

The Mature Christian Woman

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If you have been with us, you know that we are spending some weeks going through a couple of chapters in the book of Titus to relay and revisit the foundation that Truth Community Church was built on some 10 years ago in 2013 when we preached through the entire book. There's much valuable instruction for us about the nature of redemption and the nature of Christian living in 2 chapters 2 and 3. And as I've been doing, I would like to read the entire chapter 2 before we get into the particular text for this morning to keep this context ever in front of your minds because it's important as we go through it methodically and carefully to understand the basis upon which the call to certain kinds of Christian living is made to us.

Titus 2:1 we read,

1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. 6 Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. 9 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. 11 For [here's the basis of that Christian living that he just outlined in the first 10 verses] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His

own possession, zealous for good deeds. 15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

So as you see the close of chapter 2, you see this emphasis on redemption, on the work of Christ and his purposes that he was accomplishing when he gave his life on the cross on our behalf. He died and rose again in order to secure for himself, for his own possession it says, a people that would be set apart to live as he wants them to live. And so our Christian living starts not with an external standard of morality, but rather it starts with a recognition of who Christ is, of what he has done in securing our redemption at the cross, and realizing that he has a way that he wants his people to live and as Lord he has the right to command us and to direct us in the way that various aspects of his people are to live. We see in Titus 2 that it's a comprehensive text: older men, younger men, older women, younger women are addressed; that's comprehensive, there are no other genders that could expand beyond that, "male and female He made them."

And so beloved, here's the thing and we say this by way of encouragement and to set the context for everything to follow here this morning, completed redemption by Christ gives rise to a transformed life in his people and he has instructed us on the way that he wants that life transformation to be manifested. It is not our choice to live anyway that we want to, we come under the Lordship of Christ at the moment of our salvation as our Lord and authority, his word is our authority, it is our law, it is our, you know, it is our rule of conduct and what we believe, and Christ said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" And so we recognize that there are magnificent themes that are at work, and we see why it is so often said that to be a Christian and to live the Christian life is by far the most noble thing that anyone could do on the face of the earth. There are transcendent eternal principles at work in our heart, Christ has loved us and set himself for our redemption, and now we live in the blessed privilege not of walking as blind men but walking in the light, belonging to him who is the light, knowing that our ultimate destination is light itself in the glories of heaven. And so it's a wonderful place for us to be and so what we want to do as we approach a text like this, is to recognize Christ, first of all, orient our heart towards submission and obedience to him, and then say, "Lord, what would You have me to do? Speak," as it were, "for Your servant listens."

Now in verse 2, as we saw last time, Titus started with the older men, he said in verse 2 older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love and perseverance. We looked at that last time. We won't review it beyond simply saying that this is a verse that sifts every man, every aspect of every man's life, and if it's not apparent on first glance to you, I encourage you to go back and get last week's message and listen to it again. This is a thorough sifting of every man that is in the body of Christ. Now we come next to older women, and before we go to verse 3, let me just preface this and say this because I have a lot of things to say from the word of God today that are utterly countercultural, that are in direct defiance of the spirit of our age, and I fear that many of us have imbibed the spirit of that age without even recognizing it. It's understandable that it would occur because everything that the world gives to us is contrary to what we are going to see in this text and so it's important for us to step back

and approach this with a broad perspective of the ministry of Christ and the way that Christ dealt with women during the time of his ministry on earth.

Beloved, you must understand, you must recognize and be encouraged, especially if you are a struggling, lonely woman or a sinful woman in particular, understand this, that Jesus Christ bestows a very high status on the woman who is in Christ. In John 4:26, he revealed himself to be the Messiah to the woman at the well. In Matthew 9, he graciously healed the woman who touched the hem of his garment, who had had a hemorrhage that had been lasting for 12 long years, and she trembled when she was identified and Christ had mercy on her in that public moment. He healed the daughter of a Canaanite woman in Matthew 15. With his dying breath, he provided for his mother Mary on the cross in John 19 as he looked at his disciple John and said, "Behold, your mother. Behold, your son." In other words, committing his mother's care to his beloved disciple after he was gone.

