

Gospel Teachers

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[0 : 00] On first glance, Titus 2 looks like a bunch of rules, which I think is a problem, but on second look it's actually about grace and hope.

The chapter has two sections, verses 1 to 10, and then verses 11 to 16. 11 to 16 remind us of the basis for the instructions.

Normally you'd put the basis for the instructions and then the instructions, but in this chapter it's round the other way. So let me just quote from the opening verses of Titus in chapter 1, and that is verses 1 and 2.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

So there Paul, at the very start of Titus, lays a foundation of faith, truth and hope. So it's important when we look at instructions that we don't get caught up in following rules and forget that it's about Jesus' grace and hope.

[1 : 12] Now in that opening there, I wanted you to, you may have noticed this, you can see it in front of you, a particular phrase, knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. And that's a theme running through the whole letter of Titus.

Paul's looking for behavioural change. He wants that change to be evident in the lives of people who have received the gospel. He's not simply saying that we should be good people, but those who know the truth should demonstrate in their lives an increasing holiness.

Chapter 2 begins with Paul telling Titus to teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Now he's not telling Titus to teach doctrine, and he's not even telling Titus to teach sound doctrine.

He's telling Titus to teach what is in accord with sound doctrine, or congruent with sound doctrine, or fits with sound doctrine. And by that he means, in this instance, and in this situation, for Titus to tell the Christians on Crete how they should behave.

Paul breaks his instructions down into five different groups within the church. First are the older men, presumably men older than Titus.

[2 : 25] Remember, he's a young man. Second are the older women, which does not mean elderly women, but more likely adult women, possibly in their 30s, 40s, or older.

Third are the younger women, those with children, probably those in their 20s, maybe late teens. And fourth are young men like Titus, and fifth are slaves.

Verse 2, the older men are to be temperate, worthy of respect, and self-controlled. These three characteristics are all lost through drunkenness. And this seemed to be a problem on Crete.

I don't know if you've been to Crete. When I went there, I didn't feel like working. I just wanted to sit around all day. It's very hot. The beaches are very grainy. The water's nice and warm.

There's plenty of fish. It's that sort of place. It's Mediterranean. There's tomatoes, olives, and lots of grapes. And so, it should be no surprise that they were able to have wine.

[3 : 31] An older man with no self-control is as unattractive as an older man who cannot stick at something. Endurance is one thing that older people can model for younger people because we've been around so long.

Perseverance, patience, long-suffering, these are mature characteristics. Paul tells Titus to teach the older men to be sound in faith, love, and endurance.

Likewise, older women are to be reverent in the way they live. Verse 3. Not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine. You can see a pattern emerging here. You will notice by now that these instructions apply to all of us and not just women in their 30s and 40s, etc.

None of us should be slanderers and none of us should be addicted to much wine. People who drink too much and people who slander one another have too much time on their hands in my opinion.

The older women were not living productive lives and were denying younger women the benefit of their experience and guidance. The fact that younger women, verses 4 and 5, needed someone to teach them to love their husbands and love their children is very concerning.

[4 : 45] Perhaps the older women had modelled for them that it is okay to sit around drinking large amounts of wine and thus be unproductive. Drunken people are not pure, they're not busy, they're not kind and they do not normally comply with the requests of others.

How can the older women urge the younger women to love their husbands and be subject to them or to be self-controlled, pure, busy and kind when they themselves are spending so much of their time drinking wine and slandering people?

Paul says the older women should teach what is good. Likewise, each of us can teach things to those younger than us. Paul advised Titus to teach the young men to be self-controlled, verse 6.

Remember Titus is a young man. We can be confident that if the older men and women lack self-control and were heavy drinkers, then it was also true of the younger men. There's no reason for it not to be true.

The Apostle told Titus to set an example by doing what is good since he was one of them and could therefore show how a young male disciple of Christ lives. Likewise, each of us can be example to our peers, to those at our life stage or in our situation.

[6 : 10] Titus was instructed, in your teaching, show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech. I call this gravitas. Integrity is to do with coherence of argument, congruence of words and behaviour.

Seriousness is a reminder to not waste our words or be flippant or lack concern for the people we are guiding. Soundness of speech is about the health of our conversation and instruction of others.

Basically, it all has to hang together and be consistently reinforced by how we live. We are not slaves. We may feel like slaves.

We're not slaves. But sometimes when we are employed, we can feel like we're in a relationship similar to that of a slave to a master. We are to be subject to our masters, male or female, in everything.

Verse 9, we should try to please our bosses, not talk back to them and to not steal from them, whether that is stealing time or stationary.

