

Titus 2:1-10

Beautifying the Faith

What does “beautiful” look like? Every year People Magazine publishes their list of the 50 most beautiful people.

Here are some of 2005 most beautiful.

Now, I don’t know who would make your list. Obviously these are people who look good on the outside. I’m sure there’s a lot we don’t know about their hearts.

But they know how to present themselves. They know how to look good. Because they’re famous and they look good they get picked by People Magazine readers as being the most attractive.

Did you ever notice how people are drawn to what they consider attractive?

Why is it that more people aren’t drawn to the message of Jesus Christ? Some are, but many aren’t. Could it be possible that we’re part of the problem?

The Bible tells us in the book of Titus that we’re to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things,” or as NIV translates it, “make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”

We’re studying the short New Testament book of Titus and we’ve come to chapter 2.
If you’d like to turn there it’s on pg 1059

Titus is actually a letter written very early in the history of Christianity. The message of Jesus is starting to spread and has reached the Island of Crete.

Crete is the largest of the Greek islands and the 5th largest island in the Mediterranean Sea.

Today Crete is a tourist area but in the first century it was a place known for dishonesty and corruption.

As the message of Christ moved out into the Roman Empire it eventually reached the island of Crete.

As we said in past weeks, Crete was a tough place to live for anyone but especially someone who wanted to honor God with their life.

Titus was a trusted companion of Paul. Paul was an apostle that traveled throughout the empire preaching Jesus in city after city. He and Titus spent some time on Crete then Paul left Titus there to help the fledgling churches.

The book of Titus is actually a letter written by Paul to Titus giving him some specific instructions.

So far we've seen commands to install leaders in the churches and to challenge false teachers. That was chapter 1.

Today we pick up in chapter 2 but I'd like us to look at verse 10 first. Here's what verses 1-9 are going to lead up to.

Read 2:10

See that word "adorn?" It's the word *kosmeo* in the original. It's used 10 times in the Greek NT and it literally means "to put in order, arrange."

kosmeo is the word that we get our English word "cosmetics" from. You use make up to put your self in order. To make yourself look good. To make yourself look attractive.

God wants us to adorn His message of Christ. He wants us to make it appealing to our culture.

See, Paul was telling Titus, "You're in a culture that is so depraved and corrupt. The darker the culture the greater responsibility the church has to show the beauty of the Gospel."

And notice, Paul didn't say, "You know, those Cretans are so evil that you better either hide out somewhere or get off the island." Instead he encouraged Titus to reach out and offer them the grace of God. To present a message that's appealing.

Have you ever thought of your responsibility in making the gospel attractive?

How does that happen? There's only one way. Through the way we live our lives. The reality is so often more attractive than the best photographs or images. I'm sure

you've had the experience of going somewhere really beautiful. You take a bunch of pictures.

You're really excited about getting them developed or printing them out. But when you do they're never quite as striking as the real thing.

Denn Guptill writes, "Niagara Falls is just another set of waterfalls until you sail up to its splendor on the "Maid of the Mist." And so the Gospel is just another religious philosophy until it's seen in all its beauty in the life of the believer."

That's not to say that the gospel isn't powerful by itself. Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

God's message has life. God's message brings forgiveness. God's message revolutionizes lives.

It's just that to our self absorbed, narcissistic culture the gospel doesn't seem relevant.

Unless they're in crisis most people aren't looking for God. Unless they're just gotten a discouraging report from the doctor, most people aren't thinking about heaven.

Just like the Cretans, they're focused on this life.

Here's what I see as the problem.

People are focused on this life but we've tried to engage them about eternity. They're not thinking about eternity so they're not hearing us.

And even though the most important eventuality is heaven or hell, if people don't understand their need they won't listen.

We need to give them something more than a picture from a distance. We need to live out our faith. That's what's going to catch people's attention.

We don't need to say to people, "Let me show you my vacation pictures. Let me show you pictures that don't capture the beauty of the reality."

Our lives need to be that reality so that people can see God at work.

Each one of us is a walking, talking, living, breathing advertisement for the Gospel. And we either make Christianity attractive enough to draw people to Jesus Christ or we will make it something to be shunned.

Pretty awesome responsibility isn't it?

And it was in this letter that Paul tells Titus to make the teaching about God attractive.

But how? How do we make the Gospel, something that is inherently engaging, attractive? The answer is pretty basic, we live it.

And what the first 10 verses of Titus chapter 2 are about is living God's truth before our culture. And remember, this isn't just about one particular culture. This is true of 1st century Crete and 21st century AA County.

So lets take a look at our passage for today to see God's message to us.

I. Healthy Christian Teaching Is Foundational For Healthy Christian Living

Read 2:1

Verse one is transitional. Paul has finished up in chapter 1 by telling Titus to appoint church leaders who can rebuke people who want to confuse the church.

Now he says, "You, Titus, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine." The New Living Translation says, "Promote the kind of living that reflects right teaching." I like that.

The word translated "sound" in verse 1 is the Greek term, *hugiaino*, which is where we get our English word hygiene. It literally means "to be in good health."

