truth, and

<i>unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:</i>	disciple others in the Truth.	then be reminded that they are to be actively using their gifts in others lives.
<i>4:14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error.</i>	Without fellow believers equipping and edifying us, the work doesn't get done, believers are weakened by sin, and the church stagnates.	We never know everything, but everyone can know enough of the truth to walk in the Spirit and equip and edify someone else.

Ephesians 4:11-14 then clearly teaches us that the key to keeping believers from being tossed around in life (4:14) is to train them up in a healthy faith (4:11-13) and to expect them to equip and edify others.

Only when believers are on the path of being grounded in healthy or sound faith, and growing from disciples to disciple makers, do they fully become all that God designed them to be.

We must be trained to be trainers in spiritual growth. Sadly, most believers never get beyond the baby stage. But God has asked us to all do our part because...

We Have an Incredible Shared Faith in Christ

True unity in Christ flows from sound or healthy faith. Paul starts chapter 4 with a description of the ultimate unity that is to bind all true believers together.

Of course, Paul doesn't describe unity in Ephesians until we get to chapter 4. He had to lay three chapters of doctrine down as a reminder that Biblical unity starts with true doctrine. Unity that is built upon anything but true Scriptural doctrine is built upon shifting sands and has no real foundation.

In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul lays down the seven basic spiritual truths or doctrines of God's Word that become realities for those who have sound or healthy faith. Why not take a little test with Paul and see how healthy your faith is this morning. All true believers are united around these truths.

1. *Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One body.*

Though there are many local assemblies, many local churches, Paul here declares that there is only ONE body of Christ in which each believer is a member. Each born-from-above-believer is placed into Christ's body at the instant of conversion by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:12-31). The model that ever local body is to follow is the model of the one true body which is Christ's.

However, God makes it clear that being in Christ's body means that we must seek out and become a part of a local body of believers because it is only within that visible fellowship can we exercise our spiritual gifts as we saw last time in equipping (mending) and edifying (building up), to grow personally and to help others to grow.

2. *Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One Spirit.*

There is only ONE Spirit of God, and that same Holy Spirit comes to indwell every believer also at the instant of salvation. It is God's Spirit that causes each of us to belong to each other through the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned over a dozen times in Ephesians, because only by His power energizing God's grace in our lives, can we live the Christian life.

3. ***Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One hope of your calling.***

There is only ONE calling we all have and that is to live in hope of God. He has saved us to not just live a few years or months here on Earth, He saved us to live forever in His Presence as His worshipping-bondservants. The Holy Spirit assures us from the inner reaches of our souls that Christ is coming to take us His Church home to live in the place He is right now preparing us (Eph. 1:13–14).

Paul asking each of us to stop and realize that there is only one body, and all members of that body have the same Spirit, and all are waiting for the same Savior to take them to the same place that Christ has prepared—and that should draw all of us to be Christ's peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) instead of troublemakers.

4. ***Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One Lord.***

There is only ONE Lord of Glory who came in human flesh, lived a perfect life, and died the perfect atoning death—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. With only One Lord who lives within each of us, died for each of us, and is coming to get each us—isn't it hard to believe that we can be following the same Lord, and yet not be able to walk together in unity? Sadly, when Gandhi (1869-1948), the revered spiritual leader of India was asked what was the "greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?" He replied, "Christians."⁵⁴

To reach our world for Christ, only a concerted effort among true believers to live out Christ's Lordship, can bring the unity needed to let the world see an undistorted picture of Jesus through us.

5. ***Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One faith.***

There is only ONE body of truth, given by God through His Spirit, deposited in the Bible, and now entrusted as a treasure for Christ's Church to guard. Jude called it "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Paul told Timothy and all pastors and elders to come that these were the basic doctrines that they were to teach, guard, and pass on to the next generation of faithful teachers (2 Tim. 2:2).

For 2,000 years some areas of interpretation and church practice have seen differences among true believers; but all true Christians agree on "the faith".

If we could convene into one board meeting eight of the better known believers of the past 15 centuries of church history: the 4th century St. Augustine (354-430 AD) the great doctrinal mind, 11th century Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) who wrote "Jesus the Very Thought of Thee", 16th century Reformers Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564), 18th century evangelists J. Wesley (1703-1791) and Whitfield (1714-1770), 19th century evangelist Moody (1837-1899), and our most well known modern evangelical Christian Billy Graham (1918-present).

⁵⁴ This quote and some of these ideas are drawn from Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Ephesians 4* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1007

There would never be a unanimous vote on ecclesiology, eschatology, pneumatology, or many other branches of theology—but they would always be united in Christ, the One they served, loved, and followed. They would always be united in the same Lord Jesus Christ who loved them, gave Himself for them, and saved each of them!

We could say there are only three key elements of the faith: the doctrines of God in three persons (tri-unity), His Word (inspiration), and salvation through Christ alone (imputation). So true believers should be able to all affirm something close to this:

I believe in the [inspiration of the Bible](#) (both the Old and the New Testaments); the [creation of man](#) by the direct act of God; the [incarnation](#) and [virgin birth](#) of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; His [vicarious atonement](#) for the sins of mankind by the shedding of His blood on the cross; the [resurrection of His body](#) from the tomb; His [power to save](#) men from sin; the [new birth](#) through the regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and the [gift of eternal life](#) by the grace of God.

To depart from the basic doctrines of “the faith” brings confusion, distorts God's Word and causes the real disunity of the body of Christ.

6. ***Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One baptism.***

There is only ONE baptism that has always been necessary for salvation and that is this one Paul describes here. God Himself baptizes all believers, at the instant of salvation, with the Holy Spirit, as God places the believing sinner into the Body of Christ at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The New Testament always presents this baptism of the Spirit as a part of salvation, not a subsequent event that is to be sought. Only the continuous refilling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) is commanded to be sought by all believers.

For the One Body of Christ, God does the baptizing, but for the also commanded local expressions of that body, individual believers are to seek obediently to be baptized in water after their salvation, as an act of obedience to Christ's command to His Church.

7. ***Believers with healthy faith see that there is really only One God and Father.***

There is only ONE Father that we all share, and that is a particular emphasis Paul taught throughout his ministry to the church at Ephesus (Eph. 1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 5:20). Paul continued Christ's emphasis in His earthly ministry that all true believers who are born from above have the same Father in Heaven. Jesus taught us to pray not to “my” Father, but “our” Father. This leads to an amazing unity as we see ourselves a part of the very same family, loving and serving the same Father, and related to all of His other children. So much of our understanding of how we must learn to get along in a biological family helps us to see we must likewise learn as God's grace energizes us to get along in our greater, and larger spiritual family.

Sound faith is always to be accompanied by sound love as Titus 2 says. Doctrinal purity doesn't insure spiritual unity in love as Christ's words to Ephesus in Revelation 2 remind us, that is why Paul told the Ephesians they must only speak truth when it is mixed with love (Ephesians 4:15).

Unity must be doctrinal, but it also must be relationally based in Spirit-prompted love. False doctrine leads to unhealthy faith which will break our unity in the Spirit of God as both Paul (Rom. 16:17–20), and John (2 John 6–11), warn the local churches.

When we have Spirit-prompted, grace-energized soundness of faith, it is that wisdom from above that is first “pure, then peaceable” (James 3:17).

Christ Desires True Unity in His Church

True unity in Christ flows from sound or healthy faith. Paul gives us a description of the ultimate unity that is to bind all true believers together.

Unity that is built upon anything but true Scriptural doctrine is built upon shifting sands and has no real foundation.

In Ephesians 4:4-6, we have the seven basic spiritual truths or doctrines of God's Word that become realities for those who have sound or healthy faith.

How healthy your faith is this morning?

All true believers who are “sound in the faith” find they are united around these truths.

Next time we are going to look at Healthy Faith vs. Dead or Counterfeit Faith. God has always warned—Beware of dead, counterfeit, or fake faith!

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:21-27) Jesus warned that there will be many within Christ's visible church that were convinced that they had genuine faith but do not. One of Satan's methods as described in Christ's parables (Matthew 13:24-30), is to imitate and fake God's work, and sow a crop of false followers of Jesus. God commands every person who testifies that they belong to Christ, to do a spiritual self-examination and look for the evidence of genuine, healthy faith.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Cor. 13:5a).

Vital Signs of Living Faith

There are some key questions that we should ask and answer for ourselves as an obedient response to the clear command of II Corinthians 13:5. Why not prayerfully ponder these questions all alone with the Lord this week⁵⁵?

- a. Can you describe a time when you honestly realized you were a sinner and confessed this to yourself and to God?
- b. Can you describe a time when your heart stirred you to flee to Christ as the only escape from the wrath to come? Has your heart ever seriously grieved over the gravity of your personal sins that you agree with God that you have committed?
- c. Have you truly understood the Gospel of grace? That Christ died in your place, took your sins, and arose from the grave having fully satisfied God's wrath against your sins? Have you understand and confessed that you cannot save yourself?

55 Adapted and drawn from the James 2 portion of the electronic version of Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997

- d. Did you sincerely repent of your sins and turn from them? Or do you secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?
- e. Are you presently clinging to Christ and in trusting Him alone, for your salvation? Can you describe a living relationship that you enjoy with Him through His Word and in His Spirit?
- f. Can you identify how Christ has changed your life? Are you seeking to daily maintain good works, or are your works occasional and weak? Do you seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that you have been with Jesus?
- g. Do you desire to share Christ with others? Or are you ashamed of Him?
- h. Do you enjoy the fellowship of God's people? Is worship a delight to your heart?
- i. Are you seeking each day to be ready for the Lord's return? Or will you be ashamed when He comes for you?

Each believer is uniquely born again into the family of God; but all are saved the same way—by God's grace through faith only in Christ's ability to take their sin upon Himself. Experiences will differ, some words will not be the same, and degrees of sanctification are always present—but the essence will always be there.

However, these 9 questions can truly become a tool to allow each believer to do that spiritual self examination and say with David:

“Search me, O Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

Grace Energized Men: Healthy Faith vs. Dead Faith Titus 2:2

God commands each of us this morning to ask ourselves a series of questions. These questions are all targeting the one very most important issue of all—the reality of our eternal destination. As we turn to II Corinthians 13:5, Listen to what God commands us two times in this one verse, to be asking ourselves this morning:

*2 Corinthians 13:5 **Examine** yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. **Test** yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. NKJV*

Do you remember Christ's warnings about one of Satan's methods in Matthew 13:24-30? Jesus described an ongoing, covert (at night), campaign by Satan, to imitate and fake God's work, by secretly sowing a crop of false followers of Jesus.

Beware of Christian Look-A-Likes

Because this Satanic campaign to infiltrate Christ's Church by "Christian look-a-likes" is ongoing, God commands every person who testifies that they belong to Christ, to do a spiritual self-examination; and look for the evidence of genuine, healthy faith.

At the end of Christ's greatest, and longest message we call the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus warned that there will be many within Christ's visible church who were convinced that they had genuine faith, but did not. Let's stand and read Christ's sobering words together this morning:

*Matthew 7:21-27 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father** in heaven.22 "**Many** will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, **have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?**'23 "**And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**" NKJV*

Pray.

Just before we examine some of the symptoms of those who have "dead faith" in Christ's church, we need to work through the vital signs of "living faith".

Vital Signs of Living Faith

These are some key questions that we should ask and answer for ourselves as an obedient response to the clear command of II Corinthians 13:5. Why not prayerfully ponder these questions not only with me now, but at another time, just by yourself and the Lord this week⁵⁶?

56 Adapted and drawn from the James 2 portion of the electronic version of Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997

- j. **True believers are “sin-confessors” (I John 1:9).** Can you describe a time when you honestly realized you were a sinner and confessed this to yourself and to God?

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. NKJV

- k. **True believers are “sin-forsakers” (Psalm 38:18; John 8:11).** Can you describe a time when your heart stirred you to flee to Christ as the only escape from the wrath to come? Has your heart ever seriously grieved over the gravity of your personal sins that you agree with God that you have committed? Did you sincerely repent of your sins and turn from them? Or do you secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?

Psalm 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin. NKJV

- l. **True believers are “forgiveness-holders” (Acts 13:38-39).** Have you truly understood the Gospel of grace? That Christ died in your place, took your sins, and arose from the grave having fully satisfied God’s wrath against your sins? Have you understand and confessed that you cannot save yourself? Listen to these powerful, hope-giving words, recorded in Acts 13:38-39.

"Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man [Jesus Christ] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and in him **everyone who believes is justified from everything** from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses" (personal translation).

All true believers have complete forgiveness with all sins wiped away, even the deepest, darkest, and blackest; because all true believers have justification in Christ, His declaration of righteousness, over against every kind of sin we have ever done. How does He do this? The perfect life and death of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, pardons all debts and provides all righteousness for everyone who believes. The net result for each of us is that we who have been forgiven much, Jesus said, will love much (Luke 7:47).

- m. **True believers are “Christ-clinging” (Galatians 2:20; John 17:3).** Are you presently clinging to Christ and trusting in Him alone, for your salvation? Can you describe to others a living relationship that you enjoy with Him through His Word and in His Spirit?

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. NKJV

- n. **True believers are “endless-life-possessors” (Hebrews 7:16; I Timothy 4:15; II Peter 3:18).** Can you identify how Christ has changed your life? Are you seeking to daily maintain good works, or are your works occasional and weak? Do you seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that you have been with Jesus?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. NKJV

- o. **True believers are “Gospel-givers” Acts 5:20).** Do you desire to share Christ with others? Or are you ashamed of Him?

Acts 5:20 “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.” NKJV

- p. **True believers are “fellowship-seekers” (Hebrews 10:24-25).** Do you enjoy the fellowship of God’s people?

*Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.** NKJV*

- q. **True believers are “worship-givers” (Philippians 3:3).** Is worship a delight to your heart? Does the scene in Heaven around God’s Throne, of unending worship tug at your heart and often draw you like a magnet? Do you long to dwell in His Presence?

*Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, **who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,** NKJV*

- r. **True believers are “Christ-waiters” (I Thessalonians 3:13).** Are you seeking each day to be ready for the Lord’s return? Or will you be ashamed when He comes for you?

1 Thessalonians 3:13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. NKJV

Each believer is uniquely born again into the family of God; but all are saved the same way—by God’s grace through faith only in Christ’s ability to take their sin upon Himself. Experiences will differ, some words will not be the same, and degrees of sanctification are always present—but the essence will always be there.

Titus 2:2 introduces us to a trio of Christian virtues that always travel together. They do not function alone. Grace-energized men (and all believers) who have sound, or healthy faith will be pursuing the cultivation of these virtues all their earthly lives.

Grace-energized Men Have Sound/Healthy Faith

Sound faith is only the first quality of a triad that must be present in any mature believer’s life. This word ‘sound’ describes in its full, whole and proper sense, what God describes as best for a person. It means that nothing is left from it. Obviously, this use of it should alert us to the fact that some have a less than complete faith.

Healthy faith must be whole. The problem of unhealthy faith is that it may be partial, incomplete, and lacking. If a person’s faith is never brought to health, if it stays incomplete—it will turn out to be defective in the end as Christ’s words in Matthew 7 warn. A person may believe correct doctrine (as the Pharisees), and be involved heavily in God-related ministry (as the Sadducees), and even do their work and ministry in the Name of Jesus (Matthew 7:21-24)—but still not possess saving faith.

Doctrinally, a merely human Jesus can’t save, He is God the Son. An unrisen Christ Jesus, can’t save, He was raised from the dead by the power of God the Father.

Practically John’s epistles say that if a person doesn’t possess God’s love within (I John 3:14-15; 4:8), that pours out (Romans 5:5) of our hearts and lives into love of all other believers, then that person is not truly saved (I John 4:7-11).

Jesus warned explicitly that “many” would have an incomplete faith. Whenever God’s Word expressing His desires for our behavior and beliefs does not affect our thoughts, minds and attitudes, we can say that faith is unhealthy, it is not sound. It is defective⁵⁷.

If God’s Word does not prompt our purity on earth, that faith can’t assure us that we’ll have Christ’s righteousness at His return either in the clouds or to our death bed.

That brings us to James 2, one of the clearest portions of God's Word about living faith vs. dead faith.

James here writes to this perhaps earliest, local assembly of believers. This is Christ's earthly brother, now as a pastor of the “home church”, the genuine “First” church in Jerusalem. From the start Christ's church has faced those who want the benefits of salvation but do not want to bow the knee and live the life. Because of that James gives us three clear descriptions of faith. Two are bad, and are unable to save sinners from eternal death. The final one is God’s goal for each of us faith-examiners this morning.

Beware of Mere Intellectual Faith James 2:14-17

Intellectual Faith is dead faith because it can’t change the heart; and touches only the intellect. This form of dead faith is illustrated in James 2:14-17. This is faith that talks but never does. These “Christian look-alike” can pray and talk about God, but their hearts are not changed.

James uses the simple test of compassion. If a poor believer shows up at church obviously in need, and those who realized this need and do nothing—God says their faith is dead.

As a Christian we are to be doing good, to everyone we can, especially believers (Galatians 6:10). And when we do so, Jesus said it is just like we fed and clothed Him (Matthew 25:40). John emphasized salvation changes our self-focused hearts into hearts of compassion like Christ as an evidence of true believers. Look at what he says in I John 3:17-18:

*“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth”
(1 John 3:17–18, NIV).*

Literally, the question in James 2:14 reads, “Can that kind of faith save him?” What kind of faith is God talking about? Dead faith that is never seen in good works.

And what is the answer to can that kind of faith save anyone? The answer is no!

Saving faith is life-changing faith. If there is not a changed life and resultant good works, that profession is a false profession. That kind of faith is dead faith. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). The word alone in James 2:17 simply means “by itself.” True saving faith can never be by itself: it always brings life, and life produces good works.”

Over 400 years ago, the great Geneva pastor, John Calvin, wrote in his commentary on James, “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.”

Beware of Mere

⁵⁷ Faith is the key doctrine of a believer's life: we are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8–9); and can only walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7); and God is not pleased with what we do except when we do all things by faith (Heb. 11:6); and finally anything we do without faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Faith is the key doctrine of our life as a believer.

Emotional Faith

James 2:18-19

Emotional Faith is described by James as a form of dead faith that people share with demons. Demons have strong faith that is intellectual and emotional. Note James 2:18-19.

To illustrate this mere emotional faith that is also dead, James uses one of the most unbelievable comparisons. He explains the inner workings of the spirit world. Only here do we see applied, what the Gospels so clearly illustrate—the complete intellectual and emotional faith of demons that can never save them.

It may shock you, but God's Word testifies that demons have faith! What do they believe?

1. ***Demons completely believe in the reality of God.*** They have no doubts. They have seen the Lord, seen His Throne, know all about the spiritual world, and have met Jesus Christ personally. Demons could never be classified as either atheists or agnostics. They had an accurate faith in God intellectually, in their minds. You can believe all the correct facts and not be saved.
2. ***Demons completely believe in Deity of Christ.*** Demons trembled in Christ's presence while He walked the Earth. They have no doubts about who He really is. Often we hear the demons publicly stating to Jesus, “I know who You are” (Mark 5:7). Mark records Peter’s eyewitness report that whenever demons met Christ on earth, they fell down and affirmed He was God the Son (Mark 3:11–12). Demons had an emotional response to their faith, they feared, shuddered, and trembled.
3. ***Demons completely believe in the Supreme Power Christ held over their destiny.*** They even would plead for some leniency, or mercy from Jesus Christ as the ultimate Judge who held their eternal destiny in His Hands (Mark 5:1–13). Demons had a firm intellectual faith.
4. ***Demons completely believed in Hell and the horror of eternal punishment.*** They knew and testified to people that they believed in the existence of a place of punishment, and knew that they were headed towards torment (Mark 5:7), and said that they didn’t want to go there “before the time” (Matthew 8:39). Demons had a firm emotional faith.
5. ***Demons completely believe in submission to God's Word.*** They never expressed doubt that His Word was true, and they usually instantly obeyed, though a few did one final shake of their victim, or convulsion just to show their malignant hearts. So as James repeats, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19, NIV). Believing to the point of fear and trembling does not save. Only a life-changing faith, produced by God within, can save.

Now we need to apply this sermon James has just preached to our lives today.

First, an intellectual agreement or assent doesn’t save us. That is James’ point—intellectual belief is present in demons.

Second, an emotional response, coupled with an intellectual response is also not sufficient. Demons had regular emotional responses to their faith in Christ as Creator, as Omnipotent Ruler, and as the Ultimate Judge. None of those intellectual and emotional responses prompted by their faith were sufficient.

Saving Faith is faith that is real, faith that has power, faith that results in a changed life.

Be Sure you have Vital Living Faith

James 2:20-26

So what is sufficient, real, saving faith? That is the point James makes. Saving faith goes beyond intellectual assent to facts, and a resulting emotional response to God's Word—and continues into a life-transforming walk. True saving faith shows up over time in a changed life.

At the moment of responses all responses may look genuine. Simon fooled even the Apostles for a while (in Acts 8:13, 20-22), until Peter saw through the fakery and denounced him as an unrepentant charlatan.

Saving faith is always life-changing faith. Look back at what James repeats three times:

*James 2:17, 20, 26: 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, **is dead**. 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works **is dead**? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, **so faith without works is dead** also. NKJV*

James as a pastor of this vital New Testament church pleads with them. Don't just assent to ancient truth passed down from the prophets, and now Christ's Apostles—be doers of God's Word from your heart and life.

Note the word that God uses, through James, to describe dead faith means “idle, unproductive, or barren”. The idea is that nothing comes of it. Contrary to dead faith is the living reality of God's purpose in saving us. We were saved to do good works as Ephesians 2:8-10 states:

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

Good works as the evidence of sound faith brings us back to Titus 2:2. Grace-energized lives are always characterized by healthy faith, and healthy faith always produces good works. Four times in Titus we see this emphasis from God upon the necessity of good works:

*Titus 2:7, 14 in all things showing yourself to be **a pattern of good works**; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works**. Titus 3:8-14 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should **be careful to maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men. 14 And let our people also **learn to maintain good works**, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. NKJV*

Beware of dead, counterfeit, or fake faith! God commands every person who testifies that they belong to Christ, to do a spiritual self-examination and look for the evidence of genuine, healthy faith.

Vital Signs of Living Faith

1. *True believers are “sin-confessors” (I John 1:9).*
2. *True believers are “sin-forsakers” (Psalm 38:18; John 8:11).*
3. **True believers are “forgiveness-holders” (Acts 13:38-39).**
4. *True believers are “Christ-clinging” (Galatians 2:20; John 17:3).*
5. *True believers are “endless-life-possessors” (Hebrews 7:16; I Timothy 4:15; II Peter 3:18).*

6. *True believers are “Gospel-givers” Acts 5:20).*
7. *True believers are “fellowship-seekers” (Hebrews 10:24-25).*
8. *True believers are “worship-givers” (Philippians 3:3).*
9. *True believers are “Christ-waiters” (I Thessalonians 3:13).*

Each believer is uniquely born again into the family of God; but all are saved the same way—by God’s grace through faith only in Christ’s ability to take their sin upon Himself. Experiences will differ, some words will not be the same, and degrees of sanctification are always present—but the essence will always be there.

However, these 9 questions can truly become a tool to allow each believer to do that spiritual self examination and say with David:

“Search me, O Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

Grace Energized Men: Healthy Faith vs. Demon Faith Titus 2:2

Palms waving, people chanting, but there was one more part of Palm Sunday—Jesus started and ended His ministry shaking up the religious establishment.

On Palm Sunday, what did Christ do right after He rode into town? What was the first event noted right after the triumphal entry? What follows that event in all three accounts (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; and Luke 19:45-48)? Jesus cleaned out the Temple. Please open with me and follow along as we listen to Mark 11:1-19.

*Mark 11:1-19 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; 2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it **you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it...**7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it.8 And **many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road...** 15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and **began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.**16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.19 When evening had come, He went out of the city. NKJV*

Jesus Shook up The Religious

Palm Sunday was the day that Jesus cleaned out the Temple for the second time. Religious people who felt that they had all it all together and needing nothing were shocked and angered by Christ's actions. They did not understand that God wanted right living displayed in good works from the heart not just right answers.

That clearing away the distractions from the truth is one element we may miss in all of our celebration of Passion Week.

Right to the end of His earthly ministry Jesus was focused upon guarding the truth. The Temple was to be God's beacon of truth in a lost world, declaring the need for each person to seek substitutionary atonement. But that beacon of truth kept getting obscured. Truth was blurred by wrong teaching and evil practices; and that was unacceptable to Christ then, and still is today!

Truth is all that we have to build our lives and ministries upon. And truth is in Christ and His Word. And that is why Paul taught Titus the key to a healthy church is grace-energized men who have healthy and sound faith (Titus 2:2).

Healthy Faith is fed by God's Truth and that is what we need to work on this morning. Now turn with me to Acts 20:28-32.

If Jesus came back to do a visible earthly cleaning of His Church like He did in the temple during His ministry—what would He clean out? There has always been error seeping in Christ's church. Paul said there would be infiltrators, like wolves slipping into Christ's church.

Stand/Read/Pray

*Acts 20:28-32 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.²⁹ “For I know this, that **after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.** 30 “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.³² “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. NKJV*

As we saw last time, Jesus warned of Christian look-a-likes who do not have those vital signs of living faith. Do you remember those vital signs that are increasingly to be present in the life of a true believer?

Vital Signs of Living Faith

These are some key questions that we should ask and answer for ourselves as an obedient response to the clear command of II Corinthians 13:5⁵⁸.

10. *True believers are “sin-confessors” (I John 1:9).*
11. *True believers are “sin-forsakers” (Psalm 38:18; John 8:11).*
12. **True believers are “forgiveness-holders” (Acts 13:38-39).**
13. *True believers are “Christ-clinging” (Galatians 2:20; John 17:3).*
14. *True believers are “endless-life-possessors” (Hebrews 7:16; I Timothy 4:15; II Peter 3:18).*
15. *True believers are “Gospel-givers” Acts 5:20).*
16. *True believers are “fellowship-seekers” (Hebrews 10:24-25).*
17. *True believers are “worship-givers” (Philippians 3:3).*
18. *True believers are “Christ-waiters” (I Thessalonians 3:13).*

But not everyone who gathers with Christ's church has those vitals signs. They have a faith, but not one that can save them. That is why Paul said to the church through all the ages—

Beware of Unhealthy, Unsound Faith

What do the pretenders look like in Christ's church? What do those who profess, but do not possess Jesus act like that gets them by and allows them to often stay in Christ's church all through their lives? Since Jesus warned of this, and it has always been a challenge that faced Christ's church, God has provided examples in the New Testament of how these “look-a-likes” were dealt with.

⁵⁸ Adapted and drawn from the James 2 portion of the electronic version of Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997

As we open to James 2:14 this morning, we see that Pastor James, brother of Jesus, wrote to the earliest, local assembly of believers who met in Jerusalem. He was Christ's earthly brother, now as a pastor of the “home church”, the genuine “First” church in Jerusalem.

From the start, Christ's church has faced those who want the benefits of salvation but do not want to bow the knee and live the life. Because of that James gives us such clear descriptions of a faith that is unable to save sinners from eternal death. We each need to be personal-faith-examiners this morning.

In James 2:14-17, we can listen to one of James’ stirring messages, delivered to those early saints, sprinkled even then, with some Christian-look-a-likes.

James has a very stern warning for those church-goers, examine whether your faith is REAL!

Beware of Mere Intellectual Faith James 2:14-17

Intellectual Faith is unhealthy, insufficient, dead faith because it can’t change the heart; and touches only the intellect. This form of dead faith is illustrated in James 2:14-17.

James 2:14-17 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. NKJV

This is faith that talks but never does. These “Christian look-alike” can pray and talk about God, but their hearts are not changed.

James uses the simple test of compassion. If a poor believer shows up at church obviously in need, and those who realized this need and do nothing—God says their faith is dead.

As a Christian we are to be doing good to everyone we can, especially believers (Galatians 6:10). And when we do so, Jesus said it is just like we fed and clothed Him (Matthew 25:40). John emphasized salvation changes our self-focused hearts into hearts of compassion like Christ as an evidence of true believers. Look at what he says in I John 3:17-18:

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth” (1 John 3:17–18, NIV).

