

Introduction to Titus: Living Godly in the Present Age

This is a series in Paul's letter to his disciple and friend, Titus. Titus isn't a big book, just 3 short chapters, but it is an important book. Volume doesn't determine significance in God's Word. Titus is short on words, but long on practical exhortation, all of which is centered around a critical theme for Christians in every age: living a godly life in a godless world.

That is the struggle, isn't it? Living a life that lines up with the salvation we have been given in Christ. It has never been easy. The world is forever trying to press Christians into its mold, and our own flesh is on the world's side, a traitor in the gates willing to indulge in every sort of vice. It has never been easy, and I'm not really sure it is harder now than when Paul wrote to Titus, but I sure feel like its harder than it used to be.

Illustrations aren't tough to come by. In May a conservative evangelical organization completed a survey of Christians between the ages of 18 and 35, with these conclusions:

- 33% approve of couples living together outside of marriage.
- 32% agree that marriage should only be for as long as we love each other.
- 10%+ said it was okay to take illegal drugs, drink to excess, steal from work.

You know what's saddest about the results? Most of us are neither shocked nor surprised by them. Our expectations have been lowered to the point that we're only surprised the figures aren't higher!

How easily do we conform to our culture? *Very* easily. Sometimes our conformity takes a pretty obvious path, as in the survey I've just mentioned. But I think even more often we make choices we don't even recognize as rooted in this world, rather than in God's Word. Many of us just kind of drift along, actions and attitudes unexamined. What's the answer? How do we recognize when we are slipping from our moorings and conforming to the world? By coming to recognize God's pattern for living – right here in Titus.

Paul says to us through Titus: "Don't get sucked into your culture, live above it!" The central truth of Titus, its organizing principle, is in 2:11-12: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." In other words, we have a calling to live a godly life, right here, right now. And that calling is rooted in God's saving action on our behalf. It is above our world, beyond our culture.

Titus is first and foremost a book about how to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in our world. Let me give you the 30-second tour: After the opening greeting in 1:1-4, Paul tells Titus in v5-9 to make sure that elders conform to the pattern for godly shepherds, because, in v10-16, they need to confront and refute false teachers. In 2:1-10 he says that all God's people are to live lives that are fitting for sound doctrine, older men in v2, older women in v3, young women in v4-5, young men in v6-8, slaves, v9-10.

The reason they are to live that way is in 2:11-15, in two words, God's grace. Finally, 3:1-11 talks about the Christian in relation to unbelievers. They are to be subject to authority, 3:1-2, to keep aware that the world is lost, 3:3-7, and to focus on good deeds, not worthless controversies, 3:8-11.

It really is a simple message, isn't it? The tough part isn't understanding it, its applying it. I don't think we understand what it means to "live godly." What comes to your mind when you hear that phrase, "a godly life?" Does it sound a bit scary? Or at least, removed from everyday life? Something for monks, missionaries, martyrs, and mystics?? Does living godly require organ music, long prayers, hollow-eyed gauntness, beards, sandals, robes, stone cells, hair shirts, cold baths, fasting, wild rocky deserts, and clean fingernails?

Joe Bayly was a columnist for a Christian magazine, and he told a story that vividly illustrates how mixed up we are about holiness. He was interviewing some German Christians who had been in the German army in WWII. Two of these men had been put up for promotion to 2nd Lt. in the Nazi army, but they refused the promotions for moral reasons. Not the reasons you might think, though. As officers, they'd be expected to attend dances at the Officer's Club. And they knew that dancing leads to immorality, so, to not be "of the world," they refused promotion.

In the course of the war, both men were assigned to administrative duty at one of the Nazi death camps. They did not directly kill anyone, but they knew exactly what was going on. And they never raised a voice in protest, quietly going about their business, helping the camp run. Decades later, they had no regrets. They were convinced that God was honored by both decisions.

In their minds, not conforming to social pressure by refusing to attend a dance was godly living, while conforming to patriotic mass murder and remaining silent while millions died left them with no feelings of unrighteousness. We don't understand what it means to live godly. We make up our own rules as we go, and when we set the standard, we are capable of any evil.

Titus tells us that we need to live so that our lives are a reflection of God's truth, not our own goodness. In 2:1, Paul tells Titus to teach what is *fitting for sound doctrine*, and then goes on to define what sound doctrine looks like when it is lived out in v2-10. And when our lives match our God's truth, Paul says 3 things result:

- 2:5 – God's Word will not be dishonored
- 2:8 – Those who oppose Christ will not be able to accuse us of evil
- 2:10 – We will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior

Think of "adorning the doctrine of God" this way. Let's say you inherit a genuine Rembrandt, a gorgeous, valuable work of art. If your going to hang that Rembrandt on your wall, what kind of frame will you put it in? Are you going to go down to Kmart for a \$10 piece of plexiglass, or will you make sure you get a frame worthy of the art?

That is the idea here. We are the frame that God's artwork is placed in. The frame isn't the art, but a bad frame detracts from its beauty. We are to live so that we *adorn* it – we enhance its

beauty, draw attention to its loveliness, not make you think – geez, couldn't they have spent a few more bucks on that frame?

Titus is one of three books that were written after the conclusion of the book of Acts, after Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome. After he was released, he had a few remaining years of freedom. We are pretty sure he took the gospel to Spain. We know he went back to the churches at Colossae, Ephesus, Philippi, and to the island of Crete.

During these last years of travel he wrote 3 letters that we call the "Pastoral Epistles," 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. Each of these letters deal with issues related to caring for, pastoring, the church. 1 Timothy and Titus were written while Paul was out and about, 2 Timothy from Paul's final prison. It is our best guess that Titus is the next to last letter Paul wrote.

Titus differs from many NT books in its relative lack of doctrine. Romans, Hebrews, Ephesians, Colossians, many others, begin with doctrine, great truths of the faith, then move to application. We need to know truth to live truth, so the authors lay a foundation of doctrine before turning to living that doctrine out.

Not Titus. In Titus, Paul jumps in feet first, straight to practical exhortation. Not that it's devoid of doctrine, but it's just kind of sprinkled along the way to underscore some of Paul's points. He often mentions "sound doctrine:" In 1:9 – elders are to exhort in sound doctrine. In 2:1 – Titus is to teach what is fitting for sound doctrine. In 2:7 – as the spiritual leader in Crete, Titus himself must hold to doctrine that is pure. And as I've already said, in 2:10 – we are to so live that we *adorn doctrine*.

And yet, Paul doesn't go into detail as to what that doctrine is. That tells me that Titus already knows it. That he knows Paul and his teaching very well. Paul's point to Titus is: you know your stuff. Make sure you live it. That's a point for us to hear, isn't it? We know a lot, let's make sure we put it into action.

Another repeated theme in Titus that I especially need to hear – the need for good deeds in the Christian's life. I like to point out that God's word says we are saved by God's grace and sanctified by God's grace, and that good works don't win us God's favor, because it is already ours thru Christ. Nor do they make us holy, because our most righteous acts are like filthy rags compared to God's holiness. We are only holy because God has declared us holy in Christ.

Yet, Titus makes more of good works than any other New Testament epistle.

- 1:16, the lost are worthless for any good deed
- 2:7, Titus himself is to be an example to all the people of good deeds
- 2:14 says we were redeemed for good deeds
- 3:1, Christians are to be ready to do good deeds
- 3:3, Christians are to be careful to do good deeds
- 3:14, Christians are to be learn to engage in good deeds

Good deeds and living godly in this present age. There appears to be a link, doesn't there? We'll explore it in the lessons to come.

Titus 1:1-4 - The Authority of a Godly Life

Let's start by looking at its addressee, Titus. Calls him in v4, "true child, common faith..." Most likely, Titus came to Christ thru Paul. He isn't mentioned in the book of Acts, but Titus traveled with Paul a lot. We are first introduced to him in Galatians 2:1-3, roughly 15-20 years before this letter.

Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

When Paul began taking the gospel to Gentiles, the young, all-Jewish church was kind of taken aback. They had been taught to despise the gentiles, to view them as dogs or worse. All of a sudden, they are embracing the Jewish Messiah as their own, in huge numbers. Like Jews who come to Jesus as Messiah, gentiles are receiving the Holy Spirit. Could it be that God was now going to accept them?

Some thought so – Paul and Barnabus among foremost among them. Others thought not – and they insisted that only by keeping the Law of Moses in addition to accepting Jesus as Messiah could a gentile be saved. This was a huge problem, and it would take the entire leadership of the church to figure it out. So, they agreed to meet at a council of the church in Jerusalem.

The full story is in Acts 15. Galatians 2 is the condensed version of the story. When Paul and Barnabus went to Jerusalem to discuss his ministry to the Gentiles, who did they take as an example of the fruit of their ministry? The young gentile convert, Titus. What does that tell you about Titus? He must have been a pretty good example, don't you think? With so important an issue, would Paul have taken someone who would jeopardize the issue?

Titus was Paul's troubleshooter, his enforcer. When I think of Titus, I picture a marine. Tough. Strong. Jarhead haircut. Tattoo that says "The difficult we do at once. The impossible takes a little longer." A good man to have in a tight spot.

When Paul needed to send someone to the one church that gave him the most heartache, the church that struggled most with gross immorality, that ridiculed Paul's authority, that abused doctrine, the poster church for dysfunctional relationships, the church at Corinth, who did he send to straighten them out? Titus.

Titus was a good man in a tight spot, and now, years later, Paul has sent Titus to another one: Crete. The churches on Crete most likely got their start in Acts 2:11. When the Holy Spirit first came, there were some Cretans in the crowd that witnessed it. Our best guess is that after a time these new believers headed for home, taking the gospel with them.

Now, Crete is not a small island. It sits in the Mediterranean Sea, just southeast of Greece. It is narrow, between 7 and 35 miles wide, but it is 160 miles long (roughly the distance from Chattanooga to Birmingham)! The churches were spread over a lot of territory, most likely in the port cities. They were immature and they needed help, which is why Paul and Titus were there in the first place. But the work wasn't finished when it was time for Paul to move on, so he left Titus there, v5: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains..."

Supervising a bunch of immature Christians in new churches on a big island is no small task, especially when the Cretans themselves are not disposed to be easily taught. Look at Titus 1:12: "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'" How's that for cultural sensitivity? Actually, Paul is quoting a 6th century BC Cretan poet, Epimenides. But you'll notice Paul isn't arguing with him!

Cretan culture was vulgar, and blatantly evil. Titus has a tough job ahead of him. And because of that, even "the Enforcer" could use a little help. Where would Titus draw his authority and strength for such a tough assignment? We see the answer as Paul opens the letter to Titus. He is giving his friend more than a mere greeting. He takes some time to establish his own credentials as an apostle in order to give Titus some leverage, some additional authority, in dealing with the Cretans.

¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, ²in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, ³but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, ⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Pastoring even the toughest church is not a matter of banging heads together (although there are times that's exactly what you want to do). For all I know, Titus "the Enforcer" may have looked more like Barney Fife than Arnold Schwarzenegger. Titus' authority, his toughness, his ability to take on difficult spiritual issues was not rooted in physical toughness. His authority didn't derive from his physical muscle, but from the source of his spiritual muscle. I think that source is seen clearly in these first four verses.

Of course, this is a greeting from Paul to Titus, but there are truths here for every believer. I want to show you three:

Chosen of God, v1. "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." What does it mean that God chose you?

- 1 John 4:10: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
- 1 John 4:19: "We love, because He first loved us."

It is God who initiated this relationship between himself and man – not us. John 3:16 doesn't say "for we so loved God that we accepted his son..." but "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

If you chose God, what security would you have? We are fickle, wishy-washy, of two minds, indecisive. We agonize over the simplest decisions, choose the easy way most of the time, the wrong way often. Our choices, w/o God's supernatural care, are not to be trusted. So when the Bible says you were chosen by him, don't blow past that truth too fast.

It means you are of infinite value to God. It means you occupy a high, high position in Christ. It means you can never lose your salvation. It means you are kept in his love, and in his power. You are chosen by God, and when God says something, he means it! Which is the second point.

