

Instructions to the Older Men in the Church

sermonaudio.com

Beautifying the Bride, p.3

By Jeff Noblit

Bible Text: Titus 2:2
Preached on: Sunday, June 4, 2023

Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Titus 2, we're still talking about "Beautifying the Bride" because God is all about beautifying his bride. He wants the best for his bride, and the best for his bride is that his bride magnifies him, glorifies him, reflects him truly so to the world around us. And so when you get to 1 and 2 Timothy and then Titus, you have what scholars have called the pastoral epistles, as they are written to pastors, but to pastors to the end of reforming, reshaping, organizing, aligning, correcting things so that the church will be the beautified, or beautiful I should say, bride Christ wants her to be and intends for her to be.

So Titus is a younger man than Paul, and Paul has left this understudy of his, Titus, on the Greek island of Crete and he says to Titus very pointedly, "I've left I've left you there to set things in order, or to straighten things out in these churches." And I might say to you that never gets done completely in this world. Now one day his church will be perfected and glorified in the eternal state. Thank God for that. Aren't you getting tired of you? Aren't you getting tired of you? Don't you have something in you that says, "I look forward to the day when I'm perfected and glorified, when the real me down in there that wants to love Christ with everything really does love Christ with everything finally"? Well, that's going to happen, but until then God has ordained that pastors be tools through which God continually sanctifies and builds up his church.

Well, we cut to chapter 2 and Paul is writing to Titus and he's getting down to brass tacks. He's getting down to where the rubber meets the road and he's giving us some very practical instructions. So we'll look at Titus 2:2 this morning and we'll talk about older men. I've entitled this "Instructions to Older Men in the Church." And then, of course, he's going to talk later on in verses 3 through what verse 6 or so talking to older ladies, and then younger ladies, and then the young men again, and then the servants and slaves just what's your duties and what should be your role in the church. He says more to the ladies than he does to the men. I've probably put more energy in this verse on the older men than I'll put on the older ladies because I don't like getting emails from people who are upset with what I'm saying. I'm teasing, ladies. You don't do that or you haven't. May be the first time coming up, who knows? But nevertheless, be honest, it warmed my heart as I think about a lot of our older men because I've grown old with a lot of you and, um, you're a blessing to your pastor but we have not arrived so let's humble ourselves to be more of the older men God says from his word we are to be.

Titus 2:2, let's read it together. "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith," that's a preposition that applies to all three, "sound in faith, sound in love, and sound in perseverance." Now in verse 1 of chapter 2, Paul gave specific instruction to Titus about Titus. "Titus, now your duty, your job is to keep on speaking, i.e. preaching the things pertaining to sound doctrine. Keep pouring on the sound Bible doctrine that the church must have." Now he shifts and says now for the older men, but what I'd like to point out again here before I talk specifically about the older men is that let's remind ourselves that doctrine is practical. So Titus moves to this practical, appropriate doctrine for the older men, then he's gonna talk to the older ladies, and then to the younger ladies, then to the younger men, and then to slaves and servants. So he's getting very practical and we need doctrine because doctrine is essential for our standing before God that we stand as forgiven and justified in God's sight through the merits of Jesus Christ. Doctrine is essential to bring men to that faith and that conclusion but doctrine is also essential for our service to God. Sound doctrine is essential to lead us to Christ and conversion and sound doctrine is essential for our ongoing consecration, or you could say sound doctrine is essential for salvation but it is also essential for sanctification. It is it is essential for building a church, and it is essential for building up the church. Sound doctrine is both profound and practical and perpetual. It never goes out of style. And that's why I'm troubled by so many things going on in church services today that have nothing to do with the Spirit-anointed preaching of sound doctrine because we can't get too much of that. It's so essential. And so until you've exhausted this book, let's leave the other things out. Let's stay with the thing that matters the most, doctrine, practical, profound, and perpetual.

So here he begins in verse 2 with the sound doctrine. Remember the word doctrine means teaching. That's all it means. So when someone says, we don't need this doctrine stuff, that just divides people. You must have the teaching, the doctrine of the word of God. But he begins with older men, uh, and and what we see here, Titus is, uh, matter of fact, in the the old, uh, ancient world, all families of means had a house steward, someone who oversaw all the property of the household under the owner or the master. You remember watching Downton Abbey? In my house there was no vote about that. I had to watch Downton Abbey, and it was a good clean show. And you could tell me, many of you ladies, the man's name, but they had a house steward. I love the way he carried himself. He oversaw everything else under the others and there was a dignity to that. He wasn't this beat-down servant. He there was a glory in him taking care of the master's things. Well, here Titus is, Titus is the household steward. The house didn't belong to him. It's God's household. But he's the steward under God and now he must faithfully administer the provisions and the food necessary for these local churches, the household of God, to be fed, be nourished, and be healthy and function properly in God's household.

