Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God's Plan for Older Men and Older Women
Scripture: Titus 2:2-3
Code: 56-13

This morning we return in our study of God's Word to Paul's letter to Titus and to chapter 2. The chapter deals, as I noted for you last time, with the character of a healthy church...the character of a healthy church. And we're going to be looking at this over the next few weeks and seeing how the Spirit of God will unfold its content for us.

This morning I want to address your attention to verses 2 and 3, Titus chapter 2 and let me just read verses 2 and 3: "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith in love in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, not enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good."

Now obviously the message this morning is going to be addressed to older men and older women. And I think that's a very fitting subject, particularly for our time and place in history. I'm going to give you a fact that might surprise you but it's true. America is now the oldest society in the history of the world. There has never been a society with this percentage of older people. Material comfort, medical care and a low birth rate have led America to what is called the graying of America and an old population. In our country, for example, the number of people over 65 passed the number of teen-agers. There are about 23 million teen agers in America, I know sometimes it seems like there are about 250 million of them, but there are 23 or so million teen agers in America and there are approaching 35 million people over 65.

They tell us in 25 years one out of every five people will be over 65 and one out of every ten will be over 80. The graying of America. We know it's here. We see it all around us. I suppose in some ways we laugh at it. Bob Hope said, "You know you're old when the candles cost more than the cake." And Agatha Christie wrote on one occasion that she married an archaeologist. And someone asked why would you marry an archaeologist...to which she replied, "Because the older I get the more he'll appreciate me."

And we want to have a humorous approach to that. You know, they say there are only three stages in life...youth, adulthood and "my, you're looking well." And when they start saying that to you, you know where you are.

But there is some reality to this getting old that is perhaps not quite as humorous. There's a certain sadness in it. We're glad we know what we know as we get older, but we wish we had youth to

express it. As someone said, it's a shame that youth wasted on people so young. There are negative aspects to getting old, that's true. We become creatures of somewhat formidable and unbreakable habits. And the longer we do them the harder they are to deal with. Sometimes even our besetting sins become so much a part of the fabric of our lives that even recognition of them becomes difficult. Sometimes we get a little bit obstinate and a little bit stubborn and sometimes we think we know more than we do know, and sometimes we think age equals wisdom, and it doesn't. It should bring wisdom but it may not be the same thing.

No, there are definitely some negative aspects to getting old. In fact, if you want to see a little bit of a prosaic look at what aging is like you need only to turn to the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. I would draw you there for just a moment. Ecclesiastes follows the book of Proverbs and the final chapter is chapter 12 and it gives an insight, I think, in to sort of the down side of aging. The writer says in verse 1, "Remember also your creator in the days of your youth." Enjoy God while you're young, know God while you're young. "Let God be the central figure in your life while you're young before the evil days come." Well the implication there is that the older you get the more evil life becomes, the more unfulfilling, the more dissatisfying, the more disillusioning. He calls them the years when you will say, "I have no delight in them." Commit your life to God and enjoy God and make God the center of everything while you're young, before you'll not be able to experience all the rich delights of His creation. Part of getting old, before the sun, the light, the moon, the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain...the cloudy times in life, the more barren and bleak times in life when you're old.

And then he gets very prosaic as he writes, "The day that the watchmen of the house tremble and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few and those who look through windows grow dim and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low and one will arise at the sound of the bird and all the daughters of song will sing softly."

What is he talking about? Well the picture is of a house but it's symbolic of a human body. The watchmen of the house some commentators feel are the arms and the hands, those are the guards, the protectors, the defenders, and they start to shake as you get old. And the mighty men would be the legs and they begin to stoop and bend. The grinding ones, the teeth stand idle because they are few. This is the day before false teeth and bridges and whatever. Teeth don't work anymore and those who look through widows grow dim, you don't see like you once could see. The doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, could be the slowing down of some kind of internal processes. One arises at the sound of the bird, you don't need an alarm clock anymore, you wake up if there's a bird 50 yards away tweeting in a tree because you sleep so lightly. You don't sleep as well as you did. All the daughters of song will sing softly. If you bring the whole women's glee club together and all their shrill soprano voices in full glory, you have to go like this....because you can't hear them, it's all soft sound to you.

