

Heaven's Grocery Store

Titus 2:1-2

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 14, 2019

Turn with me to the book of Titus. That's the book we're in this morning. As we're preparing for Easter Sunday and all the things associated with that, I would invite you to turn with me to a book that talks about the one we celebrate at Easter. Turn to the Book of Titus.

And as you're doing that, many of you know the Book of Titus is about the church. In fact, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in the middle of a series called the "How to Plant a Church" series, because that's what the book is about. Titus tells us how to plan a church, how to get it started and off the ground, but it all goes back to Jesus. If we were going to summarize the book and put one main character of it, He would be it. The main character in the book is Jesus. He's the hero of the story because He's the hero of every story in the Bible, amen? He's the one who plants churches.

I'm guessing you didn't come here today because the person sitting next to you on the pew died for you. You came here because Jesus died for you. And you didn't come here because the person sitting next to you rose from the grave on your behalf. You came here because Jesus did that. He's the one the church stands on one. One poet said it this way, he said, "Christ for sickness, Christ for health, Christ for poverty and Christ for wealth. Christ for joy and Christ for sorrow, Jesus for today and Jesus for tomorrow." It all goes back to Jesus. He is everything to us. We have nothing if we don't have Him.

When his people were finishing the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London in the 1800s, a huge church, Charles Spurgeon spoke at the opening ceremony. And he said this, he said, "I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house as long as the pulpit shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshipers shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I'm never ashamed to avail myself a protestant. I do not hesitate to take the name 'Baptist,' but if I'm asked what my creed is, I reply, 'It is Jesus Christ.'" Can we all say amen to that this morning? Do you believe that this morning? He said, "My venerated professor has left a theological heritage, admirable and excellent in its ways, but the legacy to which I would pin myself forever is Jesus. He is the arm and substance of the Gospel. In Him, is all theology and the incarnation of every precious truth." He's right. Jesus Christ is the substance of what this church stands for. He's the substance of what every church stands for. We rise or fall with Him. Take Him away, take away our Passover Lamb, and we have nothing. There is no church.

And I mention that just by a way of an introduction because I think a lot of Christians are forgetting this today. I think a lot of churches are forgetting the importance of Jesus Christ. In the 1940s, a Gallup poll was taken, and it was discovered that 67% of all Canadians went to church – it was including synagogues. 67%. They found that in some places like Quebec, the number was as high as 90%, the highest percentage of anywhere in the world. Canada in the 1940 was like one gigantic Bible belt. It had a huge Christian influence in this country. There were more people that went to church in Canada, percentage-wise than went to church in the United States. But in the 1990s, the same poll was conducted again and they found that the number had changed. The

country had gone in reverse. Only 23% of people went to church at that time, in the 1990s. The number dropped by more than 40%, and the question is why? What happened to Canada? And the answer is the people forgot about Jesus Christ. They forgot about the one who holds the church together. As a nation, we said, "He's old news, we don't need Him anymore. We have our morality, we have our laws, we have our tolerance and our polite ways, and Jesus gets in the way of all of that. So, He has to go." And as a result, the church went with Him. You can't have one without the other. You can't have the church without Jesus Christ. He is everything to us. He holds the whole thing together.

And I mention this because you really see this in the Book of Titus. The Book of Titus, it talks about a lot of things as you've seen in our series, but it all goes back to the person of Christ. Even in a book like this where it's so much hands-on stuff about the church, Jesus is still the central figure. If you look in Titus 2:11-15, this is what Titus says about the Lord Jesus.

In verse 11, he says,

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

I want to say a few words about that in just a moment, but I've told you before that the outline of the Book of Titus is very simple at the end of the day. It's easy to follow. It's about leadership and living. That's the two themes of the book of Titus. Chapter 1 talks about leadership, the kind of leaders you want to see in the church. We've been talking about that over the past couple of weeks. And chapters 2 through 3 talk about living, the way you're supposed to live the Christian life.