[7 : 15] Overall, we are to show that we can be fully trusted like Joseph serving Pharaoh and Daniel serving King Nebuchadnezzar. In those instructions to the five groups of Christians on Crete, there was a particular outcome Paul was working towards.

His concern was for the spread of the gospel and the lives of Christians on Crete were blocking that goal. Hence, in verse 5, we see that Titus was to teach the older women to urge the younger women so that no one will malign the word of God.

Likewise, in verse 8, we read that Titus was to encourage the younger men setting an example and teaching them so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

And finally, in verse 9, we read that Titus was to teach the slaves to show that they can be fully trusted so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.

We can see from these three very similar reasons that the lives of Christians on Crete were hindering the spread of the gospel by their behaviour. They were undermining the message rather than demonstrating it with godly relationships.

[8 : 34] So we've seen in this first section, verses 1 to 10, that Paul told Titus to instruct the older men, the older women, the younger women, the young men and the slaves how they should be living.

He did this so that their behaviour would support and not contradict the gospel message. His aim was that their knowledge of the truth would lead to godliness so that the rest of Crete would have no reason to reject the good news about Jesus.

The second section in chapter 2, verses 11 to 15, reminds Titus of the basis for the preceding instructions. This is important because right behaviour comes and flows from right belief.

More than that, how we live should naturally and automatically change as a result of the Holy Spirit growing in us the character of Jesus Christ. That is, we're not simply to work harder to be good but to cooperate with the work of God within us as he brings forth in us the fruit of his presence.

Galatians chapter 5 describes this fruit as love, joy, peace, forbearance or long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

[9 : 53] So when we read Paul's letter instructing Titus to teach the various groups within the church to have self-control, I think we should bear in mind that this characteristic is a strength of Jesus, that the Holy Spirit is supernaturally growing within God's people through his presence with us.

As we look at these final five verses of chapter 2, the second section, we will see some further elements of instruction but we will also see Paul reinforcing the basis for all his instructions.

In particular, he will remind Titus of grace and hope. Grace and hope. These two key teachings, grace and hope, relate to the two appearances of Jesus.

The first appearance is when God the Son came into the world as a baby, becoming one of us so that he could do what we could not do ourselves. He lived a perfect life, lived up to God's standard and sacrificed himself to clear our debt so that God could accept us freely and completely, uniting us to God in a loving relationship that lasts forever.

Jesus is the grace of God who appeared and offered salvation to all people. Verse 12 adds, grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions.

[11 : 12] How does grace do that? How does Jesus teach us to say no? At the well, Jesus offered the woman of Samaria living water to satisfy her inner thirst.

She would no longer need to be a slave to her emptiness. To Zacchaeus, up the tree, Jesus offered acceptance by inviting himself to his house. The tax collector would no longer need to be trapped by feelings of exclusion.

To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus offered forgiveness. She would no longer be condemned as a guilty person. The salvation Jesus came to give us frees us from emptiness, rejection and shame and brings us into God's living water, acceptance and forgiveness.

This grace enables us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives. This grace changes us. Jesus appeared on earth and brought us new life, not merely a set of rules, but an enabling relationship characterized by grace, mercy, acceptance, forgiveness and love.

I don't like being in new situations. I prefer to prepare. I'm that sort of person. I don't prepare enough, but I like to prepare. And I was filling in for someone at the last minute on a trip to Vanuatu to train 80 pastors in evangelism for a week.

[12 : 40] And I called in a friend who is a Pentecostal evangelist. He's really good on his feet, incredibly blunt and doesn't have any friends because of that. But I keep him around me because he makes me grow.

But I took him in there and we had such a good time. We were running two conferences. They cancelled the second one because the first one went so well. But after the first one, they kind of kicked us out and then we went out into the streets and in the hospitals and the schools and the prisons.

Anyway, so this story I wanted to tell you is about this enabling grace. So we went into the prison. I'm not experienced in prisons. I think I won prison visit in my whole life until I went to Vanuatu.

The prisons there are a bit different. It was fun to meet the Presbyterian treasurer and all the other locals. Half of them are from the church, in the prison, caught for crimes.

Anyway, one of the fellows there was in there for putting a machete through his wife's chest a few times. And he was a very big man, quite strong, tall, scary.

[13 : 51] Anyway, I'm sort of going in there like a rabbit in the headlights, deer in the headlights, you know, that sort of saying. And, you know, within a few minutes my friend John had everyone who was in solitary confinement leaning out of their cell praying for the person next to them.

And then got permission for everyone who didn't have to be in solitary confinement to come into the quadrangle. And so I'm sitting there on a bench and all these criminals around me and I'm thinking, well, this is weird, you know, a little bit nervous, new situation.

