

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 13, Titus 2 - The Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers

6-min. Video Overview

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What if I told you that a 2,000-year-old letter, one written to a church leader on this remote little island, actually holds a powerful blueprint for solving one of the biggest crises in faith today? Well, that's exactly what we're going to break down: the Book of Titus, and see how its ancient strategy speaks so directly to a very modern problem. Okay, let's just start with a number that's, well, it's pretty staggering. According to Gordon Conwell's Center for the Study of Global Christianity, churches lose around \$68 billion a year to financial corruption.

I mean, to put that into perspective, that is more money than is given to all foreign missions combined. All over the world, it's a massive problem. But, you know, you see a number like that, and you wonder: is this kind of crisis where faith and money collide in such a disastrous way new? Is this just a modern thing? Or have we been here before? Well, it turns out this is almost exactly the kind of issue the apostle Paul was tackling when he wrote his letter to Titus.

So Paul sent his protege, a guy named Titus, to the island of Crete, and the situation there was, to put it mildly, a mess. This wasn't just about a few bad apples. We're talking about a systemic problem of corruption that was threatening the integrity of the entire church community.

Paul gets right to the heart of it. He warns Titus about these influential local teachers who were spreading all sorts of false ideas, causing chaos in people's homes, and it was all for one reason: dishonest gain. Yep, they were getting rich off of twisting the gospel, a problem that, as we just saw, is still very, very much with us.

And here it is. This is the core of the conflict. This wasn't just about money.

It was about a profound contradiction. These leaders talked a really big game about knowing God, but their actions, their actual day-to-day lives, told a completely different story. There was this huge disconnect between their words and their works.

You see, Paul's diagnosis goes so much deeper than just pointing out bad behavior. He's arguing that the root problem is a totally faulty understanding of the gospel itself. It's a fundamental disconnect between what you say with your mouth and what you do with your life.

Now, to really understand Paul's argument, you have to know one key Greek word. It's *ergon*. It means work, action, or deed.

For Paul, your *ergon* is the tangible, visible evidence of what you actually believe. It's not about what you say. It's all about what you do.

And just take a look at this. This table really shows you how central this idea of ergon is to the whole letter. From the very beginning, where actions have to line up with faith, all the way to the end, where good works provide for real needs, Paul is just hammering this point home again and again.

A faith that's only spoken but not lived out is basically incomplete. Good works aren't some side project. They're a top priority.

So ultimately, the problem in Crete wasn't a shortage of religious talk. Oh no, they were full of it. The real issue was that their actions, their ergon, had become so contradictory to their faith that they were, in Paul's own words, unfit for doing anything good.

Okay, so what's the solution? Well, Paul doesn't just tell Titus to try harder or preach better. No, he lays out this incredibly practical and strategic plan for turning the whole community around, starting from the ground up. And this is the absolute genius of the plan.

Paul lays out what you could call a cascading discipleship model. See, the change doesn't come from some top-down command. It starts with the most mature members of the community.

The older men and women are called to model a life of integrity and then actively mentor and teach the younger generations. It's personal, it's relational, and it's an incredibly smart way to build a healthy community from the inside out. Now here's a really interesting detail that often gets misunderstood.

Paul tells older women to urge younger women to be oikogoris. A lot of translations say busy at home, but the word actually means something more like good managers of the household. The point wasn't to keep women confined, but to encourage skillful stewardship of the home, which back then was a critical hub for life, business, and ministry.

This is a great strategy, for sure, but there is a massive question we have to answer. What's the power source for all this change? Is it really just about gritting your teeth and having more willpower? Let's really think about that for a second. After laying out this whole practical plan for the community, where does Paul expect them to get the strength to actually do it? Is this just another long list of rules to follow? The answer is right there in verse 11, and it changes everything.

The entire strategy, all of it, is built on this one foundation, for the grace of God has appeared. The engine for all this transformation isn't our effort; it's God's grace. You know, John Newton, the guy who wrote Amazing Grace, a former slave trader, he captures this perfectly.

Grace isn't this passive idea; it's an active teacher. He wrote, "'Twas grace that taught my heart. It was grace that actively changed him from the inside out." That is the kind of powerful, life-altering force Paul is talking about.

So, in the book of Titus, grace does way more than just forgive your past. It actively teaches, nurtures, and even disciplines us right here in the present. It actually retrains our desires and gives us the power to say no to ungodliness and yes to a self-controlled, upright life.

All right, let's bring all these pieces together. What is the ultimate takeaway from this ancient letter for our lives today? It's really all about what an authentic grace-powered faith actually looks like in the real world. So, here's the blueprint broken down into four key points.

First, a faith that you only talk about but don't live out is a flat-out contradiction. Second, real lasting change happens through intentional person-to-person mentoring. Third, the power for this change doesn't come from us; it flows from the active grace of God.

And finally, the result of all this isn't just a bunch of nice individuals; it's a community whose lives are visibly and productively good for everyone around them. And this last quote just brings it all home perfectly. Paul says the entire point of Christ's sacrifice was to create a people who are eager to do what is good.

It's not a chore; it becomes the natural, passionate outcome of a life that's been transformed by grace. The disconnect between our words and our works is finally healed. So, that leaves us with a pretty challenging final thought, doesn't it? If Paul is right, if our ergon, our actions, are the ultimate proof of what we truly believe, then what story does our life tell? What is our life a testament to?