And verse 5 says, "Men who aren't afraid of anything become afraid of a high place." Why? Because they're worried about their instability, they're worried they might fall and break some brittle bones. And they're worried about the terrors on the road as they walk along, they might stumble over a stone and fall and be severely injured. The almond tree blossoms, that probably is referring to the white blossoms on an almond tree means the hair grows white. The grasshopper drags himself along the walk, changes the pace, changes you used to kind of move along a little bit spritely and now all of a sudden you're dragging and shuffling. And eventually the man goes to his eternal home and there's a funeral and some people are mourning.

And in verse 6 he says, "The silver cord is broken," maybe the spinal cord is referred to there, "the golden bowl," maybe that means the brain. "The pitcher by the well is shattered," maybe that means the heart. "The wheel at the cistern is crushed," the veins, the arteries. I'm not sure of all the specific imagery here but I see it as sort of the demise of a man in his old age and the dust returns to the earth, as it was, and the spirit goes back to God. Kind of a bleak way to look at old age, but it's reality. All of it...all of us feel it coming.

And just because you're growing old life doesn't have to be bleak. I mean, it's...it's certainly for a Christian to be rewarded as a crowning time of life with a level of spiritual maturity you can't have in your youth. All those who know Christ, all those who have walked with Him for any length of time should look forward to old age because it takes us nearer to heaven, doesn't it? It puts us in a situation where we have accumulated spiritual experience which makes us truly rich. It enables us to be the leaders and the mentors and the models and the examples for the young. It allows us to filter out life and keep what we think is really valuable. Should be a good time.

And, you know, in the life of the church it's really very important to have people who are godly seniors. And that's what Paul is saying to Titus. Let's go back to Titus. He's saying, you know, as you look at your congregation, Titus, you need to start your instruction with the older people because they're so crucial. You know, there are a lot of churches today in our country, and I suppose in other places in the world, they are filled with young people. I really wouldn't want to be a part of one of those churches. I think...I think that would be a very difficult place to minister because you need some people there who have been where all those young people are going who can help them evaluate what they think at this present time may be valuable. You need the hoary heads, you need the aged and the wise who have come and gone and been there to instruct the young to show them the path of righteousness, to show them the path of goodness, to show them the proper priorities and values. You need some people who can stand with the Apostle Paul and say I've fought the good fight, I've kept the faith.

So the aging of Christians is a blessing. I think churches today don't understand that. I...I have heard a couple of comments from people who have gone over to Russia and the Ukraine and come back

and said, "Well, we really can't work for through the church over there, they're just a bunch of old people." That's a terrible terrible insight into the shallowness of some people's thinking. It's the aged people in the congregation that provide its strength, its stability and its wisdom. Older believers should they be in great numbers in the future in the church are going to make the church a better place, a richer place. The maturity of godliness will be a benediction to the body of Christ. The aging of America means the aging of the church, the aging of the church could be a great great blessing.

Certainly God has told us to revere those who are older than we are, those who are the aged who have walked with Him. Leviticus 19:32 says, "You shall rise up before the gray headed and honor the aged." Job 12:12, "Wisdom is with the aged with long life is understanding." The gray head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness. Somebody old who has walked a long time in the path of righteousness is a treasure, a treasure of wisdom and a treasure of experience and a treasure of understanding, a triumphant Christian who has fought the battle over and over and over and been victorious, who has experienced everything that the young are waiting to experience...become a great treasure to the church.

