

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

July 28, 2019

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Grace Does Good

PART

4

TITLE

Healthy Doctrine, Healthy Lives

SCRIPTURE

Titus 2:1-10



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Well, it's great to see all of you. I hope you've had a good week, and if you're new here, welcome. We're thrilled that you are our guest.

About 15 years ago, my wife and I, we said, "You know? This would be a great time for us to sort of start a way of life that may be a little bit more physically healthy than the one that we were on," and so we found a little plan, and it seems like every year there's a new plan, but at the time, there was a plan, and so we started it, and this plan, you basically worked out six days a week, and then you ate six meals a day. They were all small meals, and so you were never really hungry and you were really never full, which is really a miserable way to live, and no sugar, lots of carrots, no Bojangles, no smiling, no laughing. It was one of those.

But fortunately, the plan gave a free day, and so one out of seven days you didn't have to exercise, which wasn't our problem. We liked to kind of exercise, but you could eat anything you wanted to. Right? So we started on Monday, and so our free day was Sunday. So we made it through six days, and when we got to the first Saturday, I was so ready for Sunday, I went in to the kitchen and made my battle plan for what I was going to eat the next day when I woke up. It was pretty much everything that I wasn't really allowed to, that wasn't super healthy, and so went to bed and woke up the next morning way before the alarm, middle of the night, and Tabitha is not in bed. I'm like, "What's going on?" And so I get up and I head to the kitchen, and she's over in the corner eating a Reese's. Right? I'm like, "Baby, what are you doing?" And she said, "It's Sunday, look. No judging. No judging."

So I said, "All right, game on," and so I ... It was time. What was interesting, it's expected when you know that you eat so poorly. I felt terrible. And over the next several weeks, what was interesting is as we went through the week, my Sunday became less and less different from the rest because I just felt so much better when I was eating what is healthy, and this is a truth that moves beyond the physical and it moves into the spiritual.

Last Sunday, I showed you from the end of chapter 1 that our heart, our mind, it's like a mixing bowl, that we add ingredients, we add truth and doctrine, philosophies and ideas to that, and that affects us. It makes us think different ways. It makes us live different ways. You see, if we were going to make a cake, we would add ingredients, and even though the cake would look different than the batter, we know that whatever ingredients we add to the batter is going to show up in the cake, and so it is with our life.

When you look at your life today ... In fact, this passage, chapter 2, verses 1 through 10, list all kinds of different characteristics of how to live your life, and it's only natural when you see those to start thinking about our life, how we live, how we're treating other people, how we're managing money, how we're caring for the least of these or for our husband or wife or friend or children or parents, and it's only natural for us to think about our life. What I would simply encourage you to consider is I'm going to pray for us, and what I'm going to ask and what I'm going to ask you to ask God is that God would give you enough wisdom to not only properly evaluate how you're actually living your life, but He would give you the wisdom to be able to trace how you're living back to ingredients that you are either placing in or allowing to be in your heart or your mind.

So let me pray for us. Father in Heaven, we love you and we need your help now. Would you give us grace to understand truth in your word? Thank you so much for the privilege to be able to see a friend, a new brother in Christ, to be baptized in front of all of us and to declare that he is not ashamed of Jesus Christ and to be associated, and neither are we. Christ, there's a lot of things that I don't understand in the world, but one thing I do understand is that you are the most consequential person who's ever lived, that you died for us and you rose from the dead, and there's never been another champion over death, and so what you say matters. So as we open up your word, would you give us wisdom, help me to speak, help us to listen, even though we come with so many distractions, and give us grace, Lord, to be able to live a new kind of life. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

So we're in the second chapter of Titus. If you have a Bible, I would love for you to turn there. If you don't, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you, and if you don't have one at home, then take that home as a gift. But the book is really about good works. It's about how does our life bear witness to the truth of God, and so he keeps saying sentences like chapter 3, verse 12, and he says, "Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works." Good works, good works, good works. You just keep seeing this over and over and over again, and yet, it's really important that we understand that sometimes he doesn't use good works. He uses godliness. He uses those two things really simultaneously. You can just exchange one for the other, and this is why.

