

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Sound Doctrine Backed by Sound Living**

Scripture: Titus 2:1

Code: 56-12

We are in the midst of a study of Paul's letter to Titus. Titus, a younger man than Paul, has been given the assignment of ministry on the island of Crete. Churches have been established there but they have some great needs. They have need for spiritual leadership. They have need for spiritual maturity in the congregation. And so Titus has been given the assignment to work to that end as verse 5 of chapter 1 says, "To set in order what remains and ordain elders in every city."

In order to strengthen the hand of Titus, in order to encourage him in the task, the Apostle Paul writes him this letter. And this letter is intended not only for Titus but also for the congregations so that they will understand why Titus is doing what he is doing. If you've been with us, you remember that chapter 1 deals with the leadership of the church. Obviously the church has to be set in order with regard to its leaders. There are some careful detail given as to the kind of men and the duty of those men who are to be the pastors and elders.

As we move then in to chapter 2, the focus changes from the pastors to the people, from the elders to the everybody, from the leadership to the laity. And chapter 2 is all about the character of a healthy church...the character of a healthy church. We will find here very specific, very straight-forward, very direct instruction given to every segment of the church in order that the church might be in itself healthy. So it's a very practical section of Scripture.

And you know as well, I think, as I do that the Lord is concerned about the health of His body, the church. We live in a time when people are fanatically concerned about their physical bodies and we must understand that the Lord is far more concerned about His spiritual body. And that's really what is behind this chapter. The Lord has great concern that the church be what He wants it to be. He is concerned about the church's spiritual health.

One ringing note that bears on that theme is the use of the word "sound." The word "sound," the word in Greek basically gives us our word hygiene, means healthy. It is used nine times in the pastoral epistles, namely 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. And of those nine uses of the word "sound," five of them appear in Titus. Five times Paul directs Titus' attention and ours to the need for spiritual health. If anything is clear from the pastoral epistles and from Titus it is that the Lord is concerned about healthy doctrine and healthy living. And they are linked.

In chapter 1, for example, and verse 9 he talks about sound doctrine and then in verse 13, living it out by being sound in the faith. In chapter 2 verse 1 he talks again about sound doctrine and living it out by being sound in faith. In chapter 2 verse 7 he talks about purity in doctrine and its consequent sound in speech, verse 8. So the theme throughout not only Titus but 1 and 2 Timothy is the teaching of sound doctrine and the call for consequent sound living, healthy doctrine which produces healthy living. That's crucial.

Now this is all set against the backdrop of unsound doctrine which produces unsound living, or unhealthy doctrine which produces unhealthy Christianity. Repeatedly in 1 and 2 Timothy and here again in Titus there is a preoccupation with false teachers. False teachers are noted in chapter 1, you remember, in verse 10 as rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers. They, verse 11, upset whole families, they teach things they shouldn't teach. We find that they turn away to Jewish myths, commandments of men who turn away from the truth. And verse 16 says they know God they say but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed. Here you have diseased doctrine which results in diseased living.

Over in chapter 3 verse 9 there is a reminder to shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the law because they are unprofitable and worthless. They are unhealthy. So when someone teaches that stuff, reject him after a first and second warning because you know he is perverted and sinning, being self-condemned. There is seemingly always the anticipated presence of error and its result in unhealthy living. So again I say, if there's anything clear about the pastoral epistles and particularly Titus is that...it is that God is concerned that His church have healthy teaching and be called to healthy application of that teaching, healthy living. If a church is to be spiritually healthy, if it is to be sound, whole, if it is to enjoy strength, power, well being, it must have sound words, sound doctrine and it must be called to sound healthy spiritual living.

Now if you've studied the Bible with us any time at all you know that this theme comes again and again and again in holy Scripture. The Apostle Paul along with the rest of the Apostles who wrote the New Testament were concerned about healthy doctrine and holy living. In this practical chapter, and I mean really practical chapter, we're going to look at the specifics of healthy Christian living. We're going to look at a godly congregation and how a godly congregation functions. We're going to discuss older men, and older women, younger women, younger men and those who work as employees here called slaves, and we're going to talk about what God says all of us, each in our own categories, are to be doing. The Holy Spirit prescribes in this chapter a series of mandates, binding commands for every congregation to obey and to be spiritually healthy. And I might add as a footnote, some of them are going to be very unpopular because they're contrary to contemporary thinking...but they are the Word of God. And it is Titus' task and mine and any other spiritual leader to hold the church accountable for healthy living in light of healthy doctrine.

