

# Titus 2

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In our nation, it continues to be true that we pay a lot of attention to the idea of diversity and multiculturalism. Josh was telling me recently about how one of his classes last semester was a discussion of the need to understand the ethnic and personal background of the one whom you're counseling, because if you don't, then you really can't grasp who they are or where they're coming from. In many ways, it's important for us to recognize and accept this diversity. After all, the Bible itself makes clear that the apostle Paul didn't approach Jews in the same way he approached Gentiles. No matter whether the context is religious or secular, we should always be respectful of others and their differences.

However, we must also recognize that underneath the differences of age and race and education, we share the basic similarities of humankind. Each one of us has had the breath of life breathed within our nostrils by God. We are eternal beings, and we are moral beings. Each one of us, sooner or later, uses our ability to make moral decisions to make the wrong decision. Each one of us stands in need of a Savior, and each one of us may be saved by calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus. When we are saved, each one of us is added to the same church. That's why Paul says in Colossians 3 that in Christ is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, nor free. All of the differences that were so important to people in the first century were less important than a shared relationship with Jesus.

Just as the word of God is able to reach out to all nations, so too is it able to reach out to all times. We may think that we're different from those who lived 2000 years ago, but we are essentially the same. God has the same expectations for us in our many roles today as He had for the Christians who first heard the word. Let's look at these in Titus 2.

## Older Christians.

Paul begins this chapter with several pieces of timeless instruction for older Christians. These instructions appear in Titus 2:1-5. Let's notice first of all that Paul puts all of these teachings under the heading of "sound doctrine". Some Christians are allergic to "doctrinal sermons". As soon as they hear the word "doctrine", they think they're going to hear something dry, boring, and irrelevant. Clearly, that's not the case. The New Testament word "doctrine" just means "teaching", and although that teaching may well involve some things that are fairly abstract, it also embraces concepts as down-to-earth as the way that we live our daily lives. We need to be wise and give attention to all sound doctrine.

As part of this sound doctrine, Paul first instructs older men. It's noteworthy that this teaching appears apart from the qualifications for elders listed a chapter earlier. This tells us clearly that there is such a thing as an older male Christian who is not qualified to be an elder. These older men, though, still have standards for their conduct, standards that our older men must meet today. They are to be sober-minded, men who aren't given to wild or fanciful words or thoughts. They must be reverent, men who are dignified and worthy of respect. They are to be temperate, capable of self-control. Finally, they are to be sound in faith, love, and patience. In other words, their belief and confidence in Christ, their affection for God and for others, and their steadfastness in the faith must line up with the Scripture. These things are attributes that younger men should work for as well, so that when we are older, we won't be found wanting.

Similarly, God has expectations for the conduct of older women. They too are supposed to be reverent in the way they behave. In other words, they have to show by their lives that they are to be taken seriously and that God is to be taken seriously. They can't be slanderers. I've met some older women in the church who failed miserably in this, who were always ready to repeat the latest gossip about some other Christian with lips pursed in disapproval, regardless of whether they had a factual or a Scriptural basis for their disdain. Such conduct, though it may be common, is always ungodly. They can't be given to much wine, and, as always when we encounter this kind of language, it's fair to say that the older Christian woman can't be addicted to anything else either, whether it's cigarettes or candy bars. God expects more self-control from us than that. Finally, they are supposed to be teachers of good things. We saw last week that elders are to take the lead in dealing with false teachers. Likewise, older women are to lead in teaching younger women.

These younger women are supposed to learn first of all to love their husbands. The Greek word here doesn't come from an *agape* root. It comes from a *phileo* root. In other words, this verse isn't about self-sacrificing love. It's about warm, familiar affection. Young Christian wives are commanded, then, to like their husbands and enjoy being around them. The same is true of their attitudes toward their children. They are to be discreet, women who don't just blurt out whatever is on their minds. They are to be chaste and pure. They are to be homemakers, women who manage the non-human elements of their homes efficiently and well. They are to be good, reflections of the goodness and kindness of God. Finally, they are to be obedient to their husbands. The young Christian woman should leave no doubt in anyone's mind that her husband, and not she herself, is the head of the household. If older women teach these things and younger women obey them, they'll reflect God's design and not bring discredit to Him or to His word.

