



Decorating the Gospel with Our Lives

Intro: Once again, Paul's letter to Titus proves to be keenly relevant to our American culture today, even though we are separated by centuries. Here we are forced to recon with a Gospel that demands and changes our lives. We are invited to give ourselves as a decorating gift to the One who has given so much to us. Christians are able to live free from the condemnation that inevitably comes from sinful disobedience, and Christians are able to call attention to the person and work of Christ. The genuine goodness of their magnetically ordinary lives should decorate the message of grace they proclaim.

Passage: Titus 2:7-10

Background / Set-up

- The biblical Gospel includes the promise of Justification and Sanctification (as well as Glorification), and we are wise to consider the broad implications of such a message. It is hard to speak of anything else but Justification when we desire to speak accurately of this marvelous doctrine. Justification comes as a unilateral declaration from God the Father, because of the person and work of Christ – His Son, which is applied by His Holy Spirit to all who believe. And yet, the Bible does not speak only of Justification when it addresses the doctrine. Right here in the book of Titus we see the interweaving of both of these wonderful doctrines – Justification and Sanctification. Christ *redeems* and *purifies* for Himself a people of His own possession (Titus 2:14), and there is much of both Justification and Sanctification here.

Exposition of Major Ideas in the Passage

Outline:

(1) The Biblical Gospel is one of Grace, and it is received through Faith *alone*

(2) “Good Works” necessarily exist in the lives of believers

(3) Our lives either “adorn” the Gospel or they “blaspheme” it

1. The Biblical Gospel is one of Grace, and it is received through Faith *alone*

- *“the doctrine of God our Savior”* (v10)
 - God is our *Savior*, not merely our coach, our example, or our method.
 - We may not speak of offering anything to God that has initiated His gracious activity of saving our souls.
 - We may not pride ourselves as having added anything to the work of Christ on our behalf that will increase our blessed hope.
 - We may not entertain the thought that we will one day enjoy the glories of eternity because of any goodness that we have attained.
 - God is known as “our Savior” throughout Scripture
 - God said through the prophet Isaiah, “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior*” (Is. 43:1-3).
 - The psalmist declares, “*By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth*” (Ps. 65:5).
 - Micah cries out in his distress, “*But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation*” (Micah 7:7).

- After hearing that she would be the mother of the Messiah, Mary sang out, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).
- The psalmist explains that “He who has clean hands and a pure heart... will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Ps. 24:4-5).
- Jude says, “to the only God, [who is] our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 1:25).

2. “Good Works” necessarily exist in the lives of believers

- *“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works”* (v7)
 - *“integrity”* (v7) – incorruptibility – the kind of teaching that is not capable of being corrupted or “broken down”
 - *“dignity”* (v7) – seriousness, gravity – the kind of teaching or exposition that deserves reverence and exhibits gravitas
 - *“sound speech”* (v8) – healthy, pure & words – the kind of speaking that is well reasoned and brings nourishment to the hearer
 - *“speech that cannot be condemned”* (v8)
 - Only the greatest preparation and the utmost care in presenting may produce speech that proves to be utterly undeserving of condemnation.

- *“Bondservants”* – *doulos* – slave, someone who belongs to another
 - In this, and several other NT passages, we are confronted and reminded that the Bible does not advocate for a “social gospel.” Neither does the Bible push for societal or individual modification as an exclusive endeavor.

- *“be submissive to their own masters in everything”*
 - There are at least two important ideas here:
 - First, notice that submission is not to everyone, nor is it to those of any higher substance or value. The submission demanded of servants/slaves is to “their own masters.”

- Second, notice that the submission instructed is in “everything.” Slaves/servants were to make their masters know of their trustworthiness in every way.
- They are to be:
 - *“well-pleasing”*
 - The idea here is a posture of agreeability rather than obstinacy. Such a command would be reasonably quite unpalatable to one whose life was lived under the control of another.
 - *“not argumentative”*
 - This is the natural extension of a “well-pleasing” posture. If one is “well-pleasing” then his/her mouth is going to reflect such a thing. An agreeable attitude will result in a similar speech; and an obstinate attitude will result in an obstinate tongue.
 - *“not pilfering”*
 - This carries the notion of respecting the property of another – even the property of one whose luxurious possessions are in such contrast to the slave/servant.
 - *“showing all good faith”*
 - This is a general summation of the commands here. In all things, the slave/servant was commanded to demonstrate “good” faithfulness. This may seem utterly unreasonable to our modern American ears, but the idea was that the servant would serve his/her earthly master as though it was service to Christ. Such a service would be the platform from which the servant/slave may be a witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this is the goal of the passage as well.

