

2. Consistent Christian Conduct

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Date: 18 January 2012

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Our gracious God and our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you so much, Lord, for this time together today.

We thank you that we can enter your gates with thanksgiving and with praise. Father, we think on what a privilege it is to come before you as your people.

And with the psalmist, we acknowledge that a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. Lord, we know that you are a sun and a shield, that you bestow favour and honour, and that you withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly.

And so we thank you for the hope of the gospel, that in Christ your grace has appeared, bringing salvation, not because of our works done in our righteousness, but according to your own mercy.

We thank you that we have been justified by your grace alone and have become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. And so, Father, as your people, we pray for your help in living lives worthy of the calling which we have received.

[1 : 13] We ask that by the inspiration of your Spirit, you will help each of us to be sober-minded, self-controlled, sound in faith and love, such that your gospel may not be reviled.

Help us, Lord, to be submissive to our employers, to be well-pleasing to them, so that in everything the teaching about you may be attractive. And so we ask you, Lord, to bless this time, to open our eyes, open our hearts to hear, to understand, and to obey what you have to say to us.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. One book I've found helpful as I've been preparing this series is *Evangelism Through the Local Church* by Michael Green.

I think it's still in print, but it's available on Amazon. But he tells the story of a Chinese factory worker who was a Christian, and he worked in this gigantic, soulless factory in communist China, and there wasn't much of an atmosphere.

But he became known as the man who whistled while he worked. He was happy, and so he began to whistle. And after he left the factory, he pastored a church, and I think Michael Green was speaking to him and said, how do you get people to come to your church?

[2 : 34] And he said, well, I don't. People just come and ask me why I was whistling in the factory. And I tell them about my faith. I give them the reason for the hope that I have. This Chinese man knew that a consistent Christian life is attractive to the world around.

People saw his joy. And then they began to ask questions. Why are you so happy at work? And Titus chapter 2, which we're about to read, this is really Paul's message, that consistent Christian living is attractive.

The key verse for today is chapter 2, verse 10. That in everything, Christians may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. So we'll read these verses together.

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.

Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behaviour, 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.

[4 : 02] 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 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 our 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.

Well, this is our second study under the title of Everyday Evangelism.

[5 : 21] Last week we considered the episode of Philip and the Ethiopian, and we saw how that in each of our lives God brings us into contact with people who do not yet know him, and we are given opportunities to get to know them, to open conversation, and to seek to guide those conversations to the things of Christ.

We saw the importance of listening to people, but then presenting to them Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. And so we were encouraged to pray for opportunities, and to look for opportunities each day to share with the people we encounter.

But today I want to come at things from a slightly different angle. Today we will be asking the question, does it matter how we live as Christians? What role do our lives play as we seek to evangelise people?

And according to Titus, of course, it's a very important role. In fact, according to Bible Society research done a few years ago, it is very important indeed. This is a study conducted by the Bible Society, and it's called Finding Faith Today, and they interviewed thousands of people.

And they said, how did you come to know Christ yourself? And apparently 15% of men and 24% of women said the behaviour of a Christian friend was a major influence in them coming to faith.

[6 : 43] A further 39% of men and 40% of women said it was a supportive factor. It was very important, but not the main factor. And one of the quotations given to the interviewers was this, they, that is the Christians, seemed so different.

When I was in their presence, I felt different than when I was with other people. I realised that I did not have what they had. And the researchers saw a pattern.

The people notice an attractive difference in the life of believers. They hear why there is a difference, because of the grace of God, and they begin to ask questions before themselves being invited to receive that grace.

A repeated pattern. Suddenly that was the case in my own life. I had some Christian friends who said things which sounded strange to me, but they weren't strange themselves. And so I had some thinking to do about what they were telling me.

So really Titus chapter 2 is all about the importance of a consistent Christian life, because such a life bears an eloquent testimony to the gospel of grace.

[7 : 55] To give some context, briefly the letter is written by Paul. It's sent to Titus chapter 1 verse 4, and he commands Titus to appoint elders on the island of Crete.

One of the key responsibilities of those elders, verse 9, is to teach. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also rebuke those who contradict it.

So the elder is to teach the gospel as has been handed down to him. And the reason that was so urgent, verse 10, is because there were many who were insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

There were false teachers, whom Paul describes as deceivers. And the harm they were causing was very obvious. They must be silenced, verse 11, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

So they were disrupting families. They were causing people heartache. And they were doing so, verse 11, for shameful gain. They were doing it for money. They saw godliness as a means of gain.

[9 : 09] They were motivated by greed. And Paul says, they were no different from the society around them. Verse 12, one of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

That's a quotation from a Cretan prophet a few centuries earlier. And he was describing his own countrymen. And he gave that very unflattering description. And Paul says, verse 13, this testimony is true.

So, Titus was in the middle of a very greedy, a self-centered, a materialistic, a lazy society where people were slaves to their passions and to their pleasures.

A society not particularly unlike our society today. I drove past an inn in Paisley the other day and it had three signs outside. It had eat, drink, sleep.

