

Bible Text: Titus 2:1

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Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.

Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

And let's take our Bibles and let's turn to Titus. As we're continuing through the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, I've continued with the theme "Beautifying the Bride" as Paul writes to these men who were his associates under his authority and is telling them, instructing them in how to set up the local churches, how the bride of Christ, the local churches can be more fully pleasing to God, more sound in doctrine and in practice, and therefore show the beauty of God, the wonder of God, the wisdom of God to all of the world, and that's why you're here. You're part of this body, so that we might reflect his glory, that he might get honor, fame and praise from this world. And by the way, the day is coming when he will get praise from everyone. Those in heaven will praise him for love and grace, and those in hell will praise him for his justice and proper wrath. But all will glorify God.

Well, Titus 2, we've made it to chapter 2 and, uh, I was thinking just this week about, uh, one of our men told me that their grandson, who's very sharp young man, serious about the word and about his spiritual life but he said, "How long are we going to do this beautifying the bride? Is there not some other stuff that kind of more relates to us?" And, uh, I had a couple of thoughts about that. I thought that reminds me of me as a young Christian. Um, we don't know what we need and the day will come when that young man keeps maturing in the faith and he'll say, "I see now the dire importance of these books, like the pastoral epistles that set forth what a church is and what a pastor is to do." Because brothers and sisters, to find a decently, biblically, healthy, local church is not an easy thing. Our country would not be drowning in the filth and wickedness it is drowning in if all of our pulpits were aflame with sound doctrine. The problems in any country start in the pulpit. If the pulpits were right, our country would get the sloshing over of that righteousness. We would be the salt and the light we're supposed to be.

So there is a dire importance. So I thought as he grows he'll see more of this. Then I thought, he needs to strap in because Titus 2 beginning in verse 2 deals with some down to earth brass tacks, rubber meets the road stuff for all of us. But I didn't make it there. I've been out two weeks. That wasn't my plan, but I believe it was God's plan. And so I had more marination time to let this marinate, and what I thought would take several verses, I've just got to one and and that young man may say we'll never get out of beautifying the bride if you if you study and cannot get through but one verse. But I'm

going to read more than one verse because I will reference the context as we come to our conclusions for practical application and there are some great things here for all of us this morning. So tune in. I'll be asking you questions later to make sure that you heard what we said this morning from the word of God.

Titus 2, beginning in verse 1, "But as for you," that's Paul writing to young Titus that he's left on the island of Crete to set in order things in the churches on the island of.

1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Let me stop right there just for a second. We'll note here that we're getting to the end to these real practical doctrines. Doctrine just means teaching, okay? I've heard people say, "Oh, we don't want to get into doctrine in the church." Well, what in heavens name are you going to get into? Doctrine is everything. It's teaching. But here we're coming into some real, practical teaching for segments of the church and he says there as he concludes his statement about the old women teaching the younger women, so that, last part of verse 5, the word of God will not be dishonored. In other words, how you behave in these practical manners, older men, older ladies, young ladies, younger men, matters greatly because the way you behave, church members, will determine whether or not the people in the community honor and respect your God or makes snide, critical, mocking remarks about your God because even though the world rebels against God's roles for men and women, husbands and wives, etc. Our world is in full-out rebellion against those. However, God wrote his law in their hearts and he's given them a conscience. And so on the one hand, they rail against these truths, but on the other side, in the quietness of their heart, they're convicted that they're right. And since we claim to be the people of God, they want to see, do you believe it? We know because God's written it in our hearts and the conscience he gave us convicts us of such. We know this is the right way for families to be ordered, men to function, women to function, young men, old men, older ladies, younger ladies. We know it's right but if you don't live it, we'll mock your God or we'll honor your God if you do live it.

Verse 6, "Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is which is beyond reproach," here it is again, "so that the opponent," the world that hates our doctrine, "will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." I'll never forget years ago Larry King, the old talk show host who's been gone a while, he was interviewing the false preacher Joel Osteen and he was just trying to get Joel to call sin sin and call people to repentance. He said, "Well, isn't that wrong and isn't that...?" "Well, I'm just not, I'm not, not not my job to judge people." And it's funny, here the unbelieving

carnal Jewish man, Larry King, is trying to get the Christian preacher to say what is the truth and Joel wouldn't do it. That's why he's a false teacher because he is.

