
For the Adorning of the Doctrine of God our Savior...

Titus 2:1-15

Introduction A picture is worth 1000 words...Think about how many times that is true (framing store) (Beth in physical therapy explaining and sending home exercises)(planning a church building).

But what about when the things we are trying to explain are invisible, because they are ideals or characteristics or qualities? How much does a picture help then? (He is very disciplined.) (She is a pain to be around.) (They are very gentle people.)

In these cases, I say a *picture* is worth a *thousand* words, but a *word-picture* is worth *10,000* words because it allows the mind to apprehend conceptually an ideal. An ideal is not constrained by any point, time, or circumstance in history; an ideal transcends the here and now and can be applied at all times and in all things.

What Paul does for Titus in the portion of Scripture we will be considering today is paint a word-picture of what the church is to look like. It is a projection not on the fleshly eye, but the heart's eye. What Paul calls us to in these 15 verses is nothing less than a brilliant million watt beacon that is powered by grace. This beacon points the world to our "God and Savior Jesus Christ" (v.13) through the illumination of the beauty of the grace and truth of our heavenly father. And what is this beacon? Here, in this case, I can give you a simple picture .

So our work is before us this morning. How are we, as beacons, to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior as in chapter 2 verse 10? I want to begin by briefly reviewing where we've been these past two weeks to keep us in the flow of Paul's letter, and then to consider the passage before us under the following headings: Live like this...to adorn and protect the gospel...through the enabling of our redemptive reality

Titus 2:1-15 [Read] [Pray]

Review

Remember that Paul is writing this letter to Titus to give him clear, practical, instruction on the shaping and forming of the church on the island of Crete – this is the main overarching goal of this letter. Of course there are many particulars that we can learn from, but the big idea is a *picture* of the church, painted with words. In the first week of our series we established that the purpose of the church is the displaying of God's glory through his people as they mature and grow up together in Christ. Because this is true, Paul states that the reason he is an apostle and a servant of God, is *for the sake of the faith of God's elect* (v.1). Paul's ministry of proclaiming the promises of God to the elect are accomplished through the act of *preaching*, established here and throughout the New

Testament as a high and holy function of God's minister used uniquely for the giving of grace to his people.

Last week, we began to build on the godly motive, message, and means we considered in week one. If indeed God's glory is what we are about as the *church universal*, how will this work itself out in the *church local*? First, there will be the establishing of leadership among groups of believers. These leaders, or elders (shepherds, pastors, overseers, bishops), are to meet certain qualifications and are charged with two duties: Giving instruction in sound doctrine and rebuking those who contradict it. We were then introduced to the problem of those who are enemies of sound doctrine – false teachers. We took a short stroll down *Greek history lane* to better understand the historical context on the island of Crete. Through this it was made clear that the believers on the island of Crete were surrounded by a Greek culture that was extremely “religious” in the manner they thought about and viewed themselves but also extremely ungodly in the way they lived, leading to Paul's observation in 1:16, “they profess to know God but they deny him by their works, they are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.” The false teachers had gone so far as to infiltrate the actual homes of believers and were teaching elements of Judaism likely mixed in with Greek philosophy and religion, and thereby corrupting the sound doctrine.

As we finish examining the first chapter, one striking impression that should remain is the radical difference between those who teach “sound doctrine” (elders) and those who teach unsound doctrine (the false teachers). These false teachers utterly lacked any sign of life transformation as a result of interacting with their doctrines, deities, rules, laws, ideals, and philosophies. The elders, on the other hand (and as we will discover this morning, *all believers*), were those whose lives were radically transformed by their “knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness” (1:1). In a very *practical* sense, the best thing the believers could have going for them on the island of Crete was the fact that their observable behavior set them apart from the rest of the islanders, validating the power of their doctrine. And herein lies a warning for us, an accumulation of bible knowledge or a professed knowledge of God and his ways, without an accompanying growth in practical godliness is nothing more than a damning deceit that we pray God would protect us from (see 1:16).

