

## Living in the Grip of Grace

**Belcroft Bible Church**

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I know that it has been a joy to get to know many of you already, and I am excited and looking forward to our time today at lunch where we can sit down and talk some more. And you guys can ask questions, and I'm looking forward to that greatly. But I want you to know that my ultimate purpose for being here is not to stand before you as your pastoral candidate, though that's a reality that we can't deny. My point, this morning, and the reason, really, why I want to be here is I come to encourage you. This is why I'm here. I'm God's minister and I bring God's Word to you this morning. I know that you have been on a long journey. I know it has been arduous and hard at times. I know there's been high points and there's been blessings. But there's also been difficulties and sadness. And I just want to say, as a pastor and as a preacher of God's Word, that my whole purpose for being here really comes down to this moment, where I want to say I'm here to encourage you from God's Word. So, whatever you might be thinking about my verbiage or my style or my dress, and whether we want this guy to be our pastor, kind of put that aside for the next few moments and let God's Word minister to you in your time of need. And so let us pray just for a moment and ask God to speak to us.

Dear heavenly Father, we come before you humbly, because you are a holy God, and we are a most sinful people. Lord, we do not deserve to come into your presence boldly as we do right now, and it is only because of your Son, Jesus Christ, and all that He has done on our behalf that makes that possible. And so, Lord, we want you to know that we love you. We want you to know, Father, that we need you. And we want you to know, Lord, that we need to hear from you. Our lives are crazy at times. We live in a culture that is chaotic and out of control. And though we try to hold it together, Lord, we are feeble and frail people. And so, Father, we come now on this Lord's Day, ultimately, to give you praise for you are worthy, but to hear from your Word because we are needy. And so, Father God, we ask that you would speak to our hearts. There are many needs in this room. There are some, no doubt, that need to trust you as Lord and Savior. They have not released the

lordship of their life to you. And we ask, Holy Spirit, that you would move and convict and draw. Father, there are many in this room, no doubt who are dealing with sickness and sadness, loss, and bereavement. We ask that you would comfort and encourage. There are many of us, Lord, who are struggling to live the life you've called us to live. And we ask us, Lord, that you would help us, empower us, equip us for the task that you've saved us for. And now we pray that you would be honored, you would be pleased with all that is said and done in these next few moments. It's in the name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we ask. Amen.

What drives your life? What is the motivating factor of your life? What gets you up in the morning? What is the engine that moves you? What is it that grips, controls, motivates your life? Every single one of us, we are driven by something. Is it personal accolades, the praise of men? Is it personal possessions? You want to increase your bank account? You want to kind of shore up your retirement account? Is it that Winnebago or that RV that you've been dreaming about? Or that boat or that new dress? What is it that makes you smile? What is it that drives you to do and be who you are? Well, for a man named C.T. Studd, it was the amazing grace of God. You see, this man was a greatly gifted athlete. Matter of fact, even to this day—C.T. Studd lived in the late 1800s—and even to this day, he is known as one of England's greatest athletes that ever lived. He was a famous cricket player. Now, for those of us in the States, cricket, we think of that as an insect. But in England, it is a very famous sport. Actually, it's the second most famous sport in the world. Then, this man, even down to this day, is one of the most famous cricket athletes. He was born with an innate athletic ability. And by the time he was 16, when he was in Cambridge, he was already captain of his cricket team. And he went on to have great fame and was known to be a man of great athletic ability, so much so that his life was going to be taken care of. He was going to be able to have whatever he wanted because of his athletic ability.

But there was something else about C.T. Studd that's amazing. He was not only a man with great athletic ability, but he was a man who was very wealthy. His father was a wealthy man, and he, on the time of his father's death, would inherit, even back then, what would be millions of dollars. Some say, in today's monetary climate, he would have inherited something like 25-million dollars in the late 1800s. This was a young man

marked by great athletic ability. He was a young man who was marked by great fame and fortune. What do you think would drive his life?

Well, something happened. God's amazing grace reached down and grabbed a hold of this man's heart. He was saved and he was changed and he was never the same again. He decided one day, "I'm not going to live for the athletic field. I'm not going to live with all of this money and have a life of leisure and ease." He said, "I'm going to spend my life as a missionary to the unreached peoples of the world." And that is exactly what he did. As a matter of fact, when he inherited that money, do you know what he did with it? He gave it all away. You will recognize some of these famous institutions and people that benefited from this life of C.T. Studd. You've heard of The Salvation Army, and William Booth, that was started in part because of the money given by C.T. Studd. He was already referenced from this pulpit already this morning. But you've heard of the name D.L. Moody and Moody Bible Institute that was started, in part, because of the money given by C.T. Studd. Have you ever heard of that famous orphanage director named George Mueller? Of course you have. We've heard those stories and we've been encouraged by them. Guess what? He was blessed and encouraged by money given by C.T. Studd. Hudson Taylor, China Inland Mission, greatly blessed, greatly blessed by the money given, and those ministries continue on even today. No, C.T. Studd was a man that was gripped by God's amazing grace.

