

Introduction to Titus Chapter 2

Sound Doctrine and Adorned Lives: The Household Instructions, the Appearing of Grace, and the Redemption That Purifies a People

Titus chapter 2 is one of the most practically comprehensive and theologically grounded chapters in the entire Pauline corpus. If chapter 1 established the theological foundation and the qualifications for leadership, chapter 2 expands the vision to the entire household of faith — older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and bondservants — with specific instructions for each group, all drawn together by the most stunning theological statement in the letter: the grace of God that appeared for the salvation of all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The structure of the chapter is deliberately community-shaped. Paul does not address only individuals in their private spiritual lives but groups within the household of the church, each with their own responsibilities and their own ways of adorning the gospel they profess. The older men are to model the maturity and dignity that is the fruit of a long covenant life. The older women are to be reverent in their behavior and to teach what is good, specifically training the younger women in the domestic virtues that stabilize households and honor the word of God. The younger men are to be self-controlled — the same virtue that appears in almost every category in the passage, which is telling. And the bondservants are to be well-pleasing to their masters, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in everything.

The theological center of the chapter is the great grace passage of verses 11–14, which provides the doctrinal ground for every behavioral instruction that precedes it. The grace has appeared — it is historical and visible, not merely promissory. It trains — it is educative and formative, not merely declarative. It saves all people — it is universal in its scope of offer, not ethnically or socially restricted. It produces a specific life orientation: the renouncing of ungodliness and worldly passions, and the living of self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. And it is eschatologically directed: we are waiting for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The chapter closes with the charge to Titus himself: declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. The instruction to Titus about his own posture in ministry — the authority he should exercise, the dignity he should maintain — closes a chapter that has been about the shape of the whole community's life. Titus is the one who must embody and enforce the standard the chapter has set for everyone else, and the closing charge is the reminder that the pastoral task is not only the formation of others but the maintenance of one's own integrity and authority in service of the gospel.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come to Titus chapter 2 as the community that is the subject of its instructions — the household of faith that includes older men and older women and younger women and younger men and workers of every kind, each with a specific calling to live in a way that adorns the doctrine of God our Savior. We come asking not merely for theological understanding of the passage but for formation by it: that the grace which has appeared might do in us the training work that this chapter describes, renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions, living self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Lord, let the grace of God that appeared for the salvation of all people be received not merely as the declaration of our forgiveness but as the training force of our character. Let it teach us. Let it form us. Let it produce in us the self-control and the uprightness and the godliness that are the marks of the people who have been redeemed from all lawlessness and purified as God's own possession, zealous for good works. We want to be that people. Form us toward it.

And let the blessed hope of the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ be the eschatological anchor that holds the entire chapter's instruction in place. We are not living the self-controlled, upright, godly life as an end in itself. We are living it as the people who are waiting — whose whole present orientation is shaped by the certain expectation of the One who gave himself for us. Let the waiting be visible in the living.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Titus 2:1–10

Teach What Accords with Sound Doctrine: The Household Instructions for Every Group in the Community of Faith

(1) But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

*(2) That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate,
sound in faith, in charity, in patience.*

*(3) The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour
as becometh holiness,
not false accusers, not given to much wine,
teachers of good things;*

*(4) That they may teach the young women
to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,*

*(5) To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good,
obedient to their own husbands,*

that the word of God be not blasphemed.
(6) Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.
(7) In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works:
in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,
(8) Sound speech, that cannot be condemned;
that he that is of the contrary part
may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.
(9) Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters,
and to please them well in all things;
not answering again;
(10) Not purloining,
but shewing all good fidelity;
that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The Context

The opening verse — but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine — is the deliberate contrast with the false teachers of chapter 1. They taught what they should not, for shameful gain. Titus is to teach what accords with sound doctrine. The but as for you (*su de*) is emphatic in the Greek, the first of several such emphatic contrasts in the letter. And the teaching that Titus is to deliver is not primarily theoretical instruction but behavioral formation — what accords with sound doctrine means teaching whose content shapes how people actually live. The doctrinal and the behavioral are, again, inseparable.

