

The Lives that Beautify the Gospel

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[0 : 00] Well, a very good afternoon to you. Welcome to the Wednesday Lunchtime Bible Talk. Well, we're midway through a series in Paul's letter to Titus, so please do take the church Bibles there, and we're going to look at Titus chapter 2 this afternoon, and that's on page 998 in these blue Bibles. So turn with me, please, to Titus. And we are looking at chapter 2, looking at the whole chapter this afternoon, so we'll read the whole chapter together this afternoon. So Titus chapter 2, and starting at verse 1. But as for you, Titus, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young 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, Titus, 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 Saviour. 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 in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, 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. Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one disregard you. This is the word of the Lord. Well, before we think about these verses together, let's come to our Heavenly Father and pray, shall we? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we gather together here this afternoon as your people, and we wonder at the fact that we can know you at all. You are the almighty creator God, the one who created everything that we see and touch, and you created it with just a word.

And we are such lowly creatures, faced with our own sin every minute of every day, and yet you have revealed yourself to us. You have made yourself known.

[3 : 47] You have given us your scriptures, and in them you speak to us so that we can understand. In your word, your salvation is made known.

Would you help us this afternoon to listen to your word, that it would challenge our worldly thinking, that we might fix our minds on our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, and so live lives that beautify and adorn the gospel.

We ask this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. Don't you just long for friends, for family, for neighbors?

Don't you long for this city to be transformed? And not transformed in a vague sense of things just getting better, but transformed in a specific sense.

Don't you long for lives that are transformed by the gospel? People once dead in sin, now alive in Christ and living for him, and with hope of eternal life.

[5 : 09] Don't you long for that? How is that ever possible? We're tempted to think that people that we know are perhaps beyond the reach of the gospel. That's how I think much of the time.

But the hope for your friends, the hope for Glasgow, is to be found in a surprising place. The hope for your friends, for this city, for this nation, is found in the sort of churches that Titus was to establish on Crete.

Churches like that will transform lives. Churches that appoint good teachers. Teachers that will hold firm to the truth, proclaim that truth, and refute error.

Churches that unashamedly proclaim the truth that leads to godliness. Churches like that are the only hope, because only they will proclaim the life-changing gospel.

Only they will demonstrate the life-changing gospel and the lives of real people. Titus is a letter all about the good life, the godly life, and the godly life in a very surprising place.

[6 : 29] But central to good living, central to godly living, central to transformed lives, central to this letter, is teaching.

Teaching. The importance of the preaching of the apostolic gospel. Chapter 1, as we've seen over the last three weeks, is full of it. It's all about teaching and teachers and good teachers and bad teachers.

But it doesn't stop at chapter 1. Chapter 2, which we're tackling today, is all about teaching. It's all about the sort of teaching that will produce godliness.

And here is Titus' task. And it's the task for any true minister of the gospel. And that's our first point this afternoon.

Teach what accords with sound doctrine. Teach what accords with sound doctrine. Just look down again at the start and the end of our passage.

[7 : 27] Like two bookends, verses 1 and 15, give us the key idea. Titus, here is your task, says Paul. Verse 1, Titus, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Verse 15, Titus, declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. And in the middle of these two bookends, like a sandwich, Paul outlines what it is that Titus is to proclaim.

What he is to teach and preach in the Cretan church. And what he is to teach and insist upon is that which accords with sound doctrine.

Good living. Godly living. In other words, here is the sort of living that the gospel produces. And you, Titus, are to insist on that sort of living.

He's to insist on that sort of living. Good and worthy behavior can be the fruit only of sound doctrine, says the Apostle Paul. So your task is to teach.

[8 : 36] And that's a bit surprising at first, isn't it? At first reading through chapter 2, my assumption was chapter 1 is all about teaching and chapter 2 is all about how to live, about the gospel.

And yes, there is lots about how to live in this chapter. But fundamentally, Paul writes chapter 2 so that Titus will teach what it contains.

It is through the teaching of the gospel and the pressing home of its implications. It's only then that lives are transformed. If you want to grow in godliness, if your desire is to be more Christ-like, then be with the household of God where the truth is taught as much as you can.

The idea that the Christian life is a solitary life with the church as an optional extra has no place in Paul's thinking. Now, most of you here today are clearly on board with the fact that we need to be together regularly.

You're here. But let's not assume that others, younger generations, know that. Teaching of the truth that leads to godliness is the key to transforming a church, a city, a nation.

