

Titus 2:11-14

Growth

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Last week, on the holy day, the theme of my sermon was getting rid of leaven—growing and producing fruit are all parts of the same process. In fact, I stated that one could go so far as to say that these are simply different ways of saying the same thing.

Specifically, though, they are not the same thing. *Getting rid of leaven*, for example, has the most negative connotation of the terms we are using here. I think it is also clear that *growing* is the most general of the three. And *producing fruit* is the most specific of the three.

The overall point is that these three principles, considered as a whole, show that when one is a Christian one is not expected to stand still and I am hoping that throughout the course of this sermon this will be burned indelibly into our minds. I know that this is a concept with which we are familiar. I am not introducing anything that is new or radical. But I am hoping that through this sermon we will begin to see more clearly than ever before that God does not expect us to stand still.

For example, in the physical realm, we can use things that come out of the physical area in order to understand things that are spiritual. If we do not feed ourselves, what would happen to us? If we did not take the steps to make sure that we were able to eat, what would happen to us? I think that we would begin to degenerate and die, would we not? We would begin to waste away. It might not be something that would happen very quickly; it might take a month or two or three. If we did not make any effort to feed ourselves, the degeneration would very rapidly set in.

It is a responsibility that every one of us has from God—to do something to take care of our lives. And I think that you will agree with me when I say that it is not just a responsibility to keep ourselves alive, but we are also responsible to do what we can to *improve* our condition.

So, not only do we eat, but also if we are really on the ball and trying to improve ourselves, we are going to eat as good a food as we possibly can. We are going to make some effort to study and make sure that what we are eating is in harmony with the laws that are at work in our body. And then we are going to do something about it.

We begin to see this principle expand out. We are to *dress and keep* what God has put

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into our care and our life is one of the things He has put into our care. And we all agree, do we not, that we have the responsibility to feed ourselves. But if we are tuned into God and the dressing and keeping principle, we are not only just feeding ourselves, we are doing something about improving our condition. So it is just not a matter of eating right. There is also a responsibility to exercise our bodies.

We can eat right and not do any exercise and we can get by for quite a period of time on the strength of what has been done in the past or what we have in the way of natural good health which has come through in the genes. But we have to do a little bit more than that, do we not? We have to deal with the situation that life has dealt to us. All of us have the responsibility to not just accept our condition, but to do something about working our way into a *better* condition than that in which we now find ourselves.

II Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

What is the contrast here between verse 17 and 18? Verse 18 makes it very clear that there is a contrast. Peter says, "but grow." Verse 17 is a warning: "beware lest you also fall . . . being led away with the error of the wicked." Now the command is to grow, is it not?

Therefore, if the contrast that he is establishing in our minds is to be met, the positive part of the instruction is that effort has to be made in order to grow. If we are not making an effort to grow, the only alternative is to go in reverse. You see we begin to degenerate if we do not make an effort to grow.

II Peter 3:17-18 (Moffatt) Now, beloved, you are forewarned: mind you that you are not carried away by the error of the lawless and so lose your proper footing;

My attention is on this verse 17 where he says, "mind you," rather than "beware." He turns it into something that is positive. "Beware" could mean to just look around to make sure that you are safe. But on the other hand, "mind you" says, "Hey, turn your attention to focus on this so that you do not slide away!"

Clearly, I think that we can see from the combination of these two verses, we are being

told that effort must be made to produce growth or we are very likely going to fall into the error of the wicked. In other words, doing nothing in the area of spiritual responsibility is akin to doing nothing in the area of physical responsibility in regard to our physical health.

So we are faced with a choice. Now we are forewarned, are we not? Something has to be done. We cannot just stand still. We cannot just drift. Some effort has to be made in order to ensure that growth takes place.

Ephesians 4:13-16 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself [or the building up of itself] in love.