Finally we saw that we ourselves, apart from Christ, are no different than the false teachers: liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. Which brings us to chapter 2 and our message this morning. Here we have the church, in its many local expressions, throughout the island of Crete. The church's context is that of the Cretans who fashion themselves as a religious and virtuous country aspiring toward the highest of Greek ideals. The reality, however, is that the whole nation is wicked and the rest of the world knows it. And the church itself is full of “other gospels” (Gal. 1). *Hmmm. I wonder if I could think of churches in another country, in another place, at another time, that might find themselves in a similar situation? I think the more seriously we consider the parallels between the Cretan church and the church in the United States today, the more we stand to gain from a consideration of this letter.* The church in Crete must set itself apart by recovering (or newly discovering!), sound doctrine; rebuking those who contradict it, and faithfully proclaiming it to all people. This sound doctrine, or *orthodoxy*, however, **MUST** be accom-

panied by sound living or *orthopraxy*. If it is not, the gospel is defamed and the church fails in its fundamental mission, the displaying of God's glory.

Live Like This... (vv. 1-10)

Paul now sets forth five word-pictures for Titus and the Cretan believers. He has already emphasized at least *three* times in the 16 verses preceding chapter 2, the fundamental and inseparable connection between belief and behavior, creed and conduct, and doctrine and doing. **A church is no church which professes one thing and does another.** As my mom had taken to saying in my latter teenage years, *we live what we believe, not what we profess.*

But bear in mind that Paul is not calling the believers in Crete to some form of “odd” morality and ethics that the common person would have difficulty identifying with or admiring or even aspiring toward themselves. Paul used words and ideas here that are very common to the Greek ear. So to adorn, make beautiful, make attractive, the gospel, as we will see, – is NOT to make it backward, bizarre, unintelligible, or distasteful. This is where so many cults and ultra-extreme religious groups do the Church so much harm... This is clearly not Paul's intention. In fact, as we noted last week, Paul even goes so far as to parallel Christian virtue with Greek virtue. He compared (showed the similarities) the ideals but contrasted (showed the differences) the motives and the means. When we make Christian ethics, morality, and virtue something other than what the Bible calls us to, the result for the watching world is often something like, “Uhhh, thanks, but no thanks, if that is what ‘being a Christian’ looks like I think I’ll pass...” We must be sincere as believers but this sincerity cannot be disconnected from being biblical. Believers are to be “backward” in their ways only when Scripture, in the midst of the culture we live, constrains us to be so. We must be careful not to drive people away from the gospel for *unbiblical* reasons.

Older men (v.2)

In ancient Greek culture, and in our culture today, older men are expected to be stable, discerning, and disciplined individuals who are not foolish or overindulgent – they are to be pillars – upright and upstanding. Paul calls for the same when he paints the picture of sober-minded, dignified, and self-controlled. The next distinctions however, are further from widely held cultural ideals: healthy in faith, in love, and steadfastness. That is, older men should be marked by Christian virtue – a biblical faith expressed in love toward others and observed to be steadfast or consistent.

Older women (v.3)

Not unlike the older men, the older women are called to all the same ideals, as well as this summary term, “reverent.” By reverence, Paul means women that are not characterized by (slandering) starting every conversation in a slightly hushed tone with, “Did you hear...!?” or “Did you know...!?” or “Well, I can’t tell you who I’m talking about because that wouldn’t be right...but...”. Nor are they to be known by their addictions (slaves to...) – whether they be to substances, materials, or activities. In fact, a portion of *godly* older women’s time is to be taken up in the informal training of

young women by example. Freed from the need to work or raise children? Then you are freed unto an expanded ministry now in the lives of younger women who need your wisdom, experience, correction, and encouragement. This will not happen if you do not *know* them and if you are not *with* them. We are not talking about Clearcreek Chapel “Women’s Ministries,” here, though that is good. This goes beyond the formal, infrequent, and the organized to the informal, frequent, and spontaneous.

Younger women (vv. 4-5)

It is assumed that the older women who will be teaching informally “in the course of life” will be exhibiting all they call the younger women to. It is in this way they teach by example. Let’s begin with the clause “working at home” and the emphasis on domestic activities. In Greek culture, it would be normative that a young married woman would have found herself in the culturally accepted role of *homemaker*, versus career person. As such, I don’t believe we should view this as a command to women that they must work only, always, or ever in the home but rather it is a recognition by Paul that the home is where most young women at that day and time found themselves socially stationed. Therefore, several of the commands relate to functions in the home: to love husbands and children, and to be kind and submissive to their own husbands. These commands obviously apply to married women. Certainly however, self-control and purity applies to all young women, whether married or single. Young women’s lives, in whatever station they find themselves, should be untainted by immodesty, impurity, impulsiveness, and impropriety and should be marked by industriousness and attention to the duties the Lord had given them.

