

Teach right doctrine and right living

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 October 2017

Preacher: Rupert Evans

[0 : 00] The reading is from Titus chapter 2, which can be found on page 1200 in your Bibles. That's Titus chapter 2. 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 behavior, not slanderers or slaves to too much wine.

They are to teach what is good, and so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself 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.

[1 : 35] 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.

Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Catherine, many thanks indeed.

Good morning, everyone. Do keep that open, we'll turn back to it, page 1200. You should have received a little insert in the service sheet, which has an outline, which will help you know where we're headed.

And just to say, although helpful to read the whole chapter, we're just looking at verses 1 to 10 this week, and then next week, Nigel is going to be helping us to look at verses 11 to 14, I think. Shall I lead us in prayer as we begin?

Father, we know that modern-day London, like ancient Crete, is a place where most people do not conform their lives according to your word.

[2 : 56] And we know how easy it is for us to be sucked in by worldly values and practices. And so we pray this morning that as we look at how you want us to live as your people, that you would give us soft hearts and help us to be those who are indeed conformed, not by the world, but by your word.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, one of the most common objections levelled at the Christian faith is that its followers, Christians, are hypocrites.

Now, of course, in some cases, this charge will be unfair or a smokescreen. But there are also times when people look at the church and see hypocrisy, pride, self-righteousness, ungodliness, cliqueiness, and even flagrant sin.

It's desperately sad. But too often, Christians put people off Christ. On the other hand, one of the things that strikes me when I hear testimonies of Christian conversions is how often the opposite can be true.

Very often, people start to investigate the Christian faith or attend church because of the example of a Christian friend or friends. They see in Christians something different, something attractive, something they want for themselves, and so are drawn to Jesus Christ by his followers.

[4 : 24] And Titus chapter 2 shows us that that's exactly what we ought to expect. And we're going to see that this morning under three headings. And our first is the need for good works.

The need for good works. Sometimes those of us who are Christians can secretly think that it doesn't really matter how we live, that we might as well indulge our favorite pet sins, because after all, we're not saved by works.

I'm forgiven on the basis of Jesus' death, so what does it matter if I carry on sinning? But Paul would have us see that while we may not be saved by good works, we are saved for good works. And that how we live as Jesus' followers can greatly impact, for good or ill, how others perceive the Christian faith. If you've been with us over the last couple of weeks, you'll remember that Titus chapter 1 relates to Christian leaders.

Titus is told what kinds of leaders or elders to appoint in Crete, where he's been left to oversee the church.

[5 : 32] And Paul tells him how he expects Christian leaders to behave. But here in chapter 2, the focus moves to ordinary Christians, and we see the behavior Paul expects of every follower of Jesus.

And the surprise here, perhaps, is that the two lists are so similar. Many of the things commanded of elders in chapter 1 are commanded of everyone here in chapter 2.

Ordinary Christians may not have the same responsibility to teach or refute error that a church leader has, but when it comes to Christian living, the bar isn't set any lower. Because, as is one of the big messages of Titus, right belief must lead to right behavior.

The knowledge of the truth leads to godliness, sound convictions to sound conduct. And the conduct of ordinary Christians in the world really matters. Paul stresses the need for good works. Just notice how, whereas the false teachers described at the end of chapter 1 were unfit for any good work, older women in chapter 2 are to teach what is good. And Titus is to set an example by being a model of good works in verse 7.

[6 : 51] You see, godliness isn't a kind of optional extra for the super keen Christian, or something to be pursued up to a point, but not when it forces us to stand out or becomes too costly.

No, for Paul, godliness is an inevitable consequence of understanding the gospel. And for that reason, he wanted Titus to encourage every type of person to be godly.

Just look at verse 1, which acts as a kind of heading to introduce what follows. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Now that's very carefully worded.

Paul doesn't simply say, you must teach works, or you must tell people to be good. Rather, Titus must teach what accords with, follows on from, flows out of, fits in with, sound doctrine.

