

## Displaying God's Grace

Titus 3:12-15

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, June 9, 2019

Turn with me to the book of Titus. Kevin and Quentin were recently affirmed as two of our new elders here at Grace Fellowship. One of the jobs of an elder is to teach sound doctrine to the church. And one book that talks a lot about sound doctrine in the church is the book of Titus.

And if you're joining us for the first time this morning, while you're turning there, we're coming to the end of a series we started back in January on the book of Titus, called the "How to Plant a Church" series because that's what this book is about. It tells us how to plant a church, how to get it started and off the ground, which has been very useful to us because we're a church plant here at Grace Fellowship. As many of you know, we are just getting started here as a church. So, this has been a wonderful resource for us.

And today, we come to the last sermon in the series, which is always sad for me. Personally, I come to the end of a book, I feel like it's like saying goodbye to a long lost friend. Never know when I'll see him again. But this is our final message in the book of Titus.

And just to walk you through what we've looked at so far in the book, we've learned that the church is to be led by elders. If you look in Titus 1:5, it tells us there that the church is to be led by elders. Paul says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you."

Paul tells Titus at the start of the book, "This is why I left you in Crete. This is why you stayed on the island, to do two things: to set in order what remains and to appoint elders." The idea as you read through the letter is that you're to appoint elders according to the qualifications in verses 5 through 9. You can read those qualifications for an elder there. That's one of the highlights, a key theme of this book. Titus is to appoint men who meet the qualifications laid out in this passage. Which is what we've tried to do here as a church very recently. We've tried to appoint men who meet these qualifications.

We've also learned in the book of Titus that the church is to be built on sound doctrine. It's another lesson we read here. If you look in chapter 2:1, Paul says there, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." The word "sound" there means "healthy or wholesome," which means that Titus was to teach things that are healthy for the church, wholesome for the life of the church. He wasn't supposed to teach his own preferences. He shouldn't go into creed and tell them how he would want to run things, his own hobby horses. He was supposed to teach them the Word of God.

And as you come to the end of the book, one more lesson we learn is that his teaching should bear fruit in the lives of the church. One more lesson in the book of Titus. If you look in chapter 2:11 after saying, "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men," Paul ends the book this way in chapter 3:14 by saying, "This is what grace should produce." In chapter 3:14 one of the last verses, he said, "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet

pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.” That's how the book of Titus ends. That's the closing argument in the book. The grace of God should produce fruit in the church's life. We should all be impacted by grace. If you talk about fruit independently of grace, it becomes legalism, it becomes works. But Paul doesn't do that. He says, “You should teach them the grace of God, Titus, and as you teach them that, it produces fruit, good works. It makes a difference in their lives.”

I don't think there's anything more common today than Christians who haven't changed. Would you agree with that? We live in the Bible belt here. You guys know all kinds of Christians like that. They've not been impacted by grace. Just look up the divorce statistics between Christians and non-Christians in Canada and what do you see? They're often the same. Why? Well, because they haven't changed. Not in that area. Grace has not made an impact in their lives. Look up the statistics for certain sins like pornography, some sexual sin between Christians and non-Christians. And what do you see? You see the same thing. In 2014, Christianity Today ran an article which said that pornography usage in the Bible belt in the United States is higher than it is in almost any other part of the country. Isn't that terrible? That's horrible. Why is that? Because Christians haven't changed. They're not bearing any fruit. Charles Ryrie says,

Christians may not always bear the same amount of fruit because we have seasons of drought and dryness. And our fruit may not be evident for all to see. Even if I know a person a long time and have regular contact with them, I might not be able to see all the fruit in his life. But with that said, it needs to be remembered (Ryrie says) that a Christian will produce fruit. It's inevitable. It cannot be stopped. On some level, every Christian will demonstrate what he believes with the behavior in his life.

Just to walk you through this a little bit, in the Bible, fruit was synonymous with life. To be fruitful meant you were alive. You were healthy, you were doing well. And to not bear fruit meant that you were not alive. You were dead or dying or sick. Israel was an agricultural area. I think I looked it up to the other day - was it 25% or more of the country is farmland. It's a land of farmers, which means they knew about fruit. This was something they had regular contact with, and they wrote about it a lot.