Verse 9. He goes from old men to older ladies, notice I didn't say old ladies. I said older ladies. Older men to older ladies, to younger ladies, to younger men, and now to bondslaves and servants. Verse 9, "Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." So this will look proper as we claim to be the people of God.

Now we come to chapter 2, verse 1, where we're going to camp today and we'll note that in this chapter, uh, it begins with a direct exhortation to Titus. Remember now, Titus is the preacher, probably a younger preacher whom Paul left on the island of Crete to get the churches straightened out and so he's got a direct appeal to Titus in verse 1, and then also down in verse 15. In our text verse 1, he says, "as for you, Titus, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." Down in verse 15 of chapter 2, "These things, Titus, speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." So it begins and ends with a direct, specific personal word to Titus.

So Titus cannot just speak pleasing things. That's the hallmark of the false teacher. Titus must speak the truth. That's what Paul is saying here. Titus must speak that which is truly profitable. That's why he says in verse 1 of chapter 2, "But as for you." Conjunctive word "but" there means, "I'm putting what you're to be doing, Titus, in sharp contrast to what the false teachers generally do. They they wax eloquent and go all over the place misusing Scripture to teach false doctrine, but as for you, Titus, you're not to do that. You have a different assignment than those rascals."

So he puts Titus' commission and command in sharp contrast to the typical approach of the false teachers and just to get in your mind some of the false teaching Paul has already pointed out in Titus 1, look back at verse 10 as he's writing there to Titus, he says, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," that means they came from a Jewish background and they've come into our churches and they're taking Jewish law and Jewish ceremony and Jewish superstition and mixing it up with the gospel and its false teaching. Verse 11, he says, "These must be silenced because they're upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain." And then down in verse 14, "not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth."

So all of this kind of stuff, most of it with a orthodox Jewish flavor, has crept into the Christian churches on the island of Crete, and so Paul writes, chapter 2, verse 1, "But as for you, Titus, you be in sharp contrast to that foolish, abominable nonsense, that false teaching." He says in verse 1, "But as for you, speak the things." Speak to things. That's in the present tense in the original Greek. It means it has a continual action and it means, "Titus, you're to continually be doing this. You're continually to be refuting, exposing and replacing the false teaching that is ever creeping into the church with sound doctrine." You might say, "Pastor, well, how do we do that today?" We faithfully preach this book.

That's the way you do it and the best way to preach it, the mainstay of the pulpit, not absolutely the only thing, but the mainstay of the pulpit must be chapter by chapter, verse by verse, biblical exegesis, exegesis of the original text to give us the understanding of the original author.

Alright. "You, Titus, don't be like the false teachers. Keep on speaking the things," and we continue in verse 1, "which are fitting for sound doctrine." The point is, the saints must have continual installments of sound doctrine. This includes the public ministry of the preaching of the word. This includes speaking and teaching the word like in our small groups in smaller settings. And this would include face to face counseling or discussions with people in the church as that comes about. "This is going to be required, Titus. This required if you're going to expose and supplant the false teaching, the false doctrine that's crept into our churches."

Now, looking closely or more closely, I should say, at the phrase in verse 1 of chapter 2 that says fitting. "Titus, I want you not to be like the false teachers. I want you to only teach the things that are fitting for sound doctrine." Fitting. Interesting phrase. It actually has the idea of what is becoming, so you couldn't even translate it, "Titus, you preach those things and only those things that are becoming sound doctrine, that fit with sound doctrine." Now when I think about that I think about the word fitting in my mind and I picture in my mind this mold I, and you know what a mold is. You pour stuff in it and it takes the shape of the mold. There's a mold of sound doctrine, the essential doctrines once for all given to God's church. "And Titus, you must only teach what fits the mold. Don't go outside of it."

Here sometimes men going into the ministry and they'll say, "Well, God's called me in the ministry and I think I might do this, and I think I might do that." I think I don't really find that in the Bible. We have Titus is given his convictions. Titus doesn't establish his convictions. God gave Titus, gave Paul, gave Timothy their convictions. "Here's what you do. Here's what you're to believe." I mean, folks, the truth is the truth. Let's don't become mystics. "Oh, I thank God's leading me to this and I think..." Well, if God's called you to preach, he's called you to preach the old book and the old doctrine. He's giving you your convictions.