Now when we say the word older man in verse 2, the older man word comes from presbyteros or presbytese would be better in this application. It's the word we get Presbyterian from. Presbyterian has the idea of older or overseers. But not here. This is not talking about elders, overseers, or pastors. Sometimes that Greek word refers to that. Here it just refers to the older men of the church in general. And people have bounced

around on just what age is the older men of the church? And so reading some things I've just decided if you're 45 and up, you're one of the older men in the church. All right? So rest of you can just relax. Just chill out. This is old man hour at Grace Life Church. All right? And I'm preaching to Pastor Jeff this morning as I've had to repent and humble myself, said, "Lord, I want to do better. I want to be better at these things and continue to do better as I grow older."

Now I ask myself why start with the older men? Let me give you a couple of thoughts here. Why start with the older men? Why are they mentioned first? Well number 1, because they have honored headship in the church. So therefore they need to be good role models. Proverbs 16:31 says, "A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness." The connotation is there ought to be an admiration. There ought to be a respect, something of a veneration for those who've been faithful long term and have grown old serving God in the household of God. But as we think about the older men in particular, they have a headship as such in the church. Now Christ is the head of the church, but in the human realm our older men should be the elder statesmen. A headship. And as the head goes, so goes the body. If the head is sick, the body is sick. If the head is wicked, the body will suffer greatly. If the head is abdicated, then,uh, the body will suffer in aimlessness.

I think perhaps Titus getting the word from Paul addresses, uh, older men first because it's critical that the older men are solid. 1 Timothy 5:1 reminds us that Paul writes to Timothy a younger man and says, "Timothy, do not sharply rebuke older men but appeal to them as fathers." So in other words, there's an honored place that these men have, Timothy, and if you're younger, chronologically speaking here, then then then you ought to honor those over you. Now they may need correcting at times and don't don't neglect your duties there as pastor to even correct the older men, but you do it with a different tone, you do it with a different spirit. They have headship. They have an honored place. So men, if you're 45 and older, you have an honored position so you must emulate the faith well for the rest of the church.

Well, not only because they have an honored headship and must be good role models, but secondly, perhaps he begins with older men because they have less time to leave a legacy for the church. I mean, your time is less now than it was 10, 20 years ago when you might have been, well, 30, 40 years ago perhaps for some of us, when you might have been considered a younger man in the church. But it's time to get right with God. It's time to gird up your loins spiritually. It's time to get on the firing line. It's time to be true to the faith so you can leave a legacy for the church.

Hebrews 13:7 speaks to this where he says, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Look to your elders. Look to those who went before you. Honor their memory. Emulate their faith in Jesus Christ.

So are we leaving a legacy, legacy men? Are we living the way that the next generation will look back and say, "That's the man of God I want to be"? So perhaps Paul tells Titus to address the older men first because they don't have that much longer to establish a

solid legacy of faith in Jesus Christ. We want to end like Paul did where he said, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith." We all must finish our course. We must all go out fighting. Did you hear that? No R&R. Well, maybe a season or two along, but but no giving up and just coasting going into the end. We must continue on fighting to the end against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our service may change in old age, our stamina may diminish in old age, but through your ministry in the church, you have an impact and though it's different now and your duties may change in the church, your your your responsibilities may change in the church, but your witness must remain before the church.

Two specific areas that I want to pick out. You could run this all together as one, but I think I see two things here that need to pick out. First of all, older men are to be mature in stature. That means the stature has the idea of a level of development, a degree of development. You should be up here in your stature in the church. Well, first of all, he says, concerning your stature, it ought to be evidenced by being a man of temperance or to be temperate. Literally, that means not drunk. Sometimes I'll be watching an old Western and there'll be a band of women, sometimes they'll have a tambourine and they have placards and they're walking around because they're part of the temperance movement. It began in Protestant churches. Baptist churches had a primary role in it back in the day and they, those ladies would lead this movement to get rid of alcohol. First, it started just to say there ought to be moderation in alcohol. Then it led to, no, you ought not drink any alcohol, which is pretty good idea, by the way. A temperance movement and it's interesting to me, knowing a little bit about church history, is that temperance movements followed on the heels of a spiritual awakening that swept through many parts of our country in the early 1800s.