So, if you go through the Bible, you see several types of fruits mentioned. You see olives and figs and dates. You read about almonds and apples and permanganates. Am I saying that right? I hate that word. What? Pomegranates - see, that's the Canadian pronunciation. The American pronunciation is ... I wrote it down. You guys can see my notes later. I won't pronounce it again. Pomegranates, alright, I got it. You read about wheat, which is another type of fruit. It's a crop. You read about barley in the Bible because these were things that Jews were familiar with, and so they wrote about it a lot. You read about fruit all the time.

So, for instance, in Galatians 5, you read about the fruit of the spirit. It says, “For the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Paul says that is a fruit of the Spirit. That is evidence of a changed life. You can tell someone is a Christian if they are all of those things. In John 15:8, Jesus says, “My Father is glorified in this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” Jesus says, the way to prove you're a disciple is you bear fruit, much fruit, a lot of it, for all to see. In Luke 6:43-44, the Lord said, “No

good tree produces bad fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit for each tree is known by its fruit.” And we could go on and on. Colossians 1:10 says, “You should walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and bear fruit in every good work.” But you read that type of thing over and over again in the Bible. Christians bear fruit, it’s what we do. We show what we believe with the behaviour that comes out of our lives. I mean, you guys know what this is like. If someone says they’re a Christian and they’re living in sin, whatever sin it is, what do you first think? You think, “No, you’re not, or you don’t mean it.” Christians are to bear fruit.

The story is told of the time an old man who came to Christ after many years of sin, after a lifetime of theft and deceit, and as soon as he did, the next day, he went into a watchmaker’s store and he said, “Here’s a watch I stole from you 10 years ago. I wanted to bring it back.” And the watchmaker said, “Well, thanks, but why now? Why after 10 years?” And the old man said, “Well, the answer is because I became a Christian last night, and the Bible says, you’re supposed to repent of your sins. I would’ve brought it back last night, but your store was closed.” That’s the idea here. When you get saved, you repent. When you come to Christ, you change, you bring the watch back because of the grace of God. Which is what you see here in the book of Titus. This is how Paul ends this letter.

I’ve told you before that the outline for the book of Titus is pretty simple. It’s about leadership and then living. That’s the outline for the book of Titus. That’s what it’s all about. Chapter 1 talks about the kind of leaders you want in the church; the kind of elders you want to see, which we just talked about. And then chapters 2 through 3 talk about living, the way you’re supposed to live the Christian life. And as he talks about living, Paul does something interesting because he goes back and forth between life and doctrine, life and doctrine. He gives you a little bit of truth, then he applies it to your life.

And the doctrine he goes back to over and over again is the grace of God. And at the end here, he applies the grace of God by saying that it will bear fruit. If you were saved by the grace of God, then something miraculous will happen to you, something supernatural, something unexplained. There will be a change inside of you and it will cause you to bear fruit, which is what our passage is about this morning.

So, if you’re taking notes in Titus 3:12 through 15, this is our final sermon in the book. Paul gives us three fruits you will bear if you’re trusting in the grace of God; three fruits you will bear if you’re trusting in the grace of God. That’s our passage for today. Or we might say three ways to display the grace of God with your fruit because that’s what this is about. This is about putting God’s grace on display.

If you get a chance, maybe later on today, if you haven’t done it already, I would encourage you to read Titus 2 and 3, and see how much Paul says about the grace of God. Because the theme of the book is that God has saved you in his mercy. It’s not about your works, but if He has saved you in mercy, you will work. This is important. Some of you may be wondering, “Am I saved this morning?” That’s a common question I get from people. “Have I trusted in the grace of God? I think I have, but I’m not sure. I keep falling into sin, I keep messing up. How do I know?” Paul says, “This is how you know - you look at your fruit. You look at the things that come out of your life.” Maybe some of you this morning are wondering about your family members and

friends, and you're asking yourself, "Are they saved? My loved ones, have they trusted in the grace of God?" Paul says, "This is how you know the answer is the same." Martin Luther said, "As sparks fly off a fire so works fly off a Christian." They just come off of us, can't help it. They're evident for all to see. And to show you this as he closes out the book, Paul gives us three fruits you will bear if you're trusting in God's grace.

And the first one is the fruit of hospitality. This is not a comprehensive list, this is not the fruit of the Spirit. He's not going into everything here. But he gives you a few fruits, and the first one is the fruit of hospitality. Which means a love for strangers or a love for guests. That's a simple definition of hospitality. It's a love of guests. Was it Benjamin Franklin who said, "Fish and visitors stink after three days?" That's not the tone here. Hospitality is when you love having guests in your home. It's been called the art of making people feel welcome. And Paul says, "This is a fruit you will have if you're in Christ." And if you read in verses 12 through 13, he says, "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them."

