

Homiletics Analysis: Titus 2

Content & Intent

This Text — Content

Titus 2 is Paul's direct instruction to Titus regarding the concrete behavioral formation of specific demographic groups within the churches of Crete: older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves. Each group receives targeted instruction calibrated to their station and vulnerability. The chapter is not merely a catalog of virtues, however — it is structurally bound together by two theological anchors in verses 11–14, where Paul grounds all of the behavioral instruction in the grace of God that has appeared in Christ, and in the hope of Christ's return. The chapter closes with a charge to Titus himself to teach with authority and not be silenced (v. 15). The movement is from ordered household and community life (vv. 1–10) to the theological engine that makes such life both possible and obligatory (vv. 11–14) to the pastoral commission to declare it without apology (v. 15).

This Text — Intent

God's intent through this passage is to demonstrate that the gospel is not a private spiritual transaction but a totalizing power that visibly reshapes every relationship, role, and behavior pattern in the believing community — and to establish that this visible reshaping is itself a form of evangelism, a commendation of “the doctrine of God our Savior” (v. 10) to a watching world. Paul is not merely regulating conduct; he is arguing that the gospel has a public face, and that face is the ordered, self-controlled, love-shaped life of the church in community. God seeks to move the reader from treating holiness as an optional add-on to seeing it as the inevitable and necessary outcome of having encountered grace.

Subject Sentence: The grace of God that saves also trains every believer in every station toward godliness.

Primary Claim: God is calling His people to understand that the gospel they have received is not passive — it is an active, educating grace that transforms how every believer, in every role, lives in the world, so that the watching world sees the doctrine of Christ adorned rather than dishonored.

Interpretive Evaluation

The household code question: Some interpreters read Titus 2's demographic instructions as merely reflecting first-century Greco-Roman social convention (*Haustafeln*) — Paul simply baptizing existing cultural norms to avoid social disruption and maximize the church's credibility. On this reading, the passage has limited normative force today; its content is culturally relative, and its real principle is simply “don't cause unnecessary offense.” This reading should be **qualified but not fully adopted**. It is accurate that Paul is aware of the watching world (vv. 5, 8, 10 all reference the opinion of outsiders), and it would be overreach to treat every specific instruction as transcultural in identical form. However, the passage's theological grounding in verses 11–14 is not cultural — grace appearing, training in righteousness, the appearing of Christ — these are eschatological and redemptive-historical claims, not sociological ones. The behavioral instruction is rooted in the character of God's saving grace and the shape of Christ's redemption, not merely in social utility. The Reformed reading holds that the virtues named (self-control, sobriety, love, faithfulness) are not cultural artifacts but Spirit-shaped fruit that manifests appropriately within different cultural contexts. The form may vary; the substance does not.

The older women and younger women passage (vv. 3–5): Egalitarian readers often treat verse 5 (“that the word of God may not be reviled”) as the controlling concern — the specific instructions being culturally contingent means to that timeless end. Complementarian readers treat the domestic role of younger women as normative. Both readings are responding to a genuine exegetical feature: the instructions are tethered to a stated purpose. The Reformed reading here acknowledges the purpose clause as significant without reducing the instruction to it. Paul is not merely saying “do whatever avoids cultural scandal” — he is describing the shape of a well-ordered life that glorifies God within the structures of creaturely existence. The purpose clause constrains how we apply the passage cross-culturally; it does not dissolve the passage's normative force.

Verses 11–14 and the relationship between justification and sanctification:

Wesleyan/Arminian readers sometimes deploy verse 14 (“purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works”) as support for entire sanctification or a second work of grace. This should be **refuted** as an import the text does not support. The passage describes the directional training work of grace — *paideuosa* (v. 12, “training” or “disciplining”) — as an ongoing process, not a punctiliar second blessing. The language of v. 14 is covenantal and corporate (echoing Exodus 19:5 and Deuteronomy 7:6): God is forming a covenant community, not describing the inner mechanics of individual sanctification. The Reformed reading of these verses sees grace as the continuous divine teacher that progressively orients the believer away from worldly desires and toward godliness — a process consistent with progressive sanctification rooted in union with Christ.