And right at the end of chapter 2, Paul says that, "This is how you are to do that. This is how you are to live the Christian life - you do it through Jesus Christ. You do it all by His grace. You don't do it by your works, you do it by His grace. You don't do it through yourself, you do it through Him. He takes all the glory for your life." Verse 11, if you notice in chapter 2 says, the grace of God has appeared. Verse 12 says, it instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Which means that as soon as it appears in your life, the grace of God changes you. It makes you different. Verse 13 says, we look to the blessed hope and the appearing of Jesus who makes us zealous for good deeds. Which means the same thing - Jesus gives you your good deeds. They come from Him.

It's been said that grace is God giving everything to those who deserve nothing, and that's what this says. When God saves us, He gives us everything. He holds nothing back. It's also been said that when you work and receive payment, that's a wage. When you compete and win a contest, that's a trophy, but when you can't work and you can't compete and you can't do anything and you're rewarded anyway, that's grace. It's all of grace. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all man. Not only did God's grace bring salvation, but it brought it to all

men, all types of men, and people from all walks of life. You can be saved if you trust in Jesus and repent, which is what chapter two is all about. This is how the grace of God impacts your life.

We've been going through chapter 1 the past couple of months. Now, we're in chapter 2. We have made progress, and this is what chapter two is about. Let me say it this way, I my studies this week, I came across a really neat story. It was a man who dreamed he was walking into a place called "Heaven's Grocery Store". (I named the sermon after that.) But he dreamed he was walking into a place called Heaven's Grocery Store, and as he walked through the front door, an angel met him and handed him a basket and said, "Take whatever you want, then go see the man at the register." So, he did that. He walked the aisles of the grocery store and he saw items labeled "patience" and "understanding" and "love", and he pulled them off the shelves and put them in his basket. He said, "I need some of that. I need some patience. I need a lot of patience." Another aisle, he saw a bar of "meekness" and "gentleness" and he put that in the basket. He saw some "courage" and "perseverance." He noticed "truth" and "wisdom" and all these good things. And he filled his basket up with them and he went to the cash register to pay. And he took out his wallet and the attendant stopped him and said, "No, you don't understand, this is all free because Jesus paid it all. There is no charge. The charges go to Him. In fact, He paid for so much of this stuff that you can come back anytime you want and get more. The store is always open to you."

Isn't that what salvation is all about? When Paul says, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men," he means the store is always open to you. You can come back anytime you want and get more grace. You can come back tomorrow and fill your basket up. You can come back the day after that and fill your basket up. It never runs out. Do you guys ever pray to the Lord, "Lord, give me patience, and give it to me now?" Anybody ever prayed that before? Spend a couple of summers working with children, and oh man. You ever prayed, "Lord, give me some love for this person over here and give it to me now?" He will. He will.

Listen, I don't know where everybody's at this morning, but I'm guessing some of you can really use some of this. Some of you can really use some grace. If you were in the conference last week, you might've walked away with the wrong impression from that. You might have been discouraged, because you might've said, "Well, how am I going to do that? How am I going to love my wife like that?" Right? "50 questions. How am I going to get through 50 questions?" "How am I going to love my husband that way?" And the answer is you do it by His grace. This is all by His grace. If you listened to the sermon last Sunday on suffering, you might've had the same response. You might've said, "How am I going to do that? How am I going to suffer as if God is working for my good? How am I going to handle things like that woman who was so mistreated? How am I going to forgive?" The answer is you do it by His grace. This is all by His grace. You go to Heaven's Grocery Store and you fill your basket up to the top. That's what chapter 2 is all about in Titus. Jesus paid it all. He took care of everything so that you can come and get what you need and change by the grace of God.

We don't always get this, do we? Am I the only one? Do you guys ever want to walk up to the cash register and pull your wallet out and pay? We think this is all about ourselves. We can fix our problems without any help, and God says, "No, you don't understand, this is free. This is all free. It won't cost you a penny because Jesus paid all of it. Just a few passages on this. John 1:16

says, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” That phrase “grace upon grace” is beautiful because it means as soon as one grace leaves, another grace takes its place. As soon as you use one grace up, another one steps in to replace it. It comes out of Jesus' fullness, which is an infinite fullness, which means you never run out of grace, if you come to Christ. James 4:6 says, “But He gives us more grace.” You could almost put in parentheses “and more grace and more grace.” First Peter 5:10 says, “He is the God of all grace.” One other passage, Hebrews 4:16 says, “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” The author of Hebrews says, God's throne is a throne of grace. You need grace. You come to the throne and grace flows from the very steps.