Now the chapter is very straight-forward, it is very clear, it is very strong. The opening and closing verses of the chapter are very important for us to understand because in the opening and closing verse God demands those who are in His church to follow these patterns, to follow these commandments. Let's look at verse 1 to start with. "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." Literally in the Greek it says, "but you." And it's in contrast to the ones just described in verse 16, those rebellious empty deceivers, those false teachers who are detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed. Why? Because they teach things they ought not to teach. They teach deceptive lies, they're all caught up in myths and human commandments and they turn away from the truth. In contrast to that, "But you, Titus, in contrast to all the unhealthy false teaching coming from these fake teachers, you speak things fitting for sound doctrine. You be committed to the health of the church."

There are plenty who teach error and plague the church with weakness and disease as a result. The pestilence of sin is the result of their useless verbiage. It says in verse 16 they are worthless for any good work, they bring no benefit to the church, they are adokimos the word, they are tested and found useless. The word adokimos was used in building. When a stone was not fit to be put into the building, it had some serious flaw, they would scratch an "A" on it, an alpha for adokimos and set it aside so no one would pick it up again and use it. These are people who are useless. You on the other hand, Titus, need to be useful and valuable to the church because you speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

Any pastor, any church leader is certainly called to this responsibility. Now let me make it very clear what he is saying. He is not saying speak sound doctrine. That's already been covered basically back in verse 9 of chapter 1 where the leaders of the church are instructed to hold fast the faithful Word and exhort with sound doctrine. What he is now saying is you must speak the things which are properly to be associated with sound doctrine, that is those things which issue in the matter of daily living. Teach the practical requirements for every day life that suit true doctrine. You can't just fill people's head with theology. You must be truly useful by teaching the required behavior that is consistent with sound doctrine. Healthy teaching, yes. And then instruction about healthy living. You can't just teach it without forcing the application, to some degree.

Now there are several key terms in that statement in verse 1 that may help us. The first one is the word "speak" from the Greek verb laleo which just means to talk. It's not the word kerusso, to preach, it's not the word didaskaleo, to teach, it's just to talk. And it's a present tense, just keep on talking concerning things which are suitable as associates of healthy doctrine, continually be talking about the kind of behavior that fits the truth. And he's saying to him, stay on track, don't feel any resistance and capitulate. Don't get intimidated, don't slow down, don't deviate no matter what resistance you may feel, as he told Timothy in the prior chapter there, 2 Timothy 4, the time will come when they won't endure sound doctrine, they'll want to have their ears tickled with the things that strike their own imagination. But you continue to preach and reprove and rebuke and exhort and do it patiently and

do it with careful instruction. Obviously there's going to be resistance to these calls for holy living, but you must not equivocate. Keep on talking about these things.

And the idea here, as I said, is not so much preaching and not so much teaching in the formal role as in the normal conversation of life. You're talking now about pastoral work. Oh sure there's a component of that in preaching and teaching, but it comes down out of the pulpit. Help people see the truth face to face, help them apply it in their lives. And what you're telling them are those things which are fitting. The word prepohere is used. It basically means proper or seemly, or attractive. One good old word, befitting. You tell them the things they need to do that fit the doctrine they believe. It calls for behavior, it calls for action. It calls for living what is in complete accord with the truth. And obviously, any student of the Bible knows that it never divorces doctrine from duty. When Paul comes in to Romans chapter 12 and says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you," and then launches in to talking about a living sacrifice and rolls on for several chapters of Christian duty, he's building it all in the first eleven chapters of doctrine...therefore because all these mercies of God are true, all these mercies that God has given you in salvation are true, therefore live like this. As Paul writes to the Ephesians after three chapters of doctrine, he simply says that I'm going to now urge you therefore to walk worthy of the calling to which you're called. That's the calling, here's how you live. In Colossians chapter 3 after two chapters of doctrines, he says now that you've been raised with Christ, seek the things which are above. Here's how to live your life. In Philippians after three chapters of dealing with doctrinal issues he says, "Therefore I'm urging you to live this way," and he goes through chapter 4 with a list of required behaviors. This is basic. This is absolutely central. The Lord wants churches that know His truth and that live it. In fact, what other value does the truth have if it isn't lived out? He wants a chaste virgin, He wants a pure bride, He wants a holy church. In fact, in 1 Peter 1:16 it's clear just how holy, "You shall be holy for I am holy, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, be like the holy One who called you." I want you as holy as I am.

