

(Biographies) John Newton

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon 'John Newton' explores the vision for pastors to be strong and durable like redwood trees, and tender and fragrant like a field of clover, using John Newton's life as an example.

Duration: 1:34:52

Scripture: Psalm 19:1, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 27:46, Romans 1:16, Ephesians 4:15, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, James 1:19

Topics: "The Cross", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his experience of witnessing an eclipse of the moon and relates it to the darkness that Jesus experienced on the cross. He emphasizes the importance of illustrating truth in concrete language and not abstracting or generalizing, as this can lead to boredom and spiritual death. The preacher then discusses the challenge of bringing light into people's darkness, using the analogy of a two-watt light bulb in a dark room. He urges the congregation to examine whether they are more inclined towards tenderness or toughness and encourages them to focus on obedience in the midst of life's complexities.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org John Newton was born July 24, 1725 in London. 1725, so picture yourself now, how long ago that was, to a godly mother and an irreligious, seafaring father.

She died when he was six. Left mainly to himself, he became a debauched sailor. A miserable outcast on the west coast of Africa for a couple of years.

A slave-trading sea captain until an epileptic seizure ended his sea-going career. A well-paid surveyor of tides in Liverpool. A devoted and loved pastor of two congregations in Olney and London for a total of 43 years.

A devoted husband to Mary for 40 years until she died in 1790. And a personal friend to William Wilberforce, Charles Simeon, Henry Martin, William Carey, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and others. And last of all, the writer of the most famous hymn in the English language, *Amazing Grace*, which you heard and sang exactly as he wrote it, not with that wonderful last verse which we love and he did not write.

And he died in 1807 at 82. So why am I interested in this man? What's my agenda before you this morning? I'm interested in him because of my great desire to see Christian pastors be as strong and durable as redwood trees and as tender and fragrant as a field of clover. I want to see you become rugged in the defense and confirmation of the truth and relentlessly humble and patient and merciful in dealing with people.

Ever since I came to Bethlehem in 1980, I've had this vision of what I want to be and what I want to be the means of others becoming because in the early 1980s, I read Matthew and Mark in my Greek Testament, writing in the margin T.E. and T.O. beside every tender thing Jesus said or did and every tough thing Jesus said or did. And when I got done, the mixture was amazing. No man ever spoke.

No man ever lived like this man spoke and lived. There's nobody like Jesus pastoring today. And I want to be more like that and I want you to be more like that.

And therefore, as I look at pastors in history and around and I find one who got something that we need, then I bank on it for a while. And that's what I've been doing since July with Newton. And I know that this drunk peasant who can't stay on the donkey is where we all are.

Everybody in this room is falling off the horse on one side or the other on this matter of toughness and tenderness. And so it's risky business in this room to say what I'm going to say. There are a lot of us who are wimping out on truth when we ought to be lion hearted.

And there are a lot who are wrangling with anger when we ought to be weeping. And so I know I'm going to say some things that are not what some of you should hear. Some of you need a good, tender kick in the pants to be more courageous with truth.

And some of you need to realize that courage is not what William Cooper, Newton's good friend, called a furious and abusive zeal. Oh, how rare are the pastors who speak with a tender heart and have theological backbones of steel. Oh, how rare it is.

And it ought not to be rare. And I don't want it to be rare. Theological truth, biblical backbones of steel.

And as soft as clover. So that children come to you. And broken people come to you.

And homosexuals come to you. That ought not to be rare. I dream of such pastors.

I want to become one someday. A pastor whose might in the truth is matched by his meekness. Whose theological acumen is matched by his manifest contrition.

Whose heights of intellect are matched by his depths of humility. And yes, the other way around. For those of you who think you should measure it the other direction.

Not that direction. Yes, the other way around too. A pastor whose relational warmth is matched by his rigor of study.

And whose bent towards mercy is matched by his vigilance of biblical discernment. And a pastor whose sense of humor is exceeded by the seriousness of his calling. A dream of great defenders of true doctrine.

Mainly known for their delight in God. Great defenders of true doctrine. Who are mainly known for their delight in God.

And their bringing of delight in God to the people of God. Who enter into controversy when necessary. Not because they love ideas and arguments.

But because they love God and the bride of Christ. There is a great model for this in Acts 15. I just want to put the biblical model before you before I put Newton before you.

I saw this just this week in reading through the book of Acts in my trek through the Bible. With the discipleship journal plan. I don't know if you ever noticed this before.

But in Acts 15, of course, you know what happens. A false doctrine arises in Antioch. Quote.

Unless you are circumcised, you cannot be saved. Verse 1. Now Paul and Barnabas weigh in with Luke. Calling it, not a little dissension and debate.

Staseos kaid zeteseos uc oligos. That's some litotities or whatever they call those things. That understatement of not a little debate and dissension.

Means it was big and it was tough. That's what it means. And so we got to get this settled.

Where do we get it settled? Get it settled in Jerusalem. So let's send the debaters. These high powered people.

Paul and Barnabas down to Jerusalem. Get it worked out. Bring us back the decision.

Now here's what happens on the way to Jerusalem. I read it to you. And as they were going.

They were. Among the churches. Describing in detail.

The conversion of the Gentiles. And we're bringing great joy. To all the brethren.

On their way. To the debate. Oh, how many people.

There are today. Who are telling us. That cannot be.

You can't believe in going to a controversial thing. In order to fend for the truth of God. And bring joy to the people of God.

Controversy kills joy. Controversy kills churches. And here you have the debaters.

The great defenders. On their way to the great debate. Spreading joy everywhere.

So thrilled. With the mercy of God. In the gospel.

They'll die to defend it. And they can't help but explode with it. In the churches.

So that the ordinary lay people. Are happy that they came. Don't tell me that can't be.

It can be. It must be. We will be blown all over the place.

And our people will perish. If we can't do this. If we can't put this together.

It can't be done. It must be done. And there are others.

Besides those who say. You can't have both joy and controversy. There are others.

Who are on their way to the controversy. And feel no joy. And spread no joy.

In the preciousness of our salvation. And one of the aims of this conference now for 14 years. Is to say.

Simply over and over and over again. It is possible. And it is necessary.

To bring these two together. John Newton. I want to let John Newton.

