



March 22 – 28, 2021

Title: A Celebration of Grace

Scriptures: 1 Timothy 1:12-18

Speaker: Dr. Horace Sheppard

Opening Comments

- This is a successful closing of this chapter in Pastor Tony's life, his family's life and the life of Maranatha. Not a closing to the ministry of Maranatha or Pastor Tony's ministry or the relationship between Maranatha and Pastor Tony, but a successful closing to the chapter.
- One of the truths that we as Christians need to grasp is that Kingdom life is about chapters and seasons and ministries are not ours, but they belong to God. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, (Matthew 6:13) he said, "for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." We fail to understand. This is not ours. This belongs to God.
- God used the vision of Bishop Green and Pastor Tony as the founding and Senior Pastor to establish the church, but Maranatha is God's church; not Pastor Tony's church or the board's church or our church as members. When we live by the Spirit of God and let God guide us as His instruments, then we will understand some greater truths that will help us when a time like this comes.

1. The Celebration of an Appointment

- a. 1 Timothy 1:12 – I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me the strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.
- b. We celebrate the grace of an appointment. Pastor Tony was appointed to service at Maranatha and has served well for other three decades. A pastor and a people ought to come together because of an appointment of God. Such an appointment is divine, dependent, and definitive.
 - i. Divine because it comes from God. Even the vote on the successor came with prayer and fasting and the leading of the Lord, because the church is not an organization. The church is a living organism—the body of Jesus Christ. There are organizational dimensions to it, but the church is not run like an organization or even a democracy. The church is run by the Bible and the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the appointment because it's divine. It came from God, and we're praising God that the church will continue.
 - ii. Dependent—Pastor Tony celebrates because he understands his appointment was not only divine, but it was also dependent, because he had to learn to depend on the One who appointment him. Throughout a pastor's ministry God teaches them how to depend on God's leading. God develops in the pastor His vision for the church, and God calls members to walk in agreement with that vision. The phrase, 'let's agree to disagree' is not Bible. We don't agree to be in disagreement. God



does not honor disagreement. We might be in disagreement for a brief period, but when we are, we should keep working to reach a place of agreement, because that's where the power of God is. God honors agreement.

- iii. Definitive—being a pastor is a definitive assignment done decisively and with authority. There's only one pastor in one church at one time. The pastor is not a boss or dictator, but is an under-shepherd with authority to be the pastor. If God doesn't lead the pastor to undertake a particular action or direction, then the pastor is not going to pursue it.

2. The Celebration of an Amazement

- a. 1 Timothy 1:13-15 – Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
- b. Paul celebrates God's grace because he is amazed that God chose him considering who he once was, and this is a part of Pastor Tony's testimony. Paul speaks what Pastor Tony could speak, 'how could it be that I'm a minister, let alone the Pastor, considering who I once was.'
- c. There's an amazement to the grace that God pours out on our lives. God brought you from where you came from to where you are; and when you were where you came from, you never could have imagined where you are now.

3. The Celebration of an Assignment

- a. 1 Timothy 1:16,18 – But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well.
- b. The assignment was a pattern (an example). Paul says he was given mercy so that in him, Christ could display his patience as an example (i.e., as a pattern to follow) for those who believe in him. This too is part of Pastor Tony's testimony; that he has such a heart for sinners, the unchurched, the unloved. The heart he has for hurting people was developed, in part, because of his own life experiences.
- c. The assignment has a purpose; to reach people who do not know Christ. The church should be open to receive the people that the church exists to receive. When Jesus was questioned by the religious community of his day about why he was eating with sinners, he said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17)
- d. The assignment has a prophecy. Paul tells Timothy that the time of his departure is at hand, and tells Timothy it is his turn to fight the battle well. The door is closing on Pastor Tony's position as Senior Pastor at Maranatha, and his command to us is fight the battle well. He's



preached, taught, and shown us how to fight the battle well, how to serve and disciple other people. He's poured his life into this church, so go on and fight well. He's handing off the baton to the next Pastor.

- e. Pastor Sheppard prophesies to the church, "let Pastor Tony go; don't hold onto him". Let his family have him back. The church can honor him at some point in time, but we need to understand Kingdom business. In a relay race when a runner passes the baton to the next runner, they don't continue to run the next leg of the race along with the runner to which they handed off the baton.