I want us to think about these verses in the context of the subject of the whole epistle. The overall subject is *unity*—specifically a unity of two peoples coming out of two very different cultures: the Gentile culture on the one hand and the Israelite culture on the other. The one, a group of people who are familiar with the law of God, familiar with the Old Testament, familiar with the Covenant, and familiar with the hope that God had given to Israel. The Gentiles, on the other hand, had little or no relationship to these things. They came from an environment in which there was no notion of God having made a covenant with a group of people that they might become His special people, that they might represent Him. They were a people with vastly different ideas regarding family life, religion, ruling, law, and responsibility. Yet these two dissimilar peoples had to be joined together.

The subject, beginning in verse 7, involves growth. We are expected to grow within a framework or environment in which there is a great deal of diversity. On one hand, we do not have the diversity that these people had—where there was the Hebrew culture and the Gentile culture. There was a real clash of ideas.

Most of us today, however, are coming out of basically the same culture. Yet we know that there is a great deal of diversity of opinions and ideas regarding things. Somehow

or another an environment has to be created that will produce growth, an environment of unity. Unity will produce growth. Unity will produce peace. James adds in James 3 that, "the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace by those who make peace." In other words, it is a way of saying that it is going to be awfully difficult to grow if there is no peace. Where does the responsibility lie in making sure there is an environment of unity leading to growth?

Paul begins by showing that God has done His part. One of the gifts that He has given us is the ministry. It is their responsibility to give the right kind of teaching (doctrine) that is necessary for the right kind of an environment. If the ministry is divided, this is going to be very difficult. So God has given gifts to certain men to make sure that this part of the process is taken care of.

Then when he gets to the rest of the body, he tells us that the ministry is for the equipping of the saints. This indicates that God knows full well that the saints are *not* going to be equipped, in the beginning, to be able to do their part. Right? Right!

Ephesians 4:12-13 ...For the work of the ministry, for the edifying [or the building up] of the body [now here come specific areas of growth] till we all come to the unity of the faith, [faith here meaning not so much trust as a body of belief. That is the subject—a body of doctrine] and the knowledge of the Son of God...

This is not referring to knowledge *about* the Son of God, but the Son of God's knowledge! There is a difference between the two. He is actually talking about the same thing that Peter was in II Peter 3:18: to "grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ." Again, not knowledge *about* Christ, but the knowledge *of* Christ

Ephesians 4:13-16 ...to a perfect man [we see the areas of growth: unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we should no longer be children [we are to grow up from being children] tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine [here he defines what a child is: someone who is unstable and wavering all over the place in terms of doctrine] by the trickery of men [children are people who are easily tricked, deceived], which they lie in wait to deceive; [to the ministry again he says] speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ [now here is the ultimate destiny—to be in the image of Christ. This is what we have to grow into], from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint

supplies...

Now we are beginning to see that everyone in the body has a responsibility to create an environment in which growth can take place. Are you with me? Do you agree with what I am saying?

Ephesians 4:16 ...according to the effective working by which every part does its share [now get this next phrase], causes growth!

Do you want to grow? How? What is the message here? I am going to tell you what the message is. Everyone has to make sure that they, themselves, are growing. That is what creates the environment. You cannot wait for someone else to do it. You have to do it! I have to do it! And if I do it myself, I will begin to contribute to the unity of the body. I will be contributing to the environment of growth. So if I am getting in harmony with the way of God, these things will be produced. "It causes..."

Ephesians 4:16 ...growth of the body, for the edifying, [for the building up] of itself in love.

This shows that the ministry is a key in this process and that it is a gift given for this very purpose. It also shows that each part of the body has a responsibility to share in the process of *building up in love*. We find in other places, which we will not go into at this time, that those who divide the body are to be gotten rid of.

Now, notice this word, *love*. Why is this here in the context of growth and unity? There is a reason for this: love is one of the major directions we will move toward as we grow.

