

## Titus 2:3-5

By Joel Wood

**Bible Text:** Titus 2:3-5

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Well, we're looking today at Titus chapter 2 verses 3 through 5. And in light of the current temperature in our own congregation and across Christ's church in the United States, in all of its stripes and variations. Coming to a text like this, it's tempting to take a week of vacation and let Edgar handle it and then just clean up the mess when I get back or whatever. These are the texts that we come to and we have to walk right through them. We have to continually be asking ourselves what does the Bible say, what does Scriptures say, and what does it mean when it says that? You have to have both of those parts together. If you want to hear what the Scripture SAYS just invite a member of your-- a cult over to your house. They'll tell you all sorts of things that the Bible says, as they pick from here and pick from there and- and tie together dots and squares and octagons and- and they draw lines between them to fit their message. We also have to ask what does-- what does the Scriptures MEAN when it says what it says. This one's not technically included in the sermon, this one's for free. But as Titus is talking-- as Paul is talking to Titus about older men and older women, the word he uses is presbyters, the elders. And he uses the masculine form and the feminine form. It would be easy to go to the text and say, "Ah-hah! See, there are male presbyters and female presbyters." But read comment after comment after comment from all ages of church history and they're saying this is not referring to officers, this is referring to age and or maturity in the faith. And so, we have to say what do-- not only what does the text SAY but what does it MEAN when it says that. So we look at verses 3 through 5 of Titus 2. Again, I'll read and preach from the Modern English Version which says, "Likewise, older women should be reverent in behavior, and not be false accusers, not be enslaved to much wine, but teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, and to be self-controlled, pure, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored." The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of our God stands forever.

Want to encourage you this way, today. You know, I always try to have one main point so if you don't get anything else, you at least have something to think about or fume about or whatever the situation might be. Women, be faithful in the teaching ministry the Lord has given you, building one another up by applying the Word. Now, I address women primarily in that statement, but this leads to great prayer and encouragement and help and aid by the rest of us. For our women to be faithful in the teaching ministry the LORD has given them (hear a clarification in there), building one another up by applying the Word. Firstly, we see this word "likewise" or something like it in your translation that you might be holding. And so we see, firstly, the teaching OF older women. Paul is saying here to Titus, "as you teach the older men, also teach the older women." This might sound odd, why wouldn't he? But you know, there have been times in history when women were relegated to-- it would be nice if they were second class citizens, they were third or fourth or fifth class citizens. Dr. Gamble who teaches at our

seminary, when he taught at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, he was director of the Meeter Center (and it was a center emphasizing the life and ministry of John Calvin). And- and when you talk to Dr. Gamble about that era of his life, he'll say that the type of groups that contacted him the most, more than any other, were feminist groups wanting to hear about this John Calvin who was so adamant that women should be taught, so adamant that women were not second rate or dumb or stupid, but that they can be taught and they should be taught. They should be educated as men were to handle the responsibilities that God had given them in this world. Remember though that the echo here is an emphasis on sound doctrine. This is in the section that begins in verse 1 of chapter 2, "But as for you, teach what is fitting of sound doctrine." Those of us interested in sound doctrine should sit up and take notice then. Because what is being told to Titus in this following section then, is rooted and grounded in, it hangs upon, the issue of sound doctrine. If we are to say that we have sound doctrine in our church, these are the things that must be taught and practiced. Because we all know that sound doctrine is not just about believing, it's also about doing what we say we believe. So the first issue here is this teaching of older women. And as we get into what needs to be taught, we will see that, yes there is perhaps some growth and development that needs to happen in those of more magnified age, but this also points to a certain maturity that may be present in women that perhaps aren't considered old. So we see the teaching of older women is requisite here.