Faithfulness of God, v2. "in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago." Who lies? Long list – easier to count up who doesn't lie. Let's see, there's God...

Ps. 116:11 says "All men are liars." Gods of myth and pagan legend no less so. In fact, it is the deceitfulness of the gods of Greek and Roman myth that usually move the plots along. But the one true God *cannot* lie, it is not within the scope of possibility for him to do so.

- Num. 23:19: "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"
- 2 Tim 2:13: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."
- Heb. 6:18: "it is impossible for God to lie"

The God who cannot lie has promised eternal life in Christ. That is why our hope in Christ is not wishful thinking, but an anchor for the soul.

But in this fallen world, God's faithfulness is not always on our timetable. The OT saints heard the promises of a Messiah, but the promise wasn't fulfilled until the "proper time," v3. God's faithfulness is not always on our timetable, but it is always at the right time. It may seem far away, but he will do what he has promised. Couple of weeks ago I spent some time with a man, not in this church, heart broken, spirit crushed – by his pastor, his church. Knows in his heart God's care, still waiting for externals to fall into place.

Entrusted by God, v3. "But at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior." Paul was entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel in pretty spectacular fashion. Lights and voices from heaven, supernatural blindness, visions and the like.

My own story isn't nearly so exciting. Sitting in my apartment my 2nd month into my 1st year of college, I read a booklet that told me that God loved me and had a wonderful plan for my life. At the end there was a prayer written out, a prayer that invited Jesus to come into my heart and be my Lord and my Savior. I prayed that prayer by reading it out, verbatim. Pretty dull, right?

And yet, I am equally entrusted by God with the proclamation of the gospel. 2 Cor. 5:18-20 says that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation, and that we are therefore ambassadors for Christ. God has entrusted each of us with his Word and his gospel. Last week Phil Downer talked about the Great Commission of Jesus, Mt. 28:19-20, to "make disciples." And as we make disciples what are we to do? Baptize them, v19, and in v20, teach them all that Jesus commanded. 2 Tim. 2:2, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Paul, and Titus, and you, and I, have all been *chosen* by the *faithful God* who cannot lie, and *entrusted* with his word. Knowing that is what made Titus "the Enforcer." Knowing that is what enable him to handle the tough problems, to operate under pressure, amidst critics and impossible situations. He was tough because he understood it wasn't about him, it was about God. He understood who he was in Christ, and who God was in him.

How about you? Do you understand that? My prayer is that through this study in Titus, you will know it in your hearts, and it will become the habit of your lives.

Titus 1:5-9: Godly Leadership in the Church

It was the right hook that got him. Pastor Waite might have stood in front of the Communion table trading punches with head deacon Ray Bryson all morning had not Ray's fist caught him on the chin two minutes into the fight. Waite went down for the count at the altar where most members of the church had first declared their commitment to Christ.

Two of his front teeth were so loose that he would have trouble with corn on the cob for the next three summers. Ray Bryson's hand was broken in two places. Some of the townspeople dubbed him Sugar Ray after that Sunday, but never to his face.

Pastor Waite had settled into the parsonage just a few months earlier, and the new pastor started his pulpit ministry with a series of sermons on "Submitting to Pastoral Care and Leadership." He also began a visitation program, calling on the church members in their homes. The members hospitably scheduled their pastor for a luncheon, a dinner, or afternoon tea.

Everyone asked the same question: "Pastor, is there anything you need?" And each time Pastor Waite made the same request. "Since I'm new to the flock," he would say, "anything that you could tell me about the people in the church would be of enormous help. I just don't know enough about everyone."

The people of the church did not disappoint him. Within a few months, Pastor Waite was privy to the church's best-kept secrets. He carried an appointment book and made notes, capturing each rich detail. It wasn't long before he had to buy a larger appointment book and was beginning to exert unusual control over the congregation.

Pastor's talent for getting his own way was as large as his appointment book. One of his pastoral conferences could reduce the most disagreeable church member to sulking silence.

Pretty soon most of the folks began to feel like they couldn't trust any of their friends from the church.

The deacon board, which had been the target of much of pastor's pressure, wanted to call for his ouster but pastor was able to prevent a meeting of the church to consider the question by simply refusing to announce the meeting.

The church divided into two hostile camps. Those who wanted the pastor gone began sitting on the left side of the church. His supporters sat on the right. The deacons showed their solidarity by pressing together in the front pew.

That Sunday, pastor clipped on his lapel mike to make the announcements. As he stepped in front of the Communion table with its ornately carved command: "This Do in Remembrance of Me," Ray Bryson got up and walked over to the pastor. The veins in Ray's neck were showing as the two men hissed under their breath at each other.

After a minute, Ray turned to go to his seat, but his feet were tangled in the microphone cord and he fell down. There was an audible gasp from the congregation. Pastor Waite delayed for one brief moment before reaching to help him up, long enough to convince those on the left that their pastor had pushed Ray. Ray must have thought so too, because he bounced to his feet and hit the pastor square in the nose with his fist. The lapel mike registered the impact.

In an instant a majority of the congregation converged on the Communion table, punching or shoving. The melee soon spilled over to an open space beside the organ. Two tenors and a baritone jumped over the wooden railing of the choir loft and began exchanging punches with members from both sides of the aisle.

Ray Bryson's right hook finally took the pastor down. The fight ended when the police arrived. They restored order, took down names for their report, and recommended that some of the men seek medical attention. Several pairs of knitting needles were confiscated. (Chuck Colson, The Body, Chapter 3, "The Right Fist of Fellowship.")

You know the most bizarre thing about that story? It's true. Or maybe it's not so bizarre. In how many churches does leadership come down to a slugfest of who has the most popular support, loudest voice, strongest will?

There is a crisis of leadership in the evangelical church. It is a crisis of leadership when churches accept the world's standards, settle for "comfortable" religion, worshipping a mush God who makes no demands on us. It is a crisis of leadership when churches maintain an appearance of orthodoxy that covers a cesspool of petty sin.

Some Christians are dealing with this crisis by dropping out of organized churches altogether. On April 29, 2001, the New York Times ran an article titled "Search for the Right Church Ends at Home," the Times wrote:

A growing number of Christians across the country are choosing a do-it-yourself worship experience in what they call a "house church." House churches have recently multiplied as more and more disillusioned churchgoers find one another over the Internet...Some are rebelling against the contemporary culture of the megachurch, in which even midsized churches have adopted marketing campaigns, multimedia Bible studies and Sunday services as choreographed as Broadway musicals.

Others say they have been alienated by pastors who hoard power. The major theme of interviews w/home church participants across the country was that they had quit churches with overly authoritarian clergy or elders and were seeking more participatory forms of worship.

Herb Drake, who runs a house church Web site from Northern California, said: "Normally a house church does not allow authority figures to rise. When they rise, bad things can happen, like the Jonestown thing, or Waco."

House churches are nothing new. The early church began in homes – every church in the NT was a house church. But there is one significant difference between NT house churches and the ones the Times describes – leadership.

Does a church, house or otherwise, have a choice to prevent "authority figures?" Does having a leader or group of leaders necessarily lead to Jonestown or Waco, or are modern-day home churches throwing the elders out with the bathwater?

And what about non-home churches? Are we left to slug it out in front of the communion table, following guidelines that are closer to the Harvard Business School than they are to Scripture? How should a church's leadership function? Does it matter? This morning as we continue our studies in Titus we are going to talk about God's design for leadership in the church, Titus 1:5-9:

"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

V5, "for this reason..." This is why Titus was left in Crete, "appoint elders in every city..." where there were believers. Titus had responsibility for all the churches on the whole island, and there was one task above all with Paul instructed him to finish – appoint elders in each city.

We aren't talking about buildings with baptisteries and organs and all that. We are just talking about small groups of people, just handfuls really, who met in someone's home – a house church. All of these house churches together would comprise the church in a given city. Each individual group wasn't the church in and of itself, but part of the larger whole. And Paul says to Titus: "Appoint elders in every city." The elders of the church in a given city were responsible

for all of the individual house churches. Each elder most likely led one or more of the individual groups. Godly leadership in the church, as defined by Scripture, begins & ends w/ office of elder.

The New Testament uses three words to describe the office of elder: The first word, *presbuteros*, translated "elder" in v5, describes *what he is*. It means quite simply, one who is aged or mature. The reference is not so much to *chronological* maturity as to *spiritual* maturity. An elder of the church is to be a spiritually mature man, and must meet the *spiritual* qualifications for the office that follow in v6-9 (more about those in a moment).

The second word used in the New Testament is *episkopos*, translated as "overseer" in v7, also can be translated "bishop." This word describes *what he does*. An *episkopos* is a manager, one who oversees something or someone. The elders thus oversee the church, managing and leading it as God directs. The fact that both these terms are used here in Titus shows they are interchangeable – both are used to describe the man and the office.

Elders are to be spiritually mature men who oversee the church and its people. The third term which is sometimes used of elders describes *how* the elder practices his oversight. That word is *poimen*, usually translated "shepherd" or "pastor." The elder is to act as a shepherd, one who leads a flock.

Peter uses all 3 terms when he talks about elders, 1 Peter 5:1-2: "Therefore, I exhort the elders (*presbuteros*) among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd (*poimaino*) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight (*episkopeo*) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness."

Peter says, "You elders – you spiritually mature men - oversee the ministries and work of the church – guiding, protecting, leading the people – as shepherds – in a tender and loving way.

That is the job of an elder. What do we learn about godly leadership in the church from Titus? I can give it to you in one sentence: Elders are to share the leadership of the church as spiritually mature men, exhorting the faithful and correcting the faithless. (Repeat) Take these 3 points:

1. Elders are to Share the Leadership of the Church...

The only form of church gov't found in the NT is shared leadership at the local level by a team of men called "elders" and "overseers." In fact, elder/overseer almost always appears in the plural form.

- "Elder" or "overseer" only appears in the singular when discussing a specific individual who is an elder (1 Tim. 5:19; 1 Peter 5:1) or here in Titus and in 1 Tim 3, the two passages that deal with the qualifications of an elder.
- Otherwise, elders and overseers are always referred to in the plural sense, while their respective churches are referred to in the singular sense: i.e. "the elders (plural) of the church (singular)" (James 5:14)

The only form of church government found in the NT was a team of men sharing leadership. You might ask, "What about Paul? Or Timothy, or Titus? Didn't they serve as individual pastors?" Probably, but only for short-term assignments, until specific objectives were reached.

- Paul's pattern, when a church was planted, was to stay and teach until a basic level of maturity was evident. Then he would appoint elders and move on (Acts 14:23).
- Both Titus and Timothy had short term projects to fulfill. In 1 Tim 1:3, Paul tells Timothy: "remain on at Ephesus in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines." Titus v5, "appoint elders in every city"

Paul, Timothy, and Titus had apostolic authority, and they used it to put elders in place, then moved along.

That's how it was always supposed to be. So how did we ever get to where elder gov't is the exception rather than the rule? The church operated under elders the first few decades of life. But by the end of the 1st century, things were already changing. The apostles were dying out – John, the last of them, died around 95AD – and the church missed their leadership. People were confused by new and false teachings. And persecution was beginning to heat up. In response, the churches began to elevate one man as bishop (overseer) of an entire city's churches. May have seemed like a logical solution, but in fact it was a serious mistake.

Pretty soon, individual churches were elevating one man to lead, so that by the 3rd or 4th century, churches were largely run by the hierarchical model I described earlier, with church leadership a one-man show. And that remained the case until the Reformation. The movement that recovered Biblical authority also recovered biblical church leadership.

God commanded that the leadership of the church be shared. Why? Two reasons, first, consistency. Shared leadership is consistent with:

- Church as a "kingdom of priests," as Peter describes in 1 Peter 2:5, 9. We don't need a priest to represent us before God. All have equal access, all have the same Mediator.
- Church as a body, with all parts equally supplying what it needs (1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4).
- Church as a humble-servant community. Matthew 20:25-28, "But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus chose the 12, not the 1. Shared leadership is consistent with God's design for the church. Second reason, effectiveness. Shared leadership is more effective than singular, because:

- Balances weakness. Eph. 4:16 says we are one body, all parts needed to work. I have strengths that balance other elder's weaknesses, and vice versa.

