

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Planting The Gospel

PART

2

TITLE

Live Authentically

SCRIPTURE

Titus 3:1-8



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Hello Providence. It's great to see you, to sing with you. I hope you've had a great, great week. If you're a guest with us, whether you're in this room, or at home live-stream, or some other venue, welcome. We're glad that you have joined us. I want to ask you to join with me to Titus. We'll be in chapter three, mainly. But, we're actually, going to take our time, and will actually look at all three chapters. We won't read all three chapters, we'll just read eight verses in chapter three.

But it is so, so good to see you. I am so ... I love that song. Think it is so powerful. I've heard so many stories this week of folks, even in our church family, who are just totally depleted of hope, and joy, because of sin, or because of pain, or because of things in their past. And I just want you to know, that no matter where you're at, God knows where you're at. And he cares for you. And there is hope because he has power. I just would exhort you to fix your eyes on Him, the Author, and Perfecter of our faith. Who for the joys set before Him, he endured the cross so that you could have hope where you're at right now.

There really is hope for you. In a moment, I want to pray for you. Even before we do that, I want to help us see sort of where we're at in our series. And then I'm going to pray for all of us, for that. So, we're in a series. It's five weeks long. We're in the second week. It's called Planting the Gospel. And it's birthed out of a vision that you and I, over the next three years, will be sharing the gospel, our own faith in Jesus Christ, with enough frequency that it would actually be, not only possible, but likely, that a 1,000 of us here at Providence would lead at least one person to faith in Jesus Christ.

And that we would then have the opportunity to keep meeting with them, to help them to grow, so that they could then share their faith. And it would pass from one to the next, to the next. This is possible. And you have to understand this, right? That this is isn't really creative, okay? This is our instructions. It's not like I, and the elders, and the pastors sat and thought, "You know what we should do? You know this would be creative. We've never thought of this. Let's tell people about Jesus, and see if more people would believe."

Our instructions are so clear, when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he looked at his followers, and he says, "Therefore, because this just happened, and because I have all the authority that has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I commanded you."

So, what you have to understand is, even though 95% of American believers, and we would probably be no different from that stat here at Providence, 95% of all believers have never had the privileged to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ. We will be held accountable for doing so. And so, as a church family, and as leaders, God tells us, our primary job is not to do the work of the ministry, it's to equip the people to do the work of the ministry.

And so, this month, we just feel burdened. How can we, not only encourage, but also equip our church family with this idea of how can we help each one of us become confident, and hopeful in what God has made available to us, that we would go out of these doors, and actually feel compelled? I realize in a big church, we think, “Oh, a thousand, there’s a lot of those people that’ll do it.” I just want to encourage you, don’t miss out yourself. Don’t miss out yourself.

And you know, it’s interesting, as you look at, in fact, even our whole work site right now ... you know, I have a great window, and each day I kind of look out and just kind of see what they’re doing. It’s really, really cool. And there’s one thing I haven’t seen yet. I’ve not see the crew were blindfolds. All right. And there’s good cause for that. There’s good reason for that. You never come across skilled workman who are wearing blindfolds. And in the very same way, you never, ever come across skilled witnesses who wear blindfolds to the things that God has already told us that are ingredients that are critical to us sharing the gospel.

See, there’s a lot of people who try to do that though. They just say, “you know what? I understand, here’s some of the ways that he says. But I’m going to try to do it this way.” But, you know, God’s just so kind to us, in that he not only gives us instructions, and he not only gives us his spirit, but he also gives us his promises that say, “Listen, I’m going to be with you when you’re doing this. That nothing can separate you from My hand, and from My presence.”

And so, as you think about the ingredients, right. So, one last week, and it’s the importance that you and I would remember very clearly God’s grace in our life. We move from that into the second one. And you can see all five of them, right here on this screen, right. Is that, what we want to do also, is live very authentically. What that really means, right, is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to bear fruit to prove ourselves that we are his disciples. And then next week, we’re going to look at the absolute importance of praying faithfully for people who don’t know Christ. The fourth week we’ll look at caring very personally for people. And then the fifth week is, what do we actually tell people when it’s time to open up our mouth.

Now, what you have to understand about each one of these ingredients, is they’re all absolutely essential. They’re all absolutely limited, but when you put all five of them into the bowl, then mix them together, they’re absolutely effectual. They’re powerful. Amazing things happen when we do things God’s way. And ultimately when we think, here on this second message of living authentically, what we’re really thinking about here, is the idea, is that when people would look at the life of a believer, that they would look at that person’s relationships, that they would look at that person’s speech, that they would look at that person’s joy, or that person’s love, or they would look at that person’s life and say, “If that’s what it means, to walk with Jesus, and if that’s what it means to be a believer, then I consider that a trade up from what I currently have.” A trade up.