And so we see the great mercy of Christ and you can find that this is a particular sub-theme in the gospel of Luke, that Luke so often mentions the mercy that Christ had on women during his earthly ministry. When you're aware of that theme, it jumps off the pages at you. I've only given a few examples here. This is contrary to the spirit of the culture of the age, Christ coming and showing mercy and speaking, speaking to women, and dealing with women as he did. You remember that the disciples were shocked in John 4 that he was even speaking to a woman and here Christ had disclosed that he was the Messiah to her. And so no woman should think about Christianity as something that is oppressive, as Jesus Christ as someone who is contrary to her personal interests. Nothing could be further from the truth, and you must reject that spirit of the world and that attempt by the world to inoculate you against the blessings and glory of Christ by seeing what the word of God itself says about the matter.

Now further we can go on to say that there is no spiritual inequality between men and women. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In other words, salvation is freely available to men and women alike. The repentant man who goes to Christ finds that he receives him in love and forgives him. The sinful woman, on same terms on the same gospel message, on the same gospel promises can go to Christ and find full and complete and immediate irrevocable forgiveness for her sins. And so in a room of this size, I know that there are women that have been scarred by much promiscuity and perhaps trying to hide the consequences of that with other sinful actions, and there's times where you wonder if anyone could ever view you in a different light. Well, it's precisely a trembling, repentant, sorrowful woman who was weeping and washing the feet of Jesus with her hair, it was precisely that a woman like that, that Jesus looked on and said, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." He spoke to the woman at the well and said, "You've had five husbands," and yet he graciously extended salvation to her. And so there is no spiritual inequality between men and women, and mark this carefully, a sinful woman has no better friend in the universe than the Lord Jesus Christ because of all of the grace that he shows to those who come to him.

Now, with that firmly established, it's important for us to realize a companion point, a complementary point, that you might say. Scripture, within that broader context, does teach that men and women have different roles within the family and within the church. You can read that in Ephesians 5, and you also for family roles, we've taught on that and won't spend any time there, you also see that within the church that different roles are clearly taught and required by God in the pastoral epistles and in the book of 1 Corinthians 14. Turn to 1 Corinthians 14 with me. And whatever the fullness of the meaning of these two passages may be, we'll leave for another time, whatever the fullness of the proper application of these passages may be at any given time, we must realize we're simply looking here to see that there are distinct roles that are assigned to men and women in the church. In Titus 1, we saw that elder leadership is restricted to men. That is a role given by God to men and not to women. There is no such thing as a legitimate female pastor. 1 Corinthians 14:34 says this, he says, "The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church."

Now that's pretty stark and clear, is it not? And Paul said in other places, he said there in verse 37, he says, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual," you can't dismiss this simply by saying, "Well, that was the Apostle Paul in the first century and therefore it doesn't apply today." No, that is a lie from Satan to argue like that because Paul immediately goes on in verse 37 and he says this, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment." It is the Lord's commandment because Jesus Christ appointed Paul as his chosen apostle to reveal his will to the church. And so what Paul spoke that's recorded for us in Scripture, is the Lord's commandment. You cannot separate the two. They are not divisible like that.

What does the idea not speaking in the church look like? Well, go to 1 Timothy 2 with me. 1 Timothy 2 and we see the precise spheres in which Paul is speaking as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, and I'm going to read the whole passage and then focus on the verses in the middle. 1 Timothy 2:9. Again, Paul writing the Lord's commandment to women in the church. He says in verse 9, "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint." The restrictions on women are clarified here in the church as being a formal teaching capacity or exercising authority over men. That is, God-designed, God-ordained roles of distinction within the body of Christ.

Now I realize, beloved, that in society, and certainly in the broader evangelical church, and perhaps even to some inside the walls of this church, I realize that feminists inside

and outside of the church protest against the biblical principles that we have seen. But beloved, you and I as followers of Christ as he has revealed his will in his word, we are not driven by culture. We are impervious to its demands, especially when it is contrary to the word of God. We are not driven by the example of women like Beth Moore or Joyce Meyer. The fact that they have popular wide followings does not justify what they are doing. Scripture is the rule, not outward appearances before men.

