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Grace Energized Men—Don't Waste Your Life



Part 2 (071028PM)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who are the Older Ones in Christ's Church?

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

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

[Numbers 8:24-26](#) "This is what pertains to the Levites: From twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting; 25 "and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more. 26 "They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties." NKJV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Tragedy in the Making

You may not be sure that you want your life to make a difference. Maybe you don't care very much whether you make a lasting difference for the sake of something great. You just want people to like you. If people would just like being around you, you'd be satisfied. Or if you could just have a good job with a good wife, or husband, and a couple of good kids and a nice car and long weekends and a few good friends, a fun retirement, and a quick and easy death, and no hell—if you could have all that (even without God)—you would be satisfied. That is a tragedy in the making. A wasted life.

These Lives and Deaths Were No Tragedy

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

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

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

An American Tragedy: How Not to Finish Your One Life

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

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

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

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

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

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

“God created us to live with a single passion: to joyfully display his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. The wasted life is the life without this passion. God calls us to pray and think and dream and plan and work not to be made much of, but to make much of him in every part of our lives.”

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

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

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

What can keep us From Seeing Jesus in Daily Life?

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

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

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

Danger 1— Beware of the sins of old age.

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

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

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

Danger 2— Beware of the problem of exceptionism.

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

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

Danger 3— Beware of unmortified pockets of pride.

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

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

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

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

*Thro’ death into life ever-lasting
He passed, and we followed Him there;
Over us sin no more hath dominion—
For more than conq’rors we are.*

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

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

Ask Him here today to open your eyes.

Steps for continuing to grow spiritually to our final days [4]:

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

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

God has a Six Desires For Every Mature Man

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

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

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

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

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

2. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LIFE IN AN AMUSED WORLD

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

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

3. LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE IN A FOOLISH WORLD

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD

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

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

5. **STAYING TENDER HEARTED IN A CRUEL WORLD**

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

6. **FINISHING HOPEFULLY IN A DESPAIRING WORLD**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

v. 2a “sober”

2. **GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LIFE IN AN AMUSED WORLD**

v.2b “reverent”

3. **LIVING A CONSISTENT LIFE IN A FOOLISH WORLD**

v.2c “temperate”

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

4. **GUARDING A HEALTHY MIND IN A SICK WORLD**

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5. **STAYING TENDER HEARTED IN A CRUEL WORLD**

v.2e “[sound] in love”

6. **FINISHING HOPEFULLY IN A DESPAIRING WORLD**

v.2f “[sound] in patience”

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

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

If you’ve not yet done so—why not surrender to Him right now?

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

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

[1] Robertson, 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,” πρεσβυτης [presbutēs] yet he stilled served in the temple (Luke 1:18–25)—but most likely as one who at age 50 had entered some form of retirement, to mentor the younger men in the ways of God.
[3] Excerpted from *Living Hope*, week 20.
[4] J. Oswald Sanders, *Your Best Years, Staying Young While Growing Old*. Chicago, Moody Press, 1982, p. 35.
[5] MacArthur, John: *Titus*. Chicago : Moody Press, 1996, electronic edition, in loc.