So holy living is proper. Holy living is suitable. Holy living is fitting. Holy living is inseparable from sound doctrine. That's the point. So we are called then as those who lead the church to teach you healthy doctrine and to call you to healthy living. Diseased meat is not allowed to be sold in our country that's why we have agencies in the government that inspect meat and approve it because diseased meat can make you sick. It can even kill. And so can diseased teaching. Diseased teaching can make people sick and it is deadly. But on the other hand, even good meat eaten in wrong proportions or out of balance or in over indulgence can create sickness as well. It must be applied in the living of life and exercise and use to gain its benefit. And so it is with healthy teaching. Healthy sound teaching must be followed up by the call for healthy living.

In the last few days I've had the opportunity to fellowship with Jacob(?) Dukonchinko(?) who is the spiritual patriarch of the church in the CIS and most specifically leads the church in the Ukraine about 1500 churches there. And I said to him as we were meeting in my office on Friday, I said, "Have you

had through the 70 years of communist rule in the Soviet Union churches that are involved in false teaching, error?" And he said yes. He said, "They were associated with us for a while and then there was a split," and I think he said 350 churches broke off. I said, "How many churches are there now that are involved in some false doctrine?" He said about 500. I said, "How did this get started?" He said, "Well there was a man...you don't want to hear this...who came from America in 1920's and he started teaching false doctrine and we tried in those early years to deal with it and we continued to try to deal with it but finally there was a split and now there are about 500 churches."

You understand, don't you, that error is a communicable disease. It's very hard to stamp out. Sometimes you think you're dealing with a spiritual AIDS virus...you just can't find anything to deal with it. Sound teaching is therefore the priority. But it must be followed up with a call to sound living. And that's what verse 1 is saying, you must continually in every conversation all the time be calling your people to the kind of holy living that is suitable for truth. And the implication of the verse is that the teachers of truth who call their people to holy living must be aggressive and relentless. I mean, false teachers sure are. And they must maintain a certain biblical dogmatism, a certain strong demanding tenure must accompany their commands.

And so, the instruction that's going to come in this second chapter is cast in a very strong light by verse 1. It's binding on us. Then look at verse 15, look how he closes the chapter, this is the backside bracket. He says, "These things," the things he has just said, "speak and exhort and reprove with all authority, let no one disregard you." In verse 1 he said, "Speak these things," and here again in verse 15 using exactly the same verb he says it again, "Speak these things." He reminds him again, say it, it may not be popular, it may not be accepted by everyone. There may be some discussion about it. There may be some folks who forget. It may not always be in the front of their minds as it ought to be so you continually relentlessly continue to talk about it. Like the great truth of Deuteronomy chapter 6, talk about it when you stand up, sit down, lie down, and walk in the way. It's on your lips all the time. And not only in that general sense but then he says, "And exhort." That's a positive note. Come alongside people, urge, encourage, compel, admonish in a positive way. Come on, you need to do that. You have to come along in this area. You must obey this command. This is the standard. This is how you must live.

And then there's a negative. When they don't he says reprove them. That's the negative approach. Rebuke them. The word has the idea of confronting someone face to face with the purpose of convicting them of their sin. So you have a responsibility, he says, to Titus and to any other spiritual leader and that is to continually in all your conversation whether it's the pulpit or down below in the midst of the people, whether it's in the public forum or the private conversation, whether it's in the church or in the home, be always speaking about these standards of holy living which are the partners of sound doctrine and you need to speak them constantly and you need to come alongside people to encourage them to obey. And when they don't do that you need to rebuke them. And he says at verse 15, the end of the first sentence, do it with all authority. And what is that authority? Is it

the authority of your office? No. Is it the authority of your associations? No. It is the authority of the Word of God.

