

THE GRACE OF GOD TRAINS US TO LIVE GODLY LIVES

Titus 2:1-15

Key Verses: 2:11-12

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age....”

In chapter 1 Paul encouraged Titus to hold firmly to the trustworthy message of the gospel. He should not compromise with the ungodly culture around him. He should believe the transforming power of the gospel and raise leaders whose lives are truly godly—who can influence the society as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Now, in chapter 2, with this vision, Paul exhorted Titus to teach various groups in the church how Christians should behave. God’s children should act like God’s children. When they do, they can make the teaching of Christ attractive. One reason that Christianity spread throughout Rome was that Christians cared for the sick during times of plague, risking their own health, while ruling class Romans abandoned them. However, when God’s children do not act like God’s children, they give enemies cause to malign the word. One young man joined an unsavory family gathering to watch a violent movie. He wore a Christian T-shirt. Someone told him, “I see you are putting on the Christian show.” He became speechless and ineffective and left an impression that Christians are all hypocrites. Christian behavior is an essential part of our Christian witness. Today let’s learn how to behave as Christians and what enables us to practice godly behavior.

First, appropriate Christian behavior (1-10). Verse 1 is the premise for the teachings in verses 2-10. Paul said, **“You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.”** The words “you, however,” or “but as for you,” which have the same meaning, are Paul’s repeated instructions in the pastoral epistles. For example, in 1 Timothy 6:11-12a, after warning Timothy about the danger of love of money, Paul said, **“But you man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life....”** This tells us that though we live in an ungodly society full of corrupted people, God’s servants must not be influenced by them. Instead, God’s servants should influence the ungodly society to change, by teaching

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what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Here the words “**sound doctrine**” refers to healthy and wholesome teaching in contrast to the sick teaching of false teachers. When we live according to Christian teaching, we become more and more healthy, as does our family life and community. Paul said Titus “must teach.” It is a sacred duty of church leaders to teach Christian ethics. We cannot abandon doing so because it is difficult. In our society, it seems that no one can teach ethics anymore. Many universities have stopped trying. But this is not an option for Christian leaders. We must teach Christian ethics whether people listen or not. Paul explicitly tells Titus what to teach to various groups in verses 2-10.

- Older men. Who are the older men? Generally this refers to men who are at least 50 years old and especially over 60. E.K. Simpson said, “This refers to the greybeards of the flock.”¹ Paul mentions them first, for they have a great influence on the congregation as a whole. So they should be good examples morally, ethically and spiritually. They should not be a burden, but a blessing. In order to become a blessing they need to continue to grow, especially in character. The first desirable character trait is to be temperate (2a), that is, moderate or self-restrained and not extreme in opinion or statement. Older men have a tendency to give extreme opinions based on their own past experiences. But we need to learn to be temperate. Older men should be worthy of respect (2b). If older men exhibit embarrassing behavior, it is a discouragement to the whole community. On the other hand, when they set a good example, they become worthy role models. They can create an atmosphere of growth in the church. Older men should be self-controlled, especially in regard to their temper (2c). Older men should be sound in faith in God so that they can serve as pillars of the church, particularly in times of trial. They should be full of God’s love in serving others. They should endure with God’s hope and finish their race of faith strong, like Paul (2d; 2 Ti 4:7-8).

- Older women. Older women should be reverent in the way they live (3a). This means to practice the presence of God and to allow the sense of his presence to permeate their whole lives. One woman has learned how to practice the presence of God even while doing her family’s laundry. As she washes each child’s clothes, she prays for them earnestly so that their hearts and souls may be cleaned like their clothes. In order to live reverently, Paul

¹ Simpson, E.K., 1954. *The Pastoral Epistles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale. pg. 103.

