

Adorning the Doctrine of God our Saviour

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Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] We're going to turn to our Bible reading now, and you'll find it in the New Testament. And we're going to read in three different places. Turn up page 992, first of all, which is 1 Timothy, chapter 3.

And we're going to read a couple of verses there, a couple cross in 2 Timothy, and then we're going to read Titus, chapter 2. We're beginning a series, really, for this autumn term, in 1 Timothy. But these three letters that we call the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, which Paul wrote to his younger co-workers, Timothy and Titus, but also very particularly to the churches in which they are at that time working, that is the churches in Ephesus and in Crete, are vital letters that speak of many closely related themes.

So, this Sunday and probably next Sunday, we're going to spend quite a lot of time what I call waggling on the T before we actually get deep into 1 Timothy, because there's lots for us to learn across all of these letters.

And I want you to be reading all of them together as we study 1 Timothy particularly, because I think that will help you to get the most out of our study. So, 1 Timothy 3 and verse 14 this morning, where Paul tells us very clearly why he writes this letter.

[1 : 20] It's because, he says, I hope to come to you soon. But I'm writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave.

That is, in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. Turn over to 2 Timothy 2 and verse 1, where Paul says, You then, my child, speaking to Timothy, you be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And what you've heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Now, turn over to Titus, and you'll read about another one of these faithful men.

And Paul telling him, in a little more detail, exactly what he is to teach the church in Crete. But as for you, that is in contrast to the many insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers that he's speaking about in the paragraphs above.

As for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. The footnote says healthy, healthy doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified and self-controlled.

[2 : 41] Sound, healthy in faith and love and in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good.

And so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, to be working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself, in all respects, to be a model of good works. And in your teaching, show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

Slaves or bond servants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith.

Why? So that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, and training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, waiting for the blessed hope, the appearance of glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.

[4 : 19] Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, and let no one disregard you. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. Well, please do take your Bibles and turn with me to these readings that we had.

First of all, to page 992 in 1 Timothy chapter 3. Now, let me begin with a question. What kind of church is the one that will really win the world for Jesus Christ today?

Well, you'll find all kinds of books and articles and conferences and movements claiming to have the secret of being that church today.

You'll find people writing PhDs and writing all sorts of theories about how we should do church today. And the assumption very often in these things is that, although the Bible is very useful to us, it can't, of course, be of much practical help in these really important matters of the church's mission today.

[5 : 26] Because, well, the apostles couldn't know about all of our particular difficulties. Our life is so different from theirs. Our problems are so unique today. All the things that made church evangelism and mission in the past so much easier are so much harder in our world today.

And so we need to rethink everything about the whole nature of the church's mission. And it's very often the kind of things that you hear people saying in the Christian church today.

Of course, we always need to be adapting to the specifics of what we do, the language that we use, the times we might meet, the places we might, the things we might do to get a hearing of our message.

Of course, that's just common sense, isn't it? But in the things that really matter, the truth is that between the New Testament times and our times, very little has really changed.

The apostle Paul evangelized the world that was hostile and opposed to God's truth and God's Christ. And so do we. He already lived in what he called these last days, days after the coming of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior.

[6 : 35] And Paul said of those last days that he already lived in, that they would be terrible times. People, he says, will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, lovers of pleasure rather than of God, often treacherous and reckless and conceited and without self-control.

That's from 2 Timothy chapter 3. But actually, it pretty much sums up the newspaper I read yesterday morning. So in fact, as far as human beings and the human heart is concerned, the 1st century and the 21st century are remarkably similar.

And because Paul knew what the world was like then, and because he knew what it would be like always, he wrote these letters to Timothy and Titus and to the churches in Ephesus and Crete so that they would know and so that we would know what real ministry and mission is to be marked by, whether it was then or today or in every age until Jesus returns.

And his message, friends, is very, very clear. It's very, very simple. You don't need a research thesis. You don't need some special key to tell you what the answer is. The church that will win the world for Jesus Christ today, or indeed in any day, is the church that is guarded in real godliness by and for the real gospel.

That's the message of 1 Timothy. That's going to be our chief study in this term until Christmas. But it really is a message that runs through all these so-called pastoral letters. They share many, many themes, expressing them a little differently here and there and so on.

[8 : 21] And that's why we read this morning mainly from Titus. Not because I'm confused. We will get to 1 Timothy next week. But I want to encourage you, as we study 1 Timothy together, to read these other letters as well.

And you will see it just reinforces the message. And what Paul teaches in these letters is powerful, practical missionary theology.

