Making the Truth Attractive

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[0:00] New Testament reading is taken from Titus, chapter 2, verses 6-10.!

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God, our Saviour, attractive.
This is the word of God. The global beauty and personal care industry was recently valued at a staggering 754 billion US dollars.
That's a lot of money. It is in fact one of the biggest global consumer markets out there. The amount spent on cosmetics and beauty products is roughly equivalent to the total amount spent on commercial aviation each year.
People spend as much money making themselves look good as they do flying around the world. Cosmetics is serious business. But cosmetics are also typically used for one of two reasons.
[1:53] The first reason that cosmetics is used is trying to make something look good that isn't. And I think you say that, but you know what I mean.

Right? You know what I mean. When people are super dolled up in so much makeup that you know it's just covering up.
But that's not the only reason cosmetics is used. And thankfully, no one here uses it for that reason. Being married, I've learned how to dig myself out of holes.
The second reason cosmetics is used, and I think this is where cosmetics is used at its best, is to bring out beauty that is already there.
And that's what we're seeing here, of course, at St. Mark's. See, cosmetics actually is meant to bring out, to emphasize beauty that is already there.
[3:04] And that is what the root word actually implies. Did you know that the root word for the English word cosmetic is a Greek word, cosmeo? And that word literally means to embellish or to honor something.

To bring out, to show off what it is. That's what the root word of cosmetic means. And it is a word we find in this passage in Titus chapter 2.
That word cosmeo is a word that Paul wrote. And it's there in verse 10 when Paul is referring to God's truth. Have a look at verse 10.
At the end of it, he says, In every way, they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. The root word is they will cosmeo it.
They will make it cosmetic. They will put cosmetics on it, in a way. Not to try and make it look beautiful because it isn't. Rather, to bring out beauty that is already there that perhaps people don't see.
[4:09] That is what Paul means there in verse 10 when he uses that word. This truth of God that we've seen already in Titus so far is a stunningly beautiful truth.

It's the most beautiful truth you will ever hear. This truth of God about God's grace, the grace of our Creator, who wants so much good for us even though we are sinners and we live in a broken, sinful world.
And yet, God has this deep love to redeem us and to save us at his own cost. This is the beautiful truth of the gospel.
And when people take it into their lives, when people actually believe that truth about God and his Son, Jesus Christ, and how he has saved us and how he is saving us, and the plans he has for us and the future that he has for us, when people believe that, when a person believes that, believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and takes it into their life, that person starts to change.

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That person starts to live a godly life. The truth that leads to godliness, Titus 1 verse 1. Which means they start to live the kind of life God originally made them for and intended for them to live in preparation for eternity to come.
[5:35] That is the truth of God. And Paul says, make that look good in the world. Not because it's not beautiful already, but because people who are still in rebellion against God can't see it.

But what we learn here is that the way we live, particularly the way we live out in the world, is going to show the world just the beauty of the truth that they may not be able to see by themselves.
When we start to live the lives that this truth trains us to live out there, and that is what today's passage is about. As Paul turns to instruct younger men in how to live lives appropriate to this truth, which we saw at the beginning of chapter 2, is what this whole section is about.
How to live daily lives that are actually appropriate to the truth that we believe as Christians. And last week, if you were here, you'll remember, we looked at the first part of that passage, which is how older men and older women and younger women were to live this truth in their lives.
But we stopped before the part about younger men, because I wanted to look at that today. But there's a difference. Back in those days, the older men and the older women and the younger women would have pretty much been focused on the household.
[7:11] And all of the instructions Paul gives them are therefore internal about their relationships with the people within the household or within the church. But as opposed to that, now we turn to younger men, and it's very much more about being out in the world, because that's what the young men of the day would have been doing for most of their waking day.

They would have been out in the world, in the public square, in trade. And that's why the instructions Paul gives the younger men in particular are about how to live out in the world. But times have changed.
And today, the truth is, we all in some way are living out in the world. We are all having contact with people and businesses and things that are going on out in the world, whereas there it was much more segregated.
Different people had different contact. But now, with technology, we all have contact with the outside world. And so these instructions, even though they are two young men in particular, they are actually for all of us, because they tell us principles of how to stand out in the world as we are working and as we are engaging in the world in a way that will show the beauty of God's truth.
All right, so that's what we're going to look at. And there's basically just two main ideas that we see from this section, verse 6 to 10, of how to live lives that stand out in the world and show the beauty of God's truth.
[8:35] And the first can be summarized as exemplary self-control. Exemplary self-control. In fact, what you'll notice is that in this whole list, Paul has mentioned self-control a number of times.

