

Here, There, Everywhere

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[0 : 00] Well, as I said, tonight we are continuing our study in the book of Titus and we're going to read again from chapter 2, verses 7 and 8. 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 that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

As we've been saying, Titus was a pastor on the island of Crete, and Paul, who had previously been there with him, is now writing to him to give him instructions in terms of leading the church there.

And as we think about the instructions that Paul gave to Titus, we're looking at the many, many wonderful lessons that this letter has for us today as we continue to serve Jesus 2,000 years later on our own island.

And our series is called Because We Believe, and that's arising from one half of two crucial emphases that we always need to keep in balance as we follow Jesus.

So on the one side, we always need to think about what we believe and why we believe it, so there's this content of theology, a body of doctrine that we believe. But on the other hand, we need to think about how all that we believe is applied to our lives.

[1 : 23] In other words, as Christians, we believe the gospel, and because we believe the gospel, we want our whole lives to be shaped by it.

And that's a big theme in the book of Titus, the fact that in every part of our day-to-day lives, as individuals, as a church family, we want to be shaped by the truth that we've come to know and believe.

And so we're thinking about how doctrine and duty go hand in hand in the Christian life, and we're thinking about how we want to show ourselves to be a model of good works, just as Paul writes in these words.

But we do not do those good works in order to be saved. That's legalism. It's not the gospel. We do these good works. We strive to do these good works because we believe.

Our title this evening is Here, There, Everywhere, and that title captures what this chapter is teaching, the fact that the gospel should shape every single part of our lives.

[2 : 29] The good news of Jesus applies here, there, everywhere in the life of the Christian. And that's very important for us all to think about. It's very important for us as a church family because it's passages like Titus 2 that will determine what the people around us are going to see when they look at us.

And they are looking at us all the time, at school, at work, in the community. Every public interaction that we have with other people is one where we are being looked at.

And chapters like this are going to determine what people see. And that makes a chapter like this incredibly important because whether or not we listen to passages like Titus 2 is going to determine whether or not people who look at us are going to see hypocrisy or integrity.

Whether they're going to see believers who are superficial or serious. Casual or committed. Counterfeit or genuine. So there's lots and lots and lots of very relevant, very rich, very practical details in this chapter.

We're going to whiz through it so we're barely scratching the surface. In many ways there's so many verses that we can just stop and think about. But go back to this chapter, think about it, take it with you into the week. We're just going to blast through it under two headings.

[4 : 01] That's really actually seven headings. Because we're going to look at four examples and three truths. In terms of four examples, we see in this passage that Paul looks at four areas where what we believe must shape how we live.

We can summarize them under these headings. Between generations. Within families. Towards masters. Under authorities. And so we'll just whiz through each one in turn. Verses two to six.

One of the things that Paul is discussing here is in fact one of the most important resources for the Christian church. He talks about old people.

And I love that he specifically highlights the importance of both older men and older women. And throughout the entire history of the Christian church, older people have been massively important for the work of the gospel.

Now this is actually probably a point that is more relevant today than it's ever been. Because we live in an era of history where our society generally has a lower regard for the older generation.

[5 : 11] And tends instead to focus attention on the younger generation. Often older people are just seen as kind of out of touch. And sometimes just seen a bit sort of clueless.

And they're sort of the older you get. Maybe even the more hidden. We want to keep that generation. And there's far more confidence. Far more enthusiasm directed towards the young.

And that's been a kind of symptom of post-modernism and all sorts of developments in the 20th century. Here Paul is reminding us that in terms of the gospel and in God's eyes. The older generation has a hugely important role in the church.

And their importance is highlighted by the very specific instructions that Paul has for them. And their importance is also highlighted by the very high expectations that Paul has for them.

So, older men are told to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

[6 : 14] Now, every one of those words is wonderful. There's loads that we could think about. I just want to highlight that word, sound. Because it literally means, in good health.

And I think that that's a really fascinating thing to think about. Because when you think about getting older, so often our physical health declines. And many of you know the absolute reality of that in your lives just now.

