

The Christian Man

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Bible Verse: Titus 2:2
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In his book, "Ashamed of the Gospel," the 3rd edition, which was released only a dozen years ago, John MacArthur said this and much has changed for the worse since he did. He said and I quote, "Modern society has unleashed an unprecedented onslaught against the family. Most of the major controversial issues in the news today such as homosexuality, abortion, women's rights, divorce, youth gangs and so on, are direct attacks against the family. People's families are no longer where their strongest loyalties lie, families no longer function as units, and the fragmentation of the family has undermined morality and stability throughout all of society. The church cannot tolerate or accommodate this devastation. It must confront and correct, then train its families. Strong families are the church's backbone and strong families build strong individuals. We will pay a high price if we don't make the family a priority." Those words give voice to the reasons that I wanted to return to the book of Titus here in our summer months. As I said last time, we looked at Titus back at the formation of our church but it's been nearly ten years since we did, and so I wanted to come to Titus 2 and Titus 3 for the summer and into the early fall to reinforce these biblical principles about the family and specifically the roles that God assigns to men and women in the family and in the church.

You know, it's sad to watch as society tries to erase the distinctions between men and women and even make it have a philosophical construct where you can go from one to the other without any kind of real resistance, and that's affirmed as something good. Beloved, that is something evil, that is something wrong, that is contrary to the design and purpose of God who created mankind, male and female. And not only created mankind, male and female, but assigned roles to each of the sexes, as we see here in Titus 2, and the place of blessing for Christians is always going to be in accepting, embracing, upholding, asserting and defending the word of God, but not only in a teaching way, in a teaching role, but also in embracing it in life and in the way that we live and understanding that God has given us roles to live out, and these things come to us by divine authority. This is from the word of God. These are not suggestions. This is not one alternative among many. This is the way that God has called men and women to live.

And so we find that in Scripture, God deals with practical life and with practical living and we see that in Titus 2. Turn there with me. I would like to read again the entire chapter, even though we're only going to focus on a single verse here this morning. Last week we looked at Titus 2:1, and we start there again today.

1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. 6 Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. 9 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. 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. 15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

You see in that closing verse there that these things are to be taught with authority, that these are things that are not to be disregarded, especially within the church. This is the command of God, and it is the responsibility of church leaders and of teachers of God's word to hold forth these things and to assert them and to call the people of God in love and in truth to submit life to them, to submit to the word of God and to order life around the teaching of the word of God, and particularly in these roles that God assigns to men and women.

It's notable that in this letter that is designed to help Titus establish churches in his day and emphasizing the importance of the role of elders and the role of the church, and Titus has a responsibility to build it up, it is notable that he starts, Paul starts the discussion with the men in verse 2. After he had addressed Titus in verse 1, as we looked at last time, we now go to see that in verse 2 God addresses and starts the order of these things with the older men in the church. I don't mind now being in that classification. I'm older than probably the majority of you and so this passage speaks to me personally in a direct way, but also I just want to say to those of you that maybe you've raised your families, maybe you're retired, maybe you're toward the end of your career, your hair is, what's left of it is gray, as mine is turning gray as well, for us to understand that we are being directly talked to by the word of God in a way that applies to everyone, but Paul specified it out for particular attention the older men in the church as the starting point for this order that God would have in the church, in families and in society. And what we find, as we'll go through this verse together, men, is we find that which is going to challenge us

and convict us, hopefully encourage us in some ways, but also to realize that we have a great responsibility in the order of God in the functioning and in the life of the church.