The instructions for older men in verse 2 give four qualities: sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. The sound in faith, love, and steadfastness echoes the Pauline triad of virtues (faith, love, hope in the form of steadfastness) and gives the older men's formation a specifically theological shape — not merely the maturity of age and experience, but the continuing vitality of the core Christian virtues. An older man who has grown cynical or cold or faithless has not achieved the maturity this verse describes; he has simply grown old.

The instructions for older women in verses 3–5 are notable for two things. First, the standard they are held to — reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to much wine, teachers of good — is recognizably the same kind of standard set for the elder in chapter 1 (not a drunkard, not a slanderer by implication). Older women in the church are expected to embody a character consistent with the teaching office they exercise informally in the community. Second, their primary arena of that teaching is the formation of younger women in the specific domestic virtues that stabilize households and prevent the word of God from being maligned. The phrase that the word of God may not be reviled is a missional argument: the visible coherence of Christian households is a form of witness.

The instruction to younger men in verse 6 is strikingly brief — urge the younger men to be self-controlled — before pivoting to instructions specifically for Titus himself (show yourself in all respects a model of good works, etc.). This structure implies that Titus, as a relatively young man in a leadership role, is himself the primary exhibit of what Paul is asking of younger men. His life is to be the argument for his teaching. The instructions for bondservants in verses 9–10 close the household section with the most explicit expression of the missional purpose running through the whole: that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. The verb adorn is a jeweler’s word — the behavior of believers in every station of life is meant to display the gospel to its best advantage, like a jewel properly set.

Plain American English

But as for you, Titus, teach what fits with sound doctrine. Older men should be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, and strong in faith, love, and endurance. In the same way, teach older women to be reverent in the way they live — not to be gossips or heavy drinkers, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, 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 look down on the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything, set yourself as an example of doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness, and sound, unobjectionable speech, so that those who oppose you will be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Tell those who are enslaved to be submissive to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to back-talk them, and not to steal from them, but to show complete and perfect faithfulness, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Key Observations

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine”: This signifies **The Chapter’s Opening Establishes That Sound Doctrine Has a Specific Shape That It Produces in Human Lives — the Doctrine Is Sound Precisely Because It Generates the Behavioral Formation That the Following Verses Describe.**

The things that accord with sound doctrine are not, in this chapter, a list of theological propositions to be affirmed. They are the specific behavioral patterns that healthy doctrine produces in the lives of those who receive it — the sobriety of the older man, the reverence of the older woman, the self-control of the younger man, the fidelity of the bondservant. Paul’s concept of sound doctrine is inherently transformative: doctrine that produces no change in life is, by this standard, not healthy. This is the opposite of a purely intellectual or propositional understanding of doctrinal orthodoxy.

“That the word of God be not blasphemed”: This signifies **The Missional Stakes of Domestic Order Are Explicitly Named — the Visible Coherence or Incoherence of Christian Households Directly Affects the Credibility of the Gospel in the Surrounding Culture.**

The that the word of God may not be reviled at the end of the instructions for younger women reveals the missional rationale embedded in what might otherwise appear to be private domestic

advice. The conduct of Christian households in a non-Christian environment is a form of public testimony. When that conduct is indistinguishable from the surrounding culture's disorder, or when it actually produces greater disorder, the gospel that is being preached is actively contradicted by the community's visible life. This principle runs through the entire household code: the motive for each instruction is never mere social conformity or cultural decency but the integrity of the gospel's witness.

“That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things”: This signifies **The Jeweler's Metaphor of Adorning the Doctrine Is the Most Vivid Available Statement of the Relationship Between Conduct and Proclamation — the Lives of Believers Are the Setting in Which the Gospel's Beauty Is Made Visible.**

The verb to adorn (kosmeo, the root of the word cosmos and our word cosmetic) is the jeweler's term for setting a gem to display it to maximum advantage. When applied to the doctrine of God our Savior, it transforms the behavioral instructions of the entire passage into an aesthetic claim: the lives of believers are meant to be the setting that shows the gospel to best advantage. A bondservant who is fully trustworthy, not pilfering, entirely faithful, is adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in the same way that a jeweler adorns the gem by setting it properly. This is one of the most beautiful and one of the most demanding descriptions of Christian witness available in the New Testament.

