

# Church Ministries

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[ 0 : 00 ] My name is Sean. For those of you who are visiting, I'm here. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and I'm preaching God's Word on most Sundays. And today we're in Titus 2. We're going through this short series for a few weeks.

And it's possible, right, for Christians who profess Jesus Christ with their words only to then deny Him with their deeds, turning around and living in hypocrisy.

And that kind of hypocrisy destroys the credibility of the church and diminishes the plausibility of the gospel. And so with that concern in mind, Paul writes this passage that we just read.

And his main point is that we should produce good works in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ. That's his main point. And I will talk about that in two parts.

First, good works in verses 1 to 10, and secondly, good news in verses 11 to 15. And in chapter 1, just to remind you, Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders who would give instruction to sound doctrine in the church in Crete.

[ 1 : 06 ] And then he told him, instructed Titus to confront the false teachers in Crete who were not sound in the faith and were teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

So now, remember that content. And now in chapter 2, verse 1, Paul exhorts Titus to distinguish himself from these false teachers who were not sound in faith by teaching something that is according to sound doctrine.

He says in verse 1, But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. That's really Paul's main exhortation, and he repeats it at the end of this chapter in verse 15. And the word sound, as I mentioned last week, is a medical term.

It's a metaphor that is prominent in Titus. And it means that there's a kind of teaching that is appropriate to sound doctrine, healthful doctrine, wholesome doctrine.

And there's a kind of teaching that is harmful. Harmful doctrine, diseased doctrine, sickly doctrine. So this expression clearly teaches us that our theology is not inconsequential.

[ 2 : 12 ] What we believe affects how we behave. And for that reason, it is important that we have sound doctrine, have behavior that accords with that sound doctrine. And so starting in verse 2, Paul goes on to describe how Titus should teach various demographic segments of the church to live.

And he says in verse 2, read with me. By the way, if you don't have a Bible that you're following along with, I encourage you to get up and grab one because I refer back to it quite a bit. It says in verse 2, Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

Paul is not referring here to elders, the office of elders. He's referring to elder men. The two Greek words are slightly different and distinguish the office of elder from the elderly in the church.

In the Roman world, males of 16 and younger were considered boys. Those between 17 and 46 were considered young men who were eligible for military conscription.

And those 47 and older were considered elders or seniors. It would be nice if you got senior benefits at 47 now. But first, these older men are to be sober-minded, meaning they should not be given to too much wine.

[ 3 : 33 ] And that they should be sober in their judgments and clear-minded. Second, they should be dignified, meaning they should be worthy of respect. That means they should give themselves to, they should not be concerned with cheap, showy, crass, ignoble tendencies and things, but they should be given to noble, good, and worthy things and tendencies.

That's what it means to be dignified. Third, they should be self-controlled. This is a key word throughout this passage. It was one of the character requirements for elders in chapter 1, verse 8.

And it should characterize men and women, young and old. So it's repeated throughout this passage three more times in verses 5, 6, and 12. It conveys a nuance of sexual chastity, but also has a general meaning of being disciplined and in control of oneself.

Fourth, they should be sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Soundness of doctrine produces soundness in faith, love, and steadfastness.

So this is a variation of the famous Paulian triad of faith, hope, and love, which we saw in 1 Corinthians 13. If you look at what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1, 2-3, he says this, We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 4 : 58 ] So by steadfastness, he's referring to steadfastness of hope. It's again the Paulian triad, faith, hope, and love. So it means to persevere in hope in spite of appearances.

To the contrary, to hope against all odds. And so Christians then are to live by faith in Christ who saved them, with love for God and neighbor, and with hope in their future inheritance, which is guaranteed to them by the Holy Spirit who is their deposit.

And so as men age, of course, they can grow increasingly skeptical rather than faithful. They can grow grouchy and grumpy rather than loving.

They could grow cynical rather than hopeful. So this is a particular command that Paul gives to older men. And Paul urges Titus to teach them to be sound, healthy, and vigorous in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

And then Paul addresses the older woman in verse 3. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. So essentially, a Jewish philosopher named Philo uses the term older woman to refer to women over 60 years of age.

[ 6 : 15 ] And parallels what Paul, the requirement for age for widows who receive financial support from the church, which is 60 according to 1 Timothy 5, 9 as well.

