

A Call To Be Holy

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] I wonder if you'd look up the second reading, the Titus reading. You can find that on page 201.

While you're finding that little announcement, Alan DeNoise will be at the back explaining how he managed to do that trick after the service if you want to know. Because I want to know.

Now we're looking at this chapter, Titus chapter 2 this morning, and as it was read out, you will have noticed that it applies to just about everybody here.

Because Titus is given a command for the older men, and for the older women, and for the younger women, and for the younger men, and for a church leader, and for employees.

So I think you probably fit somewhere in there. I guess your problem this morning is working out which category you should put yourself in. Are you an older woman, or are you a younger woman?

[1 : 08] And if you're not sure, just ask the person who's sitting next to you, and I'm sure they'll help you. Actually, as we go through, it'll become obvious. Now the church in Crete had a problem.

And the problem is outlined in the fifth verse of the first chapter, where Paul says, I left you in Crete, Titus, that you might amend what was defective.

Something was wrong. Something was defective. And I suppose that's not really surprising, considering that the church is a young church, and it's in a disastrous kind of culture.

Harry Robinson was preaching last week on the raw material of Cretan culture. And if you were here last week, you remember he took that phrase in verse 12 of the first chapter, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

This testimony is true. That's the kind of culture that they were in. So you can see that it's not surprising that something was wrong.

[2 : 21] There would be the temptation to merge back into the culture. But if that didn't make it hard enough, there was another problem looming up as well. And that was the problem of false teachers.

And we've seen those in verse 10 and 11 of chapter 1. They were appearing, and the trouble with these false teachers was that they sounded so biblical and so right.

They were, they sounded so Jewish, you see. They were quoting the Old Testament, left, right, and center. But the effect of these teachers was to tear families apart.

And so Paul says, Titus, I want you to go to Crete. That's where I want you to go. And if I were Titus, I would say, come on, Paul, look, there are a lot nicer places to go to.

There's a few other Greek islands that there's not so many troubles. Do I have to go to Crete? It's a terrible job. Who'd want to go to Crete? It's disastrous. It's like saying to a British person, you'd want to go to Birmingham or somewhere like that, if you understand what I mean.

[3 : 35] And of course then you see, Paul says, while you're at it, while you're there, Paul, while you're there, Titus, I want you to find some elders who are the husband of one wife, children of believers, and not profligate or insubordinate, must be blameless, not arrogant or quick-tempered.

And Titus is saying, I'm going to have difficulty finding one, let alone elders for every town. This is a very difficult job you're giving me, Paul. I don't really want to go there.

Now, when Titus sees what's written in chapter 2, a list of do's and don'ts, it's very easy to look at this and say, well, this is one of the ways just to sort of gear them up, to get them to be better.

It's a requirement to get them to live a little better anyway, a little bit more holy. And Titus probably, as I suspect, if you were like me, would be groaning. Why bother with this lot?

But Paul does not see it that way. Paul doesn't see it that way. Let me try and explain how Paul sees it. In chapter 2, we see his purpose. He says at the beginning of chapter 2, verse 1, as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine.

[4 : 53] Teach the behavior that goes with the message. So that, firstly, in verse 5, the word of God may not be discredited.

And he's putting it in a negative way there. He says, in other words, make sure that your behavior as a church doesn't put people off the gospel.

That's the negative way of putting it. And then in verse 10, right at the very end of our section, he puts it in the positive light. He says, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior.

And here he's saying, make sure that your behavior switches people on to the gospel. That word adorn is one that's used in another context as the setting for a jewel.

If you get the right setting behind a jewel, not that I've ever owned a jewel, but I'm told this, but if you get the right setting, then it shows off the jewel to its best advantage.

[6 : 09] I suppose a sort of similar thing today would be a thing, I think it's called Colour Me Beautiful. You women will know this. You've got to wear the right kind of colors. I don't know if it's autumn or spring or winter or whatever it is, you know, that sort of stuff.

I don't quite understand it. But anyway, if you wear the right colors, you look stunning, apparently. Well, I'm told you are. You see, the setting, if the setting is right, then the jewel looks great.

And if the setting is right, the jewel of the gospel looks beautiful. And so what Paul is saying is this, if you live like this, it's going to make the message look very attractive and beautiful and irresistible.