Be my excuse to say it again. To say it again. Newton would be the first to remind us that he has feet of clay.

And so you hardly need reminding. He had his strengths and he had his weaknesses. In fact some of his strengths were his weaknesses.

And we'll see that and that will be instructive. Our theme is the tough roots of John Newton's habitual tenderness. His great strength.

Was his fulfillment of Ephesians 4.15. He spoke the truth in love. He made that the inaugural text. In his installation at St. Mary's Woolnoth in London.

In 1779. His last pastor. 16 years in Olney.

27 years in London. And he began it with that text. It's a great sermon to read in volume 4 or 5. I'm not sure which it is.

Now as you listen to me unpack this. My caution is that you listen and ask. Which side of the donkey are you falling off on? Do not listen.

Saying I wish the pastor across town were here for this. Okay. Just forget the other pastors in the room for right now.

Which side are you falling off on? There are tender ones of you. And there are tough ones of you. We're all wired one way or the other.

There are no balanced people in this room. And so as you crawl up on the donkey. Figure out how to stay there.

Probably stop drinking would be one way. I want it to be personal. I want you to make some steps.

I want you to advance. I want to advance. I'm doing this for me.

You happen to be here to listen. I would have done this whether you were here or not. I read biography for me.

I want to change. I love that term change agent. My biggest frustration in ministry is what to do with people who don't want to change.

To me, life is change. Life is quest for change. That's all life is is a quest for change.

If you're satisfied, what's the point of living? I mean. I don't understand people who have settled in. I just don't get it.

So I'm on a quest here. And I hope you are. If you didn't come here on a quest to become more tougher, more tender or more balanced or more something.

I can't even compute with such a being. Now. Newton's life.

I have nine pages and I'm going to try to collapse it into about one. Because I want to get to the substance of the issue. And so if I walk you through his life, that'll consume all the time we have.

And I don't want to do that. So let me be real brief on his life. You can read his life in the books and you can read the nine pages in here on his life.

His mother was a devout congregationalist and taught her son the whole Westminster catechism before he was six years old. And then she died and left him to a second, a stepmother who was religious and a father who was irreligious and left him to himself. And he became a real wrench as he calls himself in amazing grace.

Went to school two years out of his entire life and never had any theological education whatsoever. Zero ages, 11 to 18, sailed with his father, five voyages among the horrible conditions, as you can imagine, morally on the ships. Age 18 to 20, a Navy midshipman.

He had been arrested and conscripted and forced into the Navy. And he was an officer until he got so angry. He deserted.

They caught him. They whipped him, stripped him of his officer's rank and put him in a low level. Finally, they get so fed up with this guy, they put him off the ship.

And for two years he was isolated on the west coast of Africa, virtually a slave. Worse than the black slaves, which later he was to haul around on the boats to his everlasting shame thereafter. But he was a slave for two years.

And through a remarkable providence, smoke going up and a boat stopped and happened to be the boat on which there was a letter from his father. It's just an amazing thing. One providence after the other in this man's life on this boat, which he got on heading home indirectly to about 11 months to do it because they went to the West Indies first.

March 21, 1748. Mark that day. He marked it every day with fasting and prayer for the next 59 years.

Till he died. And it was the day of the storm at sea. And he said, I endeavor to observe the return of this day with humiliation, prayer and praise.

He said that in 1805, two years before he died and 57 years after it happened. The storm was horrific. The boat was sinking.

I could go into a lot of very interesting detail. He writes it all in his authentic narrative, which you can read in the memoirs. And God gets a hold of him and wakes him up from his blaspheming life.

But remarkably, I think most of the stories that are told don't get it right. He did not view this as his conversion. He said, though he was stunned, swearing dropped out of his mouth.

He read the Bible for two weeks till they landed in Ireland. He his life changed dramatically. He became very serious about religious things.

He said, I was greatly deficient in many respects. I acknowledge the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was passed, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. There's enough to inspire a book called Future Grace in that sense.

Let me say it again. I acknowledge the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was passed, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. I cannot consider myself to have been a believer.

Wow. That wipes out half the people in our churches till a considerable time afterwards, probably six years. For six years after this time, he said, I had no Christian friend or faithful minister to advise me.

All those people he befriended later, they didn't come on the scene yet in his life. He becomes the captain of a slave trading vessel for about six years, which later he wrote. Read this if you wonder where he stood on that issue.

Thoughts upon the African slave trade, which at the end he called a commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive as the African slave trade. And he joined hands with William Wilberforce to end it. And it did end.

So he looks back with great remorse upon that horrific season of his life morally, even though many people say he was a Christian during that time and he did not see it that way. He was still very much in the in the dark. He married Mary.

He loved her so passionately. It's an amazing love story that it would be wonderful to go into, but I won't go into it. The memory of her, which was never out of his mind for all those years while he was a teenager from 16 to 23, at least he thought of her every every hour.

And that memory held him back from many things. Married 1750, same year his father died, drowning in the Hudson Bay. I'd love to talk about his relationship with his father.

It was it was not good. He said, I have reason to believe that my father loved me, though he seemed to make every effort not to show it. Then came the epileptic seizure in 1754, and he never sailed again.

Ten years, surveyor of tides and lay minister in Liverpool has began to study. He studied Greek. He studied Hebrew, learn them all on his own.

He began to read divinity. He began to meet people. He met George Whitfield.

He went to so many George Whitfield's meetings. They called him the little Whitfield. And Whitfield is where he took on the spirit, took on the theology.

Hindmarsh says by the early 1760s, Newton's theological formation was complete and there would be few significant realignments of his beliefs afterwards. He was a five point Calvinist, close quote. So that's where he is theologically inside.

Just same place Whitfield was. Became a pastor in only 16 years. London, 27 years.

Never had any children of his own. Can't find a word about that in any biography. It seems so strange that nobody would talk about that.

He adopted two of his nieces and they raised them. And one of those nieces cared for him for the long years after his wife had died. So here's my question now.

What did this man's tough tenderness look like or the tough roots? What were they of his habitual tenderness? So I'm going to shift off of a summary of his life on to the habitual tenderness. So we began with introduction. We looked at his life.

Point number three, Newton's habitual tenderness. I didn't make up the phrase. He used the phrase himself.

