

Shaped by God's Grace

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[0 : 00] Father, sometimes your word reinforces what we just long to hear and long to do and things that we really just want to celebrate.

And sometimes your word seems to go against the grain. Sometimes, Father, we're afraid of your word and we don't even want to look at it. We worry, Father, that your word will hurt us, that your word will diminish us, make us less.

So, Father, we bring these things before you. We confess, Father, that we often don't even articulate that we have these different dynamics going on within us. But we come before you, Father, acknowledging our frailty.

And we ask, Father, that you would pour out your Holy Spirit gently upon us, but deeply upon us as we read your word. And, Father, we ask that you would make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to read your word so that we will bring you glory in our everyday lives.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. So, for some of you, that's not a good beginning, is it?

[1 : 18] One of the commentaries, I always read some academic commentaries as part of my preparation for my sermons. And one of the commentaries that I read was written in the late 1950s. And when he came to this part of Titus 2, which was just read a couple of minutes ago, when he came to Titus 2, I'm not making this up, he said, this contains such uncontested common sense that I do not know what to say about it.

And I thought to myself, my, the world has certainly changed in 60 years. I don't know how carefully you were listening to the text as it was written, but for many people, as they're listening to the text, they think the first thoughts that come to our minds, maybe not yours, but to many people's minds, or maybe another way to put it is, even if you thought that it's a fairly simple text, imagine reading it in a Tim Hortons or a Starbucks.

Imagine taking it to your office and reading the text. And inwardly, you would know that people are bristling. This text treats men and women unequally and is discriminatory.

This text is an abomination because it tells women to submit to their husbands. This text is an abomination because it seems to legitimize slavery.

And then, imagine having a text that gives advice to the different genders in the day and age of Caitlyn Jenner. And of trans bathrooms.

[2 : 54] And for some people, they would just say, this text is so completely and utterly hopelessly unhelpful at the best, oppressive at the worst.

Why on earth are you even paying any attention to it? One of the things we do here at the Church of the Messiah is we read through books of the Bible. When we read through books of the Bible and we preach through books of the Bible, it means that we can't just pick and choose the little bits and parts of the Bible that we like to read.

And it's part of a way of modeling. In a sense, it's an attempt for the congregation to embark on a journey of common discipleship where we learn to read the Bible together and look at parts of the Bible that, left to our flesh, we would probably avoid reading.

In fact, there's whole parts of the Bible in today's world. And it's probably true in every culture, in every generation. I mentioned in my blog, the thing in the bulletin today, that if the Bible is in fact God's word written, it means that it's always countercultural in every culture.

In a very, very militaristic or violent culture, things about turning the other cheek might be deeply offensive. It's going to be different in different cultures, but there's always going to be, if in fact it is a word from God and not just a word from our culture, there in fact are always going to be things in the Bible which are countercultural and hard for the culture to listen to.

[4 : 18] And so there are parts of the Bible that are an undiscovered country because we don't want to enter into them and reflect upon them and meditate upon them and talk about them with each other and try to learn what it is that this undiscovered country is calling us to enter into and live in and flourish.

So that's what we're going to do. We're looking at Titus 2. So get your Bibles. It'd be a really important Sunday to have your Bibles to look at this for yourself. And I'm going to do something a little bit.

Andrew, could you just put up the first of those Bible passages? I think it's the one for older men. Now, I'm not expecting you necessarily to be able to read it. Some of you have eyesight that can read this quite effortlessly and some of you can't.

But that's fine. You should have your own Bibles or you can look up there. What I want to make it first right off the bat as we get into it is it's actually from a literary, as soon as I say literary, I know that some people go like this.

So just the text, the Bible text is written in a, if you wanted to sort of, I don't have a, I need a really big screen. But it would be as if, you see at the top there it says, verse 1, but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

[5 : 35] And you'd almost want to have a colon there. And then what's going to happen is after the colon, he's going to say, here's a few specifics for older men. Here's a few specifics for older women.

Here's a few specifics for younger women. Here's a few, here's one specific for younger men. Here's something for leaders. Here's something for slaves. And then he completes the thought beginning in verse 11.

