

The Gospel That Shapes Christian Ethics

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bibles. Edward, as you know, is leading us through Paul's letter to Titus, which, of course, is not just a letter to Titus, but a letter to the whole church there and in our Bibles, because it's a letter for all the churches also today.

We've been a couple of weeks now in chapter 2, but we're going to be reading the whole of chapter 2 again and focusing particularly on these marvelous verses at the end of the chapter. About the gospel that shapes all of our Christian ethics, all the way we think and act in all that we do.

So Paul says to Titus, this church leader, in contrast to many who teach falsely and behave falsely, Paul says, but as for you, teach what accords with sound, with healthy 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're to teach what is good. And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, working at home, kind, submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

[1 : 33] Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. And 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.

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 our blessed hope, the appearing of the 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.

Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Good morning, everybody.

[3 : 22] Good to see you all here. Well, let's open our Bibles, if we will, please, at Titus chapter 2. And as you know, our verses for this morning are verses 11 to 15, the final part of that chapter.

And my title is, The Gospel that shapes Christian ethics. The Gospel that shapes Christian ethics. Now, I want us to notice right at the outset that the teaching of this passage hinges on two great historical events, one in the past and one still to come.

The past event is described in verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation. And what Paul means by that phrase is that God's grace, his tender, undeserved mercy, has appeared historically in the coming of Jesus 2,000 years ago.

And this grace has brought salvation. Paul says here, For all people. Which doesn't mean that all are saved. It means that it's available to all who are willing to repent and submit to Christ.

[4 : 38] But this is history. This has happened. And it lies at the heart of the Christian faith. Then we have the future event, which Paul describes in verse 13, where he says, We are waiting for our blessed hope, which is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And in that phrase, Paul is referring to the return of Jesus in glory to judge the world and bring history, as we know it, to an end. So we are living between these two greatest of all events, the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.

And it's those two events which define our understanding of what it means to be Christian. And Paul uses a striking word to describe both of these events.

It's the word epiphany. It's not translated as such here. But that's what he's saying. Verse 11, The grace of God has appeared, has epiphanied. And then verse 13, Waiting for the epiphany, the appearing of the glory.

He has appeared, and he will appear. In Paul's Greek, he uses the root word from which our word epiphany is formed. And an epiphany, literally, is a shining forth.

[5 : 57] It's a bright, glorious disclosure or revelation of something supremely important. We're most familiar with it in the church calendar to describe the visit of the wise men from the east to the baby Jesus.

And that visit is marked on the 6th of January each year. And we call it the epiphany because it's the moment when the significance of the child Jesus shines forth to the Gentile world.

The wise men are Gentiles. They represent the whole Gentile world. And they come to acknowledge that this baby is not only king of the Jews, but king of all peoples.

So this word epiphany means shining forth, revealing something which has been long concealed, but is now displayed for all to see. Now this is what Paul is talking about here in our passage.

The first epiphany, verse 11, was an epiphany of grace. The second epiphany, verse 13, will be an epiphany of glory. And all Christians live between these two supremely important moments.

[7 : 02] And it's those two epiphanies which shape the way we live, which shape our conduct and our behavior. These two epiphanies are the fountainhead of all Christian behavior.

Why then am I saying that these two epiphanies shape Christian conduct? Well, let's look at the text together. In the first main section of this letter, chapter 1, verses 5 to 9, Paul has described to Titus what kind of men Titus must appoint to be elders and teachers of the churches on the island of Crete.

And in the next section, chapter 1, verses 10 to 16, Paul explains the reason why men of this kind should be appointed as elders. And the reason is, verse 10, chapter 1, that there are many who are insubordinate, insubordinate to the word of God, empty talkers and deceivers.

And if I can pull four words out of that paragraph, all beginning with D, they are deceivers, defiled, detestable, and disobedient.

And these ungodly rogues are influencing the congregations in Crete. And Paul is saying to Titus, the best way to nullify the influence of ungodly teachers is to multiply the numbers of true teachers.

[8 : 22] Now, friends, it's exactly the same today. So what are these false teachers teaching? Well, look at chapter 1, verse 14. Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

So they are teaching untruth or anti-truth. So, chapter 2, verse 1, you, Titus, by contrast, must teach what accords with sound doctrine.