Well, so another way to think about this, "Titus, only speak those things fitting i.e. the mold of sound doctrine or what's becoming of sound or becoming with or fitting with sound doctrine." I thought of another word that might amplify this even more, that is only teach the things that square with sound doctrine, that which is truly appropriate based on the doctrines you've learned from me, Jude chapter 3, those doctrines once for all given to the saints. God is not giving any new doctrine. It's all right here in this book. It has been once for all delivered to the saints. We're to teach it and preach it. And you know, through these years, God's given us quite a number of people who follow our ministry and I find out all the time there are a lot of secret disciples out there. They don't want to publicly be known as guys who follow Jeff Noblit but I find out they are. They're sneakily listening to our teaching and our preaching. And and and that's that's a good thing. But but I find that there is that ever propensity to take a little and leave a little as

if we're assigned to do part of it, but not all of it. But Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I've given you the whole counsel of God. I did not shrink back from any of it."

Now I got to thinking about that phrase, "Titus, don't be like the false teachers. You're only to teach that which is fitting with, which fits the mold of or which is becoming of the faith." I thought about a good illustration for that that has a point in it by itself, but it's also a good illustration of my point. So here's an illustration that has a point in it itself, but it also illustrates my point. Alright? And here it goes. It's brazenly easy today to find people who dress unbecomingly. Doesn't fit the mode of what's proper. Doesn't fit the dignity of how God made humankind. And shall I get on my soapbox and again express that I wish pastors did not come to the sacred desk to preach the sacred word dressed like they're going to a chicken fight. It's not the way I was raised. You ever heard that? "Well, that's not the way I was raised." Not the way I was raised as a pastor. Now dress isn't everything. We know that that the composition of the heart is the main thing but dress is not nothing. There's some importance there. But in our world today, world today is certainly easy to find folks who attire themselves in unbecoming ways. In fact, it's a cultural fad today to purpose to dress like a fool instead of like one who's been made in the image of God. Now, modesty is always a foundation stone in becoming dress. So ladies, help your daughters. Dads help your daughters because moms sometimes don't get it. Amen? Moms, don't you look at me like that. Be thankful that God gave you a husband who gets it. Amen? Well, that's that's side note. Dressing unbecomingly.

Psalms 14:1 says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" And then it goes on and I'll have to paraphrase this, "they have committed abominable deeds," he says after that. And that's interesting. He said they're living wickedly in abominable deeds, and with that, they claim no God. The idea of that text is these are people who say, "I'll have nothing to do with any God. No God. I don't want his wisdom. I don't want his truth. I do not want his laws. No God for me. I will be my own god." That's the spirit of our age, is it not? Well, the Bible says you're a fool. The fool, the fool has said in his heart no God for me.

It has come to my attention recently that one of our major retailers, the Target Corporation, has now established a fool's clothing section. A fool's clothing section. And it's not just a section dedicated to immodest dress, that's always been there, but dress that is against the creature's wisdom and design. It's a it's it's a clothing section that actually promotes men dressing like women and women dressing like men, and in very perverse and sexually suggestive ways. And they're even making clothes for babies and children in the fool's clothing section. It's unbecoming to the dignity of creatures made in the image of God.

I've told you it was an illustration that makes a point by itself, but it illustrates the point of this text too. Deuteronomy 22:5 reminds us, very clear, this is there's no, there's no, there's no debate about this. "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD." Not that he's just kind of displeased. God is saying, "That radically opposes my design and intent for humankind." You can't make it right. Now let's be balanced and fair.

Within masculinity, there's a wide range of ways you can dress and attire yourself that doesn't go outside the bounds of God's truth. And in femininity, we're not all just alike. There's a range of ways you can dress and attire yourself that's not outside the bounds, so let's don't get on some, uh, Holy Roller, um, strict rules about all these things, though there needs to be a little more in this church and in most churches of the older women helping the younger women know what's proper and what's improper. Some of the ladies may need to learn to dress a little more like women and some of the men may need to learn to dress a little more like men.

Jamieson-Faussett-Brown, which I find they're almost always right on target in their commentary, they had this to say about Deuteronomy 22:5, men don't wear women's clothing and women do not wear men's clothing. Jamieson-Faussett-Brown writes, "For the adoption of the clothing of one sex by the other is an outrage on decency. It obliterates the distinctions of nature by fostering softness and effeminacy in the man, impudence and boldness in the woman, as well as levity and hypocrisy in both. And in short, it opens the door to an influx of so many evils that all who wear the dress of another sex are pronounced 'an abomination unto the Lord.'" End of quote, Deuteronomy 22:55.