But Paul doesn't specify the age, so we don't have to be legalistic in our application of it. So if you think this applies to you, then take it to heart and take it as God's word for you today. First, these older women are to be reverent in behavior.

The Greek word behind this translation literally means behavior that is fitting for the temple. So they should comport themselves reverently. It's similar to the qualifications for older men to be dignified.

And then second, the older women must not be slanderers. While men are also liable to slander, this seems to be an issue that particularly pertains to women, because since here and in 1 Timothy 3, 11, it's a quality that's specifically enjoined upon women.

And Janet Hyde from University of Wisconsin-Madison and Nita McKinley from the University of Washington are professors, psychology professors, who do meta-research on all researches on sex differences.

[ 7 : 22 ] So they research all the research. As they do this research, they account for biases. They find that there are irreducible sex differences. And one such difference is that women are better at verbal fluency than men.

And that reading and speech disorders are far less common among young girls than boys. And recent research has also confirmed that women are generally more sensitive to social effective signals in people's faces.

So that enables them to read between the lines. Some of you women are probably wondering, so they needed to do research to figure this out. So the point of all that, all the research, why is it important, is that the woman's verbal fluency, right, combined with the rich interpersonal relations that they tend to form among themselves, cultivate among themselves because of their rich interpersonal abilities, they are particularly vulnerable to the temptations of ungodly speech, whether it's slander or gossip, right?

So spreading a bad report about someone is slanderous, whether it's true or not. And so older women should take particular care to avoid it. That's Paul's point. Third, like the older men who are to be sober-minded, the older women are not to be slaves to much wine.

And so alcoholism is a problem among men and women, and it seems to have been a problem in the ancient world as it is in ours. While drinking itself is not condemned throughout Scripture, generally speaking, the drunkenness is invariably condemned throughout Scripture.

[ 8 : 54 ] And when we get drunk, we leave our wits behind and lose self-control, so older women must avoid this. Fourth, the older women are to teach what is good. The root word for good here is used two more times in this passage, in verses 7 and 14, to refer to good works, which is a major theme in this letter.

And the word teach is the same word that is used in verse 1 to refer to sound doctrine. So the idea of teaching what is good then goes all the way back to verse 1 of teaching what accords with sound doctrine, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Then in verses 4 to 5, Paul tells us whom the older women are to teach what is good to, and that's this. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

It's incumbent upon the older women to teach and train the young women. This is an important point. Look at the passage again. Note that all the other demographic groups are addressed directly, right?

Older men in verse 2, older women in verse 3, younger men in verse 6, and bond servants in verse 9, right? All of these groups fall under the main imperative directed to Titus in verse 1, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

[ 10 : 18 ] But interestingly, only the young women are not addressed directly in this way. Rather, the older women are exhorted to teach what is good, and so train the young women.

That's not to say that Titus and the elders of the church are not responsible for teaching the younger women. They are entrusted with oversight over the whole church, and as such, they will have to give an account to God regarding how faithfully they kept watch over the church members' souls, and that includes the younger women.

So they do need to have some kind of involvement in that. But there is, it seems, nonetheless, a particular responsibility for older women to train the young woman.

And Jen Wilkin, who heads up the women's ministry at the Village Church in Texas, writes this in her book, *Woman of the Word*, that women's ministry is necessary because of, one, the example, two, the perspective, and three, the authority of women teachers.

A woman can set an example for other women that a man cannot set, right? And a woman can bring a perspective that is particularly pertinent and helpful to women due to their shared experience.

[ 11 : 27 ] And a woman can speak with more empathetic authority as well and credibility to other women than a man can for that same reason. As an elder, right, for example, I can't meet with a young woman as freely as I can with men, and definitely not in private quarters, lest it multiply temptation and sole suspicion to others who look on.

And even though I can still proclaim scriptural truths to young women, I cannot speak with the same level of specificity or empathy that another Christian woman can, right? And so that's why this, I think, command and this older woman here are singled out for this task.

This is why we're excited to formally launch our women's ministry, which we'll do in a couple of weeks when we appoint the deacon of women's ministry. And that's been something we've been prioritizing over the men's ministry because of this particular need that we have as a church.

