

Adorning the Gospel

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[0 : 00] All right, we are going to come to our time in the Word together now. If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to the book of Titus. We are in chapter 2.

Titus is a letter that was written by Paul to a guy named Titus, and he was on the island of Crete, a little island southeast of Greece.

And Paul gave him some works, an assignment to do there, to strengthen the churches that were there, to put things in order for the churches there. And we've been working our way through this letter.

As we come to chapter 2, actually we started chapter 2 last Sunday, and we looked at the verses 11 to 14, and we heard again the gospel, the good news of what Jesus has done to save us.

We heard that this gospel, this good news about Jesus, it leads us to a certain kind of living, away from a certain kind of living, living in sin, living to please the flesh, and two, living a good, holy life.

[1 : 29] And we saw just how God desires for us to be freed from that sinful life, and moved into a life of good deeds, where we're eager to do them.

Not begrudgingly, but eager. Well, this morning we're going to look at how Paul sees this translating into the practical everyday lives of Christ's followers there on the island of Crete.

So we're actually going to go back up and look at verses 1 to 10, which came before all this. Let me read the passage for us this morning. Paul writes to Titus, You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

[2 : 44] Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything, set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, honesty, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed, because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way, they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

So Paul organizes Christ's instructions for how we should live, based on age, gender, and a little bit on social status, as we see at the end there with the slaves.

Why does he organize it like this? Well, it doesn't really say, but Paul knows that being a follower of Jesus is going to look a little different depending on those things, your age, your gender, and your social standing.

There are also different things that we may struggle with, or be tempted by, because of our age, or gender, or social standing. At the same time, though, we notice that some of the same things are to be there for each one of them.

[4 : 13] He encourages Titus to teach them all to be self-controlled, for example. But let's start with the men at the top, in verse 2. Paul says, teach the older men to be temperate.

What does it mean to be temperate? It may help to think of the opposite. The opposite of temperate is rash, impulsive, a person who is given to extremes.

So to be temperate means to be self-controlled. It means to be moderate. If you're thinking about food and drink, it means not given to binge eating, or gluttony, or to drunkenness.

If you're thinking about decisions and finances, this is the person who carefully weighs and considers the cost of things. A person who looks before he leaps. A temperate person is not obsessed with things, but shows balanced and prudent judgment.

Paul says, teach the older men to be temperate. Teach the older men to be worthy of respect. This means to live in a way that is dignified or respectable.

[5 : 30] And this one really warrants a fair bit of reflection. You know, as I was thinking, what does it mean to be worthy of respect? What makes for a respectable life? Think about it.

What kind of character is respectable in a person? What kind of behavior? I hope some things are coming to mind.

Things like honesty. People who tell the truth. Kindness. Even to those who are rude. A person who's a good listener.

And really listens because they care about the person that they're talking with. And the list could really go on here. We could talk about things like courage. We could talk about perseverance.

We could talk about generosity. There are many character things that we respect in others. Be a person who is worthy of respect, says Jesus, to the older men.

[6 : 29] And this really does cover a lot of things in life when you step back and think about it. Who do you respect? Are there some people that come to mind?

What is it that you respect about them? It really filters into every area of life. We could think about conflict in relationships.

Who do you respect? Do you respect the person who owns their mistakes and apologizes and seeks forgiveness when they wrong others? Or the person who minimizes their wrongs and doesn't want to take responsibility for anything they've said or done?

It affects our speech. Do you respect the person who is always joking coarsely and insulting others to get a rise out of their buddies? Or do you respect the man who always speaks well of others and says things to build people up and keeps a rein on his tongue?

Teach the older men to be worthy of respect. Let's talk about older men for a second just coming back to this.

[7 : 48] What are older men sometimes known for? I know I might step on some feelings here but it's here. Sometimes older men are known for being cantankerous, belligerent, rude, critical, sometimes bad-mouthing others.

You get the idea. But for the follower of Jesus age is not an excuse to become a crotchety, cranky, rude gossip who goes around offending people.