So God has a lot to say about dress being becoming of his wisdom and his design and his purposes. We are not to dress in a way that's not fitting, not becoming of our Creator's design for male and female. It goes against God's wisdom to do so. It goes against God's purposes to do so, and it certainly goes against God's will. Indeed, he says it is an abomination. And by the way, it was, it is and it always will be an abomination.

Now back to our text. Paul tells Titus, uses the same concept, "Titus, you cannot teach anything but that which is becoming, fitting, proper in the flow of God's wisdom and God's doctrine for God's people." Now Titus is going to have to spare no expense to persevere in this task. I mean, he's going to be going church to church to church on the island of Crete. I hope Pam and I get to go back to Rome. Who knows, we might take a bunch of you with us. If Pam and I sponsored a trip to the Holy Land, or maybe the journeys of the Apostle Paul, would some of y'all like to go? We'll have big time. It would be good and I thought about doing that. I just don't know where I'd get a plane big enough for all of you, but it would be good. It helped me. It just helped me to see the Scripture so beautifully. It was a powerful thing in my... I didn't think it was going to be. I thought it'd be good and interesting but it was powerfully impacting on me. And one place we didn't go was the island of Crete, and it was quite a distance over there and there wasn't much there and so we just didn't make it there. Made it to a lot of other places. We didn't make it to Creek, but I would love to go there and walk down some of those ancient roads and think about Titus. "Well, that last church was a doozy. Woo. Man, that was a that was a problem. I hope this next one's better." I mean, as far as we know by himself, given a daunting task to set things in order in these churches. He's going to have to spare no expense to persevere in this task of again exposing and removing the false doctrine and establishing true doctrine.

Now another another aspect of verse 2 of chapter 2, verse 1. He says, "But as for you, Titus," i.e. in contrast, "don't be like false teachers. You speak only those things fitting, becoming of sound doctrine." The word sound there is a is an important word and an interesting word. The word sound there it comes from a root word that literally means healthy. You're only to preach healthy doctrine. Now false teachers had infiltrated the churches and with their unsound and sickly doctrine, had made quite inroads into these congregation and it produced unsound and sickly Christians, unsound and sickly churches and often just false professors and false churches.

So Titus and the pastors or elders that he's going to appoint in every local church must be men who bring the true balm of Gilead, the medicine of sound doctrine, and faithfully administered, it will heal the unhealthily, or rather the unsound and sickly saints, and it will heal the unsound and sickly churches. But it will not be easy. That's why I think there's a rather curt and direct statement. "Titus, don't be like them." Because Titus is human. He's going to be tempted to cut some corners. He's going to be tempted to at times go along like, "I can't go through another fight. I can't go along with another sedition or another uprising. I'm I'm just tired of it." I felt that way and I know Titus had to feel that way. It's probable as Titus wanders around the island of Crete preaching in the local New Testament churches there that as he brings to bear healthy doctrine that they haven't been hearing lately, those churches are likely to lose large chunks of their present attendance. Their numbers are probably going to go down. But Titus has his assignment. He's given the conviction. "Titus, you don't come up with your conviction. I'm giving you a conviction, Titus," what God's doing through Paul, "and Titus, you're to do this, stay with sound doctrine."

This is the same thing he told Timothy as he left Timothy to straighten out the church at Ephesus. Let's remind ourselves of that, 2 Timothy 3:13 through 15, writing to Timothy about his work in Ephesus, Paul writes, "But, Timothy, evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse." Cheer up, Timothy. It's going to get worse. Wow. "Deceiving and being deceived. You, however, Timothy, you continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of and from whom you have learned them." In other words, Paul saying, "Timothy, I taught you sound doctrine. Remember me and when it's hard, you keep doing what you're doing, preaching the truth."

2 Timothy 4:4-5, some "will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." He's saying, "Timothy, under your ministry in Ephesus, that's going to happen some. But you, Timothy, you stay the course. You be sober in all things. Endure whatever hardship this brings. Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

So Titus must, as Proverbs 23:23 says, buy truth and sell it not. Buy truth and sell it not. "Truth is not for sale, Titus, no matter what the cost." Proverbs 19:10 tells us that God's truth is more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Child of God, there's coming a day when you're going to probably be on a deathbed, going to the beach will not amuse you. I've been there twice and didn't want to go twice, but I enjoyed going. But it's not going to matter then. Going deer hunting's not going to matter then. Buying a new dress not gonna matter then. Listen to Joanna Gaines and redecorating your house for the fifth,

5,000 time is not going to matter again. It's just not gonna matter. But you know what I think I'll say if I get out the words? "Bring me the book. I need the book. I need the book." Because this is better than gold. It'll feed my soul when the whole world doesn't matter anymore. "Bring the book."

