Eager to do What is Good

Titus 2:1-15
Key Verse: Titus 2:14
“who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

God loves his people, in this there is no doubt. From the very beginning when God created us, he has done everything for the benefit of mankind. After God created the first couple, Adam and Eve, he made them the best home, the garden of Eden. And it was beautiful, starting with the amazing sunrises and sunsets and the tranquil moon lit nights where the stars and galaxies light up the midnight sky. There were lush gardens with delicious fruit and amazing animals, God made everything for our pleasure, making sure he addressed all five of our senses, there were birds singing sweetly and the garden was pleasing to the eye, the food was tasty to eat, and everything smelled so good, and there were fluffy puppies to cuddle with. God left nothing to chance as this was his expression of his love, for his desire was to be our god and for us to be his people (Ex 6:7). All he wanted to do was walk among his people (Lev 26:12) love them and be loved by them. And for a while, that’s how it was. The garden was paradise. However, mankind could not maintain God’s blessing and sinned against God. As a result, paradise was lost and the relationship between God and man was broken. From that time on, God has been working to restore the relationship with his people and to bring them home. As we resume our study of the book of Titus, in takes place in Crete, an island off the coast of Greece, where we heard last week through Mike’s message that Paul had left Titus behind so that he could teach the people of Crete (The Cretans) how to live godly lives. Our passage today dives into the detailed instructions that Paul gave to Titus and how we, as Christians, should live.

AS usual, we’ll start with verse 1. “You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.” Paul’s concern was that the people of Crete should live lives that reveal the beauty of the truth about Jesus, and have a positive impact on those who don’t believe. The sound doctrine, which is the word of God, is designed to bring us into an intimate relationship with God, as well as, prepare us to be an ambassador of Jesus to a fallen world. To do that, Titus would have to help the people of Crete because they had no idea how to do it. In fact, the life of a believer would almost certainly be contrary to their present way of living, because they were used to lying, being lazy gluttons and evil brutes. (v1:12) Just as a child needs to be taught how to behave and to know right from wrong, Titus would have to do the same for the Cretans. And all the while he was doing it, he had to make sure he was setting a good example for them. As the saying goes, “if you’re going to talk the talk, you better walk the walk.” Otherwise, the Cretans would see Titus as a phony and wouldn’t pay any attention to him. (He may even do harm to God’s reputation by being a bad example) This is, and always has been, a difficult task. That’s why Paul wrote Titus this letter, to give him direction and help him complete his task. This letter was also meant to be read in public for others to learn from.

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Paul divides the people of Crete into five separate sub groups, older men and women, younger men and women and slaves that Titus should address individually. Starting with men, verse 2 says, “Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.” I am not sure how old Titus was at the time this letter was written, but still he would have to teach men older than he was. Of course, age is never a guarantee of spiritual and emotional maturity. True spiritual maturity comes through growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, still in some cases a younger person can be more spiritually mature than an older person. However, a younger person may have difficulty teaching an older person due to the age gap and generational differences. So, when teaching, the younger person should do so with grace and respect asking God for wisdom so that they may be a blessing to the older person. Paul singles out four qualities older men should be trained in.

The first is temperate, not given to excessive highs and lows, self-restrained. This is one of the qualities for the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:2) as well as deacon (1 Tim. 3:11). The original Greek word, (nephalios,) has the meaning of “temperate in the use of alcohol,” and then, with a broader meaning, “sober, clear-headed, self-controlled.” William Hendriksen, described it this way, ‘The temperate man ‘is moderate, with respect to the use of wine and in all tastes and habits. He doesn’t go to excess. He is not a slave to his appetites. Whether he is eating, drinking, sleeping, spending money, or engaging in recreation, he keeps a firm hand on his desires and drives.’ In this context, it refers to being free from all forms of excess or life-dominating patterns through the control of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). This is in contrast to the “lazy gluttons,” a term used to describe the Cretans.

Worthy of respect – a man’s conduct should be such that everyone may respect him, both in the church and without.

Self-controlled – This goes hand in hand with temperate. (Marshmallow experiment.) This is to be taught to each of the groups and should be a defining characteristic of all Christians.