You know, our tendency in society, the tendency in our wealthy, prosperous manner of life, is that you get to a particular point of time, and you start to think about retirement and scaling back and, you know, and looking for the good life and how we're going to travel and, you know, we're going to go see things and, you know, I'm going to pursue my hobbies and all of that. And, you know, look, I'm not going to chastise anyone that pursues retirement even for those reasons, but I am going to call you to examine the word of God and see that there are higher things that God calls you to live for, and as you reach this place of maturity, as you reach this place of advancing age in life, that there are particular responsibilities that God lays upon you. Your spiritual work is not over. Oh, your secular work, your employment work may be done but, men, you and I must understand that our spiritual work in some ways is only beginning, that we are called to set an example for the rest of the body of Christ, and that God will hold us accountable for the way that we respond. And so look at verse 2 with me again as we see Scripture speaking to us saying.

2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.

You know, one of the things about being an older man is that you've lived long enough to see the downside of living in a fallen world. You've seen loved ones suffer pain and suffer death. You've said goodbye, many of us have said goodbye to all of those who were in the generations prior to us, or many of them at least, and now we're kind of at that cutting edge of the, you know, the head of the family and who's the patriarch and who's, you know, who's left. We've been around enough to see sorrow, to have failed in our ventures, to have had people betray us, and all of the bruises and difficulties that life inflicts upon people. Older men have been around to see it, and those of you that are older that are dealing with health issues, perhaps and never knowing if your heart is going to fail like those of your older family members did, you know, we've been around and we sense our mortality. We're aware that life can end at any moment unexpectedly. We've been around to see the fallenness of the world. Some of us are experiencing the physical decline that comes with older age and dealing with the consequences and the uncertainty of that, and finding that the anatomy doesn't work like it used to in many, many ways.

Older men know this by direct experience, and here's the challenge for us men and and let me just pause for a moment when these teaching about biblical roles comes up, I like to say these things. Well, I'm addressing the men predominantly today because that's what Scripture does. Ladies, two things for you to remember, especially those of you married to an older man, is to realize that this is an opportunity for you to be gracious as you consider the spouse that God has given to you. You've been with him long enough to know his many weaknesses and failures and all of the downside of him that is perhaps hidden from the public. This is an opportunity for you to adopt in this message as you hear it, an attitude of grace toward the one that you are with here this morning, that's important to recognize. Also, let me just encourage you to remember that you will be

addressed in later Sundays in the texts that follow, and you're going to want grace from the conviction of God's word from your husband that you will wish that you had given to him as you sat here today.

And so it's important for all of us to realize that we're coming before a convicting passage of Scripture that addresses everyone, older men, older women, younger men, younger women. All of us are going to be addressed by this soon enough and so we need to be gracious with one another as we do, and we also need to adopt a posture of a teachable spirit before what God says. None of us have been made perfect yet, even the Apostle Paul said that he had not yet attained to perfection, and so we expect the word of God to convict us and to show us our shortcomings. We need to embrace that and to accept it and to be willing to respond to the word of God as it does. This is the order of God. This is the word of God to us, and he says, Titus wraps it all up, let me just remind you, these things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority, with all command, in other words, let no one disregard you. So we're here before it, recognizing the difficulties that life has to offer to us in this section, in this chapter, this season of life.

Now for all of that that we've said in a sympathetic way, let's just be honest, I can be transparent and speak autobiographically in what I'm about to say, knowing that I'm speaking and describing the experience in life failures of many of you as well. Older men have seen all of these things, and the challenge for us is that in them it is possible to become narrow-minded and grumpy about it all, to just have a complaining spirit about the state of society, the state of politics, the state of the church, the state of whatever it might be, and to just be filled with grumbling and discontent in the situation, and forgetting, perhaps, look over at Philippians 2, forgetting that we're called to live differently and to have a heart that is different from that grouchy old man perspective that our carnal flesh would lead us into. Philippians 2:1, written by a man who was in prison at the time. The Apostle Paul said, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." So Scripture calls us to a high standard of heart, a high standard of disposition and, men, we are not excluded from that. Indeed, we are to be the leaders in exemplifying what Christ has called us all to be.