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned”: This signifies **Titus Is to Be the Living Exhibit of What He Is Teaching — the Teacher's Life Is Not Separable from the Teacher's Doctrine, and the Coherence of Both Is the Primary Defense Against Those Who Would Oppose the Ministry.**

The instructions for Titus himself — embedded in the middle of the instructions for younger men — establish that the most powerful form of Titus's teaching is his own life. In all respects be a model of good works. The Greek word for model (tupos) is the word for a mold or die — the thing that impresses its shape on the material it presses into. Titus is to be the mold from which younger men's character is being shaped. This is not a claim about his personal perfection but about the intentional, consistent embodiment of the gospel he teaches. And the practical defense it provides is named: those who oppose you will be put to shame, because they have nothing evil to say about us. The life that matches the doctrine disarms its most predictable critics.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Understand That Sound Doctrine Is Assessed by Whether It Produces Sound Formation, Not Only Whether It Passes Propositional Tests: The chapter's opening — teach what accords with sound doctrine — followed immediately by behavioral instructions reveals Paul's working definition of doctrinal soundness: doctrine is sound when it produces the life it describes. Churches and theological institutions that pride themselves on doctrinal precision while producing graduates or members who are self-controlled only in their theology rather than in their actual lives have separated what Paul holds together. Sound doctrine produces sober older men, reverent older women, self-controlled young men, faithful workers. If it is not producing these, the question is

not only whether the doctrine is correct but whether it is actually functioning as doctrine in the lives of those who profess it.

2. Receive the Missional Argument for Domestic and Workplace Faithfulness as One of the Most Concrete Available Forms of Gospel Witness: The fact that the word of God may not be reviled and the adorning of the doctrine of God our Savior are explicit missional arguments embedded in what might otherwise appear to be merely private or domestic behavioral advice. The coherence of Christian household life, the trustworthiness of Christian workers, the dignity of Christian older people — these are all public testimonies to the gospel, and their absence or contradiction is a public counter-testimony. Contemporary Christians who treat the domestic, professional, and social dimensions of their lives as private spheres insulated from the gospel's public witness have missed the missional logic of this entire passage.

3. Be a Pattern Before Being a Teacher, Recognizing That the Most Powerful Argument for What You Teach Is the Life You Live: The instruction for Titus to be a model of good works, with uncorrupt teaching, dignified conduct, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, establishes the principle that the teacher's life is always part of the teaching. The coherence between a teacher's doctrine and their conduct is the primary defense against those who would malign the ministry. Contemporary teachers, preachers, and leaders who invest heavily in the quality of their public communication while neglecting the quality of their private formation have reversed the priority that Paul establishes here: the model comes before the argument, and the model is the strongest available argument.

How This Relates to Today

The household instructions of Titus 2 have sometimes been controversial in contemporary settings because they address specific groups with specific instructions, including older women training younger women in domestic virtues and bondservants being subject to their masters. The pastoral wisdom of reading these instructions in their first-century Cretan context — where the alternative was the proverbial Cretan disorder the letter has already named, and where the visible coherence of Christian households was a primary form of witness — does not dissolve their enduring claim but does locate it properly. The underlying principle — that the visible shape of Christian communities should adorn rather than malign the gospel they proclaim — applies with full force to every contemporary context.

The specific identification of older women as the primary teachers of younger women in the domestic sphere is one of the most practically neglected principles in contemporary church life, which has largely replaced this kind of mentored, relational formation with the same programmatic approach it applies to all age groups. The chapter envisions a community in which wisdom is transmitted generationally and relationally, not merely institutionally, and in which the older members of the community take active responsibility for the formation of the younger. Recovering this vision is one of the most concrete applications the chapter offers to contemporary church practice.