What grips you this morning? And do you have a life, do you have a life that declares that truth? It's easy for us to say "Yes, God's grace has changed my life." Has it really? When you look in the mirror, when you look at your life, do you see that change? Well, this morning, dear loved ones, we're going to turn to a passage of Scripture, a passage of Scripture that's going to give us four reasons, four motivating factors, four truths for why, as believers in Jesus Christ, we must live our lives marked by, moved by, empowered by God's amazing grace. If you haven't already turned in your copy of God's Word to the book of Titus, we're going to be in Titus chapter 2. And, as Marty has already read, we're going to be looking at verses 11 through 14.

As you're turning there, let me give you just a short little background of this book, because, you know, I have the great privilege of just kind of parachuting into your pulpit.

You don't really know me, and now we open up to this book that you probably didn't know we were opening up to, and now we're going to parachute right into literally the middle of it. And I don't want anyone to be lost. This is a great little, very small letter. Some have called it a mini-Magnum. It's like a real little, small, little bullet that packs a great punch. Just three chapters, but in these three chapters, there's a wealth of blessing and information that will encourage our lives. You know, if I could summarize the whole purpose of the book of Titus in one word, it would be this: *conduct*. This whole letter is about conduct. That's really what it's about.

Now, if you don't remember or don't know, this letter was written by Paul to his son in the faith, Titus, who he was sending to an island, the island of Crete, and he was sending him there to encourage the churches that had started there. These churches were, let's say, they were they were beginning to get out of order. And he says that right there, in verse 5, where he says, "Titus, I'm sending you there to put back into order what still remains." You see, the culture in Titus is marked by essentially three things. It was a culture of liars. He says that in—what is it? Verse 13, verse 12, "*Cretans are always liars.*" And then, it was also a culture marked by a lack of self-control. Paul, quoting one of their one of their poets, says they were marked as if they were evil beasts. They were like animals living out of control. And not only that, it was a culture that was marked by people being lazy gluttons. They were lazy. They wanted to enjoy life without working in life. I don't know about you. But as I think of those three descriptions, it's not that far removed from our culture, is it? Really not, sadly. But honestly, yes.

See, this letter, though written thousands of years ago, has a direct correlation and connection to our lives here. And the conduct, you know, it's really about conduct in chapter 1. Paul's going to write about the conduct of the spiritual leader. That's really what it's about, chapter 1 is about. "Titus, I'm leaving you in Crete. And I'm giving you two tools to help set into order. One is spiritual leaders." So chapter 1 is all about, "I'm going to help you by defining what a spiritual leader should be and do. And I want you to establish spiritual leaders in the church to help bring order. But not only that, not only am I am I wanting you to establish spiritual leaders, but I'm wanting you to take the truth of God through the man of God and bring that to the church of God and bring order." So he takes truth and truth-teachers, spiritual leaders, and that's what chapter 1 is about.

Chapter 3 is about conduct of the believer in the world. It's about how they are there to conduct themselves in the world. Chapter 2, though, where we are at, and really what we need most this morning, is about conduct in the church. It's about conduct in the church at chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. It is an amazing portion of Scripture and very clear. Paul gives direction to the church; he gives direction to older believers. So are there any older believers in here? I'm not going to define you because I don't want to upset you. Maybe I'm an older believer, perhaps I have some gray hair here. Yes, there are older believers among us. And Paul directly commands what Titus is to teach older believers. He not only says "Older believers," but he says, "Older men, this is how you're to act." He says not only that very touchy subject, but he says, "Older women, this is how you're to act." And not only that. "Older women, you're to teach the younger women and younger women, younger moms, younger wives, this is what you're to do." And not only that, he even gives instructions to Titus as a young pastor and says, "This is what you're supposed to do, Titus." And not only that, he says, "Slaves, those of you that are slaves within the congregation, this is this is how you're to act." He covers everybody in the church.

And what does he do in 10 verses? I'll tell you. He gives them a list of rules. He gives them a list of, if you will, behavioral traits they should be marked by. Now, especially some of you young people that are here this morning, it's easy to get into a rut and see Christianity as nothing but a long list of rules, a list of *do's* and *don'ts*. And if all you read is those first 10 verses, it could be discouraging and, sadly, I think in a lot of our lives, we get into that mode, where Christianity is just a drudgery. It's duty without delight. But, starting in verse 11, see, Paul does something very amazing. He gives the reasons for the rules that he's given in those 10 verses, and, dear loved ones, I want you to know something: rules without reason will always breed rebellion. And Paul knows that God's Word is clear. There are no rules in this book that don't come with clear reasons. God has reasons for why He does everything. We were in the Sunday school class this morning, we were talking about God being God of order, as Walt was teaching us about the Tabernacle. And you see this amazing God of order, and He has a reason for where everything is placed and why it's all there. So it is with what He commands us to do.