And that's his great thrust. You see, he's not just trying to crank them up and say, look, you've just got to live a better life. You've just got to be better. He's saying, look, I want you to live like this because if you live like this, people will see this message that we're going on about and they'll say, what a terrific message.

What a terrific message. Why, you know, that old person, old Joe, he's changed. He's a steady guy now. He's reliable. There's a purpose about him. And that woman, she used to drink like a fish, but she doesn't anymore.

[7 : 30] Something's happened to her. And that young woman, she was giving her husband a hard time. But now, why, she supports him and she respects him. And that's extraordinary knowing her husband.

Why is she doing that? And those young lads, those young lads, you know, they're not actually running off after other women and everybody else is running after other women and they're saying, what I can't quite understand, said the people, is that these people are cretins and yet they are living like this.

They're cretins, evil beasts and lazy guttuns, gluttons and always liars, but they are living like this. What is going on? You see, it's the most powerful message.

Not spoken at all. Now, the interesting thing to me is that this list that goes through here in chapter two is a call to be holy, but the connection that's interesting is that this holiness is attractive.

That's the thing that draws people to the message. Now, I wondered whether you ever thought of holiness in that kind of way. When we think of holiness, we think of dinginess, of gloominess.

[8 : 46] Well, we can sometimes. We think of Lent and we think of sackcloth and ashes. We don't think of something that's attractive. But, you know, the Lord Jesus Christ was the holiest person you could ever have met.

And he was the most attractive person you could ever have met. This holiness is riveting. It's attractive. It draws people to say, well, something's going on here.

Why are people like this? It's lovely. It's beautiful. Paul's great purpose, why he gives them this list then, is that he has a longing that the Cretans would come to know Jesus Christ.

He wants Crete for Jesus Christ. And so he says, if you live like this, people are going to start asking the questions. And now we want Canada for Jesus Christ, we want Vancouver for Jesus Christ, and Shaughnessy for Jesus Christ.

And people are going to say, gosh, if they're living like this here, there's something going on. But that isn't just his purpose. His purpose is a little bit more subtle than that as well.

[9 : 48] He doesn't simply want Crete for Jesus Christ. He wants to win back the church in Crete for the true teaching of Jesus Christ. You see, the false teachers were coming in, and they were giving the wrong teaching, the wrong angle.

And he is concerned that people might follow that wrong teaching. And so he says, I want people to follow the right teaching. And if you adorn this teaching, then they will be attracted to it.

I can't help thinking that that's also relevant for us today. We're conscious that many things are said in the name of Jesus Christ that are not really true to the biblical message of Jesus Christ.

But it doesn't really help us if we simply pump a table and say, this is what the true message really is. If we live these lives, then people are going to say, gosh, that's the true message over there in that church.

So, that gives us the context for these particular commands. Paul wants the word of God not to be discredited. He wants people to be drawn to this message to find it irresistible because, of course, Jesus is irresistible.

[11 : 08] Now, we're going to get through this list very briefly and we're going to ask ourselves this question. Why is this list attractive? Why is it that's what's written down here?

Why is it attractive? And we'll start with the older men. So, I'm not talking to myself here. I'm talking to you out there.

Sorry, all right. It is interesting, actually, that we could apply most of this to all of us. But we'll start with the older men.

Bid the older men to be temperate, serious, and sensible. We'll start with those three words. Temperate, serious, and sensible.

And that means that there's a kind of sense of a solid dignity about these men. That they're not frivolous, they're not flighty, they're not given to excess.

[12 : 11] They're temperate, serious, and sensible. And then it goes on to say that they are sound, that is, they are healthy in three things.

Faith, love, and steadfastness. That they have a healthy faith and a healthy love and a healthy steadfastness.

And that seems to speak of a kind of rock-like solid Christianity. And that's what the older men are to be like. Now why are they to be like that?

Well, we'll see in a moment. Paul then has a command for the older women. The older women are likewise to be reverent in their behavior.

Again, that dignity that's to be there. And I'm not sure what Cretan women were like, but they had to watch in a sense what came out of their mouths and what came into their mouths.

[13 : 09] They had to watch that they weren't slanderers, full of gossip, and saying something nice to somebody to their face, but behind them cutting them to shreds.

They hadn't had to watch that. And they also had to watch drink. And I think both slander and alcohol abuse are equally destructive in their own way.

And then they're to teach what is good. Now what I think he's saying then to the older people, the older men and to the older women is this. I want you to be these kinds of people in the church community.