In Psalm 71 verse 17 the psalmist says, "O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth and I still declare Thy wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me until I declare Thy strength to this generation and Thy power to all who are to come." Give me a ministry in my old age because I can talk about Your strength and I can talk about Your power because I've seen it for so many years...I've lived it. In Psalm 92 a very similar prayer rises from the heart of the psalmist starting there in verse 12, "The righteous man will flourish like a palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God, they will still yield fruit in old age, they will be full of sap and very green to declare that the Lord is upright." Those who can best declare the character of God are those who have walked with Him longest.

Older people then in a fellowship do become a treasure, a tremendous blessing. They bring spiritual experience, spiritual strength, spiritual endurance, spiritual wisdom to all of us. And if in the years ahead the church has an abundance of such people, what a source of blessing. But only if they walk in the way of righteousness. And that's why the instruction of Titus verses 2 and 3 in chapter 2 is so very very important. There's no value in being old if you're not godly. There's no value in being old if you're not a model or an example. And so the Apostle Paul lays down some very specific characteristics that are to be manifest in the older people in the congregation.

Now by the way, he's going to work his way on down. We're going to get to the younger women and the younger men as we move through this chapter on the character of a healthy church. But we start here at the top, as it were. In chapter 1, you'll remember, he addressed the leadership. And here in chapter 2 he's addressing the people. Chapter 1 focused on the quality and the character of the pastors, and now the people. And he gave us, you'll remember, three clauses in chapter 2 that I pointed out to you last time that become the reason or the motive for this. Verse 5, "That the Word of

God may not be dishonored." Verse 8, "That the opponent may be put to shame having nothing bad to say about us." And verse 10, "That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." For the sake of exalting the Word, for the sake of silencing the critics and for the sake of demonstrating the saving power of God, this is how you must live. These are not optional, these are not non-negotiable, these are required for older saints. If the church is to have a powerful impact on the world, if the church is to fulfill its evangelistic mission and mandate, then the older people must be like this that they may demonstrate God's saving power, the power of His Word and silence the critics. So what we're going to say here is mandatory for those who are older saints.

Let's look at the men. And I'm going to spend more time on the men than the women because that way I get less mail. Verse 2, "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith in love in perseverance." Now "older men" is an interesting word, presbutes, it's a word that means just that, older men. Paul uses it in Philemon verse 9 when he refers to himself as Paul the aged. Perhaps...and we know he was in his sixties at that time. Perhaps a good definition of it will flow out of Luke 1:18, Zacharias the father of John the Baptist had been told that he would have a son, that his wife would become pregnant and they would have a son and, of course, it would be John the Baptist. But Zacharias says, "How shall I know this for certain?" I mean, this seems impossible. Why? "For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." And he uses the word presbutes there which would lead us to believe that he is saying an old man is one who is unable to produce a child. So you're talking about an age where child production is no longer the norm. That's what the word means. It's talking about a man at that point in his life. And again Paul uses it to refer to himself in his sixties.

There are some ancient sources such as Philo and Hypocrites that use the term to refer to people over 50. Somewhere in the 50 and over and 60 and over category this term comes into play. The Apostle Paul was an old man by this term in his sixties and somewhere beyond 50 I think we could make this term come into play. So we're talking about that generation of men in the life of the church.

Now these men here are called to be spiritually responsible to demonstrate godly character. This is very important. In fact, it's so important in the church that if they don't do it they're to be rebuked. Back in 1 Timothy 5 it says, "Do not sharply rebuke an older man but rather appeal to him as a father." Now the assumption here is that in the life of the church older men are going to sin. And that's true. It doesn't mean that because I'm older, I'm over 50, over 60, over 70, or over 80 that all of a sudden I don't sin anymore...not so. And it is very reasonable to assume that the very fact that Paul is telling Titus to tell these men to behave this way indicates that there's a real possibility that some of them might not. It is indicated in 1 Timothy 5:1 that elders may need to be rebuked, older men. They may need to be confronted about their sin. And Paul says if you do it, don't do it sharply, that's what he's saying. Don't do it cruelly. The word here, the verb here is used only here and it means to beat with blows, or to strike with a fist and metaphorically to abuse verbally...to hammer with words, one lexicon says. So if you're going to rebuke an older man you don't want to hit him, you don't want to