And so younger women, then I encourage you to seek out the older women in church. Go to their houses, spend time with them, offer to help them with their chores, learn from their life and doctrine, right?

And older women pursue the younger woman, offer to meet with them, minister God's word to them, and pray for them and set an example for them. That's the command. In verses four to five, Paul specifies what kind of teaching and training that older women are to do with the young woman.

[ 12 : 53 ] He says, So train the young woman to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

This does not apply only to married young woman, but Paul makes a fair assumption for his time that most young women in the church would be married. So he says, Train the young woman to love their husbands and children.

And the word train comes from the same word as the self-control, which I already mentioned is a key word. And training involves discipline, imparting self-control to someone.

And it first pertains to the young woman's love for their husbands and children. And you'll see in this whole list that there is a general homeward orientation in Paul's instructions to women.

And that's because of God's design in creation for men and women. The first man was named Adam, which is a wordplay on the Hebrew word Adama, which means ground or earth. His task given by God was to work the earth, work the ground.

[ 13 : 56 ] And so fittingly, when he sinned against God, the punishment was that the ground was cursed. So that when he worked the ground, it would yield thistles and thorns, and it would make the toil difficult.

It would make his work painful for him. And the first woman was named Eve, which means mother of all living. So fittingly, when she sinned against God, her punishment was that she would have pain in childbearing.

So this shows, that creation narrative shows God's purpose, his intention for men and women. And they have distinct, though certainly in ways overlapping, areas of specialization.

This doesn't mean that women are not allowed to work outside the home. For example, the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31, he seemed to be working outside the home, as well as inside the home.

And she's praised for her industriousness. Nevertheless, scripture does teach us that home is the woman's area of specialization, which can be seen in the very basic biological reality that only women can bear and nurture children.

[ 14 : 58 ] So that's why verses 4 to 5 have a homeward orientation. They are to love their husbands and children. They are also to be self-controlled and pure. As I mentioned, self-controlled has a nuance of chastity, but has a general meaning of being disciplined and in control of oneself.

And the word pure is related to that. It conveys modesty, holiness, reverential behavior. And then young women also are to be working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands.

In 1 Timothy 5, 13 to 14, same letter written by Paul around the same time, he mentions that some of the young widows in the church were idlers. This is a quote. Idlers going about from house to house, gossips and busybodies.

And instead, so Paul is contrasting that description with his exhortation here. He charges them to instead be working at home. He wants them not to be busybodies, but to be busy workers.

And this shows also that the Bible accords great dignity to homemaking, that most of our world still refuses to acknowledge, that homemaking is work, that mothering is work.

[ 16 : 06 ] Hannah and I recently had a friend over, who was here visiting from California for her 10-year reunion at Harvard. And she had a child recently, and she, after completing her maternity leave, went back to her consulting job in California.

And when, but when she told us that going back to work for her was like vacation, because of how taxing mentally and physically her work at home was.

That's real work, and it's difficult work. It's work that God honors. And then, he says, they should be submissive to their own husbands.

They should be kind, right? Kind probably refers to her benevolent and gracious posture toward those in her home, as well as to outsiders. And lastly, they are to be submissive to their own husbands, which is a frequent Pauline instruction to married women.

And for some reason, for some, for people in our day, the word submit doesn't, you know, sit well with most of us, right? It conjures up an image of forced subject, subjugation of people.

[ 17 : 13 ] But submission, the word submission, like the word humility, even though they were vilified in Paul's own culture, they were embraced by Christians, because even though they despised submission and humility as forms of weakness, as Christians embraced them as Christian virtues, because our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified for us in his submission to his Lord, to his Father, and in dying for our sins.

And so, submission and humility are hailed as models, as virtues that every Christian should follow, and to seek to embody. And so, for that reason, being submissive here is not a sign of weakness, but it's a sign of strength.

And notice that it says, the command is addressed to the woman. The married women are called to submit to their respective husbands. It's not addressed to the husbands. The husbands are not called to make their wives submit, right?

It's a voluntary submission by the wives. And in this context, also, it says the command is to be submissive to their own husbands, right? The command is given not from one gender to another, but to one wife, to her husband.