Please, he's saying, don't give up. Don't say to yourself, well I've done my bit for the church, all I'm going to be now is just to sit in the pew and that's it.

He's saying, please don't do that because the younger people need you. See, teach, it goes on to see what the older, teach what is good and so train the younger women to love their husbands.

[14 : 16] The younger people need the older people. We use the phrase, we've used it in England, I don't know whether you use it here, we talk of pillars of the church and we say it with a bit of a smile that there's a real need for spiritual pillars in the church.

People who are steady in the faith so that the younger people can come to them and as it were sort of say, well here's something that's solid, here's somebody that's solid and steady. And with growing mobility now, you know, families split up all over the place.

There's such a need, isn't there, for older people to, as it were, be foster parents almost to the younger people. And that's very attractive.

I know many a young person in our last church and previous churches actually who can tell of the blessing of an older person who's taken them under their wing. They haven't interfered, they haven't been busybodies, but they've just said the right thing at the right time and they've been there.

Solid, dependable, sound in faith, sound in love, sound in steadfastness which links in with hope, faith, hope and love. Of course, if you're to be that kind of person, then you need to be spiritually on fire because that's a ministry.

[15 : 43] So you're not discarded older people, you've got ministry. Now younger people. And it starts with younger women. And I'll read out verses four to five.

Train the young women to love their husbands and children and to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands. And at first sight, if you're a 20th century person, you may say, what is attractive about this?

We've been battling against this for many years and now we've got emancipation. Isn't this a kind of reversion to the dark ages? Is it not? You can't apply this to the 20th century.

This isn't attractive. I need to clear away some of the junk so that we can see what this is really saying. Submission isn't subservient like a dog, you know.

It doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean that my eyes would be like doormats in that sense at all. The real meaning of the word submission is that you are an equal but that you freely come as it were, you freely submit as an equal.

[16 : 57] You don't hold on to your rights. Now, it has been said that this kind of idea is the first century it's a first century thing, it's a cultural thing, the submission.

But I don't think it is. This kind of being equal but submitting is actually part of the Trinity itself. It's part of what life is all about.

You think about the Trinity, think about the Father and the Son. The Son is equal to the Father, fully equal in his person.

And so he says occasionally in the New Testament, the Father and I are one and we're equal. You talk to me, you're talking to someone who's equal with the Father.

The Father and I are one. But then, a few verses later, he'll say, I only do what my Father tells me to do. And so you have these two things together about the Son.

[17 : 59] You're saying, wait a minute, I don't understand this. At one point he's saying he's equal and the other point he's saying he does what his Father tells him to do. And the point is that in the Trinity, there is equality, but in relationship in the Trinity, the Son submits to the Father.

You can be two things at the same time. You can be both equal and submissive. So that happens all the time. I'm equal with Harry Robinson, but I try and do what he says.

Actually, he's just come in at the back, so I'm glad I said that. That's a relief. But it happens in all kinds of relationships, in work.

It happens in work, it happens also in family relationships here. And what I find interesting is that Paul says this, train the young women to love their husbands and children.

You see, it's out of love that they act like this. And it's not something they're forced to do, it's something that they choose to do out of love.

[19 : 07] And I think the domestic bit is really to care for the children because I suspect that in Cretan society, the children have a hard time and they were maybe rather left or whatever. So that domestic bit, I think, concerns them.

And I think that is attractive. When, before I was going out with Rachel, we were at a Bible study together and we were looking at a passage just like this.

And some of the girls said, I really can't cope with all this. and they went round in a circle. And then it came to Rachel's turn and Rachel said, I think this is quite a good idea, you know, wives submit to their husbands.

And the men in the group suddenly sort of, eyes open like this. And she was asked that by three men afterwards. So, if you're looking for a husband, I think there's some truth in there.

Something attractive about that. Now, of course, it doesn't say the men side in this particular passage. It simply says the young men must control themselves.

[20 : 14] That is, not please themselves. But you know that the, that it says in Ephesians, a word for the husbands as well, that the husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. And that's a very good word for husbands because we know that husbands take great care of their bodies.

I can guarantee that the husbands have washed themselves, have dressed themselves, have relaxed themselves last night. They, they made themselves smell nice. They, you know, they, they take themselves out to the cinema, that, all those kinds of things.