Do you remember the story Jesus told about three busy travelers on the Jericho to Jerusalem highway? All three were headed to a good place—Jerusalem. All three had plans and a schedule that were not bad. But only one had true compassion in their heart like Christ's. We call that story the parable of the Good Samaritan. We all know it from Luke 10:25-37.

But sometimes we need to be reminded that the two religious passer-bys (the Levite and the priest) were students of God's Word. Both of them could articulate and defend their faith, but neither of them displayed that faith in good works prompted by God’s love.

Look closely at James 2:14. The literal rendering of that verse should be “Can that kind of faith save him?” Can faith that never gets put into action as love-prompted good works be real? The answer is NO. Faith without good works is false and dead as v. 17 goes on to state.

Over 400 years ago as the faithful expositor, John Calvin (1509-1564) declared while he preached through these verses, “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.” The word alone in James 2:17 simply means “by itself.” Sound or healthy faith, that is true saving faith, will never be by itself in a believer’s life: it always brings spiritual life, and that life produces good works. Next, look back at the Epistle of James as Pastor James Ben Joseph says—

Beware of Mere Emotional Faith James 2:18-19

Emotional Faith is described by James as a form of dead faith that people share with demons. Demons have strong faith that is intellectual and emotional. Note James 2:18-19.

*James 2:18-19 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!
NKJV*

To illustrate mere emotional faith that is also dead, James uses one of the most unbelievable comparisons. He explains to us one of the inner workings of the spirit world. Only here do we see applied, what the Gospels so clearly illustrated—the complete intellectual and emotional faith of demons that can never save them. James says—

Demons Have Strong Faith

It may shock you, but God's Word testifies that demons have faith! What do they believe? Demons have a clearly defined faith.

6. ***Demons completely believe in the reality of God.*** They have no doubts. They have seen the Lord, seen His Throne, know all about the spiritual world, and have met Jesus Christ personally. Demons could never be classified as either atheists or agnostics. They had an accurate faith in God intellectually, in their minds. You can believe all the correct facts and not be saved.
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8. ***Demons completely believe in the Supreme Power Christ held over their destiny.*** They even would plead for some leniency, or mercy from Jesus Christ as the ultimate Judge who held their eternal destiny in His Hands (Mark 5:1–13). Demons had a firm intellectual faith.
9. ***Demons completely believed in Hell and the horror of eternal punishment.*** They knew and testified to people that they believed in the existence of a place of punishment, and knew that they were headed towards torment (Mark 5:7), and said that they didn’t want to go there “before the time” (Matthew 8:39). Demons had a firm emotional faith.

10. ***Demons completely believe in submission to God's Word.*** They never expressed doubt that His Word was true, and they usually instantly obeyed, though a few did one final shake of their victim, or convulsion just to show their malignant hearts. As Jews testified daily in their Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4 That there was only one Living and True God “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord!” (Deut. 6:4). So as James repeats, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19, NIV). Believing to the point of fear and trembling does not save. Only a life-changing faith, produced by God within, can save.

Now we need to apply this sermon James has just preached to our lives today.

- First, an intellectual agreement or assent doesn't save us. That is James' point; intellectual belief is present in demons.
- Second, an emotional response, coupled with an intellectual response is also not sufficient. Demons had regular emotional responses to their faith in Christ as Creator, as Omnipotent Ruler, and as the Ultimate Judge. None of those intellectual and emotional responses prompted by their faith were sufficient.

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So what is sufficient, real, saving faith? That is the point James makes. Saving faith goes beyond intellectual assent to facts, and a resulting emotional response to God's Word—and continues into a life-transforming walk. True saving faith shows up over time in a changed life.

Be Sure you have Vital Living Faith James 2:20-26

At the moment of responses all responses may look genuine. Simon fooled even the Apostles for a while (in Acts 8:13, 20-22), until Peter saw through the fakery and denounced him as an unrepentant charlatan.

Saving faith is always life-changing faith. Look back at what James repeats three times:

*James 2:17, 20, 26: 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, **is dead**. 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works **is dead**? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, **so faith without works is dead also.** NKJV*

Warren Wiersbe says about these verses in James 2 the following insightful words:

“James 2 emphasized that the mature Christian practices the truth. He does not merely hold to ancient doctrines; he practices those doctrines in his everyday life.

His faith is not the dead faith of the intellectuals, or the demonic faith of the fallen spirits. It is the dynamic faith of men like Abraham and women like Rahab, faith that changes a life and goes to work for God.”

Note the word that God uses, through James, to describe dead faith means “idle, unproductive, or barren”. The idea is that nothing comes of it. Contrary to dead faith is the living reality of God's purpose in saving us. We were saved to do good works as Ephesians 2:8-10 states:

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

Which brings us back to Titus 2:2, and those Grace-energized lives that are always characterized by healthy faith, and healthy faith always produces good works.

Four times in Titus we see this emphasis from God upon the necessity of good works:

*Titus 2:7, 14 in all things showing yourself to be **a pattern of good works**; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works**. Titus 3:8-14 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should **be careful to maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men. 14 And let our people also **learn to maintain good works**, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. NKJV*

Beware of dead, counterfeit, or fake faith! At the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:21-27) Jesus warned that there will be many within Christ's visible church that were convinced that they had genuine faith but do not. One of Satan's methods as described in Christ's parables (Matthew 13:24-30), is to imitate and fake God's work, and sow a crop of false followers of Jesus. God commands every person who testifies that they belong to Christ, to do a spiritual self-examination and look for the evidence of genuine, healthy faith.

Vital Signs of Living Faith

These are some key questions that we should ask and answer for ourselves as an obedient response to the clear command of II Corinthians 13:5. Why not prayerfully ponder these questions not only with me now, but at another time, just by yourself and the Lord this week⁵⁹?

1. *True believers are "sin-confessors" (I John 1:9).*
2. *True believers are "sin-forsakers" (Psalm 38:18; John 8:11).*
3. **True believers are "forgiveness-holders" (Acts 13:38-39).**
4. *True believers are "Christ-clinging" (Galatians 2:20; John 17:3).*
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⁵⁹ Adapted and drawn from the James 2 portion of the electronic version of Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997

Each believer is uniquely born again into the family of God; but all are saved the same way—by God’s grace through faith only in Christ’s ability to take their sin upon Himself. Experiences will differ, some words will not be the same, and degrees of sanctification are always present—but the essence will always be there.

However, these 9 questions can truly become a tool to allow each believer to do that spiritual self examination and say with David:

“Search me, O Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

Appendix: John MacArthur explains Christian Look-a-Like

“What lulls people into such deception?”

1. First of all, many professed Christians-and even many true Christians-hold a false doctrine of assurance. Often it is because the person who witnessed to them told them that all they had to do was make a profession of faith, walk an aisle, raise a hand, say a prayer, and never doubt what the Lord had done in their lives. Perhaps they have been taught that to ever doubt their salvation is to doubt God’s Word and integrity. Unfortunately, many evangelists, pastors, and personal workers attempt to certify a person’s salvation apart from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of fruit with continuance in obedience to the Word (John 8:31). But we have no right to assure a person of something we cannot be certain is true. God’s own Holy Spirit will witness His reality to those who truly belong to Him (Rom. 8:14-16).
2. A second contributor to self-deception is failure of self-examination. Through a faulty and presumptuous view of God’s grace, some professed believers blithely go through life oblivious to and unconcerned about their sins. Yet the Lord tells His people to examine their lives each time they come to His table (1 Cor. 11:28). Paul tells us, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5). When a couple lives together without being married, when a person practices homosexuality, is deceptive and dishonest in business, is hateful and vengeful, or habitually practices any sin without remorse or repentance, such persons cannot be Christian-no matter what sort of experience they claim to have had or what sort of testimony they now make. God’s Word is explicit: “Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Again Paul warns, “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:5-6). In each of those extremely somber warnings Paul pleads with his readers not to be deceived. The person who professes to be a Christian but who habitually and unrepentantly continues in known sin makes out God to be liar, because His Word expressly denies that any such person belongs to Him (1 John 3:6-10).
3. A third cause of self-deception is inordinate concentration on religious activity. Attending church, hearing sermons, singing songs of the faith, reading the Bible, attending Bible studies, and many other perfectly good and helpful activities can actually insulate a person from the very God he is supposedly worshiping and serving. Those things can cause a believer to think he is being faithful and obedient, when in reality he may not be; and they can cause an unbeliever to think he is saved, when in reality he is not.
4. A fourth cause of self-deception is what may be called the fair exchange, or balancing out, approach. Instead of confessing and asking forgiveness for his sins, a person may give himself the benefit of the doubt and rationalize his salvation by thinking that the good things he does balance out the bad, that the positive cancels the negative. But in the first place, apart from God it is impossible to do anything that is truly good, because “there is none who does good, there is not even one,” Paul tells us (Rom. 3:12), quoting David (Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3). In the second place, it is the sin itself-not an excess or imbalance of it-that separates us from God and brings death and damnation (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Whatever good we might somehow accomplish would not cancel those consequences of sin, any more than eating right and exercising will save the life of a person infected with a deadly disease. His only hope is in receiving a cure for the disease, not in trying to balance off its deadly effect by keeping his body otherwise healthy. Isaiah said that the best deeds of men before God are as “a filthy garment,” that is, a menstrual cloth (Isa. 64:6).
5. One is the superficial person, the one who has had little or no instruction in the gospel and who thinks that his attending Sunday school as a child, having been baptized, being a church member, or other such things put him in good standing with God.
6. The other type of person is much more knowledgeable about the Bible and the gospel, and is often heavily involved in church activities of various sorts. But he lives in a constant state of sinfulness, with no thought of confessing and forsaking his sin or of seeking after righteousness. He looks to feelings, experiences, healings, angels, earthly material blessings, promises, and a host of other external things for proof of his salvation. He is not concerned about decreasing sin or increasing righteousness. He is not concerned about God’s commands, God’s standards, or God’s glory, but only what he can get out of God for himself. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones suggests, he is more concerned about the by-products of the faith than the fruit itself (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 2:285). This group includes those who are more committed to a denomination or Christian organization than to the Word of God. It includes those who are academically interested in theology-even orthodox, biblical theology-but not in obedience to the Bible on which that theology is based. It includes those who overemphasize and distort a particular aspect of biblical truth, to the exclusion

and sometimes contradiction of other truths. It encompasses those who are overindulgent in the name of grace but lack penitence.⁶⁰

Grace Energized Men: Guarding Sound Faith By Unmasking Old Lies

Acts 20:17; 25-32 and Titus 2:2

As we open to Acts 20:17, may I remind you of an old truth? “There is nothing new under the Sun”, that’s what God's Word said three thousand years ago by Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:9). When it comes to the state of Christ's Church, that truth is very helpful.

Satan has just one old playbook. His lies and tricks are old, have been used repeatedly through the centuries, and are all clear to spot. Each generation of believers faces very new and real attacks of these very old and familiar lies and deceptions. For years I have reminded you of Satan’s original pack of deceptive lies in Genesis 3. They are still with us. Remember the tools Satan used in the Garden of Eden—

- ***Doubt God's Word:*** “Hath God said” (An attack on whether God has even spoken);
- ***Doubt God's Plan:*** “ye shall not surely die” (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God’s Substitute will be saved).
- ***Doubt God’s Authority over Life:*** “your eyes shall be opened” (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the source of truth to live life God’s way.)

Stand/Read/Pray

One of the current issues that many are talking about is called the Emergent Church Movement. When examined closely, we find these same three errors present. But before we dive into the present, we need to see that some of the errors of the ECM are also the very same issues that Jesus confronted in the main stream of Bible believers in His day. In fact, we could say that—

Jesus Faced the Same Situation

Jesus confronted the four main religious groups in His day, who were Bible believing, but had mixed in false teachings and practices. We examined many of these issues three years ago when they first came up in June of 2005; in a message I called⁶¹ “How to Spot a False Teacher”; and I will repeat again Christ's call to guard sound doctrine.

By New Testament times Jesus faced four different types of so called Bible (Old Testament) believers, within organized religion. All four based their actions upon some part of God's Word (the Old Testament), but all had very serious doctrinal flaws that almost completely obscured any truth they might have rightly held.

Bible Believers of Christ's Day

⁶¹ 050612am Wn-21 Spot False Teachers.Anchored Souls.Fundamentals

Here is a summary of these four main religious groups of the day, all of whom claimed to believe and follow God's Word in Christ's day.

1. **Essenes:** The most unique Bible believers of Christ's day were the Essenes. They were mostly unmarried men, who perpetuated their movement often by adopted children from other Jewish families. They lived in a secretive, exclusive, self-denying, and usually isolated communal settlements like Qumran, in ruins today on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. These men spent most of their time either copying or discussing the Scriptures. They produced the world famous Dead Sea Scrolls—discovered by accident in 1947. Essenes sought no contact with culture nor influence on society; and are not specifically mentioned in the New Testament.
2. **Pharisees:** The most influential of all the mainstream Bible believers of Christ's day were opposite of the Essenes. Pharisees were the very public, very influential, and very self-seeking. Though possibly even more exclusive than the Essenes, Pharisees could be found everywhere in the Jewish Society of Christ's day. Jesus exposed them as doing “all their deeds to be noticed by men...” (Matt. 23:5-7).

The Pharisees formed a self-righteous, “holier-than-thou” community within the society. They believed strongly in God’s sovereignty and that they alone were right about God's Word. They considered themselves to be deeply spiritual; but this spiritual life was entirely focused on their external beliefs and practices—never their hearts. Their lives were driven by the doctrines that their revered spiritual “*leaders had devised over the previous several centuries as supplements to God's Word.*”

“These doctrines were known collectively as “the tradition of the elders,” concerning which Jesus gave the Pharisees one of His strongest rebukes, charging them with “teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matt. 15:2-9). They loved to debate doctrine, but they often failed to live it. They emphasized God’s Sovereignty but neglected His love⁶²” as Jesus told them, “You have neglected... (Matthew 23:23)”.

3. **Zealots:** The least spiritual and most fervent of the mainstream Bible believers were the Zealots. Focused completely on political activism, blatant nationalism, and even violence, the Zealots were dominated with capturing their culture and society, with what they perceived were God’s goals.
4. **Sadducees:** Finally, the most powerful group of mainstream Bible believers were the ultraliberals called the Sadducees. They arose during the intertestamental period, but from among the priests (Acts 5:17). They cared little for religion, especially doctrine, and denied the existence of angels, the resurrection, and most things supernatural (Acts 23:6-8). They believed in extreme human autonomy and in the unlimited freedom of the will. Jesus called their belief system “leaven” because it led to spiritual pride, superficiality, “and no concern for the genuine inner spiritual life or for the welfare of their fellow man. The *“leaven of the... Sadducees was the hypocritical, self-serving, dead externalism about which Jesus warned His disciples (Matt. 16:6)”.*

Fast Forward to Bible Believers Today

Throughout most of its history the church has had its own brands of Essenes, Pharisees, Zealots, and Sadducees⁶³. “The Essenes were separatists; the Pharisees were traditionalists; the Zealots were activists; and the Sadducees were modernists. They represented the same primary types of religious factions that are common today.”

⁶² MacArthur, John F., Matthew 13: *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, electronic edition) 1983. [74 words]

⁶³ Adapted and “quoted” from sections of MacArthur, John F., Matthew chapters 7, 13, and 23 in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, electronic edition) 1983

As I read this list, instead of trying to pick out the faults of others you know, ask the Lord to show you if any of these elements are present in your view of God's Word.

1. In Christ's day, Essenes were separatists who believed the key goal of life in God's Word was as much separation as possible from the evils of the world.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Essenes emphasis that the goal in life is to stay as far away from any known sin or sinner as we possibly can.

2. In Christ's day, Pharisees were traditionalists who believed God's Word plus their system of doctrine. Their primary concern was learning the teachings handed down by revered teachers over the centuries. They focused on adhering to the teachers of God's Word rather than the Word, and totally relied on the teachings of their revered teachers to understand or interpret God's Word.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Pharisees emphasis that the teachings of their revered teachers have become more authoritative than the Bible.

3. In Christ's day, Zealots were activists who believed God's Word called them to radical political activism. They looked down on fellow Jews who would not append all their time trying to change society.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Zealots emphasis and spend their lives trying to plug all the holes in the moral dike of American culture, and hold back the tsunami of sin in the world.

4. In Christ's day, Sadducees were modernists who focused on neglecting the authority of God's Word by denial and syncretistic (blending in pagan ideas) modifications that fit their own religious agenda.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Sadducees emphasis that we can't be dogmatic about anything in God's Word, and everything is valid and to be considered.

But Jesus taught us that none of those ways were right.

- To the Essenes His Word says pleasing God is in a changed heart, not merely a disciplined body.
- To the Pharisees His Word says godly change is first internal, not external.
- To the Zealots His Word says to change individuals by conversion, not to change culture by revolution.
- To the Sadducees His Word says the Scriptures are given as the authority we follow, not some ideas of man we can blend in, to build our own system of belief and practice.

Jesus Warned All Four Types of Bible Believers

The main message that Jesus preached to the religious people of His day was the longest and most public of all His teachings called the Sermon on the Mount. If you analyze what Jesus said as a religious person of the day, believing and obeying the Bible selectively, it would be very painful to your beliefs.

“The dominant message of the Sermon on the Mount is that one must not find comfort merely in right theology, much less in contemporary philosophy, geographical separation, or military and political activism.

“Right theology is essential; so are being contemporary in the right way, separating ourselves from worldliness, and taking stands on moral issues. But those external things must flow from right internal life and attitudes if they are to serve and please God. That has always been God’s way. He told Samuel, “God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). In Proverbs, wisdom says, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (4:23).”

“When the Pharisees with whom Jesus was having lunch were bothered that He did not ceremonially wash His hands before eating, Jesus said, “Now you Pharisees have the habit of cleaning the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside you yourselves are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not the One who made the outside make the inside too? But dedicate once for all your inner self, and at once you will have everything clean” (Luke 11:39-41, Williams). That was His message for every sect of Judaism⁶⁴.”

As grace-energized believers who are sound in faith, when we look at the error of the Sadducees, we can see a common element with what we are facing today.

They modified God's Word by adding pagan philosophies and secular ideas to the Bible; and this blending of non-truth with God's truth is called syncretism.

What Happened After Christ's Ascension?

In Acts 20 Paul tells us that right from the start, Satan had a two pronged attack—first, sow Christian-look-alikes in Christ's church as the tares among the wheat; and second, blend in error (syncretism) to distort the true doctrines taught by the gifted pastors and teachers.

Satan especially attacks all who wield the sword of the Spirit as Bible teachers. He seeks to destroy them, or disable them by attacking their physical health, or distracting them through disunity in the body—anything that hinders the Spirit-energized teaching of the Word, is Satan's method.

Satan was very successful, especially in getting the church to blend in pagan ideas (known as syncretism or religious syncretion). Within the first two centuries after the Apostles, every known heresy still with us today was being taught in the early church.

The post-Apostolic Fathers as they are known in Church History are a veritable mine field of terribly wrong doctrines and practices. In fact, for just a moment, let me just list all of the old deceptions found among the writings of the early church leaders.

None of the Church Fathers (leaders, writers, and pastors from AD 100-300) could ever say with Paul, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9)—because they were not INSPIRED to write the very Word of God. We can trust the New Testament writers' God-breathed words completely. But looking at what they wrote and said is alarming.

Even a skimming of the writings of these church leaders yields immense doctrinal flaws, errors and even outright heresies. Some of these men were very influential over the early church, men like Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian,

⁶⁴ MacArthur, John E. Matthew 13: *The MacArthur New Testament Commentaries*. (Chicago: Moody Press, electronic edition) 1983. [216 words]

Justin Martyr, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Augustine. What were some of the false teachings they held? For example:

- *Origen taught that God would save everyone and that Mary was a perpetual virgin;*
- *Irenaeus believed that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Jesus when consecrated, as did John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem;*
- *Athanasius taught salvation through baptism;*
- *Tertullian became a supporter of the Montanist heresies, and a promoter of a New Testament clergy class, as did his disciple Cyprian;*
- *Augustine was the principal architect of Roman Catholic dogma that included his support of purgatory, baptismal regeneration, infant baptism, mortal and venial sins, prayers to the dead, penance for sins, absolution from a priest, the sinlessness of Mary, and the Apocrypha as Scripture⁶⁵.*

We can never say that all of these men were totally wrong; on the contrary, many of them were deeply used to preach the Gospel, protect the church from great errors, and help clarify doctrine. But, to just embrace them because they were from the early church and did many things right, is to walk through a veritable minefield of heresies.

Religious Syncretism Is Deadly

There has always been this same struggle within the church. A hundred years ago it was seen in what was called liberalism, today it is seen in what is being called the emergent church movement (ECM). Those same three lies that Satan pushed into Eden are now being pushed in Christ's Church.

- ***Doubt God's Word:*** "Hath God said" (An attack on whether God has even spoken);
- ***Doubt God's Plan:*** "ye shall not surely die" (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God's Substitute will be saved).
- ***Doubt God's Authority over Life:*** "your eyes shall be opened" (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the source of truth to live life God's way.)

And those old deceptions are what we need to stand against. As grace-energized believers of sound or healthy faith, our response to these dangers of the ECM, should be:

Danger #1: Guard the Authority of the Bible

ECM error centers upon a rejection of the absolute authority of the Bible. Here we ask questions like "Is the Bible inerrant?" And "In what sense the Bible is God's communication to us?"

Examples of this total loss of holding onto God's Word as authoritative can be seen in some of the ECM's leaders irreverence which includes referring to God as a chick, and as a Cosmic Child Abuser (describing the crucifixion of the Son at the Father's will). The negation of the authority of God's Word causes ECM writers to question God's sovereignty over and knowledge of the future, as well as a denial of the substitutionary atonement at the cross, a denial of the sin of homosexuality, and a denial of hell.

⁶⁵ Dave Hunt, TBC Today email, "Ancient Future Heresies" by McMahon, T.A., February 28, 2008

Danger #2: Guard the Cross

Another great area of concern with the ECM is the cross. When some ECM leaders are asked questions like "What is the meaning of the atonement"? And, "Did Jesus actually pay for or purchase anything on the cross?" the answers are very disturbing. Jesus declared that He knew why He had to die; He came to die as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. We cannot read the New Testament and conclude otherwise.

Matthew 20:28 "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

But some ECM writers teach that the cross simply serves as a profound demonstration of the love of God. One writes that on the cross, Christ "absorbed all the pain, all the suffering caused by the breakdown in our relationship with God and in doing so demonstrated the lengths to which a God who is love will go to restore it." (Chalke)

The most visible leader and ECM writer says, "The Christian faith should become a welcome friend to other religions of the world, and not a threat." He goes on to write that not all people need to be Christians to follow Jesus. Some may be able to be "Buddhist or Hindu followers of Jesus." (Brian McLaren)

The doctrine of penal substitution--the understanding that, on the cross, Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin—is thus rejected by such ECM teachers.

As true disciples of Jesus Christ, we see the reality of sin in God's Word, and the necessity of personal salvation. The simplicity of the gospel is in the Cross Christ (I Cor. 1:18); and all that is rooted in a proper, high view of Holy Scripture (Romans 10:17).

When the Authority of the Bible is lost, then sin and salvation through Christ is no longer important, the Church loses its witness and conviction—and all that's left is a shipwrecked faith.

Danger #3: Guard the Truth

A third concern with the ECM is concerning the very nature of truth. Here we ask questions like "What is truth?" and "Does Christianity give us an accurate picture of the way the world really is, and can we know it?" And, "Can we know for sure what God has said and confidently stand and proclaim that as Absolute Truth?"⁶⁶

To many prominent ECM leaders the answer is, "No!" They say and write that we can't be dogmatic, authoritative, or even sure about doctrines laid down in God's Word that have always been believed by evangelicals throughout all of Church History.

Satan has just one old playbook.

His lies and tricks are old, have been used repeatedly through the centuries, and are all clear to spot.

Each generation of believers faces very new and real attacks of these very old and familiar lies and deceptions. Satan's original pack of deceptive lies in Genesis 3, are still with us. Grace-energized believers who are sound

⁶⁶ Don Carson in his fine book called "Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church" explains that the fundamental issue is epistemology--i.e., how we know things or think we know things

in the faith, watch out for modern (or ancient) movements in the Church that use the same tools Satan used in the Garden of Eden—

- ***Doubt God's Word:*** “Hath God said” (An attack on whether God has even spoken);
- ***Doubt God's Plan:*** “ye shall not surely die” (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God’s Substitute will be saved).
- ***Doubt God’s Authority over Life:*** “your eyes shall be opened” (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the source of truth to live life God’s way.)

Next time we will see Lord willing, ***“Where else are Ancient Heresies springing up in the Church of the 21st Century?”***

Grace Energized Men: Trust Christ's Words

How has Christ's Church Gotten so far from "Sound Faith"? Titus 2:2

I love the simplicity of the Gospel. Jesus gave us three powerful truths to hold onto through life, and that will get us safely into our place He has prepared for us in Heaven.

Just before Jesus left His disciples to return to Heaven, He spoke these words in John 14:6.

This passage is well known, but often the incredible, absolute assertions that Christ made slip by us unnoticed at times. As you open there to that passage, think about Christ's disciples who heard those most precious words Jesus ever spoke are His words in John 14:1-6. Please stand with me, and listen to Christ's voice this morning:

John 14:1-6 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.4 "And where I go you know, and the way you know."5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV

Pray

Now that we have heard Jesus speak to us this morning, let me underline in your minds the immensity of what He said.

*John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am **the way, the truth, and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV*

Jesus knew He was going to the Cross, paying the price for sin by His death, rising on the third day, and soon after, ascending back to Heaven.

He was giving His disciples vital truth they needed to survive what would follow. In nine words Jesus told them that He was everything they would ever need.

This morning, as we also face a world that is often Gospel-resistant, Jesus speaks to us as He did nearly 2,000 years ago and says all we need to do to make it through this life is hold on to these three truths.

Trust Christ's Absolute Assertions

If you look carefully, the three absolute assertions Jesus Christ made are at the center of all of Satan's attacks.

Each generation of believers faces very new and real attacks of these very old and familiar lies and deceptions. Satan's original pack of deceptive lies in Genesis 3, are still with us. Grace-energized believers, who are sound

in the faith, watch out for modern (or ancient) movements in the Church that use the same lies Satan used in the Garden of Eden—

- ***Satan always attacks “The Way”—he says Doubt God's Final Judgment of the Lost:*** “ye shall not surely die” (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God’s Substitute will be saved).
- ***Satan always attacks “The Truth”—he says Doubt God's Final Revelation in His Word:*** “Hath God said” (An attack on whether God has even spoken);
- ***Satan always attacks “The Life”—he says Doubt God’s Final Authority over Life:*** “your eyes shall be opened” (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the final source of truth to live life God’s way.)

If you remember, last time we saw in Acts 20 that Paul warned about external and internal attacks against Christ's church. We saw that right from the start, Satan had a two pronged attack—first, sow Christian-look-a-likes in Christ's church as the tares among the wheat; and second, slowly blend in the errors of false teaching with the truth (syncretism) to distort the true Biblical doctrines taught by the gifted pastors and teachers.

Satan always has attacked those who wielded the sword of the Spirit as Bible teachers. Sadly, Church History records that Satan has been quite successful, especially in getting the church to blend in much false teaching with the true doctrines of God's Word. As we saw last time, within the first two centuries after the Apostles, every known heresy still with us today was being taught in the early church.

Satan has just one old playbook.

And those old deceptions are what we need to stand against. As grace-energized believers of sound or healthy faith, our response to these dangers in any form should be the same. In our generation we see Satan again mounting his attacks.

1. “The Way” or Christ's Death as the Substitute for sinners is still under attack today: Guard the Cross

Another common area of false teaching is the cross. These false teachers say that the cross simply serves as a profound demonstration of the love of God, not as the place where God’s wrath against our sin was poured out upon Christ as our substitute. We must guard the substitutionary death of Christ upon the Cross.

