

Titus 2:1-15 – Lifelong Learners of Graceliness
St Mark's Northbridge – 11/07/2021 AD

BIG Idea: God's grace teaches us to live godly lives

Pray.

Back to School

The school holidays are over – and they probably weren't the holidays or 'staycation' that you had planned, with perhaps a bit more baking and exercise than you thought you'd be doing a few weeks ago.

And so this week it's back to school and back to the world of online learning. It feels like we've jumped in a time machine and gone back to 2020.

But this week it's back to school for all of us. You may have left your school or university days behind long ago, but this week it's back to school!

And that's because as Christians we are learners. We learn from Christ our teacher as we humbly submit ourselves to Him and His teaching. So, this week it's back to school.

And not just this week, but every other week. And we don't graduate until we reach glory and are finally face to face with the Lord Jesus.

So if you like, Christians are people who have L-plates on, as we learn to follow Jesus.

In our Bible reading from Titus 2, there is a strong emphasis on teaching and learning.

Titus has a teaching ministry in Crete. In the church he is to speak and instruct.

And if he is to teach, then those who he teaches, are learners.

And that's what Titus chapter 2 emphasises – that Christians are to learn the sound teaching which leads to sound living. We learn how to live in a healthy way from the healthy teaching we receive.

And this sound teaching is on view at the start of this chapter.

The Sound Teaching of Grace (v1, 11-14)

In verse 1 Paul tells Titus:

¹You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

In a context where false teaching and deception is leading people astray, Titus is to speak and instruct according to sound doctrine.¹ Instead of rejecting the truth, he is to teach the truth.

For the church and for Christians to be healthy, they need sound and healthy teaching. So theology and doctrine isn't dry but immensely practical and vital for all people to live godly lives.

So what is this sound doctrine that Titus is to teach? Well down in verse 11 we see that it's the teaching about God's grace. And these verses here are the heart of this chapter and the centrepiece of this letter – good verses to memorise! If there's nothing you remember from this passage and sermon today then remember these verses: they tell you how you become a Christian and how to live as a Christian.

¹ Teaching the sound doctrine in the context of Titus 1: there is error and falsehood abounding. And so Titus needs to teach the truth. In Titus 1: the elders who oversee the church in Crete needed to be men who “⁹...hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”.

This sound teaching that we see in verse 11 is about God's grace – his undeserved goodness and kindness which he shows to a world full of people who live in darkness and rebellion: people like you and me. And God's gift of love is His work in saving us from death and judgment. And as we see in verse 11 it's for all people.

- **Past, Present, Future**

And the working of God's grace which offers salvation to all is seen in time and history: past, present and future.

In the Past: God's grace has appeared in time and history – in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace is not hidden or secretive, but public. And this grace has appeared so that all people can be saved: Jews and Gentiles, men and women, children and adults, the rich and the poor, those who went to public schools and those who went to private schools. God's grace has appeared, offering salvation to all. That happened in the past.

And in the Present: In the here and now, in verse 12 God's grace ¹² *...teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,*

God's grace teaches us a new way to live right now. When we learn the way of grace it means we no longer live for ourselves but instead we live for God. We see our past and how terrible it is to live in our sin and we see that God has saved us from that. Which means we can say "No" to ungodliness. We live godly lives now in response to being

saved by the Lord Jesus.² So godliness is really, ‘graceliness’ – an outworking of God’s grace.

And while we live godly lives in the present, it is done in anticipation of the future. In verse 13 God’s grace teaches us to live godly lives: ¹³*while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

The appearing or, rather, re-appearing of Jesus Christ our Saviour is the end goal and the destination where we are heading as Christians. It’s our sure and certain hope as we wait patiently for that day.³

So God’s grace is seen in the past, and shapes how we live in the present, while we wait for the future hope.⁴

- **It’s All About You Jesus**

And as you can see God’s grace is firmly centred on Jesus. It’s all about Him. He is God’s grace who has appeared. It’s Jesus who offers salvation for all people by redeeming us from all wickedness through his death on the cross. And do you see there in verse 13 that Jesus is described as being both our God and Saviour. So He is more than a teacher or a guru. He is not merely the One sent by God into the world but God himself. Heaven coming to earth. It truly is amazing grace!