And so we see that in chapter 2, verse 2 of Titus, and men, you and I are responsible to make the effort to rise above the grumpiness and disgruntledness of this world, and to exemplify in fidelity vertically to Christ and in fidelity to those that look to us for life example and life leadership, the things that are discussed in this passage. And so we find that we have the opportunity, we have the responsibility, men, to grow spiritually even if we are declining physically. We cannot neglect that without being disobedient to the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. And so what I want to show you in this text here today are just two basic principles that will illustrate from the terms that are

used, that older men are particularly called by God to manifest a dignity in life and a maturity in faith. Dignity in life and maturity in faith.

Let's look at the first point here: dignity in life, and what God calls older men like you and me to do and to be, more importantly, God calls us to a gracious, serious demeanor that is fit for Christ. In other words, we realize that life is serious and we outgrow, we put aside the childish things that perhaps once infatuated us or entertained us. We realize that we need to put those things behind in order to live in a way that is worthy of Christ. You see it here in Titus 2:2. He says older men are to be temperate. The English Standard Version uses the term "sober-minded" to translate the underlying Greek term. Fundamentally this word refers to someone who is not overrun by the use of alcoholic beverages. That's the fundamental idea of sobriety rather than being under the influence of alcohol, and the idea thus is that older men are to be clear-headed, clear-thinking in the way that they approach life. But the term as Paul uses it goes beyond that original fundamental meaning to indicate that older Christian men should carry themselves with thoughtful judgment, with a discriminating, discerning eye toward life. You could say this in a way that applies, we set the tone for others in the congregation. Beloved, listen, this is such a vital principle: older Christian men are called away from being impulsive, from being erratic in life decisions, and going here and going there in just a hurried way without thinking through the implications of what is being done.

Look back at the book of Proverbs with me for just an Old Testament hint of this. Proverbs 19. In Proverbs 19:2, we read Solomon saying under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, And he who hurries his footsteps errs." And literally "he who hurries his footsteps sins." Older men have been around long enough to understand that life is serious and that hasty, rash decisions are not the way to live life. There's to be a self-control and a moderation to the way that life is approached so that there's a temperate thing, that's it's not overreacting to circumstances, not overreacting to provocation, not overreacting to people, but showing a measure of self-restraint in the entire spirit in which you live life.

Now Paul goes on further with a related character trait, this is all part of dignity in life, and you see him using this term in verse. 2, older men are to be temperate, they are to be dignified. They are to be dignified. Christian men should manifest an integrity and a sober-mindedness that commands respect. Now a few years ago, there was a pastor on the west coast who was known for wearing a Mickey Mouse T-shirt when he preached the word of God. His church, not surprisingly, collapsed not because of Mickey Mouse, but because of the attitude that would cause you to do that. But understand this, beloved, and I'm just using this as an illustration, that for a man who is professing to lead a church, to be held forth as one that has spiritual responsibilities and spiritual leadership as a pastor or an elder, do you see the wickedness of doing what I just described? To epitomize, to stand in front and to have a Mickey Mouse T-shirt on while you're proclaiming the word of God, that there's nothing dignified about that, that the mere clothing that you choose to wear undermines the seriousness of the message that you say that you believe? It's not dignified. This is harmful to the gospel. And we take that little illustration, and we pivot, and we realize that as older men we need to be aware of how we are living, what we find

enjoyment or even humor in, and recognize that the whole manner and demeanor in which we live life is a reflection of the truth that we claim that we believe of the truth and of the gospel that we claim is of supreme importance.