And he's applied self-control to both age groups and to both genders. And so it's not just something for young men, and yet he emphasizes it for the young men. But what is self-control?
Self-control is the ability to limit your own freedom voluntarily. The ability to limit your own freedom. And that is very unpopular in a world where freedom to do what you want is everything. And where limits are seen as bad and oppressive.
But the truth is, let's be honest, we know that total freedom to do whatever we feel like at any moment, that's actually not good for us, is it?
[9:44] We need limits in our lives. We know that if we could at any moment do everything we feel like doing, it would harm us and harm those around us.

We need limits. That's why we have lines on the road when we're driving, right? It limits us to the lane we should be driving in.
And when we are driving, we have to exercise self-control. Am I right? We can't go as fast as we want to. We can't steer wherever we want to. We've got to actually exercise a lot of self-control when we're driving, and that is good.
If we thought we had freedom to drive wherever we want, which of course taxi drivers think they do, but even they stick to certain limits.
If everybody thought, okay, I just want to live a free, authentic life while I'm driving, and they just drove wherever they want, and they had no self-control over the steering wheel, and they just, imagine what the roads would be like.

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[10:48] It would be hugely harmful for everyone if we didn't have self-control while we were driving, and it's the same with life. Freedom to do what we feel like, freedom to take drugs, freedom to watch porn, freedom to have sex outside of marriage, is only harmful to our bodies, and our minds, and our relationships.

And so that's why self-control is a good thing. The ability to limit our own freedom is good, and not only does it limit the harm that total freedom can do to us in a broken world when we have broken, sinful motives, but it also, self-control also creates circumstances to promote good.
So those are two things that self-control does. Firstly, it limits the harm that total freedom can give, and secondly, it can create circumstances that are good for us that we wouldn't have otherwise had.
So for example, the self-control of going to bed at a reasonable hour creates a circumstance the next morning where you can have time to pray before you have to go to work. Self-control creates a circumstance of good.
The self-control of not watching pornography on the internet creates good in your marriage. The self-control of not overworking and staying too late at work and deriving all your identity from work creates a situation where you can spend more time with your family and develop those relationships or spend more time serving God in church.
[12:21] Self-control doesn't only limit harm, it leads to good. And so there are many reasons why limiting our own freedoms, not doing what we want when we feel like it, is actually good.

Self-control. But you know what? Any of us who have tried exercising self-control in a particular thing that we want to do for any length of time will find that it's very difficult.
Am I right? Self-control is not easy. It's really difficult to maintain. You might be able to do it for a short period of time, but eventually we'll all kind of go back to old habits.
Self-control is really difficult to maintain without God's life in us, giving us a power to do that. God's Holy Spirit.
And that is an amazing benefit that the Gospel gives us. When we believe it, God promises to send His own Spirit, His own life in us to start to change our very desires and to start to change our will, to choose things that we wouldn't have chosen that are good for us.
[13:39] God's Holy Spirit, He promises to give those who come to Him in faith, believe in Jesus and are baptized into His name. God blesses them with His own life.

And you know, we read in Galatians the fruit of the Spirit. You recognize the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. These are the things that the Holy Spirit will produce in us.
One of them is self-control. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which means it's something we can't sustainably have inside ourselves by our own efforts.
It's something we need from God. It's something God gives to us. The ability to say no when our feelings say yes.
The ability to say no when all the people around us at that party say yes. That ability to say no is really difficult without God's power in us.
[14:44] It is actually impossible not to walk the bad paths. The peer pressure and the pressure and the power of our own feelings and desires is too strong for us without a greater power, God's power in us to put us on good paths.

And that is what our Father wants for us. He wants to put us on good paths. He wants to give us what we need to actually choose those good paths.
To choose the good ways. And as we take in this truth and we let it saturate our lives and we let the Holy Spirit have His way in our lives.
That's what gives us real power to do the things we can't do ourselves that are good for us. Have you chosen bad paths in your life?
I think we all have at one point or another chosen bad paths, harmful paths. Are you perhaps walking still on one of those paths now?
[16:01] big ways, maybe in small ways that no one knows about? Are you walking down bad paths? Well, let me tell you that that is true.

You cannot change that path. You cannot change to the good path by yourself. In any way that lasts. You might have snatches of good self-discipline, but you will go back.
You do not have it within yourself to change. But God in you, if you let Him in, if you let His truth saturate your life, He will give you the power to change and to go the right way.