It wasn't that Titus got this authority by simply being related to Paul. It was that Titus got this authority because to Titus through Paul came the Word of God. By the way, the word epitage, authority, is a word used by Paul in the New Testament always in the sense of a divine command. You can speak these things as divine commands. What you're going to hear in chapter 2 is a series of divine commands. Then he adds, "Let no one disregard you." And that's certainly for the congregations to hear. You better not disregard what Titus is saying. Scripture is not a book of suggestions, it is not a book of insights. It is a book of commands. Scripture in Psalm 19:8 is called the commandment of the Lord. In Matthew 7 and Mark 1 and Luke 4 it is recorded that when they heard Jesus speak, they said He speaks as one who has authority. In Matthew 28:19 and 20 He said you go out into the world and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always.

So that little warning at the end, "Let no one disregard you," is really a warning to anybody who might decide they're going to try to gainsay or resist what Titus commands with the authority of Scripture. He's saying, "Titus, don't back down." He said to Timothy essentially the same thing, "Don't you let anybody despise your youth, don't let anybody wrangle with you over what you say because of the fact that you are young. You continue to be an example and these things," he said to Timothy, "command and teach. Hold your ground. Don't back down."

The word "disregard" is kind of a curious Greek word. It is one of those compound words where you have a preposition put on the front of a word, phroneois the verb, it basically means to think, it has to do with the brain. Periphrono, periwe use in the word perimeter, it means the circumference, the outside of something. And the word to think around simply is the word used here for disregard. Literally to think around, to circumvent you, to try to rationalize around you, to try to give you excuses, to try to justify. Don't let anybody do that. Don't let anybody try to evade these commands. Some of these commands are pretty straight-forward things. Like older women are not to be malicious gossips, younger women are to be keepers in the home, younger men are to be sensible. It's hard for a young man to be sensible, they want to be frivolous. All these kinds of commands. People are going to say, "Well this...and well that, well you don't understand." Don't let them think around you. Don't let them put on an evasive course, justifying or rationalizing. In fact, he might have reminded them of the words of Jesus in that profound statement in Luke chapter 10 verse 16 where Jesus says what I think is just a powerful statement, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, the one who listens...the one who rejects you rejects Me, the one who rejects Me rejects the one who sent Me." What does that mean? Jesus is saying if they listen to you My Apostles, then they're listening to Me. If they reject you, they're rejecting Me. If they reject Me they're rejecting the Father that sent Me.

The point is this, when someone speaks for God, when someone speaks God's truth, God's Word and you reject...you reject God. Don't let them do that. So our Lord wants a healthy church, a church that is taught healthy doctrine and called to healthy spiritual behavior. And he gives Titus and other pastors and leaders in the church the authority to keep on speaking and even to exhort and rebuke if necessary and to do it consistently with the authority of Scripture and not be disregarded.

He wants a pure church. He wants a chaste virgin. He wants a holy spotless bride.

What then makes a church healthy? Holy living...the fruit of healthy doctrine. I can't emphasize this enough because there are so many options being offered today in building a church. What the Lord wants has nothing to do with the size of a church, what He wants has to do with the virtue of a church, the character of the church. As I've said through the years, my job is to concentrate on the spiritual depth of the church and let God take care of the breadth of it. The size is not an issue to me. The character is. And what makes a healthy church is not how many programs it has or how much money it has or how big it is, what makes a healthy church is its holy character. And yet that's very very infrequently ever even suggested today in the area of church growth. It's just so very important to understand that the Lord is concerned about the quality of a church, not the size of it. The size of it is all bound up in His own sovereign purpose. And the size of it, I'll go a step further and say, is directly related to the virtue of it. We're continually told that if we want to build the church we've got to come up with technique, strategy, marketing savvy, etc., etc., etc. That does not concern the Lord. What concerns the Lord is the character of the church, the virtue, the godliness.

Now before we look specifically at the flow of the chapter and the specific commands that are here. There's another key element to be acknowledged in this chapter and it gives you the feeling of this chapter powerfully. The commandments that are given here and the standards for behavior that are given here are required. And it is true that if you obey them and I obey them, we'll be blessed. But that's never pointed out in the chapter. That's just a given. We know that. We know that obedience brings blessing. We certainly saw that in the Psalm which we read this morning, Psalm 18. That's a given. That's taken for granted. The issue here is not the effect of our holiness on us, the issue here is the effect of our holiness on others. That's the issue. For all that virtue does for me, the compelling issue here is what it does for somebody else. Obedience to the requirements in this chapter are essential, Paul points out, not only for their own sake which is a given for you can then know the blessing and the joy of Christian living, but because it has such powerful effect on others.