If you read through the book of Titus, you come to verse 12 and it sounds a little strange. It's one of those verses or one of those passages that you just raise an eyebrow at because you wonder what does this have to do with the rest of the book. But the answer is simple. In the first century, it was customary for people to end a letter with greetings, personal greetings. We do the same in some of our letters today. But because letter writing was so expensive back then, parchment was very expensive, ink was very expensive - they would often put personal greetings in a business letter, which is what you see here. Paul hasn't said much about himself in the letter. In verses 1 through 4 of chapter 1, he mentions himself a little bit. And here at the end he talks about himself again to mention some friends of his. And he says in verse 12, "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis."

The idea here is that Paul did not intend to leave Titus on the island of Crete. He was sending him some replacements. Church history says that Titus died on the island. He would later come back and serve there. But here he is leaving. And the two guys here, just quickly, Artemas - we don't know much about him. This is the only time his name appears in the Bible. The other guy is Tychicus who was a pretty famous man. He took the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians. He was the letter bearer for those churches. Second Timothy 4:12 says, this guy would later replace Timothy in Ephesus. And once they arrive, Paul tells Titus to come to Nicopolis. That's an area, a city on the island of Greece. And here's where you see the first fruit in verse 13. He says (and hang in there with the details), "Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them."

Those are two other new people. Zenas the lawyer, that's another word for "scribe". This was a Jew, an expert in the law of Moses who was converted to Christ. That was his role. And the other guy is Apollos who led the church in Corinth. A pretty famous guy. Some say they might've been the bearers of the letter because they were passing through. And Paul's point here is that the church should show hospitality to them. If you notice, he says, "Diligently help them so that nothing is lacking for them."

Just a little background on that. That's kind of interesting because the Cretans were not known for being very helpful people. It's not a very friendly place. One contemporary of theirs named Polybius said, "The Cretans on account of their innate greed live in a constant state of quarrel with each other." Polybius said they fought all the time, they didn't get along, and so you can just imagine what it would have been like to be a stranger walking into the island of Crete. You would want an armed bodyguard or something. And yet Paul tells these Cretans to be hospitable and welcome them as guests.

He says, "Be diligent about it" in verse 13. "Show great effort in the way you welcome them in. Because (and this is the theme of this whole book)...You should do this because the grace of God has appeared to you." That's the idea here. "You should be hospitable to them (he's telling the Cretans) because God has been hospitable to you. God has welcomed you in, God has brought you in as a stranger, as an alien, and now you should have the same tone towards these people." It says, "So that nothing is lacking for them." That's the extent of the hospitality. That's how far it should go.

Travel was very expensive in the ancient world and it was dangerous. I've heard that even up until the 1800s when missionary teams would go out, if you had a dozen missionaries, you wouldn't put them on the same ship because if the ship went down, you didn't want to lose the whole mission team. So, you would divide the mission team up on three or four ships so that maybe if a ship or two went down, the other ones would make it. That was how travel was in the ancient world. You lacked all kinds of things. You lacked food, you lacked clothing, you lacked protection, constant danger of being robbed. Most of the hotels were in bars or brothels, especially in a place like Crete. So, these people would have been very needy, they would've been in trouble, and Paul says, "I know you guys will take care of them because you have experienced His grace."

And just to flesh this out a little bit so you can see what he's saying (the connection between grace and hospitality), grace puts us all on the same playing field, doesn't it? Do you guys get that? Does that make sense? It gives us all the same standing before God. So Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, Cretans and Romans, everybody's all the same because we're all saved the same way. We don't earn it, we don't work for it. God doesn't give salvation to the smartest of us or the best of us. To say it another way, grace takes us off our social ladder. It doesn't take us down on it. It takes us off of it. When we get saved, we don't say, "I'm going to hang out with those lowly people over there." We say, "I am those lowly people over there," Amen? "I'm just as lowly as they are. There's no one lower than me. I don't stoop down to hang out with him. I'm already stooped." And as a result, I can be hospitable to them. As a result, I can invite them into my home. Because of what God has done for me, there's no one too wicked for me to hang out with."

You guys know what this is like because you do a great job of this. You're a very hospitable church. Every time people come visit, they talk about how welcoming you are. You love to invite people in. Some of you are probably having guests over today in your home. And when you do that, you don't make them take a background check first. You don't make them take a blood sample at the door and have them give you their T4 form, because we're all on the same standing before God. You get that, we're equals.

