

Conduct Befitting The Gospel (Part3)

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[0 : 0 0] Well, then we get to this third section as we've broken it up into three different stages, really. We get to this third section in verses 7 through 10, and Paul is shifting away from age groups or life stages that he's covered earlier in the chapter.

And he deals with two unique categories of people in the church. The first category of people in the church is the church leaders.

They are represented by Titus, but of course, by extension, this would be the elders that Titus is to be appointing in these churches as well. We find them addressed in verses 7 and 8.

And then the second category of people we find are Christian slaves in the church. We see this in verses 9 and 10. Through the years, our English translations have tried to soften this word. It says bond servants probably in the translation that you're reading, or maybe it says servants. It's really, it's the word *doulos*. It's a slave. And it's speaking directly to people who are enslaved in Crete.

[1 : 0 6] And Paul's saying that the gospel has something to say to them. That it not only has something to say to them in regards to their salvation, it actually has something to say to them in regards to their godliness as well.

So it's unique that Paul addresses these two different groups. And why is it that that should be important to us today? Most of us are not church leaders. None of us are enslaved people either. So how are we actually supposed to understand this? Why does it matter? Well, the instruction for church leaders teach us that every Christian is responsible for following a pattern of godliness. That's the purpose of the leaders. They set a pattern that Christians must follow. As they follow Christ, others will follow their example and follow Christ as well.

So does the things that Paul is saying to Titus matter to each and every one of us? Of course they do. Because it's not instruction that's specifically for Titus. It's to be in Titus, but it's also supposed to be true of everyone else as well.

[2 : 1 1] The instructions for the slaves teach us that gospel conduct transcends even the most devastating circumstances of our lives.

And we're going to dig into that a little bit more in a few moments. Now we need to see the form of structure that Paul gives to both categories. He really structures his teaching the same way between the two groups.

He commands specific actions. Those are indicated by imperative verbs. You can see it in verse 7. Show yourself, he says. And then you see it again in verse 9.

Be submissive. Those are imperative commands. But then those actions, those imperatives are further explained by the intended result that they have.

Here is the thing that you should do, and here is why you should do it. And that is indicated, of course, by the so that clauses. So that an opponent may be put to shame.

[3 : 0 8] So that we may adorn in everything the gospel and the doctrine of God our Savior. And so that's the form. And I think it would be helpful for us to acknowledge and recognize that form as we work through this text together this morning, okay?

First, let's look at church leaders. Church leaders. Look with me again at verse 7. Paul says, show yourself. He's speaking directly to Titus again now. Show yourself, Titus, in all respects to be a model of good works.

Well, there's two specific commands given to Titus here.

He is to display good works. Titus, and he is to teach the gospel in a manner that cannot be condemned. Those are the actions. But before we get into that, I want to take just a few moments to focus in on this one word that Paul uses, that Titus is to be a model.

A model. That's not complicated, and I don't mean to treat you as if you can't understand basic things. But I do think this is helpful, at least for me, and maybe it will be helpful for you. The Greek that's underlying this particular word for model, this noun, is a term that refers to the impression of a die, like a stamping die.

[4 : 38] We could go to most of our kitchens today, and probably your wife has somewhere in the kitchen a baking mold. Maybe it's a mold for a bundt cake.

Maybe it's a mold for muffins or something like that. Julie and the girls have some of these in our kitchen at home. And what is the purpose of it? You make your batter, whatever it is that you're going to mix, and you pour it into the mold so that after it's finished baking, the finished product, the muffin or the cupcake or whatever it is, the cookie, it looks exactly like the mold in which it's been poured into.

We would think the same thing when we take our kids to the beach, and our kids like sand toys, and they'll want to build a sand castle at some point. So they have toys that are molded.

They set a pattern, and they can take that wet sand, and they can push it down into those toys so that when they dump the sand out, it takes the form and the pattern of the bucket or the other tools that they're using.

That's the idea that Paul is getting across here to Titus. Titus, and by extension, the elders that he was to appoint, was to be a mold into which others could be poured and therefore bear a likeness to him.