Verse 11 and “salvation has appeared to all people”: Some universalist or Arminian readings take “all people” (*pasin anthrōpois*) to indicate that saving grace is universally available to all humanity without distinction, or even that all will ultimately be saved. This

should be **qualified**. The Reformed reading is that “all people” refers to all kinds of people — including the varied demographic groups Paul has just addressed in vv. 1–10 — rather than every individual without exception. This reading is supported by the contextual flow: Paul has been addressing groups defined by age, gender, and social status. “All” functions here as “without distinction of type” rather than “every individual universally.” This is consistent with Paul’s usage elsewhere (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4; Romans 3:22–23).

Key Canonical Support

- **Exodus 19:5–6** — The LORD’s call to Israel to be “a treasured possession,” “a kingdom of priests” — the background for Paul’s covenantal language in v. 14 (“a people for his own possession”). God’s purpose to form a visible, distinctive community has always been integral to His redemptive plan.
 - **Deuteronomy 4:5–8** — Israel’s obedience to God’s statutes was itself a witness to surrounding nations of God’s character and wisdom. This directly anticipates the “adorning the doctrine” motif running through Titus 2:5, 8, 10.
 - **Romans 12:1–2** — The renewal of the mind and the transformation of behavior as the reasonable response to the mercies of God — closely parallel to Paul’s logic in Titus 2:11–12, where received grace produces behavioral transformation.
 - **Ephesians 5:25–27** — Christ gave himself to sanctify and cleanse the church “so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle” — the same Christ-as-Redeemer-and-Sanctifier logic as Titus 2:14, grounding community formation in Christ’s self-giving.
 - **1 Peter 2:9–12** — Peter’s parallel call to the church as God’s “chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation” called to “live such good lives among the pagans” that God is glorified — the same visible-witness logic as Titus 2, grounded in the same covenantal identity.
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Aim: To demonstrate that ordered, self-controlled, other-directed community life is not Christian moralism but the necessary public face of the gospel — produced by grace, directed by hope, and owed to the Christ who gave Himself to make it possible.

Content Table

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
2:1	Titus charged to teach “what accords with sound	Sets the chapter’s governing purpose — all that follows is

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	doctrine”	<i>sound doctrine</i> expressed in life
2:2	Older men: sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith/love/steadfastness	Four virtues; faith-love-steadfastness echoes the Pauline triad
2:3	Older women: reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to wine, teachers of good	“Reverent in behavior” — priestly connotation; their teaching function is primarily formational, not pulpit-based
2:4–5	Older women to train younger women: love husbands and children, self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, submissive — “that the word of God may not be reviled”	Only instruction here carries an explicit “lest” purpose clause — verbal witness at stake
2:6	Younger men: be self-controlled	Single-word summary; <i>sōphronein</i> repeated — the central virtue of the chapter
2:7–8	Titus as model: good works, integrity, dignity, sound speech — “so that an opponent may be put to shame”	Titus’s own character is a teaching instrument; the watching critic becomes the measure
2:9–10	Slaves: submit to masters, not argumentative, not pilfering, show good faith — “to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in everything”	The climactic statement of vv. 1–10: the whole social order is a canvas for adorning the gospel
2:11	“The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people”	Theological pivot — past-tense Incarnation/Cross as the doctrinal basis for all that precedes
2:12	This grace “trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present	<i>Paideuoussa</i> — grace as active educator; the very virtues of vv. 2–10 are its curriculum

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
2:13	age” “Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”	Eschatological motivation — present behavior is calibrated by future reality
2:14	“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”	Three purposes of Christ’s self-giving: redemption, purification, possession-formation — all corporate
2:15	Titus to declare these things with authority — “let no one disregard you”	Pastoral commission: the content of the chapter is not optional; Titus must not be silenced

Divisions Table

Division	Verses	Label
1	2:1	The Charge: Sound Doctrine Takes Flesh
2	2:2–10	The Community Shaped: Grace-Formed Virtues by Station
3	2:11–14	The Engine: The Grace That Trains and the Hope That Orients
4	2:15	The Commission: Declare It with Full Authority

Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

Subject Sentence: The grace of God that saves also trains every believer in every station toward godliness.