2. “The Truth” of God's Word is still under attack today: Guard the Authority of the Bible

Much current false teaching rejects the absolute authority of the Bible. These teachers ask questions like "Is the Bible really inerrant?" And "Are we really sure the Bible is God's communication to us?" We must guard the authority of God's Word.

3. “The Life” as set down for us in God’s Revelation to mankind is still under attack today: Guard the Truth

A third wave of false teaching attacks the very nature of truth. Here we hear false teachers ask questions like "What is truth?" and "Does Christianity give us an accurate picture of the way the world really is, and can we know it?" And, “Can we

know for sure what God has said and confidently stand and proclaim that as Absolute Truth?"⁶⁷

We must guard the truth of God's Word as God's final authoritative revelation to mankind, because God's Word says that true—

Disciples of Christ Can Spot a False Teacher

God's Word has warned us repeatedly to be on guard for false teachers. False teachers often speak God's Word without living life; or they dilute God's Word; or they disobey God's Word; or they arrogantly promote people's self serving desires to "tickle ears" rather than confront people with sin.

So how do we spot these false teachers? What do these false teachers pointing, people in the wrong direction, believe and teach? What is the message promoted by Satan's legion of liars? As we turn to I Timothy 4, always remember that Satan's lies and tricks are old, have been used repeatedly through the centuries, and are all clear to spot.

Often it is not what they say—but what they don't say that identifies them! What do false teachers deny? How do you spot a false teacher? We can use Christ's three absolute assertions to identify the clear signs of a false teacher, starting in I Timothy 4:1:

19. **The Way**—Satan always has denied that Christ's Cross is the ONLY way to God.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some *will depart from the faith*, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

20. **The Truth**—Satan always has denied that we have final, unchanging Truth from God.

2 Timothy 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also *resist the truth*: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;

21. **The Life**—Satan always has denied that the Scriptures are once and for all settled in Heaven and Authoritative.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine*, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

We believe, affirm, and strongly guard the truth that Jesus Christ gave us: He is the Way, He is the Truth, and He is the ONLY Way. But that absolute assertion of Christ in John 14:6 is not widely held by modern Christians. George Barna recently reported that in America,

"Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources. Because we remain a largely Bible-illiterate society, few are alarmed or even aware of the slide toward syncretism - a belief system that blindly combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives with God's Word."

⁶⁷ Don Carson in his fine book called "Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church" explains that the fundamental issue is epistemology--i.e., how we know things or think we know things

That leads us to consider the—

Ancient Heresies in The Church of the 21st Century

It's axiomatic to say today that "There are no new heresies". For example, looking closely at us we can see elements of the following ancient heresies in modern religious movements around us today. Because of a growing ecumenical, try-to-not-offend anyone (but God) movement around us today, we are often asked to overlook the deadly false teachings of groups that often are such warm and gracious people.

- We can see elements of the Arian Heresy in Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses.
- We can see much Religious Syncretism in the Roman Catholic Church, the Emergent Church Movement, and the Unification Church (Moonies).
- We can see elements of Marcionism, Syncretism, Universalism, Gnosticism, and Nestorianism in all the New Age versions of "Christianity".
- We can see elements of Islam's view of Jesus are similar to the Docetist and Ebionist Heresies.
- We can see elements of Roman Catholics fall into Semi-Pelagianism and, often, Mariolatry (the worship of Mary as equal with Christ and holding Divine attributes).
- We can see some Charismatics fall into Glossolalianism and Montanism.
- And many modern media-based ministries, especially televangelists, fall into almost every heresy known and unknown!

Here is a concise list of the false teachings that can be found in the writings of the early church. This list is a good reason to be very careful in embracing the writings of someone just because they were an early Christian leader.

The Known Heresies of the Early (Post-Apostolic) Church

1. "The Way" or Christ's Death as the Substitute for sinners was under attack. These heresies were those that led to damnation.
 - **Arianism** (Arius, Eudoxius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eunomius): Reduces Christ to the first created being. God-the-Father existed prior to God-the-Son. This is the false teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses. **Semi-Arianism** (Basil of Ancyra, Gregory of Laodicea): Christ is similar in essence with the Father, but subordinate to Him. **Eunomianism**: Version of Arianism where Christ is not only unequal with God, but unlike Him.
 - **Docetism**: The Son-of-God didn't become flesh, only appeared to die on cross. Christ descended upon Jesus at baptism, but exited just prior to crucifixion. This is in Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberalism today. The popular writer William Barclay held this view.
 - **Ebionism** (Athanasius): Jesus only seemed divine, but was a prophet not the Son of God. This is partly reflected in modern day Islam.

- **Gnosticism** (Greek mystery cults, Jewish Kabbalah, Zoroastrianism, Egyptian religion): Salvation is acquired through secret knowledge outside of the Bible. Envisions a hierarchy of spiritual beings that are progressively further from the evil material world. Matter is inherently evil. This is seen in so called New-Age Christianity today.
- **Nestorianism** (Nestorius): Christ was a god-bearing man (as we might become), rather than both fully-human and fully-God. This is reflected in Haganism today.
- **Pelagianism** (Pelagius, Julian of Eclanum Coelestius): Man is born essentially good, and is capable of doing what is necessary for salvation. This was the classic Albert Schweitzer type of Liberalism in America. **Semi-Pelagianism** (John Cassian): God and man both cooperate in salvation, but man must take the initiative. This is seen in extreme Arminianism.
- **Perfectionism:** (AKA: Legalism) Belief that our works bring us to salvation, or are necessary to maintain our salvation. Modern Pelagianism.
- **Unitarianism:** Denial of the Trinity. This is all around us today.
- **Universalism:** The belief that all persons will ultimately be saved, and no one will be eternally punished. The belief is growing among well-known Evangelical groups today.

2. “The Truth” of God's Word was under attack today. These heresies were those that led to confusion.

- **Apollinarianism** (Apollinarius): Christ had no human spirit, the Logos replaced it. Sort of Jesus as God clothed in flesh. **Eutychianism** (Eutyches): Human nature of Christ absorbed by the Logos. And also closely related was **Modalism** (Sabellius, Praxeus): The trinity is three facets of the same person, and not three discrete persons with one essence. This is also known as **Sabellianism** (Sabellius): Father, Son, and Spirit are three facets of same person.
- **Baptismal Regenerationism:** The belief that baptism is essential to, and seals, one's salvation. Present in many denominations today such as the Catholics, the Orthodox, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Church of Christ, and so on.
- **Glossolalianism:** The belief that only speaking in tongues proves a person's salvation.
- **Macedonianism** (Macedonius): The Holy Spirit as a created being similar to the angels.
- **Manicheanism** (Manicheus, aka: Mani or Manes): Gnostic variant believing matter is evil, God created our souls but rejected our bodies.
- **Marcionism** (Marcion): Gnostic variant distinguishing two Gods: An angry, vindictive one of the Old Testament, and a nice one in the New Testament. The OT god having no validity for Christians. This was also an early tenet of Liberalism. This gave birth to **Judaistism:** Combines Jewish civil and ceremonial laws with New Testament Christianity.
- **Monarchianism** (Paul of Samosata, Theodotus of Byzantium): Jesus became Christ at baptism, was made Son of God at His crucifixion, God according Him these things because of Jesus' righteousness. This is just like Docetism. This is

in Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberalism today. The popular writer William Barclay held this view.

- **Monophysitism** (Severus, Julius of Halicarnassus): Christ fully God, not human at all. And closely related is **Monothelitism** (Sergius, Theodore of Arabia): Christ had no human will, only divine will.
- **Montanism** (Montanus): Promotion or practice of extreme and disorderly manifestations of the "Holy Spirit". Present in some far out fringe Charismatic groups.
- **Noeticism**: God-the-Father was crucified as Christ. And closely related, **Patripassianism**: God-the-Father and God-the-Son BOTH died on the cross.
- **Subordinationism**: Any subordination of one member of the Trinity to another (in position, not role).
- **Syncretism**: The combination of Christianity with anything else (esp. Judaism in the Early Church). We see this today in RCC, the ECM, the Contemplative Prayer Movement, and many other places.

3. “The Life” as set down for us in God’s Revelation to mankind was under attack. These heresies were those that led to frustration.

- **Antinomianism**: We can freely sin because grace forgives all. We can see this today in the hyper-grace heresies that advocate “anything goes” in groups associate with Christ's church.

Why does Christ's Church still Stray from “Sound Faith”?

There are four dangerous trends I see in modern evangelical culture. Each of these can be observed in nearly any Bible teaching fellowship. All are dangerous and were clearly warned of by Jesus Christ in His ministry.

Danger #1: Unsound-Faith starts with an Improper View of Assurance

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; KJV

First of all, many professed Christians-and even many true Christians, have unsound-faith because they hold a false doctrine of assurance. Often it is because the person who witnessed to them told them that all they had to do was make a profession of faith, walk an aisle, raise a hand, say a prayer, and never doubt what the Lord had done in their lives. Perhaps they have been taught that to ever doubt their salvation is to doubt God’s Word and integrity.

But we have no right to assure a person of something we cannot be certain is true. God’s own Holy Spirit will witness His reality to those who truly belong to Him (Rom. 8:14-16)⁶⁸. [112 words]

Danger #2: Unsound-Faith continues with an Improper Understanding of Grace

1 John 3:6-7, 10 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is

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righteous. 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. NKJV

A second contributor to unsound-faith is failure of self-examination. Through a faulty and presumptuous view of God's grace, some professed believers blithely go through life oblivious to and unconcerned about their sins. Yet the Lord tells His people to examine their lives each time they come to His table (1 Cor. 11:28)⁶⁹. [52 words]

When a couples choose to live together without being married—they commit the sin of fornication against a Holy God. When a person practices homosexuality—they commit the sin of sodomy against a Holy God. When a person is deceptive and dishonest in business—they commit the sin of lying just like the Devil against a Holy God. When a person is hateful and vengeful—they commit murder in the sight of a Holy God.

God's Word is very clear about those who never turn from their sin:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. NKJV

Danger #3: Unsound-Faith continues with an Improper Conviction about the Priority of Activity

Matthew 7:22-23 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. KJV

A third cause of unsound-faith is inordinate concentration on religious activity. Attending church, hearing sermons, singing songs of the faith, reading the Bible, attending Bible studies, and many other perfectly good and helpful activities can actually insulate a person from the very God he is supposedly worshiping and serving. Those things can cause a believer to think he is being faithful and obedient, when in reality he may not be; and they can cause an unbeliever to think he is saved, when in reality he is not.

This group includes those who are more committed to a denomination or Christian organization than to the Word of God. It includes those who are academically interested in theology—even orthodox, biblical theology—but not in obedience to the Bible on which that theology is based⁷⁰. [131 words]

Danger #4: Unsound-Faith continues with an Improper Habit of Rationalizing Sin

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NKJV

A fourth cause of unsound-faith is what may be called the fair exchange, or balancing out, approach. Instead of confessing and asking forgiveness for his sins, a person may give himself the benefit of the doubt and rationalize his salvation by thinking that the good things he does balance out the bad, that the positive cancels the negative.

Whatever good we might somehow accomplish would not cancel those consequences of sin, any more than eating right and exercising will save the life of a person infected with a deadly disease. His only hope is in receiving a cure for the disease, not in trying to balance off its deadly effect by keeping his body otherwise

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healthy. This is the superficial person, the one who has had little or no instruction in the gospel and who thinks that his attending Sunday school as a child, having been baptized, being a church member, or other such things put him in good standing with God⁷¹. [162 words]

Among the most precious words Jesus ever spoke are His words in John 14:6. As we open there this morning, let me underline in your minds what He said.

*John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am **the way, the truth, and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV*

Jesus is **The Way** you must follow; He is **The Truth** you must believe; and He is **The Life** you must live.

Hold Him close today!

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Grace Energized Men: Guarding Sound Faith Against Ancient Heresies

Titus 2:2/Jude 1:3-4, 16-25

Before the celestial “shock and awe” judgments of the Tribulation are unleashed, God's Word describes a time characterized by false teaching and teachers SO strong, that it would even sweep away even true believers (Mark 13:22) if they were not sealed by the Spirit of God.

In Matthew 24 Jesus describes the world before He returns in His Second Coming, as a world where the love of most has grown cold because of false teachers (Matthew 24:11-12); and where “the Faith” will be nearly extinct (Luke 18:8).

The end of the church age is shown in Revelation 3 to be like the church at Laodicea where truth is light, self-centeredness is heavy; materialism and personal agendas run deep, and true Biblical spirituality is shallow.

As we have already seen, Paul foretold that the days would be a time of great “falling away”; and Peter, Jude and John all described this final time pervasive false doctrine across the world. As we open to the tiny letter of Christ's other earthly brother named Jude look at verse 3.

Today we see such a sweeping array of deceptive false teachers as just the foretaste of this birth pang, which Jesus warned about and described--forming before our very eyes.

Never before has wrong teaching and beliefs about God been more widely proclaimed than in our day. I a continuous, 24/7 river erroneous teaching about God flows around the world: on radio, TV, cable, webcasts, podcasts, simulcasts, books, magazines, and everywhere in between—*our world is increasingly filled with lies about God*. And to this growing cauldron of darkness and lies comes the triumphant truth that—

Jesus Christ is The Key

Please stand with me and listen to Jude 1:3-4, 16-25. Pray

The storm of lies raining down upon us today is a constant reminder why Christ's Church is to be filled with well grounded, grace-energized men and women who guard the truth that Jesus Christ gave us. We should be constantly declaring the truths we hold from John 14:6, to the confused world around us that:

- **Jesus Christ is the Way**—there is NO other road to God than the Lord Jesus Christ. Any belief system that is hostile to Him, denying of His deity, or claiming His insufficiency is FALSE.
- **Jesus Christ is the Truth**—at the center of all truth that leads to God is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says that general revelation has two means: conscience and creation. Jesus Christ is right in the middle of the *human conscience* as the Creator who breathed life into the dirt that was used to form Adam; and He is squarely in the *center of the created Universe* as He is also the Creator of everything in the heavens and on the Earth. Any philosophy, religion, or science that is hostile to Him, denying of His deity, or claiming His insufficiency is FALSE.
- **Jesus Christ is the Life**—the only way to live a life that is guilt-free, fear-free, full and overflowing, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who come to Him find His complete forgiveness of every sin, and His

complete transformation of their lives. Any religion, church, denomination, or Bible teacher that is hostile to Jesus Christ as God in human flesh who died a substitutionary death for sin, or that denies His deity in any other way, or claims His insufficiency is FALSE.

But that absolute assertion of Christ in John 14:6 is not widely held by modern Christians. George Barna recently reported that in America,

“Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources. Because we remain a largely Bible-illiterate society, few are alarmed or even aware of the slide toward syncretism - a belief system that blindly combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives with God's Word.”

That leads us to consider the—

Ancient Heresies in The Church of the 21st Century

It's axiomatic to say today that "There are no new heresies". For example, looking closely at us we can see elements of the following ancient heresies in modern religious movements around us today. Because of a growing ecumenical, try-to-not-offend anyone (but God) movement around us today, we are often asked to overlook the deadly false teachings of groups, that often are made up of such warm and gracious people.

- We can see elements of the Arian Heresy in Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses.
- We can see much Religious Syncretism in the Roman Catholic Church, the Emergent Church Movement, and the Unification Church (Moonies).
- We can see elements of Marcionism, Syncretism, Universalism, Gnosticism, and Nestorianism in all the New Age versions of "Christianity" like the talk show force Oprah Winfrey is always promoting.
- We can see elements of Islam's view of Jesus are similar to the Docetist and Ebionist Heresies.
- We can see elements of Roman Catholics fall into Semi-Pelagianism and, often, Mariolatry (the worship of Mary as equal with Christ and holding Divine attributes).
- We can see some Charismatics fall into Glossolalianism and Montanism.
- And many modern media-based ministries, especially televangelists, fall into almost every heresy known and unknown!

Here is a concise list of the false teachings that can be found in the writings of the early church. This list is a good reason to be very careful in embracing the writings of someone just because they were an early Christian leader.

The Known Heresies of the Early (Post-Apostolic) Church

4. “The Way” or Christ's Death as the Substitute for sinners was under attack. These heresies were those that led to damnation.

- **Arianism** (Arius, Eudoxius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eunomius): Reduces Christ from the Divine Son of God, to a first created being. God-the-Father existed prior to God-the-Son. This is the false teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses⁷².
- **Docetism**: The Son-of-God didn't become flesh, only appeared to die on cross. Christ descended upon Jesus at baptism, but exited just prior to crucifixion. This is in Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberalism today. The popular writer William Barclay held this view.
- **Ebionism** (Athanasius): Jesus only seemed divine, but was a prophet not the Son of God. This is partly reflected in modern day Islam.
- **Gnosticism** (Greek mystery cults, Jewish Kabbalah, Zoroastrianism, Egyptian religion): Salvation is acquired through secret knowledge outside of the Bible. Envisions a hierarchy of spiritual beings that are progressively further from the evil material world. Matter is inherently evil. This is seen in much of so called New-Age Christianity today.
- **Nestorianism** (Nestorius): Christ was a god-bearing man (as we might become), rather than both fully-human and fully-God. This is reflected in Haganism today.
- **Pelagianism** (Pelagius, Julian of Eclanum Coelestius): Man is born essentially good, and is capable of doing what is necessary for salvation. This was the classic Albert Schweitzer type of Liberalism in America. **Semi-Pelagianism** (John Cassian): God and man both cooperate in salvation, but man must take the initiative. This is seen in extreme Arminianism.
- **Perfectionism**: (AKA: Legalism) Belief that our works bring us to salvation, or are necessary to maintain our salvation. Modern Pelagianism.
- **Unitarianism**: Denial of the deity of both God the Father and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God (or the Trinity). This is all around us today.
- **Universalism**: The belief that all persons will ultimately be saved, and no one will be eternally punished. The belief is growing among well-known Evangelical groups today.

5. “The Truth” of God's Word was under attack. These heresies were those that led to confusion.

- **Apollinarianism** (Apollinarius): Christ had no human spirit, the Logos replaced it. Sort of Jesus as God clothed in flesh⁷³.
- **Baptismal Regenerationism**: The belief that baptism is essential to, and seals, one's salvation. Present in many denominations today such as the Catholics, the Orthodox, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Church of Christ, and so on.
- **Glossolalianism**: The belief that only speaking in tongues proves a person's salvation.
- **Macedonianism** (Macedonius): The Holy Spirit as a created being similar to the angels.

⁷² Two subsets of Arianism are: **Semi-Arianism** (Basil of Ancyra, Gregory of Laodicea): Christ is similar in essence with the Father, but subordinate to Him. **Eunomianism**: Version of Arianism where Christ is not only unequal with God, but unlike Him.

⁷³ Three subsets of Apollinarianism are **Eutychnianism** (Eutyches): Human nature of Christ absorbed by the Logos. And also closely related was **Modalism** (Sabellius, Praxeus): The trinity is three facets of the same person, and not three discrete persons with one essence. This is also known as **Sabellianism** (Sabellius): Father, Son, and Spirit are three facets of same person.

- **Manicheanism** (Manicheus, aka: Mani or Manes): Gnostic variant believing matter is evil, God created our souls but rejected our bodies.
- **Marcionism** (Marcion): Gnostic variant distinguishing two Gods: An angry, vindictive one of the Old Testament, and a nice one in the New Testament. The OT god having no validity for Christians. This was also an early tenet of Liberalism. This gave birth to **Judaistism**: Combines Jewish civil and ceremonial laws with New Testament Christianity.
- **Monarchianism** (Paul of Samosata, Theodotus of Byzantium): Jesus became Christ at baptism, was made Son of God at His crucifixion, God according Him these things because of Jesus' righteousness. This is just like Docetism. This is in Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberalism today. The popular writer William Barclay held a form of this view.
- **Monophysitism** (Severus, Julius of Halicarnassus): Christ fully God, not human at all. And closely related is **Monothelitism** (Sergius, Theodore of Arabia): Christ had no human will, only divine will.
- **Montanism** (Montanus): Promotion or practice of extreme and disorderly manifestations of the "Holy Spirit". Present in some far out fringe Charismatic groups.
- **Noeticism**: God-the-Father was crucified as Christ. And closely related, **Patipassianism**: God-the-Father and God-the-Son BOTH died on the cross.
- **Subordinationism**: Any subordination of one member of the Trinity to another (in position, not role).
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APPENDIX:

Should we Reject Everything Coming Out of the ECM?

Our answer is no. Indeed, we should share their dissatisfaction with certain abuses or deficiencies within Evangelicalism. We should resonate with their criticisms of consumerism, their emphasis on an authentic lived-out faith, a move toward decentralized leadership within the church, and with what many consider the heartbeat of the movement, their passion to be missional.

"The church should stop mimicking the surrounding culture and become an alternative community, with a different set of beliefs, values and behaviors.

Ministers would no longer engage in marketing; churches would no longer place primary emphasis on programs to serve members.

The traditional ways of evaluating 'successful churches' – bigger buildings, more people, bigger budgets, larger ministerial staff, new and more programs to serve members – would be rejected.

⁷⁷ Paraphrased and quoted from MacArthur, John F. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 7* (Chicago: Moody Press) 1082

New yardsticks would be the norm: To what extent is our church a 'sent' community in which each believer is reaching out to his community?

To what extent is our church impacting the community with a Christian message that challenges the values of our secular society?"⁷⁸

One writer describes the missional church "as a body of people sent on a mission who gather in community for worship, encouragement, and teaching from the Word that supplements what they are feeding themselves throughout the week."⁷⁹

Discipleship is to Ground ALL Believers in the Truth

1 John 2:12-14 uses the analogy of physical growth to describe three stages of Christian development.

Read in I J2.12-14

Child	Young	Adult
12) I am writing to you, little children , because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. 13) I have written to you, children , because you know the Father.	13) I am writing to you, young men , because you have overcome the evil one. 14) I have written to you, young men , because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.	13) I am writing to you, fathers , because you know Him who has been from the beginning. 14) I have written to you, fathers , because you know Him who has been from the beginning.
Children are unstable and need security.	Young men face special temptations that must be overcome.	Fathers step closer and closer to God in order to find life solutions.
The new Christian learns about what the Christian life is and how to live it.	The young Christians master the fight over the world, Satan and flesh by God's Word.	The mature Christian develops a deep and strong faith to carry out God's work.

John first divides all believers into three categories: "children" (babies in Christ), "young men" (those who have been around a while but still really struggle), and "fathers" (who are mature and serving Christ's church but so aware they are imperfect). He then describes the condition and needs of each.

"These very clear distinctions identify 3 stages of spiritual growth in God's family.

- "Fathers," the most mature, have a deep knowledge of the Eternal God. The pinnacle of spiritual maturity is to know God in His fullness (cf. Phil. 3:10).
- "Young men" are those who, while not yet having the mature experience of knowing God in the Word and through life, do know sound doctrine. They are strong against sin and error because they have His Word in them. Thus they overcome the wiles of the devil, who makes havoc of children (cf. Eph.

⁷⁸ In an article titled, "The 'Missional Church': A Model for Canadian Churches?" David Horrox writes,

⁷⁹ Dan Kimball in "The Emerging Church" (Zondervan, 2003)

4:14). Since Satan's efforts are in falsehood and deception, they have overcome him.

- "Little children" are those who have only the basic awareness of God and need to grow. All are in God's family and manifest Christ's character at different levels".⁸⁰

Level 1: children are those who have never grown or been trained. Either they are brand new babies in Christ or they have stayed that way for some reason. Children need to understand what they have in Christ. They have struggles with three areas: sin, forgiveness, and security in Christ. If you struggle with what is right and wrong in God's sight, wonder whether He could ever forgive you, and sometimes wonder if you are even really saved—John says you are a child in the faith. These saints need training and nurture from older believers in these three areas until they are strong in their faith.

Level 2: John speaks to the second level of growth he calls the "young men". This group knows they are saved but are so aware of their spiritual lives and the powerful temptations they face that they can easily become very discouraged. They often fear they'll never be able to be victorious and wonder why they fail so often. This group needs to be trained (think discipleship) in who they are in Christ (that they are already victors) and how to overcome (through Word-filled obedience) one area at a time in their lives and bring that area under His gracious Lordship.

Level 3: John talks about those who are fathers and mothers of the Word. They can nurture spiritual children. They have a walk that talks and they use their life to mentor others.

Grace Energized Men

Stay Tender-Hearted in a Cruel World

Titus 2:2

As we open to Matthew 24, Jesus sat down near the end of His earthly ministry and painted a vivid picture of what the world would look like as it neared its final days. We have studied that message called the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 many times. But this morning I would like you to look at just two verses in that chapter with me—v. 11-12.

Please open there with me and follow along as I read them:

*Matthew 24:11-12 “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.12 “And because lawlessness will abound, **the love of many will grow cold.** NKJV*

Jesus warned that as the end of days approaches, false doctrine would **increase** and that real love would **decrease**. The word “grow cold” is not an adjective describing a condition, it is a primary verb describing that the active display of love will be radically decreased. Repeat that with me, we are in a world where:

- False doctrine will what? INCREASE (right); and where
- True love would what? DECREASE.

So the church nearing the end of the age is faced with *increasing* false doctrine and *decreasing* genuine love.

False Doctrines Rising and Genuine Love Waning

Of course, to prepare for such an onslaught facing Christ's church, God had a plan. That plan is our study this morning, and it is found in Titus 2:2. Look closely at the fourth and fifth of the qualities that God wanted to be lived out in the godly older men.

*Titus 2:2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, **sound in faith, in love, in patience;** NKJV*

Notice the proximity of “sound faith” (vs. the false doctrine) and “sound love” (vs. the defective love) in this passage. Paul was addressing a current and future need in the church.

God wants His love lived out in Christ's church throughout all of its history. He wants each member of Christ's family to see soundness of love in action—starting with the older, godly men who are models and examples to the flock.

Then, the Lord wants sound or healthy love experienced by each member, lived out each day, before a watching and often loveless world.

So, as we come to this fifth quality of a godly man, let me ask all of us gathered today--how sound is your love this morning? We have shared several weeks looking at sound faith and healthy doctrine. But this morning Paul moves us on in his letter to Titus to an even more important topic. In other words, how complete is your love

this morning? How fully functioning is it? Do you have healthy love, the kind that God says characterizes us as believers.

The Sacred Trio

There is a sacred trio that sang often in the early church. Paul named that trio “faith, hope, and love”⁸¹, and constantly reminded the early saints that when the grace of God flows through our lives the byproduct is “faith hope, and love”.

As we look again at Titus 2 this morning, we find that trio in the middle of the passage on grace-energized men. When Paul described the godly, older men of the church he said that they would often be broadcasting from their lives “faith, hope, and love”.

This trio may be explained as, when God's grace energizes our lives, we have three clear character qualities that correspond to this sacred trio:

- Sound in “faith” means we Guarding A Healthy Mind In A Sick World
- [sound in] “love”: Staying Tender Hearted In A Cruel World
- [sound in] “patience”: Finishing Hopefully In A Despairing World

And, as we know so well from I Corinthians 13, any doctrine not wrapped in love is useless to God in His plan for Christ's church. To best see love as it should be, the sound and healthy love that the Lord desires to flow out of our lives, turn with me to I Corinthians 13:4-8 and follow along as we read of love that is Divine.

Stand/Read/Pray

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.8 Love never fails. NKJV

Paul told Titus that he was to teach believers how to “adorn” the doctrine of God (1:10). That is why Paul frequently introduces that sacred trio of “faith, hope, and love” to various New Testament assemblies. Even John at the end of the New Testament era emphasized those three truths that must be kept in balance.

As we grow in faith (sound doctrine) we must adorn it with hope and love.

Grace-energized Men Are Sound in Love: They Stay Tender Hearted In a Cruel World

Our Lord Jesus said in John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (NKJV). By what are we to be known? By love.

Compassion is a byproduct of love that means to feel deeply within—our ability to feel love deeply within (compassion) is diminished everyday by our world. Only Christ's love within can renew and restore the love that is healthy.

⁸¹ I Corinthians 13:13; Romans 5:1-5; I Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8; and I Peter 1:21-22

We must take Christ and His love, into our church, into our homes and into our neighborhoods—that is, into every relationship of life. This is only possible as He who is love is shed abroad in our hearts. This is not a passive resignation. It must be an active participation on our part.