Now this is stated in three purpose clauses in the chapter. One is in verse 5, the second is in verse 8 and the third is in verse 10 and they are potent. Let's look at verse 5. All of this matter of behavior, end of verse 5, is in order that or for the purpose that the Word of God may not be dishonored. That's it. The first compelling issue here is the honor of the Word of God. Back in 1 Timothy 5:14, younger widows are instructed to get married and bear children and keep house. Why? To give the enemy no occasion for reproach for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. In other words, how you

live is going to impact how people view Christianity and it makes Christianity attractive or turns them away into the path of Satan. The Word of God, he says, may not be dishonored. That's what holy living produces. The word here is really the word for blasphemed at the end of verse 5, disdained, rejected, treated as a lie, disregarded, mocked, shunned, ignored.

In other words, how you live will directly determine how people feel about the Word of God. Amazing. A Christian wife who is not what she ought to be, a Christian young man who is not what he ought to be, a Christian older man who is not what he ought to be, a Christian older woman who is not what she ought to be is going to give reason for people to blaspheme God's Word. You see, the world doesn't judge us by our theology, the world judges us by our behavior, right? And they judge the validity of the Scripture by our behavior. They...they judge whether Scripture is really true and powerful and life changing by whether it changes our lives.

I remember Sam Ericsson telling me that time some years back that he had invited a lawyer, he was working for a law firm in L.A., he invited a lawyer to come to church and he said, "We want you to come because our church teaches the Bible, we have a pastor who teaches the Bible and I think you'd appreciate it." And he said, "What church is it?" And Sam said, "Grace Community Church." He said, "Ha," he said, "I don't go to any church but I sure wouldn't go to that church, the most crooked attorney I know in the city goes there." End of discussion. The Word of God was blasphemed in that man's life and consequently this man turned his back on the truth. I mentioned that, by the way, on the following Sunday to our congregation without naming which lawyer it was and I think 25 lawyers repented. But that's the simple illustration of what happens when you don't live the life, you bring reproach on the truth. If it's life-changing truth, then it ought to change your life. Why should people believe it's life-changing truth if your life isn't changed?

An unbelieving husband, another family member may reject the gospel and mock the Bible because of the failure of a Christian wife to do what God has called her and empowered her to do. William Kelley translates this little phrase "So that God's Word may suffer no scandal." Listen, the world will judge the validity of the gospel which is certainly inherent in the term "the Word of God," they'll judge the gospel Word by the character of the people who believe it and acclaim it and say they're transformed by it.

You see, that's why it's so absolutely devastating when some well-known evangelists are caught in gross kinds of sins and immorality and the world just says...oh, the transforming power of the Bible they preach, huh? Show me the transformation. As the German philosopher Heinz(?) said years ago, "Show me your redeemed life, I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer." The credibility of the Christian gospel is tied to the integrity of the life of those who claim it. The impact of the lives of men and women who carry the Lord's name is vital to the credibility of the faith and the effectiveness of personal witness in preaching and becomes a determiner as to whether someone turns and comes to Christianity or falls away and follows the path of Satan.

There are some graphic illustrations of this, perhaps none more vivid than the story of David, in 2 Samuel 12, who was confronted by Nathan, confronted because of his gross sin with Bathsheba and then the consequent murder of her husband. David had sinned lusting, sinned committing adultery, sinned in plotting the murder of the husband of his paramour. And he is confronted by Nathan in the twelfth chapter of 2 Samuel and it's an incredible account. I won't read it all but down into verse 13 David said to Nathan, "I've sinned against the Lord." David is here honestly confessing. "And Nathan said to David, The Lord also has taken away your sin, you shall not die." There is forgiveness for the sinning believer. Okay, we want to make that clear...there's forgiveness. "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die." God will forgive your sin but your sin made the Gentiles, the pagans, the unbelievers blaspheme God.