- Lightens the load – Eccl. 4:9-10, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up."
- Provides accountability – Proverbs 27:17 - Iron sharpens iron. Too many men fall when they are left out there at the front all by themselves.

You might be thinking, "Does it matter if we call them elders or deacons or trustees as long as they lead the church the right way?" Yes, it does. As Christians we should prefer God's terms to ours. Scripture is clear that elders and deacons are two different things. The one is to care for overall leadership and spiritual needs, the other, day to day physical needs. To put deacons in the elder's place because of church tradition or culture is to diminish the importance of Scripture.

The leadership of a church is felt at every level. Where a church struggles with unity, with purity, with watered-down doctrine, go back and see what the leadership looks like. The spiritual well-being of a church begins there. If the church is run according to the biblical model, with elders leading from lives that are lived in conformity to the Word of God, working closely together, praying together, building one another up, loving one another, then that church will model that spirit of love and cooperation and unity.

And if what a church *says* matches what it *is*, it will have a dynamic impact not only in the church, but throughout the whole community as well. Why settle for something less than God's best? No individual, no matter how wise, no matter how charismatic his leadership, can match God's design for shared leadership in the church.

1. ...As Spiritually Mature Men...

Both Titus and 1 Timothy 3 address the qualifications of the office. The qualifications in these two letters differs slightly. The following is a brief summary of each of the qualifications in Titus:

Qualifications for Elders from Titus 1:5-9

- *Above reproach.* If an accusation were brought against him, there would be no evidence to convict. This is the general qualification, the rest are what it means to be "above reproach."
- *Husband of one wife.* Literally, "one-woman man." An elder must be a loyal husband living in a pure marriage relationship. This does not preclude a single man from serving, nor does it refer to divorce.
- *Having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.* An elder must be a spiritual leader in the home as well as the church. His children must be under control, submitting to his leadership.
- *Above reproach as God's steward.* The elder is to so manage the resources and ministries of the church that no accusation could be brought against him.
- *Not self-willed.* The elder is more interested in service than in pleasing himself. He seeks other's good first.
- *Not quick-tempered.* The elder must not be prone to anger.

- *Not addicted to wine.* An elder must be free from any abuse or addiction that would control his life or offend a weaker brother.
- *Not pugnacious.* Literally, "no striker." He must not be physically or verbally abusive to anyone.
- *Not fond of sordid gain.* The elder must not be preoccupied with personal gain. He must be an honest man, handling finances well.
- *Hospitable.* The elder's home is open, sharing with others to meet needs.
- *Loving what is good.* He desires the best in every relationship.
- *Sensible.* Literally "of sound mind." See *self-controlled* below.
- *Just.* He treats all with equity, giving what is right and fair.
- *Devout.* Literally, "holy." An elder performs his duty toward God, as one serving him.
- *Self-controlled.* The elder is to be Spirit-controlled, not self-indulgent. He is not to be given to excess in any area of life. The elder lives a disciplined life.
- *Holding fast the faithful word...able to exhort...and to refute.* He is able to communicate the Word of God. He knows his Scripture and uses it to instruct, exhort, and refute as needed.

What these qualifications show in sum is that elders are to be spiritually mature. These qualifications are especially directed toward those who lead others, who care for others, who are responsible for the spiritual well-being of a group of people.

First and foremost, elders are to be godly men, "above reproach," both here in v6 and in the similar list in 1 Tim. 3:1-7. He is to be an example to others, one who models Christ in his life. This is the general qualification for an elder, and all the others that follow flow out of this.

To be "above reproach" does not mean to be a paragon of sinless perfection – "There is none that does good." The Greek here carries the idea that there is no charge one could bring against an elder. That if a charge was brought, it wouldn't stick because there would be no evidence against him. This is talking about spiritual maturity, about serious concern for a godly life. Not successful business leaders, not pillars in the community, not movers and shakers – spiritually mature men.

And when I say men, I mean *men*. What about spiritually mature women? Can't women serve as elders? It's the 21st century, and this is in an egalitarian society. Are you telling me that formal leadership of the church is not open to women? Well, yes. Some of you here today may struggle with this, but don't hear me – hear God's word. This isn't my opinion, it is his.

- Man and woman are fully, absolutely, perfectly equal. Each was created bearing God's image (Gen. 1:27).
- Women had a significant place in Jesus' earthly ministry: Jesus' disciples included a number of women. Mary and Martha were close friends, and of course it was the women who came to prepare his body for burial the morning of the 3rd day (Jn 20:1-18).
- Women had an important role in the early church from the very beginning. The Philippian church met in the home of Lydia, who was a successful business woman. When Paul closes the letter to the Romans, 11 of 28 people named in c16 are women, showing their prominence in the Roman church.

But full equality of design doesn't mean that God intended men and women to take precisely the same roles. He designed the family to be the loving, self-sacrificing building block of society, but men and women have different roles in the family. The husband's basic role is the leader and provider, the wife's is the follower and nurturer.

- Husbands are repeatedly commanded to love their wives to prevent harsh, domineering rule, and to provide for the family's needs. (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7)
- Wives are repeatedly commanded to submit to their husbands to prevent usurping their authority, and to care for the home. (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1)

We'll see more about roles when we get to Titus chapter 2. Just as men and women have different roles in the family, so too do they have different roles in the church. So Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." That doesn't mean that a woman can't even speak in church. The context in 1 Timothy is about roles and leadership in the church. His next topic in chapter 3 is the qualifications of elders.

Paul's command regarding women doesn't mean a woman can't lead in worship thru song, thru prayer, thru reading Scripture. It does preclude women from pulpit ministry, and from authority in the church.

But what about Galatians 3:28? "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Doesn't that obliterate the cultural stereotypes of the 1st century and allow a woman the same roles as a man? No – Gal. 3:28 is talking about the new creation, about our salvation. God saves all alike – there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave or free, man or woman.

And that is why the formal leadership in the church is to be made up of spiritually mature men. The world can only see externals. It can't understand internal, intrinsic worth of roles where all believers are to give preference to one another, and the leaders are to be servants, giving themselves sacrificially for the people. To insist that men and women share or trade roles just because our fallen world thinks it should is to trade God's best for something less. Elders share the leadership of the church as spiritually mature men. Finally,

1. ...Exhorting the Faithful and Correcting the Faithless.

The final qualification is also the chief task of an elder. Of all the tasks necessary to lead the church, Paul picks out one, v9 "Holding fast the faithful word..." Keeping sound doctrine by teaching God's Word.

He could have said something about administration, or counseling, or visiting the sick, but he didn't. There is no more important part of an elder's job than to be a man who knows Scripture and actively teaches Scripture, whether in a formal setting or an informal setting, in a classroom, sanctuary, home, or one on one in discipleship.

And Paul illustrates "holding fast the faithful word" with two examples, one positive – "exhorting in sound doctrine" and one negative – "refuting those who contradict." That represents the gamut of an elder's teaching responsibility. He is to exhort, to encourage the faithful in sound doctrine, and he is to refute, to correct, those who contradict sound doctrine.

Both are vital, because according to v10, "there are many rebellious men..."

Titus 1:10-16: Men Who Must Be Silenced

The major theme of Titus is living a godly life in a godless world, living a life that lines up with our salvation in Christ. In this study we are going to confront one of the most difficult issues, the purity of the church, and the need for the godly leadership in the church to take that purity seriously enough to confront those who would challenge it. Let me set the context of this morning's study for you.

The Context: Titus 1:5-9. We saw last week that Paul and Titus had gone to Crete together to help the fledgling churches there, but when it came time for Paul to leave, the work wasn't done. So Paul left Titus there, as he says in 1:5, "to set in order" what remained. The biggest task, the most important piece of business left undone, was the appointment of elders in every city that had a church. And because of the importance of the office of an elder, Paul gave Titus a laundry list of essential characteristics that potential elders were to meet.

The qualifications in v6-9 boil down to this: elders are to be spiritually mature men. Elders are not chosen because they have the biggest business, the most friends, or even because they can really get things done. The office of elder is open only to spiritually mature men, to those who are serious about and committed to living a godly life, summed up in the phrase "above reproach" in v6, fleshed out in the remaining qualifications.

Second, we saw that elders are to share the leadership of the church. No elder is supposed to be a one man show. Instead, God designed leadership in the church to be shared by a group of spiritually mature men who use their gifts and abilities together to meet the spiritual needs of the people. Not one man at the top of a hierarchy, making sure everything goes his way. Not a deacon board that uses pressure and politics to get votes, and not the congregation dictating by majority vote. Godly men, working together, for the benefit of the people.

Finally, and we just touched on this last time, elders are to exhort the faithful and correct the faithless, v9: "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

This is the final qualification of an elder, but it is also his chief task. The chief task of an elder is not to raise money, not to attract new members, not to run meetings. It is to ***hold fast the faithful word***. The word is translated elsewhere as "devoted to" something, the idea being of clinging to something. Picture yourself fallen overboard in the middle of the Pacific, and you can't swim, and someone throws you a life preserver. How devoted to that life preserver are you going to be? That's the emphasis here. An elder is to hold on to the word of God, clinging to it for dear life. He lives it out, and he teaches it, formally or informally, to one or to many.

The faithful elder "exhorts in sound doctrine." That is, he encourages. The word translated "exhort" in v9 is *parakaleo* – do you recognize it? It is the same root word that is given as a title of the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter." It means to come alongside of someone for the purpose of strengthening them. When an elder exhorts in sound doctrine, he is coming alongside someone, comforting them, encouraging them, strengthening them in the Scripture.

But that is not all. The faithful elder will also "refute those who contradict." To refute means to correct someone, but it means more than that. The same word is translated variously as to convict of sin (Jn 16:8), to rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20), to reprimand (Lk 3:19), and to expose evil (Eph 5.11). When an elder is aware of a person or a situation that needs to be addressed – he addresses it. He doesn't avoid the confrontation. And he doesn't address it out of personal opinion, but from the Word of God.

And that is where Titus found himself, because there was real trouble in the church at Crete, trouble that shook it to its very roots. If Titus 1:5-9 shows what godly leadership in the church looks like, v10-16 shows why godly leadership is needed. There are 3 main thoughts here, the men described, v10-12, the reaction prescribed, v13-14, and their condition evaluated, v15-16. Listen as I read v10-16...

The Men Described: 1:10-12. Paul says that the reason godly leadership is needed in the church is because there are men in it who must be silenced, who are upsetting the church, teaching false doctrine. That isn't hard to imagine, is it? Can you imagine what Paul would say about our own culture? He uses 3 terms to describe these particular men in v10, none of them nice:

1. **Rebellious** – lit. "uncontrolled," men who refuse to put themselves under authority
2. **Empty talkers** – KJV, "vain talkers," talk that accomplishes nothing. Paul says their talk is empty, but it is nonetheless deadly because they use it to deceive the church...
3. **Deceivers** – lit. "mind-deceivers," their purpose is to trick, confuse, and deceive minds.
4. V11, These rebellious, empty talking deceivers were teaching things they should not teach. We get a few hints about their teaching from v14, "Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth." 3:9, "foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law (that are) unprofitable and worthless."

False teaching is deadly to the church. It was a huge problem in the early church, before God's Word was completed, when the church was dependent on men who claimed to speak with authority. Look at 1 Tim. 1:4-7: "*nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.⁵ But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.⁶ For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,⁷ wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.*"

1 Tim 6:3-5: "*If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant*

friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."

Used to use an acronym to describe someone who talked big, but talk was all they did: "ATNA" "all talk, no action." That is exactly who Paul is describing, only the context is the church, not business. "Talk is cheap," but not in this context! The empty talkers are not to be left alone, they are to be confronted with the truth and silenced! These are blowhards who want the stage, who confuse religious speculation with a heart for God, who know that there will always be people willing to pay for stuff that titillates the ear and doesn't challenge the lifestyle. Their talk is their action, but the fact that all they do is talk doesn't mean they aren't a threat.

