

Grace Energized Men— Don't Waste Your Life Titus 2:1-2

As we open to the book of Titus, remember that the New Testament has three letters written specifically to pastors, explaining how they are to teach and lead Christ's flock. Titus is one of the three, and is a book about how all of us are to conduct ourselves in Christ's church. I, II Timothy and Titus are these "Pastoral Epistles" where God explains the "How to's" for the churches that Christ is building.

The essence of God's plan is that He wants to enlist men who are at the peak of their lives and careers, to invest the best days of their lives with Him. He has the same plan for women who are at in the best days of their lives. And for those in the strong and flexible days of their youth, He has the same request. Give your life to Me, don't waste your life on anything less!

In Titus 2, God says to start a training program that would involve comprehensive, church-wide nurturing. The curriculum God offers has 24 specific lessons. We are beginning on those lessons in this study of Titus 2:1-2. Look again at God's Word:

*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;*

I like to consider these verses a series of:

Choices that keep us From Wasting Life

We could conclude that in Titus 2:2, God asks each older man to make a choice: "You can invest your life, or waste your life—it's up to you!"

Think about those choices as we look at this crucial portion of Scripture for every man who knows Christ!

These are the first six lessons are to be taught to the "older" men. Paul asked Titus to be on the lookout for "older" men to enlist in the training of younger men. But before we examine that training course, who exactly would make up the list of "older" and "younger" men? The Bible of course helps us define these designations.

In Philemon, Paul describes himself with the same word we find in Titus 2:2. Let's turn there to the very next book in your Bible, to Philemon 1, for a moment.

*Philemon 1:9 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” (**Paulos presbutes**) is where we see the very same word as the one used in Titus 2:2. The other term, for younger men we can find when the event in Acts 7:58 is recounted, Paul is there described as a young man (**neanias**) 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*

So, Paul is using some standard of age classification that the readers of his epistles in that day would know:

Who are the Older ones Of 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 most likely uses the 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 **presbutes** when they are between the ages of 49 to 59 and **geron** (as in Geritol and gerontology) for anyone past that age.¹

We also know that within Biblical parameters, God had already established a program where the Levites would retire at age 50 to assist and mentor the younger priests² (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 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.

¹Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1997, S. Phm 9

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,” (presbutes) yet he still 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.

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.

America recently passed the year that the birthrate of the group called "Baby Boomers" peaked. In 1957 there were 4.3 million babies born. Those who survived turned 50 that year—and became 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 with greater eternal value.

Just mentioning the concepts of 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, and:

At age 50 God Wants You Investing YOUR Life 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 spiritual ears of your heart 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." [551 words]

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 Christ, love Him, and offer our lives back to Him. But unless we are careful, we can allow the Lord to get blurry.

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 pathogens³:

Pathogen 1— Un-Forsaken Desires

These sins of old age (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

³ Excerpted from **Living Hope**, week 20.

“by the skin of his teeth.”) What are these sins of old age?

- **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!"*

Pathogen 2— Un-Recognized Exception-ism

What is exception-ism? 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.

Pathogen 3— Un-Mortified pockets of pride

“Un-mortified pockets of pride” means allowing pride to grow that can make you secretly, inwardly proud of your **intellect** (thinking you are smarter than others); or proud of your **achievements** (thinking you are better than others); or proud of your **goodness** (thinking “I'm not as bad as others”).

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!”

As we turn back to Titus 2, note again the description of the men who will not waste their lives. Those special men in Christ's Church will be:

Godly Men of Maturity

The men of Crete, saved by grace, were to be personally trained 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; MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE IN AN OBSESSIVE-COMPLUSIVE WORLD**. God wants matured, godly older men in Christ's church to live a life that exemplifies Jesus to a watching world.
2. **"reverent"**: God also asks older men to **Stay Serious About God In An Amused World; GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT GOD IN AN AMUSED WORLD**. God wants older men who model what it's like to live life seriously. This man thinks deeply in an amused, shallow-thinking culture. 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. **"temperate"**: Then they are to be characterized by **Living Wisely In A Foolish World; LIVING WISELY IN A FOOLISH WORLD**. God wants older men whose lives are yielded to His control. 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.

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

4. **"sound in faith"**: This means God wants them always **Guarding A Healthy Mind In A Sick World; GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD**. God wants older men with healthy minds. **Sound** is from the same word (*hugiain*) used in v.1 for Biblical doctrine, and refers to things that are healthy, proper, whole, and as they ought to be.
5. **"[sound in] love"**: Means that God also wants His servants to **Stay Tender Hearted In A Cruel World; STAYING TENDER HEARTED IN A CRUEL WORLD**. God wants men who have His love overflowing within making them personally loving towards others, not bitter. These godly men 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. **"[sound in] patience"**: And finally, as we'll see later today, God wants older men to **Finish Hopefully In A Despairing World. FINISHING HOPEFULLY IN A DESPAIRING WORLD**. God wants men who persevere through all the hard times life will always bring—and then model that triumphant hope Christ alone can bring.

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

Invest the Rest of Your Life

With God

God is on the lookout for men who have ears to hear His Word, eyes that see His plan, and who are surrendered, yielded, sold-out, full-hearted, true-seekers of Him.

Helen H. Lemmel (1864–1961), the blind hymn writer, gave us this beautiful song (it is Hymn # 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 of surrender 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 conquerors 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.*

Ask Him here today to open your eyes.