So one way to read the text is if you're an older man, in fact, maybe if you're going to meditate upon the text as an older man, is to look at it in this particular way.

You'd read verse 1, then verse 2, then you skip down to verse 11. And you get all of the weight of Paul's thought to you. And if you're an older woman, you'd read verse 1, and then you'd read verses 3 and the first few words of verse 4.

Then you go down to verse 11 to 14 to get the full weight for it, all the way through. And that's the way that the text is set up. And you'll see that everything which he's going to say, all of the advice for older men, all of the advice...

[6 : 42] So when he says... So here, I'll just read it as if I'm an older man, because that's probably what I am. By the way, I just, out of curiosity, I checked the King James Version. And rather than the word older, you know what they use?

Age. Aged. So for aged men. You know, the nice thing about the King James Version means that all of us are reading the stuff for younger men and younger women, because there's no aged people here.

But anyway, so here's how you... But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. That's what he's going to say. Okay, going to give you an example for some specifics for older men, in verse 2, older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith and love, and in steadfastness.

And just before I read verses 11 to 14, sober-minded, I think some of your translations might say temperate or something like that. Another way to translate it is having an unclouded mind.

An unclouded mind. Our minds can become clouded by lust, by ideology, by greed, by anger, by envy, by hatred, by alcohol, by drugs.

[8 : 00] There's a whole range of things that can cloud our minds. And here, speaking to older men, sober-minded means, in a sense, an unclouded mind. Like, just on a second here, before we get in first, isn't that a good thing to want?

Like, it's really, really interesting. I was having a real hard time trying to deal with this scripture passage. I really was. Somebody was saying, I don't know why, George, it looks really simple. I'm having a hard time with it.

And then I was starting to pray, Lord, what word is there in here for me? And then it was like, duh, look at older men. And then I read the first thing, sober-minded, and I said, Lord, I need an unclouded mind to read this text.

Lord, grant me an unclouded mind. And, so just go back again. So, verse one, but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Okay?

Older men, you know who you are, are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith and love, and in steadfastness. Now, jump down to verse 11. For the grace of God, God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

[9 : 07] Pause, I'm going to read it again. So, for every group, older men, older women, younger women, younger men, leaders, and slaves, the specific advice is always justified or explained or put in the context of verses 11 to 14.

It's the same for everybody. Same for everybody. 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.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, why is he our Savior? He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, a peculiar people, if you read the King James Version, who are zealous for good works.

And here was this challenge to me all week, verse 15, declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, let no one disregard you. So while I, in my Canadian flesh, wanted to run from the text, Paul says, be a man, be upright, have a clear mind, and exhort and teach this text.

But here's the thing, verse 11 to 14, that's so important, for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, the same grace that's going to save us trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passion.

[11 : 00] It trains us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. It trains us to wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us.

He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself as his treasured possession, a people of his own possession, treasured possession, a peculiar people, zealous for good works.

In the Second World War, we all know about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The war in the Pacific had been very, very brutal.

Missy, who comes to the service, she's part of it, she's not here today, she's part of the congregation. If you never met, it's too bad most of you had never met her husband Bruce, but her husband Bruce was an Australian, and this is, of course, before he met Missy.

He fought the Japanese in the Second World War, and he had lots of stories. I had the privilege of doing his funeral a few years ago, and he had lots of stories. It was very formative, and it was a very, very bloody and violent war against the Japanese.

[12 : 18] And on July 26, 1945, the Allies called for Japan to surrender and warned them that they had a weapon that could level cities, that they could not withstand.

And the Japanese did not believe them, or even if they believed them, they did nothing about it. And on the 6th of August, 1945, the Allies dropped a bomb on Hiroshima and called upon the Japanese to surrender.

They would not surrender, and they did not surrender. On the 9th of August, the Allies dropped the Americans and the British, with the permission of the British and the Chinese, dropped a second nuclear bomb and obliterated Nagasaki, killing hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people, instantly and then eventually as well through a variety of cancers.