In Titus' day, these rebellious, empty-talking deceivers upset the faith of the church by distorting the gospel. We know from other New Testament epistles that these false teachers were Jews who had embraced Jesus as Messiah, but couldn't let go of Moses. They rejected Paul's teaching of salvation by grace through faith and said instead that the only way Gentiles could be saved was if they kept the OT Law of Moses. In other words, they taught that Jesus didn't save you by his death on the cross, you saved yourself by your own ability to keep the law.

I think anything that distracts from the main message of God's love and provision for our sin would fit this description. Stuff that flatters our intellectual vanity without touching the core issue of our sin and our need for God. I think of the "Bible code" stuff of a couple of years ago, claims that someone discovered a mysterious set of numeric codes in the Bible that predicted the future. And Paul says in v11 that those who teach such stuff "must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain."

Note, Paul says they are upsetting *families*. Think about that – Why families, not individuals? There are a couple of possible explanations. It could be that what these adversaries were teaching was especially geared against the family. That is possible, and would explain why Paul goes to great lengths in chapter 2 to talk about roles within the home.

But I think there is a more likely interpretation. Think of this – where did the early church meet? In homes. Who would be the core of the church that met in a given home? The family that lived in that house. These false teachers were bringing their worthless talk into the very homes that the church met in, upsetting the families there. "Upsetting" also translated "overturned" in Jn 2:15, where Jesus literally kicked over the tables of the priests who were selling stuff in the Temple. It means to overturn, to destroy. They were overturning the faith of these families, taking the church captive one cell at a time.

Which is what you'd expect from a wolf in sheep's clothing. That is exactly what someone who is intentionally trying to destroy the church would do. The early church knew them well.

- 2 Cor 11:26, "*I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren." Paul equated the dangers of these false brethren with dangers in the sea, the wilderness, etc.

- Jude 3-4, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
- 2 Pet 2:1, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."

We aren't talking about some casual disagreement about a minor point of interpretation. This isn't about a pre-millennial rapture or whether we should dunk or sprinkle. We are talking about people who associate with the Body of Christ specifically to pervert God's truth and confuse and corrupt his people.

My friends, we face the same danger today from people who are doing their best to tear the faith apart, destroy its influence. And a lot of it is coming from some who identify with the church and claim to be Christians.

No better example than the decision just last week of the Presbyterian Church, USA, one of the largest protestant denominations in the country, to vote in favor of ordaining homosexual clergy. At the denomination's general assembly last week, by a 317-208 vote, delegates voted to delete a requirement that ordained church officers *"live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness."* They also deleted an earlier ban on practicing homosexuality. In other words, anything goes. *"The proposal must be approved by a majority of the church's 173 presbyteries, but that's not unlikely—the presbyteries recently voted against banning same-sex unions."*

Those voting to delete the requirement frequently quoted this passage in the Presbyterians' constitution: *"God alone is Lord of the conscience. ... Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment in ... religion as universal and unalienable."* In other words, while Paul in 2 Cor. 10:5 said "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," the PC USA has declared the Word of God must be taken captive to the individual's conscience.

But that's only part of the story. Lost in the headlines over gay clergy was another action that speaks volumes. The delegates also passed a resolution on the uniqueness of Jesus: ***"Although we do not know the limits of God's grace and pray for the salvation of those who may come to know Christ, for us the assurance of salvation is found only in confessing Christ and trusting Him alone."*** *It sounds good at first, but what it really says is Jesus may not be the only way to salvation, but he's the only way we are sure of.*

One delegate summed up the measure this way: *"Different religions taste, smell and look different, but they are all authentic fruits. If you look more deeply, one can see the sunshine, rain and minerals. Only their manifestations are different. ... All religions have similarities and differences, but the real difference only exists in their emphasis."*

You know what that is? Empty talk, calculated to deceive, from people who rebel against the authority of God's Word. You might ask, did these people condemn anything as being evil? As a matter of fact, yes. *"The delegates made a special effort to condemn the Left Behind novels as 'based upon an interpretation of the Bible which is not in accord with our Reformed understanding of Covenant Theology.'* Good to know they are concerned with upholding traditional theology, isn't it? (from CT.com, June 18, PCUSA Opens Door to Gay Ordination and Other Ways to Salvation).

But these things aren't just differences of opinion. They are reflections of unbelief, of rebellious people who will not be under the authority of God's word, people who want to deceive the church in order to destroy it.

In these last days our world has elevated tolerance and its partner, relative truth, to the highest good, the supreme standard. In reality they are only the ultimate false values presented by our culture, masking our descent via what some have called "gradual brimstone." And what a tragedy that in some cases the very people who claim Christ are at the forefront, leading the charge to the pit.

Sometimes the Word of God has to bring us up short. My kids tend to evaluate my sermons by how funny they are – "Not enough jokes today, Dad!" I understand that – we all enjoy a good laugh, like to be entertained. But sometimes we need more than evangelical slapstick, some messages just don't lend themselves to humor. Paul's word to us today is one of those.

About the worst thing you can be called these days is "judgmental." How dare you claim to have absolute truth! Who are you to tell me what is true and what isn't! But that is just what Paul says an elder is to do. Did you wonder why our Scripture reading for the morning was out of Ezekiel 2 and 3? Listen to God's call to Ezekiel:

⁴ *"I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.'* ⁵ *"As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.* ⁶ *"And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house.* ⁷ *"But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious." Ezekiel 2:4-7*

The elder is God's prophet to the church. The church needs godly men who can exhort and refute because of the "lostness" of our world, and because that "lostness" will infect the church. In fact, the church at Crete was so infected that you can't tell if these false teachers are Christians or not. He says in v13 to reprove them so they are sound in the faith – clearly from within the church. But he also says in v16 that while they profess God they deny him by their deeds, and are detestable, disobedient, worthless – sounds like they are lost. If they are Christians at all, they are so corrupted it is impossible to tell. I think v16 indicates they have gone so far as to prove they are not Christians.

The elder is God's protector of the church. He is to speak against false teachers, and he is to speak for their victims. Whole families are at stake. Elders must stand up as prophets among the people, who speak God's Word, exhorting in sound doctrine and refuting those who contradict, and they must stand as protectors of the flock, fighting off the wolves who would come in to destroy them.

And sometimes its okay to be blunt, to tell it just like it is. Paul quotes a Cretan poet of the 6th century BC, Epimenides, v12-13a (read). Can you imagine that being said about you in church? By the pastor? "Hey! Thanks for having me to your church this morning, you bunch of big liars, dirty dogs, and lazy pigs!"

Paul was obviously not concerned with his own popularity, was he? Nor with the feelings of the folks he was dealing with, either. What does that say about the American church's emphasis on "seeker sensitive" worship, where everything in church is geared toward the non-Christian, avoiding anything that might give offense?

The Reaction Prescribed: 1:13-14. What is the reaction of godly leadership to false teachers in the church? Paul says in v13, "For this cause...pray for mutual understanding, for love and dialogue to find common ground..." No! "Reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith..." The reaction is to be quick, and it is to be strong. First, reprove them. Same word translated "refute" in v9: rebuke, reprimand, expose their evil. Second, do it severely, abruptly, lit. "cut them off." Paul isn't treading lightly here – when the church is being taken captive, the error is to be cut out, and cut out now!

Paul was really serious about this. He is not being "nice" here. Names in v10, silenced in v11 = shut up, criticism in v12, reprove severely in v13, description in v16. Serious stuff, calls for severity, not understanding.

Sometimes that false teaching comes from outside the church entirely. Lots of non-Christians have influence within church. How many of you listen to Rush Limbaugh? Watch Oprah or any of the other dozen just like her? Larry King, Tom Brokaw, the O'Reilly Factor? When in error, godly leadership is to refute.

What about when false teaching comes from the church itself? It is the elder's responsibility to speak against it and those who spread it. When these things come from within our own congregation, it calls for church discipline. Church discipline protects purity, unity, and doctrine of the church. Mt 18:15-20 spells out how the Body of Christ is to deal with intentional, repeated, unrepentant sin (read).

Does it seem harsh? It's not. In fact, church discipline exists in the first place so that those who have erred can be restored to a sound faith, v13, literally restored to a healthy faith. Church discipline benefits the church and those in it. 3 results of Church discipline:

1. maintains the purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:6)
2. deters sin in the church (1 Tim. 5:20), and
3. calls sinning believers to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Gal. 6:1).

Look at Scriptures referenced on outline this week. How do you react when you hear of a believer who has fallen into a lifestyle of sin? Repetitive, consistent, ongoing evil? Do you shrug, turn away, avoid them? Or do you say, that's okay, God understands, don't worry about it? Or do you reach out in love that is willing to endure some conflict and call them to repentance? If we are serious about the authority of Scripture, we will elevate it above tolerance, getting along. An elder who is devoted to the faithful word not only encourages the faithful, but corrects, refutes, rebukes the faithless. To do otherwise is not to be devoted to it at all.

Their Condition Evaluated: 1:15-16. Here is the great distinction between those who follow Christ and those who rebel, who elevate man's commands over God's. (Read) "To the pure, all things are pure..." The word translated "pure" is the same word used to describe those who have been washed clean by Jesus Christ. The pure are those who trust him, who follow him as Lord and Savior. Paul says to you, all things are pure.

He's not saying that if you are a Christian you can sin it up, do whatever you want to do. He's saying that all things God give us, all things not forbidden by God, are okay for you. You are at liberty to enjoy them. 1 Tim 4:4-5, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer."

He's also talking about a basic view of life. The Christian can see the beauty, the joy, the worth of living in God's world. But that is not true of the false teacher who so twists God's truth he can't recognize it anymore.

Paul says they are **defiled in their thinking, v15**. They are defiled (polluted) and unbelieving, and to them everything else is defiled, too. Nothing is sanctified, nothing saves, nothing is any good. They are so cynical and world-weary that they hate everything that smacks of orthodoxy. The end result is that both their intellectual capacity (mind) and their moral capacity (conscience) are defiled (polluted).

And they are **defiled in their action, v16**. They profess to know God, deny him by their deeds. Detestable (abominable, disgusting), Disobedient (to God's Word), Worthless for any good deed – they have been tested and found wanting, disapproved. Their good deeds buy them nothing. Even the best things they do, whether it is feeding the hungry and poor, providing shelter for homeless, is worthless in God's eyes because it is from evil motives. They start out defiled, and they end defiled.

All God's people must be ready to take God's word to unbelieving world, and to the church itself. But elders, and you men who aspire to be elders, that is your special responsibility. There is no more powerful testimony to God's truth than a life that mirrors Scripture. As powerful as the word spoken is, **the most powerful sermon preached is the one that needs no words**.

Cretan society had oozed its way into the church. Sad to say, our world oozes in here, too. God's word to us today underscores the importance of the purity of the church. We are Christ's Body, so Paul is ferocious in its defense. So should we be.

The Table is also Christ's body, and before we partake of it we need to deal with our sin before God. Paul says in 1 Cor 11:27-29, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly."

My commitment as a pastor is to exhort the faithful, refute the faithless. To hold God's Word up as the standard by which our thoughts and actions are judged – yours and mine. My prayer is that as a church, as the body of Christ, we would share that commitment.

Titus 2:1-5: Things Fitting for Sound Doctrine, Part 1

A few years ago, our pastor in LA was teaching on a Christian home from Eph. 5 and 6. When he came to the question, should a married woman work outside the home, he came down on one end of the argument, and stated from the pulpit that married women should not work outside the home, period. That caused a little bit of a stir.

In fact, it caused a great big stir. It was a very large church, over 10,000, and the pastor was somewhat prominent, and somehow or another – I have no idea how, word got to the LA Times, and on Monday or Tuesday they printed an article detailing the pastor's very strong statement. And as reporters will do, they hunted around for other points of view within the church, and found one. An elder's wife, who worked full time in a parachurch ministry, who was willing to be interviewed and quoted by name.