Primary Claim: God is calling His people to understand that the gospel they have received is not passive — it is an active, educating grace that transforms how every believer, in every role, lives in the world, so that the watching world sees the doctrine of Christ adorned rather than dishonored.

Applications (Five)

1. (Mind/Belief) The command to live a certain way is not the ground of your acceptance before God — but it is the necessary fruit of your acceptance before God. Paul does not say “live this way so that grace will appear to you.” He says “grace has appeared — therefore this is what it produces.” If your Christian life has large tracts of untransformed behavior that you have made peace with, the issue is not willpower but belief: you have not yet fully reckoned with the claim that grace is *training* you right now. The educating grace of God is not passive, and if you are experiencing no formation, ask whether you are actually sitting under the Teacher.

2. (Affections/Worship) The most powerful motivation Paul gives in this chapter is not the opinion of outsiders — it is the appearing of Christ. You are waiting for “the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.” Let that future reality actually govern your present desires. The person who truly believes Christ is coming is not indifferent to worldly passions because they have suppressed them — they are indifferent to worldly passions because something so much better has captured their imagination. Cultivate that hope; let it actually compete with what your flesh is offering you today.

3. (Will/Behavior) Older believers — men and women with decades in the faith — are assigned a specific and irreplaceable function in this passage: the formation of younger believers. Older women train younger women; older men model what faith, love, and steadfastness look like over time. If you are in the older half of your congregation and you are not intentionally investing in the formation of those younger than you, you are leaving a God-assigned post vacant. Identify one younger believer. Begin.

4. (Affections/Worship) The phrase “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (v. 10) is one of the most remarkable descriptions of ordinary Christian living in all of Paul. Your daily conduct — at work, at home, in every subordinated relationship — is described as *decoration* on the gospel. You either make the doctrine beautiful or you make it ugly. This is not a burden; it is a privilege. When you live with integrity, self-control, and genuine love in the ordinary grind of your daily station, you are making Christ visible. Let that dignity actually move you.

5. (Mind/Belief) The virtues Paul lists in this chapter — self-control, sobriety, love, faithfulness, dignity — are not personality types. They are the fruit of what happened in history: God appeared in grace (v. 11) and gave Himself to redeem and purify a people (v. 14). The cross is the reason these virtues are possible, the cross is the reason they are required, and the cross is the energy that produces them. If you are attempting to cultivate self-control or sobriety or love apart from regular, believing return to what Christ did and why He did it, you are attempting to harvest fruit from a severed branch. Stay in the vine. The doctrine is the power.

Theological Importance

Theological Importance: Titus 2 establishes that sanctification is not autonomous human effort but a form of divine education — grace functions as the active teacher (*paideuouosa*, v. 12) that trains the believer away from worldliness and toward godliness. This passage also holds in close canonical connection the two *appearings* of Christ: His first appearing in grace (v. 11) grounds the moral life in historical redemption, while His second appearing in glory (v. 13) orients the moral life toward eschatological hope. Together these two horizons — past grace and future glory — constitute the complete theological frame within which Christian conduct makes sense. The passage further demonstrates that God’s redemptive purpose is inherently corporate and covenantal: Christ gave Himself to form “a people for his own possession” (v. 14), echoing the Sinai covenant language of Exodus 19, and the visible conduct of that people is itself part of His redemptive strategy for the world.