Still, the Japanese did not surrender. In fact, it was only six days later, on the 15th of August, and even then, it was when the Soviet Union declared war the same day upon Japan, and faced with two nuclear bombs, and now the Soviet Union declaring war on Japan, then the Japanese surrendered.

Now, here's the thing. Why am I telling you an old Second World War story at this point in time? If God sent Jesus down to earth to show us, to drum some sense into us, to show us that resistance was futile, that he was going to win, that he was going to triumph, that bad people were going to be punished, you better get in the program, and you better start a vain God, and if God had sent Jesus to earth for that, you know what?

[14 : 19] A lot of us would probably still want to fight against God. I mean, if you think about it, the Japanese continued to fight the Americans after they dropped nuclear weapons.

Jesus wasn't nearly as deadly as a nuclear bomb, just cursed a few fig trees. But if you think about it for a second, if Jesus had come down, if God had, in a sense, sent Jesus to show that he was going to win and he was going to have victory, then we might still want to continue to resist him.

But Jesus did not come to earth the way a nuclear bomb came to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Jesus came because he loved us.

He said that he came to die for us, to bear in his person everything that keeps us separate from God, that he came to live the life of perfect righteousness that we could never live, and that he came to live a life of perfect righteousness and to die the doom that we deserved.

He came to do all of those things for us so that when ordinary people put their faith and trust in him, they can be made right with God, that God, through Jesus, would make ordinary people right with him.

[15 : 42] And this is a completely and utterly preposterous story. Who on earth should possibly believe it? The only reason we possibly believe it is because of the resurrection. because Jesus, who said that he was coming to earth, that he had come to earth to do all of these things, to give himself, his life as a ransom for many, that Jesus, on the third day after dying upon the cross as a condemned man of no status, on the third day he rose from the dead, appeared to many witnesses, the tomb was empty, and that's what launched the Jesus movement.

And the resurrection of Jesus vindicates that God, who had promised throughout all of Scripture, both that he would judge but also that he would save, had begun and dealt with judging human beings in the person of his Son, and that he would save through his Son.

It vindicates who Jesus is. And it means that Jesus came to make us right with God, to do what we could not possibly do by our own power and our own efforts as a pure gift that we receive by faith alone, trusting in Jesus alone, that God's gracious power is at work in Jesus alone to make us right with him.

And that's why Jesus came. That's why he died. Not to be like Hiroshima, not to be like Nagasaki. Human beings continue to resist, they might continue to rebel, but he came to make us right with him.

And if the resurrection really happened, it changes everything. It changes everything. It vindicates who he is.

[17 : 18] It vindicates his message. And the Bible here is saying that even though, at first glance, some of the things which are said in this text seem very scary to Canadians, in a sense, this justification is asking us to say, one second, let's just get off our high horse and maybe set aside our anger and acknowledge for the fact that, God, if you'd seen the way that I've been treated by so many human beings, Father, if you'd seen the way I was treated by my dad, if you saw the way I was treated by my boss, if you saw how I was treated by my husband, if you saw how I was treated by the bullies who laughed at me because I was interested in more artistic things and not macho things, God, if you just knew how I was laughed at by coaches and at gym classes, if you just knew how I was treated, then you would understand why when I read passages like Titus 2, I get very, very worried.

And God says, you know what, I know you by name. And Jesus didn't die. My son didn't die for a principal or for a class. He died for every particular individual.

And he knows all of those things. I know all of those things. And I'm just asking you to go back and to look at this text and bring your anger and bring your worry and bring your fears to me.

But all I want you to do is just understand the context. My son gave himself for you, the real you, not the imaginary you, the real you.

He gave himself for you to redeem you. So, let my son put you on his shoulders.

[19 : 08] Let my son hold you in his arms or sit beside you. And let's look at some of these things which are so troublesome for you. And let's just look at the text. If you could put up the first point, Andrew, in some ways this first point is the whole point of the chapter.

In fact, it's part of the whole point of the book. It's a slight rewording of a point that I gave you last week. Jesus came to earth to save ordinary people who put their faith in him.