At the beginning of this sermon I said that I wanted to make sure that something was clearly established: *Christian growth is not something that automatically takes place simply because one receives the Spirit of God*. It occurs because one takes steps to yield to God to make sure that it occurs. And that is everyone's responsibility. The responsibility for this does not just fall on the ministry. It is not just the church's responsibility. It is each individual's responsibility to make sure that they are contributing to that. So every joint has to supply and that causes growth!

If people do nothing, or divide, weakness and degeneration occur just as in the analogy with regard to feeding ourselves and being responsible for our physical health.

Now let us continue to nail this down just a little bit further by going to the book of Colossians chapter 3. We are going to be hopping, skipping, and jumping all the way through verse 17. I just want us to see the *action words*, the verbs, which the apostle Paul put into this.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek. . .

Now can we *seek* without doing something? If you are not seeking something, that brings to mind a picture of someone whose shoes are nailed to the floor. But if you are seeking in terms of *research*, you are going to be digging in a book—you are going to be digging in many books—are you not? You are going to be doing something.

If you are seeking along the lines of where a problem might lie in your life, you may be examining yourself in terms of, "when did I first notice this problem? When did I first become aware? What was the circumstance? Where did it likely come from? Is it a part of my environment as a result from my being assimilated in this family? Or from these experiences at work, or what is it? Why do I have these kinds of thoughts that lead in this direction?" We are not just doing nothing! We are *searching out!* We are seeking.

Then we look in God's Word to find out what it is that He says we should *do!* Then on top of this we begin to look at our own lives and begin to say, "Well, this is the pattern by which I live, what is it I can do to avoid this problem in the first place?" We are seeking. We are not just doing nothing, we are *doing* something! We are actively pursuing a way to do what is right. So if then you are "raised with Christ . . . seek."

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind. . .

Here is another one. He is telling us where the focus of our attention needs to be. We can give our minds over to a lot of things, can we not? We can give our minds over to our job—and there is a place for that. We can give our minds over to physical things—exercise, feeding ourselves, and so forth—and there is a place for these, too.

We can see a lot of things upon which we do need to set our minds, but they all need to be prioritized correctly—put into the right niche. And then every one of these things has to be seen in relation to the Kingdom of God, do they not? The priorities must be set according to this—the overriding part of our lives.

"Set your mind on things above." This will then adjust the focus of our attention so that

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we do not get distracted by something that is less important for any longer than needed; so that it occupies the right proportion and the right amount of time in our lives.

Colossians 3:5, 8 Therefore put to death [pretty strong words]. . . . But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy.

Paul has changed the metaphor here to one of taking off clothing and putting on clothing. Is it possible that, just by thinking about it, the clothing you now have on is just going to *fall off*? You have to make effort, do you not, to disrobe? On the other hand, you have to make a choice as to which clothing you are going to put back on in its place. Then you have to make the effort to put it on, do you not?

I think that these things are so clear. Do you see that we cannot just *stand still*! Growth, in terms of salvation, is not something that just *happens* because one receives the Spirit of God. It is something that is *caused* to happen.

Colossians 3:9, 12 Do not lie [that is pretty clear]. . . . Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on [here are things that are a part of Christian life that do not come naturally]: tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

These are things about which we have to make decisions—choices—as to when and how we are going to do them. Conscious effort has to be made to do them.

Colossians 3:13-14 [we have to] bear[ing] with one another, and forgiving one another. . . . But above all these things put on love, [here is the *end* of the process] which is the bond [or the glue; it is what holds together] of perfection.

Is this not what we are to grow into? We are to grow to perfection—Ephesians 4:13, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God [another positive step, let it, the peace of God], rule. . .

It means *be the umpire*. Does that not mean making a choice? What does an umpire

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do? An umpire decides in a baseball game, does he not? Yes, he does. The peace of God has to be the umpire in you and me. It leads us into what decisions we are going to make.