The apostle Paul wrote to a city church that mirrored the very culture we live in. Lets take a trip to Corinth Century one and stop in Tulsa 2008...

LOVE was LACKING IN CORINTH

Let's journey back to the City of Corinth for a quick visit.

Sprawling along the thin isthmus joining the two halves of Ancient Greece was first Century Corinth. With the azure green waters and pure white sands of the Aegean Sea on both sides, it was a bustling commercial center in Greece, boasting world famous sporting centers and hosting the Pan-Ionian Games.

This city afforded too many temptations for the fun loving Corinthian Christians. The Apostle Paul had seen many wondrous conversions. He wrote to them, calling them saints, for so they were in Christ. But, lacking spiritual discipline they were slipping back into the evils they faced each day.

If we were to scan this epistle in a couple of minutes and grab the big problems they faced in Century One Christianity, these would be the “Sins of the Saints of Corinth.”

THE SINS OF THE SAINTS OF CORINTH

1. In First Corinthians 1:10 we see they were **DIVISIVE**: they were following men and their movements more than God and His truth.
2. In First Corinthians 1:18-20 we see they were **ARROGANT**: they were hung up on their great knowledge and philosophy rather than the simple gospel.
3. In First Corinthians 1:26 we see that they were **WORLDLY**: they were pursuing cultural, societal, and worldly prestige. The temporal was triumphing over the eternal.
4. In First Corinthians 3:1-3 we see they were **FLESHLY**: they had developed a carnality, which reduced the serious holiness of the Christian life to the mere sidelight of the Christian life.
5. In First Corinthians 5:1 we find they had sunken into utter **MORALLY LAX**: they had developed an ungodly toleration of sexual promiscuity, especially seen in the list of I Corinthians 6:9-11.
6. In First Corinthians 6:1 we find they were **LITIGIOUS**: they had caught a “vengeful, get even, get all I can, my rights first” attitude toward one another.
7. In First Corinthians 7 we find they were **CONFUSED**: they had a low view of marriage, thus there was confusion over God's principles for a Biblical marriage.
8. In First Corinthians 8:1 they were **SELFISH**: their liberty in Christ was being misused by a selfish lack of love and care for others.
9. In First Corinthians 9:24 we see that they were **UNDISCIPLINED**: they desperately needed to learn that God commands strict self-denial unto holiness.
10. In First Corinthians 10:6 we find they were **LUSTFUL**: they were chasing after worldly things and worldly pleasures.
11. In First Corinthians 10:16-22 we find they were **COMPROMISING**: as John Bunyan said in his Pilgrims Progress, they were “Mr. Facing Both Ways” because they came to the Lord's Table and also to pagan idol worship.
12. In First Corinthians 11:1 we see a **UNSUBMISSIVE**: they had allowed a perversion of godly gender specific male/female roles in church home and societv

13. First Corinthians 12-14 SPIRITUALLY EMPTY: they had perverted the proper use of spiritual gifts.
14. First Corinthians 15:1, 12 DOCTRINALLY ERRANT: they had lost their grip on resurrection truth.

So love was lacking, and they were neither sound in faith nor in love. So Paul explains to this very needy church that what they need is—

Genuine Love: Looks like Christ

The picture of genuine love in 1st Corinthians 13 is not the thought of Paul, it is the work of a Divine photographer; and Christ is the subject of the picture. Jesus was and is incarnate Love. To love like God desires is to be like Christ; and the degree of our failure is the measure of our unlikeness to Him.

In His presence there is fullness of joy. It is only as we spend time in His presence that we can become more like Him. And truly as we make choices to obey His word, there is great joy which will be ours!. A Christian is described as one who sins less and less and obeys the WORD OF GOD more and more. Only as we abide in Him -- meeting with Him in reading and meditating upon the WORD OF GOD as we hide His Word in our hearts -- and being in continually in prayer (Prayer ought to be as natural as breathing) that we become more and more like Christ.

There is no instant way to become a mature Christian woman. We are conditioned by the “instant” nature of the world we live in -- instant food, instant communications, instant updates on weather and news, etc. that we somehow believe that there ought be a way for “instant maturity in Christ”. There isn’t. We must be faithfully seeking to spend time with God every day when we desire to learn from Him as we sit at His feet.

To start our own personal pursuit of complete and healthy Biblical love, let’s review the pictures of love in 15 different actions, captured by this chapter.

1. ***Christ in me will be...PATIENT*** - (MAKROTHUMEIN): This word is always used of patience not merely with circumstances, but with people. It is to be seen when we have the power to avenge and don’t do it. Literally, this word means “long-tempered”, and is the grace-energized ability to be wronged over and over again. This word describes Paul in II Corinthians 6:6; as well as every Christian in Ephesians 4:2; and is a manifestation of the Spirit’s fruit in Galatians 5:22. Those who have God’s grace to see further than the present will have this patience.
2. ***Christ in me will be...KIND*** - (CHESTEUETAI): The other side of patience is here taking any grief, giving anything to be helpful and useful, healing wounds.
3. ***Christ in me will be...NOT JEALOUS*** - (ZELOI): Paul now starts with a listing of eight negative descriptions of love in action—what love is not doing. There will be 7 positive actions, and 8 negative actions that together give us a complete portrait of Christ's love through us. Christ's love is never envious. The root word here is “to boil, seethe”. This evil to be repented of is not the mere ‘I want what you have’; it’s the malignant ‘I don’t want you to have and keep what I can’t have’.
4. ***Christ in me will be...NOT BRAGGING*** - (PERPEREUETAI): Christ's love is not boastful, the verbalizing of self, the root is the word for which we get windbag.
5. ***Christ in me will be...NOT ARROGANT*** - (PHUSIOUTAI): Christ's love is conceited. The attitude of pride. I am better, etc. It is when one becomes inflated with their own importance.

6. ***Christ in me will be...NOT ACTING UNBECOMINGLY - (ASCHEMONEI):*** Christ's love is not rude is better seen as “love does not behave gracelessly.” The Greek words for grace and charm are notably the same. As Swindoll put it, in Christ we become winsome.
7. ***Christ in me will be...NOT SEEKING IT’S OWN - ():*** Christ's love is not insistent upon it’s rights, but seeks Christ's attitude when He took upon Himself the form of a servant.
8. ***Christ in me will be...NOT PROVOKED - (PAROXUNETAI):*** Christ's love is never flying into a rage. This is the lack of becoming exasperated. As Kipling said, “Master this and you have it all.” Better yet Solomon in Proverbs 25:28, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls and broken down.” There are really only two kinds of people, those who think of their rights and those who think of others. Our mind set is either selfish or selfless...
9. ***Christ in me will be...NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED - (LOGIZOMAI):*** Christ's love seeks to remember no evil. This is refusing to store up the memory of any wrong received. What a liberating truth to grasp hold of like an accountant, clear the ledger. As Chrysostom said, “Love is like a spark falling into the ocean is quenched.” As God does not hold our sins against us in Romans 4:8, Psalm 32.
10. ***Christ in me will be...NOT REJOICING IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS – ():*** Christ's love is taking no pleasure in evil reports as do the heathen in Romans 1:32. The meaning of iniquity is “unrighteousness”. Unrighteousness talks about sin. Love never rejoices in sin.
11. ***Christ in me will be...REJOICING WITH THE TRUTH - (SUGCHAIREI):*** Christ's love is in harmony with the truth, and partaking in the love of the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 which is the joy of God. As Psalm 15 says that those who are godly, “speak truth in heart.” Holiness or righteousness is based on truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life”. One cannot be righteous until he behaves himself in accord with God’s truth.
12. ***Christ in me will be...BEARING ALL THINGS - (STEGAI)*** Literally, this word means “to cover on all sides, to cover in silence”. When Paul says, “love beareth all things” he is not talking about enduring a trial, he is talking about covering the ugliness in someone else’s life. Love out of respect and honest concern for the real value of another person will do everything it can to cover up the sin of that person. The great 19th century Bible teacher Scroggie once said: “Love is strong in its silences. It patiently endures what it has to suffer. It is not shaken by any sort of ingratitude. The word used here is highly pictorial. It is employed of holding fast, like a watertight vessel (I Peter 4:8); it is used of a roof which does not leak; it is used of troops defending a fortress, and it is used of ice bearing weight, and not giving way. It bravely stands up to life.”
13. ***Christ in me will be...BELIEVING ALL THINGS - (PISTEUEI):*** as His grace enables me to not be suspicious, but trusting God’s plan. This action of love makes me completely trusting God, and believing the best about others. Love sees the weakness, throws a mantle of silence over it, and then believes the best. If you are going to make a mistake about someone’s character, err on the side of love. Make a mistake in trusting or believing them too much. The Corinthians were evidently believing the worst; and they were suspecting and assumed that nobody ever told the truth. In Matthew 9 (v. 2b, 7, 3) we see the Pharisees felt this way about Jesus. They had a predisposition that Christ was evil; so whatever Jesus did had to be evil. They were cynical and suspicious. Once you start hating someone, you will try to find faults. On the contrary, once you start loving somebody, you will start covering their faults.
14. ***Christ in me will be...HOPING ALL THINGS - (ELPIZEI):*** Even amid repeated disappointments there is a constant assurance that God has a future and is working all things for His own glory. Love refuses to

take failure as final. Jesus wouldn't accept failure from Peter; and Paul wouldn't accept failure from the Corinthians. Many a grace-energized, loving wife has held on to a struggling and failing husband; and many a grace-energized, loving parent has held on to a wayward child; and many a loving friend has held on to a fallen brother—by just holding on to this Spirit—prompted hope. Hope does not try to persuade itself that the thief is honest; but it holds tight knowing that man was MADE for honesty, for purity and the heavenly vision.

15. ***Christ in me will be...*** ENDURING ALL THINGS - (HUPOMENAI): The Greek term translated “endureth” is a military term which has to do with being positioned in the middle of a violent battle. The emphasis is not on handling little, minor annoyances. It refers to love that stands wounded and bleeding against incredible opposition and still loves. So we are called to actively choose to bear everything with triumphant endurance. Love never fails. Love never dies; it doesn't end. Love cannot be conquered. This is the kind of love that took Jesus to Calvary, as it says in 1 John 3:16 *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.* (NKJV)

Where do I Start?

So how do we take all this truth, all these facts and do something tangible in our lives starting today?

In that Christian classic, “The Discipline of Grace”, Navigator theologian Jerry Bridges encourages us to put I Corinthians into personal actions statements. Let me share my personal action statements:

- I will not rejoice in sin because I love you and I know our holy God is offended by sin and sin will hurt you personally.
- I will take pleasure in the truth because I love you and want your life to reflect God's holiness.
- I will bear all things because I love you and don't want to parade your sin before other people.
- I will believe all things because I love you and will believe the best about you, not judging you wrongly. I will have faith in you.
- I will hope all things because I love you and know that god is seeking you and you are made for god; I will not despair of you because I know your needs and I know God's grace.
- I will endure all things because I love you and the love of Christ is eternal; Jesus endured all opposition and persecution and prayed on the cross for his enemies. Love never dies.

Love needs to be Seen in Action

This entire section describing love describes it in action, it is a choice to do something. Not just an attitude but an action is what God desires from us.

1. *Abound in love* Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, (NKJV)
2. *Be fervent in love* 1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (NKJV)

3. Be consistent in love (Phil. 2:2) Philippians 2:2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. (NKJV)
4. Be sincere in love 2 Corinthians 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. (NKJV)
5. Continue in love Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. (NKJV)
6. Follow after love 1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual [gifts,] but especially that you may prophesy. (NKJV)
7. Increase in love 1 Thessalonians 3:12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we [do] to you, (NKJV)
8. Put on love Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (NKJV)
9. Provoke each other to love Hebrews 10:29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (NKJV)

Paul said follow me as I am following Christ:

- *1 Corinthians 4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. (KJV)*
- *1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also [am] of Christ. (KJV)*

Literally this means PATTERN your life after mine as I PATTERN my life after Christ. Cut around me exactly as I am because I am patterning my life after Christ...

We Must Make Choices to Act in Love

John 15:12-16-- WE HAVE THE ABILITY FOR SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE THROUGH CHRIST (TAPE)

1. Acknowledge it is a command (Romans 13:8-10)
2. Agree you have the power (Romans 5:5)
3. Understand it is normal Christian behavior (I John 4:7-10)
4. Realize it is the Spirit's work (Gal. 5:22)
5. Practice it. (I Peter 1:22, 4:8) (Hebrews. 5:8)

REDPATH: The picture of love is a photograph of the Lord Jesus Christ in His inner Character. In His church, He wants to have many reprints. We are looking at the Original, Himself. He is looking for the perfect reproduction of His life of love in us. To love like this is to be like the Lord. Christians are those born again by the Holy Spirit, in whom the Savior has become incarnate again, for we are partakers of a new nature -- His Character, which is love.

Conclusion: We must take Christ and His love, into our homes, into the Marketplace, into our family life. In essence, this love must flow into every relationship of life. This is only possible as He who is love is shed abroad in our hearts. This is not a passive resignation. It must be an active participation on our part.

Our Lord Jesus said in John. 13:35, "By this all will all know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." We must take Christ and His love into our churches, into our homes and into our neighborhoods. Into every relationship of life is only possible because His love is already flowing out of us by the Spirit who lives within..

REDPATH: This has been a photograph of Jesus Christ and perhaps you have felt Him looking into your own heart and asking about the reproduction of His love in your life. If you would learn to live like this, first you must receive that love into your heart. You must come to Jesus, take Him as your Lord and yield to Him.

Does this photograph find you out? Does it show your life to be the reverse of everything that Jesus is? If so, I can tell you that grace can triumphantly make you just like this, as you yield yourself to Him.

*“Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.*

*“Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.*

*“Finish then Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let it be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee.*

*“Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!”*

Charles Wesley (1747)

Grace Energized Men Finishing Hopefully in a Despairing World Titus 2:2

Paul set out God's plan of discipleship for Christ's church nearly 2,000 years ago.

We began to study that curriculum in Titus 2 about one year ago, and we are entering the final stretch. Before us lay the final elements or characteristics of what a useful, godly, servant of the Lord not only acts like—but also really is like on the inside.

First, we will trace through the pages of the Scriptures in Titus 2, the entire scope of this nurturing plan for growing strong believers. Like Peter said in his letters, our hearts will get stirred up by way of reminder. Then we will move on to the next element in our study which is, grace-energized men are characterized by persevering hope.

The church-wide discipleship curriculum, written by Paul, starts with the backbone of any church, the older men. These men were to be mature, godly, gifted men who are in step with the Spirit. As we open to Titus 2:1, note the profiles.

Godly Men of Maturity

The men of Crete, saved by grace, were to be personally trained by Titus in the six areas that God considered paramount for the survival of His Church. As we read through these descriptions of the highly useful men of Christ's church, ask yourself, "Is this the direction of my life?"

*v.1 "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine, v.2a that the **older men** be...":*

1. **"sober"**: This is a call for older, godly men to **Maintain A Balanced Life In An Obsessive-Compulsive World;**
2. **"reverent"**: God also asks older men to **Stay Serious About God In An Amused World;**
3. **"temperate"**: Then they are to be characterized by **Living Wisely In A Foolish World;**
4. **"sound in faith"**: This means God wants them always **Guarding A Healthy Mind In A Sick World;**
5. **"[sound in] love"**: Means that God also wants His servants to **Stay Tender Hearted In A Cruel World;**
6. **"[sound in] patience"**: And finally, as we'll see later today, God wants older men to **Finish Hopefully In A Despairing World.**

Godly Women of Influence

Titus is next instructed to be sure that the women of influence are tuned to what God considers most meaningful and profitable for Christ's church. Paul says to Titus, be sure that each of the older women are taught that these five characteristics should be characterizing their daily lives. As I read this list and describe these qualities, do a mental check up on how you are doing ladies.

v. 3 “...*the older women likewise, that they be*”:

1. “reverent in behavior”: We learned last year about how the godly, mature women were to **Live Holy in an Unholy World;**
2. “not slanderers”: They also were characterized by **Speaking Gracefully in a Graceless World;**
3. “not given to much wine”: The godly women also were visibly marked by **Disciplining (their) Appetites in an Undisciplined World;**
4. “teachers of good things”— v. 4: These qualities gave the older women a powerful platform to **Model Godliness in an Ungodly World;**
5. “that they admonish”: And, as the goal of their lives, these women were to make it a life long goal to be personally **Investing in others in a Detached World.**

Young Women of Godliness

Paul then asks Titus to address the younger ladies in the congregations. The younger women were to be pointed down a pathway that would lead to them becoming the godly, older women of great influence in Christ's church. To be that woman of influence, these were the seven characteristics God was looking for on your spiritual resume, Paul asks Titus to explain.

v. 4b *the young women:*

1. “to love their husbands”: The most powerful tool in God’s hands for a watching world is a band of godly wives who live out in their marriages, Christ's **Self-sacrificing Love in a Selfish World;**
2. “to love their children”, v. 5: Then these women continue as mothers who demonstrate Christ's **Nurturing Love in a Loveless World;**
3. “to be discreet”: The younger women who are in tune with the Lord also are **Focusing on God in a Foolish World;**
4. “chaste”: They seek to be **Pursuing Modesty in an Immodest World;**
5. “homemakers”: And, knowing the role God has given to them, they seek His well done good and faithful servants by **Pursuing Homemaking in a Hostile World;**
6. “good”: And all through life they are **Pursuing Kindness in a Harsh World;**

7. “obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed”: And finally, in step with the Spirit, and energized by grace they are **Pursuing Submission in a Rebellious World.**

Tomorrow’s Godly Men Start Today

Finally, Paul said that God put the spotlight on the next generation of leaders for Christ's church. The young men, who want to grow up to be the godly and mature servants of God must begin while they are young to cultivate these six qualities.

v. 6 “Likewise exhort the **young men**”:

1. “to be sober-minded”, v. 7: First in any godly man’s life is a firm resolve to **Live A Restrained Life In A Lust-Filled World;**
2. “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works”: Next, these men seek to **Become Representations of Christ In A Christ-less World;**
3. “in doctrine showing integrity”: Then is the constant desire to **Maintain Godly Purity In An Impure World;**
4. “reverence”: And the vigilant attitude of **Keeping A Singular Focus In A Blurred World;**
5. “incorruptibility”, v. 8: This means that God wants His servants to shine before our sin-darkened world by **Keeping an Incorruptible Life in a Decaying World;**
6. “sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you”. (NKJV):And finally, the whole reason God left His servants here was to go and “tell”, so godly young men are **Speaking God’s Words In A Godless World.**

What a plan God has presented to us in His Word; and what a responsibility each of us have to respond. Let’s stand for prayer and open our hearts to all that God wants us to be for His glory!

Persevering Hope

Please turn back to the next Titus 2 element we are studying this morning. At the end of v. 2, Paul described the godly, older men of the church as having persevering hope. This last quality is actually part of the trio “faith, hope, and love” that show up in most of Paul’s letters. Paul said that a spiritually healthy life, an eternally useful life would often show “healthy faith, healthy love, and persevering hope”.

God says that when His grace energizes our lives we have three clear character qualities:

- Sound in faith means that if we believe right, we’ll behave right.
- Sound in love means that when doctrine is not wrapped in love is useless to God in His plan for Christ's church.
- Sound in persevering hope means that we are willing to sacrifice the present for the promises of the future.

Paul told Titus that he was to teach believers how to “adorn” the doctrine of God. That is why Paul frequently introduces that sacred trio of “faith, hope, and love” to various New Testament assemblies. Even John at the end of the New Testament era emphasized those three truths that must be kept in balance..

As we grow in faith (sound doctrine) we must adorn it with hope and love.

When these three, sound faith, sound love, and persevering hope--operate in concert together, they result in a life, a marriage, a home, and a church filled with happiness, holiness and assurance. These three qualities present in a believer's life constitute the evidence, the litmus test, of a true Christian.

Finishing Hopefully In A Despairing World

The life lived in hope has always been one of the distinguishing qualities of God's servants. Peter speaks of this quality at the end of his life in his first letter. Turn there with me to I Peter 1:3-13. Listen to the beautiful hope-filled life we are to live before a watching, and often despairing world:

*1 Peter 1:3-13 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy **has begotten us again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.¹⁰ Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. ¹³ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, **and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;** NKJV*

The writer of Hebrews portrays the life of hope in chapter 11 as he profiled the faith set upon God's promises yet ahead, led those heroes of faith to a living hope.

But one of the most beautiful expressions of this persevering hope that we hold on to as we go through each lap, especially our final lap, is seen in Psalm 146. The source of strength to live in persevering hope is clearly seen in this majestic Psalm.

Psalm 146:1-10

Praise the Lord!

1 Praise the Lord, O my soul!

2 While I live I will praise the Lord;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

3 Do not put your trust in princes,

Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.

4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth;

In that very day his plans perish.

5 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help,

Whose hope is in the Lord his God,

1. v. 6 *Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them;*
2. *Who keeps truth forever,*
3. v. 7 *Who executes justice for the oppressed,*
4. *Who gives food to the hungry.*
5. *[Who] The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners.*
6. v. 8 *[Who] The Lord opens the eyes of the blind;*
7. *[Who] The Lord raises those who are bowed down;*
8. *[Who] The Lord loves the righteous.*
9. v. 9 *[Who] The Lord watches over the strangers;*
10. *[Who] He relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.*
11. v. 10 *[Who] The Lord shall reign forever—Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord! NKJV*

Sound in Perseverance

Hupomone means to wait patiently and endure triumphantly what ever needed for the goal. Believers with persevering hope hold on to the end, their desire to be God's servant is a stronger bond that the tug of the world can erode.

The opposite of enduring hope is when a believer gets their eyes off the hope laid up for them, quits, gives up the struggle, and backslides; all because they think it doesn't matter anymore.

If a man is complete in perseverance, this means that he goes all the way. He is focused on Christ's return. He doesn't turn back. God's Word warns that those who are not truly the Lord's turn away from Him. Listen to the Apostle John's warning:

"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19).

Jesus said that persevering hope would guard us, but those who do not 'keep themselves in the love of God' will slowly fall away and grow cold. Listen to Christ's warnings:

"Most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved" (Matthew 24:12-13).

Persevering Hope: Sacrifices

We live in a world that says we are to get what we deserve today. Our God says we await our reward coming in the future. The Scriptures tell us that the hope that God wants to see growing in the hearts and lives of His servants is so strong, that it prompts us to sacrifice anything necessary to wait for what God has ahead for us.

In Colossians 1:5 Paul says that our hope is “laid up” for us in Heaven. Literally that word (*apokeimai*) means “in store, reserved”. God says we have a possession held securely for us in His presence.

Peter expands this idea in I Peter 1:4 where we read, by calling our hope an “inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”.

The writer of Hebrews goes on to say that we are to actively reach out by faith and “laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil” (Heb. 6:18-19).

Hope for us, as believers, is a solid mooring in a safe and secure harbor. No storm can tear us away, no wind can blow us adrift, and no waves can dash us to destruction. Our souls are tied securely to a rope, the other end of which is tied to the very Throne of God.

The effect of such a hope is that we as believers will sacrifice in the present for what God has promised us in the future. We live in a world that teaches us from childhood to get what we want now, and not to wait. We have all heard the old adage to ‘not sacrifice the future on the altar of the immediate’. Yet that is what the world says every day to do.

As we mature in Christ our perspective changes. We increasingly learn to give up present comforts, immediate glories, and instant gratifications for a greater and enduring treasure. As all the world around us buys now and puts off payment until some later time, we are learning to pay now for what we wait to receive later. Grace-energized hope enables us to persevere, going against the tide of the world. We believe that we can endure like Moses, seeing our Invisible God by faith. Like Moses we forsake the present glories to get far greater and enduring possessions through Christ (Hebrews 11:24-27).

*“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; **for he was looking to the reward.** By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.”*

Moses sacrificed the present pleasures and possessions of Egypt for the future treasures of Heaven, and the presents delights of knowing God. What an example Moses is to all of us to have persevering hope. We like him need to be “looking for the reward” of God’s promises.

Paul said that trials and troubles of living for Christ in this world are “light and momentary” and that they produce an “eternal” reward (II Cor. 4:16-18) and that the struggles is “not worthy” of comparison to what we have ahead of us (Romans 8:18).

Persevering Hope: Waits

Paul takes that attitude of Moses to the churches of the Roman Empire. He told the saints at Philippi to always remember their real security came from Heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20). Each time we make choices prompted by grace-energized hope, Jesus said we lay up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Paul lived this hope-driven lifestyle to the end, even confessing that he was awaiting a crown that would never fade or rust (II Tim. 4:8).

Over 50 years ago, this hope-prompted life led Jim Elliott and four other missionary companions to give their lives in pursuit of Auca Indians for Christ. Jim had written earlier in his school days a motto that crystallizes

this grace-energized, persevering hope: “he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”⁸²

Becoming a Man of Persevering Hope

God asked Paul to begin a church-wide training curriculum that would encourage men who would persevere through hard times that always come in life, and then become models to other saints the triumphant hope that Christ provides. Especially as the woes and infirmities of old age beset their lives, these “older” men were to be radiating hope. That is grace-energized patience, and persevering hope.

These godly men were to face hardship and not quit, they were to wade through disappointments and not drown, and experience the loss of thwarted plans and desires and yet still say that Christ is sufficient. The grace-energized men were to persevere through growing physical weakness and find Christ's strength as their own, to find loneliness as a time when the Lord takes everyone else out of their lives so that He can be closest, and to enjoy the smile of God when others misunderstand, overlook, and don't appreciate or even remember their contributions.

As Paul confessed, the grace of God can give us such hope that we do not “lose heart” when life doesn't turn out as we planned. The supreme confidence of the persevering hope grace gives is that God Himself is actively at work to make ALL things that come in life work together for His good and glory (Romans 8:28).

God wants older men to finish well, as well as older women. Just as Paul confessed in II Tim. 4:7, so each of us should desire to finish the race with joy, with the grace-energized hope that keeps us looking unto Jesus to the end of the race!

⁸² Cited in Elisabeth Elliot *Shadow of the Almighty* (San Francisco: Harner & Row, 1979) p. 108

Living Hope for the End of Days— Walking Each Day with THE GOD You Can Know and Trust

Grace-energized, persevering hope is especially relevant to days in which we live. God wants hope-filled men and women walking through life side-by-side with hope-less worldlings, so that we can point those without hope to our hope in Christ.

In one of Christ's final messages, He tells us that the time period ahead of us called the end of days, is going to be so "hope-less"—that people actually will drop dead from heart failure as they see what is coming.

He then goes on to say that His children are to be different. Jesus wants you and me to be filled with hope.

Open with me to Jesus describing the End of Days in Luke 21; this is Christ's thumbnail or short version of the 22 chapters of the final book of the Bible called the book of the Revelation. There are fearful times coming to this planet. Listen to Jesus speak:

*Luke 21:25-27 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 "Now when these things begin to happen, **look up and lift up your heads**, because your redemption draws near."*

Persevering Hope or Panic Attacks

Jesus says that we are headed toward the end of days when people "expire". The word translated 'failing' (NKJV) is **apосуcho** which means that a person's 'breath pops out' or 'expires' because of complete fear. We often see that in earthquakes, fires, and hurricanes that many deaths come among the elderly with heart attacks.

But the end of days will see the ultimate panic attack coming; and many healthy humans will just expire for fear. Jesus only briefly described those days in the Gospels; the final word is the last book of the Bible.

The Book of Revelation is God's final word to mankind; it is also the most powerful book of the Bible. Nearly twenty years ago I began writing a book about living hope based on Biblical prophecy because I believed that the last book of the Bible is the most hope filled, hope inspiring, hope anchoring book in all of God's Word.

Each of us who are believers, saved, and members of Christ's family, needs *Living Hope for the End of Days*. We need to learn how to walk each day—with the God we can know personally and trust completely.

Life is hard, the world is sometimes bleak, and I often need help to go on against the flow of the world and seek God. May I give you the single most encouraging aspect of my spiritual life? Each day I get so recharged and renewed by God's Word that I can go out and face another day. How?

