

*An old story of Saint Francis of Assisi tells of the day he said to one of his students, “Come with me, let’s go down to the village and preach to the people who need our Savior.” So, off they went.*

*Once at the gate they stopped, bent down to speak kind words to a crippled old man, and gave him a cool drink of water and a few coins. Then they saw some children playing with a ball out in the field, so they joined their game and had fun with them. While they played, a lonely widow watching at her doorstep drew their attention. When they finished the game, they visited with her, bringing a few words of cheer and encouragement. A fearful young man lurked in the shadows, ashamed of what he had done the night before. They prayed with him, spoke with him openly and freely about forgiveness, grace, and mercy, and they encouraged him to pursue a more productive life. On the way out of town they stopped at a small store and greeted the merchant, asked about his family, and thanked him for his faithful work through the years.*

*Finally, Francis said, “Let’s go back.” The student stopped and said, “But wait, when do we preach?” To which Francis answered, “Every step we took, every word we spoke, every action we did has been a sermon.”*

The point of this old story is this: we are being watched. We are watched by children and teenagers, who want to know how the world works, and from our example, wonder how to walk in it. We are being watched by younger believers, who need reassurance that the path they follow is the right one. We are also watched by those who do not believe, and our conduct either confirms their suspicion that Christianity is foolish, or it invites them to take a closer look, and as a local church, we are being watched by the community who is curious to see if we really believe what we say we believe. Now I have said none of this to alarm you or to upset you or to guilt you, I’m just being real with you – we are all being watched by someone.

We have been making our way through a letter from the Apostle Paul to a young coworker named Titus. If you recall, both Paul and Titus went to the Island of Crete to organize and to shepherd the churches there, but Paul would eventually leave for other ministry, leaving Titus on the island to carry on with the work they started. Titus was instructed by Paul in this letter to appoint elders in every city where there was a church, and these elders were to *encourage* people with sound doctrine, but also to *confront* those who opposed the truth. Last week, we looked at the nature of this opposition, where Paul described these people as those who professed to know God, they used the right religious lingo, they said the right

things about God, but the way they lived their lives just didn't add up. In their conduct, in their behavior, their lives denied that God even mattered to them.

To the Apostle Paul, Christians can't be like those who say one thing and yet do another. We must be different from those who oppose the truth – we are to live like we believe, and that brings us to the next part of this letter where Paul shifts his focus to the home lives of these people because what happens in the home has an impact on the witness of the local church who is being watched.

Now, as a backdrop to this, remember that Titus is on the Island of Crete – a rough and rowdy place in those days, and the home lives of these Cretans were a total train wreck. So, for them, Paul paints a picture of an ideal household that is devoted to God, seemingly picking out those qualities that appeared to be lacking.

So, if you have your Bible, turn to **Titus 2** and we will begin with **verse 1**, where we are told,

**But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.**

**But as for you** is a phrase of contrast – a contrast from those Paul had previously described who opposed the truth. They professed to know God, they were very religious – pushing their legalistic rules on others, but their personal lives told a different story, and in contrast to all of that, Titus was to **speak the things which are fitting for sound** or healthy **doctrine** – he's to be different, meaning he can't claim to believe the truth found in God's Word, and yet ignore how it tells him to live. Sound doctrine involves more than just *right thinking*, it also includes *right living*. This is more than just knowing biblical facts and truths – it also includes – like it or not – living it out. For sure, we may not like what God has to say to us in His Word, but He's said it, and we need to live it.

So, that sets the tone for the rest of the passage where Paul gets a little more specific and very practical – focusing on certain people groups in the church, and he begins, and rightly so, with the seniors who are very important in the home and in the life of a church. In **verse 2**, he says to Titus,

**Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.**

**Older** – and when I say *older*, in those days – I think it's those over 50, and Paul says these older men they are to be **temperate**. That word in the Greek means to

be *wineless*, and no, I not talking about the kind of whining we men do when we aren't feeling well and want their wives to drop absolutely everything to care for us. Sorry ladies, but that's not the kind of *wineless* Paul is talking about. In this context, it means to be *sober*, and in a broader sense which I think is the case here, Paul is saying that older men should be *sober-minded* or maybe better said, the older men are to be *clear-headed* in their judgment.

Not only that, but Paul mentions they are to be **dignified**. That's a word we don't use much – it typically refers to people or to things that are seen as *majestic* in nature, but here, it speaks of men who are *reserved* and *composed* – there's a *seriousness* about them – they know they will soon stand before God, and the way they live their lives is worthy of respect.

**Sensible** is a word we need to pay attention to because this word is used in our passage for both genders and to every age group. To be sensible means to be *self-controlled* and it describes a person who is balanced, whose impulses and desires and passions are restrained.