Secondly, we see the reverence of older women, the reverence of older women. "Likewise, older women should be reverent in behavior, and not be false accusers, not be enslaved to much wine..." This "reverent in behavior" is speaking of a way of life. You might draw a caricature in your mind of a woman who walks around very dourly. There're stories in Sterling, Kansas, of two covenanter sisters who lived in the home now occupied by the Kilgore family. And these two sisters were very stoic, they dressed in black from head to toe, and they were very reverent. There's nothing wrong with how they lived in their reverence but Jay Adams, in his translation of this verse, puts it this way, "to conduct themselves with an outward bearing that is appropriate to holy persons." So we're not just talking about one particular way of living life, we're talking about a full orbbed approach to life that handles each situation as it should be handled in holiness and that marks out that life by a sense of reverence. And Paul here qualifies this reverence with two might seem like very obvious things, but as Calvin points out these are-- these are things that are perhaps greater temptations to the female sex, at least in Paul's time. But I think if we look at our own time, as we look at the older women in our culture, they might also be temptations there, as well. They're not to be false accusers. *διαβόλους* is the word there. If you read this in the Greek, you read "and not devils." Well, that's a little harsh, that's not earning brownie points, that's not moving anyone off the couch anytime soon for their sleeping quarters. But ladies, let me ask you. Do you struggle with a propensity towards gossip and slander? Are you diabolical in how you handle yourself? What do you say about other people out loud or in your own heart and mind? See, even in this text that deals with so much of outward behavior, we're constantly being pointed back in toward the heart. As folk grow older they lose that sense of INNER monologue and they start to say OUT LOUD things that they have thought in their hearts for years. So ladies, what are you thinking in your heart? What is your opinion of the ladies around you, of the men around you, of the person ahead of you in the grocery line, of that active child behind you in the pew? Do you leave your brothers and sisters in Christ saying, "you know, we're right here. We can hear what you're saying. You're not just thinking it in your brain, it's actually coming out of your mouth." Ladies, the first qualifier to the reverence that Paul tells Titus the older women should have is that they not be false accusers. Do you guard your lips? And if you try to guard your lips, are you ultimately guarding your heart in what you choose to think of others? Are you diabolical, are you a devil in the life of the church or are you a blessing and encouragement?

The second is "not enslaved to much wine." Now, Paul doesn't mean by this that you can be enslaved to a little wine, that's not what he means. He means that you're not a substance abuser, that you are not an addict. Jay Adams makes one of these obvious statements, he says, "it is plain that addiction and teaching younger women do not go together." Thank you, Dr. Adams, we needed that clarification. Moments of discipleship should not be marked by, "hold on, I just need to run into the kitchen for another drink." I'm not saying a shared glass of wine or, if you're like Katie Luther, perhaps, mug of beer together isn't inappropriate, but it shouldn't be the mark of your life. And what begins to unfold here is that the teaching that the older ladies are called to, as we will see in verse-- the rest of verse 3, is it involves modeling. Not- not fashion modeling, behavioral, active modeling of how do you live a reverent life. How do you interact with people and moments and things at your disposal. This is what Paul is calling Titus to call the older women of the church to. A reverence in behavior, an outward bearing that is appropriate to holy persons.

We've seen the teaching OF older women, the reverence OF older women, thirdly, we see teaching BY older women. They should not be false accusers, they should not be enslaved to much wine, but teachers of good things. And let's be honest, in our understanding of Scripture and in our confessionalism, the pastor standing up front talking about the teaching ministry of women in the church might be making some of you nervous. But it's the SAME word used here that's used when Paul tells Titus to teach. It's not a matter of what is being done, the teaching. It's a matter of what is BEING taught and who is doing it. That the older women are to teach the young women these things. Calvin comments in this way, "to make them concentrate on their duties, Paul points out that it is not sufficient for them to lead decent lives themselves unless they also train the younger women to live honorable and modest lives. So Paul tells them that through their example they should make these younger women sober in their minds or else they will be carried away by the passions of youth." And young moms, if-- and young wives, and young ladies, if I can be so bold as to make a few comments to you on this. Are you willing to listen to the older women of the church? Are you willing to hear them or are you carried away with the passions of youth? And those passions can be different from generation to generation. What holds more import and impact for you? Something an older woman in the congregation says in loving mentorship of you about yourself or your marriage or your children? Or something that the latest mommy blog has to say to you? Which holds greater weight and gravity for you? What one of the wives of one of our elders, the council they might give? Or what your friends might say to you? I don't mean to be accusatory, I just mean that I'm not THAT far ahead of you, as far as we can tell Jesus is done using us to make people so we don't have any babies in arms or anything like that. But- but we're not that far ahead of- of all you young, productive people. It wasn't too long ago that we were there and I understand the temptation to want to do-- not even just everything well, but wanting to do EVERYTHING right, which spills over into everything perfectly. You can be so paranoid that you are going to mess up your kids. Be encouraged, you ARE going to mess up your kids. That was an ice breaker for me in Sterling, a small town, life revolved around the public schools. Some people say, "You're- you're a homeschooler?" You know, like I- I should walk around yelling "unclean! unclean!" And I'd say this: I'd say, "I don't need the state schools to mess up my kids. I can do it just fine on my own." Know that you will do things wrong, you will discipline in anger and you should confess that and repent of that. You will give them too much sweets, you will give them not enough sweets, you'll have the bed time wrong, you won't feed them on the right schedule, you will give them unsprouted grains. You will do more wrong than you care to admit. But that is why the Lord has put you in a congregation with people that aren't exactly like you in age, in experience, in paranoia, in sense of failure. It's so much better to have someone walk with you who faced their sense of failure 15, 20, 30 years ago and they can walk with you in repentance and walk with you in growth and understanding of applying God's Word to your family. So as is so true of all apostolic teaching, this isn't just for older women. And, frankly, this isn't just for younger women, it's for those married to those

