

Titus 2:1-10

The church makes the gospel attractive by how we live.

I have a keen sense of smell. A sensitive nose. And smells have imprinted themselves on key memories I have - fairly random events that are core memories because of the smell!

Like the long international flight where I was uncomfortable and dehydrated. And in the middle of the night, an angel in the form of a flight attendant gave me a cool glass of water... and the scent, their fragrance brought "peace." I know it was crazy...

Another not so sweet memory is that of unloading a truck of junk at the dump with my father-in-law. It was a summer day, things were ripe. The smell made me sick, (I can still bring that smell to mind a decade or so later and it's still gross!)

Thankfully, due to the advancements in hygiene we are not faced with aromas as often as we could be, and we have come to realize pleasant is better.

There is something to this even when it comes to faith! Metaphorically, we are an aroma, that others will tie to the gospel we proclaim. A fragrance imprinted in their memory whenever the name of Jesus is brought up.

It's supposed to be that way.

2 Corinthians 2:12-16 "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, [13] my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

[14] But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. [15] For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, [16] to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?" (ESV)

With this in mind we traverse the second chapter of Titus. This letter has been outlining how the church exists in contrast to the prevailing culture of the world. Paul exhorts his disciple to the vital work of appointing elders in every city; those beyond reproach, faithful men, over and against the false teachers who stir up the people for shameful gain. Who look just like the lying, evil, gluttonous world around them.

Titus 1:16 “They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.” (ESV)

Now Paul hits the contrasting reality again with the church now increasing in Christlikeness.

The church makes the gospel attractive by how we live.

While we could approach this text in a few different ways, for our purposes this morning I want us to notice the key things the church should embrace, essentially what gospel living looks like and why we live it.

Life that Accords with the Gospel

Titus 2:1 “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” (ESV)

What accords with healthy doctrine, the grace of Christ, forgiveness and new life in Him. Trustworthy word as taught.

There is a way of life that follows the gospel. The words that prove the existence of a community’s faith.

We have heard in our day the refrain “just preach the gospel.” When that is said, i sometimes think it is code for “hate your neighbor.”

“Notice how 2:1 does not read; Paul does not say, “But as for you, teach sound doctrine.” Instead, he exhorts, “Teach what accords with sound doctrine.” In other words, Titus was to teach believers what kind of lifestyle fits with Paul’s gospel.”

There are implications to the gospel; individual - not left in sin, called to transformation to be more like Jesus; and corporate - collective display of what Jesus does in his people.

There is life that accords with the gospel and that is what Titus is to teach, what the whole church is to be about.

Firstly, these things are *in community*. Believers relating to one another. Like a family.

This last week one of our dear friends had occasion to be in Algeria and his team visited the hermitage of Charles de Foucauld, who tried to preach to local tribes along a trade route and was eventually martyred. For close to 100 years since then a solitary priest lives on the ground to perpetuate the history (current priest has been there 15 year). Very hostile space unlikely a lot of witnessing happening. Solitary life. Heard this story and thought of the appeal of acesitics, going away into the wilderness to be alone...

Solitude is great (heading on a retreat tomorrow!) but it is not meant to be our constant experience. We are meant for the community of the church.

Mothers and fathers in the faith, pouring into the next generation with Titus as a big brother type living as an example to all.

Titus 2:7–8a “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned,” (ESV)

If we only focus on the exhortations to the categories of people we find here we might miss that they are called to this way of life for the good of the church, for those around them, for those coming before and after them.

“The pursuit of individual piety mainly or solely for one’s personal edification is foreign to the gospel. Life in Christ is life in community, and the blind cannot lead the blind. Older man can teach self-controlled lives only if they have pursued it themselves. Older women can train younger women to be reverent in behavior, especially as it is embodied in being good wives and mothers, only if they have attempted to do so as well.” Paul Jeon

These corporate dynamics indicate why Paul expects ministry to occur through more than the leadership of the church. Yes, elders are to lead, but the apostle has clearly assigned to all in the Christian community a role. The older are to reach the younger, and the experienced are to pass along their experience to those coming after them—parents to children, those inside the circle to those outside the circle. Everyone has the role of making God real to someone else.

And we make God real by living *Christlike* lives.

Let's just walk through the categories and recognize they are all starkly different from Cretan culture.

Older men - They are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, love and steadfastness. They should be the anchors of the church, steady, tested, and faithful because Jesus has been faithful to us. Grandpas and uncles that have stories to tell but tell them in light of the gospel.

Older women - They get the most ink here, like the men, reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good. I don't see this as narrowly as some may - questions of punctuation not in the Greek. When they teach, like elders holding fast to sound doctrine, they teach what is good. And those watching take notice...

Young women - trained by older women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, submissive to their own husbands.

All of this in contrast to what seems to be a first-century disregard of family. We see elsewhere in the Roman world how children are regularly discarded, self is seen as priority. Here, in the church, the family takes a central place.

“Working at home,” busy at home.

“This rare Greek word *oikourgos* can also be translated “good managers of the household” (NRSV). This is a command not to stay cooped up at home but to exercise managerial gifts and skills for the family's sake. This does not rule out working outside the home (Prov 31:16, 18, 24) but confirms responsibility for domestic oversight.”

As nurturers stewarding the home out of love for husband and children. Modeled for them by the older women's lives - and increasingly counter-cultural today.

And what of being "submissive to their own husbands?"