strike him, you don't want to hammer him with words in an unkind abusive violent harsh way. The verb is related to the Greek word plektesused in chapter 3 and it means a striker or a hitter. You don't want to hit them and strike them and abuse them and be harsh with them. Confronting an older man's sin has to be done without violence and without harsh action...must be done graciously and kindly. And then it says right there how to do it in 1 Timothy 5:1, "Appeal to him as a father." Parakaleo, come alongside and admonish and encourage and appeal to one with the consideration and respect that you would give to your father.

General regard for people in their senior years is of grave concern to God, believe me...very concerned is God about it. How you treat your father is a matter for God to even discuss in the Commandments, the Ten Commandments. In fact, the death penalty was required for disrespect, for hitting, striking your father or mother or for cursing your father or mother according to Exodus chapter 22...chapter 21 verses 15 and 17. Those who are older are to be treated with kindness and love and honor and respect.

So when you confront an older man because of his sin, you do it graciously. You come alongside and appeal to him with the respect that you would give to a father.

Now Paul is saying to Titus, "You must confront the older men in your congregation and you must call them to this level of spiritual living or else...the implication is...they must be so confronted." And again I point out to you, that on the one hand we give respect to the older generation, on the other hand, we hold them accountable for their behavior and accountable for maturity and godliness. The patriarchs are to be respected but they are to be holy also. And when they are, when the older men in a church are holy godly men, they will become the mentors and models for a level of godliness that will pervade the congregation...including the women and the younger men. Every older man should set as his goal to come to the latter years of his life and be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith," 2 Timothy 4:7. Every older man should be able to say, "I want you to be a follower of me as I am of Christ." Every older man should be able to say to the younger man, "Let me show you how to live life."

As older men, we should have so much to offer. Paul suggests, first of all, three characteristics...temperate, dignified, and sensible. Let's take the first one, temperate. The word here literally means "not drunken." But metaphorically it means moderate...not indulgent...not extravagant. The older man is a man who...who isn't in to excess, who is generally a moderate person. He has learned the high cost of self-indulgent living. He has learned the high cost of filling out all his pleasures, satisfying all his whims, pursuing all his dreams. And he's now filtered through all of that and he's left a lot of stuff along the path discarded. When he was young it was a matter of accumulation. And as he accumulated he began to find out what really had value. As a young man he poured energy into a lot of things, as an older man he can look back and see where that energy was wasted in so many cases. As a young man he dreamed a thousand dreams and wanted to

accomplish a thousand things and looks back only to a handful of things that had eternal value. As an older man he has a myriad of experiences one after another, day after day, month after month, year after year and life has been moderated by those experiences.

He has found that what he thought he wanted that would give him satisfaction never did. And all the possessions and all the accumulation and all the reputation and all the achievement and all the accolades have been somehow set aside on the path of life and discarded because they had no real value. He has come to a right value system. He has come to be as a related verb puts it "sober minded," used in 1 Corinthians 15:34. Or as another related word used in 1 Peter, "sober in spirit." In other words, he's got his priorities down now. He knows what experiences were valuable and in many cases they were the ones he feared the most and now knows they rendered him the best fruit. They made him the man he is. In many cases what he didn't want was what was most valuable and what he pursued with all his might was least valuable. He knows that now. He's filtered life out.

And very often when men come to this age in life although there are certain physical things they need to perhaps increase their comfort level, they have, if they're godly and have walked the path of righteousness, they've really filtered through almost everything. And they should find themselves reduced being reduced to a simpler and simpler and simpler life because they now know what things have real value. They now know what people have real value, what relationships have real value, what efforts have real value. That is absolutely crucial for them to dispense to a younger generation.