But here's the question, have you forgotten? Have you lost sight of why God has called you to live a life of holiness? Have you lost sight of that? Well, this morning, as we look at

this, these few verses, I pray that that reality will come back to your heart and flood your heart with great encouragement and equip you to live a life gripped by God's amazing grace. What do I mean "live a life gripped by grace"? I'll tell you: it means to live a life of penetrating holiness. It means to live a life of godliness in an ungodly world. Why? What's the reason for that? I will tell you: because of God's personal grace in your life. That's why we do what we do. That is the reason behind, that's the engine that drives us to do what we do. Is that the way it is for your life? Listen, I understand how easy it is, in our culture, in our fast-paced world, to just be so overwhelmed that we just go through the motions. And that there's nothing that can be further than the truth from what God calls us to be. We're to be people filled with emotion because of God's grace, not simply going through the motions.

Let's look at the text. Now, hopefully, we're there. You've gotten the background. We've all parachuted in together. I'm not alone. Now where we are here, you know where we're at? Titus chapter 2, verse 11. Here we go: *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people."*

Do you remember how many reasons I said we're going to see in the text this morning? Somebody, tell me you're listening. Well, we're going to learn four reasons. And you're going to see one in each of these verses. Okay? So the first one, out of verse 11, is simply this. It is the foundation to our lives and it is this: if you're going to live your life gripped by God's amazing grace, you must understand—no, you must remember—if you are a believer, here this morning, that you have been rescued by grace. You have been rescued by grace. Look at verse 11. The word for there for the grace of God, literally, it literally means the reasons for which he's explained the ten verses before. That's where I came up with the four reasons. This is all explanatory. And he says, "I'm going to explain to you, now, why I've asked you, or I'm commanding you, to live a certain way." So he says, "For the grace of God"—that's the subject of this whole paragraph. It's the grace of God—*"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation..."*

You are rescued by God's grace. You are saved. You are liberated. You are set free. You know, there's a certain characteristic of God's grace that pours through this, this one verse. First of all, you need to understand that you have been rescued by a supreme grace.

This isn't just any old grace. This is a supreme grace. You know, we're called to be gracious people. And you have been very gracious to our family this weekend. And we have really enjoyed our time here. Many ways. We don't want it to end. It's been great. And I have a gracious mother-in-law. I don't know about some of you men, your relationship with your mother-in-law, but mine is great. And she is somewhere on the campus now, watching our youngest because he's been sick, and we don't want to share that love with some of your children. And so she has come from her church over here to watch my son so that my wife can be in the service this morning. She's a very gracious woman. And I'm thankful for that. My wife is a gracious, gracious woman.

But you know what? That all pales in comparison to the grace of God. See, the grace of God is supreme. It's the highest. There's nothing like it. And when he says, "the grace of God," he's saying, "This is a supreme grace." It's not the grace of a father or a mother or a loved one. This is the grace of the Almighty God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. What is grace? We could spend the next month just plummeting the depth of grace. You know, you've heard the definition "unmerited favor." It's a simple definition, but very clear, very helpful. Maybe this will be helpful for you grace, the acronym G.R.A.C.E: God's riches at Christ's expense. Excellent way to remember, G.R.A.C.E. Listen, I read this one time, and I found this to be a most helpful declaration of grace. It is the greatest gift to those deserving the greatest punishment. That's what God has given. He has given His grace, this unmerited kindness, and it is a supreme gift because it comes from the supreme God.

Not only is it a supreme gift, but it's a sovereign grace. Look at your text. "*For the grace of God has appeared...*" That word *appeared* is going to be very important in our text as we as we go through this. You're going to see it again, later. And it is an important word in this text. And it's a word that means to bring light. It means to take what is cloudy and make it clear. It means to take what is dark and to bring light to it. In our Sunday School class this morning, I was just encouraged by Walt was teaching on the Tabernacle, and all the many elements that are in the Tabernacle. And you no doubt have read or heard about the Tabernacle, and the table of showbread, and the laver and the altar and the Ark of the Covenant and the veil and the menorah and all these things that are in there. And yet, what do they mean? What are they there for and what is their purpose? And

there's a cloud, there is some uncertainty, until what? Until Jesus Christ comes. See Jesus Christ is the appearing. He is that which brings light to darkness. He is that which takes the cloudy Old Testament, the things that were given to Israel and we look at and say, "Man, what is that?" And Jesus Christ comes and makes all of that clear. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He is the Tabernacle. He is the High Priest. He is the table of showbread. He is our Ark of the Covenant. Jesus Christ is the one that has appeared. He is the one that has brought light. He is the one that has made it clear. And it is a sovereign grace because why He came into this world—John 1 tells us what? Did not know Him. "*He came into his own and his own did not*" what? "*Receive him.*" They didn't want Him. They didn't know Him. They weren't even looking for Him.