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mentions two things that older women should avoid and what they should do. They should avoid slandering others and being addicted to much wine (3b). As we know, women have a great gift of talking with each other. When several godly women get together and discuss a problem, they can uncover much of what is hidden and get to the truth of a matter. If they use this ability to pray for others, they can be a blessing to everyone. But if they use it to criticize and spread rumors, they will become a disaster. In Crete, the warm weather produced abundant grapes and much wine. Some Cretan housewives fell into temptation and became alcoholics. These days, in addition to alcohol, older women should watch out for addictions to eating and shopping with credit cards among others. Instead of doing these things, they should diligently teach what is good. Who should they teach? Not their husbands, but younger women.

- Younger women. The first thing advised for a younger woman is to love her husband and children (4). This love is the basis of marriage and family life. John Stott says this love is "...not so much the love of emotion and romance, still less of eroticism, but rather of sacrifice and service. The young wives are to be 'trained' in this..."² Younger women are also advised to be self-controlled and pure (5a). This refers mainly to a woman's undivided devotion to the Lord and to her family. They are to be "busy at home" (5b). This does not mean they should not have a career outside the home. But it does mean that they should be diligent in caring for their families in the home. They are to be kind (5c). This means not to yell at family members, but to speak lovingly and gently to build up their husbands and children. They are to be subject to their husbands (5d). This means to recognize his headship in their family. Development of a healthy family life according to God's truth is one of the most powerful testimonies to the gospel of Christ, especially in our times. This largely depends on the woman of the house. It is essential that the young women of our church be excellent wives, mothers and homemakers. Why? "...so that no one will malign the word of God" (5).

Paul did not tell Titus to teach the younger women; rather, he told the older women to teach them. Here we learn the importance of older women mentoring younger women. Because of the generation gap, it is easy for them to be disconnected. Older women tend to criticize younger women with a judgmental spirit because of their lack of experience. On the other hand,

² Stott, John R.W., 1996. *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. InterVarsity Press: Leicester, England. Pg. 188.

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younger women resist learning from older women, thinking that they don't understand and are out of touch. If they are disconnected, what happens? They hurt each other. They hurt the church, and cause division. This is not healthy. How can they resolve this? Mentor relationships between older women and younger women should be established for the sake of gospel ministry. Older women can humbly share their wisdom, experience, and even their failures with younger women to help them in marriage and parenting. Younger women can ask prayer support from older women when they face problems and difficulties. In this way they can build up trust and love relationships, which can bring unity to God's household.

- Young men. Paul had one thing to say regarding young men: "Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled" (6). Young men have an endless potential to grow as stewards of the world. At the same time they are vulnerable to worldly passions: lust, greed, pride, selfish ambition and so on. These things may seem exciting. But they lead to pain and destruction. Through practicing self-control, young men can overcome worldly passions and live holy lives. They can be used greatly by God as a blessing to the world, like Joseph in Genesis and the prophet Daniel.

Paul emphasizes self-control not only for young men, but to each group of people (2,5,6,12). Self-control means not to follow our sinful desires, but to live godly lives. To have healthy lives and relationships, self-control is essential. For example, if one loses his temper just one time, it can break a relationship built up over many years. Building a trust relationship is difficult, but destroying it is easy. So we need self-control. This cannot be done by our own will. We need the Holy Spirit. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. That is why we need to walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16,23).

- Titus. In verses 7-8 Paul gives instructions to Titus in two ways. First of all, set them an example in everything by doing what is good (7a). Young men tend to be rebellious. It is not enough for them to hear words; they need to see a good example. So Titus should be exemplary. Paul set a good example for God's people. So he said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). Jesus set the best example in every aspect of life. He told his disciples "Follow me." When we follow Jesus' example, we can also be a good example for others. Secondly, teach in the right way. Verses 7b-8a say, "In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech." Here "integrity" means to let the word of God itself speak without

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alteration. It must be spoken with a pure motive to communicate the truth of God and not to advocate one's own idea. "Seriousness" refers to one's attitude in teaching. The word of God is not a mere human idea, or a joke. It gives life to those who believe. It should be shared with a deep awareness that those who hear can be impacted eternally by what is spoken. This requires respect for the word of God and also for those who listen. "Soundness of speech" refers to the contents of the message. It should be understandable and acceptable so that it edifies the listeners and helps them to be healthy spiritually. When Titus taught in this way, those who opposed him might be ashamed because they had nothing bad to say (8).