Where there is a moderate, non-indulgent, non-extravagant, sober-minded, sober-spirited knowledge of priorities through years and years of experience you have the wisdom that needs to be passed down. It's like the father who sits with his little children and says, "I know you don't understand why, you'll have to trust me for this. You can't do this, I know why you can't do it, you don't understand why, I've been there, I'll tell you why." And so these men are to be men who are temperate. Their lives have been reduced to the irreducible minimums of what really matters.

Secondly, they are to be dignified, semnos, serious, worthy of respect, venerable. It doesn't mean that they're boring, gloomy people, it must means they're not frivolous. They're not flippant. They're serious in life. I mean, they've lived long enough to see that life is a serious thing. They're over the feeling of immortality and invincibility that plagues young people. And they've seen too much and felt too much to be trivial. They've buried their parents in many cases, most cases. They've buried their sisters and brothers. They've stood in hospital waiting rooms while those they love died. They've been waiting for the surgeon to come out and explain what happened in the cancer surgery to a life partner. They've watched a child rebel. They've watched a child born who turned away from everything they believed in. They watched a child die of leukemia. They watched a child die of cancer. They've seen it all. They've felt it all. They have borne the burdens of their own life and family and the burdens of a myriad of other people with whom they have shared life. They've come to the disillusioning reality and fact that the world is not going to get any better and they couldn't make it

any better and neither can anybody else. They've lived through all the anticipated utopian thoughts. They have lived through the hopeful euphorias that said we're going to fix everything. And they're down on the other side of it and they know with an honesty that life is the way it is because man is the way he is and he is not going to change by himself.

Things aren't as funny as maybe they were when he was young because life is too serious. I don't know about you but I...I don't relate that necessarily with getting old but I look at some of these programs that are supposedly the funniest programs on television and I find myself utterly unable to laugh at any of it. And I still think I'm...I have a pretty good sense of humor. I read somewhere where Roseanne is the number one program on television so I decided I'd make myself watch it once to see it if was funny. And I didn't think any of it was funny because all I could see was people manifesting a life style without God. And it simply became a demonstration of a point of identity where a whole nation of people identify with these people. And all I saw through the microcosm of Roseanne was a nation of people living without God. That isn't funny. That is tragic. Now there's a certain sense of humor that we all have. And, after all, God must have a sense of humor...I mean, just look around at who is sitting near you. And we can laugh, and that's a gift. But at the same time, mature Christian men have reached a level of dignity where they are venerable. They see life the way it really is. And if they laugh they laugh at what is laughable, not what is tragic. And if they smile they smile because there's something to smile about...really smile about, a sunset, a beautiful day, a beautiful scene, a precious child, love. They don't laugh at what is tragic.

And the third thing he says about these older men is they should be characterized by what is sensible. They should be sensible. This means they have discretion and discernment. That comes by age. They've experienced it all. They've gone through all the experiences and they have developed a strength of mind and a depth of experience and a grip on truth and a devotion to what is right and they have learned how to control their instincts and their passions. And that word "sensible" means they've got the loose ends of their life tied down, they're under control, they have discernment, discretion. They...to borrow the same basic concept, the same root word from Paul's statement in Romans chapter 12 verse 3...they think so as to have sound judgment. They think soundly.

These qualities, being temperate, dignified and sensible, replace the qualities of youth. You know what they are? Recklessness, impetuosity, thoughtlessness and instability.

Then there are three more positive virtues that are all summed up in the final statement. Sound in faith, in love, in perseverance...sound means healthy, without weakness, without disease, without debilitation. They have strong well whole attitudes in these areas. First in faith, this is wonderful. They are to be healthy in faith. They have spiritual faith that is healthy, whole, well, sound, solid.