² This is a constant theme throughout this letter: that knowing the truth leads to godliness. Godliness and godly living comes from knowing the truth of God’s grace.

³ The prayer of the saints: ‘*Marana tha*’ (“Come Lord”) – 1 Cor. 16:22

⁴ It’s what the New Testament often sums up in: Faith, Love and Hope. Faith in the Lord Jesus and what He has done in saving us. Our godly lives in the present age marked by Love. And living with the eternal Hope we have in the Lord and the coming of Jesus. God’s grace seen in the past, present, and future.

And even after we have been saved, it's still about Jesus because we belong to Him. His blood has paid the price for our redemption and so we are now His. Those words in verse 14 that Jesus has "*purified for himself a people that are his very own*" is a reminder of our identity as the church: that we belong to Jesus. He is our Lord and master and so everything that we do is for Him. Our eagerness to "do what is good" is not for ourselves. It's all done for Jesus. And it's all possible because of Jesus. From beginning to end, Jesus saves us for Himself. It's all about Him, and not about us.

And this is a good reminder of our faith as Christians. Our faith is based on God's grace to us. We don't bring anything to the table – not even our good works. The nature of God's grace is that we don't do anything to earn it.

And so I want to ask those of you tuning in today: do you know this grace? Have you accepted God's free gift of being forgiven through Jesus?

So the sound teaching that we are to learn as Christians is the gospel of God's grace in our Lord Jesus Christ. These are first principles and the foundations for Christians down through the centuries. And this is what Titus is to teach, and this grace is what teaches us to live godly lives.

Learning the Godly Life of Grace (v2-10)

So what does this godly life look like? What does it look like to "*say "No" to ungodliness and live a godly life...*"?

Well in verses 2 to 10 Titus is given some specific instructions for those in the church. And these verses are a bank full of detailed godly living. And I want to briefly reflect briefly on a few key themes in these verses:

- **For All in the Church**

And the first is that this teaching about godly living is for all in the church. God's grace has appeared with salvation to all people, and so the godly life of grace is for all in the church.

Paul gives instructions for what Titus is to teach to different people in the church. And what you see over these verses that godly living is for everyone. Different groups of people are mentioned but no one is left out. There's something for everyone in these verses! Older men, older women, young women, young men, slaves (or those who work under someone else's authority). And of course, this will impact children too since they are part of families. Everyone is included in these instructions because living a godly life is for everyone who calls on Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Sometimes you might hear or think that the Bible isn't relevant. That we live in a different age and that the Bible was addressing different people. And so it's not relevant for us today.

But that's a bit too simplistic. Because for a start it's the word of the living God and so it will always be relevant to us, no matter what circumstance you find yourself in!

But when we get to specific passages like this one, we see that we actually have a lot in common with who it's addressing. We too are God's church made up of younger and older men and women. And don't we see this whenever we meet together. That as a

church family there are many different people: men and women, those who are older and those who are younger. And we are all learners who are taught to do what is good by God's grace.

So this passage is especially relevant for us as it addresses specific groups of people in the church. It shows us that godliness is for all in the church.

- **Self-Control**

We also see in these verses the theme of self-control. It's a common thread that runs through these instructions and expectations for godliness:

- In verse 2 the older men are to be “temperate” and “self-controlled”.
- In verse 3 The older women are not to be “...slanderers or addicted to much wine” – that's self-control in your speech and consumption of alcohol.
- And the young women and young men are instructed to be “self-controlled”.
- And then of course in verse 12 we saw that God's grace *teaches us to **live self-controlled, ...lives.***

So self-control is a really important part of godly living for all Christians.

But it's worth asking why this emphasis on self-control?