● Slaves. In ancient times slaves were common. Slaves were regarded as the property of their master for life, without hope to change their status. The gospel message proclaims that all believers are equal before God regardless of their social status. When this message was preached, numerous slaves welcomed the good news of salvation and became members of the church. Some misapplied the message and misused their freedom to break social order by disobeying their masters and talking back to them. In this environment, Paul told Titus, **"Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted..."** (9-10a). Obedience and honesty that lead to full trustworthiness should be the trademark of Christian slaves. The same is true for employees in our times. Why should they be trustworthy? Verse 10b says, **"...so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."** The purpose of doing this is not just for one's own sake but to reveal the beauty and glory of Christ to attract people to him. In this way they can advance the gospel even as employees. One of my friends told me about his father, who worked as a janitor in a high school. Because this man believed in Jesus, he always did his best in whatever he did: cleaning the toilets, mopping the floor, scraping gum from under desks. He was also very kind to the students. If anyone forgot their lunch money, he gave them coins from his own pocket. He became known for the excellence of his work and the beauty of his character. As a result many people asked him, "Why are you like this?" And his answer was, "I am serving not only this school and its students but Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior." He has influenced many people for Christ.

Second, the basis of Christian behavior: the grace of God (11-15). When we think about the teachings Paul has shared, we easily feel overwhelmed.

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How can we practice these teachings? We may begin to think that by doing these things we earn righteousness, or by failing to do them we lose our salvation. This can become a stumbling block to our faith. This way of thinking misses the point. Verses 11-14 give us the clear basis of Christian behavior. It is the grace of God. This grace of God has come to us through Jesus Christ, who already appeared once and will appear again in glory.

By sending Jesus into the world the first time, God offers salvation to all who believe (11). This includes forgiveness of sins—justification, and growing in godliness—sanctification. Verse 12 says, **“It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”** Here, the word **“teaches”** actually means “trains.” We usually think of God’s grace as the forgiveness of sins given to undeserving people. It is something we receive freely and just enjoy. This is true. However, there is a danger of abusing this grace without considering God’s intention in giving it to us. God’s grace is deeper and more powerful than we might think. God’s grace is an active force that trains us to be godly. God’s grace trains us both negatively and positively. Negatively, it trains us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions. In many ways the Bible encourages us to put to death our sinful nature. Romans 6:13a says, **“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness....”** Galatians 5:24 says, **“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”** Positively, God’s grace trains us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. Ephesians 4:24 says, **“...and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”** Galatians 5:16 says, **“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”** To sum up, God’s grace trains us to give up our old lifestyle and to live a new life, to give up our ungodly life and live a godly life, to give up our self-centered life and to live a Christ-centered life. God’s grace has transforming power in this present age. So Paul said in verse 14, **“...who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”** We should always hold on to God’s grace, being sure that only God’s grace changes us, and persevere to grow in godliness whatever struggle we may be going through.

Jesus’ Second Coming gives us another reason to live a godly life. Verse 13 says, **“...while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ....”** When Jesus came

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into the world the first time he was born humbly in a manger, served all kinds of people, and died for our sins to offer salvation. But when he comes again, he will come with his angels in glory as the Judge. We wait for the manifestation of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is our hope. When he comes again, he will reward the godly. At the same time he will punish the ungodly. 2 Peter 3:10-11 say, **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives....”** We don’t know when Jesus will come again. We don’t know when we will go back to Jesus. Jesus told us to be always on the watch, and pray that we may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that we may be able to stand before the Son of Man (Lk 21:36).

Paul concluded in verse 15, **“These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.”** In order to carry out his ministry, Titus needed to trust the spiritual authority which comes from God and teach God’s truth boldly by faith.

In this passage we have heard many important instructions which we should remember and practice. But most of all, let’s hold on to the grace of God and let it work in us so that we may grow in godliness. The grace of God can make us influential men and women of God in our families, in our campuses, in our society, and beyond to advance the kingdom of God.