Who takes the initiative? Who brings— When it says the grace of God appeared? Did we ask for this grace? No. God, in His own sovereign love, says, "I'm going to give my Son." "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.*" This is a sovereign grace. This is a self-initiating grace. God chooses of His own love to pour His grace upon those who don't deserve it, you and I. That is a blessing of God's sovereign grace. It's a supreme grace because it comes from the Supreme One. It's a sovereign grace because God, He initiates it. He sent His Son, born of a virgin, at just the right time, into a world marked by sin. To be the one that John 1 says what? Is full of grace and truth? He says, the law, the ministry, the covenant of death, that's what the Ten Commandments ultimately were. That's what the Old Covenant was, a covenant of death that came through Moses. But what came through Jesus? Do you remember? Grace and truth, eternal life, see? As a sovereign blessing of the Lord.

Not only that. It's a sufficient grace. Look at your text. "*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.*" Did you get that? "*For all people.*" This is a sufficient grace. Now, remember the categories that were given already in the first ten verses: older people; younger people; older men; younger men; older women; younger women; slaves. Listen, everyone, everyone. This grace is sufficient for everyone. He came into the world; Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Listen, this is a sufficient grace. Why? Ultimately, because it's it comes through the supreme being, God Himself. It comes by Him, but it comes through the sufficient, supreme Jesus Christ. Jesus is the conduit of God's grace. Remember I said that word *appearing* means to make light. We wouldn't even know what



God's grace is was it not for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who is the manifestation of God's grace. It's through Jesus Christ that we see and understand God's amazing grace. This is a sufficient grace.

You know, just that alone, just that one verse should well up within our souls in understanding of worship, should drive us to live our lives to His supreme glory. If that's all we had, you know, the greatest threat—write this down—the greatest threat to godliness in your life, if you're a believer, here this morning— Hear me out. I preach to myself. The greatest threat to godliness in your life is forgetfulness. Forgetfulness? And if you think I just pulled that out of my hat like a rabbit, what was the greatest issue with Israel? See, they had supreme grace delivered to them in Egypt. Do you remember it was supreme that the ten plagues— There's nothing more supreme, powerful, there's nothing that can compare to God's majestic might that went into Egypt, where they were enslaved in bondage. And He pulls them out by these phenomenal plagues that He pours out upon Egypt. And not only that, they were they were at the Red Sea. They can't go anywhere, helpless and hopeless, without hope. And what happens? “Stretch out your rod, Moses.” The waters part; they go across on dry ground. Listen, this is grace supreme.

Not only that, when did Israel receive it? Listen, they're crying out to the Lord. He chose when He brought His man Moses. He delivered it to them. And not only that, it was sufficient for them all the way out through the desert. He provided for their every need, the manna, the quail, the water. And what did they do all the way through? Complain, murmur. They were a most forgetful people.

Listen, Jesus Christ, He understands this. And He gives us what? This table of remembrance where we will go regularly to the Lord's Supper. Why? To remember what He has done, lest we forget. Listen to me, loved ones. It is easy in our world. Our world is crazy. I understand that our world is out of control. It is circling the drain of self-destruction. But do not let the distractions of this world cloud your understanding of God's grace in your life, if you are believer in Jesus Christ. Write this down: if you have everything, but you don't have Christ, and you are here this morning, you have nothing. You can have everything. C.T. Studd, you can have great athletic ability; you can have fortune beyond compare. And yet if you don't have the Lord Jesus Christ as the center of

your life, as your Savior, you ultimately have nothing. And if you are here this morning, and you can't even put two pennies together, and you're wondering where the next meal will come from, and you're struggling and trying to find a job and you can't pay your bills, and life seems to be difficult, hear me out when I tell you, you can have, by the world's standards, nothing. And yet, if you have the Lord Jesus Christ, you have everything. It's a sufficient grace. You lack nothing.

What does Paul say in Ephesians 1? We have been blessed in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, with everything. We lack nothing. Donald Trump, he's got nothing. He may think he does, but he's got nothing compared to the believer that is in union with the Creator of all the earth. Listen, if that right there, just that one truth would get a hold of your heart, it'll grip your life. Every step you take, every breath you're given is a gift of God's grace. Use it for His honor and His glory.