Sound in faith – When I heard this it kind of reminds me of a last will and testament – I Bob, being of sound mind, do hereby give…this means that I know what I’m doing, To have sound faith, they should be certain about their faith in Jesus, not wavering, doubting, not confused, unclear or vague.

Sound in love – They should know the love of God personally and also love God and love others.

Sound in endurance – It is possible, as has been suggested, that Paul varied the early Christian triad of faith, hope, and love by substituting “endurance” for “hope,” thus emphasizing the need of perseverance for the older men. The latter years of life, especially for men, can be filled with regrets, a sense of uselessness or worthlessness, feelings of despair, self-absorption, or even a tendency to relax moral standards because of old age. However, Paul desired or the older men what he desired for himself as he approached the end of life: To have fought the good fight, to have finished the race, to have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7). Biblical history, as well as secular history,

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sadly reports the lives of those who did not finish well.

Take a look at verses (v6-8) "**6** Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. **7** In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness **8** and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us." Here Paul addresses younger men. At the top of their list is self-control. Just like the older men, young men must be able to control themselves. If they can't, they are not trustworthy. Titus's example was to extend beyond his normal, daily conduct. Titus was to be an example to younger men. Titus is to be an example of Integrity – not corrupted, Seriousness – to be characterized by dignity and inspire respect, and soundness of speech.

Next Paul turns his attention to the women. Take a look at verse 3, **3** Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good." Just like the men, he deals with the older women first. They are to live reverently – the outward expression of an inner character, devotion and conviction in matters of belief and behavior; devout, pious, one who lives devoted to God.

They are not to be slanderers. In preparing for this message, I found something interesting, did you know that the term for devil comes from the Greek root diabolos, meaning slanderer. Those persons who cannot control their tongues in speaking lies, false accusations, and spreading malicious gossip (whether true or untrue) do the work of Satan himself. They cannot be slanderers and serve God. This exhortation to self-mastery of the tongue is especially directed toward women (cf. 1 Tim 3:11); however, self-control in this area applies to all Christian believers (cf. Jas 3:1–12).

Women shouldn't be addicted to too much wine – not a drunkard and to teach what is good – to younger women. And what should they teach to the younger women, take a look at verses 4-5. "**4** Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, **5** to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

Love their husbands – In a society of arranged marriages, where women did not have a say at all on the choice of their husbands, this quality is very important and needs to be emphasized. Sometimes they may want to kill them, older women have more experience and should help younger women to love and encourage, and be a suitable helper to their husbands.

Love their children – This reminder is quite significant in a society where children are given very little importance. Also, sometimes we are blind to our children's faults, older women can help younger women how to love their children.

Be self-controlled and pure – pure is added to self-controlled, purity is a valued character trait.

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Busy at home – May indicate an efficient management of household responsibilities. don't be idle, take pride in making the home a good influence to your family.

Be kind – may indicate a lack of irritability in light of the nagging demands of mundane and routine household duties.

Subject to their husbands –This doesn't imply a position of inferiority, but recognizing and accepting a God-given order and responsibility. Husbands and wives are equal; however, their equality doesn't negate their distinctive differences. The fact is that God created male and female. Each sex has distinctive features, not only physically but emotionally and psychologically. Such features are for the mutual benefit of the other.

The last group Paul addresses are the slaves, take a look at verses 9-10. "**9** Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, **10** and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

I find it funny that the word for subject is the same for the wives and slaves. Slaves were to be subject to their masters – don't undermine their authority. Try to please their masters –take pride in the work you do. Your goal should be to bring satisfaction. Don't talk back – be respectful and polite. Don't steal, be fully trusted.

Slaves –Slaves, they could live such a honorable life doing good so that by their actions they can influence their masters. Who knows maybe they can win their master over to Christ and then their master might set them free, at the least they would be treated better than non-Christian master. Also, can relate to work – do a good job at work so that people will notice something different than others and you can glorify God.