Well, when that happened it became a good enough story for TV. All of a sudden there were camera crews everywhere, conducting interviews with anybody willing to talk. Now, in a church that size it wasn't hard to find all kind of points of view from people willing to speak on the church's behalf. All kinds of stuff, good and bad, was going out.

Can you imagine what that did for attendance the next Sunday? Not only was there not an empty seat in the house, but when the choir finished singing and filed out, another 150 people filed in behind them to sit in the choir loft. We couldn't wait to hear what we was going to say after all that! Here is my question to you: Was the pastor wrong, or was he right? I'll tell you in a minute.

Let me set the context of our study. We saw in v10-16 that there were men, false teachers, who were infecting the Cretan church, teaching "things they should not teach... upsetting whole families in the process. Said that most likely, Paul meant they were upsetting their faith. However, Christian character and family relationships are always under attack.

"The devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." 1 Pt 5:8. A hungry lion is not a discriminating eater, and neither is Satan. He just wants to eat, and he goes after anybody within reach. Today and next week we'll look at what Paul calls "things fitting for sound doctrine" in 2:1-15. Form single unit of thought, as can be seen by Paul's bookend admonitions to Titus in v1, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" and v15, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority."

That is a single unit of thought, but we can't cover it all today. This morning we are simply going to cover Titus 2:1-5:

But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

In contrast to what the men who must be silenced teach, Titus is to "speak [lit. teach] the things which are fitting for sound doctrine," with emphasis on "sound." "Sound" is mentioned 5 times in Titus. Comes from *hugiaino*, same word we get "hygiene" from. Lit. means *healthy, well-being*. Not just physical health, but spiritual also: "Sound doctrine," 1:9 and here in 2:1, is doctrine that is healthy, good. To be "sound in the faith," 1:13 and 2:2, is to be spiritually healthy. In 2:8, as the spiritual leader in Crete, Titus' manner of speaking must be sound – healthy, reflecting goodness, beyond reproach.

But I want you to notice something very interesting. Paul doesn't tell Titus in 2:1, "speak sound doctrine." Rather he tells him to "speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine," things that are appropriate to, proper for, sound doctrine. What follows in v2-10 is not doctrine, but practical exhortation that is based upon and flows logically from doctrine. The doctrinal foundation is assumed here.

What are the things fitting for sound doctrine? What Paul outlines in these verses is Christian character. Christ-like character that is appropriate to and produced by sound doctrine, but not only that. It is also Christ-like character that proves sound doctrine, that testifies to the trustworthiness of God's Word. **Sound doctrine is the basis for sound character and sound character is proof of sound doctrine.**

Sound doctrine produces sound character. We said last week that elders are to exhort in sound doctrine so that people can be sound in the faith (1:9, 13). Teaching and understanding Christian doctrine, *theology*, is not only a must, it is the foundation on which Christian living is built. But doctrine is not the only thing we are to teach. We need to help apply doctrine in ways that build character that is Christ-like.

Someone has said that character is who you are in the dark, that it is revealed in how you treat someone who can't do you any good, and in how you treat someone who can't fight back.

An article in Good Housekeeping told six clues to a man's character:

1. Watch him drive in heavy traffic.
2. Play tennis, golf, or racquetball with him.
3. Listen to him talk to his family or friends when he doesn't know you're listening.
4. See how he treats waiters and cashiers.
5. Notice what he's willing to spend his money on.

6. Look at his friends. And if you still can't make up your mind, then look at his shoes. A man who keeps his shoes in good repair generally tends to the rest of his life too. (Lois Wyse, Good Housekeeping, April 1985)

All doctrine and no application is unsound teaching. If all we teach is doctrine, we aren't teaching deeply enough. If we don't take foundational truth and build on it, applying it in practical ways, we are only teaching half of what is needed. Paul tells Titus in 2:10 that his intent for believers is that they would "adorn the doctrine of God." That their lives would put Christian truth on display, not in tongue-wagging and finger-shaking, but in godly conduct. We must teach not only doctrine, but help one another understand what conduct flows logically from it.

What are those things? What are the character traits essential to an adult believer?

Things Fitting for...Older Men and Women, v2. The first two groups of believers Paul addresses are older men in v2, older women in v3. In both cases the word "older" comes from root for "elders," but he isn't talking about church officers here, just men and women with some age on them. How much age?

In Philemon 9 Paul calls himself "the aged," (same word translated "older" in Titus). We know Paul was in his 60's when he wrote that. Also, Paul tells the church to support widows financially in 1 Timothy 5, he says in v9 that a widow should be put on the list of church support "if she is not less than sixty years old..."

Although I don't think there is a hard line here, Paul seems to be talking about men and women 60 and up. Which I guess means I have 14 more years of being a young man. And he isn't talking about absolute age, but relative age. Paul doesn't say the "old men" and "old women," but older.

At SMBC, we just don't have that many folks over 60. That doesn't mean that all of us 40- and 50-somethings are off the hook. Neither is he saying that when you hit 60 you become elderly. On the contrary, Scripture is filled with men and women, sometimes of extraordinary age, who accomplish incredible things. Moses was 80 when God called him to lead all Israel. Caleb was 85 when he led his clan against the Anakim in the hill country (Josh. 14:10-15). God never intends for us to retire from spiritual activity.

Personally, I've reached the age where "happy hour" is a nap. Someone has said there are four ages of man: when you believe in Santa Claus, when you don't believe in Santa Claus, when you are Santa Claus, when you look like Santa Claus.

We can learn an awful lot from older men and women. Jeanne Calment died a few years ago at age 122, the oldest living human whose age could be verified. On her 120th birthday, she was asked to describe her vision for the future. "Very brief," she said.

Another woman was asked the benefits of living to the age of 102. She answered, "No peer pressure!"

Finally, John Fetterman, rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, Wisconsin, told of an elderly woman who died. Having never married, she requested no male pallbearers. In her instructions for her memorial service, she wrote, "They wouldn't take me out while I was alive; I don't want them to take me out when I'm dead." (Homiletics (Jan.-Mar./96), quoted in Preaching Resources, Spring 1996, p. 77.)

Our world worships youth, but God's Word says we are to honor the aged:

- Proverbs 16:31, "A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness."
- Leviticus 19:32, "You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the Lord."
- Job 12:12, "Wisdom is with aged men, *With* long life is understanding."

America doesn't do much of a job of honoring its grayheads. In fact, millions and millions of dollars are spent every year just to hide the fact that your head is gray in the first place. Youth is so important to us that maintaining the illusion of youth is a billion dollar industry. But there is nothing sadder than an aged man or woman trying to hang on to the appearance of youth long after its reality is gone.

Older men and women are to be venerated for their age, but not just for their age – also for their character. Paul says an **older person's character should reflect their age**, and goes on to demonstrate how. **Older men, v2**, are to be:

- "Temperate" – lit, abstaining from wine, but meaning clear-headed, self-possessed.
- "Dignified" – seriousness of purpose, worthy of respect
- "Sensible" – self-controlled
- "Sound in faith, in love, in perseverance" – They know their stuff, they are not vindictive, angry, or bitter, and they are steadfast, enduring the trials of life patiently.

In other words, they are to be **honorable in heart, mind, temperament, and in the faith**. This isn't too different from what is expected of an elder of the church, is it? In fact, each of these characteristics, except the last two, are repeated in the qualifications for elders.

Older Women, v3-4a. "Likewise," just as older men are to be worthy of respect and healthy in heart, mind, and character, older women are to be:

- "Reverent in their behavior" – lit. "fitting for holiness," behavior appropriate to sacred, holy life. He defines what reverent behavior is not with two negative examples:
- "not malicious gossips" – Gk. "diabolos," root for our word for evil, "diabolic." Title for Satan 34 times in NT, the father of lies (Jn 8:44). Gossip, spreading stories about others, is no small sin. It is one of Satan's specialties.
- "nor enslaved to much wine" – drunk. Enslaved, held against will. These things are the opposite of reverent behavior. Instead of spreading evil, older women are to be

- "teaching what is good" – Older women are to be teachers. The word Paul uses here is from the root *didaskalos*, which is always translated as teacher in a formal sense. And what they teach is to be good, beautiful, excellent.

Older women are to be godly in word and deed, encouraging the young women. In teaching what is good, older women encourage the young women. Paul uses a rare word for "encourage," which is only used here in the NT, *sophronizo*. Speaks to the idea of training the mind. Older women, you are to train younger women, to help them cultivate godly attitudes that turn into godly practices.

Notice, Titus is instructed to teach the older men in v2, older women in v3, younger men in v6, and slaves in v9. He is not told to teach the younger women. First, it just isn't wise. But second, teaching young women is the province of older women. After all, how much credibility do I have in addressing practical issues a young woman will face?

I can tell you what the Word says, but I can't tell you from experience the specific issues you as a woman will have to deal with. For that, women surely minister more effectively to other women.

Older women, you have a charge to teach younger women what is good. When we talked about elders a couple of weeks ago I underscored the point that biblically, pulpit ministry is not open to women. But that doesn't preclude a vital teaching ministry within the church. In fact, older women, you have a God-given responsibility to teach. We need godly Christian women who will teach the younger women "what is good," defined in v4-5.

May I challenge you a bit? We have many, many wonderful women who work in Sunday school and Children's church. I'm not sure if, as a church, we are doing all that we should for the younger women. There are so many women here who would benefit greatly from your walk and your experience as a Christian woman.

Young Women, v4b-5. What about the young women? What is their character to be? What ministry is she to have? Paul says in v4-5 that young women are to "love their husbands, to love their children..." (5) *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored."

Let me make a couple of points. First, Paul is not addressing all young women, just those who are married. Single ladies, don't think that means you aren't important, or that God is only interested in you once you get married. Not all are to be married, as Paul makes clear in 1 Cor. 7:8-9, 17. But Paul's letters were written for practical purposes, to answer questions and cover issues that were plaguing the church. In Crete, the issues were evidently with young married women, so they get the attention here.

But there are some aspects of a godly woman's character named here that are to be true of all women – single or married. All are to have a character that reflects Christ, that is **sensible, pure, and kind, v5.**

First, sensible. Just like elders (1:8), older men (2:2), and in fact, all believers (2:12). The word means sober-minded, coolheaded, not flighty. It refers to someone who is self-controlled. Perhaps the best example in the context of a young woman is that a sensible woman not only avoids evil, but doesn't waste time on things that are trivial or foolish.

Pure is just what it says, morally pure or clean. The idea is conveyed in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, "*I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.*"

She is both modest and discrete, not dressing to reveal or show herself off. The point is not so much that no woman should ever wear braids, gold, or pearls so much as it is to dress modestly and discretely, giving more attention to good works than to fancy clothing.

Gentle, sympathetic, considerate. Pretty obvious. Kindness has at its heart the idea of tenderness and sympathy, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:32, "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." A woman who is kind does not bear a grudge, even when wronged.

In Acts 9, Dorcas is a wonderful example of a sensible, pure, kind woman. She abounded "with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did, v36." One of her ministries was to work with the widows making garments, probably for use the needy or perhaps for those who ministered in the church, v39.

In 1 Tim. 5:10 Paul describes a godly woman as one who has "a reputation for good works... has shown hospitality to strangers... has washed the saints' feet... has assisted those in distress... has devoted herself to every good work." The New Testament teaches by precept and by example that we have an obligation to the truly needy: orphans and widows, the sick and destitute. What better forum for ministry is there?

The other character traits here apply specifically to young married women, and are among the most vilified verses in Scripture. Paul is the whipping boy of the feminist movement, mostly because he spoke more frequently and more pointedly to this question than any other NT writer.

Many write these verses off as merely cultural, saying that as times change so does our expression of obedience. But if that's true, who determines right and wrong? The culture. Taken to its logical conclusion and you can get rid of any Scriptural admonition by calling it "cultural."