And to unpack that little phrase there in verse 1, Paul means, you, Titus, must teach the lifestyle, the behavior, which accords with the gospel. The sound doctrine is the gospel truth, the truth of what God has done for us through the death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

So Paul is saying to Titus, the Christian lifestyle, Christian conduct, lines up with the gospel, is shaped by the gospel, accords with the gospel.

That's what you must teach. And then Paul tells Titus in verses 2 to 10 of chapter 2 what that lifestyle looks like. And we worked through it verse by verse last week.

[9 : 28] And you'll remember that the heart of it is the quality of self-control. Now, Paul mentions many things here, but self-control is the dominant feature. So verse 2 of chapter 2, older men, be self-controlled.

Verse 3, older women, likewise, be self-controlled. And train the young women, verse 5, to be self-controlled. Verse 6, likewise, the younger men, the young Turks, the boy racers, they are to learn self-control.

And the same applies, verses 7 and 8, to Titus himself as an example of Christian behavior. And then verses 9 and 10, slaves who are Christians must live a self-controlled lifestyle.

Self-control. Why? Why self-control? The answer is because the self is an ugly monster caged in a human body. And if it's not controlled and kept on a very short leash, it will break out and do damage.

The lovely Bible qualities, Holy Spirit qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, and faithfulness, can only be practiced by a person who has his or her appetites and powerful emotions under careful restraint.

[10 : 48] Friends, I am, by nature, a rampant monster. Arr! And so are you. Even the sweetest, quietest, most demure, most ladylike person in this building today is a cauldron of potential dynamite.

And the dynamite within us is the thing that causes pain, difficulty, and breakdown in human relationships. It's sin. Sin is very destructive of human happiness.

It's the thing that robs human beings of peace and joy. Greed, pride, vanity, lust, envy, lying, hatred. These are the things that make up the heart of the self and they are powerfully destructive.

So Paul is saying to Titus, you must teach these Cretan Christians self-control. And what the Cretans needed to learn back in the first century is exactly what we need to learn and keep on learning in the 21st century.

Now just imagine Titus reading this letter for the first time. He must have felt daunted. And when he got to chapter 2, verse 10, he must have thought, but how can I teach such demanding standards of behavior?

[12 : 05] Paul, do you realize what you're asking me to do? These Cretans, as you've said yourself back in chapter 1, verse 12, are liars, all of them, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. I know that's true because I've been living here amongst them for some time.

You've got the measure of them, brother. That's exactly what they're like. They're difficult material. How can I make a silk purse out of a sow's ear? Well, it's verses 11 to 14 in chapter 2 which answer Titus' question.

The grace of God has appeared, verse 11. And what is the effect of this epiphany? It brings salvation for all who come to Christ.

And, verse 12, and this is critical, it trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.

It was the grace of God that lay behind his sending of Jesus into the world. He had compassion on the world. He saw how the world of men and women was groaning, wanting to be free, but everywhere enslaved by the power of sin, crying out, I want to be free, as so many pop songs still do, and yet unable to find freedom.

[13 : 21] So God looked upon this aching, baffled world of men and women. Look at Paul's words in chapter 3, verse 3. Hated by others, at the end of the verse, hated by others and hating one another.

That's what sin does to us. So God looked with tender love on this race of deeply wretched, enslaved human beings. And remember, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son to redeem it.

It was his grace, his merciful compassion that lay behind his sending of Jesus. But his grace didn't stop with the sending of Jesus. It continued to bless us by, verse 12, training us to renounce ungodliness and to learn self-control.

Now this is deeply encouraging for us because it shows that God recognizes that we need to be trained in self-control. Think of it like this.

Many Christians begin the Christian life as teenagers or young adults. Very often, at the age of 16 or 18 or 20, that's when a person repents and capitulates to the Lord Jesus, says to him in effect, Lord, you are right, I'm wrong, I'm trusting you.

[14 : 36] And that's where the Christian life begins, with repentance and trust. But that young adult knows that in their heart there is a cauldron of, verse 12, ungodliness and worldly passions.

And he or she might say, is it possible for me to make progress? How can I grow from being a baby Christian into a grown-up and self-controlled Christian? Well, Paul's answer is, the grace of God trains us to renounce ungodliness.

And this training moves us from being absolute beginners to a point of real and ongoing progress. Now, it's just like what happens in other spheres of life where training is necessary.