And I thought, for many people, that really is the definition of happiness, isn't it? Eating, drinking and sleeping. Well, that was the case in Crete. Cretans are liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. And the false teachers were just the same, motivated by greed.

[10:20] In fact, one of the commentators says, there was a Greek verb, *kretizo*, derived from Crete, which meant to lie. They were notorious liars.

But it has to be different for the Christian. Chapter 2, verse 1. Titus has to teach what accords with sound doctrine. And in our passage today, Paul gives commands for how Christian men and women are to relate to one another, how they are to manage their homes, how Christian employees are to relate to their employers.

And the point he makes is there must be an attractive distinctiveness between the Christian and those in the world. Verse 2, men are to be sober-minded, they're to be self-controlled, sound in faith and in love.

Verse 3, older women are not to be slanderers, they're not to spend all their days gossiping, or slaves to much wine, casually drinking all afternoon.

Younger women are to care for their families, younger men are to be self-controlled, and Timothy, the Christian teacher, is to have such sound speech that he cannot be condemned.

[11:32] Verse 9 to verse 10 describes Christians in the workplace. We don't have, officially, we don't have slavery today, but slaves were to be submissive to their masters, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith.

They were to be good employees, they were to do what they were asked to do, and they were not to speak back. So there was to be quite a difference between the Cretans, the liars, the evil beasts, the lazy gluttons, and the Christians.

They were to speak the truth, they were to be pure, they were to be hard-working, and they were to be self-controlled. And sometimes we see that difference very visibly.

I go to a conference down south once a year, and the venue of the conference has changed this year. It's like a holiday village. And I was asking one friend why that is the case.

It's such a well-suited thing. And he said, well, the reason is the company that owns it loses tens of thousands of pounds this week because the Christians spend no money on gambling and very little on alcohol.

[12:35] Normally they make tens of thousands of pounds over these five days. And so they literally said, you have to go somewhere else for your conference. A very clear distinction, the people of the world and the people of God.

And Paul says there ought to be a clear distinction, but it must be an attractive one. And he's very clear to point out that it is not a distinction of who's better than who. He's very clear that it is entirely due to the grace of God.

Chapter 2, verse 11, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. Again, in chapter 3, he reminds the Cretans they were just the same.

We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to passions and pleasures. But, verse 4, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.

So the Cretans were to be different, but the reason for that difference was not their own goodness, but the grace of God. And that led to a change in their attitude.

[13:50] They realised that they were living not just for this life, they were living for something more. There is a very prevalent attitude I encounter among people that says you've just got one life, so make the most of it.

In fact, if you buy a big issue this month, there was an interview with Michel Roux, the chef, and he says exactly that. He says, you've got one life, make the most of it. But it's very pervasive. You see it in things like travel magazines, you know, the 50 places to see before you die, the 50 restaurants to eat in before you die.

You see it when you talk to young people today. I'm chatting to a young man outside Central Station. He said, this is the only life I have, I want to make the most of it. And he spent his time standing with his friends outside Central Station.

This nihilism, this hopelessness, this life is all we have, therefore we have to fill it, full of things.

Well, that's what the Cretans thought. That's why they were slaves to pleasures and to passions, trying to enjoy themselves as much as they could before they lost everything.

But Paul says to the Christian, that isn't you, verse 13, chapter 2. They were waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[15:09] They had something to live for. They had the promise of a new and a glorious creation, of an eternal future with Christ and God, in whose presence is fullness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore.

So they were to be self-controlled. Of course, as Christians, we enjoy so many good things that God gives, but we're not to be consumed by them. I had a lovely Thai meal last night with some friends.

We had a great time. We were laughing and joking. It was a very happy occasion. And then the waitress came with the bill and for some reason they only charged us 50% of the price on the menu.

So it was an even happier occasion. We enjoy so many good things. But we have so much to look forward to. So the Christians had something to live for. But they also had someone to live for.

Verse 14. 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.

[16:14] How remarkable that God should wish us to be his people and him to be our God. And how astonishing that he should give his own son to bring us out of sin and darkness into his wonderful light.

Be holy he said to the people of Israel as I am holy. And so the Christians were to spend their time not serving themselves their own pleasures their own passions but their time serving God.

They were not to concern themselves with how they could please themselves but how they could please their heavenly father. know the joy and the wonder of worshipping and serving and pleasing him.

It was the grace of God which made all the difference in their lives. And Paul says it is so important therefore that they live self-controlled lives and he gives them two reasons why they must.