And this is what our passage is about this morning. If you're taking notes, in Titus 2:1-2, we're just going to look at the first couple of verses. But I want to show you two ways the grace of God changes you. That's really what the whole part of Titus chapter 2 is about - the way God's grace changes you. Titus has talked about leadership, or Paul has. He set up some foundations for elders and things like that. And now, he's going to get to the people in the pew, and he's going to tell you how God's grace impacts your life; two ways it changes you. We could say, here's two ways a trip to Heaven's Grocery Store will change you. If you understand all the stuff I just mentioned, if you know you can shop in heaven and take whatever you need and it's free, that should change your life, amen? That should make an impact. You should have a different marriage if you understand this. You should have a different home; you should be a different person. And we're going to talk about that a little bit this morning with two ways.

The first one is this, the first way the grace of God changes you is it changes the way you look at doctrine. It changes the way you look at doctrine. Now, I know as soon as I say that word, some of you are thinking, “Pastor Jeremy, this sermon sounded kind of interesting until you said that.” Some of you - “You're losing me on the word ‘doctrine’ there. What does that have to do with all of this?” Well, let me walk you through that and show you. The first way the grace of God changes you, it changes the way you look at doctrine. And if you want to read in Titus chapter 1:10, I'm going to read a big portion of Scripture to you, and then I want to explain it to you. But let's start in chapter 1:10 just so you can see the context of this.

Paul writes and he says,

10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. 12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.” 13 And this testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Then in chapter 2:1, “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”

I told you a moment ago that the outline of the book of Titus is about leadership then living. The book starts out by talking about leaders in chapter 1, the good leaders and bad ones. And the chapter ends with talking about bad leaders, the kind you don't want in the church. And after talking about them, Paul transitions into chapter 2 by saying, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." In other words, one way you get bad leaders out of the church is with sound doctrine. That's the connection between these two chapters. One way you remove bad elements in the church and take away their influence is by teaching people the truth. One commentator said, "All trifles vanish away when solid truth is taught."

In fact, if you notice, the verse starts off with the word "but" in verse 1, forming a contrast. This is a break with all that's been said before. In other words, the bad leaders are rebellious and empty talkers and deceivers, they focus on Jewish myths and the commandments of men. In other words, it's just works, works, works with these guys. It's just rules, rules, rules, because they thought they were saved that way. And Paul says, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." In other words, the way to get that teaching out of the church is to teach the opposite. You need to tell people about God's grace, he says. In fact, this is so important that Paul says you need to be speaking it. That's in the continuous tense here in Greek. It means you are to talk about God's grace and the fact that Jesus paid it all over and over and over again. You're to teach this stuff repeatedly because people forget it. We're all prone to go back to works-based religion. We all want to pull our wallet out, and Paul says, "Titus, you have to take them back to the fact that you don't need to do that."

He says to speak the things which are fitting for - if you notice the word "sound" doctrine. That that word "sound" in Greek means "healthy" or "wholesome". And doctrine just means "instruction" or "teaching". So, Paul tells Titus to speak the things which are fitting for healthy teaching. And it's not very healthy to hear about works all the time, is it? It doesn't make for a very healthy Christian. It doesn't make for a joyful one, I'll tell you that. I've counselled people, counselled Christians who come out of a church where they just hear about rules, rules, rules, works, works, works. And I'll tell you, they are miserable people. They're no fun to be around, and they're so discouraged. They're so defeated because no matter what you do. It's never enough works, is it? No matter what you do, you can never keep the law. And so, these people are just so frustrated. They feel like a hamster on a wheel, they're never getting anywhere.