It tells us how to be a real missionary evangelizing church today. It teaches us how to be a winsome church. A church that will win people for the Lord Jesus Christ.

People have often misunderstood these pastoral letters that thought they were about banal things to do with church structure and order and public worship and that sort of thing. Nothing could be further from the truth.

They're nothing to do with leading church services. But they are everything to do with leading the whole church into service. Service of the gospel of Christ. Just look at 1 Timothy 3 verse 15, the

verse that we read together.

[9 : 23] There's no guessing, is there, where Paul wrote, I write so that you may know how to behave, so you may know how to conduct yourselves as the household of God, as the church of the living God, as the pillar and buttress of truth in this world.

What he's saying is God has chosen the church to be his dwelling place, to be his sanctuary on this earth, to be the place where his own spirit dwells in the midst and where, therefore, his person can be encountered.

And so above all else, it's absolutely vital that we know not so much what we're to do, but what we are to be as the church of the living God.

And Paul says here we are to be a pillar, a buttress of the truth. Because it's the truth, he says in chapter 2 verse 4, that leads to salvation.

And it's the truth, he says in Titus 1 verse 1, that leads to godliness. The church is to be a buttress, a bulwark, a witness to truth, to true thinking in a world full of lies and falsehood and to true living in a world full of lawlessness and godlessness.

[10 : 48] That's what it means that the church is a dwelling place, a household of God, not a dead institution. It's to be a place that is alive with the presence of the living God here on earth.

The church is a household of the living God. And the ministry of that church, the service of that church, is therefore a faithful stewardship from God of his faithful household.

That's what he calls it all the way through these letters, a stewardship, a trust, a charge. That's such an important thing to grasp. Turn over to chapter 6 verse 16.

Paul speaks there in verse 15 of the blessed sovereign, of the king of kings, of the lord of lords, the immortal one who dwells, he says in verse 16, do you see, who has his house in unapproachable light whom no one can see.

God's dwelling is in the eternal heavens. He can't be seen, can he, by people here on earth. He'll appear, he says in verse 14, in all his glory when Jesus Christ comes again.

[11 : 57] But for now, God does still manifest his presence on this earth to men and women. But he does it through his earthly dwelling place, through his church.

You see, the church of the living God is the place where the immortal, the invisible God can be encountered, can be found, and can be known and loved and trusted in this age, in this world.

God's church is his missionary household. It's his showcase in the world of his grace and of his great glory. It is the place and the place alone where his true salvation can be found.

And that is why it is so absolutely vital that the church should be what it is called to be. Now that shouldn't be new to the church. He's writing to here, the church in Ephesus where Timothy's serving.

Remember, Ephesians 3 verse 10, Paul tells us that God's purpose is that through the church, God's manifold wisdom will be made known not only to the earth but to the heavenly realms for all eternity.

[13 : 11] And it does that as it is a pillar and buttress of truth. As it shines out, as Jesus says in Matthew chapter 5, as a beacon of light in a world of darkness.

As truth incarnate, living. Not just truth in doctrine. That's vital. You'll see that all through these letters. But truth incarnate, truth that is living.

Truth that demonstrates in its life the transforming power of the gospel of God. The church is to be on this earth the household that manifests truth for life and truth in its life.

And that dual focus is something that we'll see pervades these letters to these Christian leaders, Timothy and Titus. And focuses what Paul wants those leaders to teach and train others to teach and train so that churches after them may also know the truth.

But they're written to them and yet to be read by every member in those churches. The last line of each of these letters talks about you in the plural. Grace be with you. Grace be with you all.

[14 : 27] It's even more explicit at the end of Titus. Because there's no distinction between the life and the lifestyle of those who are leaders and of all the people of the church. Everyone has to live the truth of Jesus Christ in the church.

And these letters are preserved for us precisely because the threats to the church's life and witness and the threats to the church's effectiveness have not changed since the first century.

The church's witness is always under threat even today from false teaching. That's why 1 Timothy opens with a command from Paul to Timothy to charge people not to teach falsely but to teach only

truth.

And the church today just as then is also under threat from false living. And again that goes all the way through these letters because false living always goes along with false teaching.

Sinful behavior will always seek out some sort of teaching that will justify it. Paul says itching ears will seek for exactly what they want to hear. So Paul's words to Timothy and Titus and to their churches in Ephesus and Crete they're not just valuable they are vital for all churches in all times.

[15 : 47] And so vital for our church today. Because they tell us how to be true churches of the living God. Churches that will win people to salvation in Christ.