That is, very simply, he's to apply the truth, as well as teach the truth. Verse 12 of chapter 1 gave us a glimpse of the worldliness of the Cretan culture in which Titus was ministering.

[7 : 57] A place, it seems, of deceit, idleness, and self-indulgence. And Paul wanted Christians to be different, conformed by sound doctrine, not the surrounding culture.

In verse 9 of chapter 1, Paul explained that elders need to give instruction in sound doctrine. Well, here they're to go a step further and explain what that doctrine should lead to in practice.

What living according to that doctrine looks like. You see, the extent to which we've properly grasped the Bible's teaching will be seen not simply in our ability to explain it, but in whether we live it out, whether our behavior accords with sound doctrine.

To teach only works and not the gospel is to become moralistic or legalistic, to turn Christianity into a moral code of rules rather than a message of forgiveness. And the New Testament never divorces Christian truth from Christian living.

Rather, as we'll see next week, the one leads to the other. But it's also a mistake to teach only the gospel and not apply it. Such a ministry would likely puff people up with knowledge rather than result in changed lives.

[9 : 15] So if we're leading a Bible study or listening to a sermon or just doing our quiet time, we need to ask ourselves how a passage affects our life. What applications flow from the sound doctrine we're considering?

I think this is especially important when we have the privilege of attending a church which values sound doctrine highly and seeks to teach it faithfully. We could easily forget it's changed lives Jesus is after and not simply greater knowledge.

Remember, we've already seen in the first verse of chapter one, using very similar language actually to the first verse of chapter two, that the knowledge of the truth accords with godliness. And here in chapter two, Paul spells out what that'll look like for different people.

There are lots of different commands here and we haven't got time to explore all of them. But isn't it striking that Paul has different instructions here for different types of people? Did you notice that as we read verses two to ten?

It's a reminder to us that godliness and the particular battles we face may look slightly different for each of us depending on who we are and our context. Paul addresses men and women, young and old, and slaves separately.

[10:34] It's just a reminder, contrary to what many in our modern world want to tell us, that men and women are different, with different roles, different responsibilities, and even different struggles.

So let's notice what exactly Paul wants Titus to teach these different groups. And that brings us on to our second heading, and we'll spend almost all of our remaining time on this, the nature of good works, the nature of good works.

And notice in verse two that Paul begins with the older men, presumably because they were to be role models to others. You just have to think of Victor Meldrew, if you remember the BBC comedy *One Foot in the Grave*, to realize the stereotype Paul's addressing here.

Grumpy old men are a fact of life. Seems that as they grow old, men very easily get impatient with the world and the younger generation and can too easily become bitter and lose their temper.

So Titus is to teach older men to be sober-minded or temperate, as sometimes translated, dignified and self-controlled.

[11:42] And not only that, but they also need to be sound in faith. It's not only church leaders who need to hold to the trustworthy word of chapter one, you see. Paul expects ordinary Christians also to be doctrinally sharp and alert.

And they're to persevere in love and steadfastness, serving Christ until the very end. I'm not quite sure at what age you become an older man, but for those here who are older men or for younger men who will one day become older men, isn't this a great challenge?

To endure, to be steadfast, to be as keen and committed a Christian at the end of our life as the day we started to follow Jesus. Such Christian men are a great blessing to any church and a godly example to young believers.

Next, Paul turns to the older women. And like older men, it seems Paul was aware of particular temptations older women might be vulnerable to and which Titus, therefore, was to address.

Reading these verses, I find it striking how well Paul understood human nature and how contemporary it seems. The stereotypes we have here of different types of people haven't changed.

[12:55] and I guess are stereotypes for a reason. So Titus was to teach older women not to be slanderers, gossiping maliciously or complaining about people behind their backs and not to be slaves to much wine.

I don't know why it is, but it seems some older women can perhaps be a little too partial to a glass of Chardonnay or Shiraz. But too much wine isn't conducive to being reverent as Paul encourages older women to be here or holding one's tongue rather than slandering or being self-controlled, a characteristic commanded again and again in this chapter.

