

Models and Ornaments

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: 29 February 2004

Preacher: Paul Barker

[0:00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 29th of February 2004 the preacher is Paul Barker his sermon is entitled Models and Ornaments and is based on Titus chapter 2 verses 1 to 10 We'll keep open that passage from Titus before you, page 969 and for those who are visiting tonight this is part of a series from Paul's letter to Titus this is I think week 4 out of 6 weeks preaching through this letter and let's pray that God will use this time for his glory and for our growth Heavenly Father we thank you that you reveal yourself to us so clearly in the words of the scriptures even in Paul's advice and commands to Titus and we pray tonight that your word will not only inform our mind but reform our lives so that we may live lives of godliness which are a credit to and ornament to your gospel and we pray this for Jesus' sake

Amen Well you don't need to go far in our world to find strong opinions about how people and usually about how other people should behave so quite often you hear older people saying things like oh the young people of today they need to dress neater cut their hair jaunty and be polite sorry I don't know where jaunty came from it wasn't in my notes and of course the younger people are very quick to reply by saying the older people need to mind their own business younger women should stay at home and care for their family and of course children should be seen and not heard but well here's a little piece of advice that someone wrote along those lines the world is passing through troublesome times the young people of today think of nothing but themselves they have no reverence for parents or old age they are impatient of all restraint they talk as if they know everything and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness to them and as for the girls well they are immodest and unwomanly in speech, behaviour and dress now before you think that a grumpy old vicar wrote those words in 2004 AD they're actually written by somebody called

Peter the Monk and he wrote them in 1274 AD nothing's changed has it well even in church and Christian circles the same sort of strong opinion about how another group within society or within the church should behave occurs so not infrequently do I hear things like the young people should show more respect in church or be quiet in church and not infrequently do I hear things like the older people well they should not be so set in their ways well opinions about behaviour are curious things it seems to me so we often pontificate about what we think is right behaviour and we often do otherwise that is we say that X is right but we go and do Y we say that people shouldn't lie but probably in our own behaviour honesty has some rough and blurred edges around it we say that people shouldn't steal but little things from work we might turn a blind eye to and maybe we forget our own advice when it comes to things like tax returns we admire loving families but our society boasts about promiscuity for example we think hard work is a right thing a good virtue but we often indulge in bludging it's a curious mix right behaviour at one level is attractive even to our society's eyes appealing and yet often the same appealing behaviour is ridiculed and mocked regarded as sort of goody-goody or wowser-ish it's a curious tension I think that runs through us and through our world the appeal of something that is really noble and good and yet at the same time some ridicule or mockery or even despising of those who actually practice that appealing characteristic and for Christians who are called in particular to live good and godly lives then that tension will face us it will be appealing at one level to our world and to us but at another level it will incur some ridicule or mockery or even hostility at the same time right behaviour is a key of Paul's letter to Titus that's really in the end what he's on about is the practice of right behaviour not a pontification about what right behaviour might be but rather upholding the standards of God's gospels right behaviour for those in Crete where Titus is ministering now in Crete as we've seen in the last three weeks the gospel of Jesus is under threat from false teachers but this is more than a straight theological dilemma that is it's not just a dilemma of what is right teaching the issue of right and wrong teaching the issue of right and wrong behaviour and throughout this letter to Titus

Paul is exhorting his protege Titus to ensure that teaching is right by him and by others not just for the sake of right teaching though that is important but for the sake of right behaviour by the Christians who are on the island of Crete 2,000 years ago remember the slogan that we've seen through the last few weeks God's gospel's goal is godliness the issue of the letter is to get the gospel right so that godliness is the fruit if the gospel is under threat as it is here then godliness is under threat and where the gospel's not taught rightly as here then godliness is not practiced properly as here for in the end it is the gospel of God that defines godliness what is right behaviour by young and by old and as we'll see in these verses

Paul singles out both young and old for special instruction about what is right and godly behaviour last week we saw in particular his command to Titus to silence false teachers now the contrast occurs chapter 2 begins with Paul saying to Titus but as for you a strong contrast they're the false teachers and that's what they're teaching they should be silenced but as for you Titus a teacher a preacher in Crete as for you teach what is consistent with sound doctrine not just teach sound doctrine that is to get the doctrine of Jesus and the Trinity and all those sorts of things right but more than that teach what is consistent with sound doctrine that is so that godliness may be evidenced in the behaviour of the Christians in Crete what follows is instruction about behaviour not in fact instruction about what is sound doctrine because Paul's concerned primarily with right behaviour with godly behaviour he'll talk more about the gospel and right doctrine in the passage that we'll look at next week but for now it's right behaviour and he breaks it into four really in effect in practice five groups as we'll see in the verses that follow chapter 2 verses 2 through to 10 tonight and firstly he addresses the older men hard to know where you define older men but for argument's sake let me say 43 and upwards at the moment