ladies and in community with them and walking with them. And as we touch on this point as well we can be paranoid to say, "let's not say that older women should teach." Brothers and sisters, let us not combat feminism with other equally unbiblical and unchristian applications of the Word. Starting in the beginning when the serpent comes to Eve, what did she say? "God said, don't eat of it don't- don't even touch it or you'll die." And that's NOT what God said. But I can hear in there an overzealous husband just saying, "you know, I don't want anybody eating it so just don't even touch it or you'll die." No, we can't do that. We can't say what WE want to say to try to keep the hedges where they should be in the church. We must ALWAYS say what Christ has said. THAT will keep the hedges where they need to be. Let's not make the text say more, as others have, or less, as we're perhaps tempted to do, than it really does. These ladies should be teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to do what? To love their husbands, to love their children. The word there is-- it is not quite "love" as we would think, it is talking about affection, it's more emotive, it's more experiential. And in our day and age when a woman is called in ninety-nine different directions, perhaps even in having to step in, if she has an ill husband, to help provide. Sometimes affection is the first thing to go. Ladies, you know when you kick into go mode, you know when you kick into that moment where the to-do list has got to get to-done to-day and affection so- it can so quickly be jettisoned in the home and it must stay present.

The older women need to teach the younger women to be self-controlled. This is the same issue that was present in the lives of the older men and so it must be for ALL of us to work out that fruit of the Spirit. Teaching them to be pure. Teaching them to be homemakers, as the MEV renders it, able to manage the home economy if I can say it that way, which is not an easy economy to manage. A good chunk of the session and I were able to go up to RPTS to attend their Westminster Confession into the Twenty-first Century conference and this year being the half millenia mark of the Reformation it was on the life and teaching of Martin Luther. And- and Rebecca VanDoodewaard (don't ask me how to spell that off the top of my head), she and her husband were there to speak and she spoke on Katie Luther and her life and experience and how the Lord providentially set her up to be Martin Luther's wife and- and trained her in so many ways that she didn't know she would need. But what an example and- and some of the things that were listed: buying land, and- and brewing beer, hostessing dinners that sometimes were up to 120 for dinner at their home. I leaned over to Brad and said, "Do you think the deacons would reimburse that?" 120 people, wow. Adopting nieces and nephews up to, I think, 21 was the number. Even joining in on Luther's table talks and even disagreeing with him publicly at times. Ladies, just because the Lord calls you to be a homemaker doesn't mean He calls you to boredom, that He calls you to be seen and not heard and ideally not even seen. If you look at the great wives of the great reformers, there was a life of adventure. The- the session was sharing together even in the life of John Calvin who was literally training up a generation of martyr pastors and missionaries. And quite often in the middle of the night a wife would show up on their doorstep, blood all over her night gown as her husband had just been slaughtered in their bed next to her, with children, and Calvin would take a load of books down to the book shop around the corner and sell them back to have money to feed these wives and children. And- and the life of the Gospel is a life of adventure. Don't be bored when you read this list, don't think "how ho-hum." To love husbands and children, to be self-controlled, to be pure, to be homemakers, to be good, to be obedient to their own husbands. Jay Adams quickly clarifies, "not a doormat." Men, don't make your wives into a doormat. Don't make her the one person that you can say and do the things you wish you could say and do to the guys at work. Men, let us be careful how we treat our wives. They're the most treasured possession that God has given us. And young men, if you're anxious for marriage and you have any sense of abusive nature or treating the other women around you like garbage, don't get married. Stay single, you don't deserve it. Take care of that issue in your heart before you step into a marriage that takes you to death. And ladies, if you're single and anxious for marriage, even just yesterday I recounted the line "better to be single and wish you were married than married and wish you were single." Ladies, do not settle and if you are not ready

to be submissive to a godly man, don't get married. Stay single, do your thing, serve God, pursue what God calls you to pursue, but do it with a singular focus, not causing strife and conflict for a man who simply wants to love his wife. And let us be careful to say that this teaching is to point wives to be obedient to their own husbands. This is not a general obedience to whatever any man would tell that woman to do, as can be found in other cultures, in other places. No, there is a particular bond in which submission of life is to be worked out. For the woman, that is primarily in marriage and wives should be submissive to their husbands and husbands should remember the sacrifice of Christ for HIS church. The church is called to be submissive to Christ, that's the picture for a wife to her husband. And men, let us be ready to lay down our lives for the women that God has given us.