And yet, we know right now, throughout the world, and throughout even America, sometimes that's not the case. And so what we find here in Titus, is that strong instruction from Paul to Titus to the churches, of the importance of living authentically as one of the ingredients of sharing the gospel in a fallen world. Okay. So, if you would, let's bow, and let's pray together.

Father, I pray today, that you would help us to see the incredible value of abiding in Christ. And striving after Godliness and repenting of sin. As believers, these things should come natural, because we've proven over, and over, and over, that apart from you, we really can do nothing. And yet, we ask that you would remind us once again. Would you use your word, this morning, to give hope where there is hopelessness? Would you restore joy? Would you restore affection? God, would you give us courage to do the very things that you have called to us to do?

And God, I pray that you would examine our life, even today, on a day that we take the Lord's supper, and then we ask you to examine our life. Even now, before we do that. I ask that you would examine our heart, and that you would root out anything that would lead to compromise, or a shaming of our life, or of you as we follow you. And so I pray Father, that you would give us belief as we read, and understanding. We pray this, in Jesus name. Amen.

You know, for 200 years in America, people who called themselves Christians had the privileged and the enjoyment of seeking to represent Christ in a culture that generally, not entirely, but generally, adopted biblical values, virtues. It's not that way anymore. But at one time, this was very much the case. Over 200 years. And there's lots of examples in this. One is just schools. You look at some of the schools that now, you look, "My gosh, that's not necessarily a place of Godliness. That's not a bastion of holiness."

And yet, you look at where they started, and it's a pretty amazing thing. Let's just look at one of them, okay. This is the seal of Harvard, okay. And in 1963 ... In fact, the seal, if you can see it right, Veritas, on those three books in the middle. Veritas means truth. And then you can see some words just outside of that shield, and one of them is "Christ". The other means "church", and the other means "for". And so, Harvard was actually founded, their motto was "Truth for Christ and the church". This is where they started. Okay.

And what's interesting is, they had a set of rules and precepts, and in 1636, this is what it said, it says, "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life." John 17:3 was actually the verse of choice that was selected as the banner over Harvard, which is that there is eternal life in Jesus Christ alone. "And therefore lay Christ at the bottom." That doesn't mean that He's last priority. That means He's the foundation. "As the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning." Meaning we're going to start with Jesus Christ is the foundation of science, and English, and Math, and everything else that we're learning about, and we're going to build onto of Christ, because Christ is ultimately the preeminent one in the world. This is how Harvard started.

And if you notice, those three books, right, Veritas, like it's sort of hard to see, but the third book, that has the "TAS" on it, is actually turned upside down. In fact, they have things on campus, in concrete that they've not been able to take down. This is one of them. This is the next slide, if you want to go ahead and put that up. Okay. And what you see is that the third book at the bottom is not faced up, it's faced down. And this was symbolic of the fact that we could not identify everything that we need to identify with our own reasoning. That God's revelation has to come to us. That ultimately, it's not just about our learning, and our own creativity, and our own philosophy. That all of that learning, at some point in time, the book has to be turned on its face, and we have to look up to God and say, "God, would you give us wisdom?"

This is how Harvard began. And this is what America was like. Not entirely, but generally. Right. That many of our values, things like purity, and things like honesty. Many of our ideals, things like responsibility, and work ethic. And many of our cultural norms, things like marriage, and gender. They closely echoed the vocal instruction. And now, the page has certainly turned, hasn't it?

Virtues and values they see in scripture, they're polarizing and the gap is widening. You see it even in the new logo at Harvard. It's not new anymore. It's been there a for a while, this is it. They took out Christ and church, and they turned the book over. Now, what they believe is that all truth can be identified within our own philosophy, and our own reasoning. What once was a school that was intended to train people to actually gospel witnesses, has gotten so smart, that can't identify male from female.

I want you think about that. I want you to think about the foolishness and folly of what takes place when we reject Christ. And the question that comes to us now, when we consider that this is our culture, and that the gap is widening, it's now, "How shall we live?" And this is ultimately where Titus comes in, and is such a servant to us. This is why God gives us stuff like this. This is such a treasure. You see, Paul and Titus they traveled to an island named Crete. Now Paul, you've probably heard of before. He wrote most of the New Testament. He's an apostle.