He was writing a letter on the effects of faith. And he wrote this. He, believer, believes and feels his own weakness and unworthiness and lives upon the grace and pardoning love of his Lord.

This gives him an habitual tenderness and gentleness of spirit. So what I want to do is give you some snapshots. Persons and patterns.

That's my outline. First some persons and then some patterns of tenderness. He was tender towards groups and he was tender towards individuals.

The groups I have in mind are first perishing lost people. Here's what he wrote. Whoever has tasted of the love of Christ and has known by his own experience the need and the worth of redemption is enabled, yea, he is constrained to love his fellow creatures.

He loves them at first sight. And if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel and a care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God and even while he warns them by his terrors. And the line in that quote that I strike under is he loves them at first sight.

It's one thing to get to know somebody and have your heart knit together through some endearing relationship. It's another thing to look at a person and at first sight to have your first response not be disgust or criticism or assessment but love. Don't you want to be that way? If you're sitting here and don't want to change in that direction you may be dismissed because you're not interested in what I'm about here.

I want to be that way. Another group is children. We've heard it already.

The signature of the tenderness of Jesus is suffer the little children to come to me. When he went to Olney Thursday afternoon, one of the first things he did was start children's meetings. Two hundred squirrely kids.

And he'd have one stand up and read a text. And then he would teach them from the text. Children.

Dissenters kids, Church of England kids. He said, sometimes 269. He said, I suppose I have 200 that will constantly attend.

Third group I have in mind is his two flocks. The Olney flock and the London St. Mary's flock. And oh how he tenderly loved these flocks.

They weren't big flocks. 170 people at the beginning in Olney didn't get more than twice that size in 16 years. You know, most of the famous Puritans ministered to little churches.

We read these guys, they feel like they're big names. They ministered to little churches all their lives. They just thought big thoughts about a great God.

And some of them wrote them down. Most of them died unheard of, unheralded. And they're just as great.

They just didn't happen to be passionate to write. Some did, some didn't. He said, the believer, he possessed, I mean, it was said of him, he possessed so much affection for his people and so much zeal for their best interests that the defect of his manner, he was not an effective preacher in terms of eloquence or demeanor, that the defect of his manner was of little consideration with his constant hearers.

They just knew themselves so cared for and loved by this man. And then there were individuals. So those are the three groups.

And now he touches tenderly individuals. And you can imagine who I'm going to mention first. And that is William Cooper.

I gave a whole message on Cooper and talked a little bit about Newton. And now I give a whole message on Newton and talk a little bit about Cooper. Cooper is the mentally ill, famous English poet who came to only precisely to be under the care and interest of John Newton.

And for 12 years, they lived together. Five months one time he was in the house and 14 months another time he lived in the house when he could scarcely function on his own. Cooper never married and lived in that parish.

One person, when they saw this, as well as other things in Newton's life, they said his house was an asylum for perplexed and afflicted people. Newton says of Cooper, For nearly 12 years, we were seldom separated for seven hours at a time when we were awake and at home. The first six passed daily admiring and aiming to imitate him.

During the second six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death. Now you got to feel what's behind this. On January, don't have the date, but January 1773, Cooper wrote in the evening, God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. The next morning, the darkness fell. He never went to church again till he died for six years.

And for six of those seven years, Newton cared for him. Newton was removed from Ole in 1779. He did Cooper's funeral in 1780.

So virtually from the time the last darkness fell until he did his funeral. Cooper lived in the shadow of the church and never went there. He pointed to it.

He said, you know, the comfort. He's saying this to Newton, who visits him regularly. You know, the comfort I have felt there.

How I have seen the glory of the Lord in his house. Until I go there, I will not go anywhere else. And he never went again.

It was as black as black could be. William Jay summed up Newton's response to this sickness like this. He had the tenderest disposition and always judiciously regarded his friend's depression and despondency as a physical effect.

For the removal of which he prayed, but never reasoned or argued with him concerning it. He did one other thing in the meantime to help his brother. He was thinking creatively.

He knew this man was a poet. And so in 1770, he resolved when Cooper's brother died and he was threatening to go into another one of those horrible dark seasons. He asked him to collaborate with him in writing hymns, one a week for the people of God.

He said, you write one and I'll write one to get him to write. And after 67 hymns, Cooper stopped. Newton kept going until there were 300 only hymns.

And today we have them. Amazing Grace is one. There is a fountain filled with blood.

Cooper. God moves in a mysterious way and others. But it worked for a while and then it stopped working and the poetic juices stopped flowing for hymns.

And you read horrible, horrible poems. Some of them like the outcasts that he wrote about his own darkness. So that's the first person I would mention.

The next one is Henry Martin, the missionary. Henry Martin had an awful experience one day by going to Richard Cecil and asking for his counsel. And Cecil had heard him preach and criticized him for, quote, the insipid and inanimate manner in the pulpit.

Now, this devastated Henry Martin. And so where did he go? He went to Newton and asked his help. And Newton heard three reasons why Martin should be discouraged.

And he blocked every one of them with hope. I'll skip the first and just mention the second two. This is a quote from Martin's journal on my saying that perhaps I should never live to see much fruit.

He answered, I should have the bird's eye view of it, which would be much better. And when I spoke of the opposition that I should be likely to meet with, he said he supposed Satan would not love me for what I was about to do. And then the old man prayed afterwards with sweet simplicity.

So you've got this Richard Cecil who just decimated the guy. And then you've got Newton who got him to Persia. Don't you want to be one of those people who get your your people to Persia? I'd like half my people to go to Persia.

And then there's Thomas Scott. Some of you have heard of Thomas Scott. He wrote the book Force of Truth.

Thomas Scott was a liberal, almost Sassanian, Newton said, parish minister, one parish over. Just a rotten guy. He didn't visit anybody when they were sick, didn't care for his people, preached liberal gibberish.

And heard Evangelical was in the local parish and just mocked his doctrine. And Newton through a long series of experiences of doing some pastoral care for dying people in Scott's own parish. And then meeting with him and refusing to be controversial and loving this guy.

And then writing him letters over a 10 month period. Broke him, changed him, won him, and he became the next Evangelical pastor at only. Triumphed over his liberalism, his Sassanianism, through his remarkable, theologically acute, but loving, tender demeanor.