I've counselled other people who've never been taught about God's forgiveness. They've grown up in church, and they've never heard how much God forgives and how all their sins are nailed to the cross. They're just as miserable too. They feel guilty all the time. They're so touchy. It's not healthy either. Paul says, "Titus, it's your job to tell people something different. It's your job as a leader of the church to offer them something better. You need to tell them about the grace of God. Hold them by the hand, take them to Heaven's Grocery Store and let them walk the aisles and look around a little bit and fill their baskets up. Tell them they are not working to pay God back." You guys have heard of the bumper sticker that says, "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go?" No, nobody? There's some Christians, they put the word "church" in their - "I owe, I owe, it's off to church I go." You can go to church for a million near years, you'll never pay God back. It's not the way it works. This is all by His grace.

In a preaching magazine that I read, a pastor tells a story about the time he was eating at a restaurant in Tampa Bay, Florida. Tampa Bay is one of the orange growing capitals in the United States. There're just orange trees everywhere. And as he was eating, he ordered some orange juice to go along with this food, and they told him they were out of it. He said, "What do you mean you're out of it? Just go pick some." And in this magazine, he made a really good point. He said, "Some people do that with the grace of God today. They think God's out of grace." There's grace everywhere. There's mercy everywhere. There's salvation full and free, and there's grace upon grace. And God is a God of all grace. And God's throne is a throne of grace. And they show up to church as if God just ran out of it for them.

Paul says, it's never that way with God. God's grace never dries up. There's always some leftover to spare. And he says, "Titus, when you're talking about how people are to change, this is supposed to be the theme of your teaching."

Second Corinthians 12:9, Paul says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." Paul says, "If you're weak, that's okay because God's grace is sufficient." That means it's enough. If you need help, that's okay. There's grace for that. If you need patience, there's grace for that. If you need more love for your spouse, there's grace for that. There's always grace.

But it all goes back to sound doctrine. This all goes to what is being taught in the church. You need to be teaching people that God's grace is enough. It is sufficient. You shouldn't be talking about rules, rules, rules all the time. It doesn't help people.

You know over the main gate of Auschwitz, the concentration camp where so many Jews died in World War II, there was a huge sign with the following words in German *arbeit macht frei* - it means "work makes you free". And the ironic thing is that work did not free those Jews in Auschwitz, it killed them. It didn't bring salvation, it brought death and destruction because that's all that works by themselves can do. Without any grace, without any mercy, works can only kill a man. You see this with people today. They work and they work, and they work, and what happens to them? They die. They get nowhere. They try and they try, and they try and it's never enough. It doesn't bring salvation, it doesn't bring peace, it doesn't bring joy. Their peace is dead. Joy is dead for them. And Paul says this, it's the job of the church, it's the job of a minister of the Gospel to step into that situation and stop that and tell them that there is forgiveness and mercy at the cross. I'll show you this in a moment, but from this, flowing into the rest of the chapter until you get to verse 11, Paul talks about works. But he begins here by saying that, "Your works are to be couched in the theme of sound doctrine and grace and mercy."

Let me say this another way, this is why you learn sound doctrine, so it will change your life. You don't learn it just to learn it. You don't read the Bible just to read it. You read it so you'll change. D. L. Moody once said, if people would obey the first commandment, then they would obey the following nine. It's because they don't obey the first commandment that they fail to keep the rest. And it's the purpose of sound doctrine to help you obey the first commandment, "Have no other gods before me." Augustine said it this way, he said, "Love God perfectly and you can do whatever you want." Think about that for a minute. But it's true. The problem is we don't love God perfectly, but that's what doctrine helps us to learn how to do. And if all your affections are

focused on Him, then you will do the right thing in your life. And that's what Paul is talking about here.

He mentioned sound doctrine in verse 1, and he goes straight into telling us how to live, as I'll show you. Because in Paul's mind, there's no separation between the two. Sound doctrine leads to sound living. Healthy teaching leads to a healthy life. Show me a church where the people have good doctrine, and I'll show you a church where the people live good lives. The two go together, they always go together. Show me a church where they don't have that, and I'll show you something is off with the doctrine.