Nor would it allow them to do the positive thing Paul wants older women to do. Have a look at the end of verse 3. Paul wanted older women to be able to teach what is good through life and live.

And older women who gossip or drink heavily won't make good role models for their younger sisters. Now the male pronouns we had back in chapter 1 implicitly suggest what's made expletive elsewhere in the New Testament.

Though those who exercise leadership and teaching roles in the church ought to be men. But notice that here we see a valuable teaching role for women also.

[14:16] At the end of verse 3 older women are to teach what is good and so train the younger women the young women to love their husbands and children to be self-controlled pure working at home kind and submissive to their husbands.

Older women are to teach younger women. Of course it's not that Titus couldn't also teach the young women in his congregation it's just that older women would be in a position to teach and model something Titus himself can never model what it looks like to be a godly Christian woman or godly wife and mother.

Older women who've lived through the particular struggles and temptations of motherhood and family life or singleness for that matter will be uniquely equipped to help younger women as they face those same challenges.

You see did you notice what it was these older women were to train the younger women in. It essentially involves family life loving their husbands and children which seems to summarise and be a motivation for the other commands being self-controlled and pure working at home and submitting to their husbands loving leadership.

Now I want us to pause here and spend some time on these verses not because these commands to women are any more important than those to men actually sometimes husbands make it difficult for women to obey these commands perhaps through the expectations we have for our wives or lifestyles so we men need to listen in here too nor because I think younger women are more likely to struggle to be obedient than other groups here after all what man doesn't struggle daily with self-control for example but because it seems to me that what Paul expects of younger women here is particularly counter-cultural and increasingly unpopular both outside and inside the church I mean what could be more inflammatory in today's world than to say a woman's place is in the home and a woman ought to submit to her husband as these verses appear to suggest although once considered the norm perhaps because of our Christian heritage to be a housewife or homemaker seems at best quaint at worst oppressive to the modern mind and isn't submission to become a doormat to be walked all over indeed as Sharon James comments when discussing Titus 2 in this helpful book

[16:48] God's Design for Women today we're told the exact opposite of these verses marriage is a 50-50 partnership and neither partner leads nor submits if we do have children they must not interfere with our careers we can pay someone else to care for them self-fulfillment rather than self-control is in vogue she says so what are we to make of what Paul says here as 21st century Christians well one thing I think we can't do is say they're simply a product of their time there's nothing about these particular commands that suggest they're any less applicable to today than the commands in these verses to be kind or not slander I guess the instructions here which are hardest for modern ears are the commands for women to be working at home and to be submissive to their husbands now when it comes to working at home it's important I think on the one hand not to be overly prescriptive about what roles

Paul expects men and women to do as if women must do the cooking and cleaning and men the DIY and pay the bills but nor also on the other hand should we so stress freedom in such matters that we deny the clear distinction this passage and others do make concerning the spheres the Bible expects husbands and wives to have as their primary focus it may well be that part of Paul's emphasis here is for women to be busy as some translations put it although Paul doesn't actually use the word busy the ESV's working at home is a more accurate translation rather than being lazy as chapter one says Cretans were inclined to be in which the parallel passage in 1 Timothy 5 which incidentally I think helps us understand what Paul understood by working at home also urges women not to be but the reference to working at home is significant too I think both 1 Timothy 5 for your notes verses 10 and 14 especially and Proverbs 31 also portrayed the home and family as the primary sphere in which the virtuous wife will find herself whereas men are commanded to provide for their families and portrayed as doing business at the city gate indeed it's not only wives but widows who are encouraged to pursue what may traditionally have been described as home making or domestic type jobs suggesting this has an application for single women also now let me be clear before rotten tomatoes are thrown in my direction that this verse is certainly not saying women can't have a job or go to work after all in the ancient world where offices and factories weren't yet common place the home would have been a place of activity and industry sometimes of business as well as busyness we see that in Proverbs 31 for example a wife or woman might oversee domestic staff and be involved in a wide range of productive tasks to support and meet the needs of her family or the wider community but nonetheless to my mind the modern idea that there's no difference at all between the functions of men and women within family life seems difficult to square with this passage and the Bible as a whole from the different curses given to men and women in