Now you're still in 1 Timothy, notice that what Paul says in verse 10 because it gives us a bridge and a segue into Titus 2, Paul, having said he wants women to adorn themselves with modesty and discreteness says that they should adorn themselves also by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. Now, what would the life of a woman making a claim to godliness, what would her good works be? He doesn't specify there in 1 Timothy exactly what he has in mind, but as Scripture interprets Scripture and we come to Titus 2:3, we get very clear instructions on four different areas of life that Paul has in mind and therefore what the Lord Jesus Christ has in mind for women within the body of Christ.

So go to Titus 2, we'll land here and stay here for a while. What does the Bible say about the role of women? What does the Bible say about the role of women in the church? Beloved, let me step back for a moment and just remind you of things that we have said many, many times and cannot overemphasize. Beloved, the church belongs to Christ, not to men, not to women. It is Christ who secured the church and purchased the church with his own blood. By right of purchase, by right of creation, Jesus Christ has the right to establish the way that he wants his church to operate, and the way that he wants relationships to function within his body. That is his right. That is his prerogative. He is Lord and therefore what he says is law and is that which is required for his people to follow.

What does Christ therefore say in his words? Titus 2:3, 4 and 5. He says,

3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Beloved, if any woman comes to me and asks and says that she's struggling to find God's will for her life, I'm going to start by pointing her right here. This is the will of God for Christian women, and this is what we need to consider. Today, we're going to focus on the mature Christian woman, the older woman in verse 3. We'll save the younger women in verses 4 and 5 for next week.

Now, as you look at verse 3, notice how it begins. Notice how it begins as Paul shifts from addressing older men, he now pivots to addressing older women and he says in verse 3, "Older women likewise." He's continuing the train of thought that he developed in the first two verses of the chapter and what he's saying is he's calling women to

manifest a similar kind of dignity that he had just called the older men in the church to manifest. The only distinction is, the whole point is an overarching dignity that would mark older men and older women in the church, the distinction is that he draws out different application for men and women. We saw the application to men in verse 2, verse 3, we see he's likewise, he's continuing the train of thought when he says older women are to be thus and so.

Paul does not specify the exact chronological age that he has in mind; some of it is comparative by the nature of life in a congregation. You know, if you had a congregation that was primarily people in their 20s, someone in their 30s would qualify as an older woman compared to those around her. In a more developed, mature congregation like ours, older women, it's going to have a different perhaps chronological focus, but that's really secondary to the fact that Paul is addressing women who are in a particular station of life. By what he says in verses 4 and 5, it seems that he's addressing those who have either completed the work of raising a family or are farther along in it than what those with young children are. And so think about it in terms of a station of life, not a chronological number, and you'll be well on your way to getting the import of what Paul is trying to say here.

And so beloved, how does a Christian woman aim for maturity in light of the work of Christ on her behalf? If you have been redeemed by Christ, you're an older woman, what does Christ require of you now to be? What does he call you to do? And if you're a younger Christian woman, you still benefit from this kind of instruction because you see the long-term aspirations of your heart, what they should be, what God would have you aim your life after. And beloved, I just need to be very candid with you. Listen, let me back up and say this. It is important for me to speak the truth plainly today and not worry about whose feelings I might hurt or who might be offended by what I have to say. That is not my job here today. My job is to set forth the word of God with the best clarity and demeanor that I can muster in my fallen flesh and let the Spirit of God help you understand how it applies in your own particular situation. The word of God does not call you, the emphasis here is not a calling to go out and be a career woman in business. It's something different in the body of Christ and so we need to be mindful of that. How does a Christian woman aim for spiritual maturity regardless of what she's doing with her life? I'm going to give you four qualities, four things that she needs to keep in mind, and we're going to see that just like verse 2 sifted men completely, verse 3 is going to sift the women completely as well. And so may the Spirit of God help us have a teachable heart and guide us in our thinking and our responding as we come under the authority of his word here today as a congregation.