Well, beloved and fellow older men, there comes a time where we have to realize we've got to put childish things aside, that we don't have the luxury of being immature now, we realize that the gospel is serious, we realize that the eternal souls and their destination of men is of great consequence, and we conduct ourselves in a way that is appropriate for that. Now it doesn't mean we don't laugh, we don't enjoy each other. That's not what we're saying, but the fundamental way that we carry ourselves shows forth the gravity of the gospel, shows forth the seriousness of Jesus Christ. For a man to stand in a pulpit wearing children's clothing is disrespectful. It makes a mockery of the Christ whom the man claims lived and died for him. Can you imagine? Just think about it this way. I often think about this, just a mental picture to kind of set forth and illustrate things. Imagine time traveling, going to standing in front of the three crosses, robber on the left, robber on the right, and the Lord Jesus Christ hanging literally between heaven and earth sacrificing his life for the sins of his people, crying out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Can you imagine in that moment, standing before him with a Mickey Mouse shirt on demeaning his sacrifice by the attire that you chose to wear? Now it's just a picture, it's an unrealistic, unattainable hypothetical but, beloved, you see that when we open the word of God, when we live our Christian lives, that we are projecting an image about what we believe about Christ. And it goes beyond the attire that we choose but into the attitudes with which we live. Scripture calls us to be temperate and to be dignified, to walk in a way that is respectful of the gospel, and that calls forth respect from those who observe us.

Go back to 1 Corinthians with me for a moment. 1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter, although I'm not going there in particular. Paul's description of love. 1 Corinthians 13. Actually, let's do read, I'll read a little more than I had intended as my eye falls on the page. What is Paul here in this chapter is calling us to the spirit of love, and he describes love and what love is, what true Christian love is, not the perversion of it that is offered to us in society today. We see in 1 Corinthians 13:4, "Love," and that informs our sense of what dignity is, "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly," in other words, it's dignified, "it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." Now drop down to verse 11 in that chapter and you'll see why I turned here. Men, as we have walked with Christ as we come to know Christ, as we've grown in the grace and knowledge of Christ, we realize that there are things that we leave behind as a consequence of that, and we move on toward maturity. Paul describes that in verse 11, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things." And so Scripture calls on us to leave behind the immaturity of our youth and to embrace and enter into the maturity that Christian experience and sanctification should lead a man to embrace and to model.

Look at chapter 16 of 1 Corinthians, just two brief verses there in verses 13 and 14. "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." What is this dignity of which Scripture speaks? It's strength. It's confidence. It's maturity. There's a courage that is involved in being a Christian man. There is a maturity that is involved in being a Christian man, that when others run in fear, the Christian man stands firm, he stands strong. When others dabble in false doctrine, the Christian man rejects the worldly thinking and stands on the truth that has been revealed once for all to the saints. He contends earnestly for the faith. He realizes that doctrine matters. He realizes that the word of God is under attack. He realizes that he has been entrusted with a gift, with a treasure, with a pearl of great price, and that in the gospel Christ is revealed, and he gives his energy, gives his time, he gives his affections, he gives his heart to these things of transcendent value. He's dignified. He's strong in the faith. He's mature.

He recognizes, men, going back to something I said last week, we need men in the church broadly, and we need men in Truth Community Church who do this, who live and lead like elders whether they have the title of elder or not. We need men who embrace the importance of truth and who realize the importance of communicating that truth to the upcoming generation, and take an interest in souls, take an interest in the body of Christ and saying, "I will be one who contributes to the strength of the body and not simply live my own selfish little life, pursuing my own little interests and pleasures in disregard to how the body of Christ itself is doing." Men who will step up in times of weakness and conflict in the church and be a voice for strength and fidelity to Christ and love and forgiveness and unity, men who will undertake that and say, "Those principles matter and my life will be given to uphold them." That's what God calls us to. That's what the church of Christ needs.

The men that are like that, beloved, just to be real practical, the men that are like that don't come in late and leave early. They're interested in the body of Christ. They're interested in the people of God. They come into the gatherings with a mindset not simply, "What can I get out of this? I hope we sing my favorite hymns. I hope I like the message." And all of that self-centered stuff, but coming into the doors, coming to gather with the people of God with a mindset that says, "I hope the Lord gives me an opportunity to strengthen and encourage someone today. I'm going to be mindful and alert to the providential conversations that the Lord gives to me to see if there's a word of encouragement or admonishment that I need to give there in love, in grace, having examined my own life." I'm grateful that we have men like that, but for all of us, we need to understand this is the standard of God, this dignity, this concern for the people of God, and recognizing that your gray hair gives you a position in which to speak.