He calls each person by name to come to saving faith, know the truth, live a free and godly life, and begin to live with him forever. He knows whether you're gay, he knows whether you're transgender, he knows whether you're an abuser, he knows whether you're abused, he knows whether you're a bully, he knows whether you're a victim of bullying, he knows if you're rich, he knows if you're poor, he knows the dreams you have at night that when you wake up in the morning you can't remember, he knows the things that keep you awake at night in fear and the things that keep you awake at night in anticipation, He knows that some of the things that you fear are good things and some of the things you fear are evil things.

He knows that some of the things that keep you up at night in anticipation are because you want to do evil. And he knows that some of the things that keep you up at night in anticipation are because you want to do something really good. He knows all of that and he knows you by name.

And he sent his son to die for you. That's the gospel. Jesus came to earth to save ordinary people who put their faith in him.

[20 : 46] He calls each person by name to come to saving faith, know the truth, live a free and godly life, and begin to live with him forever. Okay, George.

It's okay. We're going to maybe just pause here for a sec. But, George, what about trans people? You don't get this text today. What about people who identify and just...

And I'm going to use this example and I'm not using this example to cause... to have anybody to laugh. Okay, I'm really not. Nobody... I don't want to... And people are now wondering what I'm going to say. What if I were a person here who looks like a male but they would understand themselves and identify and understand that their identity is that even though they might look like a male, the real identity is a woman understood in a non-binary way who is in love with women understood in a non-binary way.

And they want to take steps or have begun to take steps in terms of their social context, in terms of how they demand to be treated and expect to be treated and how they dress and maybe drugs and surgery to have that inner identification as a woman understood in a non-binary way who is in love with women but who also understand being a woman in a non-binary way.

And they want to move towards that. How on earth do you understand a text like this if you're here and that's how you understand yourself? Let's look back here again at verses 11 to 14.

[22 : 36] 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.

What this text is telling us is that when Jesus came to redeem people he came in a body and he lived a fully human life in this created order.

He entered into this created order and when he died he experienced what we experience of death which is the separation of the soul from the body.

And he experienced all there is to experience of death at the level of his soul and his body experienced what normally happens when souls leave body. His soul, his body would have begun immediately to decompose.

And then on the third day when he rose from the dead he rose from the dead bodily. The tomb was empty. It's a very, very important thing in all of the Gospels. And one of the things which this whole lesson teaches us of the death of Jesus entering in with the incarnation, his bodily death upon the cross, his experiencing death which means the separation of the body from the soul, his resurrection which isn't just a spiritual resurrection but he now has a body again and he has both a soul and a body and he's defeated sin and he's defeated death and he's on the far side of it.

[24 : 20] And even this thing of us waiting for him to come again, he's going to come to this created order and what he's doing when he comes to the created order is not to take us all to be like ghosts in a spiritual realm but when he comes again our blessed hope is that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, that there will be, that we will live there with bodies and there'll be a created order and there'll be a planet and there'll be stars and we don't entirely know what it is.

It'll be far more glorious than what we experience right now but it's an embodied existence and the body matters. And so here, Andrew, if you could put up the second point that would be really great.

The true and living God, and I don't have time to argue through it throughout the whole Bible about this, but if you read, if you read the Bible, if you read the Bible from cover to cover, if you read Genesis 1 and you read Genesis 2 and you just look at the imagery, you'll see that this is the consistent message of the Bible.

The true and living God made human beings to be a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual unity as either male or female.

And I would say, and that's it. That's what the Bible would say. It didn't really sound good on a point. But the Bible teaches that God made human beings.

[25 : 43] We're not a product of accident, but God made human beings. He made human beings, male and female, equally in his image and likeness. And he made human beings to be a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual unity as either male or female.

That's how God made us. Part of the fall is that these things break down. Their unity is the unity phrase and in some cases, for some people, it's not just that there's a frame of this unity, but that there's a complete and utter break with the unity.

And as you know, if you live as a, if you experience same-sex attraction, if you experience yourself as maybe being in a male body or a female body, but identifying in some other form, that's not necessarily something that you chose.

it's a very powerful reality maybe in your life. But the biblical teaching here is not dependent upon you having chosen certain things.