First reason why we're to be self-controlled. Older men, why we're to be godly; younger moms why we're to be gracious; older women why we're to be faithful, hardworking slaves. Why does Paul tell Titus to do this? First reason: because if you're a believer, you have been rescued by God's amazing grace. But here's the blessing, as we go to point two, as we as we go to the second reason. That's enough, isn't it? Isn't it enough that God would save us? Is it enough that God would pour His grace into our lives? Isn't it enough that He would redeem us from sin and Satan and a sin-cursed world? Oh, but dear loved ones, it only gets better. Because He doesn't just save us. He doesn't just give us the grace to trust Him and to see Him and to love Him. But He gives us the grace to follow Him.

See, we move from the fact that you have been rescued by grace to verse 12. Now you are trained by grace, you are trained by grace. Look at verse 12. It says, "*training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.*" That word there in the beginning of verse 12, *training*—and I think it was *instructing* out of the translation Marty was reading—it's exactly what it means. It means to instruct. It means to train. Better word actually, for the Greek word used there, it means to *discipline*. It's the same word used in Hebrews 12, where, if you know what that passage is, it speaks about God what? Disciplining His children, how

earthly fathers will discipline their children and how our heavenly Father will discipline us, instruct us.

You know, this training grace, it is both positive and negative. It teaches us to say *no*, and it teaches us to say *yes*. See, it's not just simply about avoiding. This is an issue, I think, for those of us who lose sight of what God has called us to do. It's not simply about becoming a monk or some monastic idea, where we just totally go away from the world and we live out somewhere where we can have the holy huddle, so to speak. It's not about avoiding. Do you notice this action? It teaches us to reject, to denounce, to repudiate, to turn away from ungodliness and run to godliness, to holiness. It's both negative and positive.

Let's look at the text. He says, verse 12, "*training us to renounce ungodliness...*" That word *renounce* is strong in the text. It means to deny, to reject, to repudiate. It's interesting, look across the page in your Bible—and this might be helpful—in verse 16 of chapter 1. He says, speaking of people who are claiming to know Christ, he says, "*They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.*" Same exact Greek word. Deny Him. They reject Him; they repudiate him. It's actually stronger in the Greek. They disavow themselves from Him. By what? By their works. And Paul is saying, "Listen, that same passion by which they reject God should be the same passion that that drives the believer to reject sin, that should mark their life." He says—it's negative, look at the look at the text again— "*renounce ungodliness...*" Two things here: "*renounce ungodliness and worldly passions...*" This is interesting. As I was studying this, you begin to realize this is both the sins that are without and the sins that are within. Ungodliness, this is the wicked world and all of its trappings and temptations by which we all live.

We live in a wicked world, don't we? Every one of us, we're bombarded by sin. We can't get away from it. It's the reality. It's the stream by which we all live in. It's a cesspool. And yet this is where we live and we're not to run from it. We're to take the gospel, we're to get the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that's filled with sin and nastiness, because we have the truth. And God's called us to that. But while we do that, it's almost like it attaches itself to us. You're on the TV, you're on the internet, you just can't get away from it. And God's grace teaches us to reject it. It teaches us to say *no* to the external wickedness, the actions of sin that just so bombard our lives. Not only that, it teaches us

to say *no* to the internal sin that resides within all of our hearts. You know, those of us that are redeemed, those of us that are believers, those of us that have been born again, who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that sin no longer reigns in our life and, praise the Lord, we have been set free. But sin remains. And it's a struggle that we fight the good fight of faith against sin. And yet God's grace doesn't leave us alone. It teaches us to say *no* to the sin of the world and it teaches us to say *no* to the sin of our heart. Look at what he says. He says, "*worldly passions.*" This is the worldly passions of your heart. This is the internal temptations that dwell within your heart. James 1 talks about where sin ultimately finds its root, in the heart of man. And the grace of God teaches us to say *no* to external wickedness, external deeds, as well as internal wickedness, internal attitudes of sin.

Not only is it negative, it trains us to reject ungodliness. But look at the text. It's also positive. It teaches us to embrace holiness and righteousness—look at the text—and "*to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age.*" And we're living there. It has the idea of this continual action; it's ongoing. It's not a point in time where you just do it once. But it's the daily fiber of your life. It's being gripped by God's grace. And every breath you take, every thought you have is to say *no* to ungodliness and *yes* to holiness.