And I think the answer lies in the context of this present age. At college one of the jokes and punchlines we have amongst us students is that the answer to most questions is: “context” – how do I know what this verse means? Context. What's the significance of this word? Context. How do I handle this pastoral situation? Context.

But seriously, I think context is why Titus is to teach self-control.

Self-control is important for godliness because we live in the present age. God's grace has appeared and we are redeemed by our Lord Jesus, but we still live in this present age. We are living in a world that is still tainted by sin. And we are still inhabiting bodies which are corrupted by sin. Even though we have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, we all still have evil thoughts and desires.⁵ So we are engaged in a daily battle. And so we need God-empowered self-control.

And self-control also matters when you consider the specific context that Christians are living in. As Paul writes to Titus, he's writing to him in Crete, a city and culture that is proud of its ungodliness. We saw this last week in chapter 1 where Paul wrote that:¹² *One of Crete's own prophets has said: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."*

Titus was in a context where the church in Crete would need to exercise self-control. They were in a city that was defined by ungodliness and overindulging in sensual pleasures.⁶ A culture that would have had many voices saying: "Be true to yourself", and "You do you". "Do whatever makes you feel good". And that doesn't sound too different to Sydney and Australia if we're honest.

So that's why self-control matters. We need to have God's grace grip our desires, our thoughts, and our actions. To show us the goodness of God and teach us to deny ourselves and follow Jesus. To exercise self-control.

⁵ It's a sign that we are not there yet. We have not reached perfection and glory

⁶ Misusing and overindulging in God's good gifts.

And this is especially the case for young men and women. It's interesting that in verse 6 self-control is the only thing that is instructed to the young men. While younger men and women may have an abundance of strength and vitality, we also lack the wisdom and discernment that comes with age. So for younger men and women self-control is a key part of being godly and living according to sound teaching. And it's only by the power of God's Spirit of grace in us that teaches us to: *say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to **live self-controlled**, upright and godly lives.*

- **Consistency and Integrity**

Verses 2 to 10 also show us the importance of consistency and integrity: that the sound and godly teaching which we receive is to align with sound and godly behaviour.

Consistency and integrity matter, especially as outsiders look on. And we see this throughout our passage:

- In verse 5, the young women are encouraged to be godly...*so that no one will malign the word of God.*
- In verse 8, Titus is to conduct himself with integrity in his teaching ...*so that those who oppose him may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say...".*
- And then in verse 10 slaves are to be godly towards their masters ...*so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.*

So one of the key reasons for godly living is because others are watching. Those outside the church are watching the way Christians live.

Mahatma Gandhi, a clear outsider once said about Christianity: “I like your Christ, but not your Christianity”. He said this when he saw the hypocrisy of Christians who were behaving in an un Christlike manner. And I’m sure we all know of people who find the hypocrisy of Christians hard to stomach.

Our godliness matters because we don’t want God’s word to be maligned or tainted by our actions. We saw this last week when thinking about the importance of godly conduct in Christian leaders and the immense damage that can and has been done when there’s a disconnect between sound teaching and sound living. But this is also true for all Christians. Our actions are an adornment to the gospel of grace. They go together. It’s graceliness.

Teaching that Encourages and Rebukes (v15)

As we finish up, we see at the end in verse 15 that Paul once again reminds Titus of his ministry to teach according to sound doctrine. And that this teaching will be both encouraging and rebuking.⁷

So in these last few minutes I want to finish with some particular areas where this passage might both encourage and rebuke us.

- Responsibility of Older Men and Women

⁷ As we learn from the word of God, it both encourages us to persevere in living godly lives, and it also rebukes us and calls us to repentance and correction.

And the first of these areas relates to those who are older in the church. In Titus 2 we see that there is an expectation and responsibility on those who are older to teach and model godly living.

