

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 13,

Titus 2 - The Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Ever heard of a place so chaotic that one of their O.B.O.N. prophets called the people always liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons? Wow. Yeah, that's Ancient Crete, the island where Paul sent Titus to establish a church. Talk about a tough assignment.

Oh, right, in the middle of all that. Well, mess. And you know, you shared some fascinating excerpts from Dr. Robert Yarbrough's lecture on Titus, specifically Chapter 2, and I'm really eager to kind of unpack this with you.

It is fascinating. It's a really fascinating look into the challenges of early Christianity, especially going up against a culture that, you know, wasn't really known for piety. Yeah.

We're going to be diving deep into this idea of good works in the Christian life. Okay. But I'm sensing already this isn't your typical Sunday school lesson.

Right. Dr. Yarbrough seems to be hinting at something, something a little bit deeper. Absolutely.

It's less about ticking boxes and more about how good works are actually like a natural overflow of a life that's genuinely transformed by God's grace. It's about the fruit, not the root, as they say. Oh, I love that.

The fruit, not the root. It makes you think about that shocking statistic that Dr. Yarbrough mentioned. More money is lost to corruption in churches globally than is given to foreign missions each year.

Yeah, it's wild. Talk about a disconnect between faith and action. Yeah, it is.

It's a pretty stark reminder that even within the church, you know, human nature can lead to some pretty glaring contradictions. Right. And it really underscores the need for us to constantly examine our own lives and just make sure our actions are aligning with what we profess.

Yeah. So true. Okay.

Let's get into the nitty-gritty of this problem in Crete. Okay. Dr. Yarbrough paints this picture of these false teachers kind of wreaking havoc, leading people astray with empty words and a focus on personal gain.

Yeah. I mean, it sounds like a recipe for disaster. Yeah, it was.

These false teachers were like wolves in sheep's clothing. They were claiming to know God, but denying him through their actions. They were disrupting families.

They were undermining the core of the gospel message, all for their own selfish ambitions. So how do we even begin to untangle that kind of mess? It makes me wonder about the approach that Paul instructs Titus to take. What is he supposed to do in this situation? Well, this is where the concept of good works becomes really crucial.

Okay. Paul essentially tasks Titus with combating these false teachings with what Dr. Yarbrough calls sound doctrine. And he's supposed to be a living example.

Right. You know, not just preaching from a pulpit, but demonstrating godliness in everyday life. So it's about cultivating a culture where faith isn't just like a Sunday morning activity.

No. It's a lived reality that permeates every aspect of the community. Right.

Which, that's a tall order. I mean, especially considering the opposition Titus was likely to face. I mean, he's going in there knowing that this is not going to be easy.

Exactly. Yeah. Paul understood that different people within the church needed different kinds of guidance.

Right. So he gives Titus specific instructions for various groups. Older men, older women, younger men, younger women, and even slaves.

Oh. You know, it was really... That's interesting. Yeah.

So it sounds like Paul is trying to establish this holistic vision for the church. Yes. Where each member kind of understands their role and how it contributes to the overall health and witness of the community.

But what about this idea of earning God's favor through good works? Is that what we're talking about here? Well, that's where it gets really interesting. Dr. Yarbrough is very clear that it's not about earning salvation through our actions. It's about understanding the transformative power of grace and how that naturally leads to a life characterized by good works.

So it's less about striving and more about surrendering to the work that God is doing in us. Precisely. Dr. Yarbrough uses this powerful analogy of a parent patiently shaping a child.

Yeah. You know, it's about teaching, guiding, and most importantly, setting an example. He argues that good works are less about checking things off a list and more about reflecting the inner transformation that God's grace brings about.

Okay. So I'm starting to see the nuance here. Right.

It's not this simple cause-and-effect relationship, but more of an organic process. But what about the instructions that are specifically addressed to women? Dr. Yarbrough seems to have kind of a different take on that often misunderstood phrase, busy at home. This is where understanding the cultural context becomes really important.