*A stunt pilot who was selling rides in his single engine airplane. One day he got into an argument with a pastor who insisted on taking his wife along at no extra charge. Not wanting to miss out on a chance to make some cash, the pilot said, "I'll take you both up for the price of one if you promise not to utter a sound during the entire flight. If you make any noise, the price is doubled." The deal was made and they climbed aboard the plane.*

*The pilot quickly proceeded to put the plane through all sorts of stunts and maneuvers designed to make the bravest person tremble. But the passengers didn't make a sound. Exhausted, the pilot finally landed. As the pastor climbed out, the pilot said, "I made moves up there that frightened even me and yet you never said a word. You must have incredible self-control."*

*The pastor thanked the pilot and then said, "I must admit that there was one time when you almost had me." "When was that?" asked the pilot. To which the man replied, "When my wife fell out of the plane!"*

Yes, that's self-control – and maybe a few other things as well. Anyway, Paul continues and says that older men should be **sound in faith**. During the many years, through the highs and through the lows in life – they should know enough, they should have seen enough, and they should have experienced enough to know that God can be trusted.

Older men are to be sound **in love**. Men, how about instead of becoming grouchier and crabbiest and harder to live with as we grow older – how about we become more loving? Just a thought – and I can ask that question of you because this kind of love Paul is talking about is *agape* love – it’s a choice. It’s not based on feelings. We can show this kind of sacrificial and serving love whether we feel like it or not. Older men should choose to love because it is the right thing to do.

Lastly for the older men, we are told they are to be sound in **perseverance**, and perseverance might be the best indicator of genuine faith in God. For the older man, in this life – he’s been through it all, he’s been through enough trials, he’s been through enough suffering and disappointments – and now he’s tempered like steel, and instead of freaking out when life doesn’t go his way, and he’s sticking with the Lord no matter what, and he’s going to endure to the very end.

So, those are Paul’s words to the older men, and now, we come to the older women. In **verse 3**, Paul says,

**Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,**

Just as Paul singled out certain qualities for the older men, he does the same with the older women who had their own unique challenges likely related to the culture on the island, and he begins by saying they are **to be reverent in their behavior** which means their conduct is to be “*fitting for the temple.*” That idea suggests that this woman, by her behavior, reflects a life of sacredness and holiness – probably referring to her appearance, how she dresses, and how she carries herself around others.

If you noticed, Paul lists two vices associated with these older women, and I am going to assume these were common issues for them. Paul says these older women are not to be **malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine**, and I suspect these two vices were connected – in other words, the more they drank, the more they talked. Now, I want to speak about the **malicious gossip** piece for a moment. In the Greek, it is the single word “*diabolos*” which is a term for the devil. Those who gossip, and come between people, and wreak havoc in relationships, are acting just like the devil. They are doing the devil’s work, and oh by the way, just because it’s framed in a prayer request, it can still be gossip.

So, instead of giving into these vices, Paul says that the older women should **teach what is good**, and beginning with **verse 4** we are told why.

**<sup>4</sup>so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, <sup>5</sup>to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.**

As we look at this passage, and I only going to highlight certain aspects of it because there's just too much here – I want you to keep in mind that a Christian home was a completely new thing in Crete, and a young woman who was saved out of paganism, who had no godly role models as she grew up, would have to get familiar with a whole new set of priorities and privileges, so all of this had to be overwhelming and it clearly demonstrated the need for older godly women to serve as mentors to these young women.

So, with that said, Paul starts by telling the young women to **love their husbands**. You might find this interesting, but I think this is the only time in the Bible where a wife is specifically told to love her husband, but what's even more interesting is that this word for **love** is not *agape* love – instead it's the Greek word *philandros* which describes loving your husband with fondness as a friend. **Have you ever heard someone say, "I love you but I don't like you"?** I could be wrong, but I think that's idea here – to *like* them, and also keep in mind that in the East, these were arranged marriages, where the man and woman were married and then they got to really know one another. So, it seems that Paul is encouraging these young women not only love their husbands, but to like them – to befriend them.

Skipping ahead, Paul says the young women are to be **workers at home**. I want to be careful here, understanding that in context this was written to people in a different place and time and culture, but I am also keenly aware this is God's Word given to us. Let me say at the onset, I understand that some sincerely believe a woman's place is in the home, and granted there may be those situations where being a "*homemaker*" if you will, is warranted, but with that said, I do not think the Bible prohibits a woman from working outside the home. For example, the woman in **Proverbs 31** – described as a worthy woman, worked outside the home. In **Acts 16**, where Paul was involved, we also read of Lydia who was described as a worshipper of God, and she worked outside the home as a seller of purple cloth.