That your physical health is a huge challenge because it's declining. And that's a very, very tough thing to experience. But these words are reminding us that no matter what your physical health is like, we can have good health in terms of our faith in God.

In terms of our love for Him and for one another. And in terms of our steadfast trust in His promises. And in our looking forward in hope and expectation for all that He is preparing for us.

So, as you get older, physically, maybe you feel a wee bit jiggered. But your faith, your love, your steadfastness can keep on flourishing.

[7 : 28] And I think that's so exciting and so encouraging. Older women are told to be reverent in behavior. And that's a fascinating word because it actually, the word that's used for reverent is related to the word temple.

It's very similar to the word temple. So, we can actually translate that word. Older women, likewise, are to be temple-ish in their behavior. Now, that's maybe a sense of a bit of a strange thing to say.

But when you think about the temple, one of the big emphases of the temple, the big concerns of the temple was that that was the place where God had dwelt in the Old Testament.

And so, to come to the temple was to come close to God. And so, the language of temple-ish behavior, reverent behavior, is describing behavior that is fitting for somebody who's close to God.

And isn't that a beautiful description? Do you know, that is actually already a description of the older women that I see in our congregation right now. That, you know, your behavior is fitting of those who are close to God.

[8 : 43] It reveals people who are close to God. And that's just a beautiful thing for God to want in all of us. Then there's a warning about two things to avoid.

Not to be slanderers, not to be slaves to much wine. And, of course, the interesting thing there is that together these are describing what comes out of our mouths and what goes into our mouths. And the dangers of both are obvious.

Then we're told what older women are to do. And they are to teach what is good. And, in particular, that teaching is to have an influence over the younger women, particularly in relation to families, which we'll say a wee bit more about in a moment.

And then Paul rounds off the kind of generational circle, older men, older women, younger women. Then he talks about younger men. And he urges for them to be self-controlled.

And the interesting thing about that is that you've got the same, you've got the word self-control there, which is the same word that you've already had there for the older men.

[9 : 48] And the emphasis of that word is basically being healthy and sound in your thinking, having control over your desires, your impulses, your urges.

In fact, some people have suggested that that word should be translated along the lines of keep your head. And that's maybe more of a kind of colloquial way of saying it.

But it's the idea that we're careful about the way that we think. Keep your head. And that's a concept, actually, that we see very often in relation to sport. If you think of football, how often do you see a manager?

They're shouting at their team and they're pointing at their head. And it's to say, look, be careful about the way you're thinking. Because it's only by being careful about your thinking that you'll reach your full potential.

And there's an amazing lesson for young men. Be careful about the way you think. Be careful about the way you think. Now, there's loads more that we could unpack in all of this.

[10 : 51] The big point is that the gospel is expecting healthy behavior and healthy relationships across the generations. And in so many ways, those healthy relationships across the generations are crucial for the advance of the gospel.

Our church, locally and nationally, will accomplish nothing unless older and younger are working together and serving together.

One last word I want to highlight that's very important is this word, likewise. Now, the reason that's important is because, you know, it shapes the way we read a passage like this.

So, you could read a passage like this very rigidly and you could say, okay, older women, you must not drink too much wine. But older men doesn't say anything about you.

You can. Of course, that's not what a passage like this is saying. And that's emphasized very clearly by that word, likewise. It's highlighting the fact that all the principles that have been set out have application across all the generations.

[12 : 03] And so, basically, all of this is saying that in terms of different generations, the gospel applies here, there, everywhere. Whether you're nine or 90, we want to get up every day and say, Lord Jesus, how do you want me to live my life today?

Then we have, Paul also explores relations within families. And in particular, there's a focus on how young women are to fulfill their roles towards their husband and children.

Now, these are interesting versions because today they can very easily sound offensive. A, because it sounds, when it says young women to love their husbands and children, it can sound like single women are being left out.

B, it can sound like women are only supposed to be at home, working at home. And C, there's this idea of being submissive to a husband.

It sounds a little bit misogynistic. So, lots in these verses that people today would, I think, recoil from. There's some important things to remember as we read a passage like this.