We could translate this verse, "But as for you, speak things that are in keeping with healthy teaching."

The world around us isn't looking for wimpy Christians with a weak, sickly faith. They're looking for people who live what they say they believe.

If we're going to adorn the doctrine of God our savior in all things, it's got to start in the most obvious areas of our lives.

When you go to a nursery to buy fruit trees they have tags on them to tell you what kind of tree it is. If your horticulturally challenged like me you need the little tag.

I wouldn't know a cherry tree from an apple tree when the trees are small. But you what, my next door neighbor has an apple tree in her yard. I know its an apple tree and it's never had a tag.

The reason that I, with my minute knowledge of trees, knows that it's an apple tree is because every year it grows apples. I've never mistaken it for a pear tree. I've never said, 'Hey my neighbor has a peach tree in her back yard.'

I know what kind of tree it is by its fruit.

The way we adorn the doctrine of God our Savior is by bearing good, healthy, fruit and the way we bear good, healthy fruit is by lining up our lives with healthy, biblical teaching.

What Paul does in the next 9 verses is tell Titus to approach different groups of people in the church with what specifically applies to them.

We're all good at figuring out what other people need to hear and do. How many times have you sat in church and said, "Boy, I wish so-and-so was here. This is exactly what they need to hear."

The truth is there are things we all need to hear but sometimes it's a lot harder for us to get what we need.

Listen to how the Bible approaches these different groups and see if there isn't something in there for you.

- I. *Healthy Christian Teaching Is Foundational For Healthy Christian Living*
- II. *Healthy Christian Teaching Needs to Be Applied to Specific Situations*

Paul didn't sit around and mass produce a bunch of letters and then tack them up to the wall and throw darts at them to decide where they were going.

You know, put on the blindfold and then pffft, that one goes to Corinth. That one to Ephesus. That one to Titus in Crete.

He wrote specific letters to deal with specific people and specific situations.

It's logical that we're all different and that we are all at different stages of life. Paul takes that logical point that every Christian, because of the stage and the situation they're in life has different challenges, different temptations, different opportunities. And he says, 'Titus, don't forget to apply God's word to each Christian in those specific circumstances.'

All Scripture is inspired by God. All Scripture is alive and powerful. All Scripture is profitable. All Scripture is for us, but not all scripture was written to us.

A few weeks ago when we were talking about spouses as button pushers in our lives we looked at Ephesians 5 and I Peter 3 to see God's instructions for husbands and wives.

There's some real specifics in those passages. But one of the things we had to do was give a warning. Because, one thing that's striking in all those verses is that the Bible never commands husbands to make sure that their wife is doing the right thing, and wives aren't told to straighten out their husbands.

The commands are always gender specific. Wives do this. Husbands do that. Don't keep checking up to see if the other person's doing what they should be doing. Or, what you think they should be doing. That's between them and God. Just do what you should do.

So as we look briefly at these different groups make sure that you focus in on what God is saying to you at this season of your life.

Read 2

There's some interesting dynamics that go on in churches. Sometimes congregations made up of primarily older folks are so focused on their likes, dislikes, needs and wants that the church has no new blood and begins to die off.

Other churches are so focused on reaching people who are young they miss out on what God wants to do through older people.

The biblical principle is that God wants churches to reach their generation. I personally believe that unless their in the middle of a retirement community a church needs to have a strong focus on ministry to children and young people.

That ought to be the emphasis. Not forgetting about those who are older but constantly asking how can we reach those that are coming up in the next generation.

I believe those of us who are older Christians have the responsibility to sacrifice some of our preferences and likes and dislikes, for the sake of reaching younger people.

Our job is to transfer the wisdom we've hopefully accumulated over the years. Our job is to mentor.

People of all ages can come to Christ. My Grandfather on my mother's side was 86 years old when he trusted Christ as Savior. That's something to celebrate, but unfortunately that doesn't happen too often.

But how we live as older people is still a very big part of this beautifying the gospel.

I've got a few years on me now but all through my my Christian life I've tried to watch and learn from older more experienced Christians.

"So here's how," God says, "Older men can beautify my gospel."

They should have self-control, be worthy of respect, they should live wisely. And they should have strong faith and be filled with love and patience.

These are character qualities. We tend to think of living out our faith in terms of what rules we follow, What things we don't do.

One man wrote: *For years this is how the church promoted the gospel. If you are a Christian then you do this and you don't do that and heaven forbid that you should ever smile or enjoy yourself. It isn't that the Christian life will make you live longer, it just seems longer.*

The truth is there obviously are things that we should and shouldn't do as believers, but passages like this focus on character more than actions. We can hide behind a facade of outward morality and still repulse people instead of attract people.

God goes right for the heart. These things are character qualities that will only be evident as we allow the Holy Spirit to really take over in our life.

Read 3

Isn't there an inherent beauty in an older person whose lived their life for God?

The outward changes. We kind of wear out. Baby boomers are spending billions on anti-aging products trying to stop the process.

But all the herbs and plastic surgery in the world can't make an ungodly person attractive.

Once again, these are character qualities.