And this leads naturally into the second way the grace of God should change you. Thanks for letting me talk about that first point for a little while. But that's important because it lays the foundation for the rest of this passage. But first, the grace of God changes the way we look at doctrine. It changes the way we look at teaching and instruction in the church. It shouldn't be about rules, rules, rules, all the time. That's the way it was with the false teachers. That's the way it was with the guys who focused on the Jewish myths and the commandments of men and things like that. But for us, it should be about grace and something greater than that.

Which leads to the next way the grace of God should change you, and this is where it starts getting practical. It should change the older men in the church. So, starting in verse 2, Paul goes into a list of several groups that the grace of God should change, several groups that should be impacted by this doctrine. And the first one he mentions is the older men. He talks about younger men and older and younger women too. We'll see that in the next couple of weeks.

But he starts with the older men because they're the ones who usually have the greatest influence in the church. They're the ones who have the greatest impact. Nothing can bless a church like a godly, older man, amen? I mean, nothing. And on the flip side, nothing can hurt a church like an ungodly older man. You know, a senior saint is a great blessing, but a senior sinner, that's tough.

And so, to address this, Paul says it this way in verses 1 through 2, he says, “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.” It's interesting that so far in this book, Paul has been writing chiefly to the leaders of the church or the elders. He's been writing to those who are in a position of authority. But now, he shifts gears for a moment, and he addresses the rest of the congregation. And he starts with the older men.

And that word “older men” it's the word *presbutes* in Greek, which comes from the word *presbuteros* which was translated “elder” in chapter 1. So, if you look in chapter 1:5, Paul says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city.” That's the same word we see here. Or it comes from the same root. Depending on the context, it can refer to the office of the elder, it can refer to the age of an older man. But here, it refers to the age in chapter 2, because he's already talked about the office. This is a reference to older men. Just to tie that into another passage, in Philemon 8 through 9, Paul says, “Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged.” That's this word here. The word “aged” is this word.

Many believe Paul was in his 60s when he said this. So, this could refer to a man in his 60s or older because Paul would have aged prematurely. His life was hard and tough, so he would've looked older than he was, no matter what age he was, if you've been beaten and shipwrecked and starved like he was. But that is the age range, 60, 70s, 80s, above that maybe.

Which is important to mention, I think, in this day and age, because a lot of men blow that season of life, amen? A lot of men waste their latter years, women too. They come to the end of their life and they say it's time to party, right? In his book "Don't Waste Your Life", John Piper writes about a couple that retired in their 50s. They retired early in order to travel the world, collecting seashells and playing softball. And after describing that, John Piper, who was in his 60s as he wrote this, he said, "That is a tragic waste of a life." To come to the end of your life, to prepare to meet God, to almost walk into the gates of eternity and what are you going to do with it? You know, play softball.

But millions of people are doing that today, right? I don't know if it's this way in Canada, but I know in the States, it's like as soon as you get out of high school, young people just blow those college years destroying themselves and older people at the other end of it, blow it destroying themselves on their retirement, spiritually destroying themselves. So, I can blow it on the front end, calm down a little bit when you have kids, and then blow it again.

I was in a cemetery in Illinois several years ago after preaching someone's funeral. I get to spend a decent amount of time in cemeteries. It's a very sobering kind of line of work. And so, I see a lot of tombstones. And I came across one (this was in Illinois) with a huge St. Louis Cardinals logo on it and I thought the same thing. St. Louis Cardinals is a baseball team in the United States. I'm actually a fan. I like the Cardinals alright. But I thought, "What is that doing here?" Look, you bury me under a cross, amen? You bury me under a Bible, but don't bury me under a St. Louis Cardinals. What's that going to do in the next life? A lot of people are spending their lives on that.

And my point is you need to be ramping up for eternity as you get older, not ramping down. You need to be gearing up for the big day, not going the other way. You're about to stand before the great white throne. You're about to stand before the Lord of Heaven and earth. Don't do it with a baseball team on your mind. You can watch baseball, that's fine. Don't watch the Cubs though, it's a terrible team. I'm just kidding. They won the World Series a couple of years ago.