When I was at school we used to have a peculiar uniform. We had bright red socks and shorts until we were in high school and then in high school you got a pair of trousers and I think grey socks but we had a purple blazer and I'm more sort of autumnal colouring you know greens, browns and purple I was quite ginger at the time it wasn't a particularly good look but we had to wear this purple blazer and we were told that we were free to go down into the village to the shops but if we did we weren't to smoke we weren't to fight we weren't to swear we weren't to be rude to old people because we were representing the school and if we got caught doing those things of course people would say well what kind of school do these boys go to that they let them get away with things like that what kind of teachers do they have that they behave that way and it is so true in our society that many people's impression of God of Christ of the gospel is formed not by what they read in scripture but what they see in the lives of Christians one famous preacher said we are the only

[18:24] Bible many people will ever read and Paul's great concern for the Christians in Crete is that the testimony of their lives matches that of their lips chapter 2 verse 5 why do Christian homes have to be self-controlled and loving verse 5 so that the word of God may not be reviled why does Titus have to watch what he says and how he conducts himself chapter 2 verse 8 so that an opponent may be put to shame having nothing evil to say about us then as now he realised there were enemies of the gospel there were opponents there were people who wanted Christians to be publicly shamed and he says you must be careful therefore in your conduct and your conversation that you give no one an opportunity to slander you and consequently to slander God you see when people see Christians living inconsistently it's easy to point the finger and say you see I told you so there's nothing in it there isn't a

God who changes lives the gospel isn't the power of God for salvation for all who believe it's all in your mind and they can write it off and they can continue living however they wish and Paul says to Titus no don't give people any opportunity to accuse you in that way but he says you can also positively promote the gospel chapter 2 verse 10 talking about the relationship of employees to employers and he says 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 I think the NIV has it they may make the teaching about God our saviour attractive and the word used it's an interesting word it's the word used to describe arranging jewels to show off their full beauty it's not that we have to make the teaching attractive the teaching is very attractive but it's to show people the attractiveness and the beauty of the gospel of God to show people the beauty of holiness and Paul says it is attractive when people are living godly and holy lives

Michael Green in his book describes it he says we can all think of people like that people with attractive testimony they laugh at problems their lives have been transformed they're fun to be with they're whole hearted in everything they do they are outward looking people not taken up all the time with their own concerns there is a warm honest instantaneous practical love about them they're concerned for justice they're not enslaved by past custom they are great people to have as friends they are the kind of people who seem so different who seem to have something that others miss the kind of people that whistle in the factory when everyone else is miserable and Paul says that is attractive and living an attractive life will inevitably make people ask questions why is it you do this why do you say no to ungodliness why do you renounce ungodly passions why do you live a self controlled upright and godly life and it will create an opening to explain the hope we have within us so in closing therefore three brief points of application firstly recognise the wonder of the gospel it's not because of anything we've done we've been saved all because of the grace and the mercy and the love of God but recognise the responsibility that comes with it that we are ambassadors for Christ and as we are known publicly as Christians people will watch us and be looking for anything by which they can accuse us this is especially true as we saw in verse 8 of those in teaching roles perhaps a particular word for Cornhill students a particular responsibility rests upon you or anyone leading a small group or a bible study or a Sunday school class recognise the responsibility secondly pursue holiness in 1st

Timothy Paul commands Timothy to train himself for godliness we are therefore to seek out sound teaching we are to seek out the gospel that was faithfully passed on to listen to it and to put it into practice to say no to worldly passions and unrighteousness and thirdly and finally we are to rely on the grace of God in chapter 3 verse 5 he tells us we are not saved because of our works but because of God's mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit we cannot change by ourselves it is only the power of God's spirit at work in us that can change us that can bring forth spiritual fruit and enable us to be the kind of person Paul commands us here to be so we must very humbly therefore and prayerfully ask God to forgive us our failings we must acknowledge our weakness before him confess our sin and ask for his power to be at work in our lives

I certainly learned this a few years ago I was working in Edinburgh in the hospitals and I wasn't particularly good at what I was meant to be doing and we did a lot of night shifts and I don't really function after 10pm at night and unbeknownst to me one of the nurses used to call me Dr.

[24 : 17] Grumpy and perhaps that's not too hard to believe and I used to get upset because things went wrong in the health service that came as a shock and there came one day when I realised that actually things were always going to go wrong and rather than getting upset about it I could just get on with it and I asked God to help me not to be Dr.

Grumpy and that's an ongoing prayer but we have to recognise we cannot change by ourselves we need to acknowledge our weakness and we need to ask God for the power to change Christians are to be different from the Cretans we have something to live for we have someone to live for and we have a great responsibility of adorning the gospel with our lives that others might ask us the reason for the hope we have within us let's pray together Father we thank you that it is by your grace that we are saved and we thank you Lord for the renewal and regeneration of your Holy Spirit that you call us out of darkness into your wonderful light Lord you appoint us to areas of service in your kingdom and you call us to be your ambassadors Lord to live for you and to speak for you and so we ask your help this week that we might give no one any reason to revile the word of God and at the same time Lord by your power at work in us the teaching of the gospel may be attractive to those around us we pray that we may be salt and light we might be that city on a hill which cannot be hidden and that as we come into contact with people Lord they might be intrigued and we may be given an opportunity to give a reason for the hope we have within us so we thank you for involving us in the world of worldwide mission and we thank you that you go before us and with us every step and so we praise you for our time together in Jesus name Amen