Younger men & Titus (vv. 6-8)

The admonition to younger men and Titus are effectively lumped together as Titus would have been one of that group. One might chuckle when reading Paul’s one sentence, one quality admonition to young men: “Urge the younger men to be self-controlled.” Need he say more? Young men frequently lack self-control, whether it manifests itself as laziness and lack of responsibility or wild and licentious living. Titus then, a younger man himself, is to be a clear picture to all who would look on of good works. In other words, you can draw your child alongside and say to them, “When you grow up, see that guy right over there? If you are a lot like him when you grow up, you will have done well.” In his teaching, or public declaration of the word, there must be an absence of corruption both in doctrine (he gets it right) and in motivation (he does it for the right reasons), that is, “for the sake of the faith of God’s elect” (1:1) versus “for shameful gain what they ought not to teach” (1:11). He must also have dignity, or a seriousness befitting the work of proclaiming the Word of God. But it is not just in the pulpit that he must speak well. In his everyday conversation his speech must be healthy, that is health-producing in those who hear it.

Slaves (vv. 9-10)

Finally, Paul addresses slaves who were, just as older and younger women, older and younger men, a normal division in Greek society who apparently represented a significant portion of the Cretan believers. Keep in mind that slaves may have been doc-

tors, teachers, and other skilled laborers in that day. The main distinction was not in type of work done but in that they were owned by their masters and absolute obedience was the societal expectation. Paul falls directly in line with this societal expectation – slaves were to be excellent employees, uncomplaining, and going above and beyond their duties. Excepting those occasions, of course, where sin would be required by a master. This type of behavior, both then and now, is sure to set the slave/employee apart. Note that Paul speaks to what were common distinctions in Greek society. The church is not so much seeking to reform society as it is to reform those in the church who both comprise and participate in society.

To adorn and protect the gospel... (vv. 5b, 8, 10)

You'll note that we passed over several statements as we moved through verses 1-10, 5b, 8, and here at verse 10. Certainly we endeavor to work hard at what God calls us to be to honor him in obedience, but are there other reasons or motivations we should have in mind besides obedience? The very clear answer is YES. And this is where the believer must begin to "grow up" in their Christian walk and mature in their living. Consider verses 5b and 8: (5b) to younger women Paul gives instructions, *that the Word of God may not be reviled* and to (8) Titus and/or younger men *so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us*. The outward, observable demonstrations of our faith will either cause the Scriptures to be reviled and give our opponents many ways to shame us OR it will beautify the Scriptures and leave our opponents embarrassed and silent. As one commentator put it "respectable behavior which bears witness to the power and truth of God, enhances the church's witness."¹

Consider the picture that Paul has put forth with his words to Titus. Consider your "category." Do you exemplify the picture he paints? Is your life the 10,000 words that fill out the word-picture he gives? Does everything you do adorn, make attractive, beautify, reflect well upon sound doctrine? Do you, as the church, fulfill your station in life in a way that makes Christ attractive to the unbeliever? Do we as a body personify Christ? Paul makes clear that a major function of the church living in obedience is to protect the testimony of the gospel and to make the Living Word attractive. Note that many of these character qualities we are called to are intensely interpersonal, that is, they happen *among* us, it is a "bodily" expression. [John 13:35] When we fail in pattern like ways to exemplify these ideals, we, as a church, run the risk of falling under the same condemnation as the false teachers in 1:10-16. We prove our doctrine unsound and steal glory from our God.

Perhaps a familiar illustration is in order here: Alexander the Great and the soldier who runs from battle: "Son, you either change your ways, or you change your name" *and now my addition to the story*: The soldier shamed and confused wimpers... "how?"

¹ Towner, P. *IVP New Testament Commentary Series*.

Through the enabling of our redemptive reality (vv. 11-15)

Here we come to the center of the letter to Titus, I believe that all the emphasis of this letter falls upon these 5 verses. In fact the short summary that Paul gives of the gospel here is so remarkable that I am hesitant to preach anything about it as I do not want to cloud its glory in any way. [Read 2:11-15]. Paul has set the bar high for the church and its leaders. He has consistently made the case that sound doctrine WILL BE ATTENDED by sound living, both positively, in the case of believers (2:1-10) and elders (1:5-9) and negatively in the case of the false teachers whose law-keeping and dependence upon Greek religion and philosophy had utterly failed to transform them into their Greek ideal. He now reveals the profound glory of the blessed hope which transforms believers.