Teach the older men to be worthy of respect, to live lives that are worthy of respect. Let's go on to the next one, self-controlled.

Don't worry, older men. Everybody else was covered in the other ages and genders as well so we're coming to you. Teach the older men to be self-controlled.

We talked about this back in chapter one with the qualifications for elders and even last week we talked about it. It's mentioned again as a general thing that all believers should strive to have, self-control down in verse 12.

[8 : 59] But I want to go over this again. It's repeated so many times in this letter. Christ wants us to hear this. Notice who this is first spoken to.

It's to the older men. Teach them to be self-controlled. self-controlled. So just because men are older does not mean that they have learned to be self-controlled.

A lifetime of living doesn't automatically make you a person of self-restraint. Experience doesn't always teach a person to control their tongue or their emotions or their appetites.

So what is self-control all about? Let's just say it again. To be self-controlled means to be a person who governs themselves well. A person who rules over their appetites and their desires instead of a person who is ruled by their appetites and desires.

The self-controlled person fulfills their obligations and their responsibilities. They keep their promises and they're able to do that because they're in control of their lives.

[10 : 07] Unlike the person who lacks self-control, they're kind of spiraling out of control. the person who lacks self-control is ruled by their emotions. They're as dependable as they are feeling that day.

The person who lacks self-control is often derailed by bodily appetites for food and drink and sexual pleasure and entertainment. They just kind of go with their feelings wherever they take them.

They feel powerless to say no to themselves when they should. Now let's take a step back here and notice that this self-controlled is not just how the older men are to be.

It's how all of them are to be. Look down in verse 3. The women of the older women, they're not to be addicted to much wine. That's a self-control thing there. And they're to teach the younger women in verse 5 to be self-controlled.

And he says to Titus, teach the young men to be self-controlled. And even to the slaves with regards to their master's possession, exercise self-restraint.

[11:16] Don't just help yourself to their things and steal from them. If you're a follower of Jesus, God wants you to be self-controlled, to say no to worldly passions and lusts as we talked about last Sunday.

God has given us many good things in this world and in this life for our enjoyment. But he wants us to receive those things with self-restraint as good gifts from him.

And not just to engross ourselves in them and become obsessed with them or addicted to them where we live lives just to maximize our pleasure. He wants us not to live just to scratch the itch of our bodies, our flesh, but to live to please the spirit.

He wants us to be wise and prudent to think about how our actions affect others and how the things that we do today or don't do today affect tomorrow.

Self-control. He says, teach the older men to be sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

[12:29] To be sound means to be, it means to be good, to be healthy, to be as you should be. And Jesus highlights three things for the older men to be sound in and the first one here is faith.

Now this one almost seems like it should be a given, doesn't it? Tell the older men to be sound in their faith, but could it be that as we get older, we men have a tendency to drift or to get bored or to want to hear something new, to take some new ideas or things that are interesting and maybe add that to our faith.

Consider King Solomon. He started so well. He asked the Lord for wisdom to govern the people of Israel and God gave it to him. And what wisdom he had.

Look at the Proverbs that he wrote. Look at the list of accomplishments. But what happened to Solomon? Solomon, his heart drifted away from the faith.

By the end of his life, he became a bitter, cynical old man as we see in the book of Ecclesiastes.

And his downfall was, ironically, his lack of self-control.

[13:43] He lived to please himself. He piled up the wives. He lived for sexual pleasure. His lust burned so hot that he considered women as a thing to be collected.

He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. And it says in 1 Kings 11 that they led his heart astray. By the end of his life, he was flat out worshiping at the shrines and altars of the pagan false gods of his wives.

So yes, it is possible to lose soundness in the faith and to drift away from the good and true words of God. There's no autopilot in the Christian life.

So teach the older men to be sound in the faith. To stay true to that trustworthy message. If you feel like you're getting bored, let me encourage you.

It's not the Bible's fault. It's not God's fault. It's something going on in your own heart. Come to the Lord again.

[14:51] Humble yourself before him. Call out to him. Plead with him to remedy that apathy and to bring back that joy, that spiritual fervor that you once felt.