They consider their own bodies, don't they? And they're to consider their wives in the same way. So, mutual submission, both sides, mutual love. And I think that's much better than the current scene in Canada today.

Somebody was describing to me what she described as yuppie marriages. And this is much better than that, isn't it? Mutual love and submission. There are two other categories here which we'll just touch on briefly.

The teacher, and that is Titus here, is to show himself in all respects a model of good deeds. And so, if any of us aspire to this role of being the teacher and the leader, they must be a model of good deeds.

[21 : 33] A model, that is to lead by example. That's a very high standard. And in your teaching, show integrity and gravity and sound speech that cannot be censured so that an opponent may be put to shame having nothing evil to say of us.

He doesn't want the word of God to be discredited. And you and I know that the newspapers are always looking out for stories about clergymen and that does discredit the gospel.

Final category is slaves. And in our Bible study that we had on Tuesday, we were explaining that slavery in the first century is a little bit different to slavery in the 17th century in that doctors as well as servants would be slaves.

So, it is a kind of strata of society that most people could be in. And it's more applicable, I think, to employees and employers. And so, Paul was saying, look, those Cretan slaves, those Cretan employees, they're to be like this.

They're to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect. So, their masters say, this is a great, this is a great worker here. It's terrific. I don't know why he's a good worker, but he is a good worker.

[22 : 50] I understand he goes to that church. Maybe he makes the connection. They're not to be refractory, which means to be obstinate and stubborn, and that's to stand on their rights. And they're to show, and they're not to pilfer, to steal, time, money, little bits of paper and pencils and all that kind of thing that we suddenly find that we walk off with, but to show entire and true fidelity.

Now do that, says Paul, live like that and you will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. And I take it that you want people to come to know Jesus Christ and to know him truly.

And so here is how we should live. So let me just finish by asking you some questions. what are you going to do with regard to this word?

You see, holiness isn't a feeling. It's a doing. We tend to think that we're holy when we are surrounded by something that's beautiful and that we feel holy.

And we get that little verse in the hymn muddled up, O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, but we think it's O worship the Lord in the holiness of beauty. But it isn't that way around. It's O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

[24 : 14] Holiness is more about doing than it is about feeling. So what are you going to do? And then you say, this is very hard to be like this.

And so next week, Harry will be preaching on the grace of God. And God gives us grace to be like this. But please, it's the way we live that shows whether we're the genuine article or not.

When we were in Jerusalem at the time that I met Harry and Fran and Ken and Gail, I met the religious editor for a major magazine in this particular country.

And I was asking him, what did he think of this religious leader and that religious leader? And he didn't have that much to say. And they asked him about one of my heroes, Charles Coulson. I said, what do you think of Charles Coulson?

And he said, ah, he's the genuine article. He's the genuine article. And you know how Coulson goes into prisons and lives out his faith. Well, you see, that's what we've got to be, the genuine article.

[25 : 27] We've got to show that this is the genuine, this is the real thing here. like an antique that pings when you hit it. You know this is the real article.

So that's the challenge to you and to me, the genuine article, so that people are drawn to the true message of Jesus Christ. Shall we pray?

Just before our prayers are going to be led, let me just lead us in a prayer on this passage.

Lord, we've heard this word and we recognize the challenge in it. We pray, Lord, that now you would help us to do something about it.

We pray that we may make this message beautiful. Oh, Lord, we also put it another way. We pray that we may never discredit the word of God, for that is a serious thing.

[26 : 51] Lord, give us grace, Lord, in your name. Amen. Let us continue our time of prayer together.

Father, our Heavenly Father, as we begin to pray, we want to remember your faithfulness to us. We thank you that you provide all that we need, that your faith is always turned toward us, that you seek us when we are lost, as the Father sought his Son.

And Father, we confess that we need your help very much to be your disciples. And Lord, we want to bring to you the concerns of our hearts today. We begin by asking you to have mercy on our world.

We remember countries that are marked by political and economic instability. We think particularly of Latin America, of Venezuela, of Africa, and of Southeast Asia.

We pray for those who are involved in the area of international finance, who make decisions about monetary policy, about international loans.

[28 : 07] We pray that you would give them wisdom, that they would find ways to ease the burden of third world debt without crippling the world economy. We pray for those people who are poor in third world countries.

We pray that you would ease their suffering. We also pray for the leadership in countries that are dealing with turmoil, with corruption, and with tyranny.

