

Modeling Christ-Likeness

Titus 2:1-10

Sept. 19, 2021

Our study of Titus chapter one was rather detailed.

We closely examined particular words in order to extract each word's precise meaning.

As we wade into chapter 2 this morning, I'd like to zoom out a bit, as it were, to make sure we don't miss Paul's overarching vision for the Christians of Crete.

Within this chapter Paul gives us the *purposes* that govern his *prescriptions*.

Why is this noteworthy?

Paul's prescriptions in chapter one were uniform—they were directed at one group of persons—church leaders.

Paul essentially says to Titus, “I want you to appoint elders in every town, but these elders must be marked in particular ways. Here is a list of 11 character traits to guide you.”

In chapter 2, Paul gives counsel to older men and to younger men, to older women and to younger women, and to slaves.

There are differences in what Paul prescribes to persons in each of these life stations.

And the interpretive danger is to get hung up on these differences.

There is a way to examine this chapter and fret that Paul prescribes one thing to older Christians, and another to younger ones.

We might be tempted to unduly scrutinize why Paul prescribes one thing to men and another thing to women.

Or maybe we are tripped up by Paul’s counsel to slaves.

A wider reading of the New Testament reveals that the behaviours prescribed for persons of a particular station should not be viewed as exclusive to that station...

For example, Paul exhorts older men to behave in a manner that is **dignified** (2:2), but this doesn't mean persons in other stations of life need not act in dignified ways.

Another example: Paul urges older women to not be "**slaves to much wine**" (2:3), but this doesn't mean everyone else is allowed to get drunk.

In other places within the New Testament we see similar prescriptions given, but with a universal application in view.

While Paul may want Titus to emphasize certain behaviours with certain groups within the particular context of Crete, we ought not drift from the universal application of these behaviours.

If we get hung up on particular phrases to particular persons or groups we risk *missing the forest for the trees*.

If we narrow our focus too much, we risk missing the larger purposes in play.

What is Paul aiming at with these prescriptions?

Two purposes are identified.

The first purpose is found in verse 5 and is framed in the negative:

“That the Word of God may not be reviled.”

The second purpose is set out in verse 10:

“That in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.”

You might say that these purposes are two sides of the same coin.

Negatively stated, Paul says, “Don’t behave in a way that makes God and His Word look badly.”

Positively stated, Paul says, “Behave in a way that makes God and His Word look attractive.”

And if we press for specific examples, Paul then gives a rather lengthy list of character traits that spans several life stations.

Whether we are young or old, male or female, an employee or an employer, we have an opportunity to beautifully **adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour** by how we behave.

I’m intrigued that while particular behaviours are emphasized by Paul, he bookends his prescriptions talking about ***doctrine***.

He begins in verse 1: “**as for you, teach what accords with sound *doctrine*.**”

And then Paul closes this section of the letter urging Christians to “**adorn the *doctrine* of (Christ)**” (2:10).

The implied correlation is clear: *Sound doctrine moves a person towards Christ-likeness.*

Or, to put it another way:

What we believe has a profound impact upon how we behave.

I have heard many people over the years say things like, “I don’t really care much about doctrine; I just want to love Jesus.”

On the surface this may sound endearing, but it’s not a strategy that the New Testament commends.

Doctrine matters.

Theology—what we believe about God—is a matter of paramount importance.

It’s not enough for me to stand here and simply urge you to “love Jesus” without telling you what the New Testament teaches about the person of Jesus Christ.

It’s not enough for me to urge you towards Christ-likeness, without also shining a light on how the New Testament describes Christ-likeness.

“As for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.”

What we believe, and what we teach, is intimately connected to how we will behave.

We see this close connection in verse 7 where Paul writes, **“*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity*”**.

In short, Paul wants there to be no disconnect between what we *say* and what we *do*.

We are to **teach sound doctrine** *and* we are to **be a model of good works**.

Our *talk* needs to match our *walk*.

And what we learn from Paul in his letter to Titus is that *our walk with Christ is not a private matter*.