Appearing of grace (v. 11)

This *grace of God* is none other than the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ our Lord. As the sun breaks through the darkness of night signaling the hope of a new day, Christ, the God-man appeared and dwelt with man. That which had been partly hidden since the declaration of the evangel in Genesis 3:15 now is fully unveiled. And with this manifestation of light, came salvation for all of God's elect (1:1). This was rescue in the past, at the cross, from the penalty of sin, in the present from the power of sin, and in the future from the presence of sin.

Training by grace (v. 12)

Grace has appeared and now grace will enable! Like a teacher, this grace, our Christ through his Holy Spirit, trains us to renounce or "say no" [NIV] to living that does not adorn the doctrine of God our Savior and to idols that grip our hearts and enslave us. We are not left with a vacuum, only a matter of stopping this and stopping that, we are trained to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives – as we noted last week, the exact parallel of the triad of Greek ideals. Christ does through grace what no other religious system can do – he transforms us! And when does this training and transformation take place? It takes place now! in the present age. The church *can* adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in the mess of our here and now living.

Waiting in grace (v. 13)

Our waiting is not hopeless. It is filled with anticipation as we await yet another appearing of our blessed hope, our great Savior, who is God, Jesus Christ. We wait with all the hope, yearning, and longing of the bride – and the bride is not made despairing by her wait – no, she is made focused, diligent, awake, and aware, confident of the bridegrooms promise to come.

Reasons behind grace (v. 14)

Why has all this happened? Why have we been the beneficiaries of such deep goodness? Is it not that Christ himself, with his own perfect life on Earth and his gruesome and bloody death on the cross bought us out of our enslavement to sin? You see, the Greeks have no such savior only philosophies and arguments; the Judiazers have no such savior only their own righteousness which is no righteousness at all...Apart

from Christ there is no salvation! And we as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons must be rescued from an angry and wrathful God – who can do it? We are hopelessly lost in sin apart from Christ.

And what are we bought into? Why has Christ redeemed us? To purify for himself a people for his own possession. It is the same as the promise to Abraham, I will be their God, and they will be my people. How about one more word picture before we wrap up today? Come to Ezekiel 37 from where perhaps Paul is borrowing his words: [READ: give background – Babylonian Exile, people are spiritually dead, Ezekiel 37:23ff, and the preceding picture of the valley of bones (regeneration): cleanse = purify]. This redemption produces zeal for good works. An enthusiasm to do what is good, “is the true badge of his divine ownership. He who eagerly awaits the return of the Savior will be eager also to further his cause by good works until he comes.”² This is one more instance of the union between creed and conduct we see in the letter to Titus.

Finally, Paul commands Titus to “declare these things” all that has been said in the preceding words (but especially the gospel) by both encouraging/exhorting the believers and warning/confronting those that are slack or apathetic. Do so with authority as you are functioning with delegated apostolic authority – therefore let no one despise you because you bring the words of God himself to them.

² Heibert in Gaebelien. *The Expositors Bible Commentary*.

Observations & Applications

1. Do you take seriously your role as “the church” with the potential to adorn or shame the gospel? If you are an older man... [there is hope! the grace of God has appeared]
2. Are you actively and conscientiously considering your representation of sound doctrine to the world? How would someone describe the teachings of the Bible if you were all they had to go on? Do you understand that you are the body?! Yes it’s about obedience, but there is so much more! [there is hope! he has brought salvation]
3. Older women who are mature in the Lord, are you engaged in the informal teaching by example and conversation of younger women? Do you volitionally pursue? [there is hope! grace is training us]
4. Are you transforming? Being trained by grace? Do you understand it is a supernatural process which is best evidenced by our hard and intelligent work toward godliness – are you aspiring toward 2:1-10. [there is hope! our great God and Savior Jesus Christ will appear again]
5. Do you revel in 2:11-14? Is it evidenced by zeal for good works? [there is hope! you have been redeemed wickedness to be purified]
6. Undershepherds, are you committed to the hard, daring, gentle, restoring, pinpoint accurate work of exhorting and rebuking with the Word, refusing to let your sheep disregard you? [there is hope! you are now his possession zealous for good works]]