Everything that the Bible would call a good work, a kindness, love, forgiveness, mercy, it's literally an attribute of God, right? He says, "Forgive because I've forgiven you. Love as I have loved you. Be kind and generous. Why? Because I'm kind and generous towards you." In other words, any good work that is seen in our life is actually simply a reflection of the perfected form, who is Jesus Christ, and that's why godliness literally means like God, to be like God. When we forgive others when they have sinned us, we are like God when we forgive them because He has forgiven us.

And so godliness and good works is a fruit, and just like any other fruit, if I had an apple up here, you would know that it just didn't appear. In fact, there was a lot of things that took place in a sequence in order for there to be an apple. First, the ground had to be tilled, and all the sudden there had to be seeds and there had to be water and time and sunlight. There had to be nutrients. There had to be all kinds of things to where a tree would be able to actually grow and form fruit so that that fruit would be healthy. But oftentimes, what we do is we see something that's like a good work and we think, "I want it right now." And so Titus teaches us, as does the rest of the New Testament, how are these good works born out in our life? And there's the sequence, there's a process, and that process begins with God. It's God's grace. The whole series on Titus is called Grace Does Good, because God in His grace comes to us. It's like light that touches us, or like a prism, and it reflects into all different kinds of color.

And so it always starts with God. This is one thing I hope that you'll leave, when we're done with Titus, I hope you will remember one sentence maybe, and only one, and it's this. If it's not overflow, it's not Christian. If it begins with you, it's not Christian. It has to begin with Him. He looks at us and He says, "You don't deserve this, but I'm going to do you good," and the good that He did primarily was He sent His son to us in Jesus Christ. We have to enter a relationship with Him because we were severed because of our sin, and so the very first step after grace comes to us is we have to have faith. We place our faith in Jesus Christ, we enter into a new relationship with him, and all of the sudden he says, "Now I want you to grow in your knowledge of the truth." And the more that we know about truth, the more we know about who God is, that's His identity, and who we are, that's our identity.

The amazing thing is this, is whatever we do in life, the good works of our life or the bad works of our life, they're always in accord with our identity. And so if we could just see what God has done in giving us a new identity in Jesus, it propels us, it's like fuel, to where we're able to bear good fruit.

So there's these two guys, it's Paul and Titus. They're buddies, yet they're very different. One's old, one's young. One Jew, one Gentile. And yet, they're both looking at Jesus Christ, and Paul was sort of the mentor, the father of the faith, for Titus, who kind of looking in is like, "Wow, that's my mentor. That's my hero." And so they're working together, they're serving together, they're sharing the Gospel together. They are on an island called Crete, and Paul leaves, and Titus stays. A little bit later, he writes him a letter, and that's the letter that we have. In the letter, he says, "Look, it's so important. It's so important for you to help the church to take all the trash, all the bad ingredients out of the bowl, all these false doctrines, all these false teachings. You need to take that out to protect them, but you also need to teach them."

And then he tells him here what to teach. Verse 1, he says, "But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith and love and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. 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. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Bondservants 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."

And so what does grace do? What does God's grace do? I'm going to show you three things in these 10 verses. The first is God's grace provides sound doctrine. You notice how he starts and he says, "Titus, I want you to teach these believers what accords with sound doctrine." So he's making an assumption not only that there is such things as sound doctrine, but that they know it, that Titus knows it. He's saying, "There's this thing called sound doctrine. I want you to teach what is in accord or what is consistent with this sound doctrine." Perhaps one of the most amazing things that if you look at this text that you're just going to read right over is the sheer privilege and miracle it is that we can have sound doctrine.

Did you know that we didn't earn it, we don't deserve it? We've not earned God's grace in our life to give us instruction on how to live. We sinned against Him, and He could have said, "All right, that's it. Good luck." But instead, He gives us teaching and training from the scriptures. It's such a miracle that we have sound doctrine.