The Greek word that's used here, *oikourgos*, doesn't just mean housewife. It actually emphasizes managing the household, which in the context of house churches was a far more significant responsibility than we might initially think. Yeah, you're right.

Back then, these homes were the centers of Christian life. They were hosting worship gatherings, providing hospitality to travelers, and serving as hubs for discipleship and outreach. I mean, managing those effectively would have required a unique set of skills and a deep understanding of the faith.

For sure. So it's less about limiting women to housework and more about recognizing this crucial role they played in building and sustaining the early church. And it's worth noting that these instructions for women are intertwined with calls to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands.

It paints a picture of womanhood that's rooted in godliness and focused on nurturing a thriving family and community. So it's not just about individual piety, but about contributing to the overall well-being and witness of the church. It seems like Paul is trying to create a community where everyone, regardless of their age or social standing, kind of understands their role and how it fits into the bigger picture.

Precisely. And all of this, Paul says, is so that no one will malign the word of God. This underscores the idea that our actions, both individually and collectively, can either bolster or undermine the credibility of the gospel.

Oh, that's good. That makes me think about Titus himself being sent into this chaotic environment. Dr. Iago points out that he's likely to face opposition, even anger, from those who don't want their comfortable lifestyles challenged.

It takes a certain kind of courage to stand up for truth when it's unpopular. It does. Especially when you're going up against people who are, you know, deeply entrenched in their ways.

Absolutely. And this is where that tension between grace and truth comes into play. How do you call people to a higher standard without alienating them? How do you speak truth in a way that's both convicting and compassionate? Those are great questions.

And I'm curious to hear how Dr. Yarbrough unpacks Titus's strategy for kind of navigating these challenges. Well, that's where we'll pick up in the next part of our deep dive. We'll delve into the specific instructions Paul gives to Titus, exploring how he's meant to balance grace and authority, encouragement and rebuke in his mission to establish a thriving church in Crete.

All right. So we've established that Titus has quite the challenge in front of him, confronting these false teachers while also, you know, laying the foundation for this healthy, vibrant church. Right.

It's a delicate balancing act. It is. I'm really interested to see how Dr. Yarbrough suggests Titus kind of goes about doing this.

Well, Dr. Yarbrough points out that Paul instructs Titus to encourage and rebuke with all authority. Okay. But, uh, he emphasizes that it shouldn't be done in a way that belittles or demeans people.

It's about striking that balance between firmness and compassion. So speaking the truth, but doing it in love, holding people accountable while also recognizing they're on a journey. Right.

It seems like a really important leadership lesson, even beyond just the context of the early church. Absolutely. Remember, the goal isn't to shame people into compliance; it's to guide them towards genuine transformation.

And that requires a, a nuanced approach, which is where Paul's, um, detailed instructions for, for specific groups within the church become so fascinating. Yes. Dr. Yarbrough talked about how Paul tailored his approach to the needs of these different groups.

Yeah. It wasn't a, a one size fits all kind of deal. I found that really insightful.

It speaks to the pastoral genius of Paul. Yeah. You know, he, he understood that a blanket statement wouldn't be as effective as addressing the specific, um, challenges and opportunities facing each group.

Right. It's, it's about meeting people where they are and guiding them towards, uh, spiritual maturity. So what did those specific instructions look like? Let's, let's start with the older men.

Right. What, what kind of guidance does Paul give to them? Paul encourages the older men to be, uh, temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, sound in faith and love, and enduring. It's a call to model maturity and stability, you know, embodying the fruits of a life lived in close relationship with God.

So essentially they're meant to be living examples of what a mature Christian life looks like. It makes me think about how important role models are, especially within a community that's still kind of finding its footing. Right.

And then we, we see a similar emphasis on character for the older women. Okay. Um, they're, they're instructed to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but teachers of what is good.