[5 : 55] Like the apostle himself, Titus was to so follow the pattern set by Jesus Christ that the people following him would also bear the image of Christ in the way that they lived and ministered.

Now that's important for us to understand here, because if we don't acknowledge that this instruction is meant to be followed by everyone, then we're going to ignore it. We're going to completely miss the point.

Titus, be a model, be a pattern for good works that the people in Crete will follow. Titus, be a model for teaching the gospel in a way that cannot be condemned so that the people in the churches will also teach the gospel in a manner that cannot be condemned.

In other words, the things Paul wrote must be true of Titus because they should be true of every Christian.

Do you see that? They must be true of Titus. They must be true of the elders. They must be true of the leaders at Lakeside Bible Church because they should be true of every other believer.

[7 : 03] And whatever pattern the leadership is going to set in the church, whatever pattern the leadership was going to set in the church here or then is what the church is ultimately going to become.

And so Paul says, model good works and faithful teaching. Now let's consider those actions themselves. First, he says, show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works.

We talk about good works a lot in Christianity, but it's generally used as a general term that doesn't often get helpfully defined.

So I want to define it. What do we actually mean by good works? What does Paul mean by good works? At the very least, it refers to righteousness.

Righteousness in particular set in contrast to the sinful behaviors and ideas of the non-believing culture. And we see this happening a lot in the book of Titus.

[8 : 05] In chapter one, Paul deals with the false teachers. He deals with the cultural ideas and the cultural sins of the people in Crete. And he says that the Christians here need to be standing in contrast to that.

At the very least, good works refers to that. It is fundamentally holiness that by God's grace sets a believer apart from the world in which they live.

Allah was teaching the kids about this on Thursday night in the adventure club class about they were defining holiness and they were talking about sanctification. And there's this dynamic of holiness that I think is so important for us to understand.

Yes, it means set apart, but think in the Old Testament for just a moment. As God commanded Moses in all the things related to the tabernacle and eventually the temple, but the tabernacle and all the instruments.

Remember he said they were to be made holy to the Lord. What does that actually mean? That the instruments in there, the altar, all the things that were being used, they were devoted specifically for

the glory and the purposes that God had given them.

[9 : 14] So it wouldn't be right for Ashlyn if she lived amongst the children of Israel in those days. It wouldn't have been right for her to decide she wanted to make a cake. And so she just kind of runs into the tabernacle there and grabs one of the basins that they have to mix or batter together because all of hers were dirty.

That would be unholy. Because those things have been devoted to God. Now that's the idea of holiness when it comes to God setting apart his people in holiness.

He has set them apart, St. Clair Ferguson says, to be devoted to God. That everything about our lives is set apart by God to be devoted to his purposes and to his glory.

And when we talk about good works in the Bible, fundamentally it is referring to holiness, this devotion to God whereby God sets his people apart from the world in which they live.

But it's not just that. There's something more to it. The biblical idea of good works is more than just resisting temptation and being orthodox in faith.

[10 : 24] It also includes positive cultural engagement that is clearly evident to the watching world. Consider Jesus' words on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5.

Jesus says, He says, It's being set apart.

It's devoted to God. It's resisting sin. And it's devoting ourselves to orthodoxy in belief. But it's more than that. It's living in such a way that other people can actually witness the good works.

They can witness the positive outcomes of the life as we are transformed by the power of Christ.

Think about this in terms of first and second century Christians that we're reading about here in Titus.

The fruit of Christian works was abundantly evident in the centuries following this. Colin Hansen wrote that early Christianity was not only offensive to Jews and to Romans, but it was also attractive.

[11 : 55] And here's what he meant. He wrote, Christians opposed abortion and infanticide by adopting children. They didn't retaliate, but instead forgave.

They cared for the poor and marginalized. Their strict sexual ethic protected and empowered women and children. Christian churches brought together hostile nations and ethnic groups.

Jesus broke apart the connection between religion and ethnicity when he revealed a God for every tribe and tongue and language. Allegiance to Jesus trumped geography, nationality, and ethnicity in the church.