How does a Christian woman aim for spiritual maturity? First, it starts with her self-assessment. Her self-assessment. There is a fundamental way that this verse calls a Christian woman to think about herself and to think about herself in relationship to Christ. Look at it here in verse 3, in the NASB, it reads this, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior." That word "reverent," it is the only time that it is used in the New Testament, and the word "reverent" as it's translated for us here in the original language, it is related to the word for being a priest, and what a priest is, especially you

see it especially in the Old Testament as you read through Leviticus and the early part of the book of Numbers, a priest was someone that God had set apart for his service and that's the idea that Paul is expressing here is that, as a Christian woman, beloved, your responsibility, your first cornerstone of how you view life is to realize this: Christ has saved you and redeemed you, Christ has died for you to make you his own, he has put his Spirit within you, that means that Christ has set you apart in a manner that's like a priest was set apart for God in the Old Testament. You have been set apart by Christ in order to serve him with your life and opportunities and relationships that he has given to you. You are set apart,. You view life from a reverent perspective. There's this fundamental recognition that the overarching purpose that is at work in your life is the purpose of Christ, and therefore it is your responsibility, and it should be your desire to increasingly bring every aspect of your life, every attitude, every affection, every thought, every deed, to bring that under the Lordship of Christ, so that your life is set apart for the purposes that he set himself apart for you. In other words, we can put it like this to put it in more colloquial language here this morning. The mature Christian woman does this, she takes seriously, earnestly, the fact that she belongs to Christ and not to herself. She belongs to Christ, not to herself. It's the desires of Christ that drive and animate and define her priorities, not self. That is so very important.

Let's look back at a passage that can help us expand on this in 1 Corinthians 6. 1 Corinthians 6. And men, as we're all turning there, it's not that we don't think about ourselves this way, it's just that Paul is addressing women particularly in this text, but we likewise are, if we are saved, we've been set apart by God for his purposes. We've been chosen, selected, set apart, distinguished from common men and so this applies to all of us, but Paul is addressing women in particular with this idea that she's set apart for service to God. She belongs to God.

Look at 1 Corinthians 6:18 where he says, "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body." Now look at how he describes it. Look at the metaphors that he uses. "Do you not know," verse 19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." The days of selfish living, the days of carnal living for you, my Christian sister, they're over. Those days are past. When Christ saved you, he set you apart to belong to him and every aspect of your life is to be a reflection of the fact that you understand that, that you meditate on it, and that you are earnestly seeking to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ladies, this has really important ramifications and things that can be very strengthening if you simply embrace it. You know, the world tells you you're to live this way and think this way and do one thing, and if you don't have this, you don't count, and all of that nonsense. Ladies, understand this, I am about to lay before you wonderful liberty, a wonderful sense of identity that no one can take away from you. So hear me carefully with what I say: you are not defined in your essence, you are not defined in your identity by your marital status, by your family status, whether you're someone's wife, whether you're someone's mother, by what kind of things you do, you're not defined by any of that

according to Scripture if you are in Christ. You are defined preeminently and first of all by the fact that Christ has set you apart for himself. You have the blessed privilege, the blessed position of having been selected by God for salvation. You have the blessed position of Christ having loved you and given himself up for you on the cross. You have the blessed position of being defined by the fact that the Spirit of God moved in your heart individually with power in order to give you new life and make you a new creation in Christ. And beloved, that is far more important than anything that happens on earth. It transcends your health. It transcends how your spouse treats you. It transcends how your children treat you. It transcends all of that. The supreme vertical defining pillar in your life is that God has loved you in Christ, and Christ gave himself up for you to redeem you on the cross. It doesn't matter how anyone else responds to you. It doesn't matter how life goes. This is the supreme defining purpose, the supreme defining factor of your existence and so you're to assess your position in Christ and realize that it impacts your entire life.

Look there again at verse 3 with me. Titus 2:3. "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior." Again, this is the only time that "behavior" is used, that particular word is used in the New Testament. And beloved, what it's referring to as this, this is so sweet and so precious, and for those of you that are truly in Christ and Christ is precious to you, this is going to be a very sweet explanation of the text coming to you. What Paul is saying here with the word "behavior" is this: behavior refers to a life that expresses godly inner character. The behavior flows from a character that is inside, the hidden person of the heart.