What do you think the world thinks when they watch Christians, prominent well-known Christians and they read about them in the newspaper as adulterers and fornicators and whatever, what do they do? They blaspheme the Lord. They blaspheme the Word of God by depreciating its power, by mocking it.

In Romans you have another powerful statement, tragic but powerful statement with regard to Israel when it says in Romans 2:24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Well that was the opposite of what they were supposed to do. They were a nation called by God to be a witness so that the name of God would be glorified. But because of their crimes and their sin, the name of God was defiled. That's a quote, by the way, from Isaiah 52:5 where Isaiah says, "And My name is continually every day blasphemed because of you."

In Ezekiel 36 there is an equally poignant text, it's in verse 17, a place to start. "Son of man, God says to Ezekiel, when the house of Israel was living in their own land they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their way was before Me like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity, or her period. Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land because they had defiled it with their idols and I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judge them. When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name because it was said of them, These are the people of the Lord." You get the picture? It was bad enough they were so bad in the land, but when they got scattered everywhere they defiled the name of God by the way they behaved and the comment of the nations was...Look, those are the people of the Lord, so you can see what kind of God He is, He's either immoral or impotent. He either doesn't do anything about it or He can't...and His name was dishonored.

Because of the sins of Israel, their crimes were attributed to the influence or the impotence of their deity, their God, so that the pagans were looking at God in blasphemous perspectives. You see,

that's why Jesus said, "Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven," Matthew 5:16. That's why Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:2 and 3, "You are our letter about Christ, known and read by all men." You're the gospel they see, you're what makes the Word of God believable or unbelievable.

So, when Paul says to Titus, "Here are the standards, older men are to live like this, older women like this, younger women like this, younger men like this, and everybody out in the work place like this," here is the reason: because if you don't live holy lives then the Word of God will be mocked and shunned and disregarded and dishonored and thought little of and that constitutes a form of blasphemy. You see how much is at stake in the way you live? And it isn't just for your own benefit. We've got to get Christianity somehow beyond that because that's where we're stuck right now. What can Christianity do for me? And the question is, what can your kind of Christianity do for everybody else? That's the issue.

Now I want you to notice in verse 8 a second purpose clause that gives us the heart of what Paul is saying, verse 8 toward the end, "That the opponent may be put to shame," the Greek word literally means to blush because he's so embarrassed, "having nothing back to say about us." That's the issue here again. The issue is...look, they're examining us and we want to so live that those opponents of the faith will blush in sheer embarrassment because there is no just criticism. Don't you think that the opponents of Christianity love it when Christians scandalize the faith? Don't they love to pick up the magazines and the newspapers and read about the fornication and the adultery and the fiscal irresponsibility and the thievery and all of the conning that goes on in the fakes of Christianity and all of the sin and iniquity in leadership? Sure they do. And I'll tell you something else, the people in your little world would love those who deny the Lord who don't know Christ who at this point haven't come to faith in Him, they would love to see you fail significantly so they can justify their unbelief. They don't want to see God transform your life and then rebuke them...but that's exactly what you want to do, you want to make them red faced, you want to make them blush when they criticize because they can't find anything to criticize. You see, the issue here is evangelism. And again I say just to put it in a context, the proper strategy for evangelization is not methodological, it is not some kind of strategy, it is not some kind of marketing technique. The way we reach the world is through virtue, godliness, holiness, purity of life that makes our faith believable, makes God's Word believable.

Peter seeing the very same issue at hand wrote words that fit right in to this same thought, 1 Peter 2:11, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts." Don't get caught in them? Why? "Keep your behavior excellent among the pagans so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers they may on account of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation." You know what that means? How can you glorify God in the day of visitation? The day of visitation is the time when He visits when He comes. How can you glorify God in that day? By receiving Him. You can only receive Him if you've come to know Him. That's exactly

what Peter is saying. Let them look at your life and whereas on the one hand they come to criticize, let your behavior be so excellent that their criticism turns to curiosity and their curiosity turns to conversion and they're there to greet the Lord with you when He comes. You lead people to the credibility of Christianity and to conversion by the virtue of your life. So stay away from fleshly lusts and let your behavior be excellent.

So the issue here in chapter 2 again is the evangelistic strategy of the church. We reach the world by holiness, not by technique.