Titus was a Greek man that Paul led to Christ. And he was such a godly man. He loved Christ so much, that Paul used him as a case study. Brings him to Jerusalem, in the book of Acts in order to show the Jews they didn't believe the Gentiles could ever love Christ like they did. And said, "See." Titus was a godly man, and Titus, he decided to go on a mission trip with Paul to the island of Crete. And when they landed in Crete, you have to understand that she too was in a moral free fall.

Look at chapter one, verse 12. It says, one of the Cretans, the prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. And then Paul comes back and goes, "You know what? That guy was right. This is true." That the people on this island can be marked, can be marked by deceitfulness, and evil, and laziness, a bunch of fat people. Paul says, "You know what? They're prophet, he's got it on the money." And then you look at verse 16. Verse 16 says, "They professed to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work."

Now, Paul is unveiling to us, sort of the moral fabric on the island of Crete. What was interesting is Paul and Titus, they start walking around, and their sharing the gospel, and they're sharing their faith in Jesus Christ, and people begin to believe. A lot of people. In a lot of different towns all around this island. It's time for Paul to leave, and instead of taking Titus, he leaves him on the island. And you see why in chapter one, verse five. It says, "This is why I left you Crete, so that you might put what remained in order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you."

In other words, he says, "You know what? I'm going to be like the worst mission trip leader in the world. I'm going to leave someone behind. Okay? But what I want you to do, is I'm going to give you some of my own authority. I'm going to delegate to you, some authority, and you are going to delegate that authority to elders within these little towns where there's believers. So that we can actually see local churches pop up and be gospel light influences all around the island."

Well, some time passes, and Paul, he feels concerned, not only for Titus, but also for these believers and churches. And so he writes them a letter. And that letter is in your hand. You think about just the amazing nature of the Bible. That Paul's letter to one man finds itself in our hands. And what he does, is he reminds him of Christ's immense power inside every faithful, authentic, obedient believer, to effect cultural change. Look what he says in chapter three, starting in verse one, "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities."

Okay, this is Paul telling Titus, what he needs to tell the churches: "To be obedient, and to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gently, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures. Passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others, and hating one another. But when the goodness, and loving kindness of God, our Savior appeared, he saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

"So that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The same is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God, may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent, and profitable for people."

So, what does Paul want Titus to remember about Jesus' work in his life, and the lives of every believer. The first is this, is that Jesus regenerates the core of who we are. So, we're talking about our heart, our soul. That Jesus regenerates the core of who we are. See, we talked about this last week just a little bit, but if you cannot recall the life that you had before Jesus Christ, one thing that you can be sure of, is that Jesus can remember what your life was like before your life with Him.

That's why he says, "We ourselves were once. We're not that anymore, but we once were. We were foolish. We were disobedient. We were led astray. We were slaves to all kinds of impulses within our heart." He says, "That we passed our days in malice, just being mean, and envy. Wanting what other people had. As a result of that, we had a lot of broken relationships. We didn't like a lot of people. And a lot of people didn't like us." This is how Jesus remembers our life. And you see it's important you understand this. This is what we did, because this is who we were.

There is always a connection between the fruit of someone's life, and condition of their heart, their core, always. And see, like a fried motherboard, or like an engine block that's been locked up, our core, when we sinned against God, it was rendered dead. Ephesians Chapter two, versus one and two says it this way, Paul says, "You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air."

All of use know what it's like to be tempted by Satan. Even if you don't believe in Satan, you know what it's like to be tempted. And what the Bible says, is that the thrust of that temptation is actually Satan himself. That he's the one who's looking at us. he wants to kill and destroy us. And what he's saying is that every single one of us, we were rendered dead. The engine was locked up. The motherboard in the computer was fried. And as a result of that, the computer, or the vehicle, or the life, it could not function the way that God had intended, and created for it to function.

We had no capacity to do that you see. And then he says, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God appeared." I love how the Bible uses words to illustrate Jesus. "The goodness and loving kindness of God, who appeared." What that means is, he's talking there about Jesus. When Jesus appeared, it says, that he saved us. And Paul wants us to be absolutely certain that we were not the ones that contributed, or that pushed the ball just over the edge of the goal line. And so he says, "It wasn't by the works done by us in righteousness." He says it was according to what? His mercy.