We think particularly at this time of Afghanistan, which is undergoing great turmoil. And we also pray for Lebanon. We pray that there would be stable government in both of these countries.

Our Father, we also want to remember refugees throughout the world. We ask your mercy for those Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees who are trapped in camps throughout Southeast Asia.

These people who are not accepted for resettlement in other countries and instead are being taken back to the countries they escaped from. We pray that as you bring them back to situations they fled, that they would be freed and allowed to resume normal lives, that there would be no punishment against them.

[29 : 25] Lord, we pray also for refugees in other countries who think particularly of Africa, for refugees who apparently have no hope of ever having normal lives. Father, we pray that there would be some solution to the difficulty of this situation.

And Lord, we pray for those who do come to other countries. We pray for immigrants who come to our country of Canada. We pray for those who face the overwhelming task of resettling and adjusting to new environments.

And often, when they come to a new country, they are met with hostility from those who already live in the country who resent their coming. Father, we ask that you would give us grace as your disciples to welcome and care for strangers who come into our community.

community. We pray that you would help us to cross the barriers of language and culture, to begin to understand what these people go through, to care for them, to accept them, and to learn what they have to bring to our community.

So, Father, we ask that we would hold out a hand to them and welcome them in your name. Father, we pray for our country of Canada. We pray for our national government, our provincial government, and our municipal government.

[30 : 46] who deal with many difficult issues. We pray for all those who are in leadership that you would give them integrity and wisdom in their decision-making.

And, Lord, we pray for ourselves and our responsibility as citizens. Please help us to do always what is good for all people and not only what is convenient for ourselves.

And, Father, we want to pray for your church throughout the world, where the church is in the midst of social turmoil, we pray that your people could be healers and peacemakers. Where your church is suffering from weakness and doubt, we ask that you would bring hope and new life.

We pray for the work of missions, both in Canada and throughout the world. Today, we remember particularly the South American Missionary Society. we pray for the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and its international affiliate, the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

We ask for all of these groups and all others who seek to serve your people to make your name known, that you would give to those involved in this work encouragement, wisdom, provision for all their needs, and sure knowledge of your faithfulness to them.

[32 : 02] And Lord, as we pray for our own parish of St. John's, we ask you to give us vision for the outreach that you would have us become involved in. We pray for those among us who are full-time workers in mission societies.

We pray for our own church programs which reach out to those within and beyond our parish. Especially, we want to remember today our church school, our Monday church club, our youth group.

We thank you very much for the service of those who organize these groups, who faithfully plan, prepare, and work with the children and young people week after week. Lord, we pray that you would guide these programs, that you would teach and encourage all who are involved in them.

We ask that through them your truth would be known and your name glorified. We pray also for the work of our office staff, our various committees, and our choir.

Again, we pray that the goal of all this work would be to use our resources in accordance with your will, to serve those whom you would have and whom you would give us to serve, and through both our words and our actions as a community of your disciples to glorify you.

[33 : 17] Father, we come now to ask you for our needs as a family and as individuals. We'll have a brief time of silence that we can bring before you the concerns of our hearts. Lord, we ask you to have mercy on all those who are sick or suffering in any way this day.

Particularly, we want to pray for young Grant Wells, who became very ill on Friday and is back in hospital. Lord, we ask that if it is your will, you would make it possible for his body to accept the bone marrow transplant, and we also ask that you would give comfort and support to his family and to his friends in this time.

Father, we also pray for those who care for the sick, both professionally and within their own families, that you would give them love and patience beyond their own strength.

To close our time of prayer, let us turn in the prayer book to page 729. In the middle of page 729, there is a prayer and intercession.

And we can read that together. Together we say, O Lord God, who has bidden light to shine out of darkness, and who has again wakened us to praise thee for thy goodness and to ask for thy grace, accept now the offering of our worship and thanksgiving, and grant unto us all such requests as may be acceptable to thy holy will.

[35 : 20] Make us to live as children of the light and heirs of thy everlasting kingdom. Remember, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy mercies, thy whole church, all who join with us in prayer, and all our brethren, wherever they may be, who stand in need of thy aid.

pour down upon us all the riches of thy grace, so that, redeemed in soul and body, and steadfast in faith, we may ever praise thy wonderful and holy name.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Now we rise and sing our offertory hymn, number 137, Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress.

137. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[36 : 46] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.