Think of learning to drive a car. That's a training operation, isn't it? I can still remember my very first driving lesson when I was 17. I'm sure that if you drive a car, you can remember your very first driving lesson.

Well, you sit there in the car, don't you, with your instructor, with your hands on the wheel. The instructor says, look in that wing mirror. So you look in the mirror. What do you see, he says? You say, I can see a thin red-headed man with an Alsatian dog.

[15:50] He says, you're not looking for dogs, you gherkin. You say, what's the mirror for then? He says, you're looking for traffic, cars, buses, beep, beep, brum, brum. Oh, you say, I get it now.

The mirror's there to give me eyes in the back of my head, is it? Well done, sunshine, he says. You're making progress. And so the training begins and it goes on and gradually you learn car control.

Any training leads to the growth of control. The tennis player learns to control the racket. The violinist learns to control the bow. And the Christian, because of the grace of God, learns control of the self, that cauldron of powerful passions.

John Newton's great hymn, Amazing Grace, expresses both the initial power of saving grace and the ongoing power of training grace. Here's the initial power of saving grace.

God's grace first taught my heart to fear. His grace, my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.

[16:59] That's the start of the Christian life. Now here's how he goes on. Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. His grace has brought me safe this far and grace will lead me home.

So John Newton sees the power of God's grace to keep him and protect him right the way through to the end of his life. Now I want us to look again at verse 12 and to ask how exactly does the grace of God train us negatively to renounce ungodliness and positively to live a self-controlled life.

Well the word renounce means to say no if necessary again and again. So training in godliness, training in self-control involves learning to say no repeatedly to temptation.

Now the Bible is full of teaching about both godly behavior and ungodly behavior. It teaches us both how to live and how not to live. And we know that we're fighting against temptation every day.

And temptation comes at us in many different ways. I want us to think of just one example. One example and that is the temptation to be lazy and fearful because those two things can often go together.

[18:18] The temptation to be lazy and fearful. Now imagine that you're a young person. You're a fairly new Christian. You're very inexperienced in the Christian life. And somebody more senior comes to you and asks you to take on a responsibility of Christian service.

For example to teach a Sunday school class children or perhaps to lead a Bible study group. And your initial reaction when you're first asked to do this is to think help I can't do this.

I don't know the Bible well enough. I don't know enough about people. I can't think on my feet. So you have a double temptation. The first is to be lazy. You think I'd much rather spend my Saturday afternoon relaxing and chilling than preparing a class for children.

But the second temptation is fear. I can't do this. I'm not adequate to the task. So for a while you feel very uncomfortable and you churn it over in your own mind.

And then finally you go to the person who's spoken to you and you say okay yes I'll do it. I don't feel up to it but I'll do it. And you do. And you survive.

[19:29] And then you do it a second time a few weeks later and you survive again. And you begin to recognize that what you're doing is really valuable. So what has happened in your life?

You've been presented with two alternatives. Either you say yes to a challenging task or you say no and give way to the temptation to be lazy, fearful, and untrusting in the Lord.

In saying yes you set yourself a personal precedent. Your character is being formed. You're learning to be a person who says yes to the Lord's challenging invitations.

And equally you're setting yourself a precedent in saying no to temptation. temptation. The way we respond today shapes the way that we will respond next week and next year and in ten years time. So we learn over time to say yes to the Lord's way and no to the ungodly temptation. I once knew of a Christian man who had a small card mounted on his desk and on it was written just four words.

[20:42] As now so then. In other words the way I respond today to problems and temptations will shape the way that I respond to them in the future.

As now so then. And it's the grace of God that trains us. He is at work to reshape every Christian's life. He's able to give us the strength to renounce ungodliness and to live an increasingly self-controlled life.

To say no to temptation again and again. And what is the great incentive to do this? Well verse 11 tells us the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation.

Jesus the savior the salvation bringer has come. So we look back in history to that coming of Jesus 2000 years ago and we know that his death and resurrection have saved us at great cost to himself. And this great fact of history impels us to turn away from the sin that he died to save us from so that we can learn to live self-controlled lives in the present age trusting him to give us strength to do what pleases him.

[21 : 56] And it's such a good thing such an encouraging thing to learn this growth in godliness together to undergo this training together as a body of Christians. We're all in training.