It says in James 4, verse 8, draw near to God and he will draw near to you. That's a promise that we can count on. Teach the older men to be sound in love, Paul says to Titus.

Again, doesn't this seem like it should be a given? And yet he says it. Does Paul actually expect Titus to look the older men in the eyes and encourage them to be loving?

Yes. Love is what God is all about. God is love. And love is to be the number one fruit of a believer's life. The Apostle John has lots to say about this in his letters.

Here's the problem. Love can grow cold. Christians who once lived to bless and serve others in the past can be tempted to turn inward and just live to please themselves.

[16:06] And so Paul urges Titus to teach the men, even the older men, the more experienced men, to be sound in love. Here's a question to ponder. Would the people who know you best say that you are a loving person?

And if you're not sure, you could ask them. This isn't about feelings. Love is more than just feelings. This is about action.

This is about a life lived in service of others and for the benefit of others. It's about loyalty and commitment in relationships, in your family, in your church, to your fellow man.

Lastly, Titus urges the men, the older men, to be sound and endurance. The Christian life isn't easy. It requires patience.

It requires perseverance. Let's move on to talk about what he says now to the older women.

[17 : 17] Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

Teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live. There's two things emphasized here. First, in the way they live, in their conduct. And second, in their conduct, in the way they live, they are to be reverent, which really means to show respect in their conduct, in their behavior.

It's just really another way of saying what he said to the older men. So, just as I said to the older men, same for the older women. There's no excuse to be rude, cantankerous, or overbearing.

Women, think of other women who you respect deeply. Why do you respect them? What is it about them that makes them so worthy of honor?

Aim to live like they do. Imitate them. Let's go on. He says, teach the older women not to be slanderers. Gossip is something that should not be part of the Christian's life.

[18 : 38] And this can be an issue for older women. First of all, older women can be less busy with work and family and children in their later years.

As we heard from Paul's letter to Timothy in the fall, there's a tendency for women who are not busy with home and family to be idle or at least a temptation to be idle and to go from house to house.

And it's not that this is no problem for men. Let me just say that. Gossip can be a problem for men as well. But maybe I'll say it this way. Women tend to be generally better at relationships than men. More social. And that strength can be used for sin in the promoting of gossip and rumors and more specifically in this instance slander.

Slander is more than just gossip. It's the spreading of something untrue about someone. And it ruins and it hurts the reputation of others. Remember the saying of the people of Crete that we heard from chapter 1.

[19 : 50] They're known for always being liars. So Paul says teach the older women not to be slanderers. Not like all the other people around to put it positively speak the truth about others.

He goes on teach the older women not to be addicted to much wine. Drunkenness really seems to have been a problem on the island of Crete. It's again essentially a call to self-control or to temperance just like Paul said for the older men.

Teach the older women to teach what is good. Now this doesn't imply that every older woman must become a Sunday school teacher but it does imply that older women be teachers in some sense.

And in this case teachers teachers who show others how to live good lives. And Paul has something specific in mind here. Let me just put the next verse up there.

He says teach the older women to teach what is good so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children and the list goes on.

[21 : 03] We'll get to that in a moment. Some of you maybe heard of the word discipleship. It's kind of a word we use in the church to refer to how we teach people to live as to be followers of Jesus.

And there's all kinds of small group methods and materials and books and methods that you can get into and there's value to many of those things. But let's not miss the fact that Jesus right here is giving us a pattern for how we teach others to follow Jesus in the church.

And it's that the older women are to teach the younger women in the church how to live, how to follow Jesus. And it's not just the older to younger women.

Later on we see it's older men to younger men as well. And part of why I think we see this here is that purity is a big factor here. Notice that Paul doesn't instruct Timothy or sorry, Titus to teach the younger women.

Not at all. He's to teach the older men and the older women and the younger men but it's the older women who are to teach the younger women. So purity is one of the big concerns here.

[22 : 20] But just practically I mean who knows what it means to be a woman who follows Christ better than an older woman who has been following Christ.

so the older women are to teach the younger women how to do that. In all this we see a pattern that we're to live out in the church.