And it wasn't that all of these things were producing salvation in these Christians. No, this was the overflow of the gospel at work in their life. In the second and third centuries in the city of Rome, Rome was devastated by two different plagues.

The second plague in the third century or second century, excuse me. No, this was the third century. It had a mortality rate of 5,000 people a day at one point. That's 35,000 people a week in a city that did not exceed in population, one million.

[13 : 14] They didn't know how to cure the plagues that were coming upon them, whatever they might have been at that particular moment. But the people eventually discovered that it was spread by contact. So what inevitably happened is people began to flee the city of Rome.

Family members were leaving their family and their children to die in the city. Doctors, the people who had whatever knowledge was possible to try to help overcome this, also left the city.

But not the Christians, says Tim Keller. The Christians stayed in the cities. Not only did they care for their own sick, but they had dynamic nursing services to others.

They went out and brought in. They cared for all sorts of the pagan sick. And as a result, many of them died. You say, well, wasn't that such a waste?

These Christians could have gone out and they could have gone around to other places around the world, perhaps sharing the gospel with others. But because they decided to stay, they lost their lives. And what good was that? It was actually tremendous good.

[14 : 18] Because the people that they were helping were also hearing this gospel of Jesus.

People were being converted to Christ. And as a result of their commitment to good works in that time, we see the progression of the gospel flourishing and beginning to flourish in the city of Rome in the time thereafter.

And here's what I mean by all of that. We must preach the gospel. But a gospel that doesn't affect the way that we live in regards to the way we view humanity and the way that we help others is not

a true gospel.

Christians sacrifice their wealth to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Using a parable, Jesus said that in the final judgment, Christians will be commended because he says, For I was hungry and you gave me food.

I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.

Christians sacrifice their time to care for the widow and orphan. James chapter 1 says, Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

[15:40] Christians give their voice to defend the oppressed and afflicted. Isaiah chapter 1. Learn to do good. Seek justice.

Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause. Of course, these works do not earn salvation, but they reveal the radical transformation that's brought about as a result of salvation.

They declare the gospel of Jesus in a way that can be seen rather than only heard. Martin Luther said, Because the heathen cannot see our faith, they ought to see our works, then hear our doctrine, and then be converted.

And we have this tendency sometimes, there's ditches on both sides of the road here. We have this tendency on one end of cultural accommodation, where we come into the world and we end up losing the gospel because all we care about is positive cultural engagement, but we never actually bring the name of Christ.

We never actually bring the gospel of Christ. What we ultimately end up doing in that situation is we accommodate ourselves to the culture. Intending to help them, we become like them.

[16:57] On the other side of this is cultural isolation, where we determine that the world is too sinful for us and it is too far gone for us, so I'm just going to isolate myself from it.

And I'm not going to be involved in any way with the culture that's around me. I'm going to keep my faith to myself and to my Christian community. And then the world never actually sees our good works. And they never hear our gospel message.

And somewhere in the mix of that is the impossible. And it's the impossible that Jesus calls us to when he tells his disciples, I am sending you into the world, but I don't want you to be of the world. So Jesus takes away the option of cultural isolation. He says, you must be in the world. And then he removes the option of cultural accommodation. And he says, while you're in the world, you need to look very different from that world around you.

And it's a battle for us. It's a constant tug of war. What do we do? Who are we supposed to see?

[18:01] How are we to be involved? And at the end of it is good works. Informed by the gospel. Founded on the gospel. But has compassion and mercy for others.

So that the faithful Christian life is marked by works of mercy and compassion and unity. Because Jesus' life was marked by such radical love.

Mark chapter 10. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. And how did he do that? By giving his life a ransom for many.

Well, how do we follow that pattern? You can't give your life a ransom for anyone. You can give your wealth to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked. You can give your time to care for the orphan and the widow.

You can give your voice and your vote to help the afflicted and the oppressed. Well, he's not only to be a model of good works, he's to be a model of gospel teaching.

[19:08] Look again at verse 7. 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 in the case of these verses, Paul is primarily concerned with Titus' manner of teaching, more so than he is the content of his teaching.