The word sound is simply ... It's an adjective. It means healthy. There's unsound and there's sound. Now, doctrine is a different word, and we need to sort of unpack what doctrine is. Otherwise, you're not going to be able to really see the wonder of this or the significance of having sound doctrine. Doctrine is the explanation of truth. It's when you understand what is true about something, and then you're able to instruct it to somebody else. But isn't it true that doctrine is sort of a stale word? I mean, doctrine, it sounds tight and academic, doesn't it? It doesn't sound something like a big hug. It's not warm and tender, it's doctrine, and so sometimes we're like, "Eh, doctrine," but doctrine is such a gift. Let me show you what it is.

God's word is sort of like a big chest a diamonds. You look at a diamond, and every single one of them, they have shape and color and beauty. They're absolutely brilliant. And if you can think about the Bible as a chest and every truth in it is a diamond, then you'll understand what doctrine is. This is what sound doctrine does. You ready? Sound doctrine shows up, and all the sudden it opens the lid and it looks in, and there you remember, sound doctrine remembers that what we're about to touch is so valuable and so precious and so undeserved that when it's sound doctrine, you never do it haphazardly, you never do it apathetically. You do it with sheer amazement that God would allow you to touch something so significant, and so you put on white gloves called humility, so that we're not standing over these things as though we're the king, but we're sitting under them just saying, "God, we simply want you to teach us."

And then what sound doctrine does is, just like a chest that's full of diamonds, there's some on the bottom. Well, the ones on the top are the ones we use a lot, but sound doctrine recognizes that every diamond affects all the rest of the diamonds, and so what sound doctrine does is it pulls them all out and arranges them so that the ones on the top and the bottom can be seen, and now we can see all of them. And then what sound doctrine does is it seeks to learn how each clarifies the other. You see, if you only had this one, you would know something that's true, but if there's 50 other diamonds that speak into your knowledge of this one, all the sudden now you know something fuller and brighter and bigger.

For example, some of you have probably heard, or maybe you even believe, you know what? Jesus was on this earth and he never claimed to be the Son of God because he kept claiming to be the Son of man. Indeed, Jesus did frequently claim to be the Son of man. But if you have sound doctrine, then what you've done is you've recognized that Son of man is also mentioned in various other places of the Bible so you can understand more about what Jesus meant when he said it. And you turn to Daniel chapter 7 and there it says that the Almighty God, the creator of the Heavens and the Earth, the Lord of all who is the Son of God is going to come to this earth, and he is going to be called the Son of man. Because Son of God and Son of man are two titles for the same person. He knows everything about being God because he's God, and yet he knows everything about being man because he was purely man. He was both. And so he could mediate between the two.

Now, if you understand that, then when you come across a passage that says that he was the Son of man, false doctrine would say, "See? He's only a man. He's not God." But sound doctrine won't just say, "No, you're wrong. He's the Son of God." It will also inspire you to be absolutely overwhelmed at the thought that God took on flesh to save you, that He's been tempted in every way, just as you and I have been, and yet He was without sin, and all the sudden, one diamond, it's not only clarifying the other but it's adding color to it. It's helping us to worship. It's creating a life that's so healthy, and so then, once we see now that sound doctrine's able to explain them, protect them from pirates who would seek to steal some and add counterfeits, and eventually look to people and appeal for faith. Do you see who He is? Do you see what He's done? Do you see how we can live? How can you not believe this? How can you not give your entire life to making this person known? This is what sound doctrine does. And so sound doctrine is foundational.

Now, you look at this picture right here, and what you find is there's a really, really strong lighthouse, but there's even a stronger foundation. This is what we find here. Verse 1, this is verse 1: Teach, build a lighthouse with what accords with a rock base. There are true things that have happened. Now, how do we live consistently with those?