Colossians 3:15-17 let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. . . . And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

When God talks about growth, He is not talking about technicalities concerning the Word of God, but growth in the kinds of things about which we are reading. This is what He is talking about in II Peter 3, to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. He is talking about growth in human relationships.

In fact, God tells us to "avoid foolish questions and genealogies and contentions and strivings about the law." In Titus 3, He tells us that such divisive things and divisive people should be rejected. Why? It is because the problems of this world are ones of relationships. An effort has to be made to conquer them. When we are doing these things we will be growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Do you realize that this is the very reason why we have received grace from God? I am going to show it to you.

Titus 2:11-15 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

These verses are jam-packed with instruction regarding our responsibility toward this subject. I think that all of us coming from this Protestant-dominated society have grown up with the belief that grace is a free gift!

Now, free it is—I do not deny that! But I also think that there is a possibility that we do not understand what the Bible means by *free*. I am going to clarify that for you. Think of these next verses in terms of yourself as being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Luke 14:25-27, 33 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me [what for? Do we not come to Him for forgiveness? Do we not come to Him for redemption? Do we not come to Him because He is our Savior], and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. . . . So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Brethren, is being a disciple of Christ *free* to us? These verses say to me that we have to give up *everything!* That is *not* cheap! And He mentions this in the context of the things that are normally the most dear to us of all things on earth—our flesh-and-blood relatives!

There is no greater price that a human being can pay than to give up his family and, yes, his own life! That is *not* cheap! That is *not* free!

Grace is the most costly thing that has ever been given to this earth. It was costly in terms of the life of the very Creator—the God who made everything! He gave His life! And in return, in order to receive that grace, He demands of us—you and me—that we give up our lives. It is *not* cheap. It is *not* free.

Then how can people say that it is free? Brethren, I do not know whether Christ could have made the cost of our obligation any clearer than He did right here. There are no relationship ties stronger than blood ties.

We have probably heard the saying, "blood is thicker than water." The origin of this saying came out of the Church of England, I believe. Blood ties are stronger than the Holy Spirit—water. They recognized that family ties would pull people away from the truth of God. They are that powerful! Grace is not free and it is not cheap by any stretch of the imagination!

Then He tells us that in addition to this we have to humbly bear any burden that comes upon us as a result of our discipleship, as a result of our having received such forgiveness. Sometimes that cost can be very great. It is pretty sweeping in terms of its consequence.

Free does not mean cheap; it means that God freely *gave* it—that is what it means. God was under no constraint. There was no obligation on His part to do what He did. He

owes us absolutely nothing for what we have done. Grace is an aspect of His love that has no motive but itself. "God so loved the world that He gave. . ."

Looking at history, brethren, is there anything about us that is lovable? Look at what we have done to this earth! Look at what we have done to one another! In the name of "God" we have blown one another to smithereens! Brethren, if someone did something to your property and to your family the way we have treated God's property and family, I think that we would have an awfully difficult time giving love. In fact, we may be unable, totally, to do it! We do not have a love of that depth. But God freely gave it—under no obligation whatsoever.

So grace is a self-motivating, stooping, communicating, tender, and forgiving mercy which has *appeared*, it says in this verse (back to Titus 2). It has appeared.

This word, *appeared*, is the same word that is used in Greek literature to describe the bursting forth of the sun in a glorious sunrise over the darkened earth! The feminine form of this word is used in the Bible to describe Christ's first coming and His second coming. It is usually used in the passive tense and it means "to show openly; to shine forth light upon." It has the sense of *something occurring suddenly and unexpectedly*. I think in this context Paul is saying that we normally do not expect grace to teach us something. Grace *teaches* us something. Are we aware of that?

The word, *teach*, is very interesting, as well. It is *paideuo*, in the Greek.

Hebrews 12:5-7 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens [the word, *chastens*, is the same word that is translated *teaching* back in Titus 2:12], and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"

This word is used in the sense of schooling, training, teaching, or disciplining. It is used primarily in the context of teaching a child—of activity (notice the word, this is not passive)—of activity directed toward the moral and spiritual training of a child; to influence conscious will and action. Again—to influence conscious will and action.