Well, getting back to our text, drunkenness was a real problem on the island of Crete. It was a real problem throughout the Greek world. The Corinthians were very immersed in sexual perversions and immoralities and drunkenness. But the idea is more than just abstinence from intoxicating drinks. It's the idea of discipline. It's it's the idea of self-control. And certainly the idea of an older man is tempered in the sense that he understands propriety. Boy, that's become an important word to me as I've grown older is that is in in in, as you grow older and you gain more wisdom, you begin to have propriety about these things matter and these things do not. These things I used to think were eight or nine, they're really a one or two, and some things that I might have used to thought were one or two, I can see now where those things lead to, so now I know they're an eight or nine. Temperance. Wisdom to see those things.

So it means more than just avoiding intoxication. It's the overall mark of being disciplined in word and in conduct and not given over to excitability and emotionalism. There's nothing worse than an older man who follows silly emotions. Temperance means he's he's worked through that. He's understands you don't let yourself get caught up in that. In Luke 7, uh, Jesus gives, uh, an interesting illustration. He said, "What what shall I compare this generation to?" He says, "Well you're like the children in the marketplace who say, sing me a song with the flute, a happy song, and then you'll say, no I don't like that, sing me a dirge, sing me a sad song." The point is they're just all over the place. They just follow their emotions. Temperate men are not childish. Something may happen

in the church and, oh, everybody gets excited about it, but men with temperance say, "Just calm down. We're not gonna chase that. We'll deal with it if it needs to be dealt with but that's a three. We don't call 9-1-1 over threes." Temperate men.

Shall I say it again, ladies? Another real contrast to temperance is the worldly women who Paul calls silly women. They're controlled by their emotions. In our country today, like it or not, want to hear it or not, I'll say it, our country today is led by silly women and effeminate men. That's exactly where we are as a country. Following their little feelings here and there and everywhere. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament tells you it's the judgment of God when women and children rule over you because you never know what you're gonna get. Is it not true? Years ago we didn't, but our culture said, okay we'll legalize gay marriage. They're just two people, they just want to love each other, have a lifetime love relationship. Well, look where we are now. You hearing me, church? Temperate men knew where that was headed. The church don't need to be led by silly emotions and childishness.

We need our older men to be men of temperance. When I hear about something in the church, for example, and I hear about a Christian, somebody said, "Did you hear about so-and-so? Did you hear about this going on?" 99% of the time I just put it on the shelf. I don't react to it. I just put it on the shelf. If it becomes a pattern, becomes an issue, then we'll pull it off the shelf and deal with it. The Bible says in Proverbs 17:9, "He who conceals a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends." In other words, there's a lot of occasions, it doesn't mean you're condoning sin, but you're just not supposed to act on being the great corrector of the church because often these are twos and threes. God the Holy Spirit will take care of that, kind of put it on the shelf and cover the transgression, so to speak.

Temperate men have blown it in this area and temperate men have not handled these things right in the past, but they're older now. They've learned. And so it's good for younger men to talk to an older man from time to time, say, "How should I deal with this?" And that older man says, "Well, do this, this, and this." And he goes, "Oh, that makes sense." Because he has temperance.

And just as a side note, building on this thing of covering a transgression, let's remind ourselves that most sins people commit against you are that you might have witnessed somewhere, need to be set aside in your mind, and just pray. Brothers and sisters, there are enough sins and sinful patterns that pop up that require to be exposed and require rebuke without you going around gossiping about lesser things and becoming the church rebuker. Put it on a shelf. Pray about it. Most of the time it's taken care of.

Well, getting full circle all the way around, that's temperance. Number 2, he said the older man, and by the way, there's a considerable overlap in understanding of these virtues or these character traits. Matter of fact, if you've got another translation, you'll notice they use the word first for the third trait or the word for the third trait for the first trait. That's because it's, and some some Bible preachers or scholars will try to specifically define which. They don't separate themselves. They overlap and intermingle. And there's need, it's purposeful. Matter of fact, we come to the next one, which is

dignified and a dignified man must be a temperate man, and a temperate man is usually a dignified man.