Now, that's not to say that the content doesn't matter. Of course, it does. We've covered that extensively already in this book. But in this verse, he's concerned with the way that Titus teaches. He was to put the gospel on display in his teaching through teaching it with integrity and dignity and sound speech. Integrity speaks to motives.

The false teachers in Crete wanted to be the social influencers of the first century. They wanted to build their own brands, and they wanted to build their own wealth. We saw that in chapter 1.

[20 : 08] Titus wasn't to do that. Titus and the elders in the churches, on the other hand, were to preach the gospel with pure motives for the glory of God and for the good of his people.

Dignity refers to Titus' manner, his persona. He was to present the gospel in a way that was worthy of respect, is what dignity means.

Sound speech certainly includes the right message, but it also involves the gracious and winsome words of speaking grace and persuading others to believe the truth of the gospel.

He was to boldly declare the gospel with a spirit that could not be condemned. Of course, Colossians 4 helps us with this. Walk in wisdom toward others, Paul writes, making the best use of the time.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, that is, toward unbelievers. Let your speech be always gracious, seasoned with salt. That means useful, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

[21 : 19] He tells Titus here, as you preach the gospel, do it with integrity and dignity and sound speech. Be gracious in the way you preach the gospel. Be salty in the way you preach the gospel. Not as a curmudgeon, not as we mean salty in that sense, but salty in the fact that you're actually useful.

That people can get beyond the way of your teaching to actually hear the message that you're proclaiming to them. And what's the intended result of all this?

There's the model of good works, there's the model of gospel teaching, and then in verse 8 we see the intended result. So that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. What's the result here? Silencing gospel opponents. Put to shame here as passive. Meaning our works and our words should shame our enemies rather than fuel the fires of their indignation towards us.

Do you see the difference in that? That the way that we live, even if they hate our message, and they hate our purpose, and they hate everything that we're doing, that the way that we live, and the way that we speak, and the way that we preach, does not fuel the fire of their condemnation, but it actually puts them to shame because they cannot justifiably condemn us.

[22 : 43] That their condemnation clearly comes as a result of their hatred for Christ and his gospel, not a hatred for the sins of our own lives in the way that we treat everyone else. It's an important dynamic here.

Notice that this doesn't guarantee their conversion. That's not the object here. Not at least in this verse. It doesn't guarantee their conversion.

It prevents them from having a justifiable reason to speak evil of Christians and therefore speak evil of the gospel because that's exactly what happens. You read news articles or maybe you listen to podcasts or whatever it is.

If you're immersed in any kind of Christian cultural information, then you're going to find every time, every time someone is going through these deconstruction phases in their faith as it's come to be called, it almost inevitably starts with the sin of another Christian.

And rather than looking to the person of Christ and the truth of what Christians should be in Christ, they take their eyes off of Christ and they look at all of these sinful men and they see the pattern of these sinful men and what they ultimately do is renounce the gospel instead of just renouncing the men.

[24 : 00] And Paul's telling Titus here, live in such a way that that cannot be said of you. That anyone who's rejecting the gospel must reject it on the sole basis of their hatred for the gospel, not because you've communicated it in such an unpalatable way that they hate you.

The Bible guarantees that the world will hate us, but you don't have to invite that hate.

It guarantees that they'll persecute us. That doesn't mean that your persona on social media needs to agitate them so that they will persecute you. That's foolish.

It doesn't glorify God. It actually condemns the gospel. If the world must hate us, let it be for the truth that we proclaim, not for the way that we communicate that truth.

If they must despise us, let it be for the gospel consistency of our lives that brings conviction to their own rather than the religious hypocrisy that has become part and parcel of those who name the name of Christ.

[25 : 20] Well, that's for church leaders. Secondly, he deals with Christian slaves. Christian slaves. Verse nine, 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 showing all good faith so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior.

Now, before we jump into Paul's instructions here for enslaved people, let's bring some clarifying understanding, perhaps, of the New Testament's view and understanding of slavery.

Because we can't get beyond the fact that the New Testament addresses slaves in their enslaved condition many, many times in the New Testament.