And I'm sitting there wondering what he's going to say and he says, okay, you're up. I nearly died. But, of course, I stood up very slowly and prayerfully and opened my mouth and started speaking and I said, you know, in Australia we put rings in bull's noses so that we can lead them wherever we want and the devil knows where our soft spots are and there are buttons he can press that can make us do bad things.

And, you know, I spoke about Jesus and then I said, and if you want Jesus to heal that soft spot, I want you to stand up. And the first person to stand up was this man who put the machete through his wife.

And then we prayed for him and then we prayed for the others and we went in and we prayed with all the staff at the jail too. It was quite an experience. But what I was trying to get to him was that the grace of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of God that that relationship we have because of what Jesus did then enables us to live a different way.

[15 : 29] So that's the first appearance, the grace. The second appearance is when Jesus will return from heaven to wrap things up, to judge the world and to take his friends into heaven. Verses 11 and 12 spoke of grace and the first appearance of Jesus and how that grace enables us to live godly lives in this present age.

There's something about the forgiveness and acceptance and mercy of God that changes us and then in that relationship we can live a different way. Then verse 13 explains that we do that godly living while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearance of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ.

Generally speaking the early church expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. Their waiting for Jesus to appear a second time was going to be a short term gig. We do not know when Jesus will return but the same certainty motivates us to live in a godly way.

And the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 would be a story that would speak to that. Our hope, which means our certainty in the future second appearance of Jesus, is the reason and basis of our new changed ways of living.

This is explained in verse 14. Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us or buy us back from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

[16 : 56] This echoes the announcement of the angel to Joseph. You might remember it recorded in Matthew chapter 1. Mary will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

We would do well to remember that insight as we monitor our behaviour and our progress in holiness or sanctification. Jesus came to rescue us from our sins.

Any sign that we are still trapped by our sins should cause us grave concern. We all want to be saved from death and saved from punishment but do we want to be saved from our sins?

Jesus came to free us from the penalty and the power of sin. Jesus has saved us from wickedness and is purifying us making us his people eager to do what he would do.

And this reminds me of what God told Moses to say to the Israelites recorded in Exodus chapter 19 which we heard read now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession.

[18 : 02] Although the whole earth is mine you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And this declaration about God's mission to build a holy nation belonging to him is repeated in 1 Peter 2.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you are not a people but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. That repeated declaration about a holy nation echoes Titus 2.13 where we read that God intends to purify for himself a people that are his very own eager to do what is good.

So we see that hope is the basis of our good behavior. We know from these scriptures that God has saved us to be his holy people, a holy nation. Therefore, since Jesus gave himself to make it possible for us to become God's special people, the object of his loving kindness, let us cooperate with that mission.

Any sign that we are still trapped in our sins, held captive and not set free is a sign that we are out of step with God's plans and living in opposition to the purposes of God.

[19 : 21] The grace of God has appeared, verse 11, and we await the blessed hope, the next appearance of Jesus, verse 13. For these two reasons, grace and hope, we should now be eager to do what is good, verse 14.

Paul concludes this section with a summary. These then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

What he meant was that Titus should not worry about his age. He was authorized by the Apostle Paul to instruct God's people. The instructing of others involves both encouraging and rebuking.

Encouraging God's people with the grace of God shown in the first appearance of God the Son. Encouraging God's people also with the hope, meaning the certainty of the coming second appearance of Jesus.

And encouraging, too, good behaviours such as self-control, endurance, reverence, love, kindness, integrity, submission, trustworthiness. We read about those in the first section of chapter two.

[20 : 28] Rebuking is the other part of the instruction of Christians. We should rebuke drunkenness. We should rebuke slandering. We should rebuke laziness. We should rebuke talking back to those in authority over us.

We should rebuke stealing. Paul told Titus to encourage and rebuke the Christians on Crete because of the grace and hope given to them in Christ and for the sake of the witness of the church to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here then are some key points to take away with us from Titus chapter two. I have a printed summary page if anyone wants a copy of the full list. But here's a brief list.

One, God gave us grace in the first appearance of Jesus. Two, God gives us hope and certainty in the second future appearance of Jesus. Three, grace and hope motivate us to avoid sin.

Four, Jesus came to save us from our sins. Five, unbelievers use our bad behaviour as a reason to ignore Jesus. Six, we should all be good examples to our Christian peers.

[21 : 35] And seven, we can all show those younger than us what is good. Join me in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the grace and hope that we have in Christ and we pray that you would speak to us this evening.

And Lord, you'll continue to work on us, strengthen us as we seek to follow Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Thank you.