Mercy is not receiving what we should receive. And the reasons that you and I did not receive the due penalty of our sin, is because Jesus received the due penalty as a substitute. Jesus lived a righteous life. And yet he went to the cross. And he died on that cross. And he was buried into a grave of a dead man. And three days later he rose from the dead. And then he gave an invitation that Paul echoes in Romans chapter 10, verse nine. It says that, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

And what Paul does to Titus in this passage, is he shows them some of the things that God did in the life of every believer. What he does in the lives of every believer when we confess with our mouth, and when we believe that Jesus is Lord. He says the first thing that happens, he says that, “By the Holy Spirit, we are regenerated and renewed.” Regenerated is the opposite of degenerated. Sin degenerated life, and the Holy Spirit regenerated life. It’s the same word as born-again, or re-birth. It’s the opposite of renovate. If you have a room, that has all over the walls black, toxic mold, it doesn’t do you any good to paint. It’s still there.

He’s not saying that what Christ did, is he came in and saw all the broken furniture, and says, “You know I’m really sure this broken table would better over by the mirror. And this rusty little piece of furniture would look actually better over here by the window.” It’s not what he says, what he says is, “I’m literally ripping everything out of the house, and I’m going to give you everything new.”

This is what he said in John chapter three. A man comes up to him, and they’re talking, and he says, “Listen, Nicodemus, unless you are born again, you will not enter into the kingdom of God. Unless you are regenerated.” This is what he’s talking about here. Is that he literally gives us a new heart that has new capacity to do new things.

But then he also says that he does one other thing. He says that he justifies us by grace. He declares us innocent. And why he does that, because he does not want us, his believers, to walk around living in guilt. Some of us are still, we’re, “Okay, that’s all good, but you don’t understand the depth of my sin.” I realize that sounds really self-effacing, but actually it’s a sign of pride. Because, when we say, “If you know how great my sin is, that Christ can’t forgive it.” What you’re actually doing is elevating your accomplishments in sin above Christ’s accomplishments in his righteousness.

Listen, he can forgive you of all of your sin. Isn’t that good news? And he does. And when we trust him, he actually says, “I want you to know that you’re innocent in my sight.” And so he says he justifies us. And then he does one other thing. He says that he actually declares us, that we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. What this means, is he wants us to make sure we don’t spend our whole life doubting.

He doesn’t want us defeated. He doesn’t want us to rearrange broken furniture with the rest of our life. He doesn’t want us living in guilt. And he doesn’t want us living in doubt. He does all this by his spirit. He changes the core of who we are. My friends, I just want to encourage you, if you have not trusted Christ, stop trying to renovate your life with dead parts. Trust Christ, and he will make you new, from the core.

You say, “Well, this is all great for the unbeliever, but what about for the believer?” And you go, “Oh, actually, listen.” This was written to a believer, to be taught to believers. Now, why would Paul spend so much time in chapter three trying to anchor this man Titus to the idea of how God had saved him, and regenerated him, and justified him, and this is why. Because believers in Crete, just like you and I today and America, face the risk of isolating ourselves as we look upon unbelievers with scorn instead of sympathy.

You see, the believers on this island, looking around and seeing everybody who's evil, and everyone who's lying, and everyone who's detestable, and disobedient. And all these people trying to legalize their sin, and normalize their sin. And create a culture around their sin. And these believers are looking at all of this that's happening, and it's very, very easy as believers living in a fallen world to actually begin to see the unbelievers as the enemy.

And so we look upon them with contempt. We look upon them with scorn, instead of looking upon them with sympathy, of where we would be, if Christ had not done a work of grace in our own life. And this is the application, is let's allow God's grace to shape our view of others. You see, Paul was a pretty amazing man. I think of him like a soldier that's just always clutching a picture of his family before battle. And that every book that he writes about, he clutches the memory of God's grace in his own life, is the motivation for why he is going out to do such a hard work of ministry.

He never got over his story. That's why we started where we did last week. Because we'll never be active in sharing our faith, until we're excited about his story in our story. We have to love the fact that we have been redeemed. You see, and this is what made Paul so humble and grateful and even sympathetic to those apart from Christ. You see, when sinners sin, and then when they want to justify their sin, and then we want to legalize their sin, make their sin normalized, we as believers are tempted to scoff instead of sympathize.

And so, Paul writes, and he says, "Don't forget, this is where you would have been, if God had not done a work of grace in your life. You would still be there." You see, we're no better, we're just forgiven. And that helps us to see people in a different way. When we leave this building today, with a lot of people who think like us, and we go into a world where there's a lot of people who don't think like us, it's really easy to look at news, and look at things in politics and look at culture, and education, and media, and look upon all these people with scorn. Because we're looking at the wrong thing.