The apostles do this. But it doesn't always have in view the kind of chattel slavery that we think of in terms of American history and American slavery.

[26 : 23] The Christian ethic represented in the New Testament always rejects kidnapping. It rejects enslaving. It rejects dehumanizing people so much so that in American history, the enslavers, when they would give these slaves, American slaves, a Bible, there's portions of the Bible they would actually remove because they were afraid that the slaves are going to read the Bible and think that God was against slavery in the way that they were dealing with it.

That's how plain the Bible is actually about this. We need to understand that. Slavery and the ongoing remnants of social prejudice and racial prejudice that it has produced in our nation are egregious sins.

They need to be lamented and repented of, not defended in any way. And the Bible doesn't do that.

The Bible doesn't give us grounds for defending it. But it is true that the culture of the New Testament, while including this kind of egregious slavery, was actually much broader than that.

It was a culture of slavery that involved apprenticeship. It involved indentured relationships, domestic workers, government officials. If you wanted to become a Roman citizen as an adult, you could be adopted by a Roman family and that would be your pathway to citizenship.

There were economical arrangements where slaves would volitionally choose slavery in order to get ahead in some kind of way in their life, whether it was economically or whether it was through social status.

[27 : 55] And there were term limits set on that and there were things that they went through that they thought, the slave themselves thought, was actually putting them forward in society.

And I don't mean to paint a rosy picture of slavery here because that's not at all what it was. Even those who entered slavery volitionally were subjected to harsh practices. They were dehumanized by their masters.

They were often mistreated by their masters. But it wasn't always the dynamic that we think of or at least the culture of it wasn't always the dynamic that we think of today. Which is why the New Testament, while condemning the things related to slavery, did not often hit head on the issue of slavery.

Rather, the New Testament speaks directly to enslavers and to the slaves. Why? Because the gospel is for them and the gospel has something to say to them in their current condition.

And when we think about that in the terms of the New Testament, that's what's happening and that's what we need to understand. So what is it that Paul's saying here? He's not condoning slavery. Neither is he promoting it.

[29 : 08] He's just acknowledging that it's a reality in Crete and he wants to say something to the Christians who are caught up in that particular structure of their culture. And he says that they need to be submissive in everything.

That's verse 9. Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. And of course, that submission has clear limitations.

The Bible never commands someone to obey man in a way that would sin against God. And of course, that is not Paul's intention here either. The sense here is that they are to willingly submit themselves to their masters, Christian or not, insofar as their duties do not violate the Word of God. Which is further revealed when Paul says how he intends for them to obey, which is listed for us here. He gives two positives and then two negatives. The first thing he says is they are to be well-pleasing.

This is how they're going to submit. This is how they're going to display this submission. They're going to be well-pleasing, which simply means that they are to serve and behave in a way that is pleasing to their authorities. That it is to be done genuinely with the aim of glorifying God with their behavior.

[30 : 26] Let me just read Colossians chapter 3 so it gives some more clarity to this. Slaves obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service.

In other words, not just when they're looking, not as people-pleasers, just putting on a front, but he says, with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance of your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

That's what he means by well-pleasing, that they're not to put on a show, that they're not to only do what they're supposed to do when their authorities are looking on, but they're to look at their condition as a way to glorify the Lord even in their work.

He says, they're not to be argumentative. This refers to that kind of contrarian attitude that pushes against authority no matter what. This is what we do when we're teenagers.

[31 : 32] We so hate authority that it doesn't matter if the instruction is good and even helpful, we're going to push against it just because we hate the authority that's put in our lives. Of course, that's not limited to teenagers.

I'm 36 years old almost and I still do that often. That's what he's saying. He said, don't have a contrarian attitude where you just constantly push against no matter what.

He says, not pilfering, that's just thievery. Don't steal from them. Don't misuse the privileges that may be gained from your work. He says, showing all good faith, faithful to the Lord, faithful to their work and the things that they do.

That's the action. What's the intended result? Verse 10. So that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

So what's the point of all of that? Christian slaves were to submit in everything so that they might glorify God in everything. And he uses this word adorn.

