

A Beautiful Gospel People

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[0 : 00] I'm Josh Johnston. I'm one of the ministers in training here at the Tron. And it's lovely to see you all. Please do feel free to stay around afterwards for a bite of lunch and to get to know some of the staff and some of the members.

It would be great to chat to some of you afterwards. But first, this week, we're going to begin a two-week look on the second chapter of Titus, Titus 2.

So we're going to be looking this week at verses 1 to 10, and then we'll finish it off next week, verses 11 to 15. So we'll read that now. Beginning at chapter 1, verse 16.

They, that is, teachers who were teaching falsely but also had lives that didn't stay true to the gospel, they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

They're detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness.

[1 : 15] Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They're to teach what is good. And so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, 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 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, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Before we begin to look at it, let's have a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can be here together on this Wednesday lunchtime with the opportunity to sit under your words and to be taught from it.

So we do pray now that as we open up this chapter that your spirit would be teaching us all and that we would be able to understand what you're saying to us in your words and that we might be trained by your grace towards godliness.

[2 : 54] For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. I wonder how many of us would admit that we are attracted to beautiful things.

I've been saving up for quite a while to buy a brand new iPad. I just got it at the weekend, and it is a beautiful piece of technology. But when I was thinking about buying it and when I was looking at it and thinking through it, I wasn't really thinking about what was inside, the processors, how quick it would be, and all this sort of thing.

What drew me in was how attractive it looks. It's beautiful. The logo, the colors, the screen. It's even really well packaged.

Now, we know that Jesus is beautiful. But what shows Jesus as truly beautiful to others?

What's the beautiful packaging for him? Or a better question, what makes Jesus and his gospel look beautiful in the midst of a misbehaving world?

[4 : 04] Paul gives Titus a glimpse of this in chapter 2. And before we begin to unpack that, it would be helpful if we find where we are by looking at chapter 1.

Titus is leading the church in Crete, and Paul is concerned that he put the church in order. We have instructions about what the leaders of God's people should look like. And these are given against the backdrop of a group of people that are liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons, according to their own prophet, in chapter 1, verse 12.

So Paul begins to introduce a thread that we'll pick up in chapter 2. He begins in 1, verse 7. We're told that overseers, elders, the leaders of God's people are to be hospitable, to love good, to be self-controlled and upright.

Not things like arrogant or drunk or violent. And they must hold to the sound doctrine they've been taught, the trustworthy word, so that as they hold to that and they live good lives, they're to give instruction on it.

They're to correct those in the wrong. And that's contrasted with those in verses 10 to 12, the many who are insubordinate, deceitful and empty talkers, lazy, evil, and gluttonous.

[5 : 31] Paul says in verse 11, they must be silenced. The one who's shown to be faithful to the gospel and how he lives is to speak it.

And those who've been shown to believe in something that contradicts the gospel by their life are to be silenced. How completely out of place for Paul.

A modern reader might say, silenced? Surely not. Everybody deserves their say. Well, Paul says no. He says if your life doesn't match the truth, you're to be muzzled, silenced.

And so we have verse 16. For they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. So Paul says to Titus, as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

And that's what Paul's unpacking in chapter 2 and what we'll look at next week, verses 11 to 15.

The sound doctrine, the reason and the way that we can live good lives reflecting the gospel is laid out.

[6 : 42] But before he does that, in verses 2 to 10, he tells us what the life is. What is it that accords with the truth? What's the life shaped by the gospel look like?

And we see two things about that life. The Christian life is to be modeled in the church and adorned in the world. So firstly, the Christian life is to be modeled in the church.

Believing the truth about God is inseparable from living an obedient Christian life. So those who misbehave show that they misbelieve.

We've seen in chapter 1 that those who live lives that are worthy are to speak. But Paul says those whose lives aren't, those whose lives are nothing like what Jesus was like are to be silenced.

Their lives are the big problem. Now the person that's really keen in theology here might get a little bit excited thinking that 2-1 teach sound doctrine is really important.

[7 : 51] They might think, fantastic, I get to study the Westminster Confession. I get to go to the gym of theology and work my doctrinal muscles. But Paul doesn't say teach sound doctrine.

He says teach what accords with sound doctrine. And if we miss that, we miss Paul's point. The way he unpacks 2-1 and the rest of this passage makes that clear.

He doesn't immediately follow verse 1 by unpacking a vast doctrine of God that gets everyone scratching their heads. No, Paul gives his basic and consistent ethic.