The concern is to govern the household relationships, not to govern a gender relationship in general. And that means, that's a calling for the wife to be submissive, means to affirm and to support the leadership of her husband, and to support him instead of usurping his prerogative to lead, his calling to lead.

[ 18 : 43 ] And the purpose of all of these good works is that the word of God may not be reviled. By being obedient to God and doing good works in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ, we ensure that the word of God would not be reviled.

And that concern is not to bring, that concern that Paul has not to bring reproach to the gospel of Jesus Christ through our own disorderly and disobedient conduct. And then, in verse 6, Paul turns to the younger men.

And it's so funny how, I don't know if this is Paul's intention, but it seems funny to me that when it comes to the younger men, he radically simplifies the instruction. He gives them one thing to focus on, and that is, be self-controlled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. This is now the fourth time Paul's used the word. And sometimes, I guess, the way to be most comprehensive is not to give a long list, but to be general, right?

And he gives a general command, be self-controlled in everything. And, of course, I think that's particularly geared toward younger men here as well, because that's often something that young men struggle with, self-control in various aspects of their lives.

[ 19 : 53 ] And then, Paul's exhortation to young men, I think, is also cut short by the fact that as he's addressing young men in particular, his mind turns to one specific young man who has greater responsibility over this church than any other young man in the church, and that's Titus, right?

And so, he begins to address Titus directly in verses 7 to 8. The good works that Titus is instructed to to enjoin upon all the members of the church, Titus himself is supposed to be a model of it.

He's supposed to set the pattern that others are to follow, and that's in stark contrast to the false teachers in Crete who were described in chapter 1, verse 16, as unfit for any good work.

Instead, Titus is to show good works, to be a model of good works in all respect. And since he is a teacher in the church, his teaching also must show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned.

Integrity is speaking of his sincerity, that he does not have ulterior motives, impure motives in his teaching. And there must be an earnestness that characterizes his teaching.

[ 21 : 14 ] It must be characterized by integrity. Similarly, his teaching must showcase dignity. It should show, it should command, the character of his teaching should be such that it commands respect for God and his word.

There should be a sense of weight, a worthiness to his preaching. And finally, his teaching must show sound speech, which again harkens back to the theme of sound doctrine. The Titus' teaching must be healthful.

Its content must be theologically sound. The word speech in Greek literally means word. It's the sound word, which is often in the writings, New Testaments refer to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He's saying that his teaching must be characterized by sound word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the doctrine. And even if he does this, he will preach something that cannot be condemned.

And of course, that doesn't mean that no one will reject the gospel. There will always be people who condemn the gospel, but at least the gospel will not be condemnable. He will preach a true gospel, and the fault will lie with those who condemn it, not with Titus himself.

[ 22 : 21 ] And what's the purpose, again, of Titus guarding his life and doctrine in this way? The answer is given in verse 8, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

By being in all respects a model of good works, and by teaching with integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, Titus can expose the folly and falsity of his opponents and put them to shame.

By providing no material fodder for evil, Titus can silence the enemies of the church. And then lastly, in verses 9 to 10, Paul addresses the bondservants who are to be submissive to their own masters in everything.

They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Just as young women were encouraged to be submissive to their own husbands, here the bondservants are encouraged to be submissive to their own masters.

It's the exact same phrasing. And just as not all women are called to submit to all men, but the wife is called to submit to her husband, not all bondservants are called to submit to all masters or freed people, but only to their own masters.

[ 23 : 31 ] And this shows that slavery in the Greco-Roman world was not a race-based one like the one we're familiar with. It was not a kidnap-sourced slavery like the ones we're familiar with, but rather it was an economic contractual agreement that is more akin to employer-employee relationships today than to the slavery that we're familiar with.

And in what sense are bondservants to be submissive to their own masters and everything? Paul explains in the following list of qualifications. He says they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative.

The word well-pleasing, it refers to those who responsibly perform their civic duty. So here bondservants are to be responsible in their duties toward their masters. They should please them in their work.

And related to this, they are not to be argumentative. Instead of talking back to their masters or talking behind their backs, they should be agreeable and compliant. In addition, they are not to be pilfering, but showing all good faith.