But we must never become puffed up because we take Scripture literally, because believing them is no guarantee we won't violate them. Many, many Christian men have abused Paul's teaching on wives and husbands to bludgeon and control, to demand submission that is domineering, not biblical. That is not Paul's intent, nor the Holy Spirit's.

Married women are to love their husbands and children, v4b. Paul isn't talking about romantic or sexual love. This isn't the unconditional *agape* love of God. It is *phileo*, tender affection. A woman is to love her husband & children with tender care that is shown by action.

Husbands are told to love their wives in Ephesians 5:25-30 by giving themselves sacrificially, as Christ gave himself for the church (read). In Philippians 2:2-4, Paul encourages the church to love one another "by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

The central ministry of a married woman is to love her family. When women love their husbands and their children, they meet their needs, putting them first. This is not subservience, it is servanthood – to which all believers are called (Gal. 5:13).

Married women are to be workers at home, v5. Want to know an easy way to pick a fight? Walk into an office full of women and say, "A woman's place is in the home." But you know what? I don't think that old adage is right, and I'm not sure Paul would agree with it, either. In part that saying grew out of a mistranslation of v5 in the KJV, "keepers at home." The NAS or NIV are much more accurate, married women are to be "workers at home" or "busy at home," with the emphasis on the verb, busy!

Paul isn't talking about *place* so much as he is *responsibility*. I would say "**a woman's responsibility is for the home.**" Married women are to be actively engaged in meaningful activity, centered around the home. Her interest should be focused on the many aspects of running a home.

The center of ministry for a married woman is the home. In 1 Tim. 5:14 Paul says the wife is the *oiko* (house) *despoteo* (despot), house despot! Women, it is yours to manage. Husbands, you need to realize that, let your wife manage the home. Our first fight as husband and wife came over precisely this issue. First Saturday AM in new apartment. I wanted to make her breakfast, she thought I was either invading her space or making a commentary on her cooking.

But after 24 years of marriage, we have this all figured out. I make the big decisions, like whether we send troops to Kosovo or not, if the Fed should cut the interest rates again, or if the Titans need to trade for a wide receiver. She makes the little ones, like where we are going to live and what we spend our money on.

But here is the \$64,000 question: **Does this mean a married woman should not work outside the home?** Was my pastor right or wrong?

First, note that there is no such prohibition in Scripture. Paul says clearly in 1 Tim. that women are not to pastor the church, and he could have stated just as clearly that married women aren't to work outside the home, but he didn't. in fact, I know of no such command in the Bible.

Scripture shows women in a wide variety of tasks, ranging from cooking, sewing, and making garments to working in the fields and tending flocks and herds. Perhaps the best picture of a truly liberated woman is Proverbs 31. We don't have time to cover it this morning, but study it this week. The wife pictured in Proverbs 31 has authority over the household, with a great deal of

responsibility and latitude in her decisions. While it is clear that her central base of operations is the home, it is also clear she spends a fair amount of time outside the home, buying and selling.

Scripture doesn't say in so many words that women aren't to work outside the home, but it does make it clear that a married woman's primary responsibility is her home and family.

When your children are young, you need to be there for them. It might mean you have to live a little lower on the hog. It might mean postponing buying a home, a car, taking a nice vacation. If you can't do those things on one income, maybe you can't afford to do them.

What if you feel like you'd go crazy in the house with the kids all day long, and need to get out of the house? In love I will tell you that reveals an attitude that is centered on self, not your husband and kids. Question is not what do you need, it is what does your family need?

Men, let me encourage you not to ask your wives to take a 2nd job. In the Garden, Adam and Eve were both cursed – Eve to bear children with pain, Adam to labor with sweat and toil. When you ask your wife to work outside the home, there is a sense in which you are asking her to take on a 2nd curse. And I'm pretty sure you wouldn't be willing to reciprocate.

Whether married women work or not isn't a question with a cut and dried answer. There may be circumstances that force you to work to make ends meet. The decision requires you and your family to talk and pray about it. Part of the decision criteria has to include the impact of a job on your ministry in the home. Perhaps part-time, or home-based jobs are what you need.

If your children are grown and your husband agrees, I believe you have the liberty to choose. But you will run into issues that impact the home, and as Paul says, I'd rather spare you.

Older women, teach these things to the younger women, and younger women, teach your daughters. Many young mothers today did not had the opportunity to observe their mothers ministering in the home.

Finally, the over-arching principle that governs the marriage relationship, **married women are to be subject to their own husbands, v5**. Subject, *hupotasso* (*hupo*-under, *tasso* – line up, arrange, lit. "line up under"). But wives, you aren't alone. Scripture speaks clearly not only in the matter of the submission of women to their own husbands, but to the mutual submission of all believers to one another (Eph. 5:21), all of whom submit themselves to God (James 4:7).

Men and women share a mutual need for one another: Gen. 2:24, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." 1 Cor. 11:11-12, "in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God."

We tend to confuse submission with inferiority. But that would be saying that the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect example of submission, is inferior to God, rather than being God Incarnate.

Submission is not a statement of inferiority, it is a statement of commitment to God-ordained roles. It is a commitment to a humble walk, giving preference to one another.

Christian men haven't shown themselves trustworthy in this, and for the woman who is married to an unbeliever it is even harder. But man's unfaithfulness is never reason to jettison God's command. So, the command stands.

Our character should fit our doctrine. Why submit? "So that the Word of God will not be dishonored." **When our lives fit sound doctrine, God's Word is honored.** When they don't, we dishonor God's Word by claiming to believe it, but not living it out. The evil we do, the good we fail to do dishonor God and his Word.

Hypocritical lives that claim to follow the gospel but don't reflect it in their character do real damage to the church. The impact to the unbelieving world is eternal. The world judges the truth and power of the gospel by what it sees in us. But lives of true Christian character provide a platform for testifying to the transforming power of the gospel. 2 Cor. 3:3, "you are a letter of Christ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

There is a beautiful symmetry here. **Sound doctrine is the basis for sound character, and in turn, sound character is proof of sound doctrine.**

How will your letter be read? Older men, are you honorable in heart, mind, temperament, and faith? Older women, are you godly in word and deed, encouraging the young women? Young women, are you sensible, pure, and kind, ministering to your home and family?

If not, would you spend time this week, praying over these issues, studying the Scripture for yourself, and ask God's help and blessing to make that change?

Titus 2:16-15: Things Fitting for Sound Doctrine, Part 2

This lesson completes the previous study of Paul's exhortation to Christian character which I've titled "Things Fitting for Sound Doctrine" from Titus 2:1. Titus 2 is all about how a Christian is to live, and the things that result. Want to see how to honor God's Word? To put those who oppose Christ to shame? To adorn God's Word, making it beautiful and desirable to those around you? Titus 2 is the chapter for you.

In v1-10, Paul says Christian character is founded on sound doctrine, and so Titus is to teach what is fitting, in accordance with, sound doctrine. He is to apply Scripture practically in order to show the Christians of Crete how they are to live. We saw that older men, v2, are to be honorable in heart, mind, temperament, and in the faith. Older women, v3-4a are to be godly in word and deed, encouraging the young women. Young women, v4b-5, are to be sensible, pure, and kind. If married, her responsibility is for the home, submitting herself in love to her husband, caring for her children.

Bottom line in v5: When believers live what they preach, when our character matches our doctrine, God's Word is honored. Symmetry in these 5 verses. Sound doctrine is the foundation for sound character (v1), and sound character is proof of sound doctrine (v5). This morning we'll finish the "things fitting for sound doctrine" with the last two groups Paul addresses, young men in v6-8 and slaves in v9-10. Then in v11-15 we'll see the role God's grace plays in building Christian character.

Young Men, v6-8, "Likewise urge the young men to be sensible" At first glance you might think, "Why so little said to young men when they so obviously need so much more? All this instruction for older men & women and younger women, and the one group that really needs instruction just gets "sensible?"

But notice what Paul tells Titus in v7-8, "in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." Paul is telling Titus to show by his own life what young men are to be. What Paul says to Titus applies to all young men.

Who are the "young men?" Again, Paul is talking about relative age, not absolute. If, as we said last week, older men are roughly 60 and up, then young men are somewhere under 60. Pretty broad range, probably beginning at point of adulthood. In other words, men, if you are in your late teens thru your '50's, this applies to you.

The first trait that should be characteristic of young men is **Sensible, v6** – Not headstrong, not impulsive. Saw last week that "sensible" is to characterize elders (1:8), older men (2:2), young women (2:5), all believers (2:12). sober-minded, coolheaded, self-controlled. Can you imagine a better word to young men?

Let me illustrate. 3 years ago our family drove out to California to visit friends and family. On the way we stopped at the Grand Canyon. Don't know how many of you have seen the canyon, but it is truly an awe-inspiring sight. Well, we just pulled in to a parking area on the south rim and just began to take it all in. Noticed a couple of things: 1) it was really a far piece to the bottom, and 2) in many areas there is no guardrail. They just expect people to use common sense about getting too close to the edge.

After a while we decided to head around to the main visitor center about a mile away. Bonnie and the kids wanted to walk along the trail that hugged the rim, so I took the car a mile or so down the road to the visitor center and waited. After a while, here came Bonnie and... Sarah. I asked the obvious question, "Where's Jonathan?" At which point Bonnie stopped dead in her tracks and said, "Isn't he with you?"

Scary enough to misplace your child, but to misplace them at the Grand Canyon? That's real fear. It turns out that as Bonnie and the kids were hiking, they could see what they took to be the visitor center some distance away, straight ahead on the path. Well, when J sees what is he going for, there is no slowing him down. So he took off like a shot for the "visitor's center."

Bonnie wasn't too worried, because, after all, it was right in front of them. And as she and Sarah continue to walk on this winding trail, they come to a fork, "Visitor's Center" to the left, "Hotel" straight ahead. Sure enough, J had blown right past the fork in the road, wound up at the hotel. But it took us a couple of hours to figure that out to find him, pacing around the hotel parking lot, convince his entire family had fallen in the Grand Canyon.

Now young men of all ages, here's the point. How often do you blow past forks in your road, heedless to the direction you're going? To be so sure of yourself in spite of all evidence to the contrary that you make a rash and foolish decision that causes real anguish and fear? That is exactly the opposite of what it means to be sensible. 13 year olds don't have a lock on it, and Paul says to each of us, be sensible, not headstrong, not impulsive.

How do young men learn? As the father of two sixteen year-olds, I can tell you that finger-wagging only goes so far. What they need is **an example, v7** – *tupos*, mark or imprint. In Jn 20:25, Thomas tells the rest of the disciples that he will not believe that Jesus has risen "Unless I see in His hands the imprint (*tupos*) of the nails..." The gouges the nails left in Jesus' hands were the *tupos* of the nails.

Paul tells Titus that he is to have the same kind of impact on the young men at Crete that the nails had on Jesus' hands – to mark them forever. This is especially true of those in a position of authority, responsibility, leadership, but it is a character trait that is universally applicable. Each one of us is to be an example.

Mark Twain, in his curmudgeonly way, said "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example." But the reality is, we all take very seriously what people do in comparison to what they say. Spurgeon said, "A man's life is always more forcible than his speech. When men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as dollars and his words as pennies. If his life and doctrine disagree the mass of onlookers accept his practice and reject his preaching."

Scripture teaches that Jesus is putting his *tupos*, his imprint, on us. All our lives, man or woman, boy or girl, are to be so clearly marked by Jesus that his imprint is seen and felt. 1 Thess 1:6-7, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." The Thessalonian believers imitated the Lord and the Apostle Paul to such a degree that their imprint was clear to the churches in the neighboring provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.

Such an imprint is not easily made. Consider what kind of impact it took to make the nail marks in Jesus' hands? Larry Richards, in *A Theology of Christian Education* says to have a measurable impact on someone a number of factors must be present:

1. frequent, long-term contact
2. warm, loving relationship
3. exposure to their beliefs and convictions
4. observed in a variety of life settings and situations

Beyond salvation, this is precisely how Jesus impacts our lives. Thru his Word, thru prayer, thru his indwelling Spirit, he wields his influence on us in all these ways. And by the power of his Spirit, he changes us to be more and more like him the more time we spend with him.