The Bible tells us what God made us in creation and what will be restored to us. And in the new heaven and the new earth, what will happen is, if I, the person that I just described at the beginning, the man who understood, the male who understood, biological male who understood himself in all of these other ways, what will happen in the new heaven and the new earth is not that you will be a woman, but that you will be a male, that you will be a man.

[27 : 17] That's the direction and trajectory of redemption. And here's the, if you brought up the next point, Andrew, no human being can be free and whole if they base their identity in rebellion against God.

No human being can be free and whole if they base their identity in rebellion against God. And by the way, even though I'm connecting this to particular sexual matters, if your identity is based on being a soccer mom in Canada, in Canada, it's the same type of thing.

All of us, if your identity is based on being a liberal or being a conservative or being a professor or anything that doesn't involve God in some ways, you'll never really experience wholeness and freedom.

So what this text is saying as a whole is that if you are biologically male, you should read it. If you're an older biological male, that's the part you should read.

If you're an older biological female, that's the part you should read. And if you say, George, that's going to be really, really, really hard and difficult for me, I mean, that's partially what the church is for, is to walk with each other and to love each other as we try to wrestle with how hard it is sometimes to walk on the Jesus way and how lonely it can sometimes be for us to walk on the Jesus way.

[28 : 49] And if Jesus comes into your life as your Savior and your Lord, it doesn't necessarily mean that you will no longer experience yourself or identify as a woman.

I have no idea whether or not, I have no more idea whether you would be healed of that or whether you would be healed of your same-sex attraction than whether you're going to get a promotion next week.

I have no particular knowledge about that. Some people are. But sometimes when people pray into these particular matters, it ends up becoming something that's going to shape what holiness looks like in your life.

And all I can tell you, because I don't suffer from those types of things, but all I can tell you is that struggling and seeking to abide by God's word is a blessing.

I mean, for every man here, I'll just talk to the men, and the more common heterosexual male's way of experiencing sexual brokenness is that they find too many women attractive.

[30 : 02] And it clouds their mind and affects their body and affects their time. And it breaks them in all sorts of ways and harms their marriages and harms their relationship with their kids.

And that's the common way that heterosexual men experience their brokenness. And for us men, when you cry out and call out to God that you would be a Proverbs 5 man, that you would take delight only in your wife, and you call out to God and pray that you would be an Ephesians 5 man, that you would start to move towards the sacrificial love of your wife.

And there might be times where that's really, really, really hard and really, really difficult, but it's always worth it. It's always worth it. And for people, maybe even who experience very, very powerful lusts, whether it's lust for multiple women or very powerful lusts if you're a man who experiences very, very powerful lusts for every other man or a man who's identified as a woman, who's attracted to other women and finds in a way which maybe for those of us who are completely out of sight, that's very, very hard to understand.

But the desire is very, very strong. The longing is very, very strong. But as Jesus comes into your life, not that he's going to deal with that right away, he might deal with your pride, your anger, your envy, your jealousy, all sorts of other things.

But at some point in time he will deal with that and as he starts to deal with that by walking with you and as you start to walk with him, I don't know what will come of that, but I know that it can be good and will be good and can be glorious.

[31 : 42] And maybe you will be the one who will write spiritual poetry or autobiography or write music or songs that will influence the church and influence many countless people for generations and generations of Christ's territories.

I don't know how it will work out in your life, but I know that it's worth it. And the start to walk to Jesus in the direction of redemption is always worth it.

And we should pray that we would be a church not filled with condemnation, not filled with mocking, but willing to walk with other people as they struggle with real brokenness, to walk towards freedom.

Because as my very first point was, Jesus came to earth to save ordinary people who put their faith in him. He calls each person by name to saving faith, to know the truth, to live a free and godly life and begin to live with him forever.

I'm going to have to go real quick over the last of these points, but hopefully this has been helpful to you. What about the text being discriminatory?

[32 : 47] What about the text being discriminatory? Different things are held up to older men than there are to older women. Different things are held up to younger men than are younger women.