And this is what our flesh always does, is we always look at other people according to the flesh. This is why Paul says, after looking at God's grace in his own life in II Corinthians chapter five, he gets to verse 16, he says, "From now on therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh." What does this mean? It means our general capacity is that when we look into a room, we look at everybody according to the flesh. And we see male and female. We see white, brown, black. We see young, old. We see this job, this kind of vehicle, this kind of title.

And all of sudden, we start to manipulate our own valuation of their need. We become more sympathetic in being around some people, and less sympathetic while being around other people. And what Paul says is this, is that when we have a new heart, and we're absolutely absorbed with the idea that God has given us grace, that these eyes look at people, and instead of seeing valuations of categories, we see one category, and that is a soul. A soul that is of infinite worth. And a soul that is absolutely vulnerable.

You see, if we do not love God's grace in our life, we cannot love people who are unbelievers. We can't love them where they're at, because we won't want to go near where they're at. And so the first thing that he does, is he says, "Titus don't forget, Jesus has regenerated the core of who we are." And then he gets into the second big point, and it's this, is says, "That Jesus renews the capacity of how we live."

He not only regenerates the core of who we are, but then all of a sudden, he renews this capacity to live a new kind of life. Now one of the things that hard for us as believers, is this, just because Jesus has given us the capacity, doesn't mean that every believer, including ourselves, lives up to that capacity. But the fact is, that we have the capacity now to be people who are marked by love, and joy, and peace, patience, and kindness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control. We have a new capacity.

You see, before Christ, we had as much capacity to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit as one of these plastic trees that's lying around our building. They're green, they look pretty, but they cannot bear fruit. But now, our capacity has been restored. And some people, the very idea of saying good works, it makes all of us really nervous, because, you know, "Like is he going down the path of moralism?" But look at how you were created.

Ephesians 2:8-10, he says "For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it's a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." And then he says, "For, or because we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works." Do you understand that when God first created you, when he created Adam and Eve, he actually created us to do good things? To be loving people. Kind people.

And what Jesus does is he restores the capacity to be able to those things. This is why, when you look at verse one and two, of our text, it's followed by the word, "For". In other words, we can be respectful to rulers and authorities. We can be obedient. We can be ready for every good work. We can speak no evil to anyone. We can be gentle, and we can show perfect courtesy toward all people. Why? "For, or because we were once like this, but now we have been saved."

You see, all the good works that he calls us to do, is simply a result of God saying, "I've given you a new engine, with a new capacity to live a new kind of life." And so you get down to verse eight, and Paul gets really serious. And he says, "Now, listen, Titus, I want you to insist upon these things." Very rarely does Paul insist in the New Testament. He says, "So that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works."

You see, Paul knew that Crete needed the gospel. And Paul knew that the believers had the gospel. And Paul knew that nothing hurts our presentation of the gospel more than believers contradicting what we say by the way that we live. And so what Paul does, is throughout the entire book, he emphasizes good works that flow out of a relationship with Jesus Christ. I want to just show you, look over in chapter one, starting in verse one. He says, “Paul, a servant of God, and apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect, and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.”

In other words, what he’s saying is there is a truth called the gospel that accords with godliness. That word means to reach towards. The gospel literally helps us reach towards godliness. Then in verse five, he says, “I want you to build up a leadership team, within these churches, and he gives characteristics of nobility of the men who would actually lead in those ways.” And then all of a sudden, look at verse 16, when he talks about the people who are unlike Christ and who cannot lead, he says the very last thing that actually characterizes their life. It says, “They’re unfit for any good work.”

Well, then you get into chapter two. And he says, “Now, I want you to teach what accords with sound doctrine.” And all of a sudden, he gives different things that each person within the church, and he starts with older men. He says, “I want you to teach the older men to do this.” And he gives them a list. Then he says, “I want you to teach the older women, and the younger women.” Then he gets to the younger men, I love it, he says, “Let’s simplify things, just self-control. Just one thing, just control. Just all the appetites, just self-control. That’s all.”

And then he gets to verse seven, and he goes, “Now, don’t forget for you, show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works.” Then you get down to verse 10, and he tells them why he supposed to be teaching all these things. He says, “So that in everything, they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” The word adorn, we think of it as clothing, which sort of ... The word comes from [cosmeto 00:33:54], where we get the word cosmetics. And the idea of makeup, is not necessarily to cover up flaws, it’s to accentuate beauty.

What he’s saying is this, if you teach these things to the believers, and these believers actually put this into practice, it will literally accentuate the beauty of the doctrine of the gospel before people on the island of Crete. Verse 11 of chapter two, he says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. And to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.”