[13 : 16] The first is to remember that in Greco-Roman society, women did not have anywhere near the rights and opportunities that they have today. And back then, for the majority of women, marriage was your only hope of security and prosperity.

If you look at the New Testament, a huge emphasis is on helping widows. Why were widows helped? Because without a husband, a woman was destitute. And, you know, we also need to remember that so many of the marriages then were arranged.

So, poor women didn't probably have much choice in the matter anyway. In so many ways, their rights were limited. And that language of submission that the Bible uses in various places in relation to a woman towards her husband is not about domination or control or abuse at all.

It's assuming the highest standards of leadership from a husband who is to care for and protect his wife.

And the whole idea is painting the picture of a man being complemented by a woman together functioning and thriving as a team, working with the deepest levels of trust, respect and cooperation.

[14 : 40] Now, in that relationship, there is a particular authority given to the husband. And the wife is to submit to that and support him and help him as they work together.

But it's all in the context of love and care and amazing trust and respect. So, we need to remember that. We also need to remember that you have to read a passage like this in relation to other passages of the Bible.

So, we think, it says here that older women are to train younger women to be good wives and good mothers. And you think, well, what about people who are single? What about people who can't have children? Well, there are other parts of the Bible that give a huge amount of dignity to people who are single.

In fact, Paul, who was single himself in 1 Corinthians 7, gives the highest level of dignity to those who are single. And there are several occasions in the New Testament where there's a wonderful identification of great works and important works done by women like Priscilla, Lydia and others like that.

And the other thing that's probably important to remember is that if you were a wife in the first century, that meant that you were also a baker, a butcher, a tailor, a weaver, a nurse, a teacher, a labourer, possibly a farmer or a shepherd and definitely a multitasker.

[15 : 56] So, a huge amount of expectation is placed on women. And I just hope that that helps us not to read a passage like this in a way that is inaccurately shaped by the cultural emphases or concerns of today.

Today, we have many, many more rights and opportunities for women compared with what it was like 2,000 years ago. And the historical, the fascinating historical fact is that that's actually because of the influence of the gospel.

It's the doctrine of humanity, male and female, made in the image of God that's been absolutely crucial for shaping a society today that gives rights and opportunities to women.

Alongside all of that is that these verses are reminding us, though, that for women who are married and for those who are raising a family, God wants that role to be shaped by the gospel.

And one of the fascinating things that verse 4 reveals when it speaks about young women being trained in terms of loving their husbands and their children is indicating that that role is something that you have to learn and it's something that you have to work quite hard at.

[17 : 20] And that's reminding us of an incredibly important point. The fact that love involves spontaneous feelings and hard graft.

And so spontaneous feelings are wonderful and easy. When we feel that towards the person we're married to or towards our children or towards our parents, that's great. But they're not there all the time.

And sometimes loving someone, supporting them, encouraging them, protecting them, nurturing them and sticking with them through thick and thin involves a lot more than just spontaneous feelings.

And Paul is emphasizing here that the older generation can set a wonderful example. And isn't it just interesting that the Holy Spirit seems to know that men aren't always that lovable.

And sometimes you have to work hard at it for women. So there's a wonderful balance there. And it's just reminding us that in terms of our families, the gospel applies here, there and everywhere.

[18 : 29] And so how we treat one another within our own homes is a wonderful opportunity to display the influence of the gospel in our lives. I've told this example before, but I think it's such an important, helpful one to share.

One of my favorite preachers, she's passed away now, was Eric Alexander, Church of Scotland minister in Glasgow. He was very, very well known, hugely respected.

But I remember hearing that his daughter was interviewed and she said the thing that she loved about her father was that everything that he was at church, he was the same at home. And so he never had this kind of double life where he was a hero at church and difficult at home.

He was a godly gentleman in public and a godly gentleman as a husband and a father. And that's just capturing exactly the kind of thing that Paul is pushing us towards thinking about here.

Verses 9 to 10 then speak about bond servants and masters. Again, this is potentially offensive for us today because it's kind of the language of bond servants is pointing us to the language of slavery.