Key Lesson: *The household instructions of verses 1–10 establish that sound doctrine produces specific behavioral formation in every group within the community of faith, that the visible coherence of Christian households and workers is a direct form of gospel witness that can either

*adorn or malign the doctrine of God our Savior, and that the teacher's own life is the primary exhibit of what the teaching claims — the model that either vindicates or undermines the doctrine it represents.**

Titus 2:11–14

The Grace That Appeared: The Doctrinal Ground of All Behavioral Formation and the Eschatological Horizon of the Purified People

*(11) For the grace of God that bringeth salvation
hath appeared to all men,
(12) Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,
we should live soberly, righteously, and godly,
in this present world;
(13) Looking for that blessed hope,
and the glorious appearing
of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
(14) Who gave himself for us,
that he might redeem us from all iniquity,
and purify unto himself a peculiar people,
zealous of good works.*

The Context

Verses 11–14 are the theological engine of the entire chapter. The behavioral instructions of verses 1–10 have told the community what to do; verses 11–14 explain why, grounding every behavioral instruction in the character of the grace that has appeared, the hope of the appearing that is coming, and the purpose of the redemption that lies behind both. The *for* of verse 11 is causal: all of the behavioral formation described in the preceding verses is being done for this reason — the grace of God has appeared, training us in a specific way of life while we wait for the appearing of glory.

The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all people is the incarnation and the cross stated with maximum compactness. The *appeared* is the word *epiphanē* — the word that gives us epiphany, the breaking-in of something from outside. The grace is not a concept or a principle; it has appeared, manifested, broken into history in a specific event. The training dimension of verse 12 is remarkable: the grace itself teaches. It is not merely the ground of forgiveness but the formative force of a new way of living. And what it teaches is both negative and positive: denying ungodliness and worldly passions (the renunciation side) and living self-controlled, upright, and godly in the present age (the positive side).

The eschatological orientation of verse 13 gives the present-age formation its proper frame: looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. The self-controlled, upright, godly life is the life of a community waiting. The present-age behavior is calibrated by the future-age expectation. The phrase our great God and Savior Jesus Christ is one of the clearest confessions of Christ's full deity in the Pauline letters — the singular the great God and Savior applies both terms to the same person, Jesus Christ, not splitting God and Savior between the Father and the Son as some later interpretations would require.

Verse 14 gives the purpose of Christ's self-giving: to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. The redemption has a twin objective — liberation from lawlessness and the creation of a particular people. The purification and the zeal for good works are not optional additions to the salvation; they are stated as its purpose. A salvation that produces no purification and no zeal for good works has not accomplished what verse 14 says Christ gave himself to accomplish. And the zealous for good works brings the passage full circle: the grace that appeared (verse 11) produces the good works that the grace was training toward (verse 12), in the people who are waiting for the appearing of glory (verse 13), because the purpose of the redemption was precisely this people (verse 14).

Plain American English

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives right now, in this present age, while we wait for the joyful hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people who are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Key Observations

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us”: This signifies **The Grace Is Not Only Declared but Educative and Formative — It Does Not Merely Announce Forgiveness but Actively Trains Those Who Receive It in the Specific Pattern of Life the Passage Describes.**

The word translated teaching (paideuoussa) is the Greek word for the education of children by a tutor — the sustained, formative, disciplinary instruction that shapes character rather than merely conveying information. Grace, in Paul's framing here, is not a static declaration of pardon but a dynamic formative force that actively shapes the life of those who have received it. This is the strongest available New Testament statement that grace and behavioral formation are not alternatives — more grace does not produce less concern for conduct, but more. The grace is precisely the teacher of the godly life it produces. This has direct implications for any version of Christian faith that treats grace as permission for moral indifference.

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”: This signifies **The Eschatological Horizon Is Not an Addendum to the Present-Age Ethics but the Frame Within Which They Make Sense — the Self-**

Controlled, Upright, Godly Life Is the Life of People Who Are Specifically Waiting for a Specific Appearing.