And Paul says in this passage a couple of ways you need to gear up for eternity as an older man, for one, he says, you should be more temperate. If you notice that in verse two, "Older men are to be temperate or sober minded." Which means they should leave their youthful ways behind. They shouldn't let themselves go wild. "Don't sow your wild oats when you're young or when you're old," he says.

And second, he says, they should be dignified. That word means "grave" or "serious" about life. They shouldn't fritter their time away on silly things. Life is too short for that. He says here they should be sensible, which is kind of a synonym of both those two ideas. It puts them both together. And they should be sound in faith. That could actually be translated "sound in the faith". That means they should know the Bible, they should know the doctrine, they should know

the faith, because young people come to them looking for help. Young people come to older people looking for wisdom. And so, older people should know the Scriptures to help them. They should know the faith. They should be sound in love. It means they shouldn't be angry and bitter. And they should be sound in perseverance. They shouldn't give up on people and say, "The whole world is going to hell in a handbasket and I don't care anymore."

But the point is that this is what the grace of God should do in someone's life. This is how it should impact older men. It should change them; it should mold them into these things. It should soften them, not harden them with time. It should make them more gracious, not less gracious.

Listen, when a man does all these things, he is a tremendous blessing to the church. He's a joy to have around. Give me a man who is temperate, dignified, sensible sound in the faith, in love and in perseverance, and you will see someone who will be greatly used of God. On the flip side, give me an older man who is not these things; who is intemperate, undignified, insensible, heretical in the faith, in love and perseverance, and he will be a tremendous burden to the church. That's why Paul puts this in here.

You know, when I think of the impact older men have had on the Bible, it's enormous. You can't even quantify it. I looked this up this week in preparation for this, but you can tell in the Bible, older men turned the world upside down for God. For example, Moses was 80 years old when he went back to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let my people go; 80 years old. Acts 7:30 says that. Now, let me ask you, what are most people doing today in their 80s? Watching TV? Going out to eat at IHOP? IHOP's a great place by the way. I'm not knocking IHOP. But Moses was confronting the most powerful leader in the world. Remember in Exodus 3, when he says, "Lord, could you send someone else?" That's why. "I'm too old for this." Genesis says that Abraham was 75 years old when the Lord spoke to him the first time. Not the second time or the third time – the first time. Abraham was converted, and he started his ministry at the age of 75 years old. Here's one that will blow your mind. Noah was 600 years old when he entered the Ark. Think about that for a moment. 600 years old and he's out there building an Ark when some creation scientists say it may have never rained before. They thought he went loony in his old age, right? By most accounts, Joshua was in his 90s when he conquered the Promised Land. He fought the Canaanites at an age when most people would be sitting in a rocking chair. But the point is God uses older men. He doesn't give up on them. He doesn't let the young people have all the fun. He doesn't let the younger generation do all the work of the Lord. This is for everyone. And Paul here, as an older man, writes to older men and says, "God can still use you greatly."

One of my favourite examples of this comes from John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, the Methodist movement. Because at the age of 86, John Wesley complained in his journals that he had to sleep until 5:30 in the morning and he could only work 15 hours a day. Let me repeat that. John Wesley complained because he had to sleep until 5:30 in the morning and could only work 15 hours a day. What a lazy person, right? He did that because he was ramping up for eternity, not ramping down. He did that because he was making his gray hair count for the next life. And the Lord tremendously blessed him for that.

In the words of George Whitfield, George Whitfield said, "I want to burn out, not rust out for God." Can you say that this morning? Do you want to burn out instead of rust out? Do you want

to make your life count no matter what stage you're in? John Piper, who I just mentioned a moment ago, he said, "Our lives are wasted if they don't make much of Christ. They're thrown away if they're not used to glorify Him."

Which leads me to ask you this morning, what are you doing with your life? What are you doing with the precious time that you have? It's been said you only have a dash. If you go in the cemeteries and you look at the time that these people have lived, there's always a dash in the middle, isn't there? Born, dead, and in the middle, it's just a dash. What are you doing with it? How are you making it count? Are you imitating those godly men in the Bible? Men like Moses and Abraham and Noah and Joshua? Are you giving everything you have for the Lord? Are you making much of Christ? Are you doing everything you can to make Him known? Are you telling others about the Saviour or are you wasting your time on seashells and softball? Are you frittering it away on things that don't matter?