So, we need to know what Paul is telling us here because I don't want someone to say, "*You folks claim to believe the Bible, but you don't live it*" – that's the underlying problem in Crete. In context, these young women are most likely child-bearing and child-raising women – there's no KinderCare down the road, ideally their husbands are providers who are out on the job, and by necessity, they have to manage the affairs of the household. Yes, she may go out and about, there maybe

things she has to do, tasks to perform – but her focus is the home. We might say, “*she is to make the house a home*” – I think that’s the idea here, and Paul wants her to do it well, and any skills she may lack in doing that, the older godly women are encouraged to teach her.

Paul says the young women are to be **subject to their own husbands**. That word “**subject**” is the Greek word “*hupotássō*” which is a military term that literally means “*to rank under.*” It speaks of the way an army is organized among levels of rank. You have generals and colonels and captains and sergeants and privates. There are levels of rank, and you are obligated to respect those in a higher rank. So, it carries the idea of recognizing one’s role and submitting to authority. That’s what it means, and the interesting thing about submission is that it does not diminish one’s importance, or dignity, or honor. For example, a sergeant may be more talented than a general, but he is still under the rank of the general and has to submit. And as an ultimate example to think about, as a child, Jesus willingly submitted to His parents Joseph and Mary, and yet He was God in the flesh. He willingly subjected Himself to their authority.

Paul says the wife is to accept her role in the marriage under the leadership of her husband, and to the husbands I want to say – God never said it was your role to get your wives to submit. It’s not written anywhere. Contrary to what some might think, husbands do not have unlimited authority to mistreat and bully and dominate their wives under the guise of submission, and husbands who treat their wives in this manner are abusing their role and have no biblical grounds to stand on.

Now, there is something else I want to say that is so important to the wives. Listen to what Paul said in **Ephesians 5:22**.

***“Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”***

What Paul is saying is the wife’s submission to her husband is really an act of worship and service to the Lord. In other words, she is not submitting only to her husband, she is submitting to the Lord Himself – for His sake, for His reputation, and for His honor. Wives, if you need motivation – there it is.

Our home is a witness and we are being watched, and as a result, these things Paul has mentioned should be lived out, so that **the word of God will not be dishonored**. We are to live like we believe.

Beginning with **verse 6**, Paul turns his attention to the young men and he says,

**<sup>6</sup>Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; <sup>7</sup>in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, <sup>8</sup>sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.**

Once again, Paul uses that word “**sensible**” which is another word for *self-controlled*. Young men, especially in Crete, were on the wild side, and so through the example of Titus who was a young man as well, they were encouraged to *apply the brakes* on their wild living so to speak. Paul wanted these young men to be productive instead of running amuck. He wanted them to control their tempers, to master their urges and impulses, and to bridle their tongues, so that nothing evil or embarrassing could be said by those who oppose the truth.

Clearly, as we have seen thus far, the witness of the church in the community is a congregational thing – involving both men and women, young and old alike. We are all being watched and we need to live like we believe.

Okay, let’s look at our last two verses. Beginning with **verse 9**, we are told,

**<sup>9</sup>Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, <sup>10</sup>not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.**

Let me say that in no way is Paul endorsing the practice of slavery – it was simply an everyday reality. In those days, under the rule of the Roman Empire, a third of all the population, some 60 million people, were slaves. In those days, slavery had become an integral part of society, it impacted all walks of life, and it included all types of people who owed some sort of debt.

In our passage, Paul singled out the slaves who attended church – who may have been trying to sort out their personal roles and responsibilities inside and outside the church. Some may have mistakenly thought that their new spiritual freedom in Christ had somehow, someway guaranteed their personal freedom as slaves, whereby they could ignore their obligations to their masters.

In other cases, it was quite possible that both the master and the slave attended the same church as brothers and sisters in Christ, and to twist that a bit, a slave could be a leader in a church and his master could be a member of it. Think about that for a moment. This was a new dynamic involving these roles inside and outside the church, and there was the potential for a lot of confusion and even more abuse.

It doesn't take much of an imagination to see where this could lead without some guidance – and in his guidance, Paul says to the slave – be **subject** to your masters, do what is expected of you, do what you are morally and legally obligated to do, and do it well. Be obedient, work hard, don't argue, and don't steal because even in your unfortunate situation, there is the potential to demonstrate the beauty of God's Word by the way you live, and everything I just said here applies today to every employee who works for an employer.

I want to close with this last thought. People want to know that what we believe is true and real, and the way they will know is to watch us – not just listen to us, but watch us, to see if we really live like we say we believe. We are being watched.

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