By spending time with the God who has left me a daily reminder of Who He is and what He is doing—that I can see and test and have my faith renewed!

This authenticating, verifying, faith building record God has left for us I call the Signature of God in the Book we call the Bible, God's Word—the Holy Scriptures.

Have you studied the signature of God lately? That is what I have poured into this year of 365 daily devotional studies taking all who will come through every word of the book of Revelation and outward to every other book in the Bible, all to lead you into what God offers—***Living Hope for the End of Days: Walking Each Day with THE GOD You Can Know and Trust***.

Why not join me for just one week's studies? This is all seven days of week four entitled, "Get Ready to Meet Jesus".

One of the most powerful truths to strengthen and guide you through life is found in **Jeremiah 1:12**.

The Creator and Redeemer, the Lord God Almighty who is the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe tells us that there is something He is very focused upon.

The Book you hold in your hands this evening, the Bible God's Word, is like none other—because God says, "I am watching over my Word—to perform it!" That is what I like to call the signature of God.

THE SIGNATURE OF GOD

Perhaps the greatest way that you and I can affirm the reality of God today is through Biblical Prophecy. The Scriptures are unique in that God has mapped out specific events in the future. Only the Living and True God of Heaven and Earth has ever dared to say, ***"Let me tell you the future"***.

In fact, He said that was the way you could know that He was real, and that you and I could place our faith and trust in Him.

God declares the future in His Word because He “watches over His Word to perform it!”

⇒ Jeremiah 1:12 Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.” NKJV

⇒ Jeremiah 1:12 The LORD said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.” NIV

⇒ Jeremiah 1:12 Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.” NASB

What is the simplest and yet most profound evidence the Bible offers concerning God’s reality?

It is prophecy fulfilled--the irrefutable verification reserved to the Scriptures alone.

Prophecy is the missing element in all other sacred scriptures of the world's religions; it is not to be found in the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Book of Mormon, the sayings of Buddha, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science).

By contrast prophecy comprises about one third of the Scriptures! And the vast majority all of prophecy centers on the nation of Israel. God has said that if we watch Israel we will see what He is going to do in the future

Prophecy Is The Test To Show Who Is God

God has left His signature, the proof that He is who He claims to be—in the form of prophecies (God explaining future events in clear details that can be verified). So the huge amount of prophetic verses in our Bible is a strong and comforting place to encourage our trusting God. As we begin open with me to Isaiah 42:5-9.

Only the One and Only True God can predict the future with absolute accuracy!

*Isaiah 42:5-9 Thus says God the Lord, **Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it:** 6 “I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. 8 **I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.** 9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; **Before they spring forth I tell you of them.**”*

Isaiah 48:17-18, 22 *Thus says the Lord, **your Redeemer**, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, Who teaches you to profit, **Who leads you by the way you should go.** 18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! **Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.** 22 "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked."*

One Huge Event On The Prophetic Horizon

A series of events described in detail 2,600 years ago has been murky, fuzzy and out of focus for all of those centuries until recently. Let me just briefly point out what God says. Turn with me to Ezekiel 36-39. These chapters describe what I like to call—

Ezekiel Chapter 36-37 describes the scattered Israelites as a pile of bones—dry and dead. Then the Lord sends forth a call, stirring the hearts of scattered Jewish people all over the world; their slow return back to the geographic area now called Israel; their rebirth as a sovereign nation called Israel, and the formation of an exceedingly great army.

This is followed by chapters 38-39 describing a war where a coalition of Islamic Nations led by Iran (all clearly described) join with Russia (also clearly defined) in a huge conflict that Bible scholars call the war of Gog and Magog.

To start with—for all the centuries since Ezekiel penned God's Word there was no regathered nation called Israel as is seeing coming back in Ezekiel 36-37.

And so, there was no Israel to be the target of the coalition of Islamic nations and Russia, from the time Ezekiel wrote (about 600 B.C.) until 1948. So simply stated, for 2,600 years—there was no nation of Israel for any nation to militarily attack!

Century after century of Bible teachers looked at these two chapters as so remote, so vague, so impossible. But then starting in the late 1800's people started talking about making a place for Jews to again live. The Scriptures slumbered along as God watched over His Word to perform it. Slowly it seems that Ezekiel 36-37 began to appear. And point by point, each of the details that Ezekiel saw in the distant past over 2,600 years ago fell into reality.

The Rebirth Of Israel

After Ezekiel's bones grew into a living breathing nation, God continued to watch over His Word and because Hitler struck with such savagery and incomprehensible carnage that the world was moved to do something. In 1948 the nations of the world united in the form of the UN, and voted to establish a homeland, a nation that was named Israel. In a short period of time—there was a nation called Israel that could be attacked militarily.

But then 50-plus years passed and Iran never seemed to join Russia in any way to march against Israel--until last year. Again the God who watches over His Word was waiting and directing the rulers of this world to do His bidding.

God has already described in detail what will happen in the future. Every time what He has declared will happen—happens, it is literally just what He said. But when examined closely, those involved make their own decisions and have no intention or awareness of following God's plan!

We live in the most written about period of time, from God's perspective. Fully 20% of the Bible is consumed with describing the events that God calls the end of days. These end of days are more described and detailed for us—than even the days when Christ walked the shores of Galilee.

The end times Biblical prophecies are powerful pictures of the God we can trust, Who has plans for the future. Here are just a few of His plans:

First, You Can Trust The God Who Promised Israel Would Return As A Nation In Ezekiel 36-37

In Ezekiel 36-37 the God who rules tells us that Israel will one day be reborn as a modern country, that Jews will pour back into the Holy Land after centuries of exile, that Jews will rebuild the "ancient ruins" and make the deserts bloom, that Israel will develop a vast and powerful military, and that Israel will become remarkably wealthy (Ezekiel 38:12-13).

These prophecies have all come true in our lifetime. They began to be fulfilled in the early 1900s, accelerated in 1948 and 1967, and continue to come true to this day.⁸³

Did the British politicians and early Zionists that fought for the establishment of the nation of Israel do all that because they wanted to or because God ruled over them? Both are true, of course. That is how God works. God was watching over His Word to fulfill it!

To benefit from the power of the God who rules, we are asked to see what He has done. Note with me the predictions found in Ezekiel 36-37 that have already come true. These are the famous prophetic chapters that foretell the future of Israel as a nation, that were written almost 600 years before Christ's birth!

1. The return of the Jews to the Holy Land after centuries in exile.

⁸³ Paraphrased from Joel Rosenberg blog 5.5.05 <http://joelrosenberg.blogspot.com/>

Ezekiel 36:10-11 "I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the **cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt**. 11 "I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; **I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings**. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 37:12, 21 "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, **I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel**. 21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the children of Israel **from among the nations**, wherever they have gone, and will gather them **from every side and bring them into their own land**;

Did the countless thousands of Jews all over the world (100 nations and counting) get up one morning and each decide to obey God's Word that said they would return? No they just had a longing to be safe, to be free, to have a land of their own—and in all that they obeyed the God who rules over the nations by watching over His Word to fulfill it!

2. **The rebuilding of the ancient ruins in Israel.**

Ezekiel 36:36 "Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have **rebuilt the ruined places** and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it."

Did God make the early settlers name their cities after the Biblical sites they were building upon? No, they wanted to tie themselves to the past, their heritage and God's Word! God was watching over His Word to fulfill it!

3. **The re-blossoming of desolate, desert lands to produce abundant food, fruit and foliage**

Ezekiel 36:8-9, 30, 33-35 "But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall **shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit** to My people Israel, for they are about to come.9 "For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and **you shall be tilled and sown**. 30 "And I will **multiply the fruit** of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. 33 'Thus says the Lord God: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the **ruins shall be rebuilt**.34 "The **desolate land shall be tilled** instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by.35 "So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become **like the garden of Eden**; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'

Did those agricultural engineers, irrigation pioneers, and desert scientists devote their lives to Israel in its wasteland condition just to make Ezekiel come true? No. God was watching over His Word to fulfill it! Israel supplies billions of dollars of fresh fruit and flowers to Europe and the Arab world from land that was once absolutely desolate.

4. The creation of an "exceedingly great army".

Ezekiel 37:10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Did the atomic scientists, the military weapons engineers and the businessmen that listened to them all want to fulfill Ezekiel? No, they were trying to protect themselves, defend themselves and make a living. But in the process became the third or fourth most powerful military in the world when the atomic weaponry is factored in. God was watching over His Word to fulfill it!

Second, You Can Trust The God Who Declares an Anti-Israeli Coalition Described In Ezekiel 38-39 will Attack a nation called Israel

Twenty six hundred years ago, the prophet Ezekiel predicted clues to identify when this would happen,

*"After many days you will be summoned; **in the latter years** you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them."* (Ezek.38:8 NAS)

Note this would happen in "the latter years" after the Israelites were scattered throughout the world and the land of Israel became a desolation for a long time. History is witness to all of this.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ **Who Is Coming Against Israel?** Ezekiel 38:1-6 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,² "Son of man, set your face against **Gog, of the land of Magog**, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him,³ "and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.⁴ "I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.⁵ "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet;⁶ "Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you.

In Ezekiel 38:1-6, the Hebrew prophet gives a list of obscure names that will form a united coalition. As I read these six verses listen to the historic records, geographic locations, and modern day countries that reside in those exact places described—and how they are all slowly aligning themselves against Israel.

- **Gog** is described as being "of the land of Magog" and as the "prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal." Most Bible scholars believe Gog is not a name but a title, like Pharaoh or Czar. He is a dictator who will hatch an "evil plan" (38:10).
- **Magog** = Leading Bible scholars say this is Russia and republics of the former Soviet Union. The first century Roman historian [Josephus](#) said the "Magogites" were the peoples whom the Greeks called "Scythians." [Scythians](#) were a fierce, blood-thirsty civilization that settled north of the Baltic Sea in [what is now Russia and the European republics of the former USSR](#). The first century historian Josephus wrote in his classic work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, that the "Magogites" are the people that the Greeks refer to as "Scythians." Study the history of the ancient Scythians and you will quickly discover that these were a brutal and bloodthirsty people that settled north of the Black Sea in the area we now call Russia and the former Soviet republics. In Moscow the State Historical Museum on Red Square has numerous Scythian artifacts prominently displayed. Russia is proud of its Scythian tradition, and this helps us pinpoint Russia as the modern country to which Ezekiel was referring.
- **Rosh** = Russia. True, Ezekiel never uses the word Russia. Instead, he says a dictator referred to as "Gog" will arise in the land of "Magog," and will be the "prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal." Other Bible scholars note that when Ezekiel mentions "Rosh" he is using the root word for Russia. Others believe "Meshech" refers to Moscow and "Tubal" refers to the Tubal River in Siberia and the Siberian city of Tobolsk.

Numerous leading Bible scholars agree that Russia will certainly be the leader of the anti-Israel coalition in what Ezekiel describes as "the last days."

- **Meshech** = Some Bible scholars say this is Moscow, others believe it refers to Turkey
- **Tubal** = Some Bible scholars say this refers to the city/region of Tobolsk in Russia along the Tobol River; others say it refers to a section of modern-day Turkey. (Interestingly, in 1964, massive reserves of oil and gas were discovered in the Tobolsk region of Siberia and people now refer to the region as the ["energy center of Russia."](#))
- **Persia** = This was the [official name of Iran](#) until 1935
- **Cush** = Sudan and Ethiopia
- **Put** = Libya, and possibly Algeria and Tunisia
- **Gomer** = Turkey, but also possibly Germany and Austria
- **Beth-togarmah** = Armenia and the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia

"Many peoples with you" who will attack along **"the mountains of Israel"** = Other countries will be involved in the coalition as well, notably countries that border the mountains of Israel. This includes Lebanon, Syria and possibly Jordan.

Third, trust The God Who Declares The Destruction Of The Entire Russian, Iranian, Syria, Lebanese and Other Islamic Military Forces who Will Come "Like A Storm" Against Israel

*Ezekiel 38:5,9, 18-22 "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 9 "You will ascend, **coming like a storm**, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you." 18 "And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord God, **"that My fury will show in My face.** 19 "For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel,20 'so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.'21 "I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother.22 "And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.*

Iran Threatens Israel

Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iranian leaders have uttered a seemingly endless series of curses against Israel, calling the Jewish people evil, insisting that the Holocaust never happened, and threatening to wipe Israel "off the map."

AHMADINEJAD SAYS ISRAEL WILL SOON DISAPPEAR

Monday, June 2, 2008

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad predicted that Muslims would uproot "satanic powers" and reaffirmed his prediction that the Jewish state will soon be wiped off the map, the Agence France-Presse news agency reported Monday.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad predicted on Monday that Muslims would uproot "satanic powers" and repeated his controversial belief that Israel will soon disappear, the Mehr news agency reported.

"I must announce that the Zionist regime (Israel), with a 60-year record of genocide, plunder, invasion and betrayal is about to die and will soon be erased from the geographical scene," Ahmadinejad said.

"Today, the time for the fall of the satanic power of the United States has come and the countdown to the annihilation of the emperor of power and wealth has started."

The White House quickly dismissed Ahmadinejad's latest broadside against Israel and accused him of having "total disregard" for the Iranian people's hopes and needs.

Since taking the presidency in August 2005, the Iranian president has repeatedly provoked international outrage by predicting Israel is doomed to disappear.

"I tell you that with the unity and awareness of all the Islamic countries all the satanic powers will soon be destroyed," he said to a group of foreign visitors ahead of the 19th anniversary of the death of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Ahmadinejad also again expressed his apocalyptic vision that tyranny in the world be abolished by the return to earth of the Mahdi, the 12th imam of Shiite Islam, alongside great religious figures including Jesus Christ.

"With the appearance of the promised saviour... and his companions such as Jesus Christ, tyranny will be soon be eradicated in the world."

Ahmadinejad has always been a devotee of the Mahdi, who Shiites believe disappeared more than a thousand years ago and who will return one day to usher in a new era of peace and harmony.

His emphasis on the Mahdi has been a cause of controversy inside Iran with critics saying he would be better solving bread-and-butter domestic problems rather than talking about Iran's divine responsibility.

When Ezekiel lists Persia in 38:5 (the name of Iran up until 1935) he was recording the words of the God who sees and knows exactly what will happen in the future. Amazingly today's news bears witness to Persia (Iran's) deep hatred of Israel.

Interestingly enough, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad used the same word that God used in his speech in April 2006:

"Like it or not, the Zionist regime is heading toward annihilation," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said at the opening of a conference in support of the Palestinians. "The Zionist regime is a rotten, dried tree that will be *eliminated by one storm*."⁸⁵

Ezekiel 38:9 specifically says that God's enemies will "come like a storm" to destroy Israel, but are destroyed by a supernatural earthquake and firestorm unleashed by God Himself.

In September [2005], when Ahmadinejad took the podium to address the United Nations in New York City, he felt surrounded by light. It wasn't the stage lighting, he said. It was a light from heaven.

⁸⁵ http://www.smb.com.au/news/world/ahmadinejad_israel_a_rotten_dried_tree/2006/04/15/1144521534107.html

Ahmadinejad's "vision" at the United Nations could be dismissed as pure political posturing if it weren't for a string of similar statements and actions that clearly suggest he believes he is destined to bring about the return of the Shiite messiah. The mystical 12th imam, who is venerated by many in Iran, disappeared as a child in the year 941. Shiite Muslims believe he will return and rule for seven years in perfect justice.⁸⁶

"While it may be tempting to some to dismiss such language as overly dramatic, it is worth keeping in mind that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has told colleagues that he believes the end of the world is just two or three years away. He believes that the way to hasten the coming of the Islamic Messiah known as the "Twelfth Imam" or the "Mahdi" is to launch a global jihad to destroy the Jews of Israel and the Christians of the United States. What's more, Ahmadinejad is feverishly trying to build, buy or steal the nuclear weapons to bring his Shiite end times beliefs to fulfillment."⁸⁷

What are you Begging God for?

When Jesus explained the entire scope of end times events, He paused and concluded with two commands in v. 36 for us who listen to Him. We can learn what Jesus said were our responsibilities as believers (Luke 21:29–38)

"Watch therefore, and pray always..." (Luke 21:36)

Pray is the word for beg, implore and beseech, it is an intense word!

Jesus revealed that all of the magnificent buildings of Herod would become rubble. . . and that nothing on earth ever lasts; but Jesus came to His disciples with an offer of something they could become a part of that never ends.

What are you intensely asking (begging) God to be doing through your life that will last forever?

Christ said here is something anyone in my family can do! Here is what you do that I love, and I make your investments in these areas last forever. Jesus said:

- **I collect all of your prayers - PRAY!** Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. (KJV)
- **I multiply sacrificial gifts - GIVE!** Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. (KJV) **do rest**

⁸⁶ <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2006/1/23/173442.shtml?s=Ih>

⁸⁷ Joel Rosenburg blog, 7/23/06

- **I count souls you lead to me - WIN!** Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. 1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. (KJV) **1st Thessalonians 2.19**
- **I remember humble service - SERVE!** Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. (KJV) **do rest**
- **I love missionaries that do outreach - GO!** Matthew 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. (KJV)

To obey Jesus we must "watch and pray". That is how we can resist the temptations that lure us. Then we will be ready when our Lord returns.

RUSSIA ARMS IRAN

Just a few days after Ahmadinejad's inflammatory remarks about Israel, these headlines appeared around the world:

- Iran and Russia in \$1 Billion Arms Deal—Aljazeera.Net (12/2/05)
- Moscow Inks Arms Deal with Tehran—*Moscow Times* (12/5/05)
- Russia Agrees to Sell Missiles to Iran—Associated Press (12/5/05)

THE LENS OF SCRIPTURE (These sections drawn from various blogs by Joel Rosenberg blog 5.5.05)

Russia's enormous military sales to Iran, its sales of nuclear technology to Iran, and the training of more than 1,000 Iranian nuclear scientists—looks so much like chapters 38 and 39 of the Book of Ezekiel. God describes a Gog or a dictator "who would one day take over Russia, form an alliance with Iran and the radical Islamic world, and take up arms against a modern State of Israel." Is Ezekiel 38-39 at the end of the seven year Tribulation just before the Millennium? I don't think so, if you read carefully the text there is quite a long period of time after this attack that doesn't square with Armageddon and Christ's 2nd coming immediately following. ¹

WHAT IS GOG'S PLAN?

- 38:7 – Gog will build a military coalition and "be prepared" to strike
- 38:8 – Gog will deploy the coalition against Israel
- 39:9 – Gog will use overwhelming force against Israel; he and his coalition will "come like a storm....like a cloud covering the land"

BUT WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN?

- 38:2 – The Lord God will bring judgment upon the enemies of Israel, beginning with Gog, the dictator of Russia;
- 38:20 – The Lord will trigger a massive earthquake in which “**all** the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence”;
- 38:21 – The Lord will turn Gog’s forces against one another;
- 38:22 – The Lord will subject Gog’s coalition forces to: pestilence, blood, torrential rains, hailstones, fire from heaven;
- 39:6 – The Lord will “ send fire upon Magog” itself and others;
- 39:9 – Israel will capture her enemies weapons and burn them for 7 years;
- 39:12 – It will taken 7 full months to bury all the bodies of Israel's slain enemies;
- 39:17-20 – Birds and beast will feast on the bodies of Israel's slain enemies.

WHEN WILL GOD DO THIS?

- 38:8 – When Israel has become a country again and Jews will be regathered to the Holy Land;
- 38:11, 14 – “My people Israel are living securely” before the “War of Gog and Magog”;
- 38:12-13 – Israel will have economic prosperity;
- 38:16 – “It will come about ***in the last days***” (before the return of Christ). **NOTE:** The Scriptures are not clear as to whether this war will happen before or after the Rapture of the Church.

WHY

- 39:21 – “I shall set My glory among the nations; and **all** the nations will see My judgment”;
- 39:22 – “the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God”;39:29 – “I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel”

In Genesis 12:1-3, the Lord is crystal clear that He will bless those who bless Israel, and curse those who curse Israel.

In Ezekiel 38-39, God specifically vowed to subject the leaders and military forces of Iran (among other enemies of Israel) to a massive earthquake, torrential rains, killer hailstorms, rampant pandemic diseases, and even hellfire and brimstone.

AN ISLAMIC CATAclysm

An event is coming and God has described it in great detail--that will strike the entire Middle East with death, destruction, earthquakes and supernatural events. That event is a Russian-Iranian led military attack on the nation of Israel.

If you read Ezekiel 38-39 you will find that God is describing how Russia and Iran form a military alliance with Lebanon, Syria and a group of other Middle East countries; and then set out to destroy Israel in what Ezekiel described as the last days.

Sit back and think, what fills the news reports these days? This past summer it was how Iran was making the mountains of Lebanon a virtual arsenal of Iranian weapons to be

used in attacks against Israel. Now almost every day we hear another detail of how Russia and Iran are working together on everything from advanced missiles to atomic weapon production.

You need to ask yourself as you look into God's Word ...is it just a coincidence? Or are we watching Ezekiel 38-39 unfold before our eyes? Time will tell as God watches over His Word to fulfill it!

What lies ahead on the prophetic landscape as far as evangelism and missionary work in the Middle East? The clear word from God is that what will happen in an attack upon Israel will be a powerful message to the entire world that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true and living Son of God.

39:21 – “I shall set My glory among the nations; and **all** the nations will see My judgment”

39:22 – “the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God”

39:29 – “I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel”

That said, it is worth keeping this intriguing thought in mind. More than two millennia ago, Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37 foretold the dramatic rebirth of modern State of Israel in the last days of history and described how Jews would pour back into the Holy Land after centuries of living in exile. Remarkably, these prophecies have come to pass in our lifetime. Is it really inconceivable, then, that the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 and 39 could happen soon? Maybe not. Time will tell.

Here is one fascinating possibility: if this Russian-Iranian invasion of Israel happens before Armageddon it could happen any day now. And when God stops the Russians and Iranian armies dead in their tracks, the entire world will be amazed—*but the world of Islam will be stunned, shaken to the core*—and what may be the greatest opening among any people will take place.

Is this event close at hand? Only God knows. But what is being said in the news is chilling if not prophetic!

We don't know when this Iranian-Russian invasion takes place; we just know that God says it will and that it will end in the catastrophic defeat of the armies of Iran and Russia. The results God says will get the attention of the entire world upon the True and Living God we know and serve.

How to Raise Godly Young Men: Grace Energized Men are Encouraged to Restrained Living in an Unrestrained World Titus 2:6

If we gathered every young man in the church to give them the most important Biblical lesson they would ever get—what would that lesson be?

If we had only one shot at preparing a class to teach young Christian men, that would prepare them for a life of blessing, a life of spiritual influence, and show them the pathway to spiritual maturity—what would be the topics we shared?

These are the types of questions that Sunday School teachers, youth workers, and pastors often ponder.

The good news today is, that God already thought of those questions. He actually moved upon Paul the Apostle's heart and poured out the Holy Spirit through Paul's mind into a letter. God has a wonderful plan for Christ's Church.

As we open to Titus 2, we see what He wrote down 2,000 years ago. This is the plan God has energized men and women to accomplish as His work, in every part of this world, against every obstacle, for every generation. The Lord wants us:

Training Tomorrow's Godly Men Today

God's plan is all about personal, face-to-face training.

Just as a baby needs nurturing, feeding, protection, and care—so every person born into God's family is to be nurtured, fed, trained, and cared for by matured believers until they grow enough to care for another.

Just as a baby that never grows and matures is considered sick, so any believer that doesn't grow and mature is also sick.

But in the church often people are physically well and mature, yet if we could see them spiritually they are stunted, weak, under-developed, and sick.

What was God's plan for this need of spiritual nurture? He called the plan "making disciples", and He made that the one goal for everyone in His family.

If you understand the Titus 2 model, you understand that this was the simple discipleship curriculum of the early church. Early missionary pioneers used this method. They took only the Scriptures and trained the believers from God's Word in what God expected. They defined, explained, and then applied these simple lessons from Titus 2.

This is a letter, written to a local church-planting, missionary pastor named Titus, Paul wrote down the plan God had for every person that claimed Christ as Lord and Savior. There was one quality that is commanded as a characteristic of every believer in Christ's church.. Because God asks for these qualities it means that He will enable us by His grace to *master every area of our life* to make our lives pleasing in His sight.

Is Every Area of My Life Mastered by Christ?

In our passage today, God shines the spotlight on the next generation of leaders for Christ's church. Young men, who will grow up as the godly and mature servants of God, must begin to cultivate these six qualities. Let's read them again in Titus 2:6-7.

Here is God's plan for each young man in the church, and the questions that each young man needs to be asked:

v. 6 "Likewise exhort the **young men**":

7. "to be sober-minded":
 - Ask them: Do you have a firm resolve to **Live a Restrained Life in an Unrestrained World?**
8. v. 7 "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works":
 - Ask them: Do you seek to **Become Representations of Christ In A Christ-less World?**
9. "in doctrine showing integrity":
 - Ask them: Do you have a constant desire to **Maintain Godly Purity In An Impure World?**
10. "reverence":
 - Ask them: Do you have the vigilant attitude of **Keeping A Singular Focus In A Blurred World?**
11. "incorruptibility":
 - Ask them: Do you know God wants you to shine before our sin-darkened world by **Keeping an Incorruptible Life in a Decaying World?**
12. v. 8 "sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you". (NKJV):
 - Ask them: Do you know the reason God left you here was to go and "tell", so are you **Speaking God's Words In A Godless World?**

What God Wants in Every Believer

This is the only universal character quality of this list. In the space of just six verses in Titus Paul declares this quality God desires is stated as part of the life of faith in Christ's church.

- Titus 2:2 that the older men be sober, reverent, **temperate**⁸⁸ [4998 *sophron*, adj.] sound in faith, in love, in patience; NKJV
- Titus 2:4 that they **admonish**⁸⁹ (4994 *sophonidzo* verb 1x) the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, NKJV

⁸⁸ This word (Strong's number 4998 *sophron*: of a sound mind, sane, in one's senses; curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate) is an adjective that occurs 4x in the New Testament:

⁸⁹ We find this same word as an action verb (4994 *sophonidzo* verb 1x) describing the need for the older, godly grace-energized women to exhort earnestly the younger women by "restoring them to their senses so they moderate control curb their minds"

- Titus 2:5 [younger women] **to be discreet** (4998), chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. NKJV
- Titus 2:6 Likewise exhort the young men to **be sober-minded** [4993 *sophroneo*], NKJV; the key to survival in a wild and distracting world.
- Titus 1:8 [an elder] but hospitable, a lover of what is good, **sober-minded** (4998), just, holy, self-controlled, NKJV
- I Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, **sober-minded** (4998), of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; NKJV

The Greek word God inspires Paul to write is *sophron* translated in the New Testament as “discreet, sensible, or self-controlled”. The meaning of this word is vital to our spiritual lives. God is asking for believers to desire and seek by His grace to be:

“...serious about spiritual things; not being known as a clown; living a disciplined life: self-controlled and not addicted to anything; in control of your choices, knowing your priorities; serious about life; temperate and avoiding excesses; a clarity of thought that leads to an orderly life.”⁹⁰

The universal application is that God wants all of us to be: serious about spiritual things; and God Wants all of us restoring others to serious spiritual living.

Becoming a Godly Young Man

They were to be taught to restrain their appetites, their minds, their bodies, their words, their habits. In everything they were to be living a restrained life in the midst of an un-restrained world.

When Paul addressed the younger men in the church of the first century, he was talking to a world so much like our own.

Young men of Paul’s day were immersed in a self-seeking, lust-feeding culture.

When they came to Christ they had to go on living in that world. To make it through life without getting neutralized, defeated, and sidelined, Paul starts with the key to godly living.

For a believing husband, this quality of self-restraint learned as a young man, leads to a mutual submission that characterizes a godly, love prompted marriage and home. Each building block of a godly husband and father, including a self-sacrificing spirit, a loving and tender tongue, and a compassionate heart—all flow from self-restraint. As Thomas Brooks used to say, “Example is the most powerful rhetoric” and so godly men discover in their marriages and homes energized by God’s grace.