What does that mean? That means their faith in God is unwavering. They've seen enough. They've been through enough. The 50, 60, 70, 80 years have shown them God and God is to be trusted,

right? They don't doubt. They don't question God. They never lose their trust in God's good intention. They never lose their confidence in God's plan. They never lose their hope for God's sovereignty to fulfill itself. They never accuse God of disappointing them. They never doubt the truth of Scripture. They never question the power of the Holy Spirit. They never ever question whether the gospel can save. They know, they've seen it.

Those who have lived through all the years and God has shown Himself and shown Himself and shown Himself and shown Himself through all of the vicissitudes and struggles and all the difficulties of life, he has been there and he has proven himself and he's an old man now and he says...I believe God. And his faith holds up the church. He's strong. His faith is courageous because a life of believing has taught him to trust God. God has proven Himself faithful over the long years. In all the hospitals, at all the funerals, in all the losses and disappointments of life, God has been faithful. Through all of the sins and the temptations and trials and the repentances and the renewals, through all of the exposure to the truth and the application of the Word, it has been as God said it would be and He can be believed. And that kind of mature faith holds up the church. It gives us a faith to emulate.

Secondly he says he is to be healthy in love. He has a healthy spiritual love. Certainly he has this love toward God and toward others as well. He is a man who loves. He's not a bitter man. That's the saddest thing there is in the world is to see an old man who is bitter. Here is a man who loves. Here is a man who loves by bearing one another's burdens and thus fulfilling the law of Christ, Galatians 6:2. Here is a man who loves sacrificially, here is a man who loves serving.

Here is a man who has learned through the years what ought to be loved and what not to love. His love is set on things that should be loved. He's learned to love when love is not returned. He's learned to love when love is rejected. He's learned to love when love isn't even deserved. He's learned to love and in his love to forgive and in his love to serve. He's learned to love patiently, kindly. His love is not jealous. His love does not brag. His love is not arrogant. It doesn't act unbecomingly. It doesn't seek its own. It isn't provoked. It doesn't take into account a wrong suffered. It never rejoices in somebody else's sin, it rejoices with the truth. His is a love that bears all things, believes all things and hopes all things, endures all things and his love never fails.

One of the tragedies of old age is when people become unloving and bitter and selfish. This older man that the church desperately needs is healthy in his love. He doesn't love out of emotion, he loves out of principle. He loves because it's right. He loves with his will not his feelings. Part of growing old is that you don't do everything by your feelings.

And then there's a third familiar thing. He is to be sound in perseverance, endurance. He's been through enough trials. He's suffered enough. He knows. He is to be a very model of patience. He has been through it all. He has the courage that is the result of that. He never loses heart in spite of

disappointment, unfulfilled aspirations, physical weakness, growing loneliness. The godly man becomes tempered like steel. His body is weaker, his spirit is stronger, he can endure to the very end. These make the gospel glory shine.

And then, and I told you I was going to spend less time on the women...verse 3 says, "Likewise, or in the same way, just the same, older women are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, not enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good."

Do you know that if an older woman isn't what God wants her to be, she's to be rebuked also? First Timothy 5:2 says, "If you have to rebuke an older woman, rebuke her as a mother." It's hard to rebuke your mother, isn't it? Well nigh impossible because you have so much love and so much respect because your heart gets in the way of your head. But sometimes older women need to be rebuked but it must be done gently and lovingly and graciously and kindly and they must be treated with the dignity and respect that a mother deserves. And again I remind you, if one is to strike his mother or to curse his mother, in Exodus 21 it says he is to forfeit his life.

The older women were handled, I think, very graciously by Paul if you want an example of how to handle them in Philippians 4. There were two women messing up the church. Paul says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." He had to rebuked them publicly in this letter. They've got to get their act together. And then he said, "Indeed, true comrade," and he points to someone there and says, "I'm asking you to help these women. You help them solve this animosity. They've shared in my struggle in the cause of the gospel." What a commendation. They shared together with Clement and they shared with the rest of the fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life. They're believers, they're in God's book and they've served the Lord, help them resolve this. That's a tender way to deal with two women having a problem sinning, gracious handling of it.