It never stops. It's not as though you get to 50 or 60 years of age and say oh well I'm a grown up now. I can stop training. No. We need to keep on training till we're 105.

The devil doesn't stop tempting you when you reach 60 or 70. So we help each other to renounce ungodliness. It's a corporate activity. And what a blessing and joy it is to belong to a group of people who are all learning together to say no to what is wrong and yes to self-control.

It makes the church a happy place to be if we're united in that aim. So that first epiphany the grace of God appearing in the life death resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus that is a powerful initiative to us.

It trains us to say no and again no and again no to temptation and to say yes and again yes and again yes to self-control.

[23 : 06] This first coming of Jesus shapes our conduct but so does the second epiphany and this is what Paul turns to immediately in verse 13.

Have a look at verse 13. What are we doing in the present age? Paul says we are waiting. What are we waiting for?

What are we waiting for at this very moment? A cup of tea at the end of the service perhaps a driving test a hospital appointment a wedding a week's holiday in the Algarve well all of us are waiting for that sort of thing but if we're Christians we're waiting for something infinitely more important and infinitely more desirable.

We are waiting verse 13 for our blessed hope that means our sure expectation of blessedness and what is that? It is the epiphany the appearing of the glory the beautiful dazzling splendor of our Lord Jesus at his return.

The apostles Peter, James and John had seen a foretaste of that dazzling splendor when he took them up the mountain and was transfigured in front of them. Paul himself on the road to Damascus had been overcome by the shining glory of the risen Lord Jesus.

[24 : 28] That was the experience that stopped him in his tracks and redefined the whole of his subsequent life. But this final future appearing of Jesus will be immeasurably more powerful because it will bring our world's present age to an end and will usher in the new world where pain and tears and mourning and death have no place.

Now let me ask friends are you consciously waiting for that? If you're young and fit and carefree you may not be thinking very much about it at the moment but trust me you will soon be older and less carefree and you'll become much more conscious of the sufferings of the world and of your own sufferings because nobody comes through life unscathed and then you'll begin to long deep in your heart for the return of Jesus.

Think of Paul because he's an example for us. He was simultaneously a deeply happy man and a deeply suffering man and while he had much joy in his life he also experienced a powerful longing to leave this pain-filled world so as to be with Christ.

There are two or three moments in his letters when he speaks of his longing as a groaning. It's good for us to learn to groan because it will sharpen our appetite for the world to come the new world.

So all this means that the Christian is a gentleman in waiting or a lady in waiting. Now we have lots to do in this world getting on with an active life of Christian service but all the time our eyes are on the horizon waiting for the great epiphany the appearing of his glory.

[26 : 14] And when he comes the whole world will know about it simultaneously. As Jesus himself said as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

And the fact that he is coming at an hour which no one can predict that fact is a great incentive to us to live in a way that pleases him because we don't want him when he comes to find us playing at being Christians but actually living in ungodliness and worldly passions despite our play.

No, we want him to find us enthusiastically serving him and honoring him in our behavior. But as we turn into verse 14 you'll see that Paul takes us back again to Christ's first epiphany and he unpacks its significance more fully than he has done in verse 11.

So let's look at the details of verse 14 which act as a great encouragement to us to renounce ungodliness and to live self-controlled lives. In verse 14 Paul is unpacking the meaning of the death of Jesus.

Now he doesn't actually use the word death there or the word cross but he's certainly talking about the death of Jesus when he uses the phrase gave himself for us.

[27 : 33] And what Paul means by that is not that he gave us his time or his energy or his teaching though he certainly did all of that. What Paul means is that he gave his life.

It's exactly the same idea of giving that we find in John 3.16 that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So it's a giving and sacrifice. It's the most extreme form of sacrificial giving. It's giving right to the point of death. And Paul uses a phrase at the end of verse 13 which shows just how extraordinary this self-giving of Jesus is.

Who is this one who gave himself for us? He is, says Paul verse 13 our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Now just think about that phrase.

Paul is not talking there about God the Father and God the Son. He's not talking about two persons of the Holy Trinity. He's talking just about Jesus. And Jesus is, says Paul, not only our Savior but our great God.

[28 : 45] This is one of the most unambiguous declarations in the whole of the New Testament of the deity of Jesus. But doesn't it make his self-giving all the more extraordinary?

The one who has given himself up to death for us is our God as well as our Savior. Can God die? Well, not as God the Father but as God the Son.