[8 : 40]

I would consider older men in a couple of months time I'll probably change that assessment but for now 43 and older that's old in my opinion and he says to these older or he says to Titus to tell the older men in verse 2 to be temperate serious prudent sounding faith in love and in endurance to be temperate means to be generally moderate not uncontrolled to restrain one's desires not just at the issue of drink which is often how the word is used but more generally than that to be serious probably doesn't mean to be gloomy a sort of ancient Eeyore type character but rather to be serious to take seriously life and behaviour to be somebody probably implied who is worthy of respect to be prudent means to be sober minded self controlled not dissimilar really to the ideas of temperate and serious and then finally sound in faith love and endurance or a bit like hope the great

Christian triad of faith hope and love that are so important throughout the New Testament remember that even old men still need to endure in Christian faith and when you think about it it's actually easy for old men to be unlike that description you see often old men are characterized by the opposites of those sorts of things see quite often old men are lazy they're gluttonous they're dirty and untidy they're bad tempered they're grumpy although that might begin a bit earlier than 43 some would say they're often cynical they're often uncontrolled in their language and in their behavior it seems to me maybe even more so in Mediterranean countries where so often older men just sit around idly playing games or smoking or drinking or lustng or swearing well we can expect that to be true in ancient

Crete we heard last week if you look up to verse 12 of chapter 1 the cretins are always liars vicious brutes and lazy gluttons so you'd probably expect the older men to be like that in particular it's quite easy for older men not to be as commanded in verse 2 and if it's true in ancient Crete it's still true today in many respects but for Christians that ought not to be the case Paul is saying here how wonderful by contrast to see older men who are radiant in faith enduring in their faith and full of Christian love not only for God but for others as well and I think this is a challenge to every older man here even under the age of 43 to be like this description well likewise now he turns to older women he in fact says likewise tell the older women so there's a bit of overlap here with what he's told the older men for them he says in verse 3 that the older women are to be reverent in behaviour that has the sense of the demeanour of a holy person in how they live their life their character they're not to be slanderers that is someone who is full of false accusations or malicious gossip nor are they to be slaves to drink become in the end alcoholics the daily sherry that becomes the daily bottle again it's easy for older women not to be like this description of verse 3 it's easy for older women to behave in far from holy ways it's easy for older women to idle away hours and days gossiping slandering full of idle chatter it's easy for older women to begin to indulge more and more in drink maybe neglected by husbands maybe trying to escape the pressures of life who knows what doesn't matter what the cause is it's very easy for older women not to be like the description of verse 3 both in ancient creed where they're often liars and vicious brutes and lazy gluttons but the same in our society as well not so for

Christians Paul says Christian older women are to be different from the cretin older women and how wonderful it is to see older women who exemplify holiness by their behaviour and character who don't give themselves over to gossip and false slanders and accusations and who aren't becoming alcoholics and slaves to drink and again there's a challenge here to older women here but just like for the men the same sort of thing for those who are younger men and younger women growing older the challenge is to be like verses 2 and 3 describe rather than as society so often is but note too at the end of verse 3 the older women have a particular responsibility to teach extraordinarily because so often we think of Paul writing and saying men are to teach and women to keep silent but here in these verses it is the women who are to teach at the end of verse 3 they are to teach what is good but the purpose shows that in particular in Paul's mind is older women teaching younger women how to live the

Christian life not only are they to teach it but they are to model it as the description of behaviour in verse 3 indicates they're to teach what is good so that they may encourage the young women now in effect here Paul now addresses young women although technically he's addressing the older women to teach the younger women but in effect he's now addressing the younger women how they should behave so for any women under the age of let's say 43 maybe these verses are for you he's to teach the younger women to love their husbands to love their children to be self controlled chaste good managers of the household kind being submissive to their husbands that's quite a lengthy list in effect notice firstly that love needs to be taught that is the older women are to teach the younger women to love husbands and children now you might think that if you're married and have children that it would be a natural thing for you to love your husband and love your children and

[15 : 29] I don't think that's the Bible's view it's certainly not Paul's view here love is often a command in the scriptures it doesn't come naturally especially love as God defines love and as God models love by giving up his son for us love needs to be taught even in the context of marriage and parenthood so Paul is saying that the older women have a particular responsibility to teach the younger women to love their husbands and to love their children now for those of you who are older women here are you taking up this responsibility to teach the younger women in the Christian fellowship here how to love their husbands and children and you younger women who are married and have children are you listening to the teaching of the older women in this Christian fellowship about how to love your husbands and to love your children as well like the older men the younger women are also to be self controlled this list says also they're to be chaste that is sexually pure the word the description here in verse five is that they're to be good managers of the household that probably suggests something probably somebody who's taking care of the home looking after home life