And so recognizing these great, lofty themes and embracing these great lofty responsibilities, what do older men in the church do? We do this: we set aside worldliness to model integrity that produces respect. Look at the book of 1 Peter, which is just shortly after the book of Hebrews, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter. 1 Peter 4, beginning in verse 1. "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the

time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries." Peter says, "Look, you've had your time where you flirted with sin. The time in your past where you pursued this sinful lust, those are over, Christian man, and you need to look at that, disown it, repudiate it and close and lock the door and say I'm never going back to that, not only to the activities but the mindset that even wanted them." It's time for me to move past the sinful end maturities of my youth and to embrace the purposes of Christ and the loftiness of living for him, loving him and proclaiming him. That's what I embrace now, and in so doing, you step out of immaturity and toward maturity, you step out of fleshly carnality and into the spiritual life that God has called you to lead. Men, this is our responsibility. This is our call. This is what is uniquely assigned to us as men, older men in the church.

You see, all that we do reflects on the gospel. We have to put aside foolishness and worldliness for the sake of Christ. I got a lesson in that, thankfully a positive lesson, just a couple of days ago. I'm just walking through Costco minding my own business, in my own little world of thought as I'm heading toward a corner of the store, let's say, and someone behind me calls out and he recognized me. He knew me. It's not a man from our church, but he had seen me in other places and he knew I was a pastor and he called out to me and wanted to engage a conversation with me. Immediately. I said, "Man, what am I, you know, what was I just doing? Is this okay?" And we had a very pleasant conversation but it just reminded me that eyes are on us, men, eyes are always on us and so we don't have the luxury of foolishness. We need to walk in a way that manifests the dignity that Christ calls us to. It's not a show, in other words. This is not something that we put on to be at church with for 90 minutes and then we go back and turn it off and go into something else, and go back to the foolishness of life when the lights aren't on. Beloved, the lights are always on in the purposes of God. In the omniscience of God, the lights are always on and so this is a dignity that we carry in our homes as well as in public.

Now Paul gives one more trait of a dignified life there in Titus 2. Let's go back there. Titus 2. He says older men are to be temperate, dignified, and sensible. This term for sensible is a recurring theme in the chapter. You see the word used in verse 5 to talk about young women. Young women are to love their husbands, their children, verse 5, "to be sensible, pure, workers at home." You see it in verse 6, "Likewise, urge the young men to be sensible." This is woven throughout the passage and even in verse 12 you see this statement of the outworking, the fruit of salvation. Look at verse 11, "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." Salvation, biblical salvation, regeneration, the new birth, the new creation, coming to Christ produces a life that grows out of immaturity and embraces the idea of sensible living. This is the pattern for Christian life, not wild-eyed charismatic arena events where people are knocked down and supposedly slain in the spirit, and all kinds of crazy healings that supposedly take place. That is not Christianity, beloved. That is not Christianity. What we see in this most direct clear statement is that the grace of God brings salvation in order to lead people into, among other things, sensible living and this term "sensible"

indicates a prudent and thoughtful man. He curbs his desires, he knows how to live with restraint, with self-control, one of the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit from Galatians 5. He knows to control his impulses and he seeks to do so. He battles against his flesh. His mind runs his life, not his desires, not his fears, not his impulses, certainly not his sexual lusts. He's driven by righteous, godly, sensible thinking that has been transformed by the word of God.

Let's approach it from a different angle. This sensible, sober-minded man, this is a man who does not panic when trials come. This is a man who it doesn't wring his hands, wondering what he's going to do. He says, "God has sent these circumstances to me, God has sent this life to me, these life circumstances, I need to respond in a sensible, godly way." There is a maturity to it. There's a calmness to it. There is a steadiness to it. Again, I'll go back to the word erratic, not bouncing around from point to point in mind or in location, not bouncing around but coming to a place of stability and saying, "This is where God has called me. This is where God has put me. I will dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness." It's the opposite of a man who bounces his family around from church to church every two or three years, for example. Prudent, thoughtful, steady, a man that can be relied on. A man who is the same today as he was yesterday and will be tomorrow. That kind of man.