Women are to be a godly resource in the church. Back in 1 Timothy chapter 5, older women who become widows are singled out and those women, he says in verse 9, who are 60 years and older who have been one-man women, chaste, faithful, pure wives who had a good reputation for good works, who brought up children, who showed hospitality to strangers and washed the saints' feet and assisted those in distress and devoted themselves to every good work, those women you need to take care of them. Now if they have a family, let the family take care of them. If they don't have anybody to take care of them at all, he says in that same chapter, and their only hope is in God, then you take care of them. Those kinds of women are worthy of your care. Bring them into the church, put them on the list of cared widows. They're precious.

Sinning women who haven't been faithful and weren't faithful to their husbands and didn't bring up children properly and didn't show hospitality to strangers and weren't known for their good works and all of that, why you don't put those on the list. No, the Scripture exalts those women who are godly

women. And they should be brought into the church to be models to the younger women.

Paul suggests several qualities that should mark these women. "The older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior." That's one word in the Greek and it's used only here in the Bible. And the word means priestlike. They're to be like priests. What does that mean? In other words, they're holy. They're the kind of women who should have access to God. They're the kind of women who could enter God's holy presence, sacred character, godly lives.

Such a woman is described for us in Luke chapter 2 in that wonderful little vignette of Anna. Anna who was advanced in years. She was a widow to the age of 84. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. An 84- year-old godly woman who was priestlike in her behavior, reverent in her behavior.

That kind of behavior is called for by Paul in writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:9, these are women who adorn themselves with the proper clothings, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly ornaments. They're humble, they're meek. They're properly dressed to call attention to the Lord and not themselves. They haven't piled a fortune in their hair to call attention to themselves. These are women who choose good works as befits women making a claim to godliness, 1 Timothy 2:10. They are women who quietly receive instruction with submission and do not exercise authority in the church or teach men. They are women who through the bearing of children have removed the stigma of their sin and have continued in faith and love and purity with self-restraint. That's the kind of behavior God wants...modesty and discretion, virtue, submission to a husband, godliness, raising children in a godly way, helping strangers. The outward action of holiness is dependent on an inward condition of holiness. And so Paul says to Titus, "You must tell the older women to be holy, to be like priests who enter the very presence of God."

And then he adds secondly, "not malicious gossips." Boy, what immediate contrast that is. You know what the word is for malicious gossips? It's the Greek word diabolos, 34 times in the New Testament it appears as a name for Satan. Nothing is more Satanlike than slander. And whereas men tend to sin and violently react physically, men prove to be rough or violent in their action, women have a tendency to be rough or violent in their words. Satan is a malicious slanderer, slandering night and day. Don't be Satanlike. Older women may have in the island of Crete as elsewhere found themselves with a lot of time on their hands and because they had less time...less to occupy their time they were given over to talk. And that talk became gossip, criticism, fault finding, slander. Paul says that's the devil's work. Older women should not vent their depravity through their speech. They should be anything but a malicious gossip.

And then thirdly he says, "Not enslaved, nor enslaved to much wine." This term refers to a drunkard. It's a strong term. Apparently in Crete as elsewhere, older people turn to stimulants to refresh their weary bodies, tired minds, and he says your women are not to do that. Your women don't need to

become slaves to that. It must have been a common thing as it even is today. These older believers are not to become drunkards, they're not to give themselves to wine, they're to maintain their senses.