- Rom 8:29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son..."
- 2 Cor 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory..."

The goal of the Christian life is to be more like Jesus. The very word, Christian, speaks to this, lit, "little Christ." We are all to be "little Christs," living examples of the character and integrity of Jesus Christ.

Scripture also teaches that we are to put our imprint on others. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Tim 4:12, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." Consider, Paul was unashamed to say things like,

- 1 Cor 4:16, "Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me."
- 1 Cor 11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."
- Phil 3:17, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

How do we put our imprint on others? The same way Jesus puts his imprint on us – spending time with them, exposing them to our beliefs and convictions, letting them see you in different life settings and situations. In other words, letting them see how Jesus has made his mark on you.

That is the essence of discipleship. Discipleship isn't an elaborate study guide with fill in the blank questions. It is letting them see Christ's imprint on you. Young men need an example to follow. What do they need to learn? Paul lists 4 things, a representative list, not exhaustive:

Good deeds – Did you know you were saved in order to do good deeds? Titus 2:14, "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Eph. 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Young men, even before you were born God had good works in mind for you to perform. What are you currently involved in that is primarily a ministry to others?

Purity in doctrine – lit, *uncorrupted*. Doctrine that is uncorrupted by world, by false teachers. Like elders, 1:9, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching." Young men, you are to know the word, and knowing it, to hold to it.

Dignified – seriousness of purpose, worthy of respect. Doesn't mean sad, sober, somber & sour. Doesn't mean pompous, puffed up & pretentious. Can enjoy life, enjoy laughter and still be a young man of dignity. Should be a strong underlying sense that you are a man to respect.

Sound in speech – *hugaino* again, healthy in speech. Beyond preaching and teaching, this is about common, everyday speech and conversation.

- Eph 4:29, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear."
- Eph 5:4, "and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.
- Col 3:8, "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth."

Not merely not swearing, which is what we tend to think of, but more than that, speech which builds. Sometimes men will go for the cheap laugh with vulgar humor, or will tear down others in order to build themselves up. Humor's great, but not when it is used as a weapon against someone else. Young men, does your speech build? Do you encourage others?

The young men need such an example in what they do, what they believe, how they conduct themselves, and what they say. Why? End of v8, "That the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." Opponent, "set against." Someone who is set against Christ, his truth, and his people.

When we live what we say, Christ's opponents are put to shame. They lose a vital piece of ammunition. When our lives don't match our doctrine, we are loading their guns for them. Sound character takes the words right out of the opponent's mouth. They may say what they want, but their accusations will be demonstrably false.

Slaves, v9-10. Christianity has left its mark on culture in many areas, none more so than slavery. Which is all the more remarkable since Scripture never explicitly condemns slavery. 1 Cor 7:21, "Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that." Paul says it is good to be free, and to be free if you can. But if you aren't don't worry about it – be a faithful disciple of Christ whether you are free or in chains.

Yet it was thru the gospel's message that God regards all men and women to be of eternal value that slavery came to be seen as evil. It was through the labors of Christian statesmen like William Wilberforce and William Penn that slavery was outlawed, first in Europe, then here.

Since slavery is defunct in America, do we just skip over the NT's words to slaves? NT slavery was a very different thing than the cruel institution of 19th century America. More than 50% of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, and they were treated much more like employees than cattle. And so today we apply these words to those who work for others.

Where do you have best opportunity to share your life with non-Christians? Work. Unbelievers can see your life at first hand, match it to your words. Work is both your greatest evangelism opportunity and your biggest pitfall.

The world judges the truth and power of the gospel by what it sees in us. A life of true Christian character is sometimes the only evidence to the transforming power of the gospel the world will believe. Heine, "Show me your redeemed life, and I might be interested in your Redeemer." They are watching you. What are they seeing?

Paul said that those who work for others should be characterized by 3 things: **Subject to their own masters in everything**. Seen this before, *hupotasso*, line yourself up under your employer's authority in all aspects of your job. He or she will be blown away!

I've managed a lot of people in 3 different companies, and one of the best examples of this I have ever seen in the workplace came from a non-Christian. When I left IBM in 1995 I took a position with a local computer networking company that was struggling. The VP, responsible for sales and more, had been with the company since it was founded. Good old boy, used-car salesman, could sell you..., but not much of a manager. And I was hired to take his place...while he stayed with the company, moving down to the position of a salesman working for me.

Some awkward moments, but he could have made life very difficult for both of us, but he didn't. From the first he told me that his goal was to be the company's best salesman, and to help me in any way he could, and he did.

I wish I could tell you that all the times Christians worked for me it was just like that, but I can't. Some of my employees thought having a Christian boss meant it was vacation time at work. They were wrong.

Paul expands what it means to "be subject" with two contrasts. First, **Well-pleasing, not argumentative**. Looking to serve, not argue. Second, **Not pilfering, but showing all good faith**. Pilfering, lit. "holding something back," skimming the profits. Instead, showing all good faith, being faithful. There are all kinds of ways to pilfer.

One of my employees at IBM was a faithful churchgoer, also very accomplished computer systems engineer. When I came to IBM in Chattanooga, management position had been vacant a couple of months. Building a house out on the lake, he'd gotten used to the lack of supervision, took to checking messages in the morning, heading out to lake to work on home during the day. If he got calls, he'd handle them, otherwise he'd work on his house.

I didn't think that was such a neat idea, told him he'd need to work on house in off-hours. That conversation didn't go well, ended with him storming out of my office, slamming the door. Took a long time to resolve situation, never really did. Would have to say that this individual reversed Paul's instruction – he was argumentative, not well-pleasing, pilfering the company's time for his own, not faithful in doing his job. The kind of guy you wanted to urge *not* to share his faith.

Paul DeKort, found money, brought it to boss, "Wondered what you would do..." They are watching, wondering if our lives really do match what we say... when they see lives truly transformed by the power of the gospel, God's Word is adorned.

When we live what we say, we adorn God's Word. Just as Christian character brings honor to God's Word (v5) and shames those who oppose Christ (v8), so it adorns God's Word. Gk. "*kosmeo*," root for cosmetics. Shows it off to best advantage. Like beautiful frame for fine art, Christian character puts power and beauty of God's Word on display.

Christian character is founded on sound doctrine, v1-10, v11-15, Christian character is taught by grace, v11, "**For the grace of God has appeared...**" God's grace, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ, has brought salvation to all. Paul's point here isn't to teach in depth the doctrine of salvation by grace, merely the fact of it. God's grace is available to every man, women, and child, but it requires the personal response of faith to receive it.

John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name." You have to receive Christ as your savior to appropriate his death on the cross for your sin. If you've never done that or if you are not sure, please see me.

Paul's main point here is that **grace is our teacher, v12**, "Instructing us" "*paideuo*," usually describes training or correcting a child. It includes the entire training process – the idea includes not only teaching, encouragement, but correction and discipline. Not classroom, but real world. Same grace that saves us also teaches how to live.

How does grace teach us to deny...? By showing us God's nature. The grace of God that takes our sin on himself shows us the terrible price of sin, and reveals God's holy nature, his incredible generosity, and rich love. As grace reveals God's nature, so it reveals conduct or character that is consistent with God's nature, v1-10.

Grace teaches 4 things: what to avoid, what to embrace, where to look, and what to do.

What to avoid, v12a, "Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires." NIV, "say No to" is good. Grace teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness, irreverence of unsaved life, ignoring God, holding no place in mind or life for him, despising him. "Worldly desires," lusts characteristic of the world in its estrangement from its Creator. Like parents training a child, one of the first lessons grace teaches is "No." Parents, isn't that one of the first things you teach a child? Avoid what will hurt you. So it is with grace, teaches us what is dangerous, what will hurt us if we get too close.

Not a lesson we hear once and never need again, is it? We need to learn to say "No" over & over again, because sin and temptation to sin present themselves daily. Need grace for daily self-denial. Sets the stage for 2nd thing grace teaches, **what to embrace, v12b**. "And to live sensibly," self-controlled, disciplined life. "Righteously," faithful, truthful, just in relationship to others. "Godly," devoted to God in heart, obedient to him in action.

When do you get to live this life? Is it in the kingdom? When you are in glory with Jesus? How about right now, "in the present age?" Paul says we can live sensibly, righteously, and godly here and now. He isn't talking about sinless perfection in this life, Phil. 3:12-14, "Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid

hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Perfection isn't available in this life, but power is. Grace not only saves us, it gives us the power to live a life that pleases God. Christian character that Paul describes in v1-10 is not something you can simply turn on. It isn't possible for fallen men and women to be...w/o supernatural power. It can only become reality through grace of God working in your life through power of the Holy Spirit.

What to avoid, what to embrace, third, **where to look, v13**, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. Clear statement of Jesus' deity.

"Looking for..." not casual glance, but expectant waiting, fervent hope. Take Jesus' return seriously, take his command to be alert seriously, to be found faithful when he comes. Focusing attention here has real benefit...1 John 3:2-3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

If we are focused on his return, we are taking it seriously, and if we are taking it seriously we will live so that we are not ashamed at his return.

Finally, v14, we see that the result of grace in our lives is that it teaches us **what to do**. Jesus, as the living manifestation of God's grace, has redeemed us from every lawless deed (that is, he teaches us to say "no" to ungodliness) and has purified for himself a people for his own possession (he empowers us to live sensibly, righteously, godly), so that we would be **zealous for good deeds**. Good deeds is what we are to be about.

Grace is not static in us, it is dynamic. It will be seen in tangible activity, good deeds. Note, good deeds don't save us, as Paul makes clear in 3:5, grace does,. But grace produces character, and character good works, and what does the world look for? People who do what they say.

Christian character 1) Honors God's Word, 2) puts Christ's opponents to shame, 3) adorns God's Word, 4) is taught by God's grace, and 5) results in good deeds.

There was once a Bedouin who was in his tent at night, eating some figs by the light of a candle. Took a bite out of a big, juicy fig, he was disconcerted to see half a worm in the uneaten fig. So he took another fig, bit it, and it was wormy, too. You know what he did? He blew out the candle and enjoyed the rest of his snack.

A friend told me of a man he knew, a Christian, who was quite a reckless driver, abused speed limits no end. He became convicted about his driving, was concerned that it was a bad testimony, especially because he had an ictus, the early Christian sign of a fish, on the back of his car. He knew when people saw that ictus on a car careening around on the interstate, they were judging Christ. What did he do? He took the ictus off.

When we blow out the candle, peel off the ichthus, we are only fooling ourselves, not the world. If we claim to be "little Christs," Christians, but don't act like it, the world simply has no reason to believe. Christian character is only a possibility because of God's grace, but it is a possibility because of God's grace. Amen?

Godly Living in a Pagan World, Titus 3:1-15

This is our final lesson in Titus. We've seen that this little book is packed with practical instruction on living a godly life in this present age. From godly leadership in the church in chapter 1, to godly character of the people of the church in chapter 2. Godly living is in fact again the focus of this morning's lesson. C3 takes godly living into the world around us.

There are many deep truths about our salvation here, all set in the context of the relationship between the Christian and government. Paul tells Titus that Christians are to submit to governing authority, remembering what we were, what we are, and what we are to be about.

As we consider the Christian and the government, I want you to consider this question, "What is the church's mission with respect to our society?" Has the church been called to impact our culture, to reform its values? To see it adopt biblical, moral character? Let's see what Titus has to say. Reminder, v1-2, Reason, v3-7, Result, v8-11. Concluding Remarks, v12-15.

The Reminder, v1-2. "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men."

When Paul says to "Remind them..." it is clear this isn't the first time they've heard this message, but they need to hear again: be subject to rulers and authorities. We've seen biblical submission the last couple of studies in Titus, in the home, and in the workplace. Now Paul says, we are also to be subject to government.