"Titus, you're not to be for sale and the truth is not for sale." Titus didn't sign up for popularity and fame. In fact, he didn't sign up at all. God called him to the task. God gave him the assignment and his convictions about the assignment. You're called to preach. We have a number of preachers that watch this broadcast and listen to this broadcast. If you're ever called to preach, you've been given an assignment. You don't get to develop what you want to develop and do what you want to do.

Now that's the instruction Paul gives Titus in Titus 2:1, a specific instruction. Paul in effect, says, "Titus, this is to be your convictions and you are to persevere in these things even though it's going to get tough as you minister on the island of Crete." But now, as I said at the beginning, now we get to verse 2 of chapter 2 and we get to the area that everyone's been waiting for. Where is there some practical stuff for us? Well, it's all been practical for you if you've got spiritual ears but in a very brass tacks down to where the rubber meets the road way, we get in chapter 2, and we get these segments of the church that are going to be instructed.

Now chapter 1, verse 5, Paul tells Titus, "I left you in Crete to set things in order in the churches." The word order there comes from a root word which means to straighten. Well, Paul is telling Titus, "I left you in Crete to straighten these churches out." I've been the human instrument that God has used to straighten one church out. I can't imagine having to straighten a whole bunch of them out. And can I just be honest and humble? God had to do a lot of straightening out on Jeff Noblit because some of you are praying, "God, give me a godly and good pastor." And so God had to straighten me out. But now Paul, through Titus to the churches in Crete and to all of us is going to straighten us all out.

So we see these segments. In verse 2 he's going to straighten out the older men. Verses 3 through 4A takes a little bit longer for them, he's gonna straighten out the older women. Versus 4 4B through 5 he's going to straighten out the younger women. Verses 6 through 8, he's going to straighten out the younger men. Verses 9 and 10, he's going to straighten out the servants that are members of the church. Did your family use this phrase, I remember it as clear as a bell, "When I get you home, I'm gonna straighten you out." I couldn't help but think about this the whole time I'm reading this. I, you know, we we picture, you know, Paul was a holy and godly man, and Titus and Timothy, but they were human too. I could almost see Paul writing this with a with a snigger on his face like, "You've got to go tell those ladies this. He's got to go tell those women this." Um, in any godless culture, one of the most glaring characteristics of a godless culture, is women forsake their love for their husbands, women forsake their love for their children, and they forsake their love and their duty to their home. Is that not what we're living in? I'm not gonna come with you with a legalistic absolute because the Bible doesn't do that. But for us older men, there's some words here for us. Some of you coasting on us a little bit.

This doesn't allow coasting. Yeah, things change and you may slow down, but you don't get the tag out until you pass out or pass on. The older ladies, there's some instructions for you and it centers around helping the younger ladies to fight the good fight of not being lured away by the wicked godless culture and the things that don't matter. And by the way, the statistics are in. 30 and 40 year old women who believe the lie, the hellish feminist doctrines, and abandon the thought of marriage and children and taking care of a husband and all that stuff they would say. These women later in their 30s and 40s are in surveys saying, "We are unhappy and we're full of anxiety. We would love to have the love and the companionship and the closeness of a family." But they sold their souls to the feminist lie that a career is the main thing. It may be a thing in your life if God allows and if it's his will, but it's not the main thing. Well, I'm getting on next week's and the next week's sermons.

So let me get down to some practical things and we'll be done. So there's a real lesson here for us. Here Paul is telling Titus, "Titus, stay with sound doctrine," and then immediately goes into very practical things for the various age groups and segments of the church, which tells us doctrine is essential for our standing with God, our conversion, and doctrine is essential for our sanctification before God, walking it out in this world. Doctrine gets very practical and it's going to get very practical here.

So let me move right along. Let's get to some conclusions for practical application. Conclusion for practical application #1: a faithful pastor has a definite assignment, and there is no Plan B. We've said that over and over. Just gonna mention it and go on. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:6 and 7, "For I," Paul, "am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight." Definite article, the. "I didn't pick my fights. It's the fights God gave me to fight. I fought the good fight. I finished the course, not the course I set out, the course God gave me when he called me and made me an apostle. I finished the course. I've kept the faith." In other words, Paul says, "I've been given an assignment and there was no Plan B."