In this kind of a context, we are not talking about someone just passively waiting for things to happen. Teaching is done so that the child will consciously act. He is taught to

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choose to do the right thing. Now when it is used in a strictly religious sense—to chastise (as we just saw in Hebrews 12)—it is for the purpose of educating someone to conform to divine truth.

Let me expand on this just a little bit more. This word includes instruction, as in a classroom—the kind of situation we are in right now. You are being taught by a teacher and you are sitting here concentrating, taking notes, following along with the theme of the person's message. So it includes that. But it also includes practice, practice, practice—much as an army out drilling on the drill field.

Drill, drill, drill, drill, drill, drill, and drill—until we get it right! Recruits, let us go through it again. We did not do it right that time. Drill, drill, drill! What does it produce? Discipline! What does it produce? Self-control! What does it produce? It produces someone who consciously moves in a certain direction.

It also includes chastisement in the sense of *spanking*—rebuking to bring about correction. This is for when someone, for whatever the reason, refuses to *get it*.

And finally, it also includes *encouragement*—a pat on the back, an encouraging word. But the intent is to always move the person in a certain *moral* direction.

Now read this verse again.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us [instructing us, drilling us, chastising us, encouraging us] that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

What these verses are doing is underlying and specifying our obligations because we have received grace. That is, we are to turn our attention, and this is what we are to *mind*, in fulfillment of our loyalty to Jesus Christ. The grace of God teaches us our ethical obligations to the Kingdom of God.

Titus 2:11-12 (Moffatt) For the grace of God has appeared to save all men, and it schools us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions and to live a life of self-mastery, of integrity, and of piety in this present world.

Did you notice that? Again, there are the negative aspects and there are the positive

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aspects. First, the negative: you renounce *irreligion* and *worldly lusts*. And then, the positive: *living soberly, righteously, godly*—living a life of self-mastery, of integrity, and of piety in this present world.

The negative usually occurs first, but it must be followed by the positive. Remember, it is not enough to just be swept clean. Nature abhors a vacuum. Something good must be put in place of that which is swept away.

We are going to look a bit more closely at these five words that are translated: *irreligion* (or *ungodliness*), *worldly passion*, *self-mastery*, *integrity*, and *piety*.

First of all—*irreligion*:

II Timothy 2:14-18 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing [or straightly cutting] the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some [an issue back in their day].

People were getting into arguments in the congregation about genealogies, meanings of words, and technicalities about the law of Moses. I want us to notice that Paul called these *ungodliness*. I would be willing to bet, if I were a betting man, that these people had the feeling that they were more righteous than anyone else. But Paul calls it ungodliness. Why? Because of what it was producing. It was producing disorder and disunity. If it was producing disorder and disunity within the congregation—it was not producing an environment for growth! Peace had gone by the wayside. Paul said that this is ungodly.

Paul also said here, in verse 16, to *shun* those things. Do you know what "shun" means? It means to walk away from; it means to turn your back on. Those things do not produce the right kinds of fruit.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is. . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This is an example of ungodliness within a congregation. But a more common application appears in a context like Romans 1:

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Romans 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Most of these things listed here as ungodliness are the things with which we are more familiar. These kinds of things, too, are those which can occur within a congregation of the church of God. But then we also find in this context the unholy marriage of idolatry joined to immorality. We find that these things are ungodly.

Let us put this back into the context of Titus 2:11-13. When grace truly comes into a person's life, one will repudiate consciously and utterly reject ungodliness. It will not happen all at once. But if we are growing we will be moving in that direction.

The second is—*worldly passions*.

This is the way that Moffatt puts it. He is talking about *desire* here. Desire is so common to us that it might even cause a measure of guilt because we feel any cravings whatsoever. Desire of and by itself is not wrong—it is not sin. God created us with the ability to desire. It is from desire that accomplishment comes.