So those are some examples of persons. Now let me shift over to patterns of tenderness in the life of Newton. I see a pattern of patience and perceptiveness.

Take those two words and give you a quote from where I'm getting those two words. Patient, he was a patient man and a perceptive man. He wrote this.

Apollos, talking about the man in Acts 19. Apollos met with two candid people. He's talking there about Aquila and Priscilla.

Apollos met with two candid people in the church. They neither ran away because he was legal, nor were carried away because he was eloquent. That's good.

You see what he's saying there? He's talking about the way he wants to be and the way he wants us to be. Don't run away from the error and ugliness in the heads, hearts, or bodies of the people you're meeting because it turns you off. And don't be swept away by all their power or beauty or whatever.

If the surface thing is repelling, don't be repelled. And if the surface thing is attractive, don't be attracted. Be patient with the first, be penetrating and perceptive with the second.

That's the liberty of the pastoral tenderness and toughness. You're going to be tender and patient with what repels. And you're going to be tough and through seeing with any kind of eloquence that might attract you for fleshly reasons.

So there was a patience and there was a perception in this man. And he wasn't overly impressed with anybody's gifts. And he wasn't driven away by their faults and their ugliness.

He said in another place, and this is really Puritan, vintage Puritan. Beware, my friend, of mistaking the ready exercise of gifts for the exercise of grace. The Puritans had a profound grasp of the difference between gifts and graces.

Gifts can be there without grace. Many of our people do not know that distinction exists. They think if a guy can really preach, he must be godly.

Not true. Not true. Now maybe the most illuminating way to get at this man's pattern of tenderness is to talk about the way he handled his Calvinism and his doctrine and controversies of his day and so on.

This is something I'm very, very interested in for us and for myself in particular. At this point, we're going to see the root bearing fruit in tenderness. The root of truth bearing fruit in tenderness called love.

I think his patience and his perception guided him between a doctrinaire intellectualism over here and a doctrinal indifference and carelessness over here. So let's talk for a minute about his patience, tenderness as it relates to his doctrine. Here's what he says first.

A lot of people ask me. I've been here 20 years now, so I'm starting to feel old and people are starting to treat me that way. And so I get asked a lot about what did you do at this point at this point at this point to get this, this, this.

He said, I have been 30 years forming my own views. And in the course of this time, some of my hills have sunk and some of my valleys have risen. But how unreasonable within me to expect all this should take place in another person and that in a course of a year or two.

I mean, some of you have been on your way theologically for 20, 30, 40 years, and you might have a thing or two figured out. And you start preaching and teaching as though this class should have fixed the atonement for these people. Predestination, we got this now.

You've been to my classes and it took you 20 years to settle in on where you are. So he's calling for us with tenderness and patience to realize that that's the case. It's not going to happen for our people any faster than it did for us and for some slower.

Yes, he had a passion for propagating the truth, the whole reformed vision of God, as he saw it. But he did not believe controversy served the purpose. Here's what he said.

I see the unprofitableness of controversy in the case of Job and his friends. For if God had not interposed, had they lived to this day, they would be still disputing. So he labored to avoid controversy and replace it with positive demonstrations of truth.

Here's what he said. My principal method of defeating heresy is by the establishing of truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tears.

Now, if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts should ponder at that point. We'll come back to that. See if that's adequate.

He knew, given his Calvinism, that the embrace of many glorious, precious truths required supernatural spiritual illumination from God on the inside. And therefore, he made his approach patient and unobtrusive. He's always said it.

I am a friend of peace and being deeply convinced that no one can profitably understand the great truths and doctrines of the gospel any farther than he is taught of God. I have not a wish to obtrude my own tenants upon others in a way of controversy. Yet I do not think myself bound to conceal them.

He said in the introduction of the old hymns, the views I have received of the doctrines of grace, code named Calvinism, are essential to my peace. I could not live comfortably a day or an hour without them. I likewise believe them to be friendly to holiness and to have a direct influence in producing and maintaining a gospel conversation.

And therefore, I must not be ashamed of them. But then he adds this. The cause of truth itself may be discredited by an improper management.

The scripture which teaches us what we are to say is equally explicit in the temper and spirit in which we are to speak. Though I had knowledge of all mysteries and the tongue of an angel to declare them, I should I could hope for little acceptance or usefulness unless I was to speak in love. Listen to this.

He says, amazing. Of all people who engage in controversy, we who are called Calvinists are most expressly bound by our own principles to exercise gentleness and moderation. The scriptural maxim, the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, is verified daily in our observation.

If our zeal is embittered by expressions of anger, invective or scorn, we may think we are doing service to the cause of truth when in reality we shall only bring it into discredit. He noticed one of the most Calvinistic texts in the New Testament calls for patient tenderness. You know which one I'm thinking about? One of the most Calvinistic texts in the New Testament.

It's 2 Timothy 22, 24 to 26. I'll read it. Notice what Paul brings together here.

Newton noticed it. Had a huge impact on him. The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kindly to everyone.

An apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. Then comes the Calvinistic part. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth and escape from the snare of the devil after having been captured by him to do his will.

I think David Powlison built his whole book on power encounters around that text. I think very powerful text. God grants repentance.

God brings people to know the truth. So what's our part? Not quarrelsome, kindly to everyone, apt teacher, forbearing, correcting in gentleness. There's the Calvinistic agenda.

Isn't it amazing what he puts together there? Newton saw it. Have you seen it? Do you do it? And given that Calvinistic truth that God's the one who grants repentance. God's the one who opens the eyes of the blind to see the truth.

Prayer became utterly crucial for him. Prayer is asking God to do what only God can do. Man can't do it.

God has to do it. You preach to people on Sunday. You're not going to change anybody in an evangelical, deep, heartfelt way.

God's got to do that. You have your role. It's described right there.

But God's going to do it. So if you don't obey that thing in prayer, you're missing one of the great means of grace that God has appointed for you. And this is what he said about prayer in controversy.

He writes to a friend. As to your opponent, I wish that before you set pen to paper against him. And during the whole time you are preparing your answer.

You may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing. This practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your heart to love and pity him. And such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write.

If he is a believer, in a little while you will meet him in heaven. He will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have on earth. Anticipate that period in your thoughts.