The older are to teach the younger. So I want to just ask you the question are you older or younger? Yeah, good answer.

Always both said Dan. That's right. Look around the room. It's kind of relative isn't it? There's always somebody hopefully that's a little further ahead in their life in their age than you. both of these come with some kind of relational responsibility. If you're the older person look around the church at those who are younger than you that are of the same age.

[23 : 19] It's your responsibility to teach them how to live for Christ. And if you're one of those younger people look around the room at all those who are older than you of the same gender.

It's your responsibility to learn from those older brothers and sisters and to listen to those who are older than you. This is something that maybe we've lost in our very individualistic society.

We sometimes see the other people in the church as unrelated to us. You know I'm following Jesus for myself and you guys you kind of got to figure that out how to do that for yourself.

But as we heard last fall the church is a family and we're to conduct ourselves like a family in many respects. Sometimes we get this idea that well the church should just have programs and you know you just kind of go to the program.

Well we do our best to offer some programs that especially for the larger groups in the church that make sense for the kids for the youth for the adults but there's going to be we can't possibly have a program for everyone in everything every age dynamic every demographic there are going to be some of you who would just do well to seek out a bit of a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a brother if you're a man or a sister if you're a woman in the church.

[24 : 51] If you're older is there someone younger in the church who you'd be willing to build a closer relationship with where this kind of teaching can happen.

If you're younger is there someone in this church that yeah I'd like to build a relationship so I can learn better how to be a follower of Jesus. Is there someone like that that you could consider asking to be a mentor and this doesn't have to be complicated because I know when we hear the word mentor we think oh what is that I can't do that.

It could be as simple for you women as inviting a younger woman to come over for tea. Or to bake cookies. Or to just get together every so often. It could be as simple as saying yes to that invitation. And asking that older believer a question about how they handled things different. How they handled different things as a mother or as a wife or whatever you're facing right now.

Or men you got something in your house that needs fixing? Why not invite another younger believer or even older believer in the church another man to come give you a hand with it?

[26 : 00] Build that relationship. This is where this kind of teaching often happens. It's not so much always here on Sunday mornings. Now let's look for a moment at what the older women are to teach the younger women verses 4 and 5.

He says they are to urge they are to urge the younger women to love their husbands and children to be self-controlled and pure to be busy at home to be kind and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the word of God.

Now there's a lot in here we're just going to skim through this quite quickly. The first one teach the younger women to love their husbands. Again it kind of seems like it should be a no-brainer but sometimes we men can be hard to love and on behalf of the men I apologize but you older women have a lot of encouragement to offer the younger women here.

Many of you have stuck through some pretty tough times and you've learned how to love your husband through thick and thin. Have those kinds of conversations with each other. teach the younger women to love their children he says.

Children also can be hard to love at times. Sometimes there's crankiness there's messes there's things that try our patience but as followers of Jesus we are to love our children through it all just like God has loved us through it all through our worst moments.

[27 : 40] purity is one of the things that's emphasized here for the younger women. Yes us who are older are called to teach about marriage and sexuality to those who are younger in the church.

Where else are they going to learn it from? So for those of you who are younger look to the older women and the older men for relationship wisdom.

Ask them those questions. Older women are to teach the younger women to be subject to their husbands. Now I know that might sound crazy to some of you we're not going to go deeply into this. He's not talking about like a slave and master relationship here. He's talking about submitting to husbands as the God appointed head of the household. God has made it that men are to be the head the leader in the family and that the rest of the family is to submit to and follow that leadership. But men are to be loving servant leaders not domineering leaders to their wives just like Jesus was a humble serving leader.

[29 : 01] And we're not going to go into more of that today. We'll leave it for another time. It's talked about in other passages a lot more in the New Testament. The older women are to teach the younger women to be busy at home.

This too is a very much debated thing and I think we need to be careful when it comes to this not to take it to either extreme. On the one hand some see this as a mandate that the woman's place is at home.

That's her special area of responsibility that's been given to her from God at creation and it's even a sin for her to work outside the home.