Hold on. Not addicted to much wine. Was that a, was that a common issue back then? Well, you know, it's, it's important to remember that wine was, uh, a staple beverage in the ancient world, often consumed with meals and at social gatherings.

Right. It wasn't uncommon for people to overindulge. So, this instruction likely reflects a concern for moderation and self-control, even in seemingly small things.

It's a good reminder that our actions, even in private, can reflect on our faith. They can. And potentially harm our witness.

Yes. It's not just about what we say, but about how we live, even in those everyday moments. Exactly.

And speaking of everyday moments, this is, this is where we get to those instructions for younger women that, that we, we touched on earlier. Right. Dr. Yarbrough really dives into that phrase, uh, busy at home, arguing that it's not about confining women to housework, but about recognizing the vital role they played in the early church.

Right. He made the point that managing a household in the context of house churches involved, you know, much more than just cooking and cleaning. It was about creating a space where the community could gather, where people could be discipled, where hospitality could be offered.

I mean, it was a significant responsibility. Absolutely. These homes were the hubs of Christian life.

Right. And managing them effectively required a deep understanding of the faith and a commitment to living out its values. Right.

It was about, you know, creating an environment that fostered spiritual growth and reflected the love of Christ. It really makes you appreciate the interconnectedness of the different roles within the church. Yeah.

It wasn't just about individual piety, but about working together to create this thriving community that embodied the gospel. And notice how these, these instructions for younger women are, are woven together with calls to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be kind and to be subject to their husbands. Yeah.

It's, it's like Paul is presenting this holistic vision of womanhood rooted in godliness and focused on building a strong family and a vibrant community. It's definitely different from the way we often think about gender roles today. It is.

But, but there are, there are some, some valuable principles embedded within these instructions. I think that's key: understanding the historical context while also looking for those timeless principles that can still speak to us today. And then we, we can't forget about the instructions given to, to slaves.

Dr. Yarbrough pointed out that even in a, in a situation as challenging and unjust as slavery, Paul still emphasizes the importance of, of demonstrating faithfulness and integrity. Yeah. It's a powerful reminder that, even in the midst of suffering and oppression, where we're still called to live out the values of the kingdom, the instructions are to, um, be subject to their masters and everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, 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.

It's it's a tough passage to read, honestly, you know, knowing, knowing the, the horrors of slavery. It is. But I think Dr. Yarbrough was trying to highlight how, how even in the darkest of circumstances, the power of the gospel can shine through.

Absolutely. Absolutely. And it, and it, it speaks to the, the transformative power of grace.

Right. It's, it's not about earning our way out of difficult situations. It's about allowing God to work in us and through us.

Right. Even when life feels unfair and overwhelming, that brings us back to the heart of it all. This idea that everything that Titus is tasked with doing hinges on God's grace.

It's not about, you know, mustering up our own willpower or trying to, to earn God's favor. It's about, it's about surrendering to the work that he's doing in us. And Dr. Yarbrough reminds us that this grace is like a parent patiently shaping a child.

Yeah. You know, guiding them through instruction, discipline, and, perhaps most importantly, example. And we, we, we see this modeled in Titus's own life as he, as he seeks to embody the teachings that he's proclaiming.

So it's, it's not just about words, but about actions. Yes. It's, it's about living in such a way that people see the reality of the gospel reflected in our lives.

It makes you think about, you know, how, how are we representing the faith today? And this is where that tension between grace and works, uh, comes into play again. Right. Dr. Yarbrough is adamant that we're saved by grace, not by our works.

But, but he's equally insistent that, that genuine faith will inevitably produce good works. So it's not an either-or situation. Yeah.

It's both hands. Exactly. And this, and this leads to that, that powerful statement in verse 14: Jesus Christ, who 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? Good works.