Now, if you're following, then you're going to understand something very important, and it's this, and that is that if doctrine is unsound, then our teaching on how to live in accord with that doctrine will also be unsound. You know, there are people today that are going to gather in a place that they call worship, and one of their foundational doctrines is that one race is superior to another. If you're new here, this isn't one of those places. We believe that everybody was created in the image of God, everyone. So there's equality and personhood and dignity. But you know what's interesting, those places, when they have a foundational doctrine that says that one race is more significant than another, they have to teach those people how to live in accord with that doctrine, which means that they're teaching people how to elevate their race and push down another.

There are churches today that are going to look within the scripture, and they're going to take one verse, and they're going to go, "See? There it is, right there. Jesus said, God said, that if we believe that He's going to heal us ..." or there's another one, "You know, it says that He's going to richly bestow His blessing upon us with all the blessings that He has." And so there are some people who are going to have unsound doctrine that says, "You know what? If we believe in Jesus Christ, we're going to be healthy and we're going to be wealthy."

And you know what those kinds of churches have to do today to the people who have gathered under this unsound doctrine? They have to teach how to live in accord with that unsound doctrine.

Now, they don't call it unsound doctrine. They just look at it and say, "See? God wants us to be healthy and wealthy," but don't you see this creates such tension in the world, and eventually such tension in the heart, because those same people, they start reading, and all of a sudden Paul, the one who wrote all of this stuff, is poor and imprisoned, and you're like, "Wait a minute," and all of the sudden they go through times where they've lost their job and they're like, "Wait a minute, this stuff doesn't work."

Friends, listen to me. This health and wealth thing, one day you will be perfectly healthy and wealthy if you know Christ in Heaven. It's not a wrong doctrine. It's wrongly timed. In Heaven, in Heaven. He says there is ... [inaudible] going to take away poverty and sickness. But it's not now. It is not now. So do you see the significance of having sound doctrine? Well, God did, which is why part of Jesus' soul-saving mission was a truth giving mission.

John 1:14 says that the Word, that's Jesus Christ, became flesh, and he dwelt among us, and we've seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace. Grace is what saves us. Truth, that's what instructs us. Jesus wanted us to know he was the perfect revelation of God, and you know what he did while he was here? He knew that we needed sound doctrine, and so one of the first things that he did, and he did it repeatedly, was he endorsed and authenticated the Old Testament, the law, prophets, and the writings, the three parts of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. When he was here, nobody argued with him. He says, "This is it."

He even talked about himself after he rose from the dead. He actually gathered two guys together after he said, "Hey, by the way, I happen to be Jesus. I'm the guy that ... on the road with you," and they're [inaudible] and it says, "And he began right then, through the law, the prophets, and the writings, to show everything was pointing to him." He authenticated the Old Testament, but you know what else he did? He entrusted some of his own authority as the perfect word of God to his apostles, to these unique individuals who had followed him and who had seen him resurrected from the dead, in order to be able to write, and this is so important.

Sometimes today you'll hear of certain church traditions, and they'll call ... This is an apostle, we're apostles. What we mean by that, what people mean by that, if it's sound doctrine, is a little A apostle, meaning a characteristic of an apostle is that they're sort of a frontier ministry, is that they're exceptional leaders that sort of rally and generate and say, "You know what? We can conquer this," and it's sort of a gift, and yet, it's not a big A apostle, which means when we today, people who say, "I have the giftedness of an apostle," when they write a love note to their wife, it doesn't get added to the Bible. But when those guys wrote letters, they became Titus, and Ephesians, and Philippians, and 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

You see, Ephesians 2:20 says that we, the household of God, have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, and so Jesus is the word. He is the perfect revelation of God. He entrusts some of his authority to apostles. Those apostles, they're preaching. Paul himself in Titus chapter 1, verse 1, he says, "I'm an apostle. I saw Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead." And now they're writing sound doctrine. That's what the New Testament is, it's an explanation of how sound doctrine moves its way and makes its way into our life. And they're preaching, and not only that, they're entrusting it to other people, pastors who will what? Who must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught. You know what that means? As taught, as they've received. That means the pastors can't make stuff up if it's sound. They can only receive what the apostles receive from Jesus, which is why we read the book, and which is why I would encourage you to read the book often.