If he is an unconverted person, he's more properly the object of your compassion than your anger. Alas, he knows not what he does. But you know who has made you to differ.

Namely, not you. You didn't make you to differ. 1 Corinthians 4.7 God made you to differ.

So, how did he handle his Calvinism? William Jay was having tea with him one day. And brought this up. And Newton said this.

I am more a Calvinist than anything else. But I use my Calvinism in my writings and my preaching as I use this sugar. Taking the lump and putting it into his teacup and stirring it.

Added, I don't give it alone and whole, but mixed and diluted. Now, I stumbled over that word diluted until I thought for a minute. I don't think diluted there means watered down in our negative connotation of watered down.

You know what it means? Pervasive. In other words, I don't do what John Piper does and have a weekend seminar on tulip. That's crazy, he says.

So, we should come back at the Q&A time to see whether that's crazy. But he never did such a crazy thing as have a course on tulip. He stirred tulip into every sermon.

Every child talk. Every counseling. Every family devotion was the flavor of a supreme, glorious, sovereign God.

It made everything sweeter. And it's a good analogy because everybody likes what sugar does. Nobody except a few six-year-olds eat spoonful of sugar.

Or people trying to get rid of hiccups. I only tried that once. And it didn't work and so I thought it's not a good idea.

The point is, and it's a right point. Flavor everything you do with your most essential doctrinal radicals. Don't isolate them out.

Hammer with them or stick them in people's mouths like, you know, sticks of clover. Put clover in the teacup. Put the sugar in the teacup.

Serve up tea. Serve up the whole picture of life. Let people hear life coming from you.

And if you love the supremacy of God and it's flavoring everything you do. I was talking with some of the brothers about this just last night or this morning. Saying, how do you get a church so that the tide will rise? So that a milieu can be created in a church where people can embrace an explicit statement.

About election or predestination or irresistible grace or the perseverance of the saints. Things that Newton said, all my peace is here. And yet, if you give it unpervasive, unattached to life, it gags people.

How do you do that? And then the answer is, you create in a church over 5, 10, 15 years. An elevated view of the supremacy of God in all things. Is that banner up there? We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples.

Now, most people like that Armenian or Calvinist. But if you do that long enough and present pervasive in us, what you're doing is creating a milieu. In which doctrinal distinctives of Calvinism become more readily recognizable as precious and biblical.

If you start without lifting the tide of God-centeredness, the exaltation of Christ, the saturation of Scripture, real life enjoyment of a supreme and great and holy and wonderful God. Then, one fellow, I don't think he's here, sent me a tape years and years ago from another conference that I was at. He said, would you tell me what you think of this? This is my effort to help my people get on board with Reformed theology.

And I listened to it and I just died. Listen to this thing. I just thought, man, get your head together.

Because the first half of the sermon was just the history of the controversy. Who cares, right? These people don't give a rip about the history of the controversy. Their marriages are falling apart.

Their kids don't come home anymore. They're just, well, who cares about the 16th century, for goodness sakes. And then he went into something else.

And at the end, I think he mentioned a Bible verse. This is just not the way to do it. And here, I'm very aware as I'm talking right now, because one of you brothers are telling me about the situation you've just been through.

That John Piper is viewed, because of something I wrote on this, as being one of the most devious people in evangelicalism today. Because I teach pastors how to sneak Calvinism into churches. I went to the website where it lists those 13 suggestions of how to get people on board with Calvinism.

Oh, this is awful. I've got to fix this. And I read it and I thought, there's nothing devious about this at all.

It's on the web page. And it says right up front what I think about everything. And you say to people, this is what we want to do here.

We want to move in a certain direction. There's nothing to hide anywhere. I hope that's not too widespread.

Did he get it right? Did he get it right? Well, not everybody thinks so. The balance of how you handle controversy. Here's William Plummer's criticism.

The pious and amiable John Newton made it a rule never to attack error or warn his people against it. He said, the best method of defeating heresy is by establishing truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares.

Now, if I can fill it with wheat first, I shall defeat his attempts. Close quote. Still quoting Plummer now.

Surely the truth ought to be abundantly set forth. But this is not sufficient. The human mind is not like a bushel.

It may learn much truth and yet go after folly. The effect of Mr. Newton's practice was unhappy. He was hardly dead till many of his people went far astray.

Paul says, preach the word. Be instant, in season, out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

The more subtle, bitter and numerous the foes of the truth are, the more fearless and decided should its friends be. The life of truth is more important than the life of any man or theories. End quote from Plummer.

Plummer didn't think Newton got it right. Bruce Hinmarsh, who wrote this first biography I held up, he also thinks there were weakness in the evangelical revival and awakening of which Newton was a very central and key part. And this was his quote.

While it is no disgrace that Newton was more a pastor than a theologian, it is one of the most serious indictments of the English evangelical revival that it produced so few theologians of stature. In other words, if our zeal for peace, conciliation, heartfelt affection for God and for people creates a milieu in which rigorous, critical thinking and theology will not flourish, we may hurt the cause of Christ in generations to come while seeming to make the cause go better now. Oh, I wish I knew better how to avoid that.

But you need to at least pose that question. In your denomination, in your church, in a little cluster of pastoral friends, is the music, is the demeanor of the pastor, is the ethos of the people shaping itself in such a way as to be inhospitable to rigorous, critical, intellectual theology? If so, it is possible and perhaps probable that the milieu is going to hurt the church in 50 years. Very few people are asking that question today.

Has something to do with our worship services and the tone of them? Has something to do with the very spirit and demeanor of the pastoral life? Has something to do with the raw, raw slapstick of so much evangelicalism? Has a lot to do with the charismatic dimension of things? You see, if your mind doesn't work in such a way that you believe critical, careful, rigorous, intellectual theology that undertakes to pull all of the Bible together, solve the problems in it, interact with the big cultural movements outside and write significant works that can make an impact on the culture and be there for the young people coming up through the colleges and the seminaries. If you don't believe that, important, you don't even care about this question. You just want a person saved next Sunday or to have a good feeling after the worship service.

It's bigger, it's bigger. You ask longer questions about what's coming of our churches and the whole atmosphere of evangelicalism in our day. Well, is he guilty as charged? I don't think so.