It was proverbial in the ancient world that slaves engaged in petty theft from their masters. But Paul tells them, the Christian slaves, rather than pilfering, they should show all good faith.

[ 24 : 41 ] They are to prove themselves to be trustworthy in every aspect to their masters. And then once again, Paul gives the purpose of all this. Why should Christian bondservants show all good faith in this manner?

He says in verse 10, so that in everything, they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior. And the phrase, in everything, is repeated in parallel fashion to make this point.

They are to be submissive in everything, so that they might adorn the gospel in everything. Paul's saying the reason why you behave this way is not because of the inherent worthiness or dignity of your master, but because of your concern to adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And note that three times in this passage, Paul uses purpose clauses to explain why Christians ought to behave in a manner that accords with sound doctrine. And they're all essentially the same.

Why should young women love their husbands and children? Paul writes, so that the word of God may not be reviled. Verse five. Why should Titus show himself in all respects to be a model of good works?

[ 25 : 45 ] So that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Verse eight. Why should bondservants be submissive to their own masters in everything? So that in everything, they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior.

So all throughout, every time, when he gives this purpose, Paul's concerned about the reputation of the church, not for their own sake, but so that the word of God may not be reviled.

So that the doctrine of God may be adorned. This is so much more than just the public relations management.

I've been seeing a lot of PR moves by companies lately. Wells Fargo has been embroiled in account fraud scandal.

And they had created millions of fraudulent savings and checking accounts on behalf of clients without their consent. So they launched a publicity campaign entitled Earning Back Your Trust, vying to, quote, we commit to their clients, fixing what went wrong, and making things right.

[ 26 : 52 ] Similarly, Facebook was recently embroiled in a data breach scandal, or privacy scandal, where they exposed personally identifiable information of up to 87 million people to a political consulting firm.

And so in response, they launched a publicity campaign entitled Here Together, acknowledging their data misuse and vowing to do more to keep you safe and protect your privacy. All these companies are concerned for their reputation, ultimately because they need to protect their bottom line.

They're for-profit companies. But Paul's intention in protecting the reputation of church was not to protect his job.

He didn't even get paid for his ministry. It's not to make sure that the church is esteemed and respected by society. His overriding concern is to protect the witness of the gospel because we, the church, are the stewards of the transcendent truth that is supremely important because the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

We have to be concerned with publishing this good news everywhere and to everyone. And if people reproach us, they despise us, who cares?

[ 28 : 11 ] As long as they believe the gospel and follow Christ. But because the reproach of the church brings reproach to Christ, because the integrity of the church affects the credibility of the gospel, that's why it's imperative that we live in a manner that accords with sound doctrine.

Thomas Watson, who was a 17th century English pastor, he writes this in his book, All Things for Good. So many being drunk with the wine of prosperity when the honor of God is wounded and his truths lie a bleeding, are not affected by it.

Did men love God? They would grieve to see his glory suffer and religion itself become a martyr. Do you grieve your sins?

Not because it brings shame on you, but because it brings shame on Christ. Let the whole world despise and leave me, but I will not stand to bring reproach to my Lord Jesus Christ.

That should be our heart's desire. That should be the heart of those who love Christ and his gospel. And so that's the good works. That's why it's necessary.

[ 29 : 36 ] And if adorning the doctrine of God our Savior is the purpose of our good works, the doctrine of God our Savior is the reason why we do the good works. It's the cause. The good works that Paul's enjoining on all of us is the natural byproduct of the good news that Paul preached.



And that's Paul's point in the rest of the passage. Good news is the basis for our good works. Good works is the result. And good news is the cause. And here's how we know about that.

Paul says in verse 11, for, that's the reason, for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. Grace is such a sweet word for the Christian because it represents the sum of all divine blessings that we experience.

And grace means unmerited favor. It's a favor that is bestowed upon us by God even though we do not deserve it. It's not given to us as a payment.

It's not given to us as a reward. It's not given to us as a remuneration, but as a gift. It stems from the sheer bounty and generosity of the giver and it is given to us freely.

[ 30 : 42 ] And that's the grace of God he's talking about. I'll mention more about this, but Paul is talking about the grace of God appearing. What he means by that is the first coming of Jesus Christ. The first time Jesus has appeared, he entered the world to save us.