I remember when I was in Los Angeles, we had a young man saved through our ministry who was very successful in the business world. He was rich and well off. He drove a fancy car, he wore nice clothes. And my pastor told me when he joined our Bible study he said, "Jeremy, it is a miracle of God that a man like that would follow you and invite you into his home." That's because I didn't have nice clothes. I had nice tee shirts, I thought. But it's all of grace. We're all bankrupt at the cross. Amen? We're all dead broke there. It doesn't matter how much money you have in the world, you don't have any money in heaven. God has it all. It doesn't matter how much glory you have on earth or importance, God has all of that too. And therefore, you can invite people into your home.

A man, like Zenas, the scribe, a Jewish scribe, an expert in the law of Moses would not be caught dead in a place like Crete, if he didn't have to be. He would never go there. It's unclean. Same with a guy like Apollos, as many gifts and abilities he had. But he went there to show them the grace of God.

The name Rosaria Butterfield may not be familiar to you, but Rosaria Butterfield was an English professor at Syracuse University in New York City before being radically converted to Christ, before her life was turned upside down. And she said the one thing that did it more than anything else was the ministry of hospitality. The one thing that changed her life more than anything else were the Christians who invited her into their home. She said, "I'd never seen anything like it before, it blew me away." She was living in sin. She was living a homosexual lifestyle, a life without God, until a group of Christians befriended her and took her into their home and showed her His grace. That's what Paul is asking these men to do at the end of this book. In one of her books Rosaria Butterfield said, "When Jesus walked the earth, He was not afraid to touch people. He drew them in close. He met them empty, but He left them full, and now He expects us to do the same through the ministry of hospitality."

Which leads us to the next point that Paul makes here. The next fruit you're going to bear if you're trusting in His grace. The first one is hospitality, the art of making people feel welcome into your home. This doesn't mean that when someone comes over, you have prime rib and lobster. If you are, give me a call. I'm available most days of the week for that. It just means you care about them and you love them. If you're saved, if you've experienced His grace, you will reach out and touch people and love them that way. Which brings us to a second fruit you're going to bear if you're trusting in His grace. And this one just builds off of the other one. A second way to display His grace is with the fruit of compassion. You display God's grace with the fruit of hospitality, but that leads naturally to the second one, which is the fruit of compassion. Which goes hand in hand with hospitality. You can't be hospitable if you're not compassionate to people. You can't make them feel welcome if you don't care about them.

The word "compassion" you could define it a lot of ways. One way is that it means to look beyond your needs to the needs of others. That's the idea of compassion. You look past yourself to them to help them. And if you read in these verses, this is what Paul is encouraging these people to do. He says in verse 12,

12 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. 13 Diligently help Zenas the

lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. 14 Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

Just a few thoughts on this, but this idea of good deeds is on Paul's mind as he's wrapping up this letter. If you look back in verse 8, Paul mentions good deeds there. He says, "This is a trustworthy statement, and concerning these things, I want you to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds." You see that phrase repeated there because Paul says, "This is the fruit of God's grace, is that you engage in good deeds and specifically the fruit of compassion." He doesn't mention compassion by name in verse 14. But to be compassionate is to meet people's needs, which is what he talks about here. It's to have pity or sympathy towards others. It says here "in pressing need" or some of your translations say "urgent need" because like I told you before, travel was very dangerous in the ancient world. Paul might have feared for his friends' lives.

And to tell you how scary this was, if you set on a journey, if it took you a month to get there, it might take several months after that to get a letter back to you saying that you arrived. And the whole time you're wondering, "Are my friends alive? Are they okay?" And Paul says, "I trust you Cretans to help them out with their pressing needs."

He also says, if you notice in verse 14, "Our people must learn to do this." That means if compassion does not come naturally to you, you need to learn how to do this. Some of you guys are like me, you don't notice a pressing need until like the person's in the hospital or something. You're kind of blind to it. You're kind of in your own world at times. Paul says, "But you can learn how to do this. You can learn how to be sympathetic towards others." The word "learn" here, it's in the present tense in Greek, which means it's an ongoing thing. So, they should learn and keep learning compassion, is the idea. They should study this and keep studying it so that they will not be unfruitful.

Let me say this other one here. The Scottish evangelist, Henry Drummond once said, "Have you ever noticed how much of Christ's life was spent doing compassionate and kind things?" You guys ever read that in the Gospels? Jesus walked the earth, He could have started a seminary, he could have started a mega church, He could have started his own publishing company. He was constantly doing compassionate things.