I don't think so. Yes, John Wesley wrote him. You appear to be designed by divine providence for a healer of breaches, a reconciler of honest but prejudiced men and a uniter happy work of the children of God.

But in 1762, they broke. Not over predestination, but over perfectionism and the Pelagian things Newton saw in it. He had a backbone.

It's true that Richard Cecil criticizes his own hero who writes the memoir, quote, that he did not always administer consolation with sufficient discernment. His talent, Cecil said, did not lie in discerning of spirits. He gives an example.

He said, Newton once said of a man that people were having trouble with. Well, he certainly is an odd man and has his failings, but he has great integrity and I hope is going to heaven. Whereas Cecil comments, almost all who knew him thought the man should first go to the pillory.

In other words, here was this Newton who was so wired to be merciful, Cecil thought he couldn't see a rascal if he faced him in the face. He just couldn't bring himself to say a negative word. So like the prairies, Nehru spoke a discouraging word.

Well, yes, there's that. But I put over against it. It was Newton whose unwavering theological commitments, commitment to holiness, doctrinal fidelity, and habitual tenderness broke the back of Thomas Scott's liberalism and Sicilianism and brought him to evangelical reform theology and put him into the only pastorate.

And that's no small potatoes. So my response is this. Pastors simply cannot devote much of their time to blowing the trumpet for rigorous intellectual theology.

They should see its usefulness and its necessity and encourage its proper place. But they can't be faulted that they mainly have flocks to love and hearts to change. Defending the truth is a crucial part of that, but not the main part.

Holding the truth and permeating all of ministry with the truth, the greatness, the sweetness of truth for the transformation of people's lives, that's the main part of ministry. And you can't fault Newton for being a pastor. And I don't think he belittled intellectual theology more than it should be belittled.

Let me take another piece of the pattern of his tenderness. It's language, the use of language to make truth winsome, healing, and tenderly effective in people's lives. I want you to get this because we can all grow in this, and I want us to grow in this now.

Newton had the eye, the heart, and the tongue of a poet, a spiritual poet. He wrote hundreds of hymns, which were poems. He wrote them for special occasions.

He wrote them for his family. Which means that he did not engage in excessive abstraction, but in concrete word and illustration. Instead of generalizing, he spoke of the specific bird, flower, apple, shabby old man.

I'll give you an illustration. In other words, the eye of the spiritual poet, which we all should want to have, whether you can write poetry or not, it doesn't matter, but the eye of the spiritual seer poet that looks at the world in such a way that it rings with the divine. The heavens are telling the glory of God.

Do you see it? And does it move you? And are you taken up into it and feel it and bring it down through your brain and heart into language so that people are made alive with it? Congregations come alive when language flows like that, from what you saw in the sky, or the night moon, or the flower, or the fish, or the child, or the bridge, or the traffic, or the hospital bed, and you bring it through the dynamic of a great theology out with concrete language. Congregations live on word like that. Your mouth becomes a fountain of life.

But if you abstract and generalize all the time, they will die. They will just shrivel up and you will be called a boring preacher. And there are just way too many boring preachers.

He was watching an eclipse of the moon. This is what he wrote. Tonight I attended an eclipse of the moon.

How great, O Lord, are thy works! With what punctuality do the heavenly bodies fulfill their courses? I thought, my Lord, of thine eclipse, the horrible darkness which overwhelmed the mind when thou sensed. Why hast thou forsaken me? Ah, sin was the cause, my sins. Yet I do not hate, sin, or loathe myself as I ought.

You ever experienced an eclipse of the moon like that? What's wrong? Newton's language was full of this kind of thing. Most of us gravitate to abstractions. We say, men tend to choose lesser pleasures and reject greater ones.

Can picture yourself saying that, can't you? That's an abstraction. You can only say that so many times until people go... Newton says, same point. The men of this world are children.

Offer a child an apple and a banknote. He will doubtless choose the apple. Talk like that! Talk like that! Don't generalize in abstractions.

Don't read that sentence and say, huh, now I've got to distill that into a principle. That's exactly backwards. You know the principles.

Get that sentence into your mouth. Get the apple and the banknote in your mouth. We say, men are foolish to fret so much over material things when they will inherit eternal riches.

Well, that's true and that can be moving, maybe. Newton says, suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate. And his carriage should break down one mile before he got to the city.

Which obliged him to walk the rest of the way to the inheritance. What a fool we should think him if we saw him wringing his hands and blubbering out all the remaining mile, My carriage is broken! My carriage is broken! You get it? If you take principles and abstractions and theories and labor with the eye of a poet, He must have seen something like this. A broken carriage on his way to Church one day.

Oh, that's good. My carriage is broken. My carriage is broken.

I mean, my whole life is like that. I don't have to look at anybody to see my carriage is broken. I'm always complaining, murmuring.

Just get in front of the mirror. That's the main place you learn how to illustrate truth. It's standing in front of the mirror, especially sin.

So this is not merely a matter of style. I experienced this last night. This is serious now.

This is not a matter of style. This is a matter of life and death in your church. Here's what I mean.

Last night, a man stood here to talk to us. And I'm sitting there thinking now, What kinds of things in counseling will break through, break through into darkness and give light? How do you get into people's darkness? Is there a human way to get into the darkness of a Cooper or anybody in your office and give them light? Two things I remember from last night that worked that way for me. And we'll come out of this mouth in the darkness of my study.

One is a two watt light bulb in a totally dark room changes everything. Because we got one of those for our little girl, Talitha. I look at that little thing.

It plugs into the socket on the wall in the bathroom. Teeny, teeny, teeny little electric glowing coil. I can see it from my bedroom around corners.

It's just it. I would never stub my toe. So here's here's the truth that just blew into my heart with that little image last night.

What came into my heart was I labor under the sense that when I'm facing colossal darkness, I got to have a big light solution or I can't do anything for this person. And now I have been shown by the use of an image and a language that no two watts will do this afternoon. Thank you.

Just two watts will get me through another week. You got two watts in your battery, Pastor? And here was the other one. The hurricane.

Wrong. So much wrong. Wrong.

Suffering. In a situation, say Sarah's situation, or the India earthquake, or the El Salvador earthquake, or a church that's been ripped apart right now. In your situation, it's just so complicated, so huge, so messy.