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Now, that is a truth that it is only by the Holy Spirit that we can have this self-control that is good and will lead us on good paths. But, there is another aspect that we see in this passage.
Self-control also needs us to practice and to have been trained in it. We don't just let go and let God. We actually have a role to play in our self-control.
[17:09] We need to practice it. Just like driving, actually. We didn't all start driving brilliantly, did we? We didn't all start with perfect self-control at the steering wheel.

We had to learn how to do that. We needed practice. I currently have the privilege of teaching one of my children to learn how to drive.
I won't mention any names because that would embarrass Alex. But, the truth is, when we were in those first sessions together and he didn't have the necessary training in self-control and I was sitting in the passenger seat, I was very scared.
Okay? And I had made sure that our insurance was up to date. But after a few sessions, he develops more self-control and I get calmer.
Because the more training, the more practice you have, the more self-control you can have. It's the same with life. And not only do we need training in self-control, we also need examples to follow.
[18:25] Alex needed to see me drive so he could see how I did it and then he could learn it. Just like we all, when we're learning something, we need examples to see how it's done. And that's why we read in verse 7, Paul saying to Titus this.

He says to, he's just mentioned the young men, but then he says to Titus, who's an older man, in everything set them, the young men, an example by doing what is good.
Now that original word, for example, there is the word model. Build them a model. Show them what it looks like. I used to build models of ships and planes when I was growing up.
But when I read this about building a model to show them what it looks like, I got in my head, you know those movies where you see like a Navy SEAL special forces team and they've got a mission to infiltrate an enemy compound and like capture a terrorist?
You know those movies? And they've got a mission briefing and they practice it beforehand and they build a whole model of the compound in front of them so they can see the entry points and they can see where they're going to extract and they can see where they're going to go.
[19:38] So they practice on a model. They look at this model beforehand so that they can see how their mission can be successful. By looking at the model they plan how the mission will work.

How it's possible. Well you know young people especially need models. Today especially when the world is so confusing they need models to see how self-control is actually possible.
To see how this life described in the Bible is possible and beneficial for them. In a world that says no, just do what you feel. Just be led by your emotions.
There's no other option. They need to be able to see models of a different way a better way. They need to see examples of older Christians putting aside what they want to come to prayer meeting even when they don't feel like it.
They need to see examples of that. They need to see examples models of restraint in romantic relationships and public intimacy to see there is another way.
[20:49] They need to see examples of self-discipline in prayer at home parents instead of just watching TV because that's what we feel like we stop we switch it off and we say we've got to pray now I don't even feel like it but I know it's good for us.

They need to see models of that. So older Christians and when I say older Christians I don't only mean those with grey hair or no hair in my case.
I mean anybody who's older than someone else here. Are you being a model?
Are you a good model for the younger Christians around you or those maybe who are older in age but are younger in their faith? Because you know your self-discipline your ability to limit your own freedoms is not just for your good it's also to be an example to others.
That's what we see in this passage. But there's one last aspect of self-discipline we need to consider before we move on to the next category and that is self-discipline self-control not just in what we do but in what we say.
[22:08] What our speech is especially when we're out in the world and especially when it comes to what we believe. And we see this in the second half of verse 7 to verse 8.

Have a look. Paul says to Titus in your teaching show integrity seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they

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have nothing bad to say about us.
So note here that Titus is obviously sharing God's truth not just within the church not just within the confines of the Christians he's also sharing the truth in the hearing of those who don't believe.
In other words out in the world he's making the truth of God known which of course all Christians should be ready to do. The Bible tells us always to all Christians be prepared to give a reasonable explanation for what you believe when you have those opportunities.
And Titus is obviously doing that even more intentionally as a missionary he's taking the gospel to the world. but Paul's saying here when he does that he must do it in a particular way if he is going to make that message attractive because it's possible to say what is good in a bad way.
[23:35] You know what I mean? I think you know the type of Christian I might be talking about. The Christian whose doctrine is 100% right but they're really rude and aggressive and arrogant and inconsiderate in how they force that truth on other people.