Reformed Theological Significance

Reformed Theological Significance: Titus 2 is a compressed but powerful statement of the Reformed understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification: grace that justifies also sanctifies, and the two are never separated though always distinguished. The passage gives no ground to antinomianism — the person who claims to have received grace while remaining untransformed by it has misunderstood what grace is and does. Equally, it gives no ground to moralism — the behavioral instructions are not the path to acceptance but the product of having been accepted and redeemed. The passage also displays the Reformed conviction that the gospel has social and public dimensions: the church’s visible conduct is a commendation of “the doctrine of God our Savior,” meaning that ecclesial formation is itself an act of witness. The covenantal echo in verse 14 (“a people for his own possession”) roots all of this in the unbroken redemptive-historical thread from Sinai to the Cross, grounding the church’s calling in the same covenant purposes God has been pursuing from Israel’s beginning.

Main Takeaway

The grace that saved you is not finished with you — it is teaching you right now. Every role you occupy, every relationship you inhabit, every ordinary day you live is a classroom in which the grace of God is working to form you into a person who makes the doctrine of Christ beautiful. You have two reference points for every decision: what Christ has already done by appearing in grace to redeem you, and what Christ is about to do when He appears in glory to complete it. Live in that space. Adorn the doctrine.

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls:

- **Reducing the passage to demographic-specific moralism.** The structure of the passage (older men do this, older women do this, etc.) invites the preacher to preach a series of unconnected moralistic charges to each group: “older men, be dignified; older women, don’t gossip; younger women, love your husbands.” This misses the passage entirely. Verses 1–10 are the application; verses 11–14 are the engine. A sermon that never reaches the engine has not preached this passage — it has merely listed its surface commands. Always preach through to the theology.
- **Preaching verses 11–14 in isolation from verses 1–10.** The opposite failure: preaching the glorious theology of verses 11–14 as a freestanding doctrinal passage about grace and the two appearances of Christ, while treating verses 1–10 as preliminary or secondary. The passage is structured as argument: *this* (vv. 1–10) is what grace-shaped life looks like; *here* (vv. 11–14) is why. Neither half is complete without the other.
- **Treating the “adorn the doctrine” motif as social conformism.** It is tempting to read the purpose clauses in verses 5, 8, and 10 — all of which reference the watching world — as though Paul’s concern is merely social acceptability or not rocking the cultural boat. This inverts Paul’s logic. The concern is not managing public perception for the church’s benefit; it is displaying the character of God’s redemption for the world’s sake. The distinction matters enormously for application: one produces a church shaped by cultural anxiety, the other produces a church shaped by missional confidence.
- **Treating “all people” in verse 11 as universalism.** The phrase “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” is sometimes read as Paul affirming universal salvation or universal salvific availability without limit. In context, “all people” refers to all types of people just addressed — every demographic group in the church, regardless of age, gender, or social status — all of whom are recipients of the same grace and called to the same transformation. This is a claim about the gospel’s reach across social distinctions, not a universalist statement.
- **Missing the eschatological motivation.** Verse 13 is not decoration — it is load-bearing. The “blessed hope” of Christ’s return is named as the orienting reality of the present-age moral life Paul describes in verse 12. A sermon that does not land the eschatological weight of verse 13 will produce application that is either willpower-dependent or guilt-driven. The hope of Christ’s return is the fuel; don’t leave it in the engine room.
- **Soft-pedaling verse 15.** The chapter closes with Paul telling Titus to declare these things with full authority and let no one disregard him. This is not a tacked-on

pastoral note — it signals that the content of the chapter is not a suggestion and that Titus's authority to enforce it is real. Preachers who are themselves reluctant to teach with authority on matters of conduct will find verse 15 uncomfortable. It should be preached: the church is entitled to be taught these things with clarity and without apology, and the pastor who hedges on household formation, self-control, and the public witness of the community has abandoned the post Paul assigned to Titus.