Verse 14, it says, “That God created a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Then you get to chapter three, and we’ve already read verse one. It says, “That we’d be ready for every good work.” Verse eight says, “That we would be devoted to good works.” And then he completes the whole thing in chapter three, verse 14, and he says, “Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.”

And so Providence, let's pursue good works as a validation of Jesus' power. You see one of the sad, and yet great obstacles to showing unbelievers that Christ and his instruction are a trade up, is reminding and showing believers that Christ instruction is a trade up. You see, many of us simply don't see compromise in our lives, because Christ and his mission are so far from our heart. And so, Jesus says to us these words, he says, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored. It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. And you are the light of the world ... let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who's in heaven."

You see, people notice those who add taste and healing and light to life. They start looking, and recognize, saying, "You know, I've noticed how you love people. I've noticed how you don't belittle the leaders that you don't agree with. I've noticed that that significant loss in your life, it didn't rob you of hope." You see the fact is, is some people are going to hate the light that we bring into their life, but they'll all notice it.

What does this look like, this pursuit of good works? And to me, it always comes back to three things. Three very, very simple things. The first is abide. You cannot forget that the whole of the Christian life is to stay connected to Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:6 says, "As you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in him." In other words, our walk of discipleship is no different than how we came to faith in Jesus Christ. We believe God at his word. We trusted him. And so it all begins with abiding.

And second, is striving. Striving, now this is a word that makes a lot of people nervous. And that's because we lump words together that shouldn't be lumped together. You see merit, and not effort as the opposite of grace. Sometimes we think, "Well if we're a whole people about grace, then effort shouldn't be a part." No, merit is the opposite of grace, not effort. And this is why, after talking about the grace of God that's been poured in the life of believers so that we can live a godly life, Peter says in II Peter chapter one, verse five through seven, he says, "Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love."

You see what he's saying? Saying nobody decides to read an autobiography of a godly man or woman unless they have effort. And that effort is not a sabotage on our belief that everything is by grace, it's a response to God's grace that's come to our life. And so we need to be abiding. We need to be striving.

And third, is we need to be repenting. Repenting, this simply means that we ask God to reveal sin in our life, and then we practice inhospitality to what he reveals. And this week, I simply want to ask you to do something. A little homework for us. I want to ask you to carve out some time, one day, maybe 30 minutes. This is a great thing to do every week, actually. Carve out about 30 minutes, and you go for a walk, you can do it alone, or in your home.

I want to encourage you do a deep reset of you soul before God. To sit down, and to ask God to reveal any sin in your life. And don't be in a hurry. Ask God to reveal any compromise in your life, any unbelief in your life, any sin of omission, or commission, and idles or lust, or any greed, or any pride. Any ways that you're deceitful. Any sinful talk. You see each time God reveals a sin or a pattern, ask God to forgive you of that, to cleanse you of that, and then to renew you of that. And own every bit of it. Don't blame anyone else, just say, "God, I did this."

It's been said that repentance is the vomiting of the soul. And that's why, when you finish doing something like this, you're going to feel 10 pounds lighter. You're going to feel his peace. And you're going to feel his joy. And you're going to feel godly motivation swelling in your heart. And one of the amazing gifts that you see with God, is he ties everything together. Instead of bring us to this place regularly, he gave us something called the Lord's Supper.

Isn't it amazing? You think about, like, why do we do this? Why are we going to do this right now? In fact, for the elders, and those who'll be serving us, deacons, if you want to go ahead and head to the back and get ready. Why do we do this? Well Jesus says it's not only to proclaim what he's done, and to remember what he's done, but it's also to give us a regular reminder to go before him and say, "God, here's my life. Is there any sin? Would you cleanse me of it?"

And so, we do this as a church family. We love to do this. And one of the reasons is because of the grace that God gives to us when we are forgiven of our sin. So if you have not trusted Christ, we would simply ask you to let these things pass. But if you have, we welcome you to this table. And as these elements are being passed, we would simply ask you, to take Christ at his word, to confess any known sin in your life, to be forgiven so that you can take this with a clear conscience.

So, If you would, let's bow. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, thank you for your kindness, for your grace, and for your love. And pray, God, that as we take this amazing gift of yours, the greatest meal of the month, God, that you would feel our soul with hope and joy, and remembering that we've been regenerated. That we have been justified. That we have been made heirs of eternal life. That you would give us hope instead of guilt, confidence instead of doubt. We love you. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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