Look over at 1 Peter 3 where we see this addressed to women also. So very important, so countercultural, so necessary for women to recognize this, to understand that and decisively reject the spirit of the world and embrace what Scripture says is the unique opportunity and calling of God on women. 1 Peter 3:1, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as," watch this, "they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." You see, Paul is calling women to a gentle spirit, a quiet spirit, a submissive spirit in the context of their family life. That is so critical to understand.

And so you exist, beloved, you exist to cultivate this quiet, godly character in your heart which is cultivated by a quiet meditation on the word of God, by private quiet prayer to God and asking God to increase the fruit of this in your heart. You exist to reflect Christ in thought, word, and deed, and you understand that all of your life, all that you say, the way that you present yourself, all that you do, the life goals that you seek, all of these are expressing whether you do or are not manifesting this quiet gentle spirit that Scripture calls women to do in multiple places. Peter, Paul, Christ, how many times does this have to be said before the church of God, I'm speaking broadly, collectively here, how many times does Scripture have to say it before the church says we must be distinct from the world not as much like it as we can possibly be. The idea is not to get as close to the line

of the world as you can in your spirit and in your behavior and in your conversation, the idea is to be as much like Christ as you can. And so let me step back and say this. Whether you were saved in a Christian home at an early age, as some of you blessedly were, or whether you were saved in adult life after a lot of sin and promiscuity, in one way or another, those of you who are Christians, you have been saved out of a sinful past and some of you gave yourselves over to sin more than others did, and I'm sure there are times when you have twangs of regret about that. But understand this beloved, the whole point of Christian salvation is this, that in Christ you have been joined together with the living God, with the living Son of God, you've been joined together with Christ. He chose you. He loved you. You are united with him in his life, death, burial and resurrection. You will be with him throughout all of eternity. Ladies, that means something really critical, it means your past no longer defines you. You are a new creation in Christ. You have been loved by the Son of God and his love is the defining element of your life that defines all else, and Christ has said, "Your sins and your lawless deeds I will remember no more." He does not hold them against you.

Ladies, Christian ladies, Christ chose you. Christ redeemed you at the cross. You are justified based on his righteousness, not your own. God accepts you not because of who you are or what you've done, he does not reject you because of what you have done. He accepts you because what his Son has done on your behalf. That's fundamental to everything and when you realize that and you ladies see how important theology is for your self-image, you realize, "Ah, you know what? I want to be reverent. I want to be set apart for the One who loved me like that after men have abused me and ridiculed me and shamed me and betrayed me again and again and again." You know, you live life with the fear of rejection and you live with a, you know, like a wounded puppy just trembling at the next time the door opens wondering what's coming in. Beloved, Christ is not like that. Christ has saved you. He set you apart to be the recipient of his great and enduring and unchanging love so that you can say, you can say, "Yes, my past was sinful." You can say, "Yes, people have betrayed me but Jesus Christ has loved me and saved me. That and that alone defines me now. I gladly give the remainder of my days to Him." Precious, isn't it?

Now where does that reverent self-assessment, where does belonging to Christ manifest itself in your life? We've been greatly encouraged by seeing the love of Christ and setting us apart, greatly encouraged by the fact that he has a loving, gracious purpose for women, that he accepts repentant women who come to him, he accepts them gladly, freely, and without rebuke. "Your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more." It's precious. Now that Christ has saved you, how does he want you to manifest the reality of your salvation in your life? Well, we've got three more points to go and the clock so far is being kind to us, for which I'm grateful. Second point for today is your speech. Your speech. In a particular way for women, the application of salvation, particularly for mature older women because that's who he's addressing here in verse 3, in a particular way for women, the application of living out a life set apart for God starts with your tongue.