3. Our lives either “adorn” the Gospel or they “blaspheme” it

- *“that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior”* (v10)
“that the word of God may not be reviled” (v5)
 - When you speak and act with integrity, you adorn the Gospel
 - When you speak and act corruptly, you blaspheme it

- When you build up your spouse, your children, and your neighbors with your words and actions, then you adorn the Gospel
 - When you demoralize and damage your spouse, your children, and your neighbors with your words and actions, then you blaspheme it
- When you live in a way that shows genuine goodness and lasting faithfulness, then you adorn the Gospel
 - When you live in a way that shows only superficial goodness and no lasting fidelity, then you blaspheme it
- In my own life I have watched professing Christians *blaspheme the Gospel* in a number of ways
 - I heard a husband and father say that there was no way anyone could convince him not to leave his marriage of 17 years for an adulterous woman.
 - I once listened to a pastor explain away Christ's commands, and later saw the tremendous damage that resulted from his utter disregard for godly living or God's discipline for rebellion.
 - I endured sleepless nights, as a young boy who wanted his father to be present and affectionate; yet the next day would dawn with still no father and still no masculine affection.
 - I watched professing Christians party right alongside me when I pursued sin as hard as I could, and I didn't feel the slightest conviction for my sin nor did I have the smallest bit of respect for their nonexistent holiness.
- As tragic as these are, I am glad to also say that I have watched genuine Christians live as *beautiful decorations of the Gospel*.
 - I have experienced the honest and sincere love of godly men who invested time and effort into me for my own spiritual good
 - I have seen a husband and father open his home to numerous struggling individuals over the course of time, so that he might be a practical help and a godly example
 - I watched two retired men offer themselves to serve and help a total stranger, simply because they loved Christ and loved others
 - I am grateful for the many people here today that have been an encouraging and inspiring example of Christian goodness in my

presence or in my hearing; for such are beautiful decorations that adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These are those whose lives serve as a beacon of light to others who are still plagued by darkness.

Application

- What is God commanding us to BELIEVE here?
 - The Gospel is the power of God
 - The Gospel transforms lives
 - What we do matters
- What is God commanding us to DO here?
 - Believe the Gospel and live as though we do
 - Understand our responsibility and pray that God would help us

My Prayers

- May God convict us of sin where we still embrace it
- May God convert us from loving sin to loving Him
- May God empower us to live the godly lives that will decorate the Gospel

Pastor Marc's Commentary

- Outline of the Letter:
 - Salutation (1:1-4) **doctrinal statement #1*
 - Organizing the Churches in Crete (1:5-16)
 - Order and Qualified Elders (1:5-6)
 - Qualifications of Elders/Overseers (1:7-9)
 - Dealing with False Teachers (1:10-14)
 - Stark Distinctions and True Intimacy with God (1:15-16)
 - Instructing Various Groups (2:1-14)
 - Instructions for Titus and Others A (2:1-6)
 - **Instructions for Titus and Others B (2:7-10)**
 - Theology for Life (2:11-14) **doctrinal statement #2*
 - Instructing on Doing What is Good (2:15-3:11)
 - Initial Charge (2:15-3:2)
 - Human Depravity and the Grace of God (3:3-7) **doctrinal statement #3*
 - Final Charge (3:8-11)
- Closing and Benediction (3:12-15)

7 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, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. 9 Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

- *“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works”* (v7)
 - Note the spectacular contrast here!
 - The ‘empty-talking’ false teachers were said to be “detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work” (1:16). They professed to “know God,” but they proved their own profession of faith to be false in the way they lived (1:16).
 - Titus is commanded to be the exact opposite! Paul commands him to “teach” what “accords with” or is befitting of “sound doctrine” (2:1). In addition to Titus’s ‘healthy’ teaching, he is also commanded to “be a model of good works” (2:7).
 - One cannot miss the necessary connection between right belief and right living. No doubt, good works do not equate healthy believing, but healthy believing never goes unaccompanied; her handmaiden of good works is always there beside her.
- *“in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech”* (v7-8)
 - Titus’s teaching (and that of all elders/pastors who will follow his example) is to show (1) integrity, (2) dignity, and (3) sound speech
 - *“integrity”* – incorruptibility – the kind of teaching that is not capable of being corrupted or “broken down”
 - *“dignity”* – seriousness, gravity – the kind of teaching or exposition that deserves reverence and exhibits gravitas
 - *“sound speech”* – healthy, pure & words – the kind of speaking that is well reasoned and brings nourishment to the hearer
 - Again, notice the direct contrast!
 - The false teachers were “upsetting whole families” (1:11) by teaching “what they ought not to teach” (1:11). Their words were “lies” (v12) that turned people “away from the truth” (1:14). Both their minds and consciences were corrupt (1:15).