So you can say a good thing the truth but in the wrong way. And that's what Paul is warning Titus against here. That type of Christian who's so confident in what they believe that they become overbearing and rude and maybe they try to trap the person they're talking to in a kind of a gotcha moment.
You know you see it on the internet a lot. These Christians who think they're being clever by being just rude. That doesn't make the gospel attractive. I don't know of anybody who says you know I became a Christian because I was humiliated by that other guy in an argument.
That's not a great conversion strategy. Now it's good. Of course it's good to debate and to pitch ideas against each other. And to have healthy debate.
Paul is not saying that Titus mustn't do that. But he must do it in a way that is still respectful. That still respects the other person as a person made in the image of God as a human being even when they don't believe the same thing.
[25:01] Or as Paul says here, do it with integrity, seriousness, also translated dignity, and healthy speech, sound speech, but it's the same word as we looked at last week, that hygienic word.

Healthy, hygienic speech. Not the speech of the world, using the tactics of the world and being ugly. Because then, when we are respectful with integrity, dignity, and healthy speech, look what happens, verse 8, those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.
That's the goal. When we are dignified, when we respect our opponents, even when they don't respect us, even if they disagree with us, the gospel is made attractive.
And so that is self-control. It's self-control in our daily lives, it's self-control in how we speak, and this self-control, especially when we make an example for others around us, exemplary self-control is the first thing that is really going to make the gospel attractive out in the world, but there's another thing.
And the next thing we see is dependable submission. Dependable submission. I'll explain that, but this counts especially in the workplace.
[26:19] Those of you who have to go every day into the workplace, these next few verses are key. And we see the principles come out in Paul's instructions to Christian slaves from verse 9.

Have a look. He says, teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.
So, firstly we need to understand something about ancient slavery in the first century when Paul's writing. Slavery was a very different thing to what it later became about 15 centuries later, which we know as the horrible, evil slavery.
Now, of course, slavery is never right. It's never right to possess another human being as property, but the slavery in the ancient world was actually in a world where they had no welfare state.
This was actually a system that allowed a lot of people to survive and live where they otherwise wouldn't have. And many slaves in the ancient world, the Greco-Roman world, were well looked after and even successful in business and in government.
[27:32] And some of them led great lives. But they didn't have freedom. They didn't have freedom to do what they wanted. And they were used, because of that, because they had to do what they were told, they were used as the primary workforce in the ancient economy.

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And they worked often doing things that they didn't choose to do. All the time they were working doing things that they didn't choose to do. do. But wait a minute, is today any different?
Do we all do work that we've chosen to do? I don't think so. Now, we're not technically slaves today, but the principles that we're reading here still apply for anybody doing work for someone else that they did not willingly choose to do, which I think is most jobs today.
Employees and bosses. Bosses telling them what to do, and because they're contractually bound, they're not slaves, but the contract puts them in a similar relationship, they have to do it. But it's in how Christians choose to do that work that they don't feel like doing, that actually creates some of the best opportunities to show the beauty of God's truth.
And that's what we're seeing. If you do a job that you love and there's nothing in it that you don't like doing, well then, that's great, and I'm happy for you, but you don't actually have opportunities to do this, to show the beauty of God's truth in that job.
[29:04] But most of us are not in that situation. And so it's when Christians work in a particular way, doing the things they don't want to do, they've been told to do, when they work in a particular way, that will actually shine God's truth out of them to the people around them.

And so I'm going to read these verses again, but I'm going to change slave to employee, and I'm going to change master to boss.
Because the same principles apply in the workplace today, listen to this, teach employees to be subject to their bosses in everything, to try to please them, to not talk back to them, and not steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.
So the first instruction is to submit to rightful authority and not push against it or argue against it. And it is even when that authority is not good, Paul doesn't say submit to the good masters, submit to the fair masters, he just says submit to the masters, because that is in that set up, in that economy, that was the authority structure that existed.
And so even if it is an unreasonable authority, it is not good authority. Servant, slaves, employees are to do this. Now, not to say that if you have a grievance with your boss, you must say nothing.
[30:32] If there are grievance processes in workplaces which should be used and they are right, and so you must make use of the channels, if your boss is being unfair, use the channels that are available, but in the interim, don't rebel against that authority.

Keep serving until that's been decided or whatever. Submit to authority. Why? And why should Christians do this? Well, there is a profound reason why Christians can submit to authority in the world.
the authorities over them, and the reason is because Christians know who the ultimate authority of their lives is. Christians know who really determines their circumstances and their future, and it's not their boss at work.
It's their boss, the Lord of heaven and earth. And that knowledge actually frees Christians to submit to their boss at work without worrying too much. It allows them to quietly submit to worldly authorities because they know who's really in charge.
And so there's submission and not rebelling against, but there's even more. Paul goes on and says, not just submit to them, but try to please them. What? Okay, that's going too far.
[31:45] I really don't like my boss. Do I have to really try and please him? Can't I just do the, you know, what I'm contracted to do? No. This is implying that Christians are to not just do the bare minimum at work, but Christian slaves are to go the extra mile for their masters, whoever those masters are, even the masters they don't like.