You see, what I hope you simply see is this, is an absolutely ocean of ideas. God has provided us sound doctrine to build our life upon. The second thing, though, is that God's grace gives consistent instruction. In other words, he says, "All right, now you have some doctrine. Now teach something that's going to accord with that." So we have to ask the question, and this is ultimately what he was illustrating. This is not an exhaustive list of everything that a Christian must do. There's nothing in here on forgiveness, there's no mercy, there's no generosity. He doesn't mention any of those things. And so it's not an exhaustive list.

Paul is looking into the church, what he remembers of these little churches, maybe some of their weaknesses, and he's highlighting some of those areas for them. He's saying, "Titus, these are the kinds of things that you need to teach that accord with sound doctrine." What I hope that you understand in all of this is if it is a good work, it's an act of godliness and it's like Jesus ... In other words, can't you see Paul sitting there, "Titus, you remember that before Jesus died and rose from the dead, do you remember what he was like? He didn't pilfer and he wasn't argumentative. He bounded in good works. He was respectable. He was sound in faith and love and steadfastness. He was self-controlled, he was pure, he was kind, he was submissive, he loved people well. He cared about the home."

In other words, when Paul tells Titus to teach certain things to different groups of people, what is he saying? He's saying, "Going to look a little bit like Jesus." And so he says, "Teach these things. Older men are to be sober-minded." When somebody is drunk-minded, the world is upside down. They can't see things clearly. But as we age, if we're growing in maturity, what takes place is we begin to see things a little bit differently, a little bit clearer. He says that we're supposed to be dignified. Now, the word dignified, sometimes it sounds staunch and tight. Somebody that plays with kids isn't dignified, but that's not the case. A dignified person sings and laughs and plays with children and gets on the carpet and plays with kids, but what they do is this: instead of deifying youth, they recognize that it's more important for me to grow mature than to stay young. That creates an honorable way of living their life.

He says that they need to be self-controlled, literally to control their selfish impulses. Now, throughout the book in chapter 1, verse 8, we're told that elders should be self-controlled. In everything that I just read to you from verses 1 through 10, the only characteristic that is supposed to be seen in all the different people groups, ages and genders, is self-control.

And then next week, so I'm going to save it till next week, he actually says, "All right, this is how grace teaches us to be self-controlled." So self-control is for all of us. It's such a critically important one to him. What he's basically saying is this: we all have these appetites of the flesh, and when an older man finally gets to the place where they're self-controlled, what he's saying is this, is that they've learned to take all of that fuel and redirect it towards noble God-honoring ends instead of towards greed, pride, or lust. They're to be sound in faith, love, and steadfastness. In other words, to have a truth rudder to their life. They're supposed to have loving relationships. They'll also have hope, and the reason they're going to have these things is because they're familiar with grace.

I've always found it a little bit funny that at the very end when he gets to young men, I can see all the young men, "Okay, he finally got to us, here we go. Be self-controlled, okay, got that one. What else?" That's it. Just work on that one. Just one thing right now in your life. You have so much energy, you have so much zeal, you have so much just passion. Just find a way not to wreck your life by listening to everything your body demands. Just learn that. Because if you learn that, and you do that for decades, you'll develop a characteristic of your life that's sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, sound in love, and sound in hope.

Then he gets to women, and if you're paying attention, when I was reading, you're like, "Okay, there's a few landmines here," so let's dance on them together. Okay? First thing he says, "They're to be reverent," which is very similar to the word dignified. The idea here is simply this: C. S. Lewis says, "There is a joy that makes one serious." When you recognize that there is a joy to marriage or to children or to home or to life or relationships, it makes us very serious to pursue those things, and it creates an honorable legacy to our life. So he says they should be reverent, dignified.