There are two different kinds of desire, however. There are godly desires and there are worldly desires. God wants us to *desire* the Kingdom of God. God wants us to *desire* the character of Jesus Christ. He wants us to *desire* that we become like Jesus Christ. He wants us to *desire* peace in the congregation. He wants us to *desire* the love of God, the peace of God, the joy of God—all of the fruits of God's Spirit. He wants us to desire

these things.

If they are greater than the desire for worldly things then that is the direction in which we will move because we always move in the direction of our desires—unless we *will* to do otherwise. You see, we can do that—we *can will to do otherwise*—so that whenever a wrong desire does arise we can consciously will to move away from it.

Grace teaches us this. If we had not received grace we would not will ourselves to move away from a desire that is wrong. What would we do? We would allow ourselves to *gratify* that desire. Grace teaches us—it schools us, it instructs us, it drills us—and it will chasten us so that we are consciously choosing to *move* our desires in the right direction and to renounce those desires that are wrong.

II Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness. . .

There is the negative; there is the positive. We will find that in the Bible, desire is used in both a good and a bad sense. The man of God is to recognize his capacity for both and to consciously turn away from that which is wrong and pursue that which is good.

A desire is a strong yearning. It is usually seen in the context of a craving for satisfaction of the physical appetite. This is the way it is normally seen in the Bible. It is a craving for something having to do with food, alcohol, or carnal sexual desires. And it has to do with pleasure madness.

I saw something on the news the other night that was just sickening—if it was true! I think it was a *Hardcopy* program. It was about these young Hollywood stars—people who are making a great deal of money on their talent. The program mentioned Shannon Doherty and River Phoenix (who recently died of an overdose of drugs) and Johnny Depp.

They showed these people in the Hollywood nightclub that seemed to have been set aside just for this group of people who have too much time and too much money and too little awareness of the consequences of what they are doing. They are constantly reaching out to satisfy the cravings of their mind and body. These people are sick! And I mean it, they are sick!

And yet they are the icons of most of the young people in this nation. They are the kind of people whom others will tend to emulate. Pleasure-madness is what this program was about—pleasure-mad. That is why River Phoenix died—seeking pleasure from

something other than that which God counsels us in His Word. That is what is being said in Timothy here: "flee also youthful lusts. . . but pursue righteousness!"

I said that desire is usually seen in the context of a craving for the satisfaction of the physical appetite. But it is also seen in the Bible in the context of a seeking after power—the passion to be number one. These people become highly competitive. They want to be dominant. They are assertive people. Do you know what their real object is? To control!

People will use this in the family in terms of anger. The real desire of a burst of anger is to control a situation to one's own end. People use self-pity the same way. It is just another extreme. It is used as a means of gaining control of a situation. It is not a seeking after truth. It is a seeking after one's own way. In the long run it is very destructive. What it usually produces is more quarrels and envy because the real problems are never resolved.

It also includes the passion for possessions and, of course, the glory that goes with those things. Young men love to tool around in their Corvettes or their street rods or whatever it might happen to be. Why? They desire to be noticed. And so the pride of possessions has behind it the craving for attention. And so people buy things, that big house up on the hill or the wonderful clothing. It is not being done in the service to God, at all. It is being done to satisfy our cravings.

It may appear that all these desires might have an animalistic connotation to them. Do not be deceived because even the more refined passions of pride and inordinate ambition are included within the framework of this word. Colossians 3:5 says this is nothing more than a form of idolatry through which carnality is gratified.

We can now make a conclusion to this section. We are to renounce irreligion and worldly passions. Grace teaches us this. Paul is saying that one cannot become godly until one first renounces ungodliness. We have to get rid of the old—the bad tenants—before a new tenant can come in.