I don't think necessarily that's a prohibition on younger women going to work but they have a particular responsibility for their own homes the management of it that implies the bringing up of the children the cleanliness of the home the meals and all those sorts of things it doesn't mean that the men should never cook or the men overall responsibility in that area of home and family life they're to be kind rather than selfish or nasty or greedy and then we're told in the end of the list more or less in verse five to be submissive to their husbands now here is something that our society doesn't much like and even within our church life these days doesn't much like submission here is a voluntary submission that is it's a submission of a wife to a husband that is not coerced or forced by the husband but is voluntarily given by the wife certainly there's no indication no support for the view that the

Christian husband should be a bully overbearing or demanding of this sort of submission in fact in other places in the scriptures where husband's responsibilities to wives are joined to this issue of submission the husband's responsibility is perhaps even more demanded to love as Christ loved the church that's far from overbearing or bullying or demanding on the wife submission is a voluntary thing from the wife and often Christian husbands somehow seem to want to want to demand to want to demand it by their sacrificial love of their wife well such behaviour in that whole list for the younger women has an apologetic purpose that is a purpose for the sake of the world the end of verse five says so that the word of God may not be discredited you see wrong behaviour discredits the gospel the teaching about Jesus and our salvation through God's grace see right and godly behaviour may well be very counter cultural it may be something that at one level our society thinks is appealing but by and large rejects and never strives for indeed sometimes godly behaviour incurs the wrath or the hostility of the world in which we live but capitulating to the standards of our society discredits the gospel of Jesus

Christ and yet so often the church is so eager to capitulate thinking that somehow if it adopted the norms and values of society it would somehow make the gospel more appealing or more attractive or church life more inviting but far from it is the truth as the church capitulates to the standards of its society then it discredits the gospel of Jesus Christ in the end such an approach empties the gospel of its goal which is godliness and that in the end denies the grace of the gospel which we'll see next week more of Paul in his instruction to Titus now turns to the younger men those of us who are 42 or younger I guess and he says to them in verse 6 very simply likewise urge the younger men to be self-controlled now you might think well that's a little bit unfair the younger women have got a long list of things they've got to heed to the younger men have just got one thing in that verse to be self-controlled yet how hard self-control is particularly for younger men

I suspect who is it on the whole who drive their cars out of control younger men who is it who on the whole deal with alcohol and drugs too badly end up in fights outside night clubs and so on usually younger men who is it who goes out of control of sporting events and so on usually younger men who is it who are probably very prone to being ill disciplined with money time work responsibilities generally commitment christian service younger men perhaps more usual than the other categories I don't think younger men have got it easy here self-control is a hard thing a fruit of the spirit as Paul writes in Galatians 5 but it's not the end of the list there's actually more because verses 7 to 8 also seem to imply the instructions for younger men in particular verses 7 and 8 now address

[21 : 49] Titus in particular but in the context of his teaching to younger men seem to show that Titus is not only to teach but also to model the behaviour that is right and godly for younger men in particular Titus verse 7 show yourself in all respects a model of good works and in your teaching show integrity gravity and sound speech that cannot be censured then any opponent will be put to shame having nothing evil to say of us Titus may well have been most probably a younger man he's to model for the other younger men the right and godly behaviour that the gospel demands so the teacher is not only to teach but to be the model that is Titus is to practice what he preaches and he's to practice and teach good works something that the false teachers were completely unfit for if you look at the very last words of chapter 1 higher up in the column they were unfit for any good work but

Titus is to teach and practice good works every good work in fact a model of good works in all respects verse 7 says he's to teach with integrity that is sincerity believing what he teaches and practicing what he teaches and also with gravity he's not to take teaching the gospel lightly or flippantly that doesn't mean an absence of humour but it does mean that he's serious about what he teaches and it's true but to teach with integrity and gravity also means that he'll be unlike the false teachers we saw last week who are greedy for gain that is his motive is pure as well as the content of his teaching is pure so he's not in the teaching job to earn money or to gain popularity he's in it for the sake of the gospel of God and of the son of God Jesus Christ and to teach with all seriousness means that unlike the false teachers who are full of idle talk just verbose and empty flowing words that have got nothing much in their content he is serious about what he says and teaches and preachers so that by his behaviour and his words verse 8 says he will be above reproach that is his sound speech probably not his preaching so much as his general conversation with people cannot be censured cannot be faulted doesn't mean that he'll be perfect but that he'll have an untarnished reputation in the eyes of others and the purpose of all that is so that any opponent will be put to shame having nothing evil to say of us it doesn't mean that any opponent won't say something evil but it means they won't have any grounds for evil so that if they speak evil of a godly