Then he talks about wine and slander, sort of an interesting thing, right? An older woman may have a little bit more time that's discretionary because their children are out of the house, and so they give themselves or can give themselves to all manner of things, which includes, normally, hey, after that we should do lunch. We'll sip on wine and we'll talk about people. That's what he says. The word slander, sip on wine and slander people, the word slander is *diabolos* in Greek. It's where we get the word devil. The devil is the accuser of the brethren, the slander of people. So it's not a way to live our life as believers. The fact is, is that godly women won't have much time for wine and slander, because godly women are spending their time teaching, instructing, and mentoring younger women on what is good.

Now, this is amazing, this phrase is only used one time in the Bible, and it's directed to women. It's actually not talking about a teaching post where people gather to listen to you teach. It's actually talking about mentoring. It's being in the kitchen, in the living room, with a younger woman, with somebody else, imparting what you have learned about something to them, caring for them in this way, teaching them not only about character, things like purity, kindness, and self-control, but also about human flourishing, which typically begins in the home.

He adds this idea of love. I think this is amazing to me. Some of us think that we can't learn to love. That's not what the Bible says. It says older women should train younger women how to love their husbands and children. Some of you, you've already given up on your marriage because you think, "I don't love him anymore. I don't love her anymore," but I want you to know, on the basis of what we find here, is that love can be trained. You can learn how to love that person again.

One of the reasons this is so remarkable is because this was a culture of arranged marriages. Just imagine, you don't know this person at all. All the sudden, now this person is your husband. Like, "How do I love this person? Maybe someone else has gone before who's done this before. Let me find an older woman who I might be able to ask that same question to. Maybe she can be able to teach me." Loving.

Then he adds two other ideas that are a little hard on modern ears, and so perspective really helps. Right? He talks about wives to submit to your own husbands, and then he talks about work at home. Right? All of a sudden, your seat got a little tighter when I read that, when I just said that, and ... Well, I'll just leave it there. That causes some of us in the room a great deal of anxiety. Let me help you maybe understand this a little bit thought with two pictures, okay?

The first picture looks like one of peril, looks like somebody's about to die. Looks like there's risk and there's a tremendous problem, and some people look at these instructions and they go, "Man, that's what God did. He threw me off a cliff." But actually, the same picture, if it's properly oriented, this is what the picture is. She's not dying. She's not being thrown off a cliff. Actually, she's coming in for a hug. Okay? Now, on the basis of your understanding of God's goodness to you, you're going to look at the instructions in the Bible either as God's throwing you off a cliff or He's giving you a hug.

So he says submit to your own husbands. That's an interesting thing, isn't it? Now, Paul extrapolates on this in Ephesians 5 in much more color, which is why sound doctrine looks at other truth statements to help us understand this one. What we find is this, is that God created male and female both in his image to be able to communicate things about Him, and He planted in each one, the male and the female, a very specific relational desire. Every man in this room, they want to be respected. Every man in this room, whether you see them do it or not, they look into the mirror every single day and they ask the question, "Do I have what it takes?" The most arrogant men among us are the most insecure men who have yet to answer that question affirmatively, so they have to compensate.

But God looks at a woman and He created her very differently, with the unique desire to be loved. So a woman looks into the mirror every day of her life and she asks the question, “Am I lovely, or am I still lovely?”

So what does God do in His amazing mercy? He says, “Husbands and wives, I want you to come together, you’re going to be married,” and then He gives a very specific instruction that meets the other person’s relational need. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives, submit to your husbands as unto the Lord. Respect him as you respect the Lord.

And you know what’s interesting, is that God created it this way, is that when our heart, when a man’s heart feels respected, we’re apt to give that person who is honoring us love. And for a woman, when you feel loved by somebody, isn’t it only natural for your esteem of that person to rise? And so they feed each other in creating or in meeting God’s created needs within our hearts.

Now, if you can understand this picture, then you understand that God is not throwing you off the cliff. He’s actually giving you a great big hug. The other one is work at home. This is not saying that a wife is to only work in the home. Okay? Even in their culture ... And you have to understand, this is a totally different culture. I mean, like to wash clothes, it is an all day effort. To cook, it’s so different today, but even in this culture, it’s really interesting that he talks about work at home as being a part of what accords with sound doctrine. So what’s happening there? Why does he say this?