What about that? Why isn't it the same? Well, actually, if you look at it for a second, you'll see that there's an interesting balance of sameness and difference. Remember, once again, every single person is called to verses 11 to 14.

So even if you say, well, one moment, like, you know, talking about younger women and being married and I'm not married and all, there's, everybody is found somewhere in this text. Everybody in this text is find something in this text.

Even those parts of being a younger woman that doesn't involve the family life, there's still other things there. But everybody is caught up, is called for 11 to 14. Look at 11 to 14 again. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

For every person, it doesn't matter if you're single, if you're married, if whatever, 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.

[33 : 57] That applies to everybody. And if you look at verses 7 and 8, I think the way to understand this, because now here's Paul talking to Titus, and I think the way to understand verses 7 to 8 is to understand that it's talking to leaders.

And everybody, on one hand, is a bit of a leader because we have some influence over somebody. Maybe it's even just our neighbor, but a lot of people have a lot of influence. And so if you're a leader, you might say, 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.

And that has obviously a special meaning in a church, but even outside of the church in terms of the type of teaching and leadership that you're called for, you're covered there. People are covered all the way through it.

And there's a commonality of the teaching, but there are specifics. There are specifics. And I'm going to confess to you that I don't entirely know why. I don't know why.

But I'm going to suggest that in the modern church, we're so afraid of texts like this, and maybe some of the reasons that we're so afraid of texts like this is that some of us are refugees from a type of brutal and unthinking traditionalism masquerading as biblical Christianity.

[35 : 32] And now we're afraid of the texts. But I'm just calling us that there's this profound undiscovered country because surely, if we're honest, isn't this a time when we need advice to figure out what it means to be an older man or an older woman or a younger man or a younger woman?

Isn't this a time for us to be able to be gripped by the gospel and think of Jesus' death upon the cross for us and maybe start to listen? And it's not macho.

This is really interesting. You know, as I was struggling with this text, asking for God to give me some clarity about it, it's really funny. You know, sometimes God answers prayers right away. So here I am.

I'm in a coffee shop. You can guess the one. And I'm in a coffee shop and I'm praying about this. And just as I'm praying about this, I am not making this up. Father, help me to understand how to explain this. And just as I'm praying this, the next thing I know, I look up because I hear a rumble, like a lot of rumbles.

And there's like six Camaros or Mustangs all muscled up, all in a row, right in front of me, all driven by a man who looks like he's between 45 and 55.

[36 : 47] Big, beefy forearms, big, beefy arms, big, beefy guy, serious looking face, one hand on the wheel, right type of sunglasses.

I'm a man who has nothing to forgive or forget. I drive a kick-ass car. I'm a man. And then you look down at verse two.

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. I thought, thank you, Jesus.

Sometimes that prayer stuff works really quick. Like, this text isn't calling me. I mean, there's not that there's anything particularly wrong with that, okay? But the problem is, right?

I mean, this is the Bible. Just, like, let's just listen to the Bible. Not be afraid of it. But some of you can say, okay, George. Okay. Let's just look at the older women for a second.

[37 : 52] Verses three to four A. I'm just going to say a few things about this. I really have to watch my time. I know. 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, and we'll talk about the younger women in a moment. I don't know why they particularly warn women about the slaves to much wine.

I know that in North America there is a huge problem for women on drugs to control their moods and for painkillers.

I have no, I'm not an older woman. I'm, but the text is there. It would be really interesting for older women to talk with each other amongst themselves and say, what do you think?

Like, and you know, it could be that some of you say, well, I have no problem with that. Well, that's good that you have no problem with that. I don't know how, but the word is addressed to older women and the word reverent. Another way to describe what the word reverent means is practice the presence of God.

[38 : 56] That's what reverent means. It doesn't mean having a long face. It doesn't mean never laughing. You know, it doesn't mean walking around looking like you're constipated.

it means practicing the presence of God. Like, what's wrong with that as a piece of advice? If you're an older woman, you're entering into a time of your life where you should call out to God.