Fourthly, we see the testimony of older women. Why is all of this to go on? Why is all of this to be done? That the Word of God may not be dishonored. That is why. The Word is still central and primary in this. These are not life skills classes where worldly wisdom can dominate. This MUST be exposition of Scripture from older women to younger women. First Peter 3 [vs 1-2], "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, so that if any do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, as they see the purity and reverence of your lives." Peter was saying the same thing and it was in relation to evangelizing unsaved husbands. Now this is not calling for relationship evangelism of the dating, engagement, and marrying kind. It always brings panic to my heart when I hear a young woman say, "oh, he's not a Christian but he's starting to bow his head when I pray for our food." He's not a Christian but.. But don't continue in a relationship with him! Get away from him! This is referring to marriages where two pagans got married, the Gospel showed up with one of the apostles, the woman was brought to faith by the working power of the Holy Spirit in her life, so what do you do with the chump that now doesn't love Jesus and is on your case every time you go to worship early on the Lord's day. You submit as much as you are able. If they don't obey the Word that doesn't mean that that gives you the right to disobey them if they're not asking you to do something that is contrary to the Word of God. See, in all of this teaching the Word is still central. Calvin adds, "when Paul adds 'so that no one will malign the Word of God' he is referring to women who are married to unbelieving husbands..." So see, he goes the direction that Peter goes with this. "... Who are married to unbelieving husbands who might judge the Gospel by the bad behavior of their wives. But what if Paul is not just talking about husbands," Calvin goes on "it is more probable that he requires this strict life so that their faults do not bring dishonor on the Gospel." Brothers and sisters, this is more true for all of us than we might want to think. What's so important to remember here is as we read these lists, our behaviorism kicks in. And let's be honest, the male-female reaction to lists in Scripture can be gender specific. I don't mean to be too much of a caricaturists, I don't-- definitely don't mean to be a sexist at all, but many times I think men can come across a list in Scripture and the reaction can be so fleshly. "I need to do what? What needs done? Is this before I mow the lawn or after I trim the hedges? What needs to go on here?" Ladies, your fleshly response can be a little different. "What needs to happen? I can do that. Show me the list, I'll check it off." Both are wrong. We need to press in in obedience according to the Gospel and the power of the Spirit at work in our lives.

Hebrews 10 draws this together in a beautiful way. Listen to this, verses 19 to 25, "Therefore, brothers, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that He has opened for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and since we have a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse them from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us firmly hold the profession of our faith without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to spur one another to love and to good works. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but let us exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching." Brothers and sisters, the writer of Hebrews is saying, rooted in our justification, let us be faithful to

teach one another in biblically appropriate ways and relationships which drives us to keep worshipping together and reminds us that Jesus is coming back when we will give an answer for all that we have said and done. This exhorting one another, this spurring one another on to love and good works, this is what Paul is telling Titus to tell the older ladies to do for the younger ladies. But it is not rooted in behaviorism, it's not rooted in "here's the list, get it done then Jesus will love you." This is rooted in the sacrificed blood of Christ already shed for these women. It's rooted in our baptism, it's rooted in the sprinkling clean of our consciences. It's rooted in the full assurance of faith. It's rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we miss that, none of this is worth doing. Why? Because it's for a testimony, that the Word of God may not be dishonored.

In counseling and in human behavior, one of the more difficult things to get our hands on is this issue of motivation. Why do we do what we do? And when we-- when we want to change, why do we want to change? Ladies, I think the temptation can be, "well, I want to do these things so that everyone thinks I'm a good wife. I don't want people to think I'm a bad wife or a bad mom. I don't want people to think I'm messing up my kids. I don't want them to think my husband made a mistake. I don't want my husband to wake up and think, 'I guess I married the wrong woman.'" Again, check the name on the marriage certificate. If it's the name of the person lying in bed next to you, you didn't marry the wrong person. But there are so many motivating factors that this world wants to shove upon you. The one motivating factor that Paul gives to Titus to give to you older ladies, to give to you younger ladies, is this: what will people think of the Word of God? If I do whatever I want to do, if I live however I want to live, if I don't do these things the Scripture compels me to do, what will they think of Jesus? What will they think of His Word that I claim to love? That should be our motivation. That should be our motivation for Christian living. That the Word of God may not be dishonored by those closest to us who do not yet know Him, who do not yet love Him or serve Him. As we prayerfully hope that the Spirit does that work in them and it's done, in part, as they look on us saying, "if they can love someone like me and serve someone like me and help someone like me, that must be the work of God in their life." So women, ladies, be faithful in the teaching ministry the Lord has given you, which isn't the teaching ministry of this pulpit, but is the teaching ministry of life on life discipleship as you look in the pages of Scripture together and how to apply that Word in your own life, in your marriages if God has so given you a marriage, and in the lives of you and your children if God has giving you offspring. Be faithful in that, building one another up by applying God's Word together to your lives.

Stand with me as we pray.