Think of James 3. We won't take the time to turn there but it starts with your tongue. Paul says in verse 3, women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, look at this next

clause, "not malicious gossips." Not malicious gossips. Ladies, one of the aspects of starting an earnest period of growing in Christ in your life is stepping back and taking a long hard look at the way that you use your tongue. You must consciously use your voice for high purposes. Ladies, now that you are in Christ, especially those of you mature women realizing that that's the primary focus today, God has not given you a tongue or a voice-box so that you can engage and talk about worldly things, live life with a sarcastic cutting demeanor, live as close as you can on the edge of inappropriate humor and things like that. No, God has given you your tongue so that you would use your voice for high, elevated, exalted purposes that advance the kingdom of God. You've been called out of worldly talk. You've been called out of sensual conversations. You've been called out of that so that God would work through you and use your tongue to be an instrument of encouragement and edification to the people that are in your circle of relationships. That's why you have a tongue. It's not for these other things.

Proverbs 31:26 speaks about the godly woman and it says this in Proverbs 31:26, it says, "She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue." Ladies, there is a particular role, a particular accent of your life that is given to you in Christ. It is an accent to bring quiet wisdom, to bring quiet gentleness, to bring a balm of encouraging words to those that Christ brings into your path. And I am so grateful to God that there are women in our church that know this, understand it and practice it. They are inestimable gifts from God to our congregation, and this is what God requires of older women in the church to avoid the kind of malicious, cutting gossip, instead of being engaged with destructive talk about other people, to realize that there is a higher purpose that is given to them.

And so, ladies, let me ask you a question with compassion, with tenderness in my heart, desiring your eternal good and the highest productivity of God through your life in the days that he's given to you. Ladies, does your tongue speak kindly to others? Or are you known for sarcasm, complaint and criticism? Those two things are mutually exclusive. In fact, I said we weren't going to go to James, but let's go to James. It's just on the other side of Hebrews to the right in your Bible. Again, as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, you see the high calling of God on your tongue, ladies, and realize how Scripture appeals to us and warns us about the nature of the tongue. Apparently, it's a particular danger to women to watch out for this or Paul wouldn't have mentioned it as he did.

James 3:8 says, "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil." James 3:8. "No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren," which in today's context we could say, "My sisters, these things ought not to be this way." What comes out of your mouth, ladies? Understand that your speech reflects what's going on in your heart. A gentle, peaceable heart yields itself to peaceable, conciliatory, edifying, encouraging speech. When it's otherwise beloved, your mouth is showing what's going on in your heart. There's no avoiding this. Jesus said that what comes out of the mouth reflects the heart in Mark 7.

And we need to take this seriously and I'm going to go places where angels might fear to tread but I'm not an angel, I'm a teacher of the word of God with responsibility to the souls in front of me. Ladies, Scripture warns against the contrary of the Proverbs 31 woman. It warns about the impact that you can have on those around you. In Proverbs 21:19 it says, "It is better to live in a desert land Than with a contentious and vexing woman." Chapter 25, verse 24 says, "It is better to live in a corner of the roof Than in a house shared with a contentious woman." Ladies, the power of blessing and the power of curse lies in your tongue. What are you going to do with it? How are you going to respond to those around you? More importantly, how are you going to respond to the one who calls you to be reverent and set apart for his purposes?

And let me say this as well, what's true in the home is true also in the church, in the body of Christ. I said last week something to this effect, that a church goes no higher than the character of its men. Well, beloved, speaking to all of you, a church is vulnerable to damage as deeply as its most divisive woman in the congregation. And I'll say this, pastors talk about this amongst themselves, they don't often say it publicly but it needs to be said and I've worded this very carefully: perhaps the majority of practical problems in a local church are caused by opinionated women who are either unmarried or have spiritually passive husbands. Listen, ladies. I'm speaking out of a pastor's heart to you, appealing to you, warning you if you've been like this and giving those of you that have not been stained by the things of which I'm about to speak the opportunity to recognize it and turn it away before it manifests itself in your own life, you know what, ladies? You do not need to correct every perceived slight to you, your husband, your family or your children. You don't need to do that. It's not necessary. Do you know why it's not necessary? Do you know why that's not the spirit of a true Christian woman? It's because forgiveness, not retaliation, is at the heart of biblical Christianity.