The other extreme would be to look at this and just say well that was just for back then. That doesn't apply at all to today. Back then men went to work outside the home and women stayed at home and so it doesn't have any bearing on today.

I think we need to avoid both of those extremes. Let's remember the issue here on Crete. The people of Crete are known for laziness.

[30 : 04] In Paul's letter to Timothy he touched on the problem of the young widows. They would get in the habit of being idle and going house to house and gossiping up a storm. The picture we get here is of young women who were perhaps well off and instead of using their time to bring blessing and benefit at home on something they're given to laziness they're being idle they're frittering their time away while their husbands or fathers or possibly their servants do all the work but work is good.

Work brings benefit blessing to other people whether it's at home or in the church or in the community and so he says the older women are to teach the younger women to be busy at home to help look after their own households.

Finally we come to the young men and after all that it might be rather surprising to see that Paul just tells them one thing. Teach the young men encourage them to be self-controlled and that's it. It might seem unfair. Why do they get it so easy? I don't think it's that they don't need to work on many of these other things. Of course they do. But self-controlled is a big one for young men. We've got lots of energy. We're in the prime of our lives and without self-control we can end up doing a lot of damage. We can end up wasting a lot of time, a lot of money, a lot of resources.

[31 : 45] I think perhaps Paul gives this one thing because this one thing would make all the difference in the world in a young man's life. when he learns to be self-controlled in his appetites, his emotions, his desires, his plans, his finances, his habits, with his words, in his relationships, you get the idea.

So these are Paul's instructions for various groups of people in the churches. We're going to skip over the part about slaves and the instructions for Titus in verses 8 to 10. 10.

But I want to end just by highlighting the why. Of course the big why comes down to us in verse 11 to 14. We looked at that last Sunday.

This is the only kind of living that fits with Jesus Christ being our Savior and King. This is gospel living. This is the kind of living that Christ died to bring us into.

And he wants us to be eager to live this way. But in addition to that we see three statements sprinkled throughout all of these instructions.

[32 : 59] The first one comes to us in verse 5. The older women are to teach the younger women to live this kind of life.

Why? So that no one will malign the word of God. Then there's a second one which comes to us in verse 8. Titus is to teach and to show integrity in his life and soundness of speech.

Why? So that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. And then the final one comes in reference to the slaves and how they ought to earn the trust of their masters not steal from them.

Why? So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. Notice the theme here. In how we live as followers of Jesus we are to make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

God's sake. It's already good news but we can put the goodness of this news on display in our lives or we can give opportunity for people to malign the word of God to speak ill of the word of God.

[34 : 25] Like oh those Christians. They don't even practice what they preach. church. I've said it before but I'll say it again. You are the Bible that most people read.

What does your life say about our Lord Jesus? Or in the words of Jesus you are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

He said you are the light of the world. So let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

There is a kind of living that goes with our faith in Jesus. It flows out of our faith in Jesus. Every one of us needs to take a look at this list and I want to encourage you to take some time this week and just reflect over it.

[35 : 34] Pray and ask the Lord which of these things on here do I need to grow in the most?

Would you help me Lord to be more self-controlled or to be more loving or whatever it is for you in this list?

Which of these is most convicting to you? Maybe it's that you've been sitting on the sidelines and you haven't been involved with teaching youngsters or maybe it's that you've been trying to do the Christian life as a lone ranger and you've been ignoring those who are older than you and you don't think you need their wisdom and guidance in your life.

Whatever it is for you may we not just hear these encouragements and forget these words. May the Lord give us grace to respond to them.

let's pray. Father in heaven we thank you that you've just spelled it out so clearly for us how we should live.

And we thank you also that for every moment in which we fail to live like this there is the blood of your son. which has brought us into a right standing with you by faith.

[36 : 52] And we thank you that nothing can take that away from us. But now we want to live to please you because we love you. You are our God. So I pray that you would work these things out in us.

That we would be this kind of church described here. Speak to us this week as we reflect on these words we ask for your glory. Amen.

Amen.