- *“speech that cannot be condemned”* (v8)
 - Only the greatest preparation and the utmost care in presenting may produce speech that proves to be utterly undeserving of condemnation.
 - Elliot – “The substance of Titus’ teaching, whether in the more private intercourse with individuals or in his preaching in the Christian gatherings, must be healthy, practical, manly, in contrast to the sickly, morbid, fanciful instruction the false teachers of Crete were in the habit of giving. His words, too, must be well weighed and thoughtful, as well as earnest and impassioned; they must be such as would expose him neither to contempt nor to the charge of presumption.”¹
- *“so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us”* (v8)
 - Even in the face of such noble and admirable speech, opponents will still jeer and writhe, as they hear what they do not want to hear. Neither the clarity, nor the logic may be compromised, but still the content of the speech may be unwanted and, therefore, opposed.
 - Though this is true, “sound speech” is to be accompanied by sound and godly living so that the opponents will be put to shame when they open their mouths against the preacher.
 - Elliot – “the enemy, either the false teacher or the Pagan opponent of Christianity, confounded by the pure, self-sacrificing, earnest life, overcome by the well-weighed, thoughtful utterance of great truths, by the impassioned exhortation to men and women to lead noble, honest lives, will surely be ashamed of his bitter opposition, when he finds neither in the life nor in the teaching anything which he can fairly criticize as ‘bad.’”²
- *“Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything”* (v9)
 - *“Bondservants”* – *doulos* – slave, someone who belongs to another
 - In this, and several other NT passages, we are confronted and reminded that the Bible does not advocate for a “social gospel.” Neither does the Bible push for societal or individual modification as an exclusive endeavor. In fact, the New Testament principle that is to guide first-century slaves does not sound very politically correct in contemporary American culture.

¹ See *Elliot’s Commentary for English Readers* <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/titus/2-8.htm>

² See *Elliot’s Commentary for English Readers* <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/titus/2-8.htm>

- 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 – “20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. 24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.”
- Benson – “the gospel does not cancel the civil rights [or obligations] of mankind”³
 - Pastor Gil Rugh says we should note four facts about slavery in the New Testament:⁴
 - The New Testament nowhere endorses slavery. There is never a recommendation to acquire slaves.
 - The New Testament nowhere denounces slavery. There is no call for its abolition. It is never called an evil.
 - The New Testament never commands slave owners to free their slaves.
 - The New Testament never commands slaves to seek their freedom, nor does it call upon them to throw off the yoke of slavery.
 - *“be submissive to their own masters in everything”*
 - There are at least two important ideas here:
 - First, notice that submission is not to everyone, nor is it to those of any higher substance or value. The submission demanded of servants/slaves is to “their own masters.”
 - While submission to anyone for any reason at any time is an allergen of an idea in our modern American culture, the practice of such a thing is actually quite widely spread. Employees must submit themselves to the policies and people who are authoritative over them; students must submit to the structure and

³ See *Benson Commentary* <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ephesians/6-5.htm>

⁴ See full article at <http://www.biblebb.com/files/gr749.htm>

persons who instruct authoritatively over them; children must submit to the discipline and authority of their parents; and so on...

- Submission of servants to their own particular master or masters would have been the basest expectation of all involved, and the biblical instruction is merely to fulfill one's duty well. However, the instruction is not for all slaves/servants to submit to all masters; and this is no small detail. Whether overt or not, the admonition demonstrates respect for position and not preference for persons.
- Second, notice that the submission instructed is in "everything." Slaves/servants were to make their masters know of their trustworthiness in every way.
 - There is a qualifier assumed throughout the Scriptures, in the case of doing all that is commanded from an authoritative voice. Any human authority that commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands is to be disobeyed. God's authority always, and in every circumstance, supersedes that of all others.
 - The aforementioned qualifier notwithstanding, the servants/slaves were clearly to submit themselves to the authority of the master(s) with a willing posture in every area. This would speak to the natural desire of one to fulfill only the minimum expectation, and it would also address the diligence of a slave/servant when they were unobserved.
- *"they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith"* (v9-10)
 - *"well-pleasing"*
 - The idea here is a posture of agreeability rather than obstinacy. Such a command would be reasonably quite unpalatable to one who's life was lived under the control of another.
 - *"not argumentative"*
 - This is the natural extension of a "well-pleasing" posture. If one is "well-pleasing" then his/her mouth is going to reflect such a thing. An agreeable attitude will result in a similar speech; and an obstinate attitude will result in an obstinate tongue.