Now, dignity and life, in other words, how can we illustrate this? It helps to have a human example. Well, let's see what Paul probably had in mind. Paul wrote this letter to Titus. What was Paul like at the end of his life? What was Paul like in his advanced years? Well, go back just one book to 2 Timothy 4. What kind of dignity do we see in the Apostle Paul? And I love hearing the crinkling of turning pages, that's one of the great things about Truth Community Church is that you follow along in your Bibles. That's exactly what you should do, and that is so important to do. So we're illustrating this dignity in life for an older man. Paul, an older man, writing 2 Timothy. This is his swan song. It's the last words that came from his great pen and what does he say? Look at chapter 4, verse 6 of 2 Timothy. Actually, go up to verse 5. His closing admonition to Timothy says, "But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." "Timothy, be sober-minded. Hardship is going to come, endure it like a man." And then he shifts to himself. He reflects, as it were, and he gives a description of what's going on in his own heart as he moves toward the finish line of 2 Timothy, as he moves toward the finish line of his apostolic ministry, as he moves toward the finish line of life what's he saying? What's he thinking? I hope that this can somehow mark me in my last days. Paul says, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." You see, Paul has recognized, "Life is over for me," and what is marking him as he does, look at verse 16. Look at verse 16 and look, what I want you to see here is Paul's attitude toward life, toward people as he comes to the end and the dignity that marks it. In verse 16, he says, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." Paul, an old man, Paul,

facing imminent death, Paul looks back on life and what is the dignity that marks him as he does? Beloved, he is gracious toward those who deserted him. He says, "These men left me. May God not hold it against them." Dignity. Sensible. Sober-minded. He looks vertically and he praises God for his faithfulness, "God has rescued me in the past. He's going to rescue me from every evil deed," perhaps thinking of execution at the hands of Caesar being just ahead for him in his life but, "God will rescue me, and He will bring me to His heavenly kingdom." This is the dignity and the sobriety of it. "I'm on the verge of death. May God forgive those who wronged me. I know that He'll take care of me going forward. He's going to deliver me safely into his heavenly kingdom."

Beloved, think about that as you think about what Paul is saying when he says older men are to be temperate, dignified and sensible. Men, older men, you gray hairs and lacking hair, there's your pattern. There's your pattern for life. This is what God is calling you to, away from preoccupation with petty issues, away from an unforgiving spirit, away from fear of the future, a willingness to forgive, a trusting of God, a confident looking forward to eternal life that is resting in the faithfulness and the love and the goodness of Jesus Christ your Lord. That's the call. Pretty high call, isn't it? Dignity in life that is rooted in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Well, let's go on to the second point here and look at the maturity in faith. Dignity in life, maturity in faith. Just a preliminary thing, one of the aspects of recognizing the supremacy of Christ and recognizing the transcendent importance of biblical truth, men, is to consider and contemplate what it is that you give your mind to, what it is that you engage your thought with. You know, are you engaging in books or teaching that are leading you into a better knowledge of biblical truth, biblical doctrine, biblical fidelity? Or, God forbid, is your mind in front of the television 7-8 hours a day just drinking in entertainment or the Fox News Channel? What you are putting into your mind is showing you what the direction of your life is, where your heart is. And what is it, I ask you? Ladies, this goes for you too. Maturity in faith, men, our lives are called to manifest Christian virtue reflected in a mature knowledge and manifestation of faith.