Restrained living was the single character quality God wanted in every level of His Church. This is the only lesson all four groups, that make up everyone in the church, must be taught. This is the only common denominator that describes what God expects from everyone.

Titus 2:12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should **live soberly** [4995 *sophron*]⁹¹, righteously, and godly in the present age, NKJV Grace teaches this serious spiritual life.

⁹⁰ These definitions are from MacArthur, *Shepherdology: A Master Plan for Church Leadership*, Panorama City, CA: Masters Fellowship, 1989.

⁹¹ This same word is found as an adverb (4996 *sophronos* adverb 1x: ‘with sound mind, soberly, temperately, discreetly’) further down in this chapter

- God says that His grace-energizes us into being serious about spiritual things;
- His grace teaches us how to live a disciplined life: which means self-controlled and not addicted to anything;
- Believers energized by God’s grace are in control of their choices, seeking out God’s priorities;
- God wants us serious about life, temperate, and avoiding excesses;
- God’s grace gives us a clarity of thought that leads to an orderly life;
- His grace leads us to thinking through the Philippians 4:8 grid.

What God asks for always comes with the power to accomplish. So, older men, older women, younger women, and younger men are all to have this grace-energized restraint. An actual form of this word is used in the sections addressed to each of these groups within Christ's church.

So, in God’s plan, the first and most vital lesson every man needs to get started in a life of self-restraint. This first element was the way the leaders of tomorrow prepared for godly living today.

But before we analyze the complete portrait of this character quality God seeks, look at the way it was to be communicated. The method of communicating this self-restrained, grace-energized, self-controlled life style is amazing.

Of all the words of this verse, the most amazing word is the description of how to train young men. Paul says God wants us to “exhort” the young men.

We All Need to Learn How to Encourage Others

Look at the tone of discipleship classes for young men. Paul says not to force self-restraint, not to drive them into sensible behavior—no, he says Titus “encourage” them.

The word encourage (found in 2:6, 15 as *parakaleo*) is a form of the word used as the Name of the Holy Spirit, when He is shown as our “Comforter”. This form of encouragement in the church is to be through a close relationship of personal exhortation that encourages another believer to lead a godly life.

It would be proper to translate this word as “I beg you, please, and urge you to...” and that tone of discipleship towards godliness is the manner Titus was taught to train up leaders in the church. Men and women, boys and girls were to be ministered to with love in God’s plan. A tender, humble, and kind urging to lead a Christ-like life was the plan.

Never was the Lord asking His people to be domineering or demanding. God is the source of authority and He can chasten at will, but we His servants are to train godliness in kind exhortations. God knows that believers would respond to loving guidance, but resist the opposite.

v. 6 “Likewise exhort the young men: to be sober-minded...”

God declares that every believer is to be in a constant cultivation of self-control, moderation, sensible behavior, and restraining their flesh. God stresses the importance of this chosen discipline in our lives by the repeated stressing of this characteristic. This word is also similar the word describing the Spirit prompted fruit called “sensible” in Galatians 5:23.

If you are a youth worker, a Sunday School teacher, a parent, grandparent or just love to be around young people—always remember that God wants us to act like the Holy Spirit and be characterized as comforters, encouragers, those who always point others in the right direction and help them along.

Because of the tendency of young men to be impulsive and volatile God points to the priority of self-control. When God can give His agenda, here it is--this quality is of first importance for young men. Probably this is the hardest quality for young men, and the greatest struggle.

As God said in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, the benefits of surrendering to the Lord's control last a lifetime! Young men who never learn this godly restraint grow into selfish husbands, and abusive dads. Unrestrained flesh drives emotions into a frenzy, enflames anger, and spreads dissatisfaction to every corner of a man's life. A life under control is very secure.

- Paul reminded the saints of Corinth: “Everyone who competes in the games **exercises self-control in all things**; They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable”. Therefore, I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:25–27).
- Paul warned his young friend Timothy to “flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).
- Peter commanded all young men to “be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

God is looking to train a generation of grace-energized, self-restrained men to lead and model Christ's righteousness in an unrestrained and intoxicated world. God wants men who do not succumb to worldly influences that dull their mind. Any desire, unrestrained by God's grace can become an intoxicating idol. Things as harmless as: comfort, convenience, security, work, sports, and amusements—unrestrained by God's grace, can become as deadly and powerful as addictions to alcohol, drugs, and sex.

That is exactly what Peter said when he used the very same word Paul used in Titus 2:2 when he called for grace-energized men of temperance. We are looking at the first word used by God to described the grace-energized older men of the faith in Titus 2:2—temperate.

Peter, writing near the end of his earthly ministry explained that we as God's people, are called to be separate in mind from those who are not God's, holy-minded in an unholy thinking world, living in each generation of Christ's Church--according to the standards of our High and only King Jesus.

A Balanced Man

The balanced man of Titus 2 would be someone if you saw them around at work or church would be one of those ‘cool, calm, and collected’ types. They have a solid Biblical orientation that keeps them on even keel emotionally and spiritually. They know God is ruling all things from the galaxies down to their little world.

Just briefly, listen to what I found by searching dozens of books on this word, and finding what many have said about this word through the centuries:

- ***This young man is learning*** what is worth living for, he invests his time, money, and strength carefully, living by priority rather than the moment—and has become contented with fewer and simpler things.

- ***This young man is learning*** how to exercise appropriate emphasis upon the priorities he has concluded are his before God.
- ***This young man is learning*** to not give in to overindulgence, knowing what God's Word that the pleasures gleaned from self-indulgence cost far more than they are worth.
- ***This young man is learning*** mental sobriety exhibited in self-restraint, a freedom from the debilitations of rash decisions, words and behavior, as well as being stable, circumspect, and clear-thinking.
- ***This young man is learning*** to be in charge of his priorities, is steadfast, morally decisive, and not under the sway of the various allurements of the world, his flesh, and the devil.
- ***This young man is learning*** to not be controlled by outside circumstances but directed by inward convictions. In English we would say he is level-headed, clear-minded, well-balanced, and unwavering.
- In short, ***this young man is learning*** to live what Paul calls for ten times in the pastoral epistles, he is sober-minded just as we also see in the qualifications for a pastor in (1 Tim. 3:2). Titus 2:2's grace-energized well-balanced men are spiritually mature members of the church.

Extra Materials:

New Testament Pictures of Sober-Mindedness

This Greek word for “sober-minded” in v.6 is used 6x in the Bible. Join me in a quick survey of all six times this word is used in God's Word and the context for each.

1. Mark 5:15 Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and **in his right mind** [4993 sophroneo]. And they were afraid. NKJV
 - Here a demonized man is radically changed, and goes from wild, unrestrained, dangerous behavior—to a meek and quiet servant of God. That is just what salvation does to each of us.
2. Luke 8:35 Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and **in his right mind** [4993 sophroneo]. And they were afraid. NKJV
3. Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but **to think soberly** [4993 sophroneo], as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. NKJV
 - To capture the sense of this verse it helps to put in the word ‘estimate’ then it would say: “Don’t overestimate yourself (huperphroneo ‘super-think’) beyond a true estimate, but estimate yourself with a proper estimate”.
 - We need to have a proper view of our self that is honest and accurate. We should realistically and Biblically view our strengths, weaknesses, God-given talents and all of our human deficiencies. After we come to an accurate appraisal of who we are and how God made us, we should see our place and purpose in God’s program. The problem we face is either we think we are better (pride and conceit) or worst (self-depreciation and self-critical).
4. 2 Corinthians 5:13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are **of sound mind** [4993 sophroneo], it is for you. NKJV
5. Titus 2:6 Likewise exhort the young men to **be sober-minded** [4993 sophroneo], NKJV
6. 1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore **be serious** [4993 sophroneo] and watchful in your prayers. NKJV
 - Peter says, especially as we who know what the end of the world will be like—we must exhibit godly restraint from any excessive behavior. Some believers go overboard with prophecy, they get unbalanced and build a bunker to hide in, or set dates, or other wild claims that make people actually turn away from the Lord. If you could see the books I have in my library, written by earnest believers that make claims that obviously were not accurate, to their embarrassment and ours.
 - The Greek word for a person who is not sober minded is the word “mania” and describes a ‘frenzied madness’. Believers are to be the most level headed, calm thinking, careful behaving people in the world because we have the grace of God empowering our lives and guarding our minds.
 - Peter’s call to sober minded behavior is in addition to the ten other times Paul call for this quality just in the Pastoral Epistles of I & II Timothy and Titus. The wonderful emphasis Peter makes is for

all of us. Because we know what is coming, and how terrible life will become on this world, we are to be “watchful in our prayers”. The lesson is that a confused mind leads to confused prayers. A grace-restrained life leads to grace-energized prayers. The wonderful Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest translated this verse as: “Be calm and collected in spirit with a view to giving yourself to prayer.”

God Wants Us Regaining a Confident Mind

This verse was Paul’s strong encouragement to him in his struggle.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a **sound mind** [4995 *sophronismos*]⁹². NKJV: God gives a sound mind!

Even a casual reading of II Timothy 1:4-8 leads us to see that Timothy was fearful, timid, felt worthless even to the point of tears, and even struggled with being ‘ashamed’ of his ministry for the Lord.

Note that Paul does not harshly rebuke him, but gently reminds him of many things. He tells Timothy he has nothing to be ashamed of. He had a great upbringing though his father didn’t help, his mother and grandmother were godly (II Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). Paul reminds Timothy of his special position as a choice servant of the Lord, personally trained (Acts 16:3) with a special gifting (II Timothy 1:6). In short Paul says there is no reason that Timothy should be timid and fearful—yet he was!

Timothy appears to have a life-long need for encouragement to be bold and go on serving the Lord. It is very possible that the stomach problems he struggled with (I Timothy 5:23) were directly tied to his emotional problems of a fearful and timid personality.

If you are a person that feels uncomfortable around people, if you draw back from people who reach out to you, if you feel inferior to others, and you are afraid of always saying the wrong thing so that people dislike you—then welcome to the club.

One of the greatest pastors and servants of the Lord of all time was so much like you. Timothy, son-in-the-faith to Paul, servant-of-the-Lord to the largest church of the New Testament world was just like you. Paul does not chastise him, scold him, rebuke him harshly, or say that he was unspiritual. Rather, Paul says give your mind back to Christ's control each time you start to fear.

The fear, the discomfort, the feelings of inferiority and shame that Timothy felt were just part of living inside a fallen body, with flesh-influenced minds and emotions. The solution was to make a conscious choice by faith to keep surrendering his mind back under Christ's control. Paul way saying--

- Timothy, God’s grace can energize your mind to understand who you are in Christ;
- Timothy, His grace teaches your mind to live a disciplined life: which means self-controlled and not addicted to anything including fear and timidity.
- Timothy, believers energized by God’s grace are in control of their choices, seeking out God’s priorities which include fearing not;

Do you see the point? The one who gets your mind gets it all. Your mind is the prize! Everything else is just the scraps.

⁹² Again we find this word in a noun form with another shade of meaning (4995 *sophronismos* noun/masc. 1x: ‘an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind, to moderation and self-control; self-control, moderation’) as Paul encourages Timothy his son in the faith. Timothy exhibited a problem many believers struggle with: he was timid and fearful.

The battle is for our minds. Satan is seeking to steal the minds of God's children.

Renewing a God-Controlled Mind

Your mind is the key to knowing God. Only a mind stayed on the Lord can have perfect peace. A mind devoted to Christ is the road to God's plan for your life!

God has a will for your mind and that is for your mind to be given to the pursuit of God, His Kingdom, His Word, and His Christ!

- How do we bring our minds into captivity?
- How do we fix our eyes on Jesus?
- How do we discipline our minds for godliness?

Probably the first and most powerful way to do all that is to put on tight, our helmet of salvation.

Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift given to him. We aren't sure what exactly it was, it might have been faith, or the teaching gifts of a pastor. But it was miraculous and came by the laying on of Paul's hands, from God.

But this evening we will learn about a miraculous gift we must stir. That gift also came the instant that God laid His Hands upon us. And that gift is our salvation.

The best way to get your mind back under God's control is to think the truth. The helmet that we are to wear as believers is the helmet of what? Salvation. Pull on the straps and fasten tight your helmet of salvation. Surrender again your mind to God's control. Energized by grace, allow God's truth to saturate your mind and see what He can do with you.

4997 *sophrosune* (noun/fem. 3x) soundness of mind; self-control, sobriety; the mark of a godly woman.

1. Acts 26:25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and **reason** [4997 *sophrosune*, noun/fem. 3x]. NKJV
2. 1 Timothy 2:9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and **moderation** [4997 *sophrosune*, noun/fem. 3x], not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, NKJV DRESS IN A GOD-CONTROLLED WAY
3. 1 Timothy 2:15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with **self-control** [4997 *sophrosune*, noun/fem. 3x]. NKJV LIVE IN A GOD-CONTROLLED WAY

In a world that often yields to wild thinking, godly men and women must be sober-minded. They have..

A Balanced View of Troubles

Another strength of a grace-energized man is his emotional stability. God's Word makes it clear that every believer will go through times in life marked by distorted thought, blurred thinking, and temporary confusion. Part of the fall is living in a fallen body with a mind that needs to be often renewed. Usually these confusing

times of blurred thoughts come when our lives get piled high with problems, troubles, unexpected crises or just plain exhaustion.

When ever you face confusing times of blurred thinking remember Elijah. Confusion reigned in his life and God recorded two amazing details in the New Testament that should always strengthen us in similar times:

- Elijah was one of the mightiest saints in God's Word (he was raptured to Heaven without seeing death, he came back to stand with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration, and he is billed as one of the greatest examples of faith-filled praying in step with God's Spirit.
- Elijah was just like us New Testament saints. Yes, in James 5:17, the pastor of the first New Testament church in Jerusalem, our Lord's own brother James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said that Elijah was a man with "a nature like ours".

So make an equation out of those two truths and what happens next. Elijah was very close to God, very powerfully full of faith and obedience plus we are just like him. That means we can relate to all the struggles he went through and that his great walk with the Lord did not keep him from having.

In I Kings 19:4 Elijah the mighty man of God (just like David the man after God's own heart)—came to a point where he couldn't cope with life. He got overwhelmed to the point that he felt like life was not worth living, he wanted to die and end all the pressures he couldn't stand any more. He felt all alone in standing for God, while God knew there were 7,000 others (v.18) who also were resisting the false worship of Baal. What can we see from the Elijah equation?

First we see that Elijah's bottoming out was a predictable outcome of the times he faced. For over three years Elijah had lived under the constant stress of Jezebel's evil campaign to rid the land of true believers. Then came the "mountain top" experience of Mt. Carmel and the dramatic victory God gave over the false prophets, answering from Heaven with fire. But after all that Elijah fell apart. He became totally unable to go on physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He actually says that he "had enough" in v. 4. Elijah was depressed and frozen.

So what did God do with him? This time of depression was temporary because God prescribed proper rest, proper nutrition, and quality time with God. As soon as those three areas were dealt with Elijah returns as the clear-minded, obedient servant of the Lord he had been before. It is very important to note that God brought a faithful friend who was loyal and close into Elijah's life also at this time, named Elisha (v. 21).

The lesson is that even the best of us will go through dark times of life, confusing times when we get "down" emotionally. In fact with certain circumstances such times can almost be predicted. But they are always momentary compared to the direction and focus of our lives which grace-energized balanced thinking reigns.

Anchored in the Storms of Life

So, Paul compares our spiritual lives to living in the midst of gale-force winds and powerful waves that beat against us each day--waves of materialistic desires, waves of sensual desires, waves of doubt, waves of fear, waves of discouragement. Each wave and the powerful winds are testing how well we are tied to God's promises. How well tied are you today?

One of the most moving moments of our recent journey to the Land of the Book was standing at the tomb of Herod the Great (hidden for 19 centuries and only found this past summer)--it was such sobering sight.

Built near Bethlehem into the side of a man-made mountain called the Herodian, Herod's Tomb and Palace are visible for miles around Jerusalem. Today all that can be seen from below is a monumental 30 foot wide staircase that led up to the tomb. We stood there and remembered one powerful truth—death takes away from each of us everything but the promises of God to which we cling by faith.

Herod was wealthy, powerful, possessing the largest palace ever built in the ancient world—and he took nothing with him out of this world when he died? Why? Because death takes everything away from us except the promises of God!

What promises of God are you holding onto today? If everything you have on earth was suddenly snatched from you—family, house, money, job, health, friends, and possessions, what would you have left? Take it a step further, because that is what death does. So think for just a moment about the instant of your death.

At the instant of death EVERYTHING is stripped away from us, including our body—except for one thing. We still have one thing we can hold onto at death and that is God's promises. They can never be taken away from us.

Knowing God's promises give us what the author of Hebrews calls an “anchor for our souls” (Hebrews 6:19). That is what keeps us from being blown around, dashed upon the rocks by every storm of life or confused by every new teaching we hear.

Lives anchored in the Word of God are stable, balanced and usable for God.

With that in mind, how many of His promises are you holding onto today?

Promises like “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb. 13:5), or “I go to prepare a place for you...I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:2-3), or how about this one “your sins and iniquities I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:11), “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin” (I John 1:7).

The Bible is full of promises, made by God to us, through his Son—and a grace-energized man is holding onto enough of them that his life becomes visibly stable. Why not bow your heart before God, look inside and do a promise inventory. Quietly repeat to the Lord in your mind what you find that you are holding onto from His Word.

Those promises can never be taken from you.

Those promises are the anchor for you soul.

Those promises help you maintain balance in an increasingly unstable world.

Long Term Sermon Preparation

NKJV	NIV	NAS
<p>But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: v.2 that the older men be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sober (3524 nephalios) 2. reverent, (4586 semnos) 3. temperate (4998 sophron) 4. sound (5198 hugaino) in faith, 5. [sound in] love (26 agape), 6. [sound in] patience (5281 hupomone); <p>v.3 the older women likewise, that they be</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. reverent (2412) in behavior (2688), 2. not slanderers (1228), 3. not given (1402) to much (4183) wine (3631), 4. teachers of good things (2567)— 5. v. 4 that they admonish (4994) <p>the young women</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to love their husbands, 2. to love their children, v.5 3. to be discreet, 4. chaste, 5. homemakers, 6. good, 7. obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. <p>v.6 Likewise exhort the young men</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be sober-minded,v.7 2. in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; 3. in doctrine showing integrity, 4. reverence, 5. incorruptibility,8 6. sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. 	<p>You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. 2 Teach the older men:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be temperate, 2. worthy of respect, 3. self-controlled, and 4. sound in faith, 5. [sound in] love and 6. [sound in] endurance. <p>3 Likewise, teach the older women</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be reverent in the way they live, 2. not to be slanderers 3. or addicted to much wine, 4. but to teach what is good. v.4 5. Then they can train the <p>younger women</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to love their husbands 2. and children, 5 3. to be self-controlled and 4. pure, 5. to be busy at home, 6. to be kind, and 7. to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. <p>6 Similarly, encourage the young men</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be self-controlled. 7 2. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. 3. In your teaching show integrity, 4. seriousness 8 and 5. soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. 	<p>But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.2 Older men are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be temperate, 2. dignified, 3. sensible, 4. sound in faith, 5. [sound in] love, 6. [sound in] perseverance. <p>3 Older women likewise are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be reverent in their behavior, 2. not malicious gossips, 3. nor enslaved to much wine, 4. teaching what is good,4 5. that they may encourage the <p>young women</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to love their husbands, 2. to love their children,5 3. to be sensible, 4. pure, 5. workers at home, 6. kind, 7. being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored. <p>6 Likewise urge the young men</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be sensible;7 2. in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, 3. with purity in doctrine, 4. dignified,8 5. sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

v.1 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine, v.2a that the older men be:	
7.	sober: Maintaining A Balanced Life In An Obsessive-Compulsive World
8.	reverent: Getting Serious About God In An Amused World
9.	temperate: Living Wisely In A Foolish World
10.	sound in faith: Guarding A Healthy Mind In A Sick World
11.	[sound in] love: Staying Tender Hearted In A Cruel World
12.	[sound in] patience: Finishing Hopefully In A Despairing World
v. 3 the older women likewise, that they be:	
6.	reverent in behavior: Living Holy in an Unholy World
7.	not slanderers: Speaking Gracefully in a Graceless World
8.	not given to much wine: Disciplining Appetites in an Undisciplined World
9.	teachers of good things—: Modeling Godliness in an Ungodly World
10.	v. 4 that they admonish: Investing in others in a Detached World
v. 4b the young women :	
8.	to love their husbands: Self-sacrificing Love in a Selfish World
9.	to love their children,: Nurturing Love in a Loveless World
10.	v. 5 to be discreet: Focusing on God in a Foolish World
11.	chaste: Pursuing Modesty in an Immodest World
12.	homemakers: Pursuing Homemaking in a Hostile World
13.	good: Pursuing Kindness in a Harsh World
14.	obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed: Pursuing Submission in a Rebellious World
v. 6 Likewise exhort the young men :	
1.	to be sober-minded,: Living A Restrained Life In an unrestrained World
2.	v. 7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works: Becoming Representations Of Christ In A Christless World
3.	in doctrine showing integrity: Maintaining Godly Purity In An Impure World
4.	reverence: Keeping A Singular Focus In A Blurred World
5.	incorruptibility,: Keeping an Incorruptible Life in a Decaying World
6.	v. 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. (NKJV): Speaking God's Words In A Godless World

Grace Energized Men: Personal Followers of Christ In a Christ-less World Titus 2:6

Jesus said that eternal life is all about following Him; and He summarized His entire plan for the disciples in just two words: “Follow Me” (Matthew 4:19). Those two words were what He spoke to Peter, Andrew, James and John as they fished and to Matthew as he sat at the tax office (Luke 5:27); and those two words are what He still calls for as He walks through this world.

This morning, are you personally following Jesus? Does your day revolve around Him: as you start the day with *seeking Him*, as you go through the day *serving Him*, and end the day with *thanking Him*? Believers are Christ's personal followers in a Christ-less world.

Jesus explained as He taught, that His disciples were those who heard His voice, became His sheep, and “followed” Him (John 10:27). Jesus called those followers His disciples or “learners”. The Gospels are a record of how disciples spent time with Jesus for over 3 years watching, listening, and most of all “following” Him.

Jesus called Himself the “Way”; and described salvation as the beginning a life-long journey of following Him (John 14:6). This call to a life of following needs to at times be renewed as Jesus demonstrated after His resurrection, when Peter was restored to ministry as Jesus again said “follow” Me (John 21:19).

Are We His Followers?

So Christ's plan was to have close, personal “followers” who were also learners and doers of His Way. They listened and followed Him as they learned from Him how to do what He did.

Then book of Acts goes on to describe the early believers as those who were “followers” of Christ Jesus, the Way:

- *Acts 9:2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of **the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. NKJV*
- *Acts 18:25-26 This man had been instructed in **the way of the Lord**; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him **the way of God** more accurately. NKJV*
- *Acts 19:9, 23 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of **the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about **the Way**. NKJV*
- *Acts 22:4 “I persecuted this **Way** to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, NKJV*

- *Acts 24:14, 22 “But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way** which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of **the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings and said, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.” NKJV*

The Church at the beginning was simple, everyone was following Jesus, acting so much like Him they were described by unbelievers as little-Christ-imitators or “Christ-ians”. As the church gathered, they were taught that every facet of their lives were to be reflective of what they learned while following Jesus personally.

Learning by Example

This “learning and doing by example” model was the key to Titus 2 discipleship; Paul described a plan for having each person in Christ's Church actually involved in a life-long learning process of following Jesus Christ. In fact, believers are called little imitations or “mimics” of Jesus Christ. The Greek word in the Epistles for “follow” and “followers” is *mimetes* (literally “mimics”).

Listen to the clear call we have all been given by Christ's Apostles to follow or “mimic” Christ:

- *1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you, **imitate** me. NKJV*
- *1 Corinthians 11:1 **Imitate** me, just as I also **imitate** Christ. NKJV [That is the clearest description of what Titus 2 discipleship is all about!]*
- *Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be **imitators** of God as dear children. NKJV*
- *1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you became **followers** of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, NKJV*
- *1 Thessalonians 2:14 For you, brethren, became **imitators** of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, NKJV*
- *2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 For you yourselves know how you ought to **follow** us, for we were not disorderly among you; 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should **follow** us. NKJV*
- *Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but **imitate** those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. NKJV*
- *Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith **follow**, considering the outcome of their conduct. NKJV*
- *1 Peter 3:13 And who is he who will harm you if you become **followers** of what is good? NKJV*
- *3 John 11 Beloved, do not **imitate** what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. NKJV*

This morning, God is looking for those who will not merely hear God's Word, study God's Word, memorize God's Word, master the content of God's Word—He wants those men and women, and boys and girls who will follow Christ.

The Lessening of Modeling

In Christ's day and His Apostles, the Church was a community of believers who followed Christ.

But, as the Church moved deeper into the Greek culture it slowly became more of a philosophy, and less of a community living out truth;

Within a few centuries as the Church moved to Rome and became more of a building than a body;

And after a few more centuries, as the Church permeated Europe, it became more a culture than a community;

And finally today, the Church in America is more of a business, and less of a band of devoted followers of Jesus Christ who live out Christ's Way in every day life.

Oh how we need to return to being disciples, followers, close-knit brothers and sisters imitating Christ and nurturing each other.

And that is the heart of Paul's message in Titus 2:7. Please stand and listen to Paul's plea for Titus to personally live the truth and not just teach it, train it, study it, or discuss it!

Titus 2:7, NKJV

*in all things
showing yourself
to be a pattern of good works;
in doctrine showing integrity,
reverence,
incorruptibility,*

Pray

Paul went to the heart of God's goal for the church as he wrote to Titus. Paul instructed Titus himself to set the pace.

Before Titus launched this mentoring, discipleship plan in the church on the island of Crete, he was to do a self-examination. What Paul made Titus do is very important for all of us who want to follow Christ.

In Titus 2:7 note how Paul broke the flow, he steps away from a list of curriculum topics for older men (v.2), older women (v. 3-4a), younger women (v.4b-5), and younger men (v. 6), to a very personal appeal.

1. **Total Consecration:** "in all things"; Titus was not to allow himself to give in to Satan's lie called "Compartmentalization" where he would have a public life, a private life, a business life, a personal life—each with a differing degree of Christ's Lordship. No, Jesus wants all of us. He wants to shine into every part of our lives. No locking Him out of an area that we say has nothing to do with Him. Christ has everything to do with all of our lives. Secondly,

2. **Personal Implementation:** “showing yourself”; Titus was called to a life of integrity, no hypocrisy was allowed. He could not teach one thing, and live another. Rather, he was to hold out to all who would look, a life lived in integrity.
3. **Visible Demonstration:** “to be a pattern of good works”; Titus was to be living his life going against the flow. He was to actively resist the bad works of the world by making constant choices to DO good works. The Devil wants believers to become passive and just drift along with the flow of the world instead of actively confronting the darkness with light, the evil with good, the selfishness with self-sacrifice—and all of these things as an imitation of Christ!

That is the essence of this next point about grace-energized men, they were men who sought to **Become Representations of Christ in A Christ-less World**. But the question we always face is—How? I think that the clearest explanation for anyone who wants to represent Christ well in this world, was given by Paul to Timothy. So, to expand upon the Titus 2:7 mandate that grace-energized men be imitators that represent Jesus well before a watching world, please turn with me to II Timothy 2.19-26.

This section of God's Word contains a complete list of how we can maintain a life that God can use for His Glory, and a life God rewards.

This is God’s standard for any and every man, woman and child who want to be a good and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I speak to young men specifically, just put your name in their and ask God through His Spirit to enable you to also live this way.

The Model to Follow

A grace-energized, godly man will model obedience to God's Word.

Here are the seven areas that the Apostle Paul pointed out to Timothy and that every man of God must always guard.

These are intentionally sought disciplines; these are deliberately guarded areas; these are never areas you can coast through; but always areas we must engage our hearts in seeking out by His grace and through the power of His Spirit.

1. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN** in God's sight. This is that great Old Testament call to living in the fear of the Lord.