They tell us how to be real pillars of his truth who really do manifest Christ's presence in the world. So as to have real power for that task of winning people in the world to salvation.

They're nothing at all to do with unifying liturgical practices inside the church's walls but they are everything to do with unleashing living power to the world outside.

To guard real godliness and to guard therefore the real gospel. And I want to begin this morning very definitely with this theme of real godliness authentic godliness which is what the apostolic gospel when it is true will always lead to in the life of the church.

Titus begins in chapter 1 verse 1 speaking about the truth that accords with or that leads to godliness. And it's a vital theme all through all of these three letters.

[16 : 58] I want to emphasize that right at the start because we must never forget that the truth of God is not just an intellectual thing. Not at all.

It's a living truth and it is a truth that is to be lived out. Real gospel truth is not just something that you hear. Real gospel truth is something that the world can see.

And it must be seen if the church is going to win the world today. It's a great theme as I've said all through this letter that life and doctrine are inseparable.

And so the lives of Christian people and the lives of the Christian church must match the message of the church. That's why Paul says in verse Timothy 4 to keep a close watch Timothy on your life and your doctrine, your teaching because that is what saves you and that is what will save others. Well of course. We know that, don't we? We know how quickly the world outside loves to expose hypocrisy in the Christian church. The papers love the scandal, don't they?

[18 : 09] When they find a church leader has been misbehaving sexually with somebody in the congregation? When it's so terrible today, when this scourge of child abuse and sexual abuse and so on is so ravaging in so many places including, alas, parts of the Christian church.

And that's why in these letters Paul's focus is so often on precisely what the world outside thinks of the Christian church. The church must commend the gospel to the world, not condemn the gospel that it's proclaiming to the world.

The church has to display in its life, in its flesh, the healthy faith and love and steadfast endurance that only the true gospel, no false gospel, the true gospel can produce.

So how are we to be a church that wins the world for Jesus Christ today? Well we are to strive to be a people who in the lovely phrase that Titus uses in chapter 2 verse 10 are people who adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

That is who show out, who showcase, who shine in the world the marvelous truth of our great Savior. Now that makes obvious sense doesn't it?

[19 : 31] The medium to a very great extent is always the message. Who is going to buy a fitness DVD that is presented by Rab C. Nesbitt? Nobody. Who is going to respond and listen to advice about self-control from a hopeless alcoholic who still can't keep up his sobriety?

Of course not. To listen to somebody talk about health you need to see health. And so it is for the church. Maybe you were here this morning and you're not a Christian and maybe part of the reason for that is you have never ever seen a healthy Christian church.

you've only ever seen a dead church. Or perhaps you've only had exposure to a church which has a deadly and deadening impact on you. Well if that's the case who is to blame you?

No, no. We are to be a church that adorns the gospel if we are ever to win people to the gospel. So let's look briefly at Titus' prescription for health in chapter 1 and 2 here of his letter.

Titus tells us that the healthy church, the sound church is a church first of all that has healthy minds. Its thinking is clear and wholesome. And then therefore it will have healthy manners.

[20 : 49] Its life will be wholesome and reliable and manifestly godly in the eyes of the world. And that will be because it has a truly healthy motivation because it really has grasped the truth of the

gospel of Christ.

So first then being a missionary church, a church that will win the world, means having healthy minds. Titus 2 verse 1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound, with healthy doctrine. Titus is to do what chapter 1 verse 9 says every Christian leader must do. Do you see? To hold firm to the trustworthy word. To give instruction and sound in healthy doctrine.

And, notice there by the way, to rebuke those who contradict that. That word sound, as I've said, is the word healthy. It's where we get our word hygiene from. It's used in the gospels of Jesus restoring the sick to health and to strength.

And here the point is that the trustworthy teaching of the true gospel is what creates health and what maintains health in the life of the Christian and in the life of whole churches.

[22 : 03] By contrast, look at chapter 1 verse 11. Those who teach unsigned, unhealthy doctrine, they upset whole, well, families is how it's translated in our version here, whole households.

It really means household churches. They were all house churches there in Crete. That's exactly what ruins whole churches, Paul is saying, that kind of wrong teaching. It turns healthy and vibrant gospel churches into dead and deadening shells.

Well, we know that, don't we? Just need to read church history in the West for the last century or two and you'll see what has happened. It was the corruption of minds through the unhealthy teaching of liberalism that came into the Western church through the Enlightenment that has so decimated mainstream Christian churches and denominations in our world today and very much so in our own nation.