Well, but the word dignified where Paul says, "Titus, make sure the older men learn to be dignified men," it has the idea of veneration. It has the idea of respect or reverence. A gravitas. That means they're serious about the things that they ought to be serious about. They're wise enough to know which things matter in the church and which things do not. What color is the carpet going to be? What color is the paint going to be? What, da, da, da, da, da, da. So the kids have this kind of stuff on the children's playground or that kind of stuff. They know we don't get caught up in that very much.

Now, dignified does not mean an older man in the church can't be humorous and can't cut up but he knows the proper place and he knows the proper time. In our world today, we have far too many clowns in the church and far too many clowns in the pulpits. So the dignified man knows that church has to be serious in its biblical purpose. He knows the local church is Christ's body and bride and that Christ's church is the centerpiece of God's purposes and God's glory for time and eternity, and he he feels the weight of that. He understands the gravitas of that. He can cut up and have fun, but the moment later, if you bring up these truths, he's like a a rock with a backbone like a saw log on some things that cannot be tampered with and cannot change. That's included in dignity. He sees life through an eternal lens, and I hate to keep saying the same things over, but there is a sense where how you dress matters in this. Dress is not everything, but it's not nothing.

So in dignity, this man of God will expend himself for these holy things, the things that matter. Well, the third word that the New American Standard gives us here in this translation is sensible. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, and sensible. Sensible means the idea of sound in thinking, or or sane thinking. This certainly includes a self-restraint. Again, the idea of propriety. He knows what things belong where and and what things should not be in certain areas, but should be over there. He has a healthy discretion. He's a man determined not to allow, uh, things that are unsound to control his thinking. He's just learned through the years, "I can't just be sloppy and careless about what comes into my mind and and resonates there." I I've got to make sure because, look folks, the things of the world are not sensible. The things of the world are moronic and idiotic very often. The men of God and the older men of God ought to be disciplined in their minds to know what things are right and think on those things as Philippians 4:8 reminds us that we're to think on the things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellence, and worthy of praise, controlling what comes into our minds and if stuff comes in that shouldn't be there, working to repent and get it out of our minds, and therefore, by by working better to control our minds, we better control our attitudes and we better control our actions. One of the greatest gifts God's ever given me is responsibility to preach to you because every time I open the book it starts uprooting and digging out stuff that needs to get out of here and getting the right stuff back in here so I can have sober or sensible thinking. That's why I often refer to our church as an oasis of sanity. We are people at least striving to grasp, glory, and promote sound thinking, and the old men must lead us in that.

Just there there ought to be, there ought to be, or inevitably there's going to be, a time along the way when maybe some younger guys will say, "Man, we ought to get into this right here, we ought to turn our church this way, we ought to embrace these new trends," and if you're the older guys with with a calm demeanor and with with a compassionate understanding, because they used to be young and foolish one time, ought to say, "No, that's not what we're gonna do. That's not what we're gonna do." You know what you younger men ought to do? "Yes, sir. God gives you the place of honor. You've been down the track. You men have paid some prices we know not of. We yield gladly."

So we need to be sensible. Now he uses the word sound here for this next section. So we're moving over into not only mature in stature, that's a stature by the way, you can be mature in stature but not be godly. In other words, you can have disciplined the old man, the outer man, and have a kind of a persona, if you will, and disciplined habits that make you dignified, at least generally speaking in people's minds, and temperate about some things, but you can't be a godly temperate man or a godly dignified man or a godly sensible man without true spirituality. So that's what we get to next. II, mature in spirituality. The the second area is actually the foundation for the first area. So under a mature spirituality that needs to be evidenced among the older men, he gives three things and he gives a preposition sound before it and the idea of sound here means healthy. Uh, it means that there's a a still a vigorous, uh, healthy element in your life and he gives three things that this ought to be manifested: a healthy faith, a a healthy, um, uh, love, and then a healthy perseverance.

So let's talk about faith. First of all, he says you got to be sound in faith and I think this is talking about his personal faith in Christ. This means he's older now and he's matured beyond leaning on his own opinion or own inclination, but instead he stands steadfast on the word of God alone. My, what a journey God brought me through as my first inclination or my first opinion on what certain Bible doctrines meant and how they were to be understood were so wrong and God had to over and over correct me. Not all the time was it a correction from heresy into truth, but just just knocking off some shallow things and some false understandings and then I had I had a deeper, robust, sound or healthy faith then. Older men ought to be more sound than the younger men in the church.