[9 : 58] And Paul urges Titus to teach, to insist on that sort of living that the gospel produces, the sort of living that you and I are to attain to.

It's the sort of living that is produced by the gospel, the sort of living that adorns the gospel, living that beautifies the good news and our Savior. That is Titus' task.

He is to teach these things. He is to insist upon them. That's his key task. And Paul sets out what this means for five groups of people.

Older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves. Paul assumes that different ages and different roles face different challenges and temptations.

I'm going to be brief here. I'll read the verse, give a sentence summary, and then pose a question to each group that Paul mentions here. So firstly, older men.

[11 : 01] Now this is probably aimed at men over 40. So if you thought you were off the hook, you may be back on it. You are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

Be the sort of man that younger men look up to and hope to be like one day. Sober, self-controlled, sound in the faith.

Are you committed and devoted to the work of the church? Or is retirement the time to take your foot off the pedal and let the younger generations do the work?

Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the younger women.

If you're an older woman here, I'm not looking anywhere in particular, be careful with your wine and your words. Rather than gossip under the guise of prayer news, use your words to teach and build up the younger women.

[12:17] If you're an older woman here this afternoon, do you take this responsibility for teaching and training younger women seriously? Are you taking that seriously?

What are younger women to be taught? What are they to aspire to? Train the younger women to love their husbands and children and to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands.

The assumption here is that loving husbands and children does not come naturally. It's something to be trained in. And speaking as a husband myself, I know that there is lots not to love about me. My children are lovely at times, but jolly hard work for most of the time. What my wife needs is an older woman to come alongside her and to help her do what is most difficult, to love her husband and her children.

Think of younger women in your church, maybe one in particular. How can you train her? How can you get alongside her, encourage her this week?

[13:34] Younger men, be self-controlled. Self-control is the great struggle for men in their teens, twenties, thirties.

Self-control when it comes to getting out of bed in the morning, when it comes to money, sex, what you look at on your phone, what time you go to bed, how much you eat and drink.

If you are a young man here this afternoon, are you an example in self-control to your peers?

Slaves. Slaves. They are to be submissive to their own masters in everything.

They are to be well-pleasing and not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith. Now the modern equivalent is employees.

I guess sometimes it feels like slavery if you're in work. But rather than just do the minimum amount of work required, rather than just ticking the boxes, Paul urges you if you're in work to seek to please your masters.

[14:43] So are you merely doing the minimum required or do you take initiative to bless your employers, to bless your company? Well, that's something of a whistle-stop tour through Paul's teaching for different groups in the church.

and Titus' ministry, his job there on Crete was to insist on practical godliness in all these sorts of areas. Are you living out the implications of the gospel as set out there in verses 2 to 10?

It would be worth reflecting on those verses this week. How do you measure up to what Paul urges Titus to insist upon, what we are to insist upon in the church today?

And perhaps as you think about that, you experience a rising panic. I fall so short. How could I possibly live that way? But Paul shows us how, and it's nothing to do with what we do, it's all to do with what Christ has done.

We see in verses 11 to 14 the gospel that changes lives. The gospel that changes lives. Notice the little word at the start of verse 11.

[16:03] For, for, here is the reason you are to live lives like that. And Paul points to past events, the appearing of the grace of God, and draws out the implications for every Christian.

The implications are so huge and all-encompassing that living the sort of life that he has just detailed seems like the only way to live. If all this in verses 11 to 14 is true, then verses 2 to 10 we've just looked at follow on.

It is only on the ground of what God has done for us in Christ that the ethical instructions he's just set out become meaningful or even possible.

God's grace, says Paul, has appeared and brought salvation for all. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, was born into our world of darkness and sin.

He lived a perfect life, a sinless life. He was crucified. He was buried. He rose from the dead. His death and his resurrection, they paid the price for sin and brought salvation to all who had turned to him in repentance.

[17 : 22] It is that wonderful, astonishing gospel of grace that Paul points us to. And not only do we look back to what God has done in Christ, but we look forward, verse 13, to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We look back to what God has done. We look forward to what he will do. In the words of Isaac Watts, which we will sing later, when I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt and all my pride, love so amazing, demands my soul, my life, my all.

In light of what he has done, we can live the sort of two to ten lifestyle that Paul sets out. Two headline implications from these verses 11 to 14.

Firstly, God's grace trains us. God's grace trains us and God's grace has bought us. God's grace trains you, verse 12, to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.