Whole churches, whole groupings, whole denominations ruined because minds became unhealthy through teaching which should never have been taught in the name of the truth of Jesus Christ. And that's why the great theme in these pastoral letters is so often, guard the truth. Because it's not just Cretans, as Paul says in verse 12 there, who are innately likely to be self-deceivers and morally corrupt.

[23 : 31] It's all human beings, isn't it? What would Paul have said if he was writing to the Scots in the 21st century? Pretty much the same thing, I would think. Left to ourselves, we will become unhealthy.

Anybody left to itself with no healthy input, with no exercise, with no stimulation, any mind left like that will turn to decay, won't it? And how much more of our Christian minds and understanding in the Christian church?

But no, says Paul, a real missionary church must be a real pillar of truth. It begins with healthy minds, with true instruction.

And that involves, look at chapter 1, verse 9 there, that involves both instruction in what is healthy and the exposure and the rebuke of that which is unhealthy.

You've heard me say many times, necessary negatives are essential in the Christian church. We don't like it, but the New Testament is full of warnings and rebukes for what is wrong.

[24 : 41] I want to emphasize this morning this emphasis on the purpose of having these healthy minds. Healthy doctrine, healthy minds is to produce healthy lives.

Look at chapter 1, verse 13. Paul says, you are to rebuke what is unhealthy in the church, that they may be sound, that they may be healthy in the faith. That is so that their whole lives will be healthy and right.

Because the Christian mind and the Christian walk are absolutely linked. Truth pervades the whole of life, as does error. Look at verse 15.

You see, error brings minds and consciences that are defiled. People who profess faith, who profess to know God, but in fact deny it in their actions.

Their lives contradict what they say they believe. But genuine faith, as Paul, can be seen in the body. Just as verse 16 is very clear, so can spurious faith.

[25 : 46] It's detestable, it's disobedient, unfit and unfruitful. Well, we know, don't we, that when minds are sick, eventually bodies also become sick.

The more a mind degenerates, it's so sad, isn't it, when we see somebody whose mind is degenerating through dementia or some other disease and gradually their bodily life begins to disintegrate. And so it is in the church, says Paul.

But by contrast, it is healthy teaching that brings healthy lives of faith. And that's what Paul is describing here in chapter 2, that healthy life of real faith.

Healthy minds in true gospel doctrine, that's where it begins, but because of this, secondly, he says, the winsome church will be marked by a healthy manner because the one produces the other. Now look at chapter 2, verse 1. He's to teach what accords with healthy doctrine. One translation puts it this way, teach the kind of living that reflects right teaching.

[26 : 52] That is the manner of life which will be healthy. It will be ordered. It will be wholesome. It will be free from corruption, free from the disorder and the disease that's so evident in the world around us.

And what Paul's doing in verses 2 to 10 there is simply describing just that kind of a healthy life of faith that has the power to commend the gospel to the world, not to condemn the gospel in the world.

It's a description, isn't it, of the healthy manner of a church that is sound, that is healthy in faith. See how that phrase brackets verses 2 and 10, verse 2 there, he speaks of health in faith and love and steadfastness.

That's the long hand. And in verse 10 at the end we have the short hand showing all good faith. This whole section is about applied truth.

It's what real faith looks like in the community life of the church, the healthy manner of the Christian church. So what is Titus to teach?

[27 : 57] He is to teach the healthy Christian life that will live out the healthy Christian gospel, that accords with healthy doctrine. The life that is full of faith and love and steadfastness.

And when that manifestly healthy manner is seen visibly, when it is shaped by minds that understand the true truth of God, that is a church that will impact the world.

Because then the gospel will be visible and will be adorned by the life of God's people. And the one who lives in unapproachable light in the highest heaven is made known, is seen in the flesh, in the people of God today.

The sad things, friends, the sad thing that we have to admit is that so often that isn't true, is it? And as I've said, the world so loves to show up falsehood in the church.

Sadly, that's been the way ever since the beginning of God's people. The prophets of the Old Testament said so often to Israel, God's name isn't blessed among the nations because of you, it's blasphemed among the nations because of you.

[29 : 13] The Apostle Paul says the same thing in the New Testament. And too often today, that is the truth, is it not? And that just gives ammunition to the Richard Dawkinses and all the others who want to take pot shots at the church's message.

But where healthy minds and true gospel teaching produces a healthy manner and healthy manners, real living faith, lived out faith in the world, then it's very different.