This is interesting. When you look at the text, he gives us three descriptors here, which I think is actually very helpful. He says, "*to live self-controlled lives.*" That means that's private. That's you. That's you and your own heart. Self-controlled. What does that mean? It means to live mentally, not emotionally. You know, we have a 10-month-old I referenced him already. And you may be surprised by this, but he is a young lad that lives not by his mental ability, but by his emotional strength. When he wants something, when he's happy, when he sad, it's the same line. It's screaming. You've never seen that before. Have you? Right? We were actually, I was preaching at a church in southern Virginia, and we were at a hotel the night before. And you know these things, you know the pastor's wife is so orderly, and we're in the hotel room and 10-month-old (he's probably eight months at the time), he's coming unglued. It's like 10:30, he's tired. He's not feeling well, and like the whole hotel room, it's just, like, chaotic. I know that never happens to y'all. But anyway, and we're in there. And you know, being a good preacher, I've got my daughters and my other son, I sit him down on the bed. I'm like, "I got to redeem this

because this is terrible.” And I'm pointing to the son who's having a moment. And I said, “Do you see that?” And I said, “Now who's the one in this room that lacks self-control? Who's the one in this room that is that is not marked by control? Who's the one in this room that lives emotionally?” And my daughters, you know, you see the wheels turning, and then they all turn and they look at Hunter. And I'm like, “Exactly.” And then I looked at the other three kids and I said, “And that's a picture of you when you live by your emotions. You're no different than that.”

And see God's grace, it trains us. It instructs us. It teaches us to not live emotionally. You know, I teach my daughters in particular all the time, living by your emotions is the lowest level of living. It is the lowest level, the 10-month-old lives by that. But, as you mature and you grow, well, do you learn to live not by your emotions? Not even by your heart. But the mind? Isn't there a verse in Romans chapter 12, that speaks to that? “*I beseech you, therefore, brothers*” what? “*To present your bodies as a living sacrifice.*” And it goes on to say, “*by the renewing of your mind.*” See, it's by the renewal, by the taking in of truth, by God's Word overpowering and overshadowing your life, by everything you do being filtered through the truth of God's Word that you begin to grow. And you begin to understand that, I'm not only going to say *no* to ungodliness, but I'm going to say *yes* to this. But even though my emotions want to go over here to the wicked things of the world, but God's Word teaches me and shows me that this is far better. And I'm going to live mentally, not emotionally. See, that's private. God's grace is personal. It teaches us to live rightly, within ourselves.

Not only that; look at the text. It teaches us to live upright. You know what that is, that's how we live with one another. Fair, honest, right between one another, how we deal with each other across the aisle, how we deal with each other in our workplace and in our lives. See, God's grace not only impacts you personally, but it impacts you publicly. And it helps you to live together in unity and as brothers and sisters. Not only that; look at the text. It teaches us to live godly. That's your relationship with the Lord. This is the whole sphere of life. It's the private life, the public life, and the spiritual life. It's the inward, it's the outward, and it's the upward. This is God's grace. See, it not only rescues you, but it trains you; it equips you; it instructs you; it helps you. This is a tremendous blessing.

You know, the greatest illustration of this comes straight out of Scripture, Hebrews 12, the greatest illustration of this is parenting, that I was referencing just a little bit here. And I think there might be a few of us here who are parents, both older and younger. And you can take parenting, and you can sum it up in two words—or three, if you count the conjunction, or the connector—stopping and steering. That's what you do in parenting. You stop. You see your child, and he's headed towards the precipice, and he's about ready to run off the cliff. And what do you do? Have fun? No, you grab him; you stop him. You know, my six-year-old son, I pray you get to meet him. He's a great kid. And he's full of life. Takes after me—I feel sorry for him—and he's full of life. He's full of energy. And so when we're out in public, even though he normally is rather obedient, but he gets excited, and I can see his little hand starting to shake, and he wants to run. And he sees like one little strip of green grass, and we're over here. And then we're like, across a five-lane highway, and he's wanting to get over there. Like a dog and he wants to run that grass. What do I do? I grab him; I stop him. Because I know. And then what do I do? I kind of steer him back. Isn't that what we do in parenting? We stop our children from going the way of the world. But we just don't end there. We don't stop there. No, we take our children and we bring them back and say “No. No, don't live that way. Don't look that way. Don't walk that way. No, no, come this way.” And we bring them back to the ways of God and we steer them.

Listen, dear loved ones, that's exactly what God's Word does for us. It stops us from going the way of the world. But it doesn't leave us there in that neutral state. It shows us, “This is the way to go. This is the path to walk. This is the way of holiness. Walk in this.” That is a tremendous blessing of God's grace, that He doesn't leave us alone. This isn't just rules without reason. This isn't just a duty that turns into drudgery. This is delight, because God's grace, it empowers me to do it. I'm saved by grace. But then it also not only empowers me, but it encourages me and instructs me and helps me along the way. It's a training grace.

You are rescued by grace (verse 11). You are trained by grace (verse 12). Now look at verse 13. You are sustained by grace. Sustained (verse 13). “*Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...*” Oh, this is so—There's so much here that I don't have time to unpack, but maybe I'll get invited back and

we can go a little deeper. But anyway, it's a blessing. You may not like this. I don't like it, but it's reality. You can summarize the Christian walk, the Christian life in one word. It's found in this text. It's in all of our lives. It's this: waiting. We live a life of waiting. Wait. We're waiting for our salvation to be complete, for the Lord to return. We're waiting for our battle with sin to be done. We're waiting for our loved ones to come to know Christ. What you're waiting for, for a pastor to come and shepherd. You were just filled with waiting. And here's the amazing thing about that. God's grace, that supreme grace, that sovereign grace is sufficient grace. It not only saves us, it not only trains us, but it sustains us amidst the waiting. It preserves us. It helps us wait and rightly.