I think the idea here, too, is that the gospel of grace is not just true in itself as some objective reality out there, "Well, I believe that gospel," but it means it's true in his heart. He he lives glorying in the doctrine with a robust sound faith. That means a thoroughly biblical faith. How many of you sitting here before me at one time at least did not grasp or at least or perhaps you even struggled with the sovereignty of God in human conversion, as if God is sovereign except when he converts men, then he's not sovereign anymore, we become sovereign then. And so the doctrines of election and the doctrines of predestination and the doctrine of foreknowledge and the doctrine of chosen, all of those doctrines the Bible explicitly teaches were, "Wait a minute, that's not the way I would have felt it would have worked out." But older men have gone through that. They've learned to say no to their natural inclinations and yes to the word of God. Sound in faith. Young men should sit at the feet of the older men. Young men should not

brazenly speak up as if they're the equal of the older proven men in the church. They should show them honor and respect. And the older men must know how to speak to the younger men with compassion and with love but with conviction, especially when it comes to correcting.

So brothers, for those of us who are older, we recognize that as the outer man, the natural body decays, the inner man should be gaining strength. "Well, he's he's not quite the physical specimen he used to be." Yes, but he's grown in wisdom. He gets things he didn't used to get. Uh, these, these, I call them boys, I don't mean that disrespectfully, these young men that come into the Pastors Training Institute or inquire about the Pastors Training Institute, they go, "We're gonna, I'm gonna study this, I'm gonna study that, I'm gonna learn from this guy, I'm gonna learn from that guy, we're gonna go here, we're gonna go there." And I feel like what, uh, old Dr. Vance Havner heard from R. A. Torrey on a train one day. Vance Havner was just a young preacher, about 12, 14 years old, a young teenager, and he used to get on the train to go preach places, main mode of travel in those days, and he got on the train, he's sitting back there, and he looked up there about five rows and it was Dr. R. A. Torrey, a a revered man of God in that age, an older man of God. So this young teenage boy, Dr. Vance Havner, he wasn't a doctor then, he goes up and he sits by Dr. Torrey, he said, "Dr. Torrey, so honored to meet you. I'm I'm just so excited that God's called me to preach and I'm preaching." And Dr. Torrey said, "Well, what are you gonna do?" He said, "Well, I don't know, I might do this and I might do that and I might do here." And Dr. Torrey, Vance Havner said, looked at me like a prophet out of the Old Testament. Said, "Son, set your mind on something and stick with it." Sometimes we need an older man to say that and sometimes I I say to these younger preacher boys, I say, "Look, anchor your life here at Grace Life Church, learn in our Institute, submit to our elders and stay with it and God will bless your ministry."

All this bouncing around, hopping around. The only model we have in the New Testament is being sent out by a local church under the authority of a local church. That's it. That's why we train boys not in a seminary somewhere but in a local church. And by the way, if they want to look down on us, that's fine. We're fully accredited by the same wicked people that accredit all the other schools. If that means something to you, it doesn't mean anything to me. Honestly, it don't. Dr. Seal just knew how to do that. He said it won't take much trouble and I said, we'll do it. So you have the esteem, if you come to our school, of leaving with accredited classes like all the other infidels at Harvard and Yale and everywhere else. Am I making my point? What are we talking about?

Sound in faith. The outer man, 2 Corinthians 4:16, brothers, 45's and up, the outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. That's what Paul is saying to Titus to tell these older men, "Yeah, you may be weaker but you're to stay sound in the faith." Brother Matt, you're what, four years away from, five years away from being an older man. Dear heavens, what happened? But he's doing good on the wisdom part. I think about Simeon of the gospel of Luke. Simeon, you know, was a man of God and he stayed at the temple and he felt impressed by the Spirit of God that he would not die until he saw the Lord's Christ. And Jesus comes, his parents bring him to the temple and

Simeon holds the baby Christ. Then he says, "Now I can depart in peace." What's the point? Simeon stayed at it to the end with a robust faith. Moses, though he failed, couldn't go to the Promised Land, but he climbs Mount Nebo and then he saw the Promised Land and he said, "I'm ready to die now. I finished what God's called me to do." Didn't quit in old age, stayed with it, repented when I messed up, stayed with it.