And then there is a third text, verse 10. A third purpose clause, the end of verse 10, "In order that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." That moves from a more negative tone in the first two to a positive one. First in verse 5 he says we want to make sure the Word of God is not blasphemed. Second in verse 8, we want to make sure that anybody who opposes Christianity will have their mouth closed and stand there in absolute embarrassment because there's nothing bad to say about Christians. And here he says on the positive side, verse 10, "We want to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." This is such a powerful powerful point.

Let me ask you something. What is our primary message to this world about God? Are we trying to tell the world that God is omnipotent? Well it's true. Are we trying to get across to this world that God is omniscient? That God is omnipresent? That God is immutable? Are we trying to get across to this world that God is the creator and the sustainer of the universe? That God is sovereign? That God is eternal? Yes, all that is true. What we're really trying to get the world to understand is that God is a Savior...isn't that it? We're trying to get them to understand that God is there to save them. And that's verse 10. "How can we adorn the teaching about God as Savior in every respect if we don't look like we've been saved?" I mean, if I tell you about my barber and you look at me and say, "Your hair is a mess," you aren't going to my barber. Now how obvious is that? If I tell you I have found a wonderful place to eat and I've been eating there for 15 years and I'm going to eat there till I'm dead, I have a terminal illness that came from food poisoning. You're going to say, "I'm not going to that place." It doesn't do any good to commend something to you that doesn't show up in my life. If I am going to adorn the doctrine or the teaching about God as a Savior, then I'm going to have to demonstrate that I've been saved. Saved from what? Sin...sin.

We make salvation attractive when we demonstrate deliverance from sin...power over sin and temptation. Lives characterized by purity, power, joy, blessing. By the way, that word "adorn" is great. There's a hairspray named that, Adorn, and that really does speak about what that word means. It's from a Greek word kosmeo, from which we get cosmetic. It means to make something beautiful. We say a woman adorned herself with jewels and it was used that way in ancient times. The word kosmeo, to put on cosmetics, to make beautiful. In fact, in the Greek one made kosmeo out of chaos and that's what you ladies are doing basically. You're turning the chaos into the cosmos, the disarray into beauty and order. Some of you are doing a wonderful job at it as well. And the true

chaos will never be known, I'm sure. But that is precisely what the word means. And when we show the order and the beauty of the power of a saving God in our lives, we make salvation beautiful, we make God, as it were, attractive. And he says you want to do that in all things, in every respect.

Do you see what's at stake here? Souls, eternal souls. You see, wrong conduct on the part of Christians leads non-Christians to slander God, holy conduct on the part of Christians leads people to glorify God. The issue in holy living then, again I say, is not just self-centered, I want to be happy, I don't want to get chastened, the issue here is the whole matter of evangelization. It's all bound up in this. And again I say, what makes the church powerful in the world is not its strategy, it is its virtue, its holiness. What we believe is linked to how we live and how we live is directly linked to evangelism.

So Paul in this chapter is going to set some standards down. They're not negotiable. They're absolute. He says to Titus, "Don't let anybody get around this...don't let anybody circumvent this...don't let anybody rationalize and justify themselves and evade these things...they're crucial, keep on talking, keep on talking and do it with authority...because what is at stake? The Word of God, the saving power of God, that's all at stake." And if we're going to have an impact on the world it's going to be the impact of our holy living, starting in verse 2, and we'll start there next time, comes the commands. They run down through verse 10 and then in verses 11 to 14, the reason for them. It is a powerful chapter and I believe God is going to instruct us in powerful ways. My prayer, that the result will be many will come to know Christ because of your life and your testimony.

Father, we thank You this morning for this time in the richness of Your Word. We now feel like we have a hold on the heart of this chapter and are now ready to submit to what it teaches, to that end we pray in every life, Lord, in order that we might adorn the teaching about Your saving power, in order that we might stop the mouth of every critic of Christianity, in order that we might never bring a reproach on Your Word. Lord, so much is at stake, eternal souls, help us to live holy lives. We have been taught for many years healthy doctrine, now, Lord, by Your Holy Spirit may we live healthy Christian lives and may You be glorified in and through us so that our testimony can be the very motivation for others to embrace the Savior. We pray in His dear name. Amen.

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