And by the way, in verses 1 to 5, the verb tenses, they're all aspirational. This is an invitation as to something to aspire to. That you have so begun to learn the practice of the presence of God that you see every one of your waking moments is being done in the presence of the living God.

That it affects the way you live. I think that's a wonderful thing to aspire to. In fact, you know where the first imperative comes? To the young men. They only have one imperative.

Get your life in order. Learn self-control. Learn self-control. Don't let anger rule your life. Don't let pornography rule your life.

[40 : 07] Don't let hatred. Don't let envy. Don't let your temper. Don't give me any excuses. Learn some self-control. Be gripped by the gospel. Learn some self-control.

That's the first imperative in the text. The rest of it's aspirational. What about submitting to your husbands? I was actually saying I'm going to run out of time so I can't talk about this now.

I'm just joking. Oh, look at the time. I guess I can't talk about this. Figure it out for yourselves. No. No.

Let's look at it four being through five. And so train young women to love their husbands and children to be self-control, pure, working at home, kind and submissive.

Working at home doesn't mean what we mean by it today about not having a job outside. It means a specific responsibility for the home. Kind and submissive to their own husbands that the word of God may not be reviled.

[41 : 12] Now here's the thing about submissive. slave. It's a curious word and it's the same word that's going to be used for slaves. How do I have a consistent reading for both?

That's going to be the exact same word that's going to come a few words later for slaves. And here's the thing about it. Women and slaves have a very different social context.

If they don't, you should. Women aren't slaves. Married women aren't slaves. Here's the thing about submissive. It's both on one hand a far weaker word than obey and a far tougher word or deeper word than obey.

Those of you who work in bureaucracy know that there's a way to be obedient that can cause chaos in an organization. That there's a way to be obedient that can stick it to your boss.

Am I allowed to say that in a sermon? I just did. Any one of you who work in a bureaucracy know there's ways of being obedient that undermines everything, causes chaos.

[42 : 25] And the word here is an obedient. It's submissive. It's submit. Here's the thing to understand about the text and to look at the text very carefully and quietly.

The thing about submissive is in this particular text, it's something that's enjoined upon the young women to offer as a gift to their husbands, but they maintain complete and utter control.

The husband has no right or authority to demand submission or to describe submission or to complain about the behavior of his wife.

The husband is given no authority to command. The wife is enjoined to submit.

It's an appeal to her freedom and she gets to determine what it looks like and the extent. If she has a husband who's violent and abusive, that's going to look very, very different than a husband or it should look very different than a husband who's very loving and self-sacrificial and attentive.

[43 : 52] But it's a gift that she offers that it comes from God, it's an obedience to God. And it's not to all men or to the patriarchy, it's just to her husband. And on one hand, for some people, that's going to look very, very weak, but on the other hand, this can be something that goes very, very deep.

And it's beyond the scope of this one sermon, all I can do is hint at it it comes to the asymmetric relationship often between the sexes and the commands.

And in fact, actually, if you even think about it for a second, you look, who is it who's training the women to do this? It's the older women. The men are cut out of the discussion altogether. Isn't that very funny?

You see, one of the things happens is maybe in 1958 they would have read that and they would have just imposed a patriarchal culture onto the text.

But one of the benefits in the sense of our cultural moment is that when you start to question a narrative of patriarchy and just try to read the text and listen to it, you see that the mystery in the text is that the mystery of the text Actually, I'm sort of running out of time.

[45 : 10] Could you just put four and five up there, Andrew? The first one is saving grace is training grace for everyday life. You'll notice there about women, older women training and also if you look down in verses 11 and 12 where the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people training us to renounce ungodliness and the same point put in a slightly different way is verse point five.

The grace from God which saves also trains us to live free with others for the glory of God. So I just want to make, I've already gone long but I have to talk about slaves.

Look at verses 9 and 10. Bond servants or slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but actually I'll go back here read that again.

In the Greek language there's two different ways to put well-pleasing and this version is chosen one way but I think it's actually more accurate to read it with a comma in a different spot.