II. Pray for and encourage your pastor. Pray for and encourage your pastor, because your soul depends upon it. You should pray for me for the good of your soul and the good of the souls of your family. And I include all of our associate pastors in this, of course. Romans 15:32 Paul writes to the church at Rome and he says he hopes to come to them and find refreshing rest in their company. That means Rome was a place Paul could go and get encouraged and you can tell that's important to him. He said, "I I'm looking forward to being there." And I I thought about our True Church Conference we have every year and I was listening to Blake and Destiny Keenum, who are at our church plant up in Canada in Selkirk, MB, and and they asked them about or Brother Matt asked them in the podcast, "What do you like about the True Church Conference?" And they said, "It's homecoming. It's a family reunion. It helps us so much be encouraged." And that's the way Paul viewed the church at Rome. "If if I can get there, I I expect to be just greatly refreshed."

Do you refresh your pastor and the staff? Are you a refreshing person when you're around them? Compensate your pastors well? I'm not saying this for my benefit or the staff

because you do a good job here. Most churches do not. I think the reason why in 1 Timothy 5:17 Paul writes that the elders who work hard at preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor, I think one of the main points there is if they're the guys who have to reprove and rebuke the error in the church and try to establish the truth in the church, they have enough burdens than having to go home and wonder how they're going to pay for their kids' college. That's one of the main reasons. The task itself is worthy of generous and joyous compensation, but if you can remove that off of a man of God, remove it off of him because I counsel with so many people. I remember a dear pastor's wife years ago and I was counseling with them about their church situation, and they had a good church, but they were just behind in their thinking. They had that typical human fleshly thinking that if a man is called to God, he's got to be poor. That's Catholic poverty theology. That's not biblical theology. And she said, "Brother Jeff, all I really want to do is put shoes on my children this fall." God forbid a church have the means, and again you do well here, but God forbid those churches that are stingy and selfish and they have a man trying to preach the word of God.

And by the way, if he's a young pastor, he's going to make mistakes. He's gonna make some blunders. He's gonna have to repent and grow himself. But I hope now that you and I have been together, what, 43ish years? I hope you would say I'm glad we grew us one instead of just swapping out every few years. And and and nobody ever really grows that way because a pastor stays 3, 4, 5, 8 years, he goes somewhere else, he does the same thing 3, 4, 5, 8 years. He goes somewhere else, does the same thing, 3, 4, 5 and 8 years. And then all these local churches passing these pastors around have a new vision and a new approach every 3, 4, 5 and 8 years. We wouldn't have our impact around the world we have if we had done that. So thank you for letting me grow up here.

And by the way, Timothy was young and that's where why Paul tells Timothy, "Don't," this in the word of God, "don't let them look down on your youthfulness. A lot of the older men would probably use that against you, Timothy, but don't let it happen. You keep growing, stay humble, repent, but be the man of God and preach the truth to all of them."

3. Sound doctrine is essential for sound living, and that's what we're going to see starting in verse 2 all the way down through verse, uh, well, the end of the chapter, basically. We're going to see that to live right, you need to be taught right and that's why Paul tells Titus, "Go to all these churches and straighten these segments of the churches out." Doctrine is essential for our standing before God, but doctrine is also essential for our living for God in the here and now. I'll say it again, the wicked sinful immoralities we see in our country would not be happening if our pulpits were flame with sound doctrine. The church is a centerpiece of everything.

Now true conversion is essential to all things. You can't just open the Bible and find the doctrines that are practical and say, "Well, I'm just gonna grit my teeth in the power of my old fallen flesh. I'm gonna try to do these things and live better." That's being foolish. The greatest evil is not committing gross immoralities, the greatest evil is substitution, substituting rather your good works for the new birth. You have to be converted. You

must be born again. The greatest failure in so many of our churches today is church membership rolls filled with unconverted, unregenerate members but without genuine conversion, there can be no practical application of doctrine in your lives. Your heart has to change before you can embrace the seriousness and the supremacy of the truths of this book. Vital spiritual life must be present before spiritual living can commence. Let me say that again: vital spiritual life, a true conversion experience, true spiritual regeneration must have happened in your heart before spiritual living can even get started. We do not by godliness obtain life. Did you hear that? You don't straighten your life out and live better and then get eternal life. That's not how it works. It is not by godliness that you obtain life, but by life you then can begin to obtain godliness in your daily life.