I got to I got to fix this hurricane. No, you don't. You need to know two acts of obedience today.

The eye of the storm is small compared to this thing. You can live in it. You do the next thing.

Find some parents for your kids. If you're going to die in two months, just do that. You don't have to fix the cancer.

You don't have to be there when they go to college. Just do what you can do. Now, that's an illustration.

Hurricane and two watt light bulb of what I mean by this is not a style issue here. This is life. This is life for John Piper.

This is life for you, Pastors. It's life for your people. You need to open your eyes.

And if you don't have your eyes open to see the world like that, you know what the problem is? Sin. You are so wrapped up in yourself and your little problems. You don't trust in the providence of God enough to free you to see what God's saying to you all the time in broken carriages and lunar eclipses and the glory of the Lord shining down.

And yes, one last thing on this pattern of tenderness. And yes, there's a place for humor. Many people ask me about that in his pattern of tenderness, but not the contrived levity of so many communicators today who know how to work an audience.

But the balanced, earthy experience of the way the world really is in its horror and its humor. There would be more real laughter in our churches if there were more tears. Ask yourself this question.

What is the quality of the laughter in a family over the meal after the funeral? Is it jokes? Are they saying in an uncomfortable ice breaking kind of way? Hey, did you hear the one about the guy? Everybody's going to look at you and say, leave the ministry. That's not why they're laughing. Joanne, who sat right right there on Sunday, lost her dad last Sunday.

The whole family was there. And I went to the funeral and participated in it on Thursday night. And everybody who got up testified to how much they'd been laughing together.

That is pure health. It's called health. It's just health.

It's just there because that's the way daddy was. That's the way daddy talked. That's the way he wore his sweater wrong buttoned up.

That was daddy. Everybody knows if you can't laugh there, you're sick. Laughter is a mark of health.

And the world rings with horror. I look at these horrible pictures of those bodies crushed under that cement. And I think about 60 hours and the water dripping into his mouth and wondering, will I suffocate here and others who didn't have 60 hours and how many hours they survived? I can hardly stand what my imagination does at those moments.

And yet I'll walk home in an hour. Absolutely. His Erica will happen on the bridge or at home with my little girl or something.

That's life. And your people need to see the tears for India. And they need to see you laugh till the tears run down your face because of that wacko thing that elder just said.

Laughter. So yes, yes, tenderness. I'm talking about how to be a tender, habitually loved and loving shepherd.

There's a place for that. And let me see if I can just sum up these last few things on roots. The talk is about the tough roots of the habitual tenderness.

I have three. Number one, Newton's realism about the limits of this life. Oh, how helpful it is to hear his his realism only so much as possible in a fallen world.

We groan waiting for the redemption of our bodies. And if we don't realize the limits of our ministry, we will absolutely go crazy trying to fix the world and fix everybody. He said, my course of study, like that of a surgeon, has been principally in walking the hospital.

He did not, however, become cynical as he walked the hospital and saw the remedial diseases of Bedlam. Bedlam comes from insane asylum hospital in his day. He said, I endeavor to walk through the world as a physician goes through Bedlam.

The patients make noise, pester him with impertinence, hinder him in his business. But he does the best he can and gets through. I read that last November or somewhere, and I said, thank you.

Thank you. That's all I do. I just do the best I can get through, get through this mess, get through that mess, get through this mess.

Thank you, Newton. Thank you for telling me that's the way you did your ministry. You just walk through an insane asylum and you're pestered by this person and grabbed by that person.

And and you reach out, you touch, you pray, you bless, you call, you do you get criticism. You didn't call soon enough. You didn't say this.

And you just look up and say, sinner. Oh, I am. I did the best I could.

I'm going to keep going. And that's the key. Realism keeps you going.

Perfectionism wipes you out. So have Newton's realism. Here's the here's the picture.

He had to put it in a picture, right? It's so beautiful. He's standing at his window, looking out on the sun about to come up. The day is now breaking.

How beautiful its appearance. How welcome the expectation of the approaching sun. It is this thought makes the dawn agreeable that it is the presage of a brighter light.

Otherwise, if we expect no more day than in this minute, we should rather complain of darkness than rejoice in the early beauties of the morning. Thus, the life of grace is the dawn of immortality. Beautiful beyond expression, if compared with the night of thick darkness, which formerly covered us yet faint and indistinct and unsatisfying in comparison to the glory that will be revealed.

And we heard that this morning. We heard that this morning, that the only way that keeps us going in the ministry is when a man tells us that he's still doing his masturbation thing and can't seem to shake. These fantasies is to ask him, where did you come from? Remember that story compared with the present condition only? There's a lot of darkness left, but the sun's rising in your life.

It's rising in your life. And the glory is going to be beautiful. So be realistic, folks.

We groan inwardly, waiting our adoption of sons. The redemption of our bodies are groaning in this life will never end. There will be mental illness.

There will be physical illness. There will be church disputes. There will be marital stresses.

There will be wayward children till Jesus comes. And if we can't model our way through the insane asylum of this world, we will quit. Let's help each other, not quit.

Newton has helped me. I want to help you. That's one route.

The next group is his humility and gratitude. Then the last one is his confidence in Providence. Just one quick word about each.

Maybe he was overwhelmed by amazing grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found.

I was blind, but now I see. Till the day he died, he never ceased to be blown away by the fact that he had been saved and made a preacher of the gospel that he once labored to destroy and mock. He wrote his own epitaph.

You can read it on his grave, which is now in Olney. It used to be in London. They moved it so a subway could go through underneath the church.

John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy. Near 16 years at Olney in Bucks and they left the number blank years at this church in St. Mary's, Woolnoth. He was overwhelmed by this.

And he wrote that he didn't see how anybody could know how he was saved and not treat others with kindness. He said a humble, humble under such a sense of much forgiveness to himself. He finds it easy to forgive others.

If you're a hard pastor, you don't properly know what's happened to you. If you're a hard pastor, your first reaction is a hard reaction. You are not duly feeling the wonder that you are saved, forgiven, accepted.

So dwell on it, linger on it. Let yourself marvel at your own forgiveness and your own acceptance and all that implies about your relationship now and forever, and it will soften you. He had to put it in a picture.