Genesis 3 through to the roles we see women performing in the New Testament because notice that it's in the context of serving their husbands and children and the home that married women are to exercise godliness here in fact that's part of what godliness looks like for them it seems the home

may have involved more than just a woman looking after her children but certainly not less than that and can I say the home is a great place for engaging in hospitality Christian ministry and evangelism and while because of the fall raising children may often be exhausting and difficult can feel monotonous and is devalued by our world it provides the most wonderful opportunities for nurturing the next generation in the Christian faith indeed the influence and example of his mother led the great 18th century preacher John Wesley once to say I learned more about Christianity from my mother than from all the theologians in

England and for that reason and maybe one or two at this point maybe wanting to reach for those rotten tomatoes again personally I do feel this command to younger women here provides a strong encouragement in normal circumstances for mums to see the task of being a wife and mother in the context of the home as their primary responsibility under God as they seek to obey this command to love their husbands and children the Christian writer and women's minister Carrie Sandham puts it like this she says our society often encourages women to ignore the unique role they have as child bearers and embrace a full and satisfying career instead the desire to be treated the same as men and to enjoy all the benefits of a long and successful career means that motherhood and family life are devalued and undermined it's not that women shouldn't have a career but the care and nurture of children should take priority over a woman's woman's career because being a mother is more important than where she works or how much she earns it is a role that women are physically mentally and emotionally equipped for but are in danger of forsaking because of the natural sinful desire women have to compete with and be seen to be as successful as men there just aren't any women who at the end of their lives say I wish I'd spent more time at the office more often than not they regret not spending more time with their children every mother I know regrets that to some extent after the children have flown the nest but those who could have stayed at home and chose instead to further their careers are often the ones who feel most guilty children are a precious gift from the Lord and bringing them up to know and love him is more important than where women work or how much they earn

Christian women in the 21st century need to recognize that we live in a society that doesn't value motherhood and in many ways positively undermines it family life is being eroded at every turn and at the end of the day it is an expression of our rebellion against God's good design for us as women so I guess the question boils down to whether we think God knows best about how we and families are to function perhaps shouldn't surprise us as Sharon James points out that evidence increasingly suggests young children in childcare are likely to be disadvantaged in educational performance, behaviour and attachment to their mothers indeed some of us may have read Esther Ranson's article in the Telegraph this week where in the context of her involvement with child line she pointed to the demise of the traditional housewife and the busyness of both parents in the modern world as a principal cause of the increased depression, suicidal feelings, unhappiness and loneliness which characterises children today.

[24 : 06] I don't know what you make of all that. I realise this is a sensitive subject and let me say that of course there are different seasons of life. The demands of a mother with preschool children and the emotional needs of a toddler are obviously not the same as when those children are older.

although my observation of working with teenagers is that they continue to need the unrestricted time, care and service of their mothers. Of course there are also situations where because they're single mothers or their husbands are ill or out of work women may need to work outside the home for longer hours.

And of course there's a difference too between a part-time job during term time with flexible hours and a demanding full-time job that involves regular travel. But in light of these verses, in normal circumstances it seems to me anyway that being a wife and mother is a wonderful privilege and responsibility to take hold of.

In his book on Christian parenting, the American church leader John MacArthur puts it like this, to be a mother is by no means second class. Men may have the authority in the home but the women have the influence.

The mother more than the father is the one who moulds and shapes those little lives from day one. Mothers, don't let anyone ever dupe you into thinking there's anything ignoble or disgraceful about remaining at home and raising your family.

[25 : 28] Don't buy the lie that you're repressed if you're a worker in the home instead of in the world's workplace. Devoting yourself fully to your role as wife and mother is not repression, it is true

liberation, he argues.