Self-control. There are many examples in Paul's letters where he unpacks the gospel truths and then shows how these are to shape how we live.

This is true, therefore, live like this. But Paul in Titus does it in reverse. He explains the common characteristic that he teaches, self-control, and then he says how the church can live lives like this.

[9 : 02] You see, Crete appears to be overrun with people who reflect little, if anything, of Jesus.

Yes, there's a false teaching needing addressed, but Paul here is addressing the lack of self-control in how the Cretan Christians live.

They're to be silenced because of their lives. Paul is laying out the conduct befitting of an officer in Christ's army.

Conduct for the church. In the military, there's an article that says, any officer subject to this act who shall be guilty of any conduct unbecoming the character of an officer shall be dismissed.

Paul is saying there's a code of conduct for Christians in God's church. Over and against a world that's characterized by laziness, gluttony, deceit, evil, the church was to be distinct.

Verse 10, adorning the doctrine of God. And this distinction is through self-control. Look at verses 2, 5, and 6.

[10 : 16] Older men are to be self-controlled. Older women are to teach younger women to be self-controlled. And younger men be self-controlled. He even urges Titus to model all these things in verse 7.

Can you imagine the behavior that was going on in the church in Crete, perhaps in many churches here? Thankfully, the trauma seemed to be in a loving church, but we need to be careful that we

don't slip into losing self-control.

Paul is not writing to those outside the church urging that they be self-controlled. It's the Christians he's concerned with. So imagine for me on your way in today.

You're greeted by some elders unwelcome. They were grumpy and arguing with each other. They mumbled under their breath. They're sick of standing at the door in the cold, serving the church. You're served lunch at the back by some older ladies and they're gossiping about the church staff. And you get the whiff of wine off their breath. As you sit down, you see a couple of young women discussing their marriages, resenting being left at home with their baby.

[11 : 33] One says, I'm going to give an ultimatum tonight. If he wants to be married with me, it'll be on my terms. He can stay with the baby. I want to go and socialize. And then the last straw, you see me walking in with Edward Lobb.

I'm raising my voice at him, ignoring what he's saying, and I'm telling him he can't possibly be useful if he's not going to preach from an iPad. In the end, I let out a shout, telling him his mistake and about some theological issue, and I walk up to the pulpit and begin to preach.

This may be a picture of what the church in Crete was like, and even in many churches now. In fact, some of these things might be present here in subtle ways.

But if it was this obvious, would you be here again next week to listen to me preach? Would you want to be welcomed into the building by grumpy old men, drunk, gossiping women, and frivolous young ladies with a young man preaching who's very disrespectful?

This is conduct unbecoming of Christ's people. It would display beyond doubt that anything you'd be taught would not lead to godliness. And so involved in all of this is that the members of the church are to model the behavior for each other.

[13 : 10] The older men are to show the younger men what it is to be self-controlled. This responsibility is certainly true for Titus in verse 7. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works.

And this modeling and showing each other is also true for the women. Verse 3 and 4 older women are to teach what is good and so train the younger women.

That's worth thinking about. Paul's saying that older women are to do more than pray. Paul's wanting the women who've lived towards the end of their lives being faithful to the gospel, still here week by week, still faithful, still wanting to serve God.

He wants these ladies to pass that on to the younger ones. It's good to be involved with people your own age, to encourage them, to look after them, but Paul is saying older women are to teach and show and model for younger women and the same applies to the men as well.

As a young man in church, if all I see is older men, leaders, being grumpy, silly, lacking any sense of self-control, then how am I going to learn?

[14 : 32] And in the same way, a teenager looking at me must be able to see some of these things modeled. Young mums will learn how to be godly wives and mothers if the older women who've already done it show them.

The church family relies on each other to learn from their experiences of how to keep following God through a long hard life. I need to be open to learn from older men what it is to be a faithful Christian.

Young people need models. And what Paul is saying is that you older men and women are them. You may not think it.

You may think, what use can I be in helping our young people? Well, you're still faithful and you're still here. And Paul says, you guys are the models.

So that means being involved in their lives, trying to be involved in their lives, taking interests, trying to model the Christian life, the self-controlled, submissive life.

[15 : 42] A young lady in Crete is certainly not going to learn how to be a good wife and mother from Titus. He'd be clueless. But it's also easy for the youthful members of the church to think, well, things are modern now.