Look over at Ephesians 4 for example. Ephesians chapter 4. We're going to spend a little time here. Ephesians 4, beginning in verses 31 and 32. Paul speaking to the whole body of Christ, which includes women, you get a sense of when he says, "not malicious gossips," as you compare Paul's inspired writings with other inspired writings, you get a sense of what he's addressing. He says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." You say God has forgiven you of your entire sinful past, you rejoice as we spoke earlier this morning about the position in Christ that is yours by faith in him, well, understand that the vertical way that God has forgiven you becomes the standard by which you forgive those around you. Jesus said in Matthew, you don't need to turn here for the sake of time, in Matthew 5:38, he said, "You've heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two." What he's saying here is reject that spirit of retaliation and desiring to strike back for personal wrongs that have been done to you.

And so ladies, I am going to say what are in front of my notes here to say. When it comes to your families, when it comes to dealing with your children and the little spats that children can sometimes get into, do everyone a favor, do yourself a favor, honor Christ and do this, spare us. Spare us all the Mama bear routine. "I'm going to protect my kids." Do you know what? In significant matters, I understand that, you protect them and guard them from the evils that this world has, but beloved, your example, the call on your life is Christ not an unreasoning animal to proudly call to yourself, "I'm a Mama bear when it comes to my kids." That's a boast that is really a cause for shame. You're not an unreasoning animal. You are a Christian woman called to be set apart and you need to help your children navigate and to understand principles of non-retaliation, principles of forgiveness. And if you teach them that while they're young, you teach them that when they've been wrong, perhaps in little ways rather than always demanding the ounce of flesh in response. Mama Bear is not... I'm not impressed by that. And I'll just say it again, you are not an unreasoning animal in the body of Christ and so don't act like one. There is a way to calmly, patiently, lovingly work through issues without creating division when things come up.

Secondly, let me say this: ladies, you really do not need to voice every criticism that you may feel in your heart about your circumstances, your culture, or even your church. Beloved, grace and gratitude are the marks of a quiet and gentle spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, those are the fruit of the Spirit. Philippians, 2:14 and 15 says this, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." All things without grumbling and disputing. Beloved, grace and gratitude, not grumbling is the spirit of biblical Christianity. How did we ever get off and into the areas of conflict and dispute that, broadly speaking, the church of Christ is so often known for? How did we ever lose sight of these basic principles? You older ladies, you mature Christian women, those who call yourself and think of yourself in those terms, understand this: the voice of the mature Christian woman should calm troubled waters not agitate them, Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they and they alone shall be called the sons of God."

So you see, beloved, it is urgent for the sake of your soul, it is urgent for the sake of your family, it is urgent for the sake of the example that you set for your children, it is urgent for the body of Christ that women embrace Titus 2 and say, "That sets the path that I'm going to walk. Let others do whatever they're going to do, I'm going to walk the path laid down for me in the word of God. Though none go with me, still I will follow."

And so let me just say this: if you are a lady with an outspoken tongue, in one sense that's okay, you know, there are people are quiet, people are outspoken, verbal, no problem, no problem. I'm not saying that a woman shouldn't be verbal. What we're saying here from the word of God is that your verbosity, your outspoken tongue must be brought under the authority of Scripture and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Don't boast in being a woman who speaks her mind if you're not conscious of being a woman that is under the

authority of God and consciously dependent upon the Spirit of God to promote sanctification in your heart.

Thirdly. We've seen Scripture address your self-assessment, address your speech, thirdly, your sobriety. Your sobriety. Drunkenness is a problem in our culture, and it was a problem back then as well. Go back to Titus 2:3 with me. Titus 2:3. Paul goes on to say, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine." Ladies, the further you separate yourself from this alcohol-soaked generation, the more you will reflect the reverence of a Christian woman. I'm not making absolute statements about alcohol or wine that would not stand up to Christians in France, for example, or in Italy. I've been there. I'm simply saying to be mindful of the fact and being mindful of what Scripture says here not to be enslaved to much wine. And that's a more searching statement than you might realize. Not enslaved to much wine has a positive biblical counterpart over in Ephesians 5. I think we looked at it Tuesday night? If so some of you will remember it more specifically, but in Ephesians 5:18, understand that when Scripture is giving us these practical applications, it's usually giving us negatives to avoid and positives to embrace, and such is the case as we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.