2 Timothy 2:19-21a Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ **depart** (aor.impv.) from iniquity.”²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.²¹ **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor . . .**

Depart (NKJV for *aphisteimi* [868]) is a well chosen word that says in as many ways as it is possible to say it—stay away from sin. It means to cause to withdraw, to remove; to go away from, to depart from; to desert; to shun, flee from; to cease; to keep one’s self from, absent.

Grace-energized young men will—flee sin, hate sin, and keep themselves in the love of God so that they have a life that is clean.

2. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A BODY THAT IS YIELDED** to God's Work. This is servant hood.

2 Timothy 2:21b Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

Grace-energized young men will—keep their body as God’s instrument to do His will. As Christ's constantly desired and said, may you continually say, “Not my will but Thine be done”. Adelaide A. Pollard wrote a magnificent poem of 1907, “Have Thine own way”. May these words be your hearts desire for a body that is yielded to God’s work.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit ‘till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

3. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A HEART THAT IS PURE** as God's Home.

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace **with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

Just as Robert Boyd Munger says in his booklet MY HEART CHRIST'S HOME, we must constantly examine our life, as if it were a house full of interconnected rooms. We must be sure Christ is at home in every part of our house.

Grace-energized young men will—guard their hearts, renounce their flesh, purge themselves from any filthiness of the spirit as Paul exhorts and be that man of God who is pure in heart that sees God. Let your eyes be fixed upon the land that is far off and ever see the King in His beauty—from a heart that is pure.

4. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING** God's way.

2 Timothy 2:23 But **avoid foolish and ignorant disputes,** knowing that they generate strife.

Grace-energized young men will—cultivate the mind of Christ, invite the wisdom that is from above, and think the Word. Always remember we live in a crooked and perverse generation. Let your life be a light as you walk in His light.

5. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A MANNER THAT REFLECTS** Christ's meekness and gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:24 And **a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all**, able to teach, patient,

Grace-energized young men will—be meek and gentle in the power of Christ's Spirit. Take Christ's yoke He promised and let Him grow the fruit of the Spirit of God unhindered in your life. Christ's **MEEKNESS** is the opposite of asserting yourself; it is the ending of your personal agenda; it is living daily as crucified with Christ.

6. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE** to God's Word. The only way to change people is through the Word. We can't.

2 Timothy 2:25 **in humility correcting those who are in opposition**, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

Grace-energized young men will—clothe themselves with humility. Wrap up in the apron of a servant as Peter said to the elders he served. Let the humble mind of Christ be in you and let God lift you up. There is no limit to what God can do with you if you let Him get all the credit!

7. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE** like Christ's.

2 Timothy 2:26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, **having been taken captive by him to do his will**.

Grace-energized young men will—put on a heart of compassion. Clothe yourself with Christ and be moved as He was for the flock He gives you. Love them, feed them, lead them—all with Christ's compassion, and you will receive that unfading crown of His good and faithful shepherds of His flock!

So ask yourself, “How am I doing at following Christ”? Do I represent Him well? If not, why not stop and right now renew your decision to be a grace-energized, personal-follower of Jesus.

Here is the goal: *a grace-energized representation of Christ must have:*

- ✓ A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN in God's sight.
- ✓ A BODY THAT IS YIELDED to God's Work.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS PURE as God's Home.
- ✓ A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING God's way.
- ✓ A MANNER THAT REFLECTS Christ's gentleness.
- ✓ A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE to God's Word.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE like Christ's.

May we all follow and imitate Christ all our days, by His grace!

Grace Energized Men: Following Christ is Living in Him Galatians 2:20, Titus 2:7

Christ's first words, to His first disciples, should be our first priority as His disciples today. "Follow Me" is still the essence of Biblical Christianity.

Those two words were what He spoke to Peter, Andrew, James and John as they fished (Matthew 4:19) and to Matthew as he sat at the tax office (Luke 5:27); and those two words are what He still calls for as He walks through this world.

But the sad part about the history of the church is that it seems like after a few years most believers in most churches have gotten inoculated by Christ's words and seem to take them less-and-less seriously. Inoculations are when a powerful virus is injected, and some irritation, or redness occurs, but then it goes away; it was a slight annoyance but nothing like the actual disease.

"We have all been inoculated with Christianity, and are never likely to take it seriously now! We are on Christ's side, we wish him well, we hope that He will win, and we are even prepared to do something for Him, provided, of course, that He is reasonable, and does not make too much of an upset among our cozy comforts and our customary ways.

But there is not the passion of zeal, and the burning enthusiasm, and the eagerness of self-sacrifice, of the real faith that changes character and wins the world."⁹³

Living Life by Following Christ

Paul as he wrote the New Testament epistles (or letters) to churches and individuals, he was just expanding and illustrating that life of following Christ. In Galatians 2:20 Paul explained that as believers, following Christ means we do not live our own lives. We live the life of another--or, more accurately, another lives His life through us. Look again at those words:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (KJV)

The heartbeat of Galatians 2:20 is the essence of following Christ; and that is all that is essential to live our lives as believers. But, until we grasp that as the key to the mystery of Christian living, we have not graduated from the pre-school level of the Christian life.

Noted pastor and writer Ray Steadman (who wrote that great challenge to the church called Body Life) summarized this truth when he taught these words to his congregation:

⁹³ *From the Edge of the Crowd*, A. I. Goswin, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh: 1924

"People who equate orthodoxy with authenticity find it hard to even consider the possibility that, despite the correctness of all their doctrinal positions, they may have missed the deepest reality of the authentic Christian life.

But we must never forget that true Christianity is more than teaching--it is *a way of life*. In fact, *it is life itself*. "He who has the Son has life," remember? When we talk about life, we are talking about something that is far more than mere morality, far more than doctrinal accuracy.

Life is a positive quality, not negative--a description of what we fundamentally *are*, not what we are not.

The eternal life that Jesus brings to us is radical, not superficial. It is humble, not self-promoting. It is compassionate, not indifferent. It is courageous, not timid or retiring. It is a far cry indeed from the mild compatibility, agreeability, and affability that passes for Christianity in thousands of churches across the land. In fact, the Great Imitation is so widely accepted as genuine Christianity that the real thing is often regarded as a threat or a heresy whenever it appears."⁹⁴

This morning each of us can measure your life's worth by the degree to which Christ is followed! But as our text reminds us this morning, not only are we to be Christ's followers—our lives are also to slowly become a pattern for others to follow!

Measuring Life by Christ's Standard

This morning, are you personally following Jesus? Does your day revolve around Him: as you start the day with *seeking Him*, as you go through the day *servicing Him*, and end the day with *thanking Him*? Believers are Christ's personal followers in a Christ-less world.

But, the tricky part of being a Christian is really understanding that we are utterly helpless, in our own strength, to do anything good as Christians. Grace-energized living is the understanding that our flesh, no matter how hard we try, is never able to please Christ.

We have no human powers to overcome temptation and sin, or to accomplish any good works. Here is short summary of what following Christ is all about:

“Our natural life in Adam is called "the flesh," in the Bible. The flesh has obvious bad traits such as lying, stealing, cheating, drunkenness and immorality. But the "best of the flesh" (doing our best to serve God in our own effort for example), is equally as bad as far as God is concerned. King Saul's experience recorded in First Samuel 15 illustrates this point vividly. On the cross, God has said "no" to the flesh, to the law of self-effort, for all time and eternity.”

The whole secret of being a follower of Christ is to learn, (and to relearn), that only Jesus can live the Christian life. We must give Jesus permission to live His life through us day by day. Paul calls this mode of living "our reasonable service" in Chapter 12.

In Romans 7 Paul shows us that when "I" to do anything to serve God in my own strength "I" will always fail, and when "I" determine to avoid sin by my own will power, "I" am found to fail. A daily death-to-self is what God asks of me.

⁹⁴ Roy C. Steadman, *Authentic Christianity*

God the "great I AM" has taken up residence in my heart--the Holy Spirit has come to join Himself with my spirit. My human spirit is now the lesser, subservient "i am." This new inner partnership, or union of two spirits--my spirit with God's Spirit--is really a Lover-beloved union of two persons, not a mutually convenient arrangement such as a business partnership. Knowing God as He wishes to be known is an interactive relationship of intimate love--which fulfills the great commandment."⁹⁵

And this is the completely new operating system described by Paul in Galatians:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (2:20)

And that is the heart of Paul's message in Titus 2:7. Please stand and listen to Paul's plea for Titus to invite Christ to personally live through him daily; and not just teach about this life—but to live it!

Titus 2:7, NKJV
in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works;
in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,

Pray

Paul uses the word *yourself* (*seauton*) in this verse. Titus, was a "younger man" himself; and Paul urged him to set an example for the young men in the churches he led (see also how Paul urges Timothy similarly in 1 Timothy 4:12). Authoritative words have no impact if not backed up by a blameless life of *doing what is good*. Titus's life-style was to be an example of how that self-control can be applied to daily living. This principle is true for each of us today.

We are Christ's Representatives

In Christ's church there is always someone who is watching us, looking up to us and following us in some way. We must walk the talk, live the life and be Christ's example.

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.
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I would be faithful through each passing moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be strong to follow where He leads me;

⁹⁵ Lambert Dolphin, June 2008, *Newsletter #78: Discover, or Rediscover, the Exchanged Life* [260 words]

I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

--Howard Arnold Walter, 1906

Paul went to the heart of God's goal for the church as he wrote to Titus. Paul instructed Titus himself to set the pace.

That is the essence of this next point about grace-energized men, they were men who sought to **Become Representations of Christ in A Christ-less World**. But the question we always face is—how?

I think that the clearest explanation for anyone who wants to represent Christ well in this world, was given by Paul to Timothy. So, to expand upon the Titus 2:7 mandate that grace-energized men be imitators that represent Jesus well before a watching world, please turn with me to II Timothy 2.19-26.

This section of God's Word contains a complete list of how we can maintain a life that God can use for His Glory, and a life God rewards.

This is God's standard for any and every man, woman and child who want to be a good and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I speak to young men specifically, just put your name in their and ask God through His Spirit to enable you to also live this way.

The Model to Follow

A grace-energized, godly man will model obedience to God's Word.

Here are the seven areas that the Apostle Paul pointed out to Timothy and that every man of God must always guard.

These are intentionally sought disciplines; these are deliberately guarded areas; these are never areas you can coast through; but always areas we must engage our hearts in seeking out by His grace and through the power of His Spirit.

8. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN** in God's sight. This is that great Old Testament call to living in the fear of the Lord.*

2 Timothy 2:19-21a Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ **depart** (aor.impv.) from iniquity."²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.²¹ **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor . . .**

Depart (NKJV for *aphisteimi* [868]) is a well chosen word that says in as many ways as it is possible to say it—stay away from sin. It means:

- "to cause to withdraw, to remove";
- "to go away from, to depart from";
- "to desert; to shun, flee from";
- "to cease; to keep one's self from, to be absent".

Grace-energized young men will—flee sin, hate sin, and keep themselves in the love of God so that they have a life that is clean.

At this point we are all “hearers” of God's Word, to become “doers” we all must pause and ask ourselves before the Lord—what He wants cleansed from our lives. Do that for a moment and let the Spirit point out an area that needs your attention.

Look back at II Timothy 2:19-21a and actually make this verse a prayerful response to Jesus Christ. You can do that now by saying to the Lord:

“By Your grace and for Your Glory I invite You to live in me and through me. You O Christ can empower me to “depart” from this sin (name it to Him) that “so easily besets” as Hebrews 12 calls it”.

“I will today withdraw from anything that encourages this sin, I will depart from this sin, I want to desert, shun, flee from, cease, keep myself, and be absent from this sin today.”

This choice we have to make each day is the life of surrender to Christ that is the only way to live. Here is how the great Christian thinker C.S. Lewis described this daily surrender:

"The Christian life is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, "Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work. I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires, which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked-the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself; my own will shall become yours." (C. S. Lewis)

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: life that is clean; and:

9. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A BODY THAT IS YIELDED** to God's Work. This is servant hood.*

2 Timothy 2:21b Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

Grace-energized young men will—keep their body as God’s instrument to do His will. As Christ constantly desired and said, may we continually say, “Not my will but Thine be done”.

Adelaide A. Pollard wrote a magnificent poem of 1907, “Have Thine own way”. May these words be your hearts desire for a body that is yielded to God’s work. Turn for a moment to hymn # 371

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit 'till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: *life that is clean, a body that is yielded*; and:

10. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have A HEART THAT IS PURE* as God's Home.

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace **with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

Just as Robert Boyd Munger says in his booklet MY HEART CHRIST'S HOME, we must constantly examine our life, as if it were a house full of interconnected rooms. We must be sure Christ is at home in every part of our house.

Grace-energized young men will—guard their hearts, renounce their flesh, purge themselves from any filthiness of the spirit (II Cor. 7:1) as Paul exhorts and be that man of God who is pure in heart that sees God.

Look at II Corinthians 6:14-18 and see the way that Christ living in us changes our habits and desires.

When we let our eyes stay fixed upon the land that is far off, we will always see the King in His beauty (Isaiah 33:17, 14-16)—from a heart that is pure.

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11. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING* God's way.

2 Timothy 2:23 But **avoid foolish and ignorant disputes**, knowing that they generate strife.

Grace-energized young men will—cultivate the mind of Christ, invite the wisdom that is from above, and think the Word.

The way to keep a mind that has confident assurance of God's way is to always sense the way God works vs. the way the world, the flesh, and the devil works. Look briefly at James 3:13-18 to see that described.

Always remember we live in a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). Let your life be a light as you walk in His light.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: *life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure, a mind that is discerning*; and:

12. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have A MANNER THAT REFLECTS* Christ's meekness and gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:24 And **a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all**, able to teach, patient,

Grace-energized young men will—stay meek and gentle in the power of Christ's Spirit. Take Christ's yoke He promised (Matthew 11:28-30) and let Him grow the fruit of the Spirit of God unhindered in your life (Galatians 5:22-24).

When we surrender to allowing the Spirit of God to direct our personality we find Christ's **MEEKNESS** at work in us; meekness is the opposite of asserting self; meekness is the ending of our personal agenda; meekness is living daily as crucified with Christ.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: ***life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure, a mind that is discerning, a manner that reflects Christ***; and:

13. A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE** to God's Word. The only way to change people is through the Word. We can't.

2 Timothy 2:25 **in humility correcting those who are in opposition**, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

Grace-energized young men will—clothe themselves with humility (Col. 3:12). Wrap up in the apron of a servant as Peter said to the elders he served (I Peter 5:5-6). Let the humble mind of Christ be in you (Phil 2:5-8) and let God lift you up. There is no limit to what God can do with you if you let Him get all the credit!

Open to I Peter 5:3-7 and look at the choices we must make. Peter said that the examples to the flock, the leaders, the shepherds who taught by word and lifestyle had a big choice to make in v.3, they were to be “examples” to the flock. In v. 5 there are two commands, or imperatives. The second one is “be clothed” which literally means “clothe yourself”.

The Greek word is ***egkombaio*** and described the white apron towels that slaves wore as they served their masters. In John 13 when Jesus washed His disciples feet He first wrapped a towel around Himself. That is exactly what this word means. Peter probably could still see that Last Supper night vividly in his mind. Jesus quietly rose from the meal, walked to a corner, picked up the apron towel no one else would lower themselves to wear, and did the foot washing work of a slave.

Peter said that the humility Christ seeks in His church is one where everyone from elder to newest believer, all take the slave's apron and clothe themselves with humility. Why? Because anything less than a life of humble slavery to God for others meets daily resistance from the Lord Himself.

God just won't tolerate any pride in His people. At every level He resists the lives of His children when they are proud.

This slavery for Christ as His humble servant is a conscious choice, Christ living in me enables me to make.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: ***life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure, a mind that is discerning, a manner that reflects Christ, a spirit that is humble***; and:

14. A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE** like Christ's.

2 Timothy 2:26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, **having been taken captive by him to do his will.**

Grace-energized young men will—put on a heart of compassion (Colossians 3:12). Clothe yourself with Christ (Rom 13:14) and be moved as He was for others. Love with Christ's compassion, and you will receive that unfading crown of His good and faithful servant!

- *Do you have an eye to see how helpless our world is?* There are almost 7 billion sheep, most of them without a true knowledge of the good Shepherd! There were only 250 million in Christ's day. The population of our world is 28 times that today! What do you see in a crowd? A business man sees a potential market, an educator sees a potential classroom, a politician sees potential voters. Nearly everyone thinks in terms of personal benefit. Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of a crowd, and that compassion led Him to give His life on a cross of wood, writing a letter of love for the sins of the world.
- *Do you have a heart to feel?* The word in the Bible for compassion means 'to suffer together with'. The emotion of compassion constitute a language that is understood universally. Compassion can be seen and felt by all because it is the language of the heart that needs no translation to be understood. We of the instant gratification, veneer thin depth of commitment that characterizes our day, have lost so much compassion.. Superficiality of emotional expression from the media has seeped into our spiritual lives. We are good actors, but often poor feelers, of others pain. Ask God for a heart of compassion like Christ's.
- *Do you have hands to perform?* What ministry are you involved in today touching the lives of people for Jesus ? Can you name one? Why don't you start in our children's ministry and then expand into the Rescue Mission, Crisis Pregnancy Center and so on?

So ask yourself, "How am I doing at following Christ"? Do I represent Him well? If not, why not stop and right now renew your decision to be a grace-energized, personal-follower of Jesus.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a:

- ✓ A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN in God's sight.
- ✓ A BODY THAT IS YIELDED to God's Work.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS PURE as God's Home.
- ✓ A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING God's way.
- ✓ A MANNER THAT REFLECTS Christ's gentleness.
- ✓ A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE to God's Word.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE like Christ's.

May we all follow and imitate Christ all our days, by His grace!

Grace Energized Men: Learning to Follow Jesus I John 2:6, Titus 2:7

Following Jesus is the call of every believer. As the Apostle John was inspired to say, it is also the test of true salvation. Listen to him in his first letter: “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:6)

Discipleship: Learning to Follow Jesus

Although the word discipleship is a common term used constantly in many churches, we don’t seem to see Christ-like people developing as readily as it is talked about? We live in a land where millions of born again Christians are suffering from acute biblical illiteracy; and many of them are enslaved to culture-accommodating lifestyles. It is a critical time to reassess how God’s Word says to train people to be true followers of our Lord Jesus.

“Perhaps the greatest single weakness of the contemporary Christian Church is that millions of supposed members are not really involved at all and, what is worse, do not think it strange that they are not. As soon as we recognize Christ’s intention to make His Church a militant company we understand at once that the conventional arrangement cannot suffice. There is no real chance of victory in a campaign if ninety per cent of the soldiers are untrained and uninvolved, but that is exactly where we stand now.”⁹⁶

In analyzing the Gospels we find that Jesus ministered to the multitudes no less than 17 times; but His small group sessions recorded number no less than 46. Although this is just an observation, we could conclude that Christ’s plan was to offer a mix of 25% public training (large group sessions) and 75% small group nurturing (discipleship, hands on demonstrations and accountability).

John Wesley wrote, “I am more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again.”⁹⁷ So, in 1743 John Wesley organized a society. “Such a society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation.”⁹⁸ The rest is history. From Wesley’s ministry the Methodist Church began and spread across the world in evangelism and missionary work.

Christians that were baptized into the hope of both eternal life and newness of life are often not successful in living Christ out in practical, every day ways. This most likely because the Biblical concept of “teaching” is becoming more of a “telling” or “pointing” to available resources, rather than life-style demonstration (Titus 2:7).

⁹⁶ Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed*, NY, NY: Harper, 1961, p. 38.

⁹⁷ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, entry dated Sunday March 13, 1743; vol. 1 (10.14.1735 to 11.17.1746), London: J. Kenshaw, 1827, p. 398.

⁹⁸ Richard Watson *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary* article entitled “Methodists” Waugh & Mason. Nv. NY: 1832 p. 641

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Heb. 5:11-14)

No Discipleship = Spiritual Immaturity

1. Marginal desire for God's Word (virtually “Biblically illiterate”).
2. Walks in the flesh; does not know the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit.
3. Few “works of faith”, i.e., no evidence of being filled with God’s love to serve others, giving, etc.
4. Easily swayed or deceived by false doctrines.
5. Stuck in the basics-no growth.
6. Limited desire for fellowship with other believers.
7. Strong desire for worldly possessions; selfish ambitions; spirit of competition.
8. Difficulty in repenting/forgiving others.
9. Lacking compassion for the lost.
10. Not actively assisting in the spiritual development of others.
11. Limited sense of God, His character or His will.
12. Life filled with fear, anxiety, and the absence of peace.
13. Often covetous, boastful, prideful, manipulative, etc.
14. Ongoing financial difficulties (living far beyond means...in debt).
15. Seekers of pleasure.
16. Lives marked by lack of discipline (physically, mentally, and spiritually).
17. Partial victory over sin.
18. Nonexistent or lackluster prayer life.
19. Little or no time or sincere interest in worship.
20. Not accountable to anyone for anything.
21. Small degree of grace and mercy toward others or self.⁹⁹

Christ's first words, to His first disciples, should be our first priority as His disciples today. “Follow Me” is still the essence of Biblical Christianity.

Paul went to the heart of God’s goal for the church as he wrote to Titus. Paul instructed Titus himself to set the pace.

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⁹⁹ Doug Morrell, Wesley’s 3-Strand Discipleship, May 18, 2005: <http://www.corediscipleship.org/index.html>

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- *Do you have an eye to see how helpless our world is?* There are almost 7 billion sheep, most of them without a true knowledge of the good Shepherd! There were only 250 million in Christ's day. The population of our world is 28 times that today! What do you see in a crowd? A business man sees a potential market, an educator sees a potential classroom, a politician sees potential voters. Nearly everyone thinks in terms of personal benefit. Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of a crowd, and that compassion led Him to give His life on a cross of wood, writing a letter of love for the sins of the world.
- *Do you have a heart to feel?* The word in the Bible for compassion means ‘to suffer together with’. The emotion of compassion constitute a language that is understood universally. Compassion can be seen and felt by all because it is the language of the heart that needs no translation to be understood. We of the instant gratification, veneer thin depth of commitment that characterizes our day, have lost so much compassion.. Superficiality of emotional expression from the media has seeped into our spiritual lives. We are good actors, but often poor feelers, of others pain. Ask God for a heart of compassion like Christ's.
- *Do you have hands to perform?* What ministry are you involved in today touching the lives of people for Jesus ? Can you name one? Why don’t you start in our children’s ministry and then expand into the Rescue Mission, Crisis Pregnancy Center and so on?

So ask yourself, “How am I doing at following Christ”? Do I represent Him well? If not, why not stop and right now renew your decision to be a grace-energized, personal-follower of Jesus.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a:

- ✓ A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN in God's sight.
- ✓ A BODY THAT IS YIELDED to God's Work.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS PURE as God's Home.
- ✓ A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING God's way.
- ✓ A MANNER THAT REFLECTS Christ's gentleness.
- ✓ A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE to God's Word.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE like Christ's.

May we all follow and imitate Christ all our days, by His grace!

Grace Energized Men: Maintaining a Pure Life

Un-enslaved to Corruption in a Corrupted World

Titus 2:6

Our God is a Consuming Fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29);
and He forever dwells in Unapproachable Light (I Tim. 6:16), surrounded by His exquisite creations that
chant Holy, Holy, Holy—and fall down in obeisance before Him (Isaiah 6:3; Rev. 4:8);
and since the Lord God Almighty is Immutable, He is always that way, He will never change—it
is we who MUST change.

Grace does not change God, it changes us. Grace has opened a way to God, a safe passage through the fire.
Christ's work on the Cross opens the way for us to approach and know, serve and love our Holy God.

Knowing our Holy God

How constantly we need His life-changing grace, to energize us in our struggle against the flesh within, and the
sins that so easily beset us. Sin constantly surrounds us, like flood waters; and swirling around, seeks to seep
into any crack or unprotected area of our life.

Salvation described by Jesus is, “knowing God”. Grace made us able to know the Unapproachable, Holy God of
the Universe. But our God says that there is a choice about our purity we must make. He opened the way giving
us His imputed purity. This is where God places upon us the actual purity of Christ in our new nature we have
as believers (Rom. 6:4-5; 8:5-11; Col. 3:9-10; 2 Pet. 1:3). And when we sin Paul explains, it is not by the pure
and new us, but by the sin in our old flesh (Rom. 7:17, 19-22, 25).

So we walk through life clothed in an imputed purity, also known as our positional purity which is also the
purity we were given at the instant we trusted Christ as Savior. But this also means we now have an awesome
new responsibility. That responsibility is what is called our personal, chosen or practical purity.

Participation in Purity is Demanded by God

Paul was the Apostle of purity. In each city where Christ's church was birthed, Paul called the believers to live a
life of integrity, living out the high and holy calling of sanctified living. In all the carnality of Corinth Paul begs
the saints to:

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything
that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. NIV*

Similarly, as Peter ministered the Word across the greatest cities of the Empire in Asia Minor, he pleads with
believers to live the life that matches their beliefs:

1 Peter 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." NIV

All that is because, practical purity is a choice. God has done His part, but we must also do ours.

*"This, of course, is the hard part, the part that does require our supreme effort. Only God possesses or can possess primal purity. Only God can bestow created purity, ultimate purity, positional purity, and actual purity. **But practical purity, though it too comes from God, demands our participation in a way that the other kinds of purity do not.***

We are not saved just for future heavenly purity but also for present earthly purity. At best it will be gold mixed with iron and clay, a white garment with some black threads. But God wants us now to be as pure as we can be. If purity does not characterize our living, we either do not belong to Christ, or we are disobedient to Him. We will have temptations, but God will always provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). We will fall into sin, but "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)."¹⁰⁰

Some of the loftiest promises and sternest warnings in God's Word revolve around the purity of life that we choose to live while here on Earth. In Isaiah 33:17 God says that the more we pursue purity of heart and mind and action, the more clearly we will see our King in all His beauty.

Jesus commended the pure in heart as those who would see God in Matthew 5:8.

But in Hebrews we hear a stern warning: that only those who pursue purity and holiness as a lifestyle will even get to see God. In other words, only those who seek to live in purity or holiness are assured of salvation.

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: NKJV

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. NIV

The Character of God's Servants

So we have come to the third of six elements that characterize a godly young man's life. He is ever seeking to **MAINTAIN A PURE LIFE IN AN IMPURE WORLD.**

v. 6 "Likewise exhort the **young men**":

1. "to be sober-minded", v. 7: First in any godly man's life is a firm resolve to **Live a Restrained Life in an Unrestrained World;**
2. "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works": Next, these men seek to **Become Representations of Christ In A Christ-less World;**
3. "in doctrine showing integrity": Then is the constant desire to **Un-enslaved to Corruption in a Corrupted World;**

¹⁰⁰ MacArthur, John F. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: from the section on Matthew 5:8* (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983. [172 words]

The context of this third exhortation is that while the doctrine we teach is vital, there must be integrity. Our life must match what we say that we believe.

Paul has already challenged Titus to be an example of **purity in doctrine** in 1:9 and 2:1. Now Paul turns to the hand that holds the Bible, the mouth that speaks the Word, and the life that is used in teaching others—that life must have consistency with that pure, orthodox, doctrine.

The word that the Holy Spirit guides Paul to use is *Aphthoria* (**purity**). This word is actually a negative form of a descriptive word for being morally corrupt and vile—thus it means “not morally depraved”. In Paul’s day this word (without the “not” added) was often used of morally depraved people such as rapists, seducers, and abortionists.

Writing also about the vital need for integrity in our personal lives, Peter uses a related form of this word when he says that false teachers promise “freedom while they themselves are slaves of *corruption*; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved” (2 Pet. 2:19, emphasis added). Paul is using this term to admonish Titus to live a life of moral **purity** that lines up in secret with the pure **doctrine** that he proclaimed in public.

What are the Benefits of A Life of Purity?