For the older men in verse 2 they are to be: ²...*temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.*

There is an expectation here that older men will be looked up to. They are the ones who are to be sound in faith, love, and endurance. They are the leaders and role models in the church.⁸

And older women too. In verse 3 they are to: *to teach what is good.* And in verse 4 to *teach the younger women.*

So in the church older men and women have a responsibility to teach and model the grace that leads to godliness. And what this means is that the teaching and learning that happens in our church is much more than the 25 minutes on a Sunday when someone preaches. Amongst Christians, teaching and learning is done in different contexts by different people, especially those who are older.

So for those who are older, do you see the responsibility of teaching and modelling godliness? And who are you teaching and modelling the Christian life to?

For those of us who are younger, who are we looking up to and learning from as godly examples?

⁸ This is linked to Titus 1 where the elders/overseers in the church are to be men. They have been given the responsibility to be leaders.

I think St Mark's is extraordinarily blessed to be a church full of Titus 2 men and women. The kids and youth and younger members of our church have many older men and women that teach and model godliness to them.

And personally as a younger man, I am thankful to learn from the many godly older men at St Mark's who've been following Jesus longer than I have been alive.

So this passage certainly challenges us to keep being a church full of Titus 2 men and women, and a church that raises the next generation of Titus 2 men and women.

So there is a clear responsibility and expectation on those who are older to be modelling and teaching the grace that leads to godliness.

- The Home as a context for godliness.

Another area that this passage challenges us is in relation to the home. It reminds us that the home and the household is an important place where godliness is to be displayed.

And we see this in the section specifically addressing younger women. In verse 4 Paul says that the older women "...*can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children*"

Now it needs to be said, that Paul is not commanding that all young women must get married and have children. But he's pointing out that if they do get married, then the family and the home – the household – will be a place where godliness is to be displayed.

And in verse 5 there are some specific ways in which this will be seen: being *self-controlled and pure, busy at home, being kind, and be subject to their husbands*, all of this *so that no one will malign the word of God*.

It's again underscoring the importance of the home. The household and family is a vital context for godliness. And while here it specifically addresses women, we know that godliness around the home is for all members of the family: men and women, both young and old. I think this is a very timely reminder for us since lately we have all been spending more time around the home and it looks like we'll be doing so for the next little while. The home is a place to be exercising godliness.

Now before we move on, it's important to note what it does and does not mean in verse 5 for young women to be "*subject to their husbands*" or to "submit to their husbands". When the Bible teaches that women are to submit to their husbands, it means the voluntary and willing acceptance of the leadership and responsibility that a husband has. It is not teaching subjugation of women and giving license for husbands to do whatever they want to their wives. Rather it is the call for a husband to sacrificially lay down his life for his wife, as Christ has done for the church.

Unfortunately, the home is not always a safe place. So I want to be absolutely clear that Titus 2 and the Bible's teaching on submission is not teaching that a woman, or a man for that matter, has to remain in an unsafe household. Submitting to your husband does not mean that a wife has to put up with abuse. So if you are in an unsafe situation, then you are not compelled to stay. And I urge you to seek help.

And if a husband is using their strength to abuse their wife, then they are definitely not imitating Christ, and nor are they exercising self-control!

I think this goes to show why we need to prioritise godliness in the home, especially self-control and patience towards those who might irritate us. Titus 2 helps us see that in the home and amongst those whom God has placed us with, we are to be teaching and learning godliness.⁹ For men to be leading the way in the home as they take spiritual leadership of the family in a sacrificial manner. And for women to be loving their husbands and their children – children who will learn from the godliness that is taught and modelled in the home by their parents, grandparents, and family members. Titus challenges us to see the importance of the home as a place for godliness and gives us a picture of what this godliness looks like.

So it's back to school this week. And from this chapter there is so much for us to learn when it comes to living out godliness. There is something for all of us here.

So are you ready to keep learning the way of God's grace?

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,

Amen.

⁹ This also pushes back against our world and culture which tells you that your significance and value is found in the 9 to 5 and what you do for "work". Titus 2 wants us to see that the home and the household is a place where godliness is to be displayed. And what you do at home and work around the house including raising children is just as valuable and if not more valuable than the 9 to 5.