When I was welding, we had to change the polarity from time-to-time. Sometimes we would be on straight polarity and other times on reverse polarity. It all depended upon what we wanted to accomplish. This is what we are talking about here. The direction of one's life has to be *changed*. That is what grace teaches. The obligation that goes with grace is for the person to recognize that he has been given an opportunity to change the direction of his life. If one changes the direction of his life it is going to end in the Kingdom of God and along the way he is going to glorify God. There can be no greater

opportunity given to a human being than that.

Did you know that grace taught us that? I do not think you did. That is why God gives it.

Now he mentions three positive things:

Self-mastery: Here is self-government; here is self-control; here is a disciplined person; here is a person who has his life in order. The first thing that a person has to accomplish as he begins to get evil out of his life is to get his own life in harness. Because if we cannot control ourselves we are sunk! The rest of the growth process will not follow. It begins with number one.

Go back to the beginning of the sermon, to the thought that was there. The thought was there in Ephesians 4 that every part of the body has to contribute to the unity of the whole. How does one contribute to the unity? By making sure that one is growing; by letting grace teach us; by consciously responding to it.

The word can be even more strictly defined as the English word, *sober*. This is how it is translated in the King James Version and the New King James Version. This is the direct translation of that Greek word.

I will tell you something else. It could also be directly translated into the English word, *sane*. How about those apples? Does this not indicate that before grace comes into our lives we are all somewhat insane? Yes it does! Grace teaches us how to be sane—*sound-minded!* We are beginning to get a little bit looser in the translation, but it is still something that fits.

It has also appeared in Greek literature as the word, *discreet*. It appears as "self-discipline," "behave in an orderly manner," "to be prudent," "to be moderate" depending upon the context in which it appears.

We will find it in the Bible in such places as Romans 12:3; Titus 2:6 (just a couple verses before this section in Titus 2:11); I Peter 4:7. It always gives the impression of a person who is even-handed and who has his passions under control; one who is making the proper use of his drives and desires. Does that connect with getting rid of worldly passions? It goes together like hand-in-glove. It means a person in whom there are no extremes in manner of life. In the religious (or biblical) sense, it means one who is making steady progress in growing into the balance of Jesus Christ. Someone who is not doing these things will be divisive because they are serving themselves.

The fourth word is sometimes translated as *righteously* and sometimes, as Moffatt does, *integrity*. This is a very interesting one because the translation into the word "righteously" automatically makes us think of codified law; "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). All too often we leave it here without pursuing a further understanding of it.

If you were to look in Luke 23:41 you will find the exact same word translated as "fair." This is uttered by one of the thieves on the stake beside Christ. What he said was, "The treatment that we have received is *fair*, it is *righteous*. But what He is receiving He does not deserve because He is without sin." They received their righteous treatment.

What we are considering here is the adverbial form of the word, *dikaios*. It literally means "conform to what is right." Plato said that the word is inseparably bound with the word translated above as *sober*, which is kind of interesting. He said the two words go together.

Understanding who wrote this, the apostle Paul, I can understand. I am sure he was a man well versed in Greek writings. He understood that these two words go together hand-in-glove (*sober* and *dikaios*). One is translated, *sane*, and the other, *conforming to that which is right*. The difference is that one is generally applied to the self; the other is applied to one's treatment of and conduct toward others. *Dikaios* means to be conformed to what is right with regard to other people.

Someone who would be called a *dikaios* by a Greek would be one who is neither selfish nor forgetful in giving to people what is their due. He is always conformed to that which is right. He is sensitive enough, humble enough, thoughtful enough, and courageous enough to do what is right. Sometimes it takes courage to do what is right. Sometimes one has to humble himself or be tough or to knuckle under or to submit, we might say. One has to be thinking about the well-being of others in order to be sensitive enough to do what is the right thing. Sometimes the right thing to do is to chastise, to scourge, or to correct. I will show you that in just a minute.