Old men, you know the only way you're gonna stay with it is just keep repenting. We don't arrive, amen? Keep repenting. Here's what I find is as we grow along and repent, the plane keeps getting a little bit higher. The plane of sanctification and godliness can keep getting a little bit higher. Just don't let it start digressing in old age. That's what's happened. A lot of the older men in Crete had given themselves over to just drinking heavy and hanging out because, "We've done our thing now." Paul tells Titus, "Don't let that stuff happen in the church. We need these older men. They've got more wisdom than anybody does now. We've got to have these guys."

Sound in faith, healthy, robust faith. Well, secondly, he says, not only faith, but sound in love. This is the second virtue, and by the way, the order here is important because this virtue, our love that must be in the older men, flows out of having a sound faith. You see, brothers, we look first to Christ and to his word, treasuring him first and foremost, and then, then there kindles in us a love for all that is his and a love for all of his purposes. Older men, having walked in faith longer, should have grown in love deeper. Deeper.

Now, the key concept here is this is not some gushy, fickle, emotional sentimentality that our world talks about when it's love. It just grieves me to no end that all of our great performers and country music people and pop people and all the thinkers of the day are totally consumed with sexuality and emotions. Has not our God Creator given us something more than that? That's real. That's okay. It's not evil, of course, exercised according to God's will, but we get to taste the pleasures of God, the pleasures of of God's church family, and it's not like anything else. We get to be a part of something more substantial, more true, more enduring. What would...and I'm chasing a rabbit, but but what a statement of vile human depravity that today we defined...listen, today we define everything about who you are as a person by your latest sexual lust. "I'm this. Well, I'm that. Well, I'm this. Well, I'm both. Well, I'm either/or. I float around." That's below the dignity of the animal kingdom. Even the beasts don't do that nonsense. Sure, we enjoy human sexuality, but sexuality was given to man to be governed and guarded and guided. You don't get to follow your lust. You follow your God, and he will give you greater pleasures. We're fallen beings. If you follow your lust, you become lower than the beast, and that's what we have in our country today.

We need older men in the church that know what real love is. Love must correspond with truth. So when we hear these people talk, "Well, we just gotta love these people." Wait a minute. Sure, we show compassion and love in a sense to all mankind because all are made in the image of God, but we don't rejoice, embrace, or celebrate wickedness. That's not love. You see, older men start to get that. They're not controlled by those sentimentalities and emotionalisms and and and pseudo-wisdom that is floating around out there in the world.

Just as a quick quick primer on sound love or healthy love. It's kind of a side note, a little outline. I'll go through it quickly. What is sound love? Well, number 1, it has to come from the true source. The love that the Christian knows comes from the true source and that's God himself and, of course, God's word. It comes from the true source. We love according to the truth because our God is truth. So much of what the world calls love is warped compassion and simply lower-based lust. It's not love at all. It comes in the true order, the true order. Of course, love for our families, and I might put it too, actually, families might need to be number 2, but let me put it number 1 for right now. 1 Timothy 5:8, "If anyone does not provide for his own house and especially for those of his household, he's denied the faith, he's worse than an unbeliever." What's the point is you ought to have a special love for your families. The man of God who walks in true love loves his family.

Secondly, but it could be first, he loves the household of faith, he loves the local church. He loves the local church. Galatians 6:10, we have a Galatians 6:10 fund. Why? Because it gives us the true order. So then while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people. As you go along in life and it's possible to do good for somebody who has a need, help them, but he says, especially for those in the household of the faith. I can't tell you how hard this was for me as a young Christian. I became a Christian, I was so excited about it, I was so zealous and I knew nothing. Well, I knew I'd been saved, I knew Christ, and I tried to serve and help and give and everybody, and it was absolutely, totally overwhelming and impossible. And then I stumbled upon God's word. Isn't it amazing how God's word helps you out. And God's word basically says you can't show that total self self-sacrificial love to everything and everybody. You've got to start with God's order, your family, your local church.

And then there's those friendships, those those unique friendships like Jonathan and David. God just gives you a a sister or two or three, and he gives you a brother or two or three and they just, it's just a special friendship. Now, we should love all of our friends and all the church, but often there's a few that God just seems to bring into our lives.

Then, of course, we love our enemies. That would be last in the list. It doesn't mean that we don't genuinely love them, but if you spend all your time trying to prove to the world that you're a Christian by loving your enemies, there'll be no time to love your family and no time to love your local church and no time to love those special friends God's given you. There's just not enough of you to do it, but God helps us. And you follow this order and you get to heaven. If my order's not right, then I'll step up and say, "I messed them up, Lord. I gave them the wrong order." I don't think I am. I think this is a good order.