When we see this list of things we should do, we can respond in a couple of different ways. One way is to look at it and think, "I don't need your rules. I'm going to live how I want to live." That is outright rejection. Another way to respond is to think, "I can do these things, no problem. I got it." And then we make this list our righteousness. And then what happens is we begin to look down upon those who don't have the personal discipline and criticize them. With this kind of attitude, the community of believers turns into a tedious, legalistic, burdensome place ruled by fear and condemnation. And who would want to live in a place like that? Another response can be, you look at this list and want to do it but think, "Who can do all of that? You have to be perfect and who's perfect?" And it can become so burdensome trying live according to all the rules and regulations. However, when we truly experience the grace and love of God, our attitude changes, and instead of only looking at the list of do's and don'ts we think of God and remember his love and what he's done for us and we carry on. For example, if you were to look at the long list of things you have to do to raise kids; having to get up with them in the middle of the night when they are sick, clean their vomit and poopy diapers, sit with them for hours to make sure their homework is done properly,

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follow up on them to make sure they're not getting in trouble, having to discipline them when they need correction, you might not want to do it, however when you do have children and you hold them in your arms, and feel their little hugs, their lives are so precious and you love them. Then when you run into one of those difficult times, you do what you need to do because you love them. You may not particularly enjoy it, but you bear it because of your love for them. Likewise, when we live our life with faith in Jesus, not all the time is going to be easy, but when we remember his love for us, it gives us the desire to do so. Verses 11-14 say, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." The more grace of God touches our heart the deeper understanding of our sin is. And the deeper realization of our sin, the great our thanksgiving is to God for saving us. The bigger debt that you've been relieved of, the more you're thankful. The word of God teaches us to walk away from the wrongs things and to say "Yes" to the right things in life.

In the passage, self-controlled, or a variation of it, is mentioned six times in this short passage the key a faithful life is to be self-controlled. Which means to be led by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18) so that we don't need anyone to tell us what to do, we do it naturally, as verse 14 puts it, to be eager to do what is good.

When Jesus truly comes into someone's life, he brings a revolution. He shows what God is like, offers salvation and gives power to those who want to change. Jesus has given his life to conquer evil and rescue sinful people into God's family. The challenge for the Christian is how to lead a pure life in a wicked world. Our hope is not that we will overthrow the evil structures of the world, but that Christ will return in glory and complete his new creation.

The late J. Hampton Keathley III noted that, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the months before his execution by the Nazis in 1945, wrote: "I fear that Christians who stand with only one leg upon earth, also stand with only one leg in heaven." His concern was for Christians who had disengaged themselves from the world, who could stand by and watch atrocities committed as if the Christian message or individual Christian responsibility had no bearing whatsoever upon earthly affairs.

The fact of the matter is, that our faith in Christ was designed for engagement in the world. The source of this new life is from God above, as our values are not of this world and our hope takes us beyond this world, heavenward. However, it's in this world that God has called us to live, and it's the people around us that we must reach with the gospel. Engagement of this kind requires credibility and participation in the life of the world. We are to be in the world but not of it. (Jn 17:15) If our lifestyle fails to reflect the character of God, then we neutralize our testimony. How many times have we seen how people who once lived faithful lives have destroyed their testimony because of sin? What Paul is telling Titus to teach the people of Crete is, "You are God's people, so live like it. Do the right thing because how you live, reflects upon God.

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Therefore, since God wants to be our god and for us to be his people. God has demonstrated his love for us, by sacrificing himself to redeem us from all wickedness. God longs for us to love him back. The way that God wants us to show our love for him is to be eager to do good. But because of our sinful nature, it is difficult for us to do so. We need to help one another, we need to teach and be taught, encourage and rebuke so that we may run the race of faith and fight the good fight to the end. One example that came to my mind was Derik Carr, an NFL quarterback, this past week became the highest paid player in football. 125M and what does he talk about right after signing his contract? Giving a tithe. He has been giving 10% to God ever since his first college scholarship check of $700 at Fresno State. Now 10% would be 12.5M and yet he still wants to give. I think that is an example of being eager to do good especially in our modern society where people what Christians to keep their faith quiet, Derik Carr chose not to. But he didn't do it in a loud obnoxious way, he put his money where his faith is. As believers, we should show our love for God, and be eager to do good, in whatever way God inspires us to do so. What good do you desire to do?

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