We are not afforded the opportunity to turn to our Christian brother, or sister, and say, “My relationship with Jesus isn’t any of your business.”

*The exhortation to **teach what accords with sound doctrine** doesn’t make any sense unless we are, in some sense, subject to one another.*

And so you have Paul urging older women to “**train the young women**” (2:4), and you have the older men being exhorted to “**urge the younger men**” in a variety of ways (2:6).

I want to challenge you a bit here.

I want to challenge you a bit—believing that the health of this faith community hinges in large measure upon what Paul is describing here.

You often hear me speak about your relationship with Jesus.

As your pastor, your personal growth with your Christian walk is very important.

This morning, however, Titus chapter 2 prompts me to ask a different question...

To what degree are you helping others grow in their relationship with Christ?

Are you training someone who is younger in the faith than you?

When it comes to Christian living, are you actively mentoring another person?

The answer might be “No” because you regard yourself to be somewhat young in the faith.

For you then, the question changes:

Are you currently being mentored in the faith by another person?

As I read Titus 2, it becomes clear that every Christian ought to be a mentor or a mentee.

Some of us might be both...

But none of us get to do this alone.

And if you are going at the Christian life all alone, you are not going about the Christian life as God intends you to.

Why appoint elders in every town if religion is simply a private exercise?

But of course, Christianity is not a private endeavour.

We need one another.

And we need one another in very particular ways.

We need to **teach what accords with sound doctrine.**

We need to speak God's truth into one another's lives.

We do this understanding that there is a correlation between what we believe and how we behave.

God has so designed the Body of Christ to have interdependence between its members.

And the help we provide one another enables us to better adorn the doctrine of Christ.

Our primary aim is to make Jesus look glorious.

Of course, Jesus is glorious in and of Himself, independently of any human response...

Nevertheless, the glory of Jesus is not yet on full display for the world to see.

God has ordained for the glory of Christ to be revealed through the conduct of His people.

For better, or for worse, God has ordained for the world to get a glimpse of His glory through us.

A colleague of mine once said;

“Don't worry about what your neighbours think about you. Worry about what your neighbours think about God because of you.”

How we represent Jesus to the world matters immensely.

Think back with me to when you were in school...

Many of you, like me, wore a school uniform everyday.

This was a challenge for me.

This was a challenge for me because, as a teenager, I was always getting into trouble and doing things I ought not to be doing.

And when I was outside the gates of my school, I had to be very careful...

Because I was wearing this uniform, which clearly identified the school I was representing.

I learned the hard way that my misdeeds and poor behaviour didn't simply reflect upon me, but upon the school that I represented.

The visible reminder was helpful.

Wearing that blue blazer with my school crest was my visible reminder to behave in a particular way.

I realize we do not have a physical uniform to identify us as followers of Jesus...

But many know what you believe.

Many know that you profess to be a Christian.

How you behave impacts how others see Jesus.

How we behave impacts how others see Jesus.

I grew up going to church and attending Sunday School, but I didn't notice anything that distinguished the people in the congregation from those who didn't attend church.

It's not that the congregation made Jesus look badly...

It's that the congregation made Jesus look *boring*.

I'm not simply talking about a manner of worship here, but I do include that.

We make Jesus look boring when we relegate Jesus to the periphery of our life.

For example, what are we conveying to the world when we always choose family time over Jesus?

For many of us, the challenge isn't that we choose sinful activities over Jesus but that we choose good and legitimate things over Jesus.

If you were to ask me to characterize “**sound doctrine**” in a phrase, here is what I would say...

Sound doctrine emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus over all things.

And so to properly adorn the doctrine of Christ is to make Him supreme in your life.

To properly adorn the doctrine of Christ is to order your life in such a way that others see that Christ is preeminent to you—not just important, but of surpassing importance.

My dear congregation...I urge you both as individual Christians, and collectively...

Let us show the world the beauty of Jesus Christ.

May our lives, submitted to Him, display His glory. Amen.