Statistics have been done on this and it's been determined that only 4% of Christians in North America regularly give to the church, 4%. And the average donation they give is \$17 per week. That is pathetic, isn't it? And about 37% of those who attend never give anything at all. And when you relate that to the topic of compassion, you can see that we are not a very compassionate people.

Harry A. Ironside tells a story of a Christian group who held a convention with a big sign over the door that said, "Jesus only" until the wind blew down a few letters and it said "Us only". They held a convention with the sign "Us only" on the door. "We four and no more," you guys have heard that before? And Paul's point here is that the Christian life is not about that. It's not about us only. You can't be focused on yourself. Grace needs to change you in this department.

Grace needs to change how selfish you are. If God has saved you by His grace, you need to be gracious to others, is the idea, and meet their needs.

You know, I was preparing for this sermon, I was thinking of some ways could do this. Some ways in which you can be compassionate towards others. And one of them is to give financially. It's not the only way, but Jesus said, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." So, giving is an indication of your treasure. That's one way to do it.

Another way is to give of your time to others, to show compassion that way. Get involved in ministry. You can do that by visiting the sick, visiting shut-ins. You can do it by getting involved in different activities here. You can do it in prayer. We have a prayer ministry every morning at nine o'clock. We meet upstairs in the hottest room in this building to sweat it out in prayer. You can get involved that way. But the whole idea is that you need to get involved to show compassion. Someone else can't do it for you. You have to do it yourself.

It's been said that if Jesus can rise from the dead, then surely you can rise from the bed. Amen? Write that down and take that home and meditate on that. I mean surely, you can go out and do something for the Lord. I think sometimes our problem is we get what's called "compassion fatigue". You see so many needs around you, you don't know where to start. Well, just start somewhere, is the idea.

When Paul says, "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds," he means all of us there, all of our people, every one of us should be compassionate. This is not just for the super Christians, this is not just for the leaders, this is not for those who have been in church for 50 years. This is for all of us. We're all to do this.

It's been said that everyone in this room is better than me at something. And some of you may not be comfortable coming up here and preaching a sermon, but I would rather eat your cooking than mine. And you can do that for someone. You can sit down and have a conversation with people. There's all kinds of things you can do, but you need to be serving others.

I read recently about a child who was acting in a Christmas play and he had one line in it. He was the innkeeper who was supposed to tell Joseph and Mary that there is no more room in the inn. That's all he had to do. Just one line, and that was it. And when it came time to say his line, he froze up and he blew it because he said, "I'm so sorry. There's no more room in the inn, but you can have mine." Friends, that's the attitude of a Christian. There may not be any room over here, but you can have my room. You can have my heart. My life is open to you. That's how grace changes you. Which leads to one more point Paul makes in this letter. One more fruit you will bear if you're trusting in the grace of God.

Just review these other ones. The first one is the fruit of hospitality. Paul says, "If you've trusted in God's grace, you will be hospitable. You'll invite people into your home, make them feel welcomed there." Second, he says, "You will be compassionate," going hand in hand with the idea of hospitality. "You will take care of people's needs, you will be compassionate." It leads to one more fruit you'll bear as well, if you're trusting in the grace of God. This is the last one on the list. And that is the fruit of love. Paul says, "If you trust in His grace, you will be hospitable,

you will be compassionate ultimately because you will love people.” That’s where all of this comes from. It comes from the fruit of love.

Jesus said, “By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” He didn’t say, “All men will know you’re my disciples if you fight a lot. You need to love.” And this is how he closes the book. In verse 15, Paul says, “All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.”

If you read that, you’ll see that the word “love” only appears once in here, but the word “greet” appears a couple of times. And that is the word *aspazomai* in Greek, which means “to draw to oneself”. And it was a synonym of the word “love” because people in the ancient near east were very affectionate in their greetings. You guys have heard about this. They were very loving when they met someone for the first time, because they wouldn’t just shake your hand or pat you on the back, they would hug you and kiss you. They would draw you in close, which is this word, and they would plant a wet one on both cheeks. Now, personally, I prefer a handshake because it’s safe and we’re on good, clear terms there. But they wanted to draw you in to say, “You’re part of our family. You’re one of us. I just meet you for the first time, don’t know who you are, but what’s mine is yours, what’s yours is mine.” In fact, verse 15 could be translated this way, “All who are with me love you, and love those who love us in the faith.” Paul says, “I’m sending my friends to you, I’m sending these men that are actually treasures to the church. These are men who are doing a great work of God in other places, and I’m simply asking you to love them as one of your own.”