Biblical submission is willing obedience, lining self up under the leadership or authority of another, in this case, the government. Paul expands on what submission looks like in v1-2, obedient, ready for every good work. Don't malign or curse anyone, be at peace, be gentle, show every consideration for all men. Root idea, "meekness," humility, consider their needs first.

You probably never really thought of Paul as a fantasy writer, did you? Do you kind of wonder if Paul would have written those words if he'd known about presidents and congressmen?

I think so. Every individual and institution must live in relationship to government and governmental authority, including the church. For many Christians in this country that has become a whole lot harder than it used to be.

Abortion, homosexuality, pornography in the mainstream are just a few of the indications that we truly do live in a post-Christian culture. Or put it another way, a pagan culture. Did you know that pagan worship is one of the fastest growing segments of the "religious" population. Wicca, the worship of Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, various earth cults are commonplace?

Christian principles and morality provided the foundation for much of the Declaration, Constitution, and Bill of Rights, but those principles are no longer welcome in the public discourse. Our government has largely gone from being a restraint on man's evil to an advocate for it. Where life was once sacred, now "choice" is. Where marriage and the family were once the building blocks of society, now you are a bigot if you hold that marriage requires one man and one woman.

Hard times, for American Christians, right? Yes, but perhaps we should all thank God we don't live in the Sudan? Or Indonesia? Or China? Bad as our government may be, we have a loong ways to go before they start killing Christians.

So, how should we think about our government? How should we act towards it? What does Titus say? "Reform the culture!" "Get out there and show 'em who's boss!" Nope. Maybe he tells us exactly what we don't want to hear: "Be subject."

Nothing here about reforming the culture, taking society by the ears, kick it in line with biblical values. Not even a word about restoring a sense of biblical moral character to our society. Just "be subject."

But, does "being subject" mean not questioning? Does it mean not being involved in the process? Shouldn't Christians be politically active? In a democratic society, shouldn't we be involved in process? Absolutely, since we have freedom to be involved, as responsible citizens we should be involved. If we have something to offer, Christians can and should run for office.

But that is not to be our emphasis. The political process is not where solutions will be found. Paul says our emphasis in relation to the government is to submit ourselves to it, to obey it, in a meek and gentle way. The question is not **whether** we should be involved, but rather, **how** will we be involved?

But, what if, and this is purely hypothetical mind you, our government was filled with a bunch of total sleazeballs? What if our government legalized and encouraged truly evil things? Well, Paul's government was no bed of roses. At the time he wrote these words, Nero was Caesar in Rome, a venal, vile, corrupt man who would make the worst of our lot look like...

Here is a key point. Governmental authority does not reside in the individual or the individual's personality. Authority resides in the office, and derives from God.

1 Peter 2:13-17, "**Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake** to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors **as sent by him** for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, **honor the king.**"

You don't honor the king because he is such a wonderful man – because he isn't. You honor him because he has been sent by God.

Romans 13:1-5, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.** Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for **it is a minister of God,** an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Because governmental authority derives from God, we must obey its laws, whether or not the people that make up the government are respectable or not, and irrespective of personal feeling towards them.

What laws do we have to obey? All of them: Traffic regulations (ouch!), tax laws, etc. "But," you might ask, "what if they passed a law that made it a crime to read the Bible, or to gather together as Christians, or that made abortion mandatory?" That's when we have to obey the higher authority over the lower one.

The early Christians faced that dilemma far more frequently than we do. In Acts 5, the Apostles are arrested for preaching Christ, and they are brought before the Sanhedrin for trial, Acts 5:27-29, "When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "**We must obey God rather than men.**"

This confused the Sanhedrin, who could have sworn that **they** were doing God's work. One of their members, Gamaliel, told the rest of the council to leave them alone and see what happened. If they were fakes, their movement would amount to nothing. If they were real, they wouldn't want to be found fighting against God.

So in 5:40-41, "They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they **flogged them** and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name."

Peter and John accepted the flogging with joy, then went right back out and began to preach Christ again. Here's the point: if we **must** disobey the government, we must still submit to the consequences. If imprisoned, accept the sentence. If fined, pay it. If punished, accept it and rejoice in, and keep right on obeying God.

Far too many Christians use the faith as a political tool. In some cases they do it for the common good, in some cases they use it to seek power. They have elevated the political process past its place. That is not what Paul tells Titus. What Paul tells Titus is that we **impact society by our character, not our criticism.**

What is your testimony as a Christian in regard to government? Are you obedient? Ready for every good deed? Kind, gentle, meek? If so, you can make your voice heard, whether by writing letters to the editor, walking a picket line, or running for office. But don't get your action out ahead of your attitude, don't make political action your focus. Non-Christians would be far more impressed if we take in an unwanted baby than if we stand around, yelling at clinic workers.

Be subject, obedient, ready for every good work.

The Reason, v3-7. Paul's exhortation to be subject to authority is based on our salvation: *"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."*

Paul says to remember what you were, v3. And what was that? No different than any other non-Christian. Foolish, *anoetoi*, senseless. In a word, dumb. Disobedient, deceived, enslaved. Eph 4:18, "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart"

Can godless leaders help themselves? Are they the enemy, or are victims of the Enemy? We must remember that before Christ invades your heart you are literally not working with a full deck.

The world says "No boundaries! I gotta be me!" But Jesus said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." The reality is every person who rejects Christ is forging his own chains. Before Christ we spent our life in malice, envy, hate. Picture using your life up, wasting it, in an ever-deepening spiral of ugliness. If left to ourselves hell would be the only fit place for us.

Except for that marvelous word that begins v4, "But..." out of that bleak, black picture of our ugliness comes this brilliant contrast of God's love.

"But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

You must remember not only what you were, but **what you are, v4-7.** Contains some of the most important truths about our salvation in all of Scripture. We could spend weeks on these 3 verses alone (and have). I am only going to focus on a couple of points out of the richness that is here. Let me encourage you, if you are the type that writes in your Bible (and let me encourage you to be that type), underline v4-7. Spend time in it this week.

When his kindness and his love appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, it wasn't because we had earned it, or because we had proven ourselves worthy. It was simply because he loves all mankind. 4 expressions of God's love in v4-7.

- "Kindness," v4, *chrestotes*, benevolence, disposition to bless
- "Love for mankind," v4, *philanthropia*, general love for all
- "Mercy," v5, *eleos*, not getting what we deserve, withholding what is due
- "Grace," v7, *chariti*, undeserved favor, favor to undeserving

Because of his kindness, his loves for mankind, his mercy, and his grace, he made provision for our sin, v5-6. First, the basis for our salvation. **His mercy, not our deeds.** This is the verse for someone who says we get to heaven by doing more good than bad. The basis for our salvation is his mercy, not our good deeds.

Eph 2:4-5, "But God, being **rich in mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), v8-9, "For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

So then, where do good works fit in? More about this in a moment.

Second, the result of our salvation. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, two things happened to you at the point of salvation. The first is what he calls the "washing of regeneration." Some say this refers to baptism and use this verse to teach "baptismal regeneration," the idea that without physical baptism you cannot be saved. But there is no water here. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 3:21, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." This is not being dunked in the river or sprinkled from a basin. This is a spiritual bath, being cleansed from your sin as the blood of Christ is once and for all applied to your sinful heart.

How could a physical agency like Tennessee River water be the indispensable agent for the eternal spiritual benefit of regeneration? Not even Evian could do that. We are washed "by the Holy Spirit," not water.

So at salvation you were cleansed from all your sin, past, present, and future. The second thing that happened at the moment of salvation was you were made new. "Renewing," *anakainoseos*, means something entirely new, a new creation.

- 2 Cor 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a **new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."
- Eph 4:22-24, "that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the **new self**, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.:
- Col 3:9-11, "Do not lie to one another, since you **laid aside the old self** with its *evil* practices, and **have put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a *renewal* in which there is no

distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all."

This regenerating and renewing work is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is "poured out on us richly" at salvation.

You have been "justified," v7, *dikaióthentes*, legal term, pronounced guiltless, declared innocent. Burden of sin removed. As a result of our salvation, of the washing of regeneration and renewing by the HS, we are justified before God. And finally, "Made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," We are in line for a great inheritance, 1 Pt 1:3-4, "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

We are washed clean, made new, justified before a holy God, and heirs of eternal life. Folks, that should blow your socks off! But how does this relate to living a godly life in a pagan culture? What does it have to do with submitting to the government?

Remembering what God has done in our life will change your attitude toward the lost. We too were once lost, and all of us are sinners. The men and women of government are not the enemy, Satan is. The non-Christians who are our friends, family, colleagues at work are no different from you and I before Christ took hold of us. This being the case, how can we look down our noses at non-Christians? How can we stand in judgment when they cannot help themselves?

That why Paul says in 1 Tim 2:1-4, to pray for all who are in authority, "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who **desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**"

The point of our submission to government is their salvation. Not reforming the culture, not standing up for morality, not even a positive atmosphere to raise kids.

The Result, v8-11. "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

What Paul has just told Titus is "trustworthy," faithful, good and right. Therefore, Titus is to "**Speak confidently**," stoutly maintain and urge, continually stress, for this reason: **so that believers will be careful to do good deeds.** This is the end result Paul is looking for. "Be careful," take the lead in, prepare yourself for, embrace.

Said back in v5 that we are not saved by good works. But all Christians are to be occupied by them.

Matthew 5:13-16, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Good works are the fruit of faith, not substitute for it.

The world has heard enough commercials for Christ. Needs to see tangible evidence, transformed life. Christians who live out their biblical morals in a pagan world, honoring the ruling authorities even when those authorities haven't earned the honor personally will have a far greater impact than those who criticize, or sit in isolation.

We are spending our time profitably if we are submitting to the authorities, giving serious consideration to what God has done in our lives, and busily engaged in good deeds. By contrast, we must avoid what Paul calls unprofitable and worthless things in v9-11: "But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."

Avoid foolish words, v9. "Foolish," moronic. I'm not sure I need to say much more about that.

Avoid factious men, v10-11. "*Hairetikos*," root for heretic, means one who causes a division. Not talking about accidentally, but on purpose. His intent is to split, break down, corrupt, and destroy the unity of the body of Christ. Such a one is condemned by his own behavior as perverted, sinning. In context of C3 may be talking specifically about one who will not be subject to authority, kind to all. May also be specifically within church.

Reject after 1st, 2nd warning. Refers to Matthew 18:15-20, "church discipline." Sin against the unity, purity, or doctrine of the church is a serious business, calls for serious action. "Reject..." Literally, refuse him, put him out of the fellowship.

Concluding Remarks, v12-15. Personal details, including Titus' relief and a chance for the Cretans to practice some of those good deeds Paul has been urging.

"Make every effort..." v12. Paul is going to be at Nicopolis for the winter, and is sending one of these two men to relieve Titus. Paul used Tychicus a couple of times in this way, sending him with his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches. I imagine one or both men were not yet available, perhaps on a similar mission, and Paul would send whoever was available first.

Note how Paul depends upon people to help him minister to the churches. He is the picture of a shepherd, not a CEO.

"Diligently help..." v13-14. Z & A, might already be with Titus, or they might be on their way. Either way, they are just passing through. Apollos is described in Acts 18:24 as "an eloquent

man...mighty in the Scriptures." One of many, like Apostles, who would travel from church to church to teach and disciple the people. Evidently he was going to be passing thru Crete, and the church is urged to be diligent about helping him as he passes thru.

In connection with that is the final exhortation to good deeds. They are to engage in good deeds in order to meet "pressing needs," necessary things, especially in order to help Christian brothers as they travel in ministry.

Paul concludes with a simple prayer for grace to be with Titus and the churches at Crete. The love and favor of God, and all it entails.

Do you want to reform the culture? Then submit to government, be kind, gentle and meek to all, ready for every good deed. We do not reform the culture by our criticism. We do not reform the culture by political activity. Neither do we make an impact by inactivity, ignoring it and pretending it doesn't exist.

We can only reform the culture one life at a time. The key is to remember what you were, what you are, and what you are to be about. That's the mission of the church.