To the Christian this translates into this little saying: "My duty is my right." To the person who is a *dikaios*, duty always precedes everything else. This translates out into all kinds of descriptors. It has everything to do with the instruction of God and little to do with codified law. I am going to give you a clear example of this. Is it our duty to *love*? Is it our duty to be conformed to what is right? Are we talking here about codified law? Let us see!

I Corinthians 13:4-6 Love suffers long [where can you show me this in

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codified law?] and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

These things have little or nothing to do with codified law and yet every one of them is righteousness. When we confine righteousness to things having to do with codified law we are missing an awful lot about what is right. Codified law only involves those things that are basic and elementary. But these things that we are talking about are things which are much more difficult to grow into and to do. And yet, you see, grace has been given and these are the very areas that we need to grow into.

The Pharisees had a form of righteousness; even Jesus said that. But was it the righteousness of God? Was it a righteousness that was kind, gentle, merciful, good, thoughtful of others, considerate, or patient? Not by Jesus' description! They were a long way from being a *dikaios*!

These are the kinds of things that build unity, produce peace, and bring us more into harmony. The word, "integrity," translates into the English word, "whole." Most of us have the first part of righteousness. We see it in terms of codified law. The more important part of righteousness—that which follows—is what makes us *whole*. And that is what God calls *love*. It is the combination of codified law administered with patience, kindness, sensitivity, and goodness. That is the area in which we need to grow.

Now fifth is *godliness*, or *piety*. In Acts 10:2, 7 the word is translated, *devout*. And it means: "to render to God the reverence and worship emanating from a holy life." In other words, in order to do this, the holy life comes first and then the giving of this kind of devotion to God is made possible.

You see the process here: we begin to get rid of irreligion; we begin to get rid of worldly passions, and then we begin to replace them with self-mastery and integrity. It will lead us to the place where we are godly!

Do we see what grace teaches us? It teaches us to take care of three major areas of life: *the self; the relationships with others, and the relationship with God*—and in fact may put them in the right order of progression. First we work on changing ourselves then we expand out to the right kind of sensitivity and thoughtfulness to our brother and it puts us into a position, then, to give God the right kind of devotion.

We are looking here at a person who is deeply committed, earnest, and fearless about

his religious duties. This is certainly one who shows that he is not lackadaisically drifting into the Kingdom of God. Jesus said in reference to a comment made about John the Baptist that the violent take it by force. That hardly looks to me like someone who is *drifting* into the Kingdom of God! We are striving and making efforts that must be made in order to be in the Kingdom of God and to glorify God!

I am going to summarize here. The reason why all the members of God's family should live a life of self-mastery, fairness, integrity, and devotion is because the grace of God has burst into our moral darkness to redeem us and lead us away from ungodliness and onto the path of holiness. We can walk along this path with eager anticipation because of what it says in verses 13 and 14: we do this because of our *hope* in the return of Jesus Christ. This is what drives us to do what needs to be done.

And in the process we are being purified into a special people who have a *zest for noble deeds*. What a wonderful way to put it. That is the way Moffatt says it: "a zest for the right and noble deeds." And in the process we become a special treasure to God. Brethren, connect that with Malachi 3.

Malachi 3:16-17 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

This special treasure, He says, are the ones that He is going to preserve through the time that is coming—His jewels.

I am going to try to do my job to the best of my ability. According to Ephesians 4, every one of us must give ourselves over to this. We have been sold a bill of goods to think that salvation is just something that we receive.

It is true that we cannot save ourselves through our works, but I am going to paraphrase what Mr. Armstrong said. He said that we are not going to be saved by our works, but only those who *do* work are going to be saved because they are the ones who are showing God their attitude toward the great gifts He has given; they appreciate them and respond to Him.

We have a lot to work on and much to do. We need to make sure that we are using our

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time and directing our lives toward God's Kingdom. And we must allow Him to work with us so that we are consciously setting our will to do the right thing.