That's the appearance that he's talking about. That's the grace of God appearing. And he continues in verse 12 that this grace of God that has appeared is training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

The grace of God trains us. Isn't that a wonderful expression? The word train is a very apt translation. It combines the meaning of both instruction and discipline.

Man-made religions teach us that we must do good works in order to earn God's will. But the gospel teaches us that we are saved not by our good works, but by God's grace.

That we are saved not by good works, but for good works. And sometimes people fear that this gospel, that this doctrine makes people lazy, passive, not interested in doing any good works.

[ 31 : 52 ] But the exact opposite is true. Paul teaches us here that it is the free grace of God that trains us. It instructs us and disciplines us.

It's not the law of God, but the grace of God that energizes us, enables us, and empowers us on the one hand to renounce godliness and on the other hand to live godly lives.

We put off the evil and put on the good. And notice the repetition of the key word self-control again. Repeatedly, Paul exhorted believers in Crete to be self-controlled, and now he tells them how they can be self-controlled.

We do it by the grace of God. The grace of God trains us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. And those three words, self-control, upright, and godly lives may respectively govern how we relate to ourselves and to others and to God.

Right? The inward orientation of self-control, the outward orientation of uprightness, and the upward orientation of imitating God, of having godliness in the Christian life.

[ 33 : 01 ] And not only does the grace of God train us to live godly lives in the present age, it also gives us hope for the age to come. Paul continues in verse 13, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is not the second time Paul's used the word appearing. In the first use, Paul's referring to Christ's first coming when he came to save us. Now, in the second use, Paul's referring to Christ's second coming when he comes to judge and to establish his rule over all creation.

At his first coming 2,000 years ago, Christ revealed the grace of God, as it says in verse 11. And at his second coming, Christ will reveal the glory of God. God's grace is the river's source, the headwaters from which all our spiritual blessings flow, and God's glory is the river mouth.

Right? The ocean of God's glory to which our spiritual blessings are flowing. Grace is the origin of God's saving work, and glory is the destiny of God's saving work. So a true Christian, then, is someone who lives from grace to glory between the two appearances of Christ.

And that's how we produce good works in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ. So Christians, then, are those who are trained by the grace of God in the present age and those who are waiting for the glory of God in the age to come.

[ 34 : 28 ] We're like flowers, right, that are planted firmly and rooted deeply in the grace of God, revealed at Christ's first coming, and we are growing and stretching forth toward the son of the glory of God to be revealed at Christ's second coming.

And that's a blessed hope that we have, Paul writes. He calls it a blessed hope, a happy hope. Why is it such a happy hope? Jonathan Edwards, a 17th century pastor, American pastor, writes this.

God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. The enjoyment of him is our proper and is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied.

To go to heaven fully to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here, better than fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of any or all earthly friends.

These are but shadows, but the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain.

[ 35 : 42 ] These are but drops, but God is the ocean. That hope that we have for the glory of God, that's what sustains us, helps us to persevere and to be trained by the grace of God to live godly lives.

And this hope that we have is sure. It's not an illusion. It's founded on our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Right? Paul, throughout the verses 11 to 15, Paul's used a lot of words and concepts that are prominent among the pagan religions that were contemporary to Christianity.

And so words like appearing, train, godliness, upright, self-control, as well as the phrase great God and Savior all had their usages in pagan religions.

So for example, the Greek king Antiochus was called by people as God appearing. Pagan goddess Artemis and the Roman emperor Claudius were described as the great God.

And the Macedonian general, Ptolemy I, as well as Julius Caesar, were all at various points called God and Savior. So by using these words, Paul is setting up a deliberate contrast between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the false man-made religions of the world.

[ 37 : 01 ] Antiochus is not God appearing. He's a mere man even though he styles himself as God. But Christ, he is God incarnate. He is the word made flesh.

He is God appearing. That's what Paul is telling us. Ptolemy I was a man and general, yes. Julius Caesar was a man and dictator, but neither were God and Savior, but Christ.

He really is the true God and Savior. In the Greek, the words God and Savior are governed by the same article. So it shows that it's referring to one person, Jesus Christ, and not to two persons.