Well, third main point under what sound love is, it has a true nature. 1 John 3:18, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." It's it's not mouth love, it's heart love. It's not mouth love, it's action love. "Well, boy, I love the church." Well, are you giving tithes and offerings? "Well, I love God's church." Well, are you faithful to small groups and trying to help minister and care for those in your small group? Pam and I have just been blown away the way the church has ministered to her

mom and dad. Too much, actually, too much. Well, that's that's heart love. That's that's that's deed love, action love. That's the true nature.

Also, it must be of true wisdom, biblical in its purpose, not allowing or encouraging men to sin, for example. The older men in the church know that when there's reckless and open sin in the church, that some shallow people may say, "Oh, let's be loving and just overlook it." No, it's contaminating the church. At that point, you can't cover transgression. At that point, it's scandalous in public. The older men know that's got to be dealt with. It's not fun, it's not easy, but it's got to be dealt with. See, they have true wisdom. Proverbs 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."

Well, it's a love that loves when there's adversity. The older men can be a guide to us that when a brother's hurting, let's help him. Let's don't get busy with our stuff. Let's be there for them.

Well, fifthly, the sound love has true duration. It knows no time limit. A friend loves at all times, Proverbs 17:17. Loves at all times because this is how God loves us. Isn't that amazing? He never stops loving us. But as I say often, he never started loving us. He has an eternal covenant because he's an eternal being. He's always loved his church. He's always loved his elect people. He never started loving us and he never ends loving us. And especially the older men of the church must model this durative, this duration nature of true love. Of course, for those older men, this must be fueled by a continual dying to self and a continual looking to Christ. By the way, us older men are not perfect, but we should be further along because we've been at it so long. We should be further along because we've been at it so long. That's what Titus is saying here. "You guys ought to be more of an example in these areas. Not perfect, but you ought to be more there."

Then he says, not only sound or healthy in faith and sound and healthy in love, but sound and healthy in perseverance. Now, these three virtues, faith, love, and then perseverance, they build on each other. A sound faith is exemplified in sound love, and sound faith and sound love must be followed by a sound perseverance. We don't throw in the towel or give up. You may endure many afflictions and many hardships as you grow older, but you must persevere in faith and love. And I want you to pray this for me. Would you pray this for me? Would you pray with me this for me that I'd be effective for Christ in my old age. That's all I'm asking and I mean that. I may lose everything materially. I don't know what may happen, but I'm asking God, just make me effective for Christ in my old age.

Taylor, a an old author who I drew a lot of insights from for this message, said this, and I quote, "Affliction follows faithful believers like the shadows follow the body." So as we grow older, we've been through more afflictions and sometimes as we grow older, the afflictions increase and the infirmities but we must endure. We must persevere. 1 Corinthians 13:7 reminds us, love endures all things. Enduring obviously is the idea of persevering. Think about Christ's love. To love us, Christ has to endure us. There's nothing about us lovely to him. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches explicitly clear that everything about you is offensive to him, but he loves you enduring that. So older men

should model for us we can love with an enduring nature. When it's not, doesn't really feel like the thing I should do, I still can love.

I told you before after we'd gone through one of our horrible splits years ago, uh, it seemed like everywhere I went in Muscle Shoals there were five or eight people that hated me. Oh, that's hard for you to believe if you hadn't been around here long, but they were. And you know, one of the key ways I got through it, I remember distinctly as I'm talking to you right now, I'd pull up in the Walmart parking lot knowing I'm going to go around the corner and run right into somebody I'd removed from the church for discipline. And that's not fun. And I would just say to myself, I can always love because love doesn't matter what you get. I can always love because I did what I did to them because of love, because I loved them in truth. And it would just, it just revived my spirit. I could, you can think about that. I can always love. Yeah, dah, dah, dah, dah, but they did, dah, dah, dah. And yeah, they were wrong, but I can always love. Older men should have more of that, that kind of sound love. The church needs it from us. They need to see it in us.

So perseverance becomes more challenging as frailties attack on every hand as we grow older. There are more and more temptations for older guys to give in to grumbling and murmuring against God. As the body grows weaker though, we must not allow our faith to grow weaker, but we must persevere. Think about Christ's perseverance. In Matthew 17:12, he looks at the people and says, "Oh, unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?" But he didn't let the grievous nature of the oppositions, the slanders, the ungodly twisting of everything he said to put him in a bad light, he didn't let that deter him. He dotted every i and crossed every t of the Father's will to get to the cross and redeem the children.