[32 : 36] And I love this word. There was a culture of adornment. You can actually look this up. That's what it was called, a culture of adornment in ancient Greek and Roman societies where it's very similar to our own, where statements were made by the way that people dressed or the way that they accessorized their bodies.

We do the same thing. They did it really to an extreme. 1 Timothy and 1 Peter both deal with this in terms of living in such a way that our adornment is modest, pleasing to the Lord, looking to show our faith rather than to show our social status or our wealth or whatever it is that we may be trying to prove in the way that we carry ourselves.

Here, Paul says that when slaves behave in this way, these four categories, that they wear the gospel of Jesus.

It's like putting on a coat. They put on the gospel of Jesus, putting it on display for everyone to see. It's a transcendent gospel that we have.

It transcends every circumstance that you may find yourself. And that's proven further in the very next verse. We'll get there next, or two weeks from now, but look at verse number 11.

[33 : 54] Look what the very next sentence is that Paul writes in this letter. He says, do this so that you can in everything adorn the doctrine of God our Savior for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for what people?

all people. It's a transcendent gospel. What did this mean for these people? This meant that the gospel of Jesus extended to those in society whom their culture considered worthless and servile. When the world had looked at these slaves and said, you're not even worth being counted as a human being, the gospel says, no, you're valuable.

You have worth if not to the people in your life, to the God who has created you. It also meant that a believing slave could understand that the gospel of Jesus extended to the very people who were abusing them, to the very people who were ruling over them, sometimes ruthlessly.

And here's the point. You may not look like much to the world, but to Jesus, you're wanted as much as anyone else. Your sin may be so egregious that you would be utterly embarrassed if the people in this room knew what you had done and knew what you maybe are doing and knew what the condition of your heart and the condition of your mind is.

[35 : 27] But to Jesus, you're never beyond mercy and forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus loves you.

It is never wrong when we say Jesus loves you. The very fact that you have life proves it.

Because the holiness of God dictates that at the moment that we fall short of his glory, he is worthy and he is justified to take our lives immediately, but that's not what he does.

He gives us life and he gives us pleasures and he gives us provisions and he loves us to the end, but here's the best part. It's not seen anywhere greater than on the cross.

And we know the verse well. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever will believe, whoever will believe, will have eternal life and find forgiveness.

[36 : 34] That's not because God hates you. That's because God loves you and Jesus calls you into this love when he says, come to me, all who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

When he says, come to me and I will never cast you out. This transcendent gospel for these slaves meant that they weren't so low despite what everybody else says that Jesus couldn't send his love, that Jesus didn't extend his love and that Jesus didn't care either.

It's a gospel they could relish in, a true gospel, but it's a gospel that they could turn around and display to their unbelieving masters because that gospel extends to the egregious sinners that was true of their earthly masters.

And they could say, Jesus loves you as much as he loves me. And if you believe him, he'll save you like he saved me. And the result of that will be transforming your life and transforming your thoughts.

You'll receive forgiveness and eternal life. This is a wonderful gospel. It's a wonderful gospel. And it speaks to everyone no matter what their circumstance is, no matter what the extent of their sin is.

[37 : 55] It speaks to you. It is for you. And Christ invites you into this love. He invites you to receive it by faith in what he has done for you on the cross and what he has provided for you in his resurrection.

There might be some room for us to apply these verses. In fact, I've been tempted all week in regards to these last two verses to apply this to our work and our jobs. But that's not the point. That's not the point of what Paul's doing here. The point is that gospel transformation and conduct transcends every circumstance of life. No amount of hardship or hurt or failure is an excuse for not living a godly life if you're a believer.

No circumstance. We look at some people and we say, you know what? They've been through so much. They have every right to be mad at God or to doubt him.

That's not true. We never have a right for that. We look at people and the circumstances of some of these Christians in creed and their slavery, whatever their situation may have been in regards to that and we would say, you know what?

[39 : 22] Who cares? Let them rebel. Look at the condition of their life. Paul says, no, the gospel says different than that. There's never an excuse for us to abandon in godly behavior.