Yes, he can, he could, and he did. Charles Wesley puts it beautifully in his hymn, 'Tis mystery all, the immortal dies. Now it is a great mystery.

Jesus died. He really did die. He became a lifeless corpse and he was buried. And yet he rose again because he had what the New Testament describes as an indestructible life.

He was destroyed and yet is indestructible. So what was the purpose of his self-giving on the cross? Paul goes on to explain.

[29 : 47] First, he gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness. Now redeem in the Bible means to rescue or deliver or liberate.

death. So Jesus' death liberates us from our bondage to lawlessness, which is sin. A person who is not a Christian is in bondage to the power of lawlessness and that bondage will lead ultimately to eternal death and eternal ruin.

The wages of sin, the wages of lawlessness is death. But the death of Jesus liberates the believer from that dreadful slavery. So it means that if you're a Christian, you're now released from prison.

The prison door shuts behind you. You're free. You're in the open air. You no longer have to sing I want to be free. Now you can sing I am free. I'm redeemed, rescued from all that lawlessness.

All of it, says Paul. Not a sin remains on my record which can accuse me on the day of judgment. But Paul hasn't finished telling us of the benefits of the death of Jesus.

[30 : 55] Secondly, he gave himself to purify for himself a people. Purify. So there we were filthy in his sight, besmirched, soiled, spoiled.

The marks of sin's devastation all over us. But he gave himself for us to purify us, to wash us clean. Purification simply means the removal of impurities.

It's what you do every time you put a shirt through the washing machine. The soap removes the dirt, then clean water removes the soap suds, and your shirt emerges, purified.

But it's neither soap nor water that purifies the people of God. It's blood. As it's put in the book of Revelation, they've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

And then thirdly, still in verse 14, he gave himself for us that we should be a people for his own possession.

[31 : 57] Now, the man of the world will say, I possess myself, thank you. I'm my own man. But the Christian says, I belong to Jesus. I'm possessed by him.

The man of the world replies, are you handing over the title deeds of your life to somebody else? Look after your own destiny, man. Be your own master. But the Christian replies, I was made to be possessed by the Lord.

In fact, I'm his twice over. He has a double right to me. First of all, because he created me. And second, because when I was lost and far away, he redeemed me.

So I'm his by creation and I'm his by redemption. That has always been my destiny, to belong to him. And then fourthly, all of this, redemption, purification, and possession, leads to the Christian being zealous for good works.

End of verse 14. Zealous. Not fanaticism, but enthusiasm. Think of it like this. You get up early in the morning.

[33 : 06] It's not a great moment, is it? You switch on the radio and listen to the news. I suggest you do that very briefly, because it's universally depressing. Then you look in the mirror, seven o'clock in the morning, and that line from the hymn comes back to you, change and decay in all around I see.

Then you look out at the weather. It's pouring with rain again. Now, all these things conspire to make you feel pretty gloomy. But you then remember what you've been redeemed for.

Why you've been purified by the blood of Christ. Why you're possessed by him. It's to be zealous for good works. You remember why you're here. Not just to get through another day grimly.

Not just to grit your teeth and survive for another 24 hours. But to get on with serving the Lord enthusiastically. That's why Christ has given himself up to death for us.

so that we should be zealous, enthusiastic for the good works he has given each of us to do, which is to serve him and other people. Now, these four component parts of verse 14 actually have a long hinterland to them.

[34 : 18] They show us the deep connection that Paul's thinking has with the Exodus. First, there's the giving up to death of the Passover lamb.

You remember the story. The Israelites, just before they marched out of Egypt to their freedom, they witnessed God killing the firstborn of every Egyptian family. That was his just judgment on the Egyptians.

But the Israelites themselves were spared because they daubed the blood of the Passover lamb over their doors. And when the destroying angel came and saw the blood, he passed over that house and spared its inhabitants.

And the sacrificial death of Jesus, which took place purposefully at the Passover festival in Jerusalem. That was the final and effective blood shedding which has caused God to spare every person who trusts in the death of Jesus.

Verse 14, he gave himself for us. That is a sacrificial death. Then secondly, keep your eyes on verse 14. This sacrificial death has redeemed us.

[35 : 25] And redemption is a great book of Exodus word. For example, in Exodus chapter 6, the Lord says to the people of Israel, I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from slavery to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.