We can't really learn from the older folk. They don't know what our world's like. Paul says, no, we must learn it from models. We must learn by seeing other people do it.

We must learn to deny the lazy, selfish longings of our hearts and be controlled in how we live because we see other people doing that. And Paul tells us in the second part of this chapter how we can manage to do this.

Thankfully, it's not just a case of us trying hard. Paul tells us it's the grace of God that trains us toward that. But that's next week. First, Paul wanted the church to know that self-control is the mark of a real Christian life.

It shows that you really believe. It is the life that is in keeping with sound doctrine. Denying the sexual urges we may often have to be pure, verse 5.

[17:00] Resisting the urge to be controlled by how we feel at any moment, wanting to be angry or whatever it is, but instead being dignified and sober-minded and sober-minded, verse 2, Christians living the truth that they believe will benefit the church.

That is the Christian life modeled in the church. And the second thing to look at is adorning the Christian life in the world. Adorning the Christian life in the world.

You see, it's not just something that benefits the church. Paul's really encouraging in another way here. He repeats something three times in verse 5, 8, and 10.

Essentially what he's saying is that as a Christian's life matches their faith, as they display to those around them what it looks like to believe sound doctrine, the result is that it shows the beauty of the gospel.

It makes the gospel attractive. Isn't that encouraging? We are the beautiful packaging that shows the rich gospel content.

[18:20] Do we believe that? Faithful Christians make the gospel look as beautiful as it is. Christians living lives that reflect what they believe means that God's words won't be reviled or criticized or hated, verse 5.

There will be nothing evil to be said about real Christians, verse 8. And finally, verse 10, the truth about God will be adorned.

It will be shown to be attractive. The gospel will look as beautiful as it is. verse 9. And as we move toward the end of these verses, the arena has changed from modeling it in the church to the workplace.

Verse 9, Paul's addressing slaves or servants and points them towards living what Christians believe in that sphere. Be an exemplary employee.

Work for your boss's benefit. Christians, says Paul, it is not in keeping with our faith to be the employee that criticizes their boss behind their back, that causes friction in the workplace by opposing their boss and having no respect for him.

[19:43] It is not the Christian life to be dishonest in how we make money. We are not to pilfer, we are to be well pleasing in the workplace, working well so that our employer is satisfied with us.

In the workplace, the slow progress, the long slog of being a hardworking employee with integrity and who is honest, who doesn't gossip behind backs, doesn't moan about his boss, that life adorns the gospel.

It makes it look beautiful. It shows how attractive the gospel really is. When colleagues are falling out with each other, when people are being dishonest, when there's friction with the boss, when colleagues need someone to share a burden with, the lazy, deceitful, grumpy, drunken people are not the ones who will be helpful.

They're not the ones people will look to. We think that the Christians in the office will look boring and weird because they refuse to join in in the drunkenness at the Christmas party, or we think that they look boring and weird because they don't join in in criticizing the outsider.

We think that the world will see us as losers in the workplace. But what Paul says is that the world will see the Christian who's worked hard, who's been honest, who's shown integrity.

[21:30] Paul says the world will see a beautiful thing. And maybe that Christian will have the opportunity to share the gospel with the person whose marriage is falling apart, or the colleague who's depressed and wonders what life is about.

In these times, the slog of the honest, hard working Christian life, the self-controlled Christian life, is attractive. The office clown or cheat or drunk, is not attractive to our struggling, questioning colleagues.

No, it's the honest, hard-working, self-controlled life that adorns the gospel. That's the Christian who's the living embodiment of the truth about Jesus.

Jesus. Remember my new iPad? It's beauty that was alluring, useful for lots of things. Well, living self-controlled, godly, submissive lives is the beautiful packaging that sold me my iPad.

bad. You can be the beautiful allure that brings people to taste the sweetest of tastes. You can adorn the gospel.

[22 : 58] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

Father, we thank you that the grace of God has appeared, and that as Christians we can be trained by him, by your Son and by your Spirit, to be faithful, growing Christians, wanting to be self-controlled.

We thank you that we don't do this by just struggle and trying as hard as we can, but we live lives like this in response to the appearance of your Son.

So we pray for your help in all of this, your help to be models in the church and to show in the world how beautiful Jesus is.

[24 : 12] Help us reflect the wonderful sweet taste of Jesus, for we ask it in his name. Amen.

Amen. H wieder together a