Chapter 2 verse 5 says there, the word of God will not then be reviled by the world outside. But rather, as that lovely phrase in verse 10 puts it, the gospel will be adorned with a living witness to the truth.

Even there, he says, in the lives of household bond servants, in the tough duties and the hard work that they had to live in. But that's a real challenge, isn't it?

And friends, it's especially a challenge for those of us who want to take doctrine and healthy minds very seriously. Because a healthy mind goes with a healthy body, says Paul.

[30 : 27] Some churches can be very proud of their healthy doctrine, very very focused on getting things right. But there often, sadly, can be very little evidence of that in their corporate manner.

Similarly, some Christians go on and on about sound doctrine, but sometimes their manners and their manner of life leaves a great deal to be desired.

But Paul is absolutely clear here, isn't he? A healthy manner adorns the gospel of Christ. An unhealthy manner causes the gospel to be reviled.

It is anti-evangelistic. Now, we don't have time to go into all the detail today, but just note a couple of points.

In verses 2 to 10 here, it's all about right relationships, isn't it? And right behavior in the church. And it involves absolutely everyone. Do you see? Older men, younger men, older women, younger women, even those in the most menial positions of household slaves.

[31 : 31] Everyone is involved in the missionary task of adorning the gospel of Christ. Everyone has a role in making sure that the gospel is not reviled because of us, but is rather adorned.

And the very fact that Paul writes these things also is evidence, isn't it? That for every single person, whoever you are, whatever age and stage, it's a struggle to live like that. That's why we need this continuous healthy teaching to keep us healthy.

When you're a young man, you think, well, I'll get a bit older and I'll finally get to the stage when godliness will be natural and easy for me. Maybe you look around at some of our older men in the church here, the revealed stalwarts of our congregation, and you'll think to yourself, oh, well, godliness is just second nature for them.

No, it's not. It's just as hard for them as it is for you. Don't think that self-control and dignity and all of these things Paul took is easy for them. Some of the younger women will likewise look around at some of the older saints, people you admire, and you'll think, well, it's easy for them to be reverent. It's easy for them not to be gossiping. It's easy for them not to be slanderers, all this that Paul talks about. No, it isn't. It's hard. Sometimes the older ones look down on the younger ones and say, oh, you've got it easy, we are the ones that's got it hard.

[32 : 55] No, no, no, no. The reality, friends, is that it's hard for all of us to live the healthy, holy lives that God calls us to, and it always will be, whether we're men or women, whether we're 21 or 91.

That's why this teaching is needed for all of us. Of course, the struggles will differ slightly in their nature, depending who we are, what stage of life we're at, but not the essential struggle to be healthy in faith and love and steadfastness, to show all good faith in our whole Christian life so that our life matches our doctrine.

It's hard. But let me say this. It is a struggle that is infinitely worth it. And it is a struggle that is possible.

It seems impossible. Paul says, no, it's not. And he ends by giving us the reminder that a truly winsome church has a truly healthy motivation.

It has a powerful, a wonderful motivation. We want to live out this healthy manner in the sight of the world, and we are enabled to live that out in the sight of the world because, verse 11, see, for we know something.

[34 : 14] We know that the grace of God has appeared to bring salvation. And we know, says verse 14, we know that our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, gave himself to redeem us and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works that show his beauty to the world.

We know the amazing grace of God our Savior. We know what it means to have been rescued from lawlessness and darkness. And rescued for, notice, for God himself to be his own treasured special possession.

And that means that our motivation, above all things, is such a wonderful one. We want to live that healthy life of faith because we want to be worthy of our great Savior who loved us and gave himself for us.

There's no higher motivation than that, is there, for the Christian to do everything for the Lord Jesus himself, for his joy and his glory. We're his treasured possession.

And we want to be the best that we can be for him, just to please him. While we wait, as verse 13 says, for the blessed hope of his appearance. What is it that will please him now as we wait for that blessed hope?

[35 : 45] Look at verse 12. Look at how verse 12 is sandwiched between verse 11 and 13. Verse 11, do you see, it speaks of the appearance of the grace of God in the past, in the world, in the person of the Savior, Jesus Christ, when he came in the flesh.

And verse 13 speaks about the appearance of Christ again in glory that we wait for when he comes again. But in between is what Paul calls the present age.

And that is the age where he's telling us God appears to men and women and to boys and girls in this world, not in his earthly body, as he did in the person of Jesus, not in his glorious body when it returns to judge the earth, but where?

Through his earthly household, through his dwelling place on earth. As the church, as his people, look at verse 12, as they renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. And as we live to adorn the gospel, as we live self-controlled, godly and upright lives in this present age.