Look at the end of verse 2 with me. "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible," here we go, "sound in faith, in love, in perseverance." Sound, healthy, strong, confident in what you believe, what you know, what you believe and how you respond to it. You are confident in the word of God, you are confident in the goodness of God, and you affirm it in your life with your lips, and you affirm it with your life and the way that you live and with the decisions that you make. You see, beloved, what we're talking about here, what Scripture is calling us to, is something that is far beyond mere verbal assent, far beyond nodding in response to what the preacher is saying, far beyond, in other circles, calling out "Amen" when a guy preaches. You know, that can be kind of distracting to the guy in the pulpit, just so you know. You might want to affirm a guy that way, but it can distract and break a train of thought. It's not necessarily a good thing to do and sometimes it's just a matter of calling attention to self. Forget that kind of external verbal stuff that other men can see and contemplate your character in light of these things. This is not an outward thing for a show for men. We're not putting on displays for

others to see. We're after the reality. We want to be like this in our character because this is what God has called us to be.

And so it's the maturity in faith is a manifestation of a peaceful demeanor, a knowledge of truth that isn't chasing after every new fad. The older man who's mature in faith wasn't tempted to chase after the social justice gospel when it rose up, wasn't tempted to chase after all the new fads that inevitably come up when publishers realize there's a buck to be made in this genre of books. Men who weren't attracted away by the so-called heavenly tourism books. "Oh, I died and went to heaven. Let me tell you what it's like up there." You know, men look at that and just realize for the tripe and trash that it is and don't give their time to it, don't speculate on it. That kind of maturity. It's a maturity that, you know, kind of building on what I said earlier, that loves others, seeks out weaker believers and looks to build them up rather than just living in a selfish bubble that's all about me, maturity in faith that walks with Christ even when the howling winds of adversity rattle the windows of your life. That kind of maturity, a kind of maturity that sets priorities and sets schedules around the things of God rather than the pleasures and entertainment of men. That's what we're talking about, beloved. This is lofty. This is life-transforming. This is convicting for many.

Let's see these things in the life of Paul again as we turn the corner in our message. Sound in faith, we saw it there in Titus 2:2. Sound in faith. What was Paul's faith like as an older man at the end? Look back again to 2 Timothy 4. Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." Paul says, "I've kept the faith the Lord gave me, the Lord instructed me, revealed things directly to me, and I've kept it. I've taught them. I have not deviated from them. I've given them to the next generation. I've kept it." That's the mark of an older man in the faith.

What about sound in love? Going back, we'll bounce back and forth between Titus and the illustrations here with the life of Paul. Titus 2:2, "sound in faith, in love." What about Paul's love at the end of his life? We'll look at 2 Timothy 1 now, verses 3 through 6, as he writes to his disciple these parting words. Look at the affection. Look at the concern. Look at the spiritual godliness that surrounds what he says to his struggling disciple. He says there in chapter 1, verse 3, "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

Beloved, this was so much more than a sentimental "atta boy" that he was giving to Timothy. This drips with spiritual earnestness. It drips with love and concern for his well-being. It drips with the love that looks to strengthen him in life. Look at it there with me. He's praying for him in verse 3. He longs to see him in verse 4. He remembers past time together when Timothy wept in his presence, and he said, "The memory of you fills me

with joy." Men, I ask you whether there is anyone in your life that you feel that way about, let alone whether there's someone that you have that kind of input with him or not. Sound in love. Investing in one way or another, I won't prescribe the details of it, I'm just asking you whether there's a man, whether there are men in your life that you give yourself to and you're concerned spiritually for them. I know that some of you do in the realms that God has given to you, and I am so encouraged by that. There's a lot of men in this room so I have to ask the question broadly. Sound in love. You have the sense, "You know what? God didn't give me this life for me. There are men out there, there are people out there, there are family members out there who need me to be strong, to love, to support them and I'm going to be there for them." Sound in love, it's the call of God on an older Christian man.