[19 : 36] And this and other passages in the Bible talk about that and there's the risk that it gives the impression that slavery seems okay. And sometimes people have tried to claim that the Bible gives a warrant to it.

Three important things to say about that. One, the overall message of the Bible is monumentally anti-slavery. The big event in the Old Testament is a deliverance from slavery, the exodus.

And the whole point of that deliverance is to point towards the great objective of Jesus' mission to deliver us from slavery to sin. So the Bible is monumentally anti-slavery in terms of the big message that it's presenting to us.

Number two, when we think of slavery, we think of the appalling slave trade, particularly seen in America two to three to four hundred years ago. So the situation in the Greco-Roman world was not the same as that.

That doesn't mean it was okay, but it was not the same. It was not primarily a racial slavery. It was more to do with war, economics and social class. And as I say, that doesn't make it okay, but it was different.

[20 : 46] And there's several roles that we would just think of as jobs today, even teachers that were performed by slaves. And the third thing that's important is that when Paul talks about this, he is simply addressing the way things were.

There were people in that church who were slaves, and they were not able to change that. And so Paul is addressing things as they were.

He's guiding them in their lives and in the situation that they face. That does not mean that it's endorsing something that the Bible overall is categorically against.

But the point that's been raised here is that bond servants are to be honest and reliable, well-pleasing, cooperative, hardworking.

Now, at one level, we have to be very careful with comparisons because we are not downplaying the fact that even the slavery here that was not necessarily as bad as what we've seen in other historical contexts is still not a good thing.

[21 : 55] However, there are some principles, while we do this carefully, we can draw principles in these verses towards how we approach our jobs because at a very basic level, we are thinking about a master and somebody who performs work under the authority of that master.

And that principle applies to our jobs. So I do that with care and with a whole ton of caveats, but the positive commands in these verses are principles that we can take and apply to our jobs.

In other words, your job, if you're still working, and when I say job, some of you are getting paid for work if you're still employed, some of you retired from paid work and are now just working away in other community activities.

Whatever you're doing, it's a brilliant opportunity to display how the gospel applies here, there, and everywhere. And so how you react to difficult people or situations, how you encourage colleagues, how you respond when something goes wrong, how you handle responsibility, freedom, and resources, all of it is an opportunity for the influence of the gospel to be visible in your life.

And then the very last bit was the first couple of verses of Titus 2, thinking about living under authorities, being submissive to rulers and authorities, obedient, ready for every good work.

[23 : 30] Again, highlighting the fact that we want to function and serve as part of a well-ordered, well-structured society. Now again, the rest of the Bible brings an important teaching here.

If you had a leader, a government that was telling us to renounce our faith, we would obviously not do that and these words would not apply. But in a context where we have the freedom to still worship and follow and praise Jesus, Jesus himself expects us to be submissive to those who are in authority over us.

In other words, in normal circumstances, God expects the Christian church to be excellent citizens, to recognize and respect civil authority.

In fact, we believe that all those authorities are established by God. And so within that society, in other words, this week, as you go to school, work, community, everything that you're doing, we want to live out our lives in a way that sets a good example, makes a positive contribution, it avoids speech and behavior that has a negative impact.

We want to display open, visible gentleness and courtesy towards people. Be gentle to show perfect courtesy. And this is one of the words that just kind of hits every single part of life because we're to speak evil of no one, which means no one.

[24 : 58] And we're going to show perfect courtesy to all people, which means all people. No exceptions. And that phrase there, perfect courtesy, one dictionary suggested that that word, the Greek word behind that could also be translated, gentle friendliness.

How good would that be when you drive the car and someone pulls out in front of you or you pull out accidentally and somebody and they respond with gentle friendliness?

Or you've got a customer and you know that what they're waiting for hasn't arrived, but they respond with gentle friendliness. Or you can think of tons of examples yourselves.

That kind of perfect courtesy, that kind of gentle friendliness is a huge blessing to experience. And so it's a huge privilege for us to show it.