For those believers on Crete, God's grace would train them to renounce the laziness and gluttony so prevalent in the Cretan society. And for us, it is only God's grace that will help us resist worldly pleasures.

[19 : 00] Only God's grace can train us to do that. God's grace trains us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. Self-control in relation to ourselves, uprightness in relation to others, and godliness in how we relate to our heavenly father.

God's grace trains you, and God's grace has bought you, verse 14. God's grace has bought you, he 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.

God's grace has bought you from a life of lawlessness to belong to Christ to be zealous for good works. There's the pattern.

Bought from a life of lawlessness. Bought to belong to Christ. Bought to be zealous for good works. You, if you are a Christian here this afternoon, you do not belong to yourself.

You have been bought with the blood of Christ. You are not your own. Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness. He bought us for himself, eager to do good works.

[20 : 28] Here is what Christ has done for you, and it's astonishing. Will you dwell on that? Think on it. Consider what it cost him.

You have been bought by his very own blood. That is a gospel that changes lives. We have been bought from deadness to life.

Let me read some words from John Calvin. We are not our own. Let not reason nor our will therefore sway our plans and deeds.

We are not our own. Let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own. In so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.

Conversely, we are God's. Let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's. Let his wisdom and will therefore rule our actions.

[21 : 35] We are God's. Let all the parts of our life accordingly strive towards him as our only lawful goal. This is a gospel that changes lives.

The gospel is the engine that produces godliness. Dwell on those verses 11 to 14.

See what Christ has done for you. His grace trains you. His grace has brought you. That is the gospel that changes lives.

And not only that, but the sorts of lives that the gospel produces, the sorts of lives we've seen in verses 2 to 10, those sort of lives proclaim profound truths to those around us.

And here's our final point. lives. It's the lives that beautify the gospel for the watching world. The lives that beautify the gospel for the watching world.

[22 : 43] This is why this sort of ministry, the sort of teaching ministry Titus was to be engaged with, brings hope for the church, hope for this city.

Transform lives, lives that have been transformed by the gospel of the living God. they demonstrate to the watching world the beauty of the gospel. Notice three short statements in the first half of our passage.

Verses 5, 8, and 10. Each of these speaks about our behavior making the gospel attractive. So verse 5, older women are to train younger so that the word of God may not be reviled.

Verse 8, Titus is to show integrity in his teaching so that an opponent may be put to shame having nothing evil to say about us. And verse 10, slaves will be submissive so that in everything they may

adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Godly lives are a witness to those around, to the watching world. Godly lives say something.

[24 : 06] Those we live next to, work alongside, share life with, they will see a person whose life has been transformed by the gospel. The sort of lives true gospel ministry are to insist upon will make the gospel beautiful to those outside.

People will notice if you live like this. Our lives, in addition to our lips, are a witness to the gospel.

The sort of living that Titus was to insist upon, the sort of living that the gospel would produce there on Crete, that would stick out like a sore thumb.

People would notice. People would see their lives, and it would adorn the gospel. Evangelism is by what we are, in the home, in family relationships, as well as by what we say.

What is the hope for a place like Glasgow? What is the hope for the friends and family you thought about at the start of this service?

Yes, the hope is the truth, the truth of the gospel, but it's also the truth as evidenced by your life. It's the truth as adorned by the way you interact with others in the church family.

[25 : 36] You and I are to live godly lives, and we can do so as we dwell on the gospel that changes lives. And that happens primarily as we gather together as the church together and sit under instruction and sound doctrine.

The hope for Glasgow is churches that follow the pattern of Titus chapter 2. The hope for your friends is a church where this gospel, this insistence on the sort of living that accompanies the gospel is taught.

So will you pray for more teachers that will insist on gospel truth, preachers that will follow the pattern that Titus was to follow, a proclamation of the gospel truth, and an insistence upon the implications for our lives.

Lives like that will beautify the gospel. Will you pray for more ministers like that, more churches that will hold to this gospel?

Let me pray. Father, we thank you again for your word. We thank you for the gospel that has been made known, that we can know it.

[26 : 59] Thank you that the gospel transforms lives, and that comes only through the proclamation of your truth. God will hold firm to the truth, who will insist upon it, who will press home its implications, so that we see more and more churches in this land, full of people whose lives are transformed by the gospel, and what a witness that would be to the watching world.

we pray that that might be the case, for your glory and the good of the gospel. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.