Look at the text. Not only that, you are sustained, first thing, by an eager anticipation, (verse 13), *"waiting for our blessed hope..."* That word *waiting* is so pregnant with meaning. It means this idea of expectation with passion, this idea where you're— It actually, the word means to look forward to the future, but to strain, almost it's like a picture of the prodigal son. The father— Do you remember the story of the prodigal son? In the end, the son comes to himself. That's a testimony of God's grace. And he realizes the grace of the father when he says, "Oh my father, he will treat me graciously. And look what he does with his servants. And he'll just, even if he treats me like one of those, it's better than the pig slop I'm in now." And he goes back and what does he see? The father what? Sees him from afar off. It's this idea. The father was waiting. The father was looking. The father was longing. It was this expectation. "Maybe today's the day my son will return." See, God's grace helps us.

Some of you have heard my story of how I met my wife. Those of you that haven't, I hope I get to share it with you, but it's a blessing. My wife, I have no idea why she said yes, but it's too late now. It is. Yeah, she's phenomenal. And if you meet her, you'll agree. She's amazing. I'm from West Virginia, a nobody from Nowhere, West Virginia. And she's from right across the county over here, Anne Arundel, in Glen Burnie. We have this blind setup. And I won't go through the whole story. But we're set up; we didn't know each other, didn't go to school together. She's a little bit younger. She's still in high school. I'm out of high school. Well, I meet this girl, changed my life. Now, I'll tell you the story later. But I was— I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to talk with her. She'll fill you in on that. But something happened. We only saw each other on the weekends. We only saw

each other, even the whole year and a half before we were married, I think a two-week stretch before we got married. I worked for my dad, alright, my whole life. And my dad said, "Son, I've noticed something," after I met Amy. He said, "Noticed something about you. About Wednesday morning you start to perk up. Like you're in the doldrums. I gotta really struggle to get work out of you. And Monday and Tuesday, you're just moping around. But man, Wednesday, you start to perk up a little bit." He said, "What's going on?" I said, "Dad, Friday I get to see my girl. Friday, I get to go be with her." Listen, I was waiting. Not wondering what's gonna happen. Like, you know, "I don't know. Maybe I'll get to see Amy on Friday." Are you kidding me? It changed my life. Listen, I took a shower. Wednesday would come, "Alright, I better start scrubbing. It'll take next few days to get this grime off." I clean my car. You know what? I don't, you know, clean my car, wax my car. Are you kidding me? Drive a big old four-wheel-drive pickup truck. No, you don't clean that. Mud is like, "Yeah, I'm a man." I'm cleaning my car and washing everything, washing my clothes. I'm putting on cologne. I'm shaving. You know, I'm putting my best foot forward. Why? I can't wait to see my girl.

Listen, dear loved ones. This is the sad reality. Is that how you're waiting for your Lord? Is that how I wait for my Lord? He ten times greater than my wife, who I love dearly. And yet, do I wait for Him with that eager anticipation? Do I look like the prodigal son's father? "Maybe today he's coming back." I want to shave. I want to shower. I want to get my life right. I want to live for Him like there's no tomorrow, because maybe today. That's the grace of God, teaches us to wait with full expectation, to wait with great excitement. O dear loved ones, is that how you're waiting?

Not only that, look at the text. He says, "*waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior...*" One more thing and I'm going to pass on through here. But I want you to know something: blessed hope. Don't miss this. This will help your waiting. This is how God's grace helps our waiting. When the Bible uses the word *hope*, it doesn't use it the way we do. You know, when I was waiting for my wife, I was hoping she would say yes when I popped the question to her. What did I mean by that? I didn't know if she'd say yes or not. I wouldn't say yes to me. But maybe she will. But I didn't know. It was probable. It was possible. There was potential. But I didn't know. The Bible doesn't use *hope* that way. It is always not a "hope so but uh, no." So it is confident expectation



of future fulfillment. That's what the word means. And so there's a sense in which we're waiting for the blessed hope. It's this confidence we have. We know Christ is coming back. Why? Because He said he would. And He promised, and all of His promises have come true. That's the blessing of the gospels. All the way through the gospel, He keeps saying, "I Am. I and the Father are One. I am the Messiah. I am the One. Look at the work that I'm doing. And I'm going to lay my life down, and you're going to destroy this temple. I'm going to rebuild it in three days. And I'm going to come back," and all these things. And guess what. They all came true. And that's the beauty of Acts, when the angels are talking to the disciples, and they're like, "Why are you gazing up? Just as He came, He's gonna come back again, just as He said." Listen, He has promised and He has proven to be true. And it's a hope I bank on. Listen to how to help. You're waiting. That's the grace of God.