And that outstretched arm indicates both strength and love. Then thirdly, purification. The teaching of the books of Moses often speaks of the sacrificial blood purifying everything used in Israelite worship.

And this idea is beautifully expressed in Hebrews chapter 9. Under the law, that is the law of Moses, almost everything is purified with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

And then fourth, Paul speaks of a people for Christ's own possession. And that idea of possession is powerful throughout the Old Testament.

It comes out like this in Exodus chapter 6 where the Lord says to the Israelites, I will take you to be my people and I will be your God.

[36 : 39] So do you see it's a mutual possession. You are mine and I am yours. And that's the language of marriage, isn't it? Roderick, will you take Susanna to be your wife?

Yes, I will. Susanna, will you take Roderick to be your husband? Amen. Preach it, brother, with all my heart, she says. To be possessed by the Lord gives us a wonderful ultimate security. It means we're no longer waifs and orphans, no longer like flotsam and jetsam on the surface of the ocean. Lost souls. We belong to him.

As it's put in Psalm 100, it is he who has made us and we are his. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. He owns us. He feeds us and cares for us.

And finally, will bring us to his own wonderful home. So verse 14 brings out the strong Old Testament understanding that lies behind Paul's teaching.

[37 : 45] We have sacrificial death, redemption, purification, and possession by God. Now that's the gospel. Christ has died for us. His death has redeemed us.

His shed blood has purified us. And now he has the right to possess us. All of which means there is only one way for us to live in response. And that is that we are zealous, enthusiastic for good works. And what are these good works that we're to be so enthusiastic about? Well, the good works are to live in the way that Paul describes in verses 2 to 10. That's what he means by a life of good works. So the older men learn to be self-controlled and loving and steadfast. The older women learn to be self-controlled, not frittering their time away with Chardonnay at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but getting alongside the younger women and lovingly teaching them how to run their homes well, how to love their husbands, how to care for their children.

Good works for the younger men means learning self-discipline. Difficult for the young Turk, but if he's ever going to grow into maturity and responsibility, he's got to learn to discipline his appetites.

[38 : 58] And the way that he uses his time. Then Titus, as a senior leader, must be an excellent example or model of the self-disciplined life. And Christians who are slaves must learn to honor their masters and live the kind of life, verse 10, which adorns the doctrine of God our Savior, a lifestyle that commends the gospel to everybody that they live amongst.

Now, Paul hasn't quite finished. He has a final word for Titus in verse 15, and it's a strong message. Verse 15, Declare these things.

Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Declare these things. So what are these things?

These things surely are the ethical instructions of verses 2 to 10. Paul is saying to Titus, these things are non-negotiable. This is the lifestyle which accords with the sound doctrine of the gospel. Titus, you must declare these things clearly in your teaching, and you must insist on them. Now, in our own day, in our modern world, these things are very often not insisted on in churches.

[40 : 14] They're not declared with authority. Many church leaders, alas, are not willing to exhort or rebuke. And the failure of churches and church leaders to act in line with verse 15 brings churches to ruin.

Such churches become collections of people without discipline and without self-discipline. Anything goes. Multiple lifestyles and behaviors are tolerated.

Friends, we need discipline. It protects us. I need to know, I need to know that if I start to misbehave with money, with alcohol, with somebody else's wife, I shall be called to account by the leaders of the church.

Church leaders cannot be endlessly nice people. The Bible holds us to ethical standards and it's only as the church insists on the Bible's standards that we can truly experience the love of Christ and the safety of being sheep in his flock.

This verse 15, it's a message from Christ himself to us through his apostle. It's Christ who declares these ethical standards. The teaching of the Bible on how to behave, it comes from God.

[41 : 31] It's not human morality. It's the divine lifestyle. Christ died for us so that we should live in a way that pleases him. That is why Titus must declare these things, must exhort and rebuke with all authority and must allow no one to disregard the teaching.

Well, let's pray together. Dear God, our Father, we confess to you that we readily stray like sheep from the good path of discipline and truth, but we thank you that the Bible teaches us so clearly how to live as redeemed people saved by the blood of our Lord Jesus.

So be at work, we pray, in our hearts. Enable us to love the truth that you teach us and to hate the behavior that contradicts it. Help us to be men and women who adorn the doctrine that speaks of your great salvation.

we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.