So it's not talking about our great God, the Father, and then Savior, Jesus Christ. No, he's talking about Jesus as our great God and Savior. And that's an amazing statement for a Jew to make.

It's no easy thing for a faithful Jew who has for generations, Jews who for generations after generations, thousands of years, have worshipped the one God to acknowledge that Jesus, the Son of God, he is God and Savior.

[ 38 : 05 ] And Paul repeats that audacious claim in this early letter of his three times throughout the letter to Titus. Once in each chapter, he calls God the Father, Savior, and then just one or two verses after that, he calls Jesus Christ our Savior.

He's intentionally making the connection that these two persons of the Trinity are one and the same God. So who are you putting your faith in as your Savior in your life?

What are you putting your faith in? You might not think that you need saving, but God sent us as a Savior because you do.

And no mere man can save you. Money cannot save you. Your hard work and success cannot save you. Politics cannot save you. Marriage cannot save you.

If you put your ultimate hope in any of these things, they will disappoint you and leave you emptier than you started because you were created for a relationship with God, to have eternal fellowship with Him.

[ 39 : 11 ] And the only person who makes that possible is our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. And how does Jesus save us?

Verse 14 tells us, He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.

Christ saves us by redeeming us and purifying us. Redemption refers to purchasing the freedom of a slave. We were all once slaves to sin and lawlessness, but Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us.

Christ gave Himself for us as the ransom price for our freedom. we were all in debtors' prison enslaved by lawlessness, but Christ paid the price of our freedom by dying on the cross for our sins.

If you're not yet a follower of Christ, then you are still enslaved to lawlessness. And you must turn to Christ as your Redeemer. Lawlessness creates an illusion of freedom because it makes you feel like you're your own Lord.

[ 40 : 23 ] But the exact opposite is true. Rule of law is the foundation of every free society. In the absence of the rule of law, might makes right and your inalienable rights get denied for the sake of indulging others who are more powerful than you.

Sin enslaves us. Lawlessness, though we might feel free, it enslaves us. And Christ redeems us from all lawlessness and restores us to right relationship with God.

Likewise, Christ also purifies us. Purification refers to Christ washing us from our sins. Sin was on all of us like filthy rags. We had the grime of sin smeared all over our souls.

But Christ washed us clean with his blood and clothed us with the righteousness, the clean robes of his righteousness. And if you are not yet a follower of Christ, you must repent of your sins and receive this purification through faith.

No one can enter into the presence of the holy king in filthy rags. We must be washed and clothed with appropriate attire. And Christ freely offers this to you only if you would entrust yourself to him.

[ 41 : 40 ] And once you do this, Christ takes you as his special possession. It says in verse 14, Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Christ redeems us and purifies us so that we might belong to him as his own. And the word own here is an emphatic word that means one's very own. Something that designates a special possession.

Not any ordinary common possession, but a special possession, a cherished possession, a people whom God delights to call his own, my very own.

That's the expression that was frequently used in the Old Testament to describe Israel, God's people. And now Paul tells us that the church, those that believe in Jesus Christ, are the new people of God.

And as such, people, we are to be zealous for good works. This directly contrasts the description again of the Cretans who are described as unfit for any good work.

[ 42 : 50 ] We are instead to be zealous for good works. Yes, moderation is good in most things. But when it comes to matters of ultimate importance, when it comes to knowing God, when it comes to loving God, when it comes to serving God, when it comes to good works for God's glory, moderation will not do.

Restraint will not do. Lukewarmness will not do. Be a zealot for good works. Give yourselves wholly to it.

Be passionate about it. Be earnestly committed to it. Give your life for it. Give it. And if you're already a follower of Christ, let me remind you that we don't do these good works in order to win God's favor or earn our salvation.

Rather, we pursue purity because, as it says here, because we have been purified by Christ. We behave in a godly way because we already belong to God as his special possession.

our good works stem from the good news of Jesus Christ, not the other way around. We are not sycophantic employees currying favor with our heavenly boss.

[ 44 : 18 ] We're adopted children of God secure in our place in the family, desiring to please our heavenly father because we love him.

So let's be a church that produces good works in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ. Please close your eyes and take a moment to silently reflect on this word, to think about how God is calling you to produce good works in keeping with the good news he has given us.

Amen. Amen.