Well, if it’s sound doctrine, we’re going to consider other parts of the Bible to see, can a woman actually work outside the home? Like, if that’s the only verse of the Bible you had and it says, “Work at home,” you’d be like, “Well, that’s probably it.” But Proverbs 31 says that a woman ... In fact, it’s honoring a woman, a very specific kind of woman, and totally esteeming her for how her heart for her home motivates her to work outside the home, trading and doing commerce for the good of her family. It’s a heart orientation. To see the importance of the family. See, ladies, I hope you understand this, is that God has all authority, and one of the things He’s done is He put the home into the heart of a woman’s hand, not because there’s not another task, but because there’s not a greater task. Whoever holds the home, holds the future.

Sound doctrine tells us that the home is the first institution that God created. Not law, not government, not education, the family. It’s the building block of all of culture. And so I think He looked down and He said, “Who’s more capable to hold this thing? You are.” See, if you understand these sorts of things and how much God values these things, then to understand your role or to look at the home and this instruction, you don’t see it as God throwing you off a cliff. You see it as God giving you a great big hug.

Now, all the sudden he talks about one other group of people. I don’t know why he adds it, I don’t. I’ve wondered, but I don’t have an answer to it, and it’s bondservants. Now, immediately you heard the word bondservant ... By the way, some of your translations it says slaves. It’s the same word in Titus 1:1 when he says, “I am a bondservant or a slave of Christ.” It’s the same word.

The fact is, is our history in America with slavery that was fueled by race was, as well as the daily outburst that we see in our culture today that's not necessarily slavery but it's grotesque in so many different ways when we view people as not being equal and we value one over another, it colors our lens in how we even come to a passage like this, a verse like this. Bondservants? Uh, I think ... Let's just skip that one. Let's not talk about that one. But this is really important that you understand, because eventually there is an application for us.

The first thing we need to know though is what's happening there. What was Paul actually talking about? What environment was he writing in? He's in the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire had two different kinds of slavery that were not race based. One was when the army of Rome literally went through the world and conquered people, they gave people an opportunity. You want to live and be our slave, or do you want to die? And so there were a lot of conquered warriors on Crete and on the island of Crete, as well as everywhere else in the Roman Empire, and they were slaves.

Then there was something called bondservants, and bondservants was not a Roman thing. It was an Old Testament thing. It's something that God actually even informed and spoke into, and this is what was happening. Among the Jewish people, if somebody really came on hard times and they couldn't feed their family and they went in debt with somebody, they could choose to actually become a bondservant of the person that they owe the money to in order to work for them to pay off the debt, and while they were working for that person, they would provide for him and their entire family the needs. So mercy was baked into the culture when people came upon hard times.

Well, this kind of bondservanthood ... I mean, there's no lending agencies, right? You could say, "Oh, I'm a slave to my debt, to my ..." It was sort of the same idea, that bondservanthood there, of, "Man, I'm in such debt, but I'm just going to work to pay off that debt." All of this was all mixed together, and so we need to say, okay, what does the Bible actually say about all of this? There's a lot it says. Let me boil it down to one verse, though.

Paul wanted to write Timothy, and he says, "Look, what do we do with the Old Testament law? You got all these rules for the Jews, but do they all apply to us?" And this is what he says to him. He goes, "You have to understand that the law was actually meant not to give us an instruction manual to live, first and foremost, but first and foremost, to show us that we needed a Savior, that we had all sinned." And so he says this: "The law is not laid down for the just," that is the righteous, but who's it laid down for? Who does it need to expose and say, "Hey, by the way, what you're doing right now, that's a sin." That's what the law was for. It's for ... And it lists a bunch of things, and one of them is for enslavers, the same word as slave traders. For slave traders, for liars, purgers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine. And so fundamentally, categorically, slavery is sin.