If you are, if you're wasting your time, I want to tell you this morning, it doesn't have to be that way. You can turn your life around and make it count today. You don't have to waste it, you don't have to blow it. You can honour God right now. And you do it (tying all this together) by trusting in His grace. Listen, friends, God can make beauty out of ashes. He can make diamonds come out of coal. And if you've wasted your life, if you're coming to the end of it and you're saying, "This has all been for nothing," It doesn't have to be that way because God can redeem it, and Jesus can save you and turn your life around.

Friends, let's look at it this way, we're all in the latter years of our life. I don't care how old you are. You're all in the latter stages. It's all just a dash. We're all on borrowed time. You only have so much time and that's it. You don't get any more. But Jesus came so you could make it count for eternity. He came so that if you trust in Him today, He will come into your soul, take you by the hand and lead you straight to Heaven's Grocery Store, so you can pick up whatever you need. You can browse the aisles, you can look around, you can fill your basket up and you can come back tomorrow and fill it up again. And you can come back the next day and fill it up again, and you can come back the next day and fill it up again. And they'll always be more for you. And when you come to the cash register and you pull your wallet out, the attendant will say, "You can put that away, you don't need it anymore because Jesus paid it all." Friends, Jesus paid for all of our sins this morning. He paid for all of our wrongs against God, so that if we trust in Him, trust in His grace, we can be saved this morning.

You know, when I think of these older men that have made such an impact in eternity, one name that comes to mind is the name of John Newton. Some of you might be familiar with that name. But John Newton was a son of a ship captain and he says that the age of seven years old, he went off to sea, seven years old. And he said for the next 16 years, he became the youngest most evil depraved sailor the world had ever known. He was so bad that one time he deserted ship, he was tied to the mast and flogged eight dozen times for his punishment. He became a slave trader. He said, "I was such an evil person I traded human lives for money."

But in one of those trips out in the Atlantic Ocean, his ship was caught in a storm and he cried out to God to save him. He didn't even know what he was saying, really. He said, "I didn't know who God was, but I cried out to God to save me. And when I got back to land, I found a minister

who told me about Jesus Christ and the way He forgave sinners, and He changed my life.” And as the years went on, John Newton became an ordained minister in the Church of England. And as an older man, he says, people would come from miles around to hear this converted sailor and slave trader talk about what God had done for him. They could not believe God would change a man like that.

And he went on to write some famous hymns. One of them was originally called “Faith's Review and Expectation”, but it was changed to the first words of the song. And it went like this, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.”

Friends, is God's grace still amazing to you this morning? Does it still blow you away that the God of the universe would forgive a wretch like you and a wretch like me? If it does, there's nothing better we can do than sing about it. We're going to do that in a moment. But let me close us in a word of prayer.

Father, as we talk about this passage in Titus chapter 2, and we continue our studies in the weeks to come, we pray for Your help, Lord, in articulating and proclaiming Your grace. We read a passage like this chapter and it's so many works in here. So many good works for older men and younger women and older women, younger men, these different groups in the church. But You so beautifully tie it back into the amazing grace that is given to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, may we always look at the Christian life like this. It is a life of grace. It is a life of mercy. No matter what stage of life we're in, old, young, in between, it's all a dash. But in Your kindness, it can be a dash that counts.

Father, I pray for those who are here this morning, whatever stage of life they're in. If they don't know Your grace (Your people who are here) that they would know it for the first time.

And Father, for all those You've saved, I know there's many here who have trusted in Christ and have experienced this grace. May they be so encouraged and blown away by the way You've opened up the free gates of eternity for us. Lord, You are so merciful and kind. May we go out and live like it today and believe it in our hearts.

Thank you, Father, for what Christ has done, and thank you for the time of the year we're approaching when we can celebrate the resurrection and remember what He's done. But until then, this morning, Lord, we are blown away by Your amazing grace. May You be glorified as we sing about it now. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.