

Legacy

Titus 2:1-8

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This is the second part of my three part series on discipleship, for which the goal is to learn what Scripture teaches about helping each other grow and what heart attitude we should have towards each other. It's easy for Christians to become focused on rules, but God cares more about the heart. There's a danger of serving and doing all the right things while still being heartless and loveless. But this isn't what our new life in Christ should look like. In Titus 2:1 Paul contrasts Titus with the false teachers that focus on following rules. These teachers have a heartless ritualistic religion focused on rules created by man rather than true holiness coming from a heart that believes and lives according to the gospel. God wants us to have a sincere heart towards Him. This means internalizing the gospel message that tells us we are sinners once condemned, but God sent His Son to die and be raised again to cleanse us of our sin and give us new eternal life in Jesus.

In today's passage we see 3 considerations for taking the gospel to heart. First, holiness is for the gospel's honor. In vv. 1, 5, 8, and 10 Paul tells us that we should live in a way that protects the gospel's reputation. Our core beliefs shape how we live. If a father believes it's most important to provide for his family financially, he will spend his energy at work and be absent at home, pursuing success above all else rather than God. But when we become Christian, our core beliefs are supposed to be replaced by the new foundation of the gospel. This is the renewing of our minds. Rather than working hard to advance our own careers, we should work for God, to bring Him glory and to show Jesus to those around us. But so often we compartmentalize. We want God to change only the parts we want to be changed. We live for our self-interest sometimes even at the expense of others, thus becoming poor representatives of the gospel. And even when it comes to serving in church, often our actions and motivations aren't rooted in the gospel. Sometimes this causes people to become burned out because they are driven by something that cannot match the joy that God provides through the gospel. When this happens the gospel can be misconstrued as burdensome rather than something that gives joy. All this being said, though our lives should make the gospel look attractive, Paul isn't asking us to distort the gospel by taking out the offensive parts. People don't want to hear that we are all sinners, incapable of saving ourselves. The world says we are beautiful the way we are. The gospel says

we aren't beautiful, but God loves us anyways and is offering to change us. And though the world doesn't recognize their own ugliness, they will be attracted to the undeniable beauty of a life changed by God, one filled with love, kindness, graciousness, and selflessness. If they don't listen to what you say about Jesus, you can still show them Jesus in how you live, giving Him the credit rather than yourself.

Second, we can have a sincere heart by teaching the gospel to the heart. In this passage Paul seems to list off different commands. But his intent isn't to have us follow a list of rules. Rather these commands all indicate the kind of heart we should have. In v. 2 Paul mentions being sound in faith, love, and endurance, which comes from fixing our eyes on the hope we have in Jesus. This is about the state of the heart, not about outward appearances or self-righteous talk. We recognize sound faith in someone who makes God the hero of their story rather than themselves. This is living according to the gospel, because it's about our powerlessness and God's power working in us. The gospel produces true humility. As another example, in v. 4 Paul talks about loving your spouse and children. It's hard to love others, especially when they are difficult. But the gospel is about forgiveness. If God can forgive our grave offenses against Him, we cannot hold ourselves so much above others as to not forgive their minor offenses. The gospel produces true love through forgiveness.

Finally, we must let the heart produce gospel living. Some practical ways we can do this are to pray that God helps us be sensitive to His word, to ask Him to give us the right heart behind our actions, and to ask the Spirit to help us grow. It's not about behavior modification, but about God transforming you into the likeness of Christ. For example, in v. 3 Paul mentions not slandering. Pray to God that He may give you a sensitive heart that listens rather than being hardened and ignoring the command. Ask for the right heart rooted in the gospel, so that we may realize that we shouldn't be so proud and self-righteous as to slander and judge others, because we recognize our own sinfulness. And finally ask the Spirit to help you be gracious when you encounter the person whom you are tempted to slander. Let us maintain a sincere heart with a foundation in the gospel, so that its beauty may shine forth in our lives.