So us older men must persevere like our Lord and like our Savior. As we grow older, we're tempted to shrink back. "Well, I'll tell you what, I just don't know if I don't want to face the persecution and the cross bearing, and I might just slip out of church more and be a little less vocal about my faith." No, no, no, no, no, no, a thousand times no! Perseverance.

Three quick thoughts, and I'm basically through. Keys to perseverance. Number 1, number 1 key to perseverance: throw yourself in in praise and thanksgiving for your trial or affliction. Throw your, grab yourself by the nap of the neck and by the sheer act of the will, begin to praise God and thank God that in this affliction and in this trial, God is going to use it for your good and for his glory. Throw yourself in it. "But I don't feel like it." Grow up and get out of the nursery! It's not about how we feel, it's about who he is. My goodness. I don't want to, just don't like to be around whiny old men. There's a movie about you guys, "Grumpy Old Men." Sometimes I can get grumpy. I feel a little grumpy right now. But seriously, I want to go out sweet, joyous, treasuring my God and my Savior no matter the affliction. There's only one way to do that, you grab yourself up by the nap of the neck and throw yourself into praise because God has woven into your affliction, it's like a tapestry, lots of things that are good for you and will glorify him. You can't see them because you're looking at the bottom of the tapestry. Have you ever looked at the bottom of a tapestry? It's a mess. But slowly he'll turn it over and you can

say, "Oh my goodness, look what God was doing the whole time. This is beautiful." Some of you prayed that God would sustain me and give me wisdom and be a good pastor. A lot of you prayed that, but you had no idea what God had to do to me to get me halfway there. But as he gets me there, as he gets you there, I'm finding that it's so beautiful.

2. If you're going to persevere, resign yourself totally to the will of God. "So be it, Lord. Whatever it is, so be it." There's certain things I can't quit. There's certain things I can't change. I will not change my convictions if they're biblical and so be it. What it cost, it cost. What it means, it means. Resign myself totally to the will of God. Isn't this what my Savior did when my Savior knelt with sweat sweat drops of blood? We don't understand the agony of that, but he was fully human while he was fully divine and in that full humanity, there had to be weights upon him that we can't comprehend. But he said, "Not My will, but Thy will be done." Us older men should be better at that for the sake of the younger men.

3. Expect God's deliverance. Expect it. I don't I don't know how it's going to work. I don't know how it's going to work, but I expect God's doing something. Look, he always has gotten us through it and he will again. Even if it's home through the door of death, that's the best deliverance of all.

Resign yourself to the will of God. Expect God's deliverance. Then first of all, throw yourself in praise and thanksgiving that God's using it for your good and his glory. This perseverance, men, that we're to have will manifest itself even in the dire and troubling seasons of old age. When we grab ourselves and hold ourselves to the truth, when our emotions don't feel like it and our sentiment doesn't feel like it and our strength doesn't think we can do it, but we require ourselves based on truth to stand there, others see us and it gives them hope and it gives stability to the body of Christ. You say, "Well, if he's not moving, I don't guess I'll move either. If he's not capitulating, then I'm not going to capitulate either. I'm going to stay with it." The younger men need to see the old men so they'll have that conviction.

Perseverance. The original word here has the idea of remaining under. What a picture this puts in my mind. He's the man of God in his old and golden years with new afflictions and new frailties and new infirmities and new trials and troubles, but he remains under the rule of God. Perseverance, remain under. He remains under the rule of God. His spirit and attitude remains God-centered and on God's word. He's learned not to allow inner turmoil or fear or grief or outer calamities and distresses to move him. He remains under the rule of God. He will not be moved.

The Apostle Paul said at the end of his ministry, in prison, awaiting execution, "I finished out just the way God wanted me to. I fought the good fight. I finished the course. I've kept the faith." And we all must finish our course and go out fighting. Now, brothers, your job in the church may change. You can't do as much as you used to do, perhaps. Your ministry and responsibilities may change in old days, but your witness must remain. Your duties may have changed in your latter years, but you still have duties to Christ and his church.

So that's Paul's word to Titus about straightening out the men in the churches on the island of Crete. Now, I don't know about you, but I think it may have straightened some of us out or might we say, helped to straighten some of us out because he's still working on me, but I want him to, and I want to cooperate with him.