Here it is. A company of travelers fall into a pit. One of them gets a passerby to draw him out.

Now, he should not be angry with the rest for falling in. For because they are not yet out as he is, he did not pull himself out. Instead, therefore, of reproaching them, he should show them pity.

A man truly illuminated will no more despise others than Barnabas. Bartimaeus, after his own eyes were open, should take a stick and beat every blind man he met. Don't you want to talk like that? Come on, let's become that kind of life giving.

Why did you laugh at that? See, that's not a joke. That's not a joke. That's a vivid, powerful, pointed, inditing word to me.

Who tends to hit people because they don't see what they ought to see. Last root. He loved and rested in the providence of God.

And I'll just say here that if you don't feel confident that all of your miseries and sadnesses and pain are going to work together for your good under the hand of a loving Father, you will eventually cave and begin to need the world. You will reach for pornography or you'll reach for money or you'll reach for the praise of men because you have felt beat up so bad that you say, I need a little reward here. I need a little reward here.

No, you don't. You need your eyes open to the fact that you didn't get beat up. You got handled wisely by a loving father who knows how to make you into the image of Jesus.

Is your heart breaking right now? You know why? So that you'll know how to handle broken hearts. You don't like that? Shouldn't be in the ministry. God breaks our hearts for a reason.

And he's not mean. He's not ugly. He's not unwise.

He's not unkind. He's a surgeon. He knows how to turn us into pastors.

Well, the last implication of that Providence thing is that if you're not confident that God will be your all in all through his wonderful overarching work for you, then you will not have the power to resist the allurements of inferior pleasures. I'll read it. This is my Christian hedonism swan song.

By faith, the believer triumphs over the world's smiles and enticements. He sees that all that is in the world suited to gratify the desires of the flesh or the eye is not only to be avoided as sinful, but as incompatible with his best pleasures. So the roots of his habitual tenderness are one realism that we will groan until our bodies are redeemed.

You will always have a groaning church. You will always be a groaning pastor. You will always have a groaning marriage and you will always have reasons to groan about your children.

Secondly, the all pervasive humility that he had came from an awareness that he had been wonderfully forgiven and undeserved. And thirdly, he trusted in the Providence of God so that he wouldn't say all the way to heaven. My carriage is broken.

My carriage is broken, but instead would say to his grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home. Okay. I'm happy to stay if you want to ask some questions.

We'll start right there on that microphone. I belong to a small Baptist Association much like yours. And Calvinistic thinkers are few and far between.

And for a lot of people in the association, they're really hostile towards it. And some other young ministers coming up have seen it and it's just a beauty to us. It's just welling up inside of us.

But sometimes we feel like we have to walk so softly that we're not seeing any change and not being able to present this beautiful thing. What would be your advice to a young minister about maybe jumping ship or staying in there and walking as softly and trying to change things? I don't want to be advocating splitting churches. A split Armenian church is no better off than a unified Armenian church.

And so I don't think I want to encourage you to do that at all. I want to encourage you to pray. I want to encourage you to humbly love the flock that God has given you to love.

I want to encourage you to let the truth and sweetness of the God that you know, which you call a reformed vision of God, to be the power that sustains you in your situation, to care. I want you to be honest and teach what you see is truth and teach it mixed in with all the nitty gritty of life so that the kids grow in your ministry. And I want the proof to be in the pudding so that the parents will look at these kids and say, what are they getting and wanting themselves? That would be the counsel I would give.

And if that aborts giving it your best shot over X number of years, and I can't tell you how many, then I think you'd sit down with your senior pastor. You tell him your heart's desire. You'd share the situation and ask him to give you counsel.

And if he says, well, maybe we do need to go our separate ways. And then you go. But you don't you don't pull that trigger very, very quickly.

Dr. Piper, there's several books been coming out on the wider readership on grace. I think our brother Chuck Smith wrote one out in California. There's so much being talked about by grace.

But what is your how does grace relate to God's supremacy, God's pleasures? And really, what is grace? Because most of what I read is like water off a duck's back. You know, what is what is your real understanding of of of why we would see Newton as maybe a good portrait of grace? Grace is the overflow of God's self-sufficiency. So you can't have grace if you don't have an utterly, infinitely, gloriously, self-satisfied, all sufficient, overflowing God who doesn't need you at all.

So you need to you need to test people's read of grace with. I try to come up with new questions periodically to test myself and others to see if they're more American than they are biblical. More 20th century or 21st century than they are first century Christian.

And the one I've been using for the last couple of years is, do you feel more loved when God makes much of you? Or do you feel more love when God frees you to enjoy making much of him forever? The former is not grace. The latter is grace because it's God centered. I fear that for most Americans who have grown up on the self-esteem gospel, the only filter in their brain to understand grace is that which makes much of me.

If it doesn't make much of me and thus help me feel good about being made much of, I don't feel graciously treated. That's a fundamental flaw in their whole makeup and network. Our hardest job is to shift the categories of emotion and thought such that God becomes the center of the universe around which all the planets circle.

So that the highest experience of satisfaction is in making much of him, not having him make much of us. And so the way that happens is that you recognize him as an infinitely all sufficient, overflowing fountain that is worthy of your trust, worthy of your delight, worthy of your praise, worthy of your allegiance. And you begin to live that way.

And grace is the utterly undeserved action of God to include you in that enjoyment. If you don't define grace in terms of enjoying God, I don't know how you can keep it from being self-centered. Now, we'll have to discuss this some more on the panel to see where I fit in with this need, need stuff, right? That David Powelson has been talking about because there's some fuzzy.

We need to think clearly about this. But I think God centeredness is preserved by making him the center of your desires. I wonder if David would agree with that.

I don't think he's here, but he'll be here. We're willing tomorrow that the test of whether you get grace or not is, is the best thing God could do for you is give you God to enjoy. If you don't think that's the best thing he could do for you, you don't get grace.

If you think the best thing he could do for you is to give you a good marriage or believing kids or healthy body or successful church, you don't understand grace. The highest, most loving, most gracious thing God could do for you is to give you God for your everlasting and ever increasing enjoyment. If you don't get that, you don't get grace.

So I don't hear too many people saying that. And so I don't think grace is, I don't think we've quite got grace yet. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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