And I think in the modern world, what does that look like? It looks like doing that project that your boss has given you to do excellently, to the best of your ability. Getting it in before the deadline that your boss has given you.
If your boss tells you to make a cup of coffee, make the best cup of coffee you can, and don't spit in it. This is the idea, that a Christian will do things that people in the world won't do.
They'll do excellent work, even for bosses they don't like. Why? Well, firstly, because no one expects it, and it stands out in a world that doesn't do that.
Secondly, though, think about it. God wants all things done well in His world. Christ, Jesus Christ, has been crowned, after His resurrection and ascension, Lord of all in this world.
[33:06] Lord of heaven and earth. He is Lord even of a world that is still in rebellion to Him. And Jesus wants the world, His world, to work well. He wants businesses to work well.

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He wants governments to work well. He wants the team digging a hole in the side of the road to be a good hole. But what stops excellence in Christ's world, in God's world, is people dragging their feet because they don't like their bosses and they're grumpy.
Christians are better than that. And then thirdly, the other reason we should do this is because it displays grace. I think this is the most profound reason. When we do this in our workplaces, when we show favor to bosses that are not showing favor to us, when we go the extra mile and are excellent, it shows grace.
Grace, you know what it is? It's doing good to someone who doesn't deserve it. Grace is undeserved good. And you know that is exactly what we have received from God as His people. We have received so much good from Him that we do not deserve. And it is the heart of the gospel. That's why it's called the gospel of grace. The gospel is a message about how sinners get what we do not deserve from a God who loves us.
[34:30] And it is beautiful. God's grace is one of the most beautiful things. things. And what better way to show the beauty of the gospel of a God who chose to come and serve and save sinners who didn't deserve it than serving and pleasing those who don't deserve it in our lives.

And you know what? We have opportunities to do that every day. And so maybe as you go to work this week, think about that. Don't harbor those bitter thoughts for your boss or your work colleagues. Think about how I can show a little bit of the grace I've received to these people around us who, around me who don't deserve it. And you know what? You have that attitude. You're not going to harbor bitterness in your life and you're going to have a better day anyway and they're going to have a better day.
Verse 10. And do not steal from them. Okay? Take that stapler. Back to work, please. But show that you can be fully trusted.
Show that you can be trusted. You know, there's also a practical benefit when Christians do this in the workplace, when they show that they can be trusted. When they're trustworthy, Christians are typically given more responsibility.
[35:51] Any good boss will give more responsibility to those he trusts. And then they have more influence to do more good. It makes sense, doesn't it? And in fact, we see in the Bible multiple examples of this happening.

When God's people are in situations they didn't choose to be and yet they do excellent work and they're trustworthy. How they have really good influence. So we read from Daniel earlier. Daniel was an example.
In Babylon, he was a slave. But because of his excellent work, King Darius raised him to a high position and he had great influence in government. Also, Joseph in Egypt.
Remember Joseph? The end of Genesis. Joseph was captured. Again, he's a slave in Egypt and yet he's so reliable and he does such good work that Pharaoh gave him the responsibilities that essentially had him rule over the logistics of the government and God worked through that to save Abraham's family.
God worked through that to save God's life. Because they just did their daily work well and with integrity and with grace. And it's for us too. It's in ordinary ways.
[36:59] Ordinary ways that we can show, display the beauty of God's truth in our daily habits, our self-control, our speech and in how we work.

And then the people around us, when we do that, then they start to realize that what we believe is not just words. What we believe has real effects.
It benefits not just us, but them as well. And it is a truth that transforms and points those who see it to a better way, to right paths, and ultimately to the world that is to come.
It's going to be those people this week. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we thank you for your grace. We thank you that we could celebrate it earlier in our liturgy, in our confession, and in the assurance, and in our songs.
We celebrate your amazing grace to us who don't deserve it. And we pray, Lord, that you would help us to show grace to those around us who don't deserve it in our lives.
[38:10] But also, Lord, we pray for your Holy Spirit to be in us and work through us and give us the ability to do things we wouldn't be able to do in our own strength so that we can show the world the beauty of your truth and that many can come to know you as we do in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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