So while of course there's lots that's good about many jobs, let's celebrate motherhood and honour the home as a workplace. And again let me say at the risk of alienating the other half of the room that this is a word for husbands too.

I know if Carrie Sanden were here she'd say it's the men who often need to hear this because husbands need to be encouraging their wives to focus on their God-given role in the home. Sharon James talking actually about women whose children are older, writes husbands who encourage their wives to do this, that is stay at home, serve the community in a wonderful way.

It is sad when a wife wants to be based at home to care for her family and engage in other unpaid ministries but her husband puts pressure on her to go out to work so that their standard of living can increase.

Sure for a mum to stay at home, especially somewhere like Dulwich, will require sacrifices, material sacrifices, career sacrifices, even social sacrifices in terms of how it's perceived.

[26 : 49] It's deeply counter-cultural and difficult in a world where two income families have become the norm. But that's only been the norm recently and to my mind often to the detriment not only of children but also actually women and men.

And remember Titus is written in a context of worldliness where Paul wants Christians to be shaped by the word, not the world. We're supposed to be counter-cultural and stand out.

Well I hope I haven't lost too many friends after that. Moving on, I'm not going to say as much about the command here for wives to be submissive to their husbands, partly because we touched on it I think when we looked at 1 Corinthians 11 last year.

Except to make clear that this of course doesn't legitimise abuse nor does it require submission if it involves ungodliness. Nor does submission imply inferiority or becoming a doormat.

After all, Jesus is fully God but submits to his father. And we all have bosses we're called to submit to but are in no sense intrinsically inferior to. Indeed, husbands are commanded to love their wives sacrificially.

[27 : 58] Notice love is commanded of older men in these verses. And therefore ought to be seeking to meet their wives' needs and preferences rather than insisting upon their own will. Do speak to me afterwards if you have any questions about any of that.

And because there's so much more that can be said about these verses let me just recommend this book here, *Feminine Appeal, Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother* by Carolyn Mahaney which goes through the seven characteristics listed for women here in Titus 2.

I read it a few years ago and thought it was outstanding so you may find it helpful to get hold of a copy. I talked to Adrian earlier and he's happy to take a list of those who would like us to order in a copy for next week.

Feminine Appeal by Carolyn Mahaney. Well let's move on and much more briefly notice that Paul also much more briefly addresses younger men next in verse 6.

And interestingly unlike the other groups we get just one instruction for them. Perhaps because unlike women us men are rather limited creatures who can only concentrate on one thing at a time.

[29 : 04] we can't multitask. So Titus is simply to urge younger men to be self-controlled. And I guess he focuses on self-control because self-control is so related to almost everything that young men struggle with.

Just think for a moment if you're a young man about how important self-control is. We'll all struggle in different areas of course but a lack of self-control is behind so many things which snare young men in particular.

Drunkenness, sexual sin, pornography, losing your temper, swearing, lying, quarreling, going to bed too late, prayerlessness or not having a daily quiet time, laziness, glossony, malicious talk and even a lack of punctuality or reliability.

If we're young men who want to please Jesus then above all else we must learn and pray for self-control.

And notice that just as the older women were to train the younger women so Titus was to help the younger men and he was to do so by setting them an example. Verse 7.

[30 : 14] 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. Both Titus' life and his teaching were to commend the gospel.

Again we see why Paul was so keen to emphasize the need for godly character in church leaders in chapter 1 so they could set such an example. But returning to our passage as one final group of people Titus was to teach in verses 9 and 10 and that's the slaves.

Now it's important to note that Paul isn't condoning slavery here. Just over the page he calls on Philemon to grant freedom to a slave and elsewhere he suggests slaves should take their freedom if offered it.

In 1 Timothy he condemns slave traders. But slavery was simply a fact of life in the first century Roman world and many of the early Christians were slaves.

So slavery rather than the office or the home was the context in which many of Titus' congregation were to be godly. And Titus was to teach these slaves to be obedient to their masters not just in their actions but also in their hearts seeking to please their masters and also to teach them to be loyal and trustworthy.

