

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 16/1/2022

Titus 2 verses 1-15 "Creation restored"

"Living godly lives in a godless culture" Pt 8

Titus 2:1-15 Titus 2 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. 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^[b] 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 Saviour. ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. ¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Looking back in history, any city with its walls broken down was open and vulnerable to attack from the enemy. **Proverbs 25:28** tells us: **A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.** Like that unprotected city, a person without self-control is vulnerable to attack from the enemies of the soul - the world, the flesh and the devil. Without self-control we leave ourselves open and vulnerable to every kind of sin.

Paul commands Titus to teach the whole church to exercise self-control (**vv1-2** above). He goes on to refer to older women (**v3**), young women (**v5**) and young men (**v6**), before showing why this applies to them all and why it is possible (**vv11-12**).

Without self-control, people will not live a life of beauty that contrasts with their culture but are vulnerable to:

- The sins of their culture
- The sins of their own hearts
- The sins of Satan's temptation

In **Titus 1:12** (see p4), Cretans are described as 'evil beasts'. **The creation order has been turned upside down as the result of the fall of humanity into sin.**

Humans, having no moral restraint, behave with animal-like tendency. This is not just true of 1st century Crete. It is true today. We see it in young people out on the town who lack self-control and drink too much. We see it in older people, as we find ourselves unable to hide the things in our hearts and react to situations with anger rather than patience. Perhaps we develop an overly critical attitude because things aren't like they used to be, or just start speaking our mind and saying things that ought not to be said.

The story of the Bible is how God is reversing the effects of the fall

God is creating a new community of people who are living self-controlled lives so that they are:

- Dignified and reverent in the way they live
- Careful in what they say so they don't slander
- Able to submit to God-ordained authority structures

They are a people whose lives show the beauty of Jesus Christ who has saved them.

That is the power of the Gospel when it is believed in and lived out in everyday life.

W 11-14 (above) show us that God is not content to leave us at the mercy of our own fallen, dehumanised nature.

Jesus restores our humanity.

He has redeemed us, purchasing us from sin and death with the payment of his own blood, so that we might be a people who are zealous for good works. Through God's grace, we become a people who live self-controlled lives.

The Gospel is not just a message that we sing about and rejoice in on Sunday mornings. It changes us so that we live the life described in **Titus ch2** (above). If you

are a Christian, God both intends you to be self-controlled and enables you to be self-controlled.

How does this happen?

God plays his part but we have to play our part too. Here are seven imperatives for us to live the self-controlled life that Jesus has redeemed us for.

1. **We must be born again** – this must come first. If we read the commands of the Bible and think we can change ourselves, then we will fail, and just become legalists. The kind of change that is called for is a change that comes through a heart that has been changed to love and treasure Jesus Christ above everything. There are many people who are not Christians but still manage to live self-controlled lives. However, they do it in their own strength, or with self-serving motives that honour them, not Christ.

If we truly love and treasure Jesus, that way of self-control will never satisfy us. The self-control we need is a fruit of the Spirit of God (**Gal 5:22-23** see p4). One proof that you have been born again is that you will have a desire to honour God by living right. The Bible tells us that when we have a will to obey God, and the direction of our lives is to obey God, it is because **it is God who works in us both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil 2:13)**.

We need to be born again

2. **We need to read the Bible** – We need to know what God wants (sound doctrine) in order to exercise the self-control that honours God. (v1 above). How we think and how we behave is constantly being shaped either by our culture (both the contemporary culture and the culture we grew up in), or by the Bible. Many of us do what we do today because of how we were brought up, and we have not looked at our ways in the light of God's word.

We may never have really thought through what we do and how we think. We may not have considered whether it is right in God's sight, but are simply assuming it is because that is how we were brought up. Alternatively, there may be things we assume are sinful, because we weren't allowed to do them, but

actually the Bible says those things are ok, and we are just slaves to our hang-ups. **Read God's word.**

- 3. We need to take time to think – Psalm 1** (see p4) talks about the person who meditates on God's word and as a result lives a godly, fruitful life. They slow down in their reading of the Bible and think about what it means. They ask questions and personally apply the Bible by meditating on it.

We have been looking at self-control, but Paul commands many other character qualities in this passage. The particular aspect that God is dealing with in our life will be different for each of us. We all need to exercise self-control, but for some it might be to do with use of time, and for others it might be about money or gossip etc. Unless we slow down and let the Holy Spirit speak to us through his word, we will not experience Christ transforming us into a people who live self-controlled lives.

- 4. We need Christian community** – we need people around us to model a redeemed life (v7 above), showing what it looks like to live a self-controlled life with regard to money, time, sexual purity within marriage and use of authority amongst many other things.

We need people who will hold us accountable and call us out when we are wrong. We need people who love us in the right way, applying God's word to us, and who will rebuke us in love when necessary.

- 5. We need God's discipline** – God disciplines us as an act of his love. At times it is necessary for him to do so to ensure we live out the redeemed life. **Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. Ps 119:67** He is the only perfect Father and loves us so much that he doesn't want to see us wasting our lives in sinful pursuits (such as slander and gossip) that will rob us of his fellowship and joy. He will discipline us and when he does...

- 6. We need to surrender to God** – the apostle Paul commands God's people to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1)**. We are not our own, we were bought with a price and belong to Jesus Christ, body and soul. We must therefore submit to him,

surrendering our whole life to him – our time, money, family, education, work, ministry, sexuality, hands, mind and tongue.

When God speaks to us through his word about something, or disciplines us over a sin in our life or shows us an example of Christian living then we need to prayerfully submit ourself to him and surrender our life to him.

7. We need fellowship with Christ - I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Without Christ, you are just not able to do any of this. We will never experience the fruit of a self-controlled life unless we are spending time in fellowship with Jesus, abiding in him through the means of grace:

- Hearing from God as we read and think over the truth of the Bible
- Fellowshiping in person with other Christian believers
- Talking to God in prayer, asking him to do in us what he is commanding of us
- Worshipping God in community week by week
- Fellowshiping with Christ through the Lord's supper

The fall of humanity into sin has broken down the wall of self-control around our lives, leaving us vulnerable to the attack of the world, the flesh and the devil. God, by his grace, is reversing the effects of the fall, restoring humanity to be truly human again. We are being changed to be like the only perfect human who ever lived – the Lord Jesus Christ.

By his grace, God is rebuilding the wall of self-control around the city of our lives so that we can live out:

- The beauty of a redeemed life
- The beauty of Christ's life in us

Though we have to live out our daily lives, we are heading for the day when the reversal will be complete, the whole of creation will be redeemed, and we will be perfect because we will see Jesus as he really is, and everything will be as it is meant to be.

Change is happening as part of our journey to that destination, and until then, we need to work with Jesus Christ to be a people who are self-controlled in every area of our life.

Pray that as we are challenged and convicted, God will make each of us like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 1:12 One of the Cretans,^[i] a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Psalm 1: 1-3 Blessed is the man^[a]

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

² but his delight is in the law^[b] of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree

planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.