And as we do that, he says, quite literally, as verse 10 says, we are adorning, we are showing forth the beauty, the power, the wonder of the doctrine of God our Savior, of the gospel that can transform ill health for health and beauty and wonder.

[37 : 10] And it's that demonstration, isn't it, of the transforming power of God himself, of God's spirit within us, it is that that will authenticate our message.

It is that that shows the converting power of the gospel is real. The winsome church will be a beacon of health in a world of decay and of death.

Just read through this letter and you'll see the radical contrast in so many ways between the world outside and what the church ought to be showing to the world from within. Our world is a world in which there is less and less respect, isn't it?

Less and less respect for elders, less and less respect for parents, for employers and so on. More and more of asserting ourselves and our own rights. Not so with you in the church, says Paul. He speaks here of respect, doesn't he, of honesty, of hard work for our employers and so on. Our world is full of casting off moral restraint and casting off decency, doing whatever you want instead, doing it your way.

[38 : 19] No, no, no, says Paul, not in the church. Verse 12 is so clear. He's taught you to renounce these things and to live upright lives, live with self-control.

Our world increasingly says, doesn't it, that your private life, your sexual life, your family life, all of these things, it doesn't matter at all. It's got no bearing on your public life. It shouldn't matter at all in leadership at candidates in parliament and so on.

Paul says the opposite. Not so with you in the church. Christian leaders, he says, are to be above reproach. Christian leaders are to be a model of all good works.

Our world also resents authority increasingly. Increasingly, we live in a world of cynicism and of slander. No, says Paul in the church, chapter 3, verse 1, you are to be the very opposite of that. You are to submit to authorities. You are to speak evil of no one so cynically. You are to show perfect courtesy to all people. That's quite a challenge, isn't it?

[39 : 27] Certainly a challenge for me. But our manner, he says, is everything. If we're to show the true health of biblical minds.

And if we're to show the true motivation of love for our Lord and Savior. So that the world will see the truth of God incarnate in the midst of his people, the church.

That doesn't mean that we're trying to do anything we can to make the gospel look attractive. Of course not. The point is that the true gospel, when it is lived out, is wonderfully attractive to the world.

Even, even when people see it and resent it and don't like what they see. As they often do, because the very essence of sin is to suppress the truth. But Paul is saying that lives lived in line with God's truth.

That will commend his truth to all of those whose eyes he is opening to that truth. And so, for example, living out here, what he says about the complementary rules of men and women.

[40 : 38] That's something that increasingly our world today, at least in our culture, does not accept, does it? It finds Paul's words deeply offensive. But where there is healthy, biblical relationships between the sexes, in marriage and within the church, a right ordering, there is a harmony and a beauty that cannot be hidden.

There is a true masculinity and a true femininity that people recognize. In sharp distinction, let it be said, to the gender rivalry and chaos in relationships that is the result in our culture of rebelling against God's created order.

It's God who tells us how to have healthy minds. It's God who tells us how to have a healthy manner for lives that will be fruitful. And the motivation for us, as Christians, is that we do it all for him in glad response to that marvelous grace that has appeared to redeem us and to give us a share in his everlasting kingdom.

Friends, do we get this as a church? It's so, so important. A church can have everything in terms of possessing the truth, the right doctrine, the right faith, the right preaching, all of these things. But God's truth is living truth. It's truth to be lived. And real partnership in the gospel for each one of us means real partnership in living that truth together.

[42 : 14] Whether we're old or young, whether we're male or female, we all have a part to play and must play that part if we're going to be a winsome church that will win the world today.

A winsome church will be a healthy church in mind and in manner and in motivation. That's a church that will display in the flesh the presence of the immortal, invisible God, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

That's a church that will adorn the gospel of living truth, which alone can lead to salvation. That's the church that we're called to be.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, your word challenges us so deeply in our hearts, each one of us as Christian people, to live and to show in our manner and in our manners in all things the wonderful message of our great Redeemer and for our whole life together in our relationships to be visibly, rightly ordered and healthy and sound and true and wholesome so that the world in looking to us instead of turning away and deafening itself to the gospel of Christ is drawn in and wants to hear and must hear more of the power that can so change the lives of flawed and feeble human beings. So help us, Lord, we pray. Help us to help one another and may this study in this coming term be one that strengthens us to be a pillar and buttress of truth, to be a bright and shining light in all this world to lead people to our Savior, the Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray.

[44 : 26] Amen.