[31 : 33] Now none of us are slaves but for those of us in the workplace or at school these words are an important reminder to us that godliness will mean dependability, diligence and respect in the office or classroom.

In fact the workplace or school is the place where many of us will spend most of our waking hours during the week is in many ways the primary area our allegiance to God will be tested and demonstrated and we're to conduct ourselves in a way that accords with sound doctrine.

But all this can be hard. It can be hard to be self-controlled and kind and to bite our tongues and to have a right attitude to work. And that's why we need to remember our third heading.

The reason Paul was so keen that Titus taught what accords with sound doctrine. So finally and briefly before we close the effect of good works. The effect of good works.

I wonder if you noticed a repeated idea in these verses as we read them earlier. It's an idea which comes at the end of verses 5, 8 and 10. Why is godliness so important for Christians?

[32 : 46] Well it's because of the effect it has on outsiders. Look at the end of verse 5. Young women are to be self-controlled and pure and to work at home and so on that the word of God may not be reviled.

Or look at the end of verse 8. Titus is to set an example so that an opponent may be put to shame having nothing evil to say about us. Or have a look at the end of verse 10.

Slaves are to live godly lives so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. All three verses are basically making the same point aren't they?

Godliness is infectious and so makes our teaching the gospel message attractive to outsiders.

Godly living is a powerful testimony to the truth of the gospel.

Now Paul isn't saying godly living itself saves people. It's the word that does that. That's even emphasised here. Paul talks about people not reviling the word of God and the doctrine of God our Saviour being adorned.

[33 : 49] We do need to teach the gospel. Living a good life on its own isn't enough to save people. And yet it's a terrible thing isn't it?

As we were thinking at the beginning when Christians don't live appropriately to sound doctrine. When they're hypocrites whose lives aren't consistent with the Bible. It undermines what we say.

Mahatma Gandhi once remarked, if it weren't for Christians, I'd be a Christian. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once commented, I might believe in the Redeemer if his followers looked more redeemed.

It should fill us with sadness when people say things like that. Because the opposite should be true. That's the point of Titus 2. Our lives should adorn the gospel.

Those I've learnt most from in the Christian life are those who've shared their lives with me as well as the gospel and modelled Christian living to me in a way which was attractive. You see, if we're serious about wanting people to come to know Jesus, then we need to be radically distinctive in the way we live our lives.

[34 : 56] I mean, just imagine the effect on outsiders of Christians putting Titus 2 into practice. Imagine the effect on our colleagues as they see us seeking to please our bosses. Or on our friends seeing us devoting ourselves to good works, having happy home lives and living with integrity.

Godliness is not an optional extra for Christians. Rather, it's essential to the health of the church. We're to be so distinctive in how we live that we stand out from the crowd and people want a taste of what we have.

Now as we close, let's step back and see where we've got to in Titus so far. In chapter 1, we saw how Titus needed to appoint elders in every town who teach Paul's gospel, the trustworthy word as taught.

The truth which accords with or leads to godliness. And this morning, we've seen the vital importance of godliness and that the key to making the gospel attractive to outsiders is godliness. But as we close, we may be left with a question. How can I lead the sort of life which will make the gospel attractive to non-Christians? What will lead me to be self-controlled, to go against my natural sinful self, to serve others and commend the gospel in my daily life?

[36 : 17] Well, we find the answer in the last few verses of chapter 2, which we'll be looking at next week and which show us why Paul was so keen for Titus to appoint elders who teach the truth.

Let me lead us in prayer. Father, we want to say we're sorry for the times when we see godliness as a chore, when we think we'd be better off living the way the world lives.

We thank you that living in a way that accords with sound doctrine is attractive. We thank you for the way in which it is good for society and family life. And we pray that you'd help each of us here, whether we're older or younger men, older or younger women, to listen to what we've learned this morning, to consider what it looks like for us, and then to live lives which are conformed by your word and which make the gospel attractive to outsiders.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.