Bond servants are to be submissive to their own, are to be submissive, submissive, comma, to their own masters in everything they are to be well-pleasing, nether comma, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

[46 : 45] Now, here's the thing about the Bible. In the ancient world, slavery was viewed as normal. You know, in our culture there's all sorts of things that are normal.

It's normal that you have police, it's normal that you have an army, you know, it's normal that there's money. In the ancient world one of the things that would just be normal was that there were slaves, it was just normal. One of the interesting things about the Bible is that the Bible never once argues for slavery, justifies slavery, encourages slavery, never once.

But the Bible, in fact, puts in the seeds to undermine slavery. The Greek word, when you look at words that talk about in other epistles when it talks about masters and slaves, in English they translate the word, the Greek word as master, but it's actually the same word that the word despot comes from in Greek.

And slaves had no rights. And what the Bible here does is it it awakens within slaves who have no freedom and the Bible is telling them that they have inner freedom.

That they have inner freedom and they have an important objective for the good of the gospel that they can accomplish. So that while in their social location it looks as if they're just under the thumb or the rule of their despot, the Bible calls them to exercise an inner freedom to understand that they have ways of submitting that they can choose and do and offer as a gift to God and that they are to try to shape their submission to their masters in such a way that the gospel looks beautiful.

[48 : 37] Now some of you might say that seems a little bit insufficient, but here's what often lurks behind the modern mind when it's complaining about the Bible. Imagine here to bring it out to the front, imagine now that we had a chance to send a letter to 150 North Koreans in a prison camp in North Korea who had become Christians.

They are in effect slaves. They have absolutely no rights whatsoever. No rights whatsoever. We would write, wouldn't we like to write and say to them, this is a terrible evil.

You should cast off your chains and start living as a free man. Bear up your arms in revolt. Well, gosh, that would make us feel good, but it would be completely useless advice to them.

In fact, it's posturing on our part, not helpful. What the Bible here calls for is something which is deeply helpful for them.

From the eyes of the world, they are just slaves. There is maybe nothing that they will ever be able to do about it in a slave culture, in a slave society. They are a slave. They will probably die as a slave, but their identity is not slave.

[49 : 54] Their identity is one for whom Jesus loved so much and knew by name that he died for them. And that they have an opportunity, even though they are in a social context of unbelievably restrained freedom, freedom.

But the Bible calls them to recognize that they have an interior freedom, which no master can touch, that they are to exercise that interior freedom in such a way that the gospel is glorified, not only in their social context, but in their community and to the ends of the earth.

Their destiny is not to die as a slave, but to die as the precious, peculiar possession of God with an opportunity to show forth his glory by rediscovering inner freedom that carries itself out in action.

And such teaching eventually makes slavery seem unthinkable. Can you put up the final point, Andrew?

I'd like to ask you to stand. You've been very, very patient. In one level, this is a very, very, we're not going to be able to pray this prayer together. And I left a blank there.

[51 : 09] I don't like leaving blanks, but I couldn't figure out how else to do it. And I'm not going to pray this prayer, but if you want to find it later on, it's on the webpage. But I'm inviting you to pray, Almighty God and Father, please make me a disciple of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, who humbly meditates upon what your word written says about being a, and maybe I would say, an older man and a leader.

And maybe some of you would say, a younger woman and a leader. And maybe some of you would say that I'm not entirely a slave when I work for the civil service or work for my boss, but it has some stuff to say about what it means to be a good employee, about being an employee and a younger woman and a leader.

And you fill in the blank. You make the prayer your own. make the prayer your own. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, and knowing who he is and what he did for us, that we start to lose our fear of your word.

And Father, help us to be a people who walk together, who learn to walk together as they follow Jesus, to share our fears and to share our joys and to share our aspirations and our hopes, to think upon your word and to look upon the nuances, to see what's there and to see what's not there, to be Bereans, Father, who study your word and dwell your word.

Father, as we're gripped by the gospel, help us to lose our fear of your word. Thank you, Father, that the same word that saves us is the word that trains us. The same word that promises salvation is the word that will make us free.

[52 : 53] Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory. And this we pray in Jesus' name and all God's people said, Amen.