The looking for (prosdechomai — waiting with expectation) is not a passive disposition but an active orientation of the whole life toward the expected event. The present-age ethics of self-control, uprightness, and godliness are explicitly connected to this eschatological waiting: we live this way in this present age while we wait for the appearing. The eschatological hope is not escapism but the very motivation and calibration of the present-age life. Remove the blessed hope from the picture and the behavioral instructions of the chapter lose their eschatological frame and become a mere moralistic code. Keep the hope in view and the instructions become the natural posture of the community that is oriented toward the One who is coming.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”: This signifies **The Purpose of the Redemption Is Explicitly the Creation of a Purified and Zealous People — Salvation That Does Not Produce Purification and Zeal for Good Works Has Failed to Accomplish What Christ Gave Himself to Accomplish.**

The gave himself and the purpose expressed in the that clause establishes the clearest possible connection between redemption and the expected outcome of redemption. Christ did not give himself simply to forgive sins in a way that leaves the sinner unchanged, nor simply to rescue from hell in a way that leaves the conduct of the present life unaffected. He gave himself to redeem from all lawlessness — liberation from sin’s dominion — and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are eager to do good. The zealous for good works is not an add-on to salvation but its stated purpose. A community that is not becoming more eager for good works has not been failing to add something to their salvation; they have been failing to experience what their salvation was for.

“The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”: This signifies **This Is One of the Clearest Confessions of Christ’s Full Deity in the Pauline Letters — the Singular Definite Article Linking Great God and Savior to the Same Person, Jesus Christ.**

The Greek construction of verse 13 is one of the strongest available linguistic supports for the full deity of Christ in Paul’s letters. The single definite article (the) governs both great God and Savior, linking them grammatically to the single referent Jesus Christ. This is the Granville Sharp rule applied to a theologically decisive passage: the great God and our Savior are not being distinguished (as if God the Father and Jesus Christ were separately in view) but identified as the single referent to whom the appearance belongs. Paul is confessing that the appearing they are waiting for is the appearing of Jesus Christ who is the great God and Savior — one of the clearest high-Christological declarations in the Pastoral Epistles.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Receive the Grace of God as Formative and Educative, Not Only Declarative, and Resist Any Version of Grace That Treats It as Permission for Moral Disengagement: The grace that teaches is one of the most important theological correctives available to the antinomian distortion of grace that treats it primarily as liberation from moral expectations. Paul’s grace is not the enemy of the transformed life but its primary teacher. The person who uses the language of grace to excuse

the absence of the renunciation of ungodliness and worldly passions has not understood the grace that has appeared. The grace that appeared teaches exactly those renunciations. More grace — properly received — produces more formation, not less.

2. Maintain the Eschatological Frame as the Motivation and Calibration of Present-Age

Conduct: The looking for the blessed hope is not an invitation to spiritual escapism that neglects the present age but the eschatological orientation that gives the present-age life its proper shape. The community waiting for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ lives differently than the community that has lost that expectation. The specific behavioral instructions of verses 1–10 are the natural posture of people who know who is coming and who want their lives to reflect the character of the one they are waiting for. Losing the eschatological horizon flattens the behavioral instructions into mere moralism; restoring it gives them their proper evangelical shape.

3. Take Seriously That the Stated Purpose of Christ’s Self-Giving Was the Creation of a Purified and Zealous People, and Measure the Health of Your Community Accordingly:

The that he might purify for himself a people for his own possession who are eager for good works is not a description of an optional advanced stage of the Christian life. It is the stated purpose of the redemption. Churches and believers who are not moving toward greater purification and greater eagerness for good works are not merely failing to reach the advanced levels of sanctification; they are failing to experience the purpose for which Christ gave himself. This should produce neither despair nor mere striving but the honest assessment that leads to the confession and the renewed reception of the grace that teaches.

How This Relates to Today

The grace that appeared for the salvation of all people — not for a particular ethnicity, social class, or legal status — is a direct challenge to every version of the gospel that restricts the offer of salvation or the formative community of faith to particular groups. Paul has just given instructions to older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and bondservants without suggesting that any of these groups are outside the reach of the grace that appeared or the formation it produces. The household of faith that the grace creates is socially and generationally diverse, and the formative work of the grace that appeared applies to every member of it.