Should I paint Titus 2:5 over the mantle at home?

"is important to notice what Paul does not say. He could have said, "Husbands, subject your wives to yourselves." In other words, he might have spoken in such a way that called on husbands to compel or coerce submission from their wives. Even though that would have fit with the patriarchal context of the first-century Greco-Roman world, that is not how Paul writes. Instead he calls on wives to submit voluntarily to their husbands. The primary responsibility falls to the wives to submit themselves, not to the husbands explicitly to make them submit. "That the word of God may not be reviled" indicates that failure to carry out this role gives outsiders grounds to criticize God's Word, which is something no Christian has permission to do."

As the church has roles, so does the family. A mutual giving of one's self for the good of the spouse and the family. Where the wife seeks and submits to this family leadership, the husband leads and gives of himself as Christ.

Ephesians 5:22–29 "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, (ESV)

Clear here that this is not harsh or burdensome but a surrender to this way that the culture around the church has no frame for.

These things are not only for the women, “likewise...”

Younger men - self-controlled, responding to the example of integrity, dignity, and sound speech.

All of this, living like Jesus. Paul, having modeled this for Titus, calls on the young pastor to do the same.

“Titus cannot merely teach faithfully. He must live faithfully. If Titus cannot live faithfully as a Christian, he is not qualified to teach others what he himself cannot do. He must be able to say to his congregation,” as Paul does...

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” (ESV)

Lastly, slaves, bondservants, those often outside the family, are to me submissive to their master, well pleasing, not stealing, showing all good faith. Those economically tied to another, see this effort as an example for how we work. Different, not begrudgingly laboring for the paycheck, but serving with honor wherever we are.

We are not meant to look at these exhortations with a bent to knit pick them but to see them as the fruit of the transformation we are promised in Jesus.

“Believers need concrete help and guidance for parsing out what godliness looks like. Training in godliness is more than offering vague ideals of goodness and piety. The specificity of Paul’s instructions might rattle some, but the problem is not with any legalistic tendencies on his part; rather, it may result from our proclivity for ambiguity, which allows “acceptable sins” to persist in our lives.”
Paul Jeon

Paul’s list of gospel “fruit” here, combined with his lists in other epistles, such as Galatians 5:22–23 or 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, makes plain that grace is not an excuse for sin. Godliness is not merely an option for Christians; it is essential. The rules do not change, but the reasons do, as love for the God of grace becomes the primary motivation of the Christian life.

Abiding quality for everyone in the church...

“the virtues of sobriety and self-control are given, explicitly or implicitly, to all four groups. It would be a mistake to interpret these abstractly. More faithful to the letter itself is to treat these as qualities that necessarily flow from adopting a worldview marked by the poles of Christ’s first and second coming. Given Jesus has come and will come again, believers should live with a sense of clarity, discipline, and purpose.” PJ

“Self-control” as “avoidance of extremes and careful consideration for responsible action.” The “self-controlled” person is “intent on the what, the how, and the when of doing what should be done.”

Gospel sanity brings a steadiness, sensibility to our lives and that works out for the good of others, those we relate to in the church.

Of course there is a way of living that follows the gospel - the gift of grace compels us into new life. Eternal living starts now and this is what it is beginning to look like.

When you believe in Jesus, that he is God in the flesh, who lived submitting to the Father in your place, died a death your sin and disregard of God deserved, giving you his righteousness, making you blameless before your Creator. When you believe in him, you commit not only to forgiveness but to His way. To gospel living. To the self-controlled, dignified, gracious life - empowered for it by His Spirit.

Gospel change is from the inside out, not from the outside in. If the heart is healthy, fruit will come.

And this fruit is doing something vital. By this way of living you are filling the air with fragrance.

Living that Adorns the Gospel

Peppered through this description of gospel living has been the reason for it. Did you notice?

Titus 2:5b “that the word of God may not be reviled.” (ESV)

Titus 2:8b “so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.” (ESV)

Titus 2:10b “so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” (ESV)

The lives of the church are proof the gospel is beautiful. We are not living for the same pursuits as the world. Instead we are satisfied in Jesus and living like him with others for his glory.

Given family, belonging, a life to live to spotlight Jesus.

In the New Testament we never get the sense that Christianity was just a Sunday thing. That life should be indistinguishable from everyone else's except you have the hope of heaven!

Even in Titus we've seen the call to the opposite, to lives set apart.

We've all seen the negative examples - professing Christ but smelling like something far different. There is grace for that - Paul even tells Titus to sharply rebuke them to bring them to soundness of faith.

And we recognize that we won't be perfect so we live repentant, leaning into the promise of change, of newness, of Christlikeness.

We are living lives that are seen... may they make the gospel attractive.

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (ESV)

The church makes the gospel attractive by how we live.

Determine to live like this - From the grace of Christ for you, endeavor to be sober-minded, self-controlled... that others will see.

Live it with others - Sink into community, throw off the ideal of rugged individualism, and see each other as examples, a refining community on the journey together.

“The progression of Paul’s instructions to the various segments of the church indicate that community dynamics are instrumental in influencing others in the church, silencing opponents in the church, and reaching unbelievers outside the church. This is power from which no believer should cut himself or herself off.”
BC

Live for all to see - Let your light shine, adorn the gospel as you live relying on Jesus, honoring others, inviting them in.

Titus 2 is for us a smell check. May the fragrance be life, forgiveness, freedom, a place to call home.