You have been rescued by grace; you have been trained by grace; you are sustained by grace; and lastly, look at the last verse, verse 14, you are inspired by grace. You are motivated, inspired by grace. This is so encouraging. Verse 14, "*who gave himself for us.*" Let me tell you what you're going to see in this text. This one verse just drips, it just bleeds, literally bleeds with the personal intimacy of Jesus Christ and His loved ones. You, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, look at the text. Look what he says: "*who gave himself for us.*" That's personal. You're inspired by the personal connection. He gave literally what? That means there's the sacrifice. He killed Himself. For us. It's a personal connection. He isn't a god, that's nuts, removed from His people. He's not just some god that stands far off. Praise the Lord. He's not. He's my heavenly Father. He's my Lord and Savior. He's my greatest Father. He walks with me and He talks with me. That's what He's saying here. He has redeemed a people for Himself. Listen, he died, so that you might know Him. That's what He's saying here. Who gave Himself, who killed Himself for us, not only for a personal relationship, but—look—"to redeem us," to free us, "*from all lawlessness...*" He liberates us.

And then look at the next phrase, "*to purify for himself a people for his own possession...*" That word *purifies* is where we get the word *cauterize*, to where it means to cleanse; it means to wipe clean. And this is what He does with us, loved ones. He doesn't leave us where we once were. But He moves us from where we are to where He wants us to be, conforming us into His image. What a blessing. We are so encouraged and inspired by

God's amazing grace, His personal cost, the personal connection, and look at the last part of the verse, the personal commission, *“to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”* Listen, I stand before you as someone that, I can tell you, no one is more surprised than me that I'm standing up here today. As a pastoral candidate, I don't deserve this. Not at all. But that's the amazing thing about God's grace. He takes broken people, undeserving people, and He changes their lives, and He pours His mercy into them. And not only does He save them, but He trains them, He instructs them, He helps them move from this side to that side. And not only that, He helps them to wait for Him because there's time needed to prepare us for heaven. That's what He's doing.

And not only that, in the time since He saved us, and He's sanctifying us and He's preparing us, He actually uses us. I don't know about you, but if that doesn't make you stop for a moment and say, “Who would do that? Who would use me?” you might want to check your birth certificate. See if you're still alive. Listen to me, dear loved ones, God doesn't need any of us. He does not need one single person on the face of the earth. He is the Almighty King of kings and the Lord of Lords. He can do whatever He wants when He wants. He can save whoever you want. He doesn't need me. He doesn't need you. But in His grace and in His mercy, He chooses to use us, to save us, to empower us, to strengthen us, and send us out. That is an amazing grace that I don't deserve. But I am so thankful because I love to serve the Lord. How about you? You are inspired by God's grace.

Listen, think of those four reasons today. Let them encourage you. And live your life gripped by those things. You remember C.T. Studd, when I started this, the sermon this morning? Let me end with that. C.T. Studd was an amazing servant, poured his life on the mission field, ultimately dying there really. He got towards the end of his life— Well, he went to China first. And he poured his life there and got really sick. After about 12 years, came back. And he was serving as, like, a mission liaison who was trying to really promote missions. And then he went to India. And he thought, “Okay, I can go again. I'm feeling better.” He went to India, got sick again, came back to England. And he was doing his best to serve from the home base. And one day, he ran into a man who held a sign that said “The cannibals want the gospel too,” speaking of Africa. And he was so moved by that. He said, “I'm gonna go to Africa.” Well, at this point, he's in his 50s. He's got no life left. He's

beaten down. He sees a sickly man. No one would support him. He went to a different man. And he said, "We've got to take the gospel to Africa." And they said, "Yes, but you can't go." And he said, "I must go," and no one would support him. And you know what? They said, "Why would you do this, C.T.? Why would you do that? You've given your life already." And he said—listen to me— "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then nothing I do for him will ever be enough." That was a man that lived gripped by God's amazing grace.

Is that you here this morning? Listen, today's a new day. Maybe you've never received the Lord Christ as your Savior. Maybe this is the first time you've heard of God's grace. You know the sin of your heart. You know the wickedness. Jesus Christ gave His Son that you may have life and if you'll turn to Him and trust Him today, you may have life everlasting. Maybe you've been a believer, but you've lost sight of God's grace. Turn back to Him today. Walk in the way of holiness and find His grace to be sufficient for you. And you will be blessed. Be encouraged, Belcroft Bible Church, today. Let us pray.