Our hardships actually do the opposite. Our hardships provide a backdrop against which the gospel shines the brightest. That's the point here.

Like a jeweler, I remember in the days, it's probably been about 15 years now since I've looked for jewelry for Julie and I remember looking for engagement rings and she told me what she liked and I went to Jared's and they pulled out because I have to get it from there and they pull out the thing. You know, guys, you know how they do it. They pull out the thing and they put all of the really expensive rocks on the black felt. You know what I'm talking about?

They don't set it on the glass because you won't see it well on the glass. They won't put it on a white backdrop or a gray backdrop. No, they got these black ones that's just as black as can be and they stick them in there and then they take these lights.

[40 : 29] They're not fluorescent lights. They're these spotlights and they shine them directly on this rock so that when your girlfriend sees these rocks, Brian, when your girlfriend sees these rocks and she's like, sorry, Brian, she sees these rocks and she's like, wow, wow, it's so beautiful.

Look how glorious it is. That's what Paul's saying here. The hardships of our lives are like that black felt. Sometimes the circumstances of our life we feel are unfair and from a human perspective they very much are.

Maybe it's struggles with your work or maybe with your family or maybe it's a financial issue you're facing. There's some kind of suffering, some kind of trial, some kind of hardship and it doesn't look like you're going to get out of it anytime soon.

And the gospel says, no, it's okay because the lights are shining on the gospel in your life right now and if you will live according to the gospel and you will live this gospel life, it will shine so brilliantly that God will use it so that when the world looks on at your works and at your teaching and at your faithfulness, they'll say, wow, it's beautiful.

That's beautiful. Not the person, but whatever it is that has done this in their life, I want to know more about that thing. That's a beautiful thing. And what is that thing?

[41 : 55] It's the gospel of Jesus. It's no other thing. It's the gospel. And we spent a lot of time these last three weeks thinking about what it means to live out this gospel life, gospel behavior.

And conduct befitting the gospel applies to every age and circumstance. We've discovered that. And it's always for the glory of God and His word. But I must say it again, we have to recognize that our efforts in this godliness are not a means of earning God's favor.

You can never earn God's favor because your righteousness will never be righteous enough. Instead, this behavior is the overflow of a heart that by faith has come to realize that through Christ, we already have God's favor.

And when a person trusts Jesus alone as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes and He changes their affections so that they obey in response to God's salvation rather than at a means of gaining salvation.

And now their desire to obey boils down to three statements in this text. Verse 5, Do these things so that you will avoid reviling the word of God, rejecting the word of God, condemning the word of God.

[43 : 24] Verse 8, so that you would put opponents to shame, not to gain some type of social high ground, but to not give a reason for the gospel to be condemned. That the opponents of the gospel would be put to shame.

And then thirdly, that you would adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every circumstance of your life. That's what this godliness does. That's what the true Christian desires.

And the question is, are you living your life with those desires in mind? When you wake up in the morning, in some way, is your life patterned in such a way you're so in tune with the truth of God that you think, I don't want to revile God's word today.

I want to put the opponents of the gospel to shame in the way that I live. And I want to adorn the doctrine of God no matter how terrible my day is today. I want to please the Lord. not because I'm afraid of Him, but because I love Him.

Do you care if your belief and behavior rejects the Bible? We talked about earlier. Are you more prone to say, I see what that says, but I just feel like that's reviling the word.

[44 : 36] Are you eager to live so that the gospel message is held above reproach before your enemies? Is your life adorned by the truth of God and for your love for Him?

And if the answer to any of those questions is no, then you have some serious, serious spiritual deficiencies that need to be addressed.

Because one of two things is true. Either you've never had the new birth, you've never been born again, so that the Holy Spirit has actually changed your affections and your desire now is to please the Lord with your life.

Either that's the case or you just don't faithfully walk with Christ through prayer and the word. Listen, even as a believer, if you're not serious about walking with God, your life will never reflect the gospel the way that it should.

God begins this work in us, but we must pursue that work as well. That begins with the word and it begins with prayer.