It's, it's such a, a beautiful summation of the, the gospel message where we're saved by grace, not by our own efforts, but that grace compels us to, to live lives that, that reflect the transformation that's taken place within us. Right. But if good works are the fruit of a transformed life, as Dr. Yarbrough puts it, what kind of fruit are we producing, or are we living in a way that aligns with the grace that we've received? That's, that's a question we should all be asking ourselves.

And it's a question that leads us into the final part of our deep dive, where we'll explore the implications of this message for our own lives today. You know, that question about what kind of fruit we're producing, it's really stuck with me. It's, it's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and lose sight of the bigger picture.

Yeah, absolutely. And that's precisely why this conversation about, about good works is so important. It's a call to examine our lives and make sure our, our actions are aligning with, with the grace we've received.

Dr. Yarbrough reminds us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I mean, that's a pretty comprehensive list. It is, it is.

And, and it's not just about checking boxes; it's about cultivating these qualities in our hearts and allowing them to kind of overflow into our relationships and our interactions with the world. Exactly. And I think that's where the importance of community comes in; you know, we need each other to grow and mature in our faith.

We need people around us who can encourage us, challenge us, and hold us accountable. It's like that idea of, you know, iron sharpening iron, right? Yeah. We, we can't do this alone.

We can't. We need that, that support system to help us stay on track. Right.

And to remind us of the grace that empowers us to live out these values. Absolutely. And it's worth noting that Dr. Yarbrough emphasizes the practical nature of good works.

Yeah. He talks about how they should be excellent and profitable for everyone. It's not just about abstract piety.

It's about making a tangible difference in the world around us. So, meeting the needs of others, showing compassion, working for justice. I mean, it's about reflecting the character of God in all that we do, even in the mundane aspects of daily life.

Precisely. Right. And this, this brings us back to that idea of transformation.

Okay. Good works aren't about earning salvation. Right.

But about demonstrating the reality of the change that's taken place within us. It's like the outward expression of an inward reality. Yes.

And Dr. Yarbrough reminds us that this process of transformation isn't always easy. Yeah. You know, Titus was likely to face opposition, even anger, from those who didn't want their comfortable lifestyles challenged.

Right. It makes you realize that standing up for truth, especially when it's unpopular, can come at a cost. It can.

But it's a, it's a cost worth paying. Yeah. Because ultimately the goal is to point people towards the source of true freedom and transformation, Jesus Christ.

So what, what does this all mean for us today? How can we, how can we apply these principles from Titus in our, in our modern context? It feels like we're living in a time where the church is facing a lot of the same challenges that the early Christians did. I think you're right. And I, I believe that the challenge for us is to, to embrace that same spirit of grace and truth that, that we see in Titus.

Right. It's, it's about holding fast to sound doctrine while also demonstrating compassion and understanding. It's about being willing to challenge the status quo, even when it's uncomfortable, and to do it with a heart of love.

And it's about recognizing the power of community, surrounding ourselves with people who will encourage us in our faith and hold us accountable to live it out authentically. If we can do those things, I truly believe we can see the same kind of transformation in our own lives

and communities that we see happening in the book of Titus. As we wrap up this deep dive, keep going back to that point that Dr. Yarbrough made about the church in Crete losing more money to corruption than it was giving to missions.

I mean, it's, it's wild. It's a sobering thought. It is.

You know? Yeah. It makes you wonder: what are some of the subtle ways that we might be robbing God in our own lives? Are, are we holding back our time, our talents, our resources? Are we harboring bitterness or unforgiveness in our hearts? Are, are we prioritizing comfort and security over, over stepping out in faith to serve others? I mean, these, these are tough questions. They are.

But I, I think they're important ones for us to, to wrestle with. I agree. This, this deep dive has, has definitely given me a lot to think about.

Yeah. And I, I encourage you to, to continue exploring these ideas and, and discussing them with, with your own community. Mm.

The book of Titus is full of wisdom and guidance for living out the Christian life in a way that honors God and transforms the world around us. Well, thanks for joining us on this deep dive into the book of Titus. We'll be back next time with another fascinating exploration.