- *“not pilfering”*
 - This carries the notion of respecting the property of another – even the property of one whose luxurious possessions are in such contrast to the slave/servant.
 - It is interesting to note the parallel here with this succession and the 2nd table of the 10 commandments. Commands 8, 9, and 10 have great similarity to these three instructions.
 - “You shall not steal” (command 8) is similar to the command here to “not pilfer.”
 - A slave/servant would have had ample reason to covet his/her master’s material wealth and societal position, and the slave/servant could have even enjoyed opportunities to gain material wealth at the expense of his/her master.
 - “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (command 9) is similar to the command to not be “argumentative” in that both are dealing with the speech that would be motivated by ill will.
 - It would seem perfectly reasonable for a slave/servant to have a constant disdain for his/her masters, and the slave/servant would likely have had opportunities to do as the master commanded while rebelling against the master’s authority with his/her mouth.
 - “You shall not covet” (command 10) is like the command here to be “well-pleasing,” as both are directly related to one’s contentment.
 - A servant/slave would have been justified, from a worldly perspective, in his/her being discontent with his/her lot in life. Such a general posture could easily lead to both covetousness and a less than agreeable attitude.
- *“showing all good faith”*
 - This is a general summation of the commands here. In all things, the slave/servant was commanded to demonstrate “good” faithfulness. This may seem utterly unreasonable to our modern American ears, but the idea was that the servant would serve

his/her earthly master as though it was service to Christ. Such a service would be the platform from which the servant/slave may be a witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this is the goal of the passage as well.

- “*so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*” (v10)
 - All of the commands here, and all of the godly living described in Titus 2:1-6 is leading to this climactic purpose: “In everything, adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”
 - All is to be done so that the “word of God may not be reviled [or blasphemed]” (v5), but instead the “doctrine of God our Savior” should be adorned.
 - The “doctrine of God:”
 - While there may be those who would avoid ‘doctrine,’ it is not wise or possible to do so. Doctrine is simply the teaching or instruction concerning a thing – in this case the teaching or instruction concerning God. To avoid learning about God, His instructions, His expectations, His deeds, His promises, His self-revelation, and a host of other things is to block one’s self from knowing God at all.
 - Spurgeon – “It is the fashion, nowadays, to talk much about preaching Christ, but not His doctrines. I neither understand nor wish to understand what that expression can mean. Christ without His doctrine? The great Teacher without His teachings? The Lord without His commands? The Christ without His anointing? Jesus, the only Savior, without His precious blood of Atonement? This is Judas-like, to betray the Son of Man with a kiss, to set up a engraved image in the place of Christ, a stuffed idol from which everything is absent that is vital to the true Christ of God!”⁵
 - “God our Savior:”
 - That there is a *Savior* is taken for granted nearly universally. The only group, it seems, that does not take such a one for granted is that group that fancies

⁵ See Charles Spurgeon’s full sermon on the passage at <http://www.spurgeon.org/vols40-42/chs2416.pdf>

themselves to be without need for it – either they will save themselves, or there is no danger from which any saving is necessary. But presumptuous people and other sinners of all kinds are in need of an exceedingly gracious Savior.

- Not only has God provided a Savior; He Himself has condescended to fill the role! This speaks to the dire need of all those He has saved, and the unfathomable depth of His loving grace.
 - Sinners are utterly dire in their need, for God Himself has been made the Savior. If the sinner's plight were less demanding, then maybe an angel or even a good man could be summoned to rescue the sinful one. Yet, no angel and none among men were up to the task. Finite sinners were in such despair that there could be no other Savior than the infinite God of all Creation.
 - God's grace for sinners is immeasurable and without compare. God has loved sinners with a motivating love. It was His effectual love that compelled Him towards the drastic course of coming to dwell as a man and suffer as a sinner. None can know the depth of suffering Christ endured upon the cross, and likewise none can measure the grace that held Him there.
- “Adorning” the Gospel:
 - The “doctrine of God our Savior” most assuredly is brief script for the substance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What “doctrine” of God can we know that is not viewed in its fullest form in the Gospel? And What “Savior” do we know other than the God-man who lived and died and rose again? Is there any other Savior than Christ Jesus, who is God in human form?
 - The Gospel, then, is what is to be “adorned” with the lives of those who believe and proclaim this supremely good message. In their thoughts, words, and deeds, followers of Christ adorn His message of redeeming work by exhibiting a supernatural love for Christ and obedience to

His loving care. In their lives, those who trust in Christ are to be “models of good works,” so that the Gospel message might be adorned with such things as they live in and speak of its marvelous light.

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