Well, one last one here as we look at maturity in faith. Titus 2:2, "in perseverance." Sound in faith, in love, and perseverance. Was Paul sound in perseverance? What a rock. 2 Timothy 1:12, verse 11, he said, "I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher." He'd lived out his ministry, he'd suffered a lot of hardship as a result of it, despised and rejected by men in reflection of our Lord who was also despised and rejected of men. And you see, men, look, as noble as this life that Scripture calls us to is, and it is a noble life, it is not the path of popularity. This is a path that leads you to rejection, to being marginalized by the people around you, by being ignored by others. But we're not motivated by the human reaction to the life that we live for Christ. That's not what motivates us and so it does not deter us from persevering in it. Paul, verse 11, "a preacher and an apostle and a teacher," and what does he say about it at the end of his life? He says, "For this reason I suffer these things." He's in prison, he's about to be executed. He says, "I'm about to spill my blood. I'm about to die as a result of the things that I've taught and communicated to you, Timothy." And what does he say about it? This is a man. This is a Christian man. He says, "I suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. I know that Christ is the living God. I know the biblical truth about Him, and I believe it, and I'm committed to it. And whatever the consequences that come from that belief, I'm undeterred. I know whom I believed. I'm not ashamed. All the more, I'm all the more convinced of it at the end of my life than I was at the beginning, that this One whom I know, this Christ who loved me and gave Himself up for me, this Christ who reigns in glory at the right hand of the Father and one day he's coming back in glory to establish His kingdom, to separate the wheat from the chaff, the sheep from the goats, I know Him. He loved me, gave Himself up for me. He's supreme and sovereign over all. I'm convinced of these things and I know that He'll keep my soul. Men may kill the body, they may kill, God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever." He endures. He persevered. And soon after he wrote those words, his faith again became sight.

Men, I wish I could kind of sit in the audience to hear what I need to say, but I'm speaking to myself as well as to you. Men, if you're the head of a household, Scripture has just sifted your entire life. Some of you should be feeling convicted, I know. I say it sympathetically, but the conviction is good and necessary. I say this gently and I say it in love, men, I truly do to the best of my ability anyway, but in a room of this size, let's be

honest, there are men who are just going through the motions without any real heartfelt pursuit of Christ, without any fundamental love for him in their hearts, without any fundamental transcendent purpose to life that says, "I exist in order to strengthen other believers, to help them, to be an encouragement to them. The Lord has given me strength, given me a mind, given me resources, given me time. I want to be beside them. I want to help them." Not every man in a church lives that way, do they? Scripture calls them to. If you've accepted that kind of mediocrity in your life, and you're living that way, beloved, shame on you. Shame on you. Jesus Christ is worthy of so much more than what you've done, than what you're doing. It's time to repent. It's time to put away the childish approach to life and live for manly things. I invite you, I encourage you, I call upon you to confess your sin before God earnestly, ask him to change you and to set your mind on the upward call of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There are others of you for whom I am so grateful to God that your earnestness is so apparent. You weep over the remnants of sin in your life. You come alongside men and encourage them. You're faithful to your spouse and seek to encourage her in Christ. That's the kind of thing that we're talking about and we have a lot of men like that in our church, Christian men of dignified faith in the body of Christ. May God help you to excel still more for the glory of the one who loved you and gave himself up for you because this is what Scripture calls us to, because this is what Christ is worthy of, because this is a noble way to live, because a church will not rise above the character of its older men.

Let's pray together.

Father, may You strengthen the hands of the feeble, may You be gracious toward those who are convicted and draw them by Your Spirit into the love of a gracious Christ who longs to bless them and use them still. The fact that we are still here, Lord, is an indication that we still have work to do, that You are not done with us, You have not yet set us aside. And so, Father, whether it's men that have been faithful and just need to be affirmed and encouraged by Your Spirit in it, or men who need to repent and to come out of the woods and into where the cutting edge of the battle lies, bless our men, help them, strengthen them and use them for Your own glory and the glory of Your dear blessed Son to whom be glory now and forevermore. Amen.

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