Then he says, “Grace be with you all,” which is how Paul ends all of his letters. This was a common salutation of his. If you want to look over to the book of Philemon (which is right next to this one), and you look at the very last verse in Philemon. There, Paul says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” In other words, those were his final words to Philemon. It was all about grace to him as well. If you look back in Second Timothy, at the end of Second Timothy, the book before this, Paul says, “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.” That’s how he ends that book as well. Those were his final words to Timothy. Some believe those might’ve been the final words Paul ever said. And now he closes the book of Titus with, “Grace be with you all.”

I’ve told you several times, this is what this book is about. This is the point of it all. This is how you plant a church, this is how you become a Christian. This is how you bear good fruit, it’s all of grace. Grace does it all. You don’t earn it, you don’t deserve it. You don’t work your way up to heaven. You don’t become hospitable and compassionate and loving just by your own self-discipline. This is all of grace. God does it all through you.

Which is important to remember because some of you read a passage like this or you read other things in this letter, and you say, “I can’t do this. There’s no way, I’m terrible at hospitality. My house is a wreck, always. I’m terrible at loving people, at being compassionate. I’m too lazy, I’m too selfish. What do I do?” Well, the answer is right here, you trust in His grace, you trust in His mercy. You ask Him to help you. And this is not about you, this is about Him. This is not about what you have done, this is about what He has done, and it is about you resting in that. Others of you might say, “Well, I do okay in those areas. I’m pretty hospitable and compassionate, but I

sinned a lot this week. I mean, I failed at home, I was a terrible dad, I was a terrible mom. I yelled at my kids." Some of you may say, "Well, I blew it at work. I had 20 opportunities to evangelize. I didn't do any of them. My thought life was a wreck, prayer life was a wreck. How do I fix that?" The answer's the same; you trust in His grace. This is all about grace. "Grace be with you all," which means all of you can experience it. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, you can all take this in.

This sermon may be about fruit, but let me remind you where the fruit comes from - it comes from grace. This may be about works and showing that you're a Christian, but let me remind you where that proof comes from - it comes from this right here, it comes from God. "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men." I can think of no better way to end the book of Titus.

As many of you know, I often end my sermon with an illustration, an object lesson, and I wanted to do that here. I brought a tennis ball with me this morning. I used to hit these things around all the time. I love the way they smell when they come out of the can, but this one probably doesn't smell too good anymore. It's been in the garage for a while. But if I put this ball on my Bible and kept my Bible still, it wouldn't go anywhere. But if I don't move it, if I'm able to not move it, it won't go anywhere. But if I do move it an inch, it falls off. Every time, no matter what I do, if I move the Bible, if I move the foundation, the ball comes off. But if I put my hand on the Bible, no matter what I do to the bottom; shake it, move it around, pop it up in the air, it's not going to fall. It's going to stay put. And it's the same way with the grace of God. If the grace of God has you in its grip, then no matter what's going on under you, you won't fall. No matter what life throws your way, no matter how terrible it is, no matter how much you fail, you're going to stay put in the arms of God.

And the question you have to answer this morning is, are you resting in His grace today? Are you trusting in His mercy? That's how you don't fall. That's how you bear all this fruit. You sit in His wonderful grip in your life. If you haven't done that today, I would encourage you to do so. If you haven't trusted in His grace, there's no better time than right now. Let me pray for you that you would if you haven't.

Father, we thank you Lord for Your grace. We thank you for Your mercy, for what Christ has done on behalf of sinners like us. There's not a man or woman or child in this room who doesn't need salvation. None of us can say we have not sinned. We've all fallen short, and yet Your grace and Your kindness has extended to all of us.

Lord, I pray if there's any here this morning who are not resting in that, that they would do so now. If there's conviction of sin, if they're saying, "I've failed, I've messed up," they would know that Your arms are open wide for anyone, any prodigal that wants to come home. I pray they would do that now.

For those who are saved, we just rejoice and thank you Lord, for how kind you have been to us. You have been forgiving and patient and merciful beyond what we could believe. We are those lowly people out there. We are the ones who were stooped down low, and yet You have saved us. Thank you, Father, for the salvation we have in Christ.

Would You go with us now, Lord, as we go from this place, would You be glorified and honoured, and may Christ be exalted in the lives of this church. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.