Now we understand from our past studies of this matter of wine that God knew people in that culture would have to drink fermented drinks. And wine was generally then mingled with water or reduced to a paste and without fermentation then water was introduced into it again and it could be drunk. The implication here is not that they were drinking normal wine which would be mixed with water so you couldn't get drunk from it, but the idea of someone who was a drunkard. Perhaps in the pain of their old age and maybe even in the loneliness of their old age they wanted to dull their senses a bit and so they gave themselves over to these things and he says that's not fitting. They need to be in full use of their senses for God's holy purposes. They are to be like priests who draw into the presence of God. Their tongue is to speak nothing but that which is edifying and seasoned with grace, never are they to talk like the devil does, slandering or gossiping and never are they to become slaves of anything that inebriates them or takes away their senses.

They also have a positive duty at the end of verse 3, they are to be teaching what is good. They're to be teaching what is good. Older women, you need to be teaching. Teaching whom? Verse 4, teaching the young women to love their husbands, love their children, be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their husbands that the Word of God may not be dishonored. You teach the younger women. You've already taught your children. They're come and gone. Now it's your time to teach the younger generation. That's so important. That's why you have to have those godly older women in the congregation to teach the younger ones, to teach them how to raise their children, how to love their husbands and how to be godly. The teaching place of the older women is not in the church, he permits not a woman to teach, 1 Timothy says in chapter 2. The teaching place of an older woman is the home, informal teaching by word, by example, in a group of women here and there and wherever to bring along a generation of godly women. I fear what's going to happen in the church in the future if our godly women today don't teach the next generation because they don't have normal families to bring them up with any kind of sense about what a family is.

She is to teach what is good, kalodidaskalos, one word, teach good. What is right and what is good is to encourage young women to love their husbands, love their children, be sensible, pure, workers at home, etc., etc. That's their primary role to raise a godly generation of young women. I challenge the older women in our church to do that, the young women in your life are crucial...crucial. And you have them, they may be your daughters, they may be your daughters in law. They may be your granddaughters, they may be your daughter's friends, they may be your nieces, they're around, they may be those you know because of friendships, the daughters of your friends. They may be people in the church family. I don't think they're asking here for some kind of formal seminar. You have to come alongside and teach them how to live life, nurture them to godliness.

So that you older people are not the cause of dishonoring God's Word, so that you older people are not the cause of giving the opponent something to say bad about the church and so that you are not the cause of people who would doubt God's saving power, you need to live like this. A lot is at stake...a lot is at stake. And you have so much to offer.

Not long after the beginning of the racist black power movement and the start of the group called the Black Panthers, a little 67-year-old lady named Margaret Koon(?) in Philadelphia decided she wanted to get in on the Movement only from a different standpoint, so she started the gray power movement and started an organization called Gray Panthers. And her whole idea was just to get a bunch of gray people to make a change in the world.

Well what about the church? What about the gray power in the church? I look out over the congregation and I see a lot of gray. You're a powerful force in this church. We need you. Moses was 80 when God called him to lead Israel, 80. And he gave many excuses, but age wasn't one of them. Don't underestimate your capability.

John Wesley traveled 250 thousand miles by horseback or on foot to preach. He preached 40 thousand sermons, produced 400 books and knew 10 languages. At 83 he was annoyed that he couldn't write for more than 15 hours a day without hurting his eyes. Get this, at 86 he was ashamed that he could only...that he couldn't preach more than twice a day. And he said, since his eighty-sixth birthday, he had to admit there was an increasing tendency to lie in bed until 5:30 A.M. What a terrible decline in character that is.

You have so much to offer. Godly older generation, crucial to the life of the church. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for our time this morning in Your Word and the wonderful practicality of it. Thank You for the richness this church has in its senior saints and, O God, how we pray that they'll be the kind of people You want them to be and that they might bring great stability, great strength and character and wisdom to this congregation, that You'll give them a ministry in the lives of the youth of this church and those in the middle years that the lessons that they have learned and the character they have developed can become that which is passed on to the following generations. Preserve Your church, Lord, as the older generation who walked with You for so many years pass on the great life-changing truths and their practical implications. Bless this congregation. Bless its seniors and make them all that You want them to be and we'll give You praise in Christ's name. Amen.

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