The high Christology of verse 13 — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ — is not merely a doctrinal point for academic theology. It is the christological claim that gives the entire chapter its weight. If the one who is coming is the great God and Savior, then the life being lived in expectation of that appearing is not merely the life calibrated to a religious ideal but the life oriented toward a person who is God. The self-control, the uprightness, the godliness, the eagerness for good works — all of it is the posture of people who know who is coming and who are shaping their whole present lives in light of that knowledge.

Key Lesson: **The grace of God that appeared brings salvation to all people and trains those who receive it in a life of renounced ungodliness and self-controlled, upright, godly living in the present age, while orienting the whole community toward the blessed hope of the appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself to redeem from all lawlessness and to purify for*

*himself a people for his own possession who are eager for good works — the doctrinal ground that makes every behavioral instruction in the chapter intelligible, urgent, and achievable.**

Titus 2:15

Declare These Things: The Charge to Titus and the Authority of the Gospel Ministry

*(15) These things speak, and exhort,
and rebuke with all authority.
Let no man despise thee.*

The Context

The final verse of the chapter is the charge to Titus himself, and it is the shortest of the three sections but not the least important. After the comprehensive community formation of verses 1–10 and the dense theological grounding of verses 11–14, the chapter closes by returning to the minister. The these things refer to the entire preceding content of the chapter — everything from the behavioral instructions for each group to the great grace passage. Titus is to declare all of it, exhort with all of it, and rebuke with the authority of all of it.

The three verbs — declare, exhort, rebuke — map the full range of the preaching ministry. Declare establishes the content: this is what is true. Exhort addresses the will: this is what you should do in light of what is true. Rebuke corrects the wayward: this is where you have departed from what is true and what is required. Together, they describe a ministry of the word that is neither merely informational (declare only), nor merely motivational (exhort only), nor merely corrective (rebuke only), but comprehensively pastoral in the fullest sense.

The with all authority is the authorization for a ministry that will inevitably face resistance. Titus is in an environment where the authority of sound doctrine is being challenged by false teachers (chapter 1) and where the call to behavioral formation may be resisted by those comfortable with the surrounding culture's norms. The authority Paul is investing in Titus is not personal authority — not the authority of his personality or his institutional position — but the authority of the gospel he proclaims. And the let no one disregard you is the charge that Titus must not allow his youth (implied by the earlier instructions about being a model for younger men) or the cultural pressures of Crete to erode the authority with which he exercises the ministry.

Plain American English

Declare these things, encourage people with them, and correct those who go wrong — with full authority. Don't let anyone look down on you.

Key Observations

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority”: This signifies **The Three Verbs of Ministry Describe the Full Range of the Pastoral Task — Proclamation That Establishes Truth, Exhortation That Applies It to the Will, and Rebuke That Corrects Departure from It.**

The three-verb structure of verse 15 is the most concentrated description of the pastoral ministry available in the letter. Declare (*laleo*) is the basic act of speaking, of making the content known. Exhort (*parakaleo*) is the application of the content to the will and the life — the urgent, caring call to respond. Rebuke (*elencho*) is the confrontation of what is wrong — the naming of departure from truth and the call to correction. A ministry that only declares produces informed spectators. A ministry that only exhorts produces emotionally engaged but potentially ill-informed responders. A ministry that only rebukes produces defensive and discouraged people. All three together, with equal weight and authority, is the model Titus is being given.