Christian teacher and preacher then the evil they speak is clearly made up and has no room to stick no grounds on which it is made Paul of course is writing to Titus in the context where there are false teachers evil people around and he's saying make sure that at every point your behaviour matches your preaching which is both good and godly so that the opponents have no room to censure you to reproach you for what you do wrong now for those thinking about future Christian ministry or those who are in it now as well there's some serious challenges and warnings for us here practice what you preach make sure that your teaching therefore is done with integrity and for Catron going in Christian ministry to Ecuador for the next six months there are warnings here for you too make sure that godliness is your necessary accompaniment of the gospel so that you're not a gospel minister without the example of godliness in your life as well

Christian ministers are to be models in effect on the Christian catwalk of ministry people watch people watch ministers people see their life they soon pick up a lack of integrity they soon pick up where the teaching of the gospel does not match in the life's behavior people watch with eagle eyes observing every move and I think that that's right Christian ministry in a sense necessarily lives in a fishbowl existence with people peering in and watching what a Christian minister does and says and how they behave don't think for one minute those of you who are thinking about some form of Christian ministry that all it is is about getting the words right in the pulpit it's much more than that because just one act or word of ungodliness destroys a hundred theologically sound sermons or talks godliness is the necessary accompaniment for the gospel for those in Christian ministry well finally Paul addresses slaves he's dealt with the older men the older women by implication the younger women the younger men in particular

Titus's example within that category now finally slaves slaves he talks about in verses nine and ten tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect they're not to talk back they're not to pilfer but they are to show complete and perfect fidelity so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior well it would be easy for slaves to talk back to their masters they had little to lose perhaps it'd be easy for them to pilfer often they had great opportunities and responsibilities looking after their masters goods and possessions but it's not just the absence of bad things here Paul doesn't simply say to slaves don't talk back don't pilfer as though then they could be sullenly silent moping around while they did their job not at all rather than just the absence of the bad things they are to be positive in the way they act and work for their masters so Paul says they are to give satisfaction in every respect and they are to show complete and perfect fidelity and that's much harder than just the absence of talking back or pilfering we ought not to think that Roman slaves were sort of like the

[28 : 29] Uncle Tom's cabin variety of American slavery a hundred or fifty two hundred years ago where they were treated fairly abominably many Roman slaves were pretty much more like employees today less rights no unions but nonetheless with some good conditions and some care within their Roman masters household or work business or whatever it was in many respects we ought to see here some instruction for employees in general even though perhaps technically we're not slaves and again we find an apologetic purpose to this the end of verse 10 says so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior an ornament is something that adorns beautifies or adds to or gives credit to something so the right behavior by slaves is to be an added credit to the gospel which they believe in it is an attraction for the gospel and in many respects the end of verse 10 says positively what the end of verse 5 says negatively there the younger women were to behave right so that the word of

God may not be discredited here the slaves are to act right so that they actually give credit to adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ well remember God's gospel's goal is godliness and the lack of godliness evident in behavior discredits the gospel in 2004 in Australia indeed around the world by and large the gospel of Jesus is in great danger of being discredited if not already done so it's in danger of being brought into serious disrepute by Christian behavior that is often lacking in the categories described here in these commands too often Christian behavior is unattractive ungodly unloving lacking in self-control lacking in mutual love and submission lacking in temperance lacking in working hard and bringing satisfaction to employers and so on often Christian behavior is no different from the behavior of our world and sometimes it is worse we are to practice godly behavior a necessary accompaniment of the gospel godly behavior doesn't convert people we still need to speak the gospel we still need to teach the gospel but godliness adorns and commands the gospel of Jesus Christ and so we must practice being godly being godly not in the world's terms or in our own self-righteous terms but in God's gospel's terms may be counter-cultural may not be natural to us that Paul has outlined here what the new testament consistently outlines and indeed what the old testament outlines as well by way of what is godly character and behavior for the people of god for older men be temperate serious prudent full of faith hope and endurance for older women be reverent not slanderers or slaves to drink for younger women be loving of your husbands and children chaste and kind for younger men self-controlled and full of good works and for slaves or perhaps employees bringing satisfaction and faithfulness to your job these are high standards to live up to especially in a world which doesn't hold these virtues so preciously but these are god's standards they're god's gospel standards and god's gospel doesn't change and god's gospel standards don't change whatever age we live whatever society we live these are the standards of godliness and right behavior that we must practice that we must not only aspire to but reach beyond our reach beyond our reach beyond our reach and next week we'll see more about how we attain these standards in our life before we sing let's pray let's pray oh god our father we thank you for the gospel of the lord jesus christ and salvation by your powerful grace that is ours through him but we thank you too for the godliness which the gospel commands and we pray that as we respond with faith and repentance to your gospel so may we live lives that are godly according to your gospel standards we pray this for jesus sake amen

Cette f