And now look what these godly older women are to do: **Read 4-5**

God's program is for older women to share with and teach younger women practical Christian living.

Our women here are working hard at putting together a mentoring program so they can transfer that wisdom that God through the years has taught them.

You know what our natural tendency is? The old tend to criticize the young. They don't know any younger people, they don't spend any time with them, they don't understand them, they keep saying, "When I was that age..."

And then younger people just reject flat out the generation that came before them. Like they're so 80's. What do they know? They're just old! They don't understand what it's like to be my age. They don't have anything they could add to my life.

I'll tell you, when our culture catches a glimpse of younger people honoring and learning from older people, and older people deferring to the tastes of younger people for the sake of being able to minister to their lives it's powerful. It's huge.

Look at This: **Read 6-8**

Verse 6 says, "Exhort the young men." The word there is *parakaleo*. The noun form of this word is the word that Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit translated "comforter." *parakaleo* literally means to call along side.

Here it doesn't mean bark out orders. It means challenge them by coming along side them in life and helping.

This is so practical. Let's say young man has a problem with his temper. If we're going to help, we want to share the Biblical principles for dealing with anger and we're going to put our arm around him and say, "Let me walk through this with you. Showing self control is tough but you can do it by learning to tap into God's resources. I'll pray for you. Let's talk about your successes and failures."

Look at these other things Paul lists here. Integrity, reverence, healthy speech.

There's even a section here for servants.

Read vs 9-10

This is the same word *doulos* that Paul used to describe himself in verse 1. It doesn't mean "servant" like we would use the word. We use "servant" to mean someone who voluntarily works for someone else in their household.

Doulos literally means "slave." Slaves were captured by Roman armies from every country Rome invaded. They came from all nationalities, races, and educational levels. They were used for everything from construction workers to teachers depending on their background.

The one thing that all slaves had in common though, was they were somebody else's property. They were owned by a Roman master, and that master had the power of life and death.

As the message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ spread in the Empire a large number of slaves became believers. Christianity was the great leveler. It took a fragmented culture and put every Christian on equal footing.

Now, that led to some interesting circumstances. In fact in some congregations a slave could be a church elder and his master could be under his spiritual leadership.

In the long run Christianity undermined slavery in Roman society and was a key reason for its extinction.

But not every slave had a Christian master. It was a tough position to be in. You had no legal protection, you were in a foreign country far from friends and family, and you were subject to the whims of your master.

Talk about a tough place to live out your faith. But here's what they needed to do to make their faith beautiful before their pagan master.

Do what they say. Don't give the guy any lip. Don't steal. Be honest.

Now look back at that last phrase in verse 5. Here's the contrast. **Read: that the word of God may not be blasphemed** but, verse 10 **that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.**

I. Healthy Christian Teaching Is Foundational For Healthy Christian Living

II. Healthy Christian Teaching Needs To Be Applied To Specific Situations

III. Healthy Christian Teaching, When Lived Out, Draws Others To The Faith

I don't know how all this hits you, but for me it's a challenge to see my responsibilities before God in a whole different light.

My seriousness about allowing God's character to show through my life might make the difference between someone being willing to listen or someone ignoring the Gospel.

You say, "Ed that's really a heavy responsibility." You know what, you're absolutely right. It means that along with the fact that I've been bought with a price: therefore I'm to glorify God in my body, and in my spirit, which are God's, I need to be serious about God because if I'm not I could stand in the way of someone ever giving the gospel message consideration.

The message is so beautiful. It says that the holy and righteous God of creation has been offended by my sin. It says that sin is so serious to God that it's consequences are death in hell forever.

But then it goes on to say that God in His love created a way for me to be forgiven. That He, Himself came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. That the Creator took on the very substance of His creation.

It tells me that God did that, so that He could take my chastisement and make the death payment for me.

The Bible says, *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

God in Christ did the dirty work. God in Christ did what I could never do. God literally took every wrong thing that I have ever done, every evil thought that I've ever entertained, every good thing that I refused to do even though I knew I should, every selfish and hurtful word that I've ever spoken, and He absorbed them in His own body on the tree.

He became sin for me, that He might make me the righteousness of God in Christ.

The day I honestly believed that message. The day I received Him as Savior I passed from death to life.

That is so amazing, so astonishing, so staggering, so extraordinary, that sometimes I have to go back and just read it all over again in the Bible and try to process it all over again.

That my God would do that for me, is an overwhelmingly beautiful truth.

How absolutely selfish and self-absorbed I'd be if I wanted to keep that message to myself.

I want the world to hear that Good News. I want to make sure that not only do I not get in the way of that message, but that my life, by God's grace adorns it. Beautifies it in a way that people I come in contact with are drawn to my Savior.

How about you? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you have, does your life enhance and intensify it's significance to the people who know you?

God puts a high premium on Christians making the Gospel attractive. People will not accept a Gospel that does not make people better people and they may never know just what the Gospel can do for them until they have seen what it has done for you.

How attractive is the fruit that you are producing? What has the Gospel done for you? Are you adorning the doctrine of God our Savior?