“Let no man despise thee”: This signifies **The Charge to Maintain Ministerial Authority Is the Practical Outworking of the Life-Before-Teaching Principle — Authority Is Not Claimed Verbally but Earned Behaviorally, Rooted in the Integrity the Chapter Has Been Describing.**

The let no one disregard you is not a command to assert personal status but a call to live in such a way that disregard becomes impossible. In the context of chapter 2, the means by which Titus’s authority is protected is not the force of his personality or the assertion of his institutional role, but the coherence of his life with the teaching he delivers — the model of good works, the uncorrupt doctrine, the dignity and sound speech of verses 7–8 that give opponents nothing evil to say. This connects the closing verse back to the earlier description of Titus himself: his authority as a minister of the gospel is inseparable from his embodiment of the gospel.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Practice All Three Modes of the Pastoral Ministry Rather Than Defaulting to the One That Feels Most Natural or Encounters the Least Resistance: Every pastoral personality tends to one of these three modes. The doctrinally oriented pastor defaults to declaration and may neglect exhortation or avoid rebuke. The relationally warm pastor defaults to exhortation and may lack the courage for rebuke or the structure for clear declaration. The prophetically gifted pastor defaults to rebuke and may exhaust the congregation without the sustaining balance of declaration and encouragement. Titus’s charge names all three as equally necessary and equally part of the pastoral commission. Identifying one’s default and deliberately cultivating the neglected modes is one of the most concrete applications this verse offers.

2. Protect Ministerial Authority by Embodying What You Teach Rather Than by Asserting the Authority Verbally: The let no one disregard you in the context of the chapter’s prior instructions implies that the protection of ministerial authority is primarily behavioral rather than positional. Titus is not being told to remind people of his apostolic credentials or institutional standing; he has been told to be a model of good works with uncorrupt teaching and sound speech that cannot be condemned. The authority that withstands contempt is the authority of the coherent

life, not the asserted claim. Contemporary ministers who find their authority challenged should examine the coherence of their life before they examine the adequacy of their arguments.

How This Relates to Today

The let no one disregard you is a particularly relevant charge for young ministers, women in ministry contexts, and anyone whose authority is likely to be challenged on demographic rather than doctrinal grounds. Paul's instruction is not to assert credentials more loudly but to live in such a way that the challenge loses its purchase. This is simultaneously more demanding and more powerful than institutional credentialing — the life that matches the teaching is the argument that cannot be answered with contempt because it has removed the basis for the contempt.

The three-verb structure also reflects a vision of preaching and teaching ministry that is richer and more demanding than many contemporary homiletical models allow. A culture of pulpit communication shaped primarily by entertainment values tends to collapse all three modes into exhortation at best — the motivating, affirming, emotionally engaging communication that avoids the confrontation of rebuke and the sustained intellectual labor of declaration. Titus's charge invites contemporary ministers to recover the full-orbed ministry that the apostolic pattern describes.

Key Lesson: **The closing charge to Titus — declare these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority, letting no one disregard you — describes a three-mode ministry of proclamation, application, and correction that is rooted not in the assertion of personal or institutional authority but in the coherence of the minister's own life with the teaching he delivers, the model of good works that vindicates the doctrine by making disregard impossible.**

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We close Titus chapter 2 having received the most complete available account of what it looks like when sound doctrine produces sound community. We have seen the older men and women and the younger women and men and the workers — every group given its specific formation, every group charged with adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in the way that befits their station. We have received the great grace passage that grounds it all: the grace that appeared, that teaches, that looks toward the appearing of the great God and Savior. And we have received the pastoral charge that closes it: declare, exhort, rebuke, let no one disregard you.

Lord, let the grace that has appeared be our teacher. Not a permission for indifference but a formation toward godliness. Let it teach us the renunciation of ungodliness and worldly passions. Let it train us in self-control and uprightness and godliness in this present age. And let the blessed hope of the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ be the eschatological

anchor that gives the whole present life its proper shape — the posture of a community that knows who is coming and is living in light of that knowledge.

Let us be the purified people, zealous for good works, that You redeemed us to be. Not merely forgiven but formed. Not merely declared righteous but becoming righteous in the shape of daily life. Let our households, our workplaces, our communities, and our churches be the settings that display the gospel's beauty — the jewel properly set, the doctrine of God our Savior adorned in all things. And let those who minister among us have the courage to declare and exhort and rebuke with all authority, in lives coherent enough that no one has anything evil to say.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
Glory to God Alone