In all these areas, between generations, within families, towards masters, the gospel applies here, there and everywhere. But all of that is grounded on what we believe.

[26 : 11] And so we are going to blast three minutes, three truths, very quickly. All of this is arising from three key truths that undergird all the practical emphases that Paul is displaying in this chapter.

Number one, we believe in the reality of sin. And that's telling us that the reality of sin revealed in the Bible is emphasizing the massively important fact that everything has been mucked up by sin.

Everything has been mucked up by sin. That means everything that we look at is not the way it should be. And so in societies, families, nations, there are things that are not the way they are meant to be.

And that applies in all the areas that we have looked at. And so the reality of sin is here, there and everywhere. Jesus has come to put right all the damage that has been caused by sin.

Ultimately, that will not be complete until he returns. But now, there is an opportunity for us as followers of Jesus to improve the way things actually are.

[27 : 24] Sin has spoiled the relationship between generations, within families, towards masters, or before those who are in authority. And every single day, you and I have the opportunity for the gospel to live, to influence our lives so that we will live in a way that makes a positive contribution.

In other words, sin spoils every area of life. That means that the gospel which defeats sin can bring healing to every area of life.

And that means that this week, you and I can make a wonderfully positive contribution to the lives of the people around us. And wouldn't it be brilliant if this week, for you at work or whatever, to just speak or behave in a way where somebody who's having a really bad week just turns around and thinks, wow, that was nice.

That's the kind of difference that the gospel should make. Second thing we believe in is the power of beauty. Now, I don't mean the beauty of good looks, I mean the beauty of good behavior. And that's one of the big points that Paul is making.

Our good works are beautiful. In fact, he uses a fascinating phrase in verse 10. He speaks about how our behavior may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

[28 : 42] I think that's a fascinating statement. Because the doctrine of God, our Savior, is unchangeable, magnificent, and glorious, and yet it can be made even more beautiful.

It can be adorned by your good works. And that's a really important point that we must remember. My behavior is not validated by what I believe.

The truth is the other way around. What I believe is validated by my behavior. In other words, we can sometimes think, you know, well, I'm orthodox in my theology. And because of that, we can then think that we're justified in behavior that's ugly.

That is absolutely not the case. Ugly behavior raises the question as to whether our theology is orthodox at all. Beautiful behavior, on the other hand, is an incredibly powerful witness.

It's a foretaste of heaven. We are adorning the truth that God is revealing in His Word by living out lives shaped by it. So, we believe in the reality of sin, and so we want to see improvement and blessing in all areas.

[29 : 56] We believe in the power of beauty. We want our beautiful behavior to have a powerful, positive impact on people's lives. And thirdly, and most importantly, we believe in the availability of grace.

A sermon like this has the potential to be either very inspiring or very depressing. It can be very inspiring because we think, yes, that's how I want to be. Very depressing because we think, that's not how I am.

And we think, I can't do this on my own. And yet, the amazing thing about the gospel is that God never, ever asks you to do anything on your own.

And so, the big reason why you can go into this week and live a life shaped by Titus 2 and by the gospel is because of the availability of grace.

That's the big emphasis in verses 11 to 14 that we're going to look at in more detail in a couple of weeks' time. The thing I just want to highlight just now is that it says that the grace of God has appeared. The grace of God has appeared.

[30 : 57] And that means that you and I can go into this week confident, motivated, encouraged, and determined. Not because we are strong, but because His grace is available.

The gospel shapes everything and everything in the gospel is shaped by grace. So, I was asked this afternoon, is anything exciting happening this week?

And I gave completely the wrong answer because I spoke about all the things in my diary. It's not very exciting at all, really. Is anything exciting happening in my week? Is anything exciting happening in your week?

You are going out with the grace of God blowing in your sails, with the Holy Spirit empowering and helping you, with people everywhere longing for something good and encouraging and positive in their lives.

And you have the God who has placed you here to be that beautiful, wonderful influence in a world that so desperately needs it. Is this week exciting? Too right it is. Let's go and may the gospel shape us here, there, everywhere.

[32 : 13] Amen.