If we were to distill down the descriptions that God's Word has for those who walk as Christ's disciples, in the power of the Spirit, with this grace-energized purity, this is what the New Testament says we have:

- A Great hunger and desire for God Himself, His Word, His Way.
- We walk in the Spirit; and grow better and better at knowing the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit.
- We have an increasing ability to apply God’s Word to life.
- We grow in the obvious “works of faith” like serving others, giving, etc.
- Purity brings stability, we are firmly grounded (not swayed or deceived by false doctrines).
- Purity is the soil in which continual spiritual growth and maturity take place.
- Pure saints exhibit a great desire for fellowship with other believers.
- Purity of life leads to evidencing the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- A pure believer, un-enslaved to sin has little to no desire for worldly possessions; greater and greater unselfish motives; and a growing spirit of cooperation.
- The liberated from bondage believers are quick to repent and to forgive others.
- Pure believers have a sincere compassion for the lost.
- Believers un-entangled with the lusts of the flesh are usually actively assisting in the spiritual development of others.
- Purity and holiness always lead to a continuous sense of God’s Presence, and a deepening knowledge of His character and will.
- A pure believer will always have a life characterized with peace; and meekness and humility will characterize their attitude.
- Almost always a believer walking in holiness will have their home life in order; and will be personally seeking God’s purpose for their life.
- Purity leads to a life marked by discipline (physical, mental, spiritual); and a growing track record of being an over-comer of sin.
- There is an immensely powerful prayer life that flows from a pure heart; and a dynamic life-style of worship.
- Finally, a believer walking in purity and holiness, with integrity has a life-style of grace and mercy toward others and self.

Because the Tsunami of sin sweeps across our lives each day, this man always seeks to...

Choices that Lead to a Life of Purity

The only way to recover from an eroded mind, a mind that has gotten neutralized, where evil seeps in a bit more each day, is to pursue personal sanctification:

1. **Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Saturate themselves With the Word** (Joshua 1:8). After you read and ponder, work on memorizing key Scriptures that can help you have greater victory over sin, and then regularly meditate upon those verses. **Meditate day and night!**

Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. NKJV"

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. NKJV

Fifteen minutes reading per day makes it through the Bible once a year, and a half-hour equals two times. On a CD or tape, listening to the complete Bible in a year requires the same amount of time. Isn't God worth it?

Remember: God wants to invade every part of your heart, mind, and life. But He can only do so if you will say, "By Your grace, Lord, I purpose to *learn* Your Book, to prepare my heart to *live* Your Book, and to *lead* others in living and learning Your Word." That is exactly what God has put you on earth to do!

2. **Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Consistently Hate Evil** (Rom. 12:9). As pilgrims in this world, and with the Tsunami of sin crashing over and around us each day, Paul prescribed one constant attitude—hate evil. **Abhor, turn away from, and hate evil!**

Evil, because of our ever present flesh, is always more interesting. Understanding the allure of evil explains why we watch so much of it, even when it is so clearly destructive. The sheer volume of evil our nation is exposed to on a daily basis is one of the most disturbing effects of the proliferation of media. The only remedy I know is two thousand years old:

*Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. **Abhor** [hate so go away from] **what is evil**. **Cling** [go toward so stuck to, glued to] to what is good. NKJV*

The heart of the message Paul taught them is in Ephesians 4:22-24. Christ's Lordship must fill our lives displacing any places in our lives to the Devil. Three clear choices we must make!

*Ephesians 4:22-24 that you **put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and **be renewed** in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you **put on** the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

To apply all this, remember when Paul taught the Ephesian believers about anything tied to Satan in Acts 19:19-20, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact.

Right now, if you have music, videos, games, books, posters, or other objects that are tied in any way to the occult, destroy them today.

3. Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Look for God When Tempted. This is a daily, purposeful, and planned focus on pleasing the Lord in all things. Start your day crying out for Christ's help. **Look for Him!**

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. NKJV

This verse has a huge truth we need to stop and really lay hold of--**God is there all the time**. The longer we meditate on this verse, the more we see God's shadow. It is He who is standing over us always ready to deliver us if we but look to Him! He is not distant; He is never closer than when we are tempted!

God is there all the time. Have you allowed that truth to sink into your soul and become a part of your operating system? God has told us that He is faithful. Whenever we think we are alone, we are not alone. We never face the adversary, the prowling lion called the Devil—alone.

God has already measured and limited the attack upon us. He has already provided an escape route if we will only look for it and take it. If we were alone and facing temptation, we would be hopelessly defeated.

But God knows that already and so He is there, all the time, and every time. And He has the best way of escape marked for us. What a Mighty God we serve!

Pause and do something before you lose that truth.

- Tell Him thank you for being there with you right now. Now, with your heart opened before Him, tell Him that the next time you are tempted (you may even want to whisper in your heart to Him the temptation you most fear and often get defeated by)—that you will look for Him.

Look for God! He is always faithful!

4. Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Starve their Flesh (Romans 13:14).

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. NKJV

Cut all supply routes. If there are websites, TV shows, magazines, videos, and so on, that are less than Christlike, destroy them. If there are avenues that defile, such as cable TV/HBO and ungodly internet access, get rid of them. Do whatever it takes to starve the evil desires of your flesh, and those of your family. **Put on Christ by starving your flesh!**

- ⇒ Have a *no-television* week or month.
- ⇒ Read God's Word before email or online news each morning.
- ⇒ Pray in the car or meditate on a verse instead of listening to the radio.
- ⇒ Cancel the newspaper or magazine.
- ⇒ Create an intentional solitude.

5. Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Walk in the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-19). Let the Word of God fill your life, and then pass it on to your family! **Walk daily!**

Please turn with me to Ephesians 5:18-19:

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, NKJV

Those biblical commands are meant for each of us, as Christians, to obey. They are not something to simply pray about, and then get around to doing one day. No, they are for us to actively grab hold of and obey—right now!

So God Almighty commands:

**All of Us
To Let His Spirit
Continuously Be Filling You!**

6. **Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Stay in Constant Touch with God** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is the best, greatest, and most powerful way to touch your family's lives! **Pray without ceasing!**

Pray for wisdom, and seek God's direction for how to promote your growth in Christ's mind. Do not let another day go by without praying for your mind. Plan for purity; expose your mind only to the right things. Read the Bible to your family, and discuss it, so they also learn how to draw practical life applications from God's Word. It is by your walk with the Lord that you demonstrate that you love the Holy Scriptures yourself.

Pray for grace to stop the indiscriminate and endless watching of TV and videos, and starting systematic, prayerful reading and studying of God's Word. We all have the time to do what is right—we simply have to make it a priority. Today, let us each choose to cultivate the mind God has willed us to have!

7. **Grace-energized purity means that young men will choose to: Make Little Choices of Self-Restraint** (1 Timothy 4:7). This is a daily pattern of saying no to specific temptations, and saying yes to the Holy Spirit as He prompts you.

Grace teaches this serious spiritual life.

- God says that His grace-energizes us into being serious about spiritual things;
- His grace teaches us how to live a disciplined life: which means self-controlled and not addicted to anything;
- Believers energized by God's grace are in control of their choices, seeking out God's priorities;
- God wants us serious about life, temperate, and avoiding excesses;
- God's grace gives us a clarity of thought that leads to an orderly life;
- His grace leads us to thinking through the Philippians 4:8 grid.

**The Pathway to a
Life of Purity**

God has given to us all we need. The pathway to a life of purity for every young man and every young woman, older man, and older woman is paved with grace. The means of grace that God will use every day in our lives are laid out clearly in His Word. In the Scriptures we find:

1. ***Grace Energizes Purity:*** We begin the pathway of purity with the realization that we are unable to live a single holy moment without the Lord's power-filled grace. "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin?'" (Prov. 20:9), the obvious answer to which is "No one." The Ethiopian cannot change his skin or the leopard its spots (Jer. 13:23). Purity begins with a recognition of our weakness; and then weakness then reaches out for the strength of God.
2. ***The Word Prompts Purity:*** To continue on the pathway of practical purity, we must stay in God's Word. God's will can't be followed apart from His Word. Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3).
3. ***The Spirit Leads Purity:*** The power to maintain a life of practical purity only comes by being controlled by the Spirit, walking in step with God through His Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says it clearly: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."
4. ***Prayer Maintains Purity:*** Jesus was a model of the necessity of prayer. To walk the pathway of life-long purity, we must pray. Prayer keeps us constantly aware of God's Presence. "With all prayer and petition" we are to "pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18; cf. Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17). With David we cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 51:10).
5. ***God seeing Purity:***

"The great blessing of those who are pure in heart is that **they shall see God**. The Greek is in the future indicative tense and the middle voice, and a more literal translation is, "They shall be continuously seeing God for themselves." It is *only they* (the emphatic *autos*), the pure in heart, who **shall see God**. Intimate knowledge of and fellowship with God is reserved for the pure.

When our hearts are purified at salvation we begin to live in the presence of God. Purity of heart cleanses the eyes of the soul so that God becomes visible. One sign of an impure heart is ignorance, because sin obscures the truth (John 3:19-20). Evil and ignorance come in a package. Other signs of an impure heart are self-centeredness (Rev. 3:17), pleasure in sin (2 Tim. 3:4), unbelief (Heb. 3:12), and hatred of purity (Mic. 3:2). Those who belong to God exchange all of those things for integrity and purity".¹⁰¹

God calls every young man, and also every other believer to a life of purity.

Our Consuming Fire God has given us the pathway of grace to follow. His grace energizes us to live the life, walk the walk, and have that powerful integrity of life that matches what we believe.

¹⁰¹ MacArthur, John F. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983. [160 words]

Grace Energized Men: Keep a Singular Focus In a Blurred World Titus 2:7

Jesus said that if our eye is single (Mat. 6:22), all of our lives will be filled with His light. Jesus went on to say that we can't have two masters, we must focus upon one (Mat. 6:24). James warns us of the dangers of being double minded (James 1:8), because it destabilizes every part of our lives.

This morning, Paul tells us through Titus (2:7), that God desires every man to keep a singular focus upon God and His way. A focused life is what each of us should desire to give to God today.

Focus light and you get a laser burst.

Focus water and you get some commercial cutting applications.

Focus atoms and you get some momentary atomic power.

Focus on money and you get a passing fortune like a Rockefeller, Morgan, or Buffet.

Focus on conquest and you get a short-lived Alexander or Hitler.

But—focus your life on Jesus Christ and you get an eternal reward, and endless delights.

We come to the fourth quality, “reverence” that God is looking for in younger men (Titus 2:7). The call goes out through Christ's Church—God wants grace-energized men who choose to keep a singular focus upon Him in a horribly blurring world.

Paul reintroduces us to the quality we have already seen for older men (it was also the second quality listed in v. 2). All men whether older or younger, are called to have a singular focus upon a godly, reverent lifestyle. This word “reverence” describes a man with a “seriousness about life, a dignified lifestyle, and a goal of pursuing whatever honors God”. Reverence doesn't mean never laughing, showing humor, or enjoying life—rather it means checking in first with God, to be sure that the laughter, humor, and enjoyment are pleasing to Him. This grace-energized reverence leads to constant choices to avoid the trivial and pursue the eternal.

Tomorrow's Godly Men Start Today

Paul tells Titus that God put the spotlight on the next generation of leaders for Christ's church. The young men, who want to grow up to be the godly and mature servants of God must begin while they are young to cultivate these six qualities. Do you have them noted? Here they are again:

v. 6 “Likewise exhort the **young men**”:

13. “to be sober-minded”: First in any godly man's life is a firm resolve to **Live a Restrained Life in an Unrestrained World;**
14. v.7 “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works”: Next, these men seek to **Become Representations of Christ In A Christ-less World;**

15. “in doctrine showing integrity”: Then is the constant desire to **Un-enslaved to Corruption in a Corrupted World;**
16. “reverence”: And the vigilant attitude of **Keeping A Singular Focus In A Blurred World;**
17. “incorruptibility”, v. 8: This means that God wants His servants to shine before our sin-darkened world by **Keeping an Incorruptible Life in a Decaying World;**
18. “sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you”. (NKJV):And finally, the whole reason God left His servants here was to go and “tell”, so godly young men are **Speaking God’s Words In A Godless World.**

Whether young or old, God wants men who think deeply about God in an amused, shallow-thinking culture. This man lives a life that is marked by grace-energized convictions:

- This man chooses to not be entertained by sensuality; and
- This man chooses to never be amused by vulgarity.

This quality of godly character means a grace-energized choice to:

- understand the brevity of life;
- experience the gravity of God’s Word; and
- live in the reality of eternity.

This morning, may I challenge every young man in this place to God’s call that you keep a singular focus upon God in an increasingly blurred world.

One of the greatest joys of life is going through this dark world of sin and decay—seeing God. This singular focus means living like the great models of the Old Testament. Living by grace like Moses in Pharaoh’s court, Abraham in Canaan’s tents, Joseph in Potipher’s house, and David on Israel’s hillsides.

Some of the greatest promises found in God's Word are to those who see and follow the Lord. Let’s open to just one of the countless promises offered to the band of those who set their sights upon seeing God, in Hebrews 11. Please stand with me as we read starting in v. 13.

*Hebrews 11:13-12:2 v.13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having **seen them afar off** were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command. 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he **looked to** the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; **for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.** 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**
NKJV*

Pray

Seeing God as

Our Greatest Delight

How is your vision this morning? I recently was struggling seeing with my new glasses. They were made by the best doctor, prepared in the best lab as a special gift for me heading out in ministry—but they were a bit fuzzy. I went in and found that the blurred vision was neither the glasses nor my eyes, it was just one of the nose pads had gotten bent. Just a tiny correction and the world was clear again.

How is your sight of God these days? Crystal clear, bright, and empowering, or has God gotten blurred over the days and weeks of life that has gone by?

One great benefit of grace-energized choices to focus upon God is how clear He becomes.

*Isaiah 33:14b-17 “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” 15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions,
Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes,
Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed,
And shuts his eyes from seeing evil:
16 He will dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks;
Bread will be given him, His water will be sure.
17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;
They will see the land that is very far off. NKJV*

Choosing to Focus on God For a Lifetime

11. Grace-energized Men who Focus on God will choose to: Starve their Flesh (Romans 13:14).

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. NKJV

Cut all supply routes. If there are websites, TV shows, magazines, videos, and so on, that are less than Christlike, destroy them. If there are avenues that defile, such as cable TV/HBO and ungodly internet access, get rid of them. Do whatever it takes to starve the evil desires of your flesh, and those of your family. **Put on Christ by starving your flesh!**

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Pray for wisdom, and seek God's direction for how to promote your growth in Christ's mind. Do not let another day go by without praying for your mind. Plan for purity; expose your mind only to the right things. Read the Bible to your family, and discuss it, so they also learn how to draw practical life applications from God's Word. It is by your walk with the Lord that you demonstrate that you love the Holy Scriptures yourself.

Pray for grace to stop the indiscriminate and endless watching of TV and videos, and starting systematic, prayerful reading and studying of God's Word. We all have the time to do what is right—we simply have to make it a priority. Today, let us each choose to cultivate the mind God has willed us to have!

14. Grace-energized Men who Focus on God will choose to: Make Little Choices of Self-Restraint (1 Timothy 4:7). This is a daily pattern of saying no to specific temptations, and saying yes to the Holy Spirit as He prompts you. One small choice is to turn your monitor so those behind you can see what you are viewing. If you struggle with images online this is a great accountability step. **Discipline yourself!**

Grace teaches this serious spiritual life. Today we can make little choices to give to God what He desires from us.

- **Give Him your un-blurred devotion.** Mark 12:33 “And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” NKJV

Have we offered our devotion up to Him irretrievably, completely, and lovingly—by giving Him time each day because we love Him; by giving Him our complete attention as we focus upon Him in His Word and in prayer?

- **Give Him your un-blurred life.** Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. NKJV

Have we recently renewed that offering of all we are to Him? Have we repeated those simple words of the child Samuel, that the Lord so delights to hear from us, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening!”

- **Give Him your un-blurred service.** Philippians 2:17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. NKJV

Are we pouring out what we cannot keep--to Him so we cannot lose? Each time you serve, look up in your heart from the classroom, nursery, choir room, AWANA room or where ever you offer that service, and say to the Lord, "I am giving this time to you. I can't keep it, I could selfishly squander it, but instead I give it to YOU as an act of devotion and worship!"

- **Give Him your un-blurred gifts.** Philippians 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. NKJV

What is the aroma ascending from our living before Christ's eyes today? Make more of your offerings by praying over each check, hold it in your hand as you mail it or place it in the offering and breathe out to God, "I give this to YOU as an offering of love and gratitude!"

- **Give Him your un-blurred worship.** Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. NKJV

When is the last time we stopped and launched a wave of praise filled worship toward His Throne? Plan to burst forth in your car, or on a walk, or when you are all alone into a cry of love to the Lord. Say something like you sing, "I love YOU Lord and I lift my voice to WORSHIP you...!"

- **Give Him your un-blurred good works.** Hebrews 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. NKJV

What acts of kindness have we premeditated and carried out this week? Plan to do intentional sacrificial acts of kindness for others. Do things unasked, unseen, and not expecting any thanks. As you do that act (like the trash, laundry, sweeping, mowing, what ever) lift you eyes above and say, "I am doing this in YOUR Name Oh Lord because I love YOU and I want to serve like You served!"

- **Give Him your un-blurred prayers.** Revelation 8:3-4 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. NKJV

What do we have in the bowl of our collected prayers? If God loves our prayers so much that He collects them all (like notes from my wife & kids) why don't we send more? Up your times of prayers. Invite God into every praise and problem, every fear and frustration...your life will be revolutionized as you say to the Lord, "I need YOU in every part of my life!"

- God says that His grace-energizes us into being focused upon spiritual things;
- His grace teaches us how to focus on living a disciplined life: which means self-controlled and not addicted to anything;
- Believers energized by God's grace focus their choices upon seeking out God's priorities;

15. Grace-energized Men who Focus on God will choose to: Live like Pilgrims and Strangers here on earth.

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, NKJV

The grace-energized man never gets intoxicated by the error of the world that this world is my home and this is what I live for. Peter explains for us the focused-mind that God wants and that Paul instructs Titus to train up. Peter uses five, very targeted exhortations, in I Peter 1:13-16, in the form of 2 imperative commands surrounded by three participles. The NIV renders them all as commands, and that is the direction we will go this morning. The singular, reverent focus on God is governed by these truths.

- (6) **UNHINDERED: “gird up the loins of your mind”** (NKJV) or **“Prepare your minds for action”** (NIV). In Bible times men often wore long, flowing robes. When strenuous work or running was required they would pull up and cinch into their belt that robe to make what we would call shorts. Obedience is a conscious act of the will. Christians in conflict need a tough-minded holiness that is ready for action. The ancient practice of gathering up one’s robes when needing to move in a hurry; here, it is metaphorically applied to one’s thought process. The meaning is to pull in all the loose ends of one’s thinking, by rejecting the hindrances of the world and focusing on the future grace of God (cf. Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:2).
- (7) **UNINTOXICATED: “be sober”** (NKJV) or **“Be self-controlled”** (NIV) Is our word from Titus 2:2 is word from Titus 2:2 via the verb *νεμφοῦ* (“be sober”) which is always used figuratively in the New Testament. This word describes a person free from every form of mental and spiritual “drunkenness” or excess; and one who resists the control of outside circumstances. God wants believers to be directed from within. As we’ve seen, this form of spiritual sober-mindedness includes the ideas of steadfastness, self-control, clarity of mind, and moral decisiveness. The sober Christian is correctly in charge of his priorities and not intoxicated with the various allurements of the world.

“The opposite of “be sober-minded” is “frenzy, madness.” It is the Greek word mania, which has come into our English vocabulary via psychology. If we are sober-minded, we will be intellectually sound and not off on a tangent because of some “new” interpretation of the Scriptures.

We will also face things realistically and be free from delusions. The sober-minded saint will have a purposeful life and not be drifting, and he will exercise restraint and not be impulsive. He will have “sound judgment” not only about doctrinal matters, but also about the practical affairs of life.¹⁰²

- (8) **UNWAVERED: “rest your hope fully”** (NKJV) or **“Set your hope fully”** (NIV). This balanced mind and holy life demands great determination. A believer’s hope is to be set completely, unwaveringly, and without reservation solely by faith upon **God’s grace**. Only His grace can energize an anchored mind.
- (9) **UNSQUEEZED: “not conforming yourselves to”** (NKJV) or **“do not conform to”** (NIV). Here we see Peter using that famous word from Romans 12:1 (*suschematidzo* “not squeezed into the mold of”) **the evil desires** of their past sinful lives. Rather **as obedient children** (lit., “children of obedience”) they were to mold their characters to God’s Word and the renewed mind’s desires implanted through the Spirit of God.

- (10) **UNTAINTED: “be holy in all your conduct”** (NKJV) or **“all you do”** (NIV). Grace-energized living brings a denial of the old life (their former **ignorance**), and a new walk in the Spirit that is set apart to the desires and wishes of God who gave us new birth and called us to be His own.

Remember the recent tomato scare, as hundreds were sickened and some died from possible tomato borne disease. Remember how some of you looked at anything remotely resembling a tomato in your food? That is how a grace-energized man looks at anything that displeases God!

We live in the most intoxicating time in history. We live around the constant allurements of wealth, comfort and the false promises of security. When we give in to the “Canaanite virus” we slowly detach from the closeness to Christ and His church He calls us to and we drift around seeking our goals, plans, and ambitions.

Whether young or old, God wants men who think deeply about God in an amused, shallow-thinking culture.

This man lives a life that is marked by grace-energized convictions:

- This man chooses to not be entertained by sensuality; and
- This man chooses to never be amused by vulgarity.

This quality of godly character means a grace-energized choice to:

- understand the brevity of life;
- experience the gravity of God’s Word; and
- live in the reality of eternity.

This morning, may I challenge every young man in this place to God’s call that you keep a singular focus upon God in an increasingly blurred world.

What would be one the strongest intoxicant this world has to offer? To understand, lets use the Bible to illustrate for us the dangers we face from this world. One of the strongest tugs on most peoples lives is a spirit of independence. Most humans, and even believers seek to live as independently as we possibly can. We ponder personal goals, personal dreams, and cultivate personal ambitions—often without even realizing that as we do so that we are often just doing what we have decided is right. Note the very last verse of Judges with me.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
NKJV

Living Among Canaanites Today

Without a life anchored by God's Word self-determination and self-driven lives are the norm. Think about what you know about Israel entering the Promised Land. As the Jews entered Canaan they found it unbelievably lush, green, and productive. God had warned them repeatedly about the evil of the people of the land, the Canaanite pagans who God asked them to drive out and destroy.

Rather than get rid of them, Israel slowly began to think that maybe they knew more than God. Maybe their gods made the Land so fruitful. Slowly Israel conformed to think and act like the Canaanites. This whole decline is explained in Psalm 106. Look there with me at Psalm 106:34-36:

They did not destroy the peoples, Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, 35 But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works;36 They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. NKJV

Canaanites seemed nice, they looked harmless, they made great neighbors. But they did have bad habits, they did worship fertility gods and engage in sexual promiscuity, and they did reject the truth of God...but maybe the Canaanite gods really did bring prosperity and success. So Israel mingled and blended in with them.

God's Word warns us that each of us who know Jesus are...

The Canaanite snare to Israel that is played out in the book of Judges is probably a good picture of the autonomous lifestyles many American professing Christians are living these days.

Grace-energized Men are not Independent of God

The online source for many Americans named Wikipedia really does capture the essence of the current American's thinking:

"In general, the American dream can be defined as being the opportunity and freedom for all citizens to achieve their goals and become rich and famous if only they work hard enough."

This statement of the "American Dream" is the most frank definition of what may actually be our deeply rooted national form of idolatry. As believers we have become so American that we think God and the American dream somehow fit together. We are so steeped in our culture and life that we fail to fear the "Canaanite" danger all around us. We are in the very same dangerous place as Israel in the times of the Judges.

Our society offers us all manner of consumer goods, pleasure, travel and enjoyment, the good things of life-- but we are asked to be "tolerant" of (and eventually to buy into) the pagan idolatry which is everywhere around us. And when we do so, and the more we do so—then the terrible sickness and blindness of Revelation 3 takes hold of our lives.

Look with me at Christ's last letter to His church, the ones in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:14-22 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.16 “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.17 “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—18 “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.19 “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.21 “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ” NKJV

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The Evidence of the Spirit Filled Walk

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is both an initial event and an ongoing experience of God that takes place as we yield our lives completely to His control, confessing and repenting of any conscious sin. We also open our lives to the Holy Spirit when we spend time with God, praying and reading His Word. As ³being filled with the Spirit² becomes a normal, moment-by-moment part of our daily walk with God, gracious virtues known as ³fruit of the Spirit² will be produced in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). It is only as the Holy Spirit works within the believer that the following can be realized:

- Putting off of your old self (Eph. 4:22)
- Being made new in the attitude of your minds (Eph. 4:23)
- Putting on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24)
- Putting off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor (Eph. 4:25)
- In your anger not sinning (Eph. 4:26)
- Not giving the devil a foothold (Eph. 4:27)
- Stealing no longer, working, doing something useful with your own hands, that you might have something to share with those in need (Eph. 4:28)
- Not letting any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Eph. 4:29)
- Not grieving the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30)
- Getting rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice (Eph. 4:31)
- Being kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Eph. 4:32)
- No hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people (Eph. 5:3)
- No obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving (Eph. 5:4)
- Not deceived with empty words (Eph. 5:6)
- No partnership with deceivers (Eph. 5:7)
- Finding out what pleases the Lord (Eph. 5:10)
- Having nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather exposing them (Eph. 5:11)
- Being very careful how you live—not as unwise but as wise (Eph. 5:15)
- Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16)
- Not being foolish, but understanding what the Lord's will is (Eph. 5:17)
- Not getting drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, being filled with the Spirit.² (Eph. 5:18)
- Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making music in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19)
- Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20)
- Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21)
- Wives, submitting to your husbands as to the Lord (Eph. 5:22)
- Husbands, loving your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph. 5:25)
- Children, obeying parents in the Lord, for this is right (Eph. 6:1)
- Honoring your father and mother (Eph. 6:2)
- Fathers, not exasperating your children; instead, bringing them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)
- Employees, obeying your employers with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ (Eph. 6:5)
- Serving wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men (Eph. 6:7)
- Employers, treating your employees in the same way. Not threatening them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him (Eph. 6:9)

- Being strong in the Lord and in his mighty power (Eph. 6:10)
- Putting on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes (Eph. 6:11)
- Putting on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand (Eph. 6:13)
- Standing firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place (Eph. 6:14)
- Taking up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Eph. 6:16)
- Taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17)
- Praying in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests; being alert and always praying for all the saints (Eph. 6:18)
- Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love (Eph. 6:24)

What exactly has Christ done for you? What is there in your life that needs Christ to explain it, and that, apart from Him, simply could not have been there at all? If there is nothing, then your religion is a sheer futility. But then that is your fault, not Jesus Christ's.

For, when we open the New Testament, it is to come upon whole companies of excited people, their faces all aglow, their hearts dazed and bewildered by the immensity of their own good fortune. Apparently they find it difficult to think of anything but this amazing happening that has befallen them; quite certainly they cannot keep from laying almost violent hands on every chance passer-by, and pouring out yet once again the whole astounding story. And always, as we listen, they keep throwing up their hands as if in sheer despair, telling us it is hopeless, that it breaks through language, that it won't describe, that until a man has known Christ for himself he can have no idea of the enormous difference He makes. It is as when a woman gives a man her heart; or when a little one is born to very you; or when, after long lean years of pain and greyness, health comes back. You cannot really describe that; you cannot put it into words, not adequately. Only, the whole world is different, and life gloriously new. Well, it is like that, they say.

... [A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*](#)

The redeemed in Heaven crying continually, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood," give, say the scriptures, an adoration which, in depth and fullness, no angel of them all can ever equal. Yet even then, we have not reached the centre. For when we worship, we are in God's presence, and it is what He says and does to us that is the all-important thing, not what we say and do toward Him. Since He is here and speaking to us, face to face, it is for us, in a hush of spirit, to listen for and to His voice, reproving counseling, encouraging, revealing His most blessed will for us; and, with diligence, to set about immediate obedience. This and this, upon which He has laid His hand, must go; and this and this to which He calls us must be at once begun. And here and now I start to it. That is the heart of worship, its very core and essence.

... [A. J. Gossip, *Experience Worketh Hope*](#)