## **Other Christians.**

From there, Paul proceeds to instruct other Christians. This next series of lists may be found in Titus 2:6-10. It begins with a single instruction for younger men. Just like everyone else Paul has mentioned, they are to be self-controlled too. Next in line, Paul has instructions for Titus, from which preachers specifically and all Christians generally can learn. The first thing that Paul mentions in this respect is teaching that comes not from the lips but from the life. Titus is to be a model of good works, which we should all be. Just like we can look at a model of a train or a car and learn what the life-sized vehicle actually looks like, people should be able to look at us and learn what God wants people to be like.

When we open our mouths to teach, in whatever setting, there are a few basic things that Paul wants us to remember. First, we must teach with integrity. We have to be honest with the word, and we have to be honest with our hearers. It doesn't show integrity when we look for ways to explain away a difficult passage rather than confronting it. It doesn't show integrity when we bluff like we know the answer when we don't. God doesn't require us to be omniscient, but He does require us to be honest. Likewise, when we teach, it should be with reverence and dignity. Some preachers out there think that a sermon ought to be an audition for Amateur Night at the local comedy club. They're much more concerned with getting laughs than piercing hearts. That might glorify the preacher, but it does not glorify God. We must keep our attention instead on the word and on taking it seriously. We must be incorruptible, and we must use sound speech that cannot be condemned. We have the word. It is infallible. It cannot be refuted. However, when we ourselves say something that isn't right or use some underhanded tactic, we allow our opponents to turn us instead of the word into the issue. However, if we stand out of the light, no enemy of truth can have anything to say against the Scripture.

Finally in this section, Paul speaks to bondservants, the first-century equivalent of employees. As employees, we must be submissive and obedient. On the job, our employers get to tell us what to do, and we can only refuse them for God's reasons, not our own. It's our responsibility to figure out what our masters' expectations are and then strive to meet those expectations in every area. When they speak to us, we can't answer back, which is to say that we can't respond with some snarky rejoinder or with an argument. We can't steal from our employers, even if it's just a couple of pens or paper clips out of the supply room. Instead, in all things, we have to be faithful, serving them the way that they want to be served and the way that God wants them to be served. This accomplishes two important things. First, it brings us favor in their eyes and makes our workdays easier. Second, though, it brings God favor in their eyes. If we claim to be Christians and then act like scoundrels on the job, our employers will hold Christianity in contempt. On the other hand, though, when we claim to be Christians and then live to a higher standard, that brings glory to Christ.

## **The Grace of God.**

In the concluding section of this chapter, Paul tackles the subject of the grace of God. We see his discussion of this topic in Titus 2:11-15. Paul explains here why we are to be godly no matter what our situation is. We have been freed from our sins by the grace of Jesus, but that very act of grace constrains us to be righteous. Because we're free, we don't get to embrace ungodliness. We don't get to chase after worldly lusts. We have to renounce those things. They belong to those who are still trapped in the evil and misery of the world, not to us.

Instead, in our lives, we are responsible to live in a sober, self-controlled way. This seems like about the millionth time the idea of self-control has come up in this chapter, but Paul keeps on repeating it because it's important. If we cannot control ourselves, then God cannot control us. Only as we have learned to govern our evil desires can we be useful in His kingdom for His work. Likewise, we are supposed to be people who are righteous, who live lives that conform to the standard of the word. Finally, we are to live godly lives. As is usually true in Scripture, this doesn't mean that we are expected to be God-like. It means that we are to be God-oriented. If we are God-oriented, regardless of whatever else we happen to be doing, our number one priority will be to live for God and do the things that please Him.

This might seem like an awfully sterile existence. We don't get to go play in all of the sins that the world finds so enticing. Instead, we have to hold ourselves to this rigid code of conduct and live for the approval of One whom we can't even see. Paul explains, though, that we're doing this because we're waiting for Jesus. When I'm at the airport waiting for a plane, even though the airport is a boring place, I don't go off on sightseeing tours of downtown Chicago. If I do that, I might miss my flight, and getting on that plane is the most important thing to me. In the same way, we don't go touring all of the sinful delights of the world while we're waiting for Jesus. If we do, we might miss out on Him.

We will miss out on Jesus if we live a sinful life because a righteous life is what He expects. He died to rescue us from lawlessness, not to allow us to be lawless. He cleansed us not so that we could jump back in the pigpen of sin, but so that we would remain pure and be fit for Him to possess. We are not to love sin and look longingly back toward the forbidden delights of the world. We are to love righteousness and look forward to eternity with God in heaven.

These are important things, both for Christians in the first century and for us today. These aren't just some wise man's helpful hints. Instead, they have the authority of God behind them, and God expects us to obey. Whether we read them or hear them, we need to listen to them, even if they step on our toes. Otherwise, we cannot please our Creator.