When we look at another person and we force them to be less in a culture, it is wrong, and what took ... You don't need me to tell you what took place in America is wrong, but if you're wondering, "Well, I want to know what he thinks," well, it was absolutely, categorically wrong. It was sin. So why didn't Paul just condemn it? Like, why add this? Oh, by the way, those of you in the church who are bondservants, how come he didn't say, "By the way, just stop this whole thing"? Well, it's likely for the same reason that he didn't condemn Rome's judicial system even though he spent so much time in a prison when he did nothing wrong.

Paul's aim when he was on the earth and the New Testament's aim was not to evaluate the broken worldly systems that come under the sinfulness of man, but to call Christians to live worthy of the Gospel in whatever situation that they are in. You see, if you're wondering, I know there's people here whose skin color's darker than mine, and as a church family, not just me, as a church family, we are glad you're here. And not just glad you're here like, "Hey, you're welcome here." We appreciate you here. We want you to contribute. We want you to be able to feed into this church and to affect it.

One of the reasons that we care so much about this is because when we look at the final victory of Jesus when it's seen in physical form, it says that every race, every language, every ethnicity is all going to be gathered around the throne, and the combination of all those differences are going to magnify the person of Jesus Christ all the more. And so here at Providence, and many other places, we long for that to be seen [inaudible 00:42:31], and so may it happen, but the nearest parallel for this verse for us in our culture would be the workplace where unbelievers watch us work under a boss, where someone can tell us to do something, so how should we be in that environment? Well, submissive, well-pleasing, not argumentative, and not pilfering.

That gets us to the last thing, and that is that God's grace enables an appealing testimony. Three different times he says, "I want you to do this, first, that God's word may not be reviled. Second," verse 8, "so that nobody can say anything against us," and verse 10, "So that the doctrine of God may be adorned." The word adorned there in verse 10, it comes from a word, it means [foreign language 00:43:11]. It's where we get the word cosmetic. This is what he's saying. He's saying, "When Christians live this kind of way, it's not that we're covering up something unsightly. It's that we're taking what is so beautiful and we're highlighting the beauties in such a way that people can even enjoy them all the more."

That's what we're doing with the Gospel. Our lives are like a picture frame, really. The fact is, is that we're all broken, every one of us, and broken glass does not negate the beauty of the Gospel, but it does hinder one's ability to see it. This is why God is at work in our life.

So before I pray, let me just encourage you with a few different thoughts. Okay? Number one is if you've never trusted Christ, I want to ask you to respond to the truth and trust Jesus Christ. Don't let the broken glass that you see in my life and other people's lives lead you to conclude that Jesus Christ is not the most important person in your life. No one's ever loved you like him, and so we urge you to trust him today. Second, I encourage you to give yourself to knowing God's word. Healthy doctrine is the consistent diet of healthy disciples, and so I beg of you to read your Bible. Third thing, I encourage you, let's examine our lives and repent. When you're reading the Bible and your life is out of step with what you read, don't redefine what is right and wrong. Repent.

C. S. Lewis said it this way. He says, "Progress means getting nearer to where you want to be. If you have taken a wrong turn, then going forward does not get you any nearer. Progress means turning around and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive."

And last, let's consider those apart from Christ. We have the privilege to base our entire life upon sound doctrine, and yet there are so many people in the world today who've never heard sound doctrine. They've never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and so I want to just encourage you to continue to pray, continue to go, continue to sin, continue to give, so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can run far and fast. So let me pray for us.

Father in Heaven, we love you, and as we come to this place, we pray for your grace in each of our lives, that you would teach us, that you would evaluate our hearts. Now, God, as we sing, as we give, we do so out of the overflow of resource and energy that you've given to us. We want to sing to you out of overflow. We want to give to you because you've been so good to give to us, and the great desire of our heart is as we sing, and as we give, that you would not only take the worship, but that you would take the finances, and that you would use them as a propellant to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth. That is our prayer, and we pray it all in the name of Christ our Savior. Amen.



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