Ephesians 5:18, "do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but," by contrast, "be filled with the Spirit." You see, what I just said about the tongue, I said it's okay to be outspoken if your tongue is under the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is what Scripture is teaching, "be filled with the Spirit." And what does the tongue that is under the control of the Spirit look like? Verse 19, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." You see the inner spirit, the gentleness, the joyfulness of that inner spirit that is the counterpart of being enslaved to alcohol? So, ladies, don't be satisfied simply with avoiding drunkenness, fill your heart with Christ-centered songs, with Christ-centered gratitude, with Christ-centered love. Beloved sisters in Christ, this is the unique role, this is the accent, better stated, the accented role that God gives to you. This is your contribution to make to life in the body of Christ is that role that he assigns to women.

Fourthly and finally, your sympathy. Your sympathy. We've seen your self-assessment, your speech, your sobriety, and fourthly, your sympathy, and this will bleed over into next week. What does a mature Christian woman do? Where does she recognize that her prime ministry opportunities lie? Godly women, godly, mature women understand that they have a unique role to help and to encourage younger women in the church. Younger women in the church. Titus 2:3, "not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine," negatives, now here's the positive, "teaching what is good." You older ladies, those of you that have been raising children even for a while, you understand uniquely the challenges and trials that are set apart for younger women. Some of you know by sad personal experience what it is like to live with a difficult husband. My wife does. She knows what it's like to live with a difficult husband. Some of you know what it's like to be betrayed. You know what it's like to have sick crying children and staying up all night and trying to maintain your sanity when you're reaching for another bowl for them to throw up into. You know what that's like. You know how hard it is. For a mom, young

mom to maintain her composure under circumstances like those, you have a unique opportunity that God specifically gives to you as a privilege, as an opportunity for ministry, to help those younger ladies around you with sympathy. To encourage them. To tell them that it's going to be okay. To tell them they can call you. To assure them that you are there for them.

Teaching what is good, verse 4, "so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children," and on and on it goes. This particularly pictures private interaction. You know, ladies, you don't need a big platform, you don't need a Bible study of your own in order to exercise this kind of ministry. There is all kinds of opportunity to reach out to young ladies and see how you can help and encourage them. You know, the young ladies today and it's just going to get worse, you know, now they're dealing with, you know, "My friend is transgender and I'm wondering about myself, you know, and I've got these difficulties and my parents are difficult to live with and they're not Christians." And young ladies trying to find their way, probably having sinned somewhere in their past like some of you older women have done. You have a profound opportunity if you will just embrace it and focus on being reverent in your behavior, using your tongue to encourage and manifesting the sympathetic heart of a woman who's been there yourself.

And let me say this as well. You know, ladies sometimes come to the elders, "I need counsel. I need help." Listen, we are going to send you to ladies in our congregation that we know are qualified to give you good counsel to minister to you in particularly this way. It does not take a college degree in biblical counseling to be an effective counselor in the body of Christ. That is so important to understand, especially in this day and age in the church. So we'll look at that private interaction and how it plays out for younger women more next week.

But ladies, as we close, first of all, let me just say to men, "Men, if God has given you a woman like this, you fall on your knees this afternoon and thank him that he's given you one like that." And ladies, understand this, that Jesus Christ in defining roles in the body of Christ, he has not called you to a second-class status in his kingdom. Your lofty goal, your lofty opportunity, your lofty privileges in the days that the Lord has left for you is to live the life of one that Christ has set apart for himself and for you to say, "I am set apart for Him. I am His and He is mine and that defines me, and I'll gladly embrace this role that He has given to me." And as you do that, you will manifest the glory of Christ in the circle that God has given to you and, ladies, there is no higher privilege than that.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for the wisdom that we find in Your word. We thank You for the clear direction of how You would have us live as those who belong to Christ. Having set us apart positionally. Father, help us now, men and women alike, to live it out in practice to the glory of our great Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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