So the doctrines of the book are essential for both, the changed heart and conversion and the changed lifestyle of what we might call practical sanctification. And the second one to change lifestyle is essential for the assurance you have the first one, true conversion. Did you hear me? Works do not save you, but works signal to you that you are saved. And those works must come out of a new heart desire. The affections of your heart change from the world and the pursuits of the world and the, the, the, the glories of the world and the attention of the world and the popularity of the world, your heart has changed to turn to what pleases my Lord. That changes and then we can begin to grasp the truth of God's word and apply it into our lives.

So preaching sound doctrine is essential, first, for the establishment of conversion in your life and for the commencement of sanctification in your life. 2 Peter 1:3, "seeing that by His divine power He has granted to us everything," in other words, God's given you all you need, "pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

Finally, number 4 of our conclusions for practical application: are you living a healthy Christian life? Remember the word sound. Paul says, "Titus, you preach the things fitting, becoming, fits the mold of sound doctrine," and it means healthy. Are you living a healthy spiritual life? Well, that's why Paul gave Titus what we have as Titus 2:2 through the end of the chapter. It's one of those sections that is doctrine that teaches us how to live healthy spiritual lives.

If you are not living a healthy spiritual life, there's one or two problems. Is there problem of hearing sound doctrine? Many people, and it's just unfortunately widespread, many people sit in churches where they just do not hear much sound teaching, healthy teaching, healthy doctrine. I've said it many times, I'd drive two hours one direction to get my family under the preaching of sound doctrine. It's been 43 or so years ago since my father-in-law, Clifford Battles, brought his family to this church, and on then to First Baptist Church of Muscle Shoals. And I asked Pam again this morning, I said, "Do I remember that the discussions around the family that when Clifford brought y'all here not all of y'all were happy about that?" But I remember specifically Clifford saying, "I had to get somewhere where the word of God was preached." That's why fathers are to be the head of households. They don't think so much through their emotions. They think more according to truth. And I said, "Pam, wasn't it true that Miss Helen and you and Cindy

weren't that happy about it?" She said, "I don't remember about Mom and Cindy. I knew I wasn't happy about it." Well, boy, she's happy now because she got me when she came here. I jest but it was just at that point she was a teenager and you know, not that she hated anything here, just that wasn't her choice.

But God knows what. You see, if you put first what God puts first everything else comes together. Is it a problem of hearing? Are you hearing sound doctrine or is it a problem of heeding? You know, one of the great serious... I don't have the word. This is what I do. But I don't have the word. One of the great serious concerns of being under sound preaching is that familiarity breeds contempt. "Well, I expect both Jeff and the and the elders to kind of keep this thing right. I expect with Jeff and the elders to keep this thing sound. Been watching them for decades and they seem to be very serious about that and they're not perfect, but do a pretty good job. And so I'm just gonna to kind of view the Sunday morning worship service as an adult nursery. I'll just kind of lay back and kind of half doze and kind of half get it and kind of..." Has familiarity bred....? You're going to be accountable for God for faithful preaching whether or not you got used to it or not, whether it just kind of got old to you and wasn't nothing new. So can I charge you after these four plus decades together to gird up your loins. Be sober-minded. Refresh your conviction, "I come to church to learn where I can repent and apply afresh the truth of God's word." Because I can promise you, when I study, I'm repenting. I've been studying ahead a lot in the last two weeks and I've had to think about I'm one of the older men now. Am I temperate? Am I dignified? Am I sensible? Am I sound am I sound in my faith and my love and my perseverance? And I had to repent some.

Sound doctrine produces spiritually healthy living. So as Titus preaches these practical duties, the carnal believers in Crete who had the sins and their flesh nature pampered by false teachers in the past, that's about to be all over because Titus is showing up and his job is to uproot that stuff and establish truth instead, and a lot of these sin, sin-embracing, flesh-peppered church members under false doctrine are gonna be deeply disturbed. And when the word of God comes at you and it's preached in power and the Spirit of God sits in your soul, you've got one of two choices: repent or rebel. Every Sunday, repent or rebel. Humble yourself afresh under the authority of God's word or harden yourself against it. And I've got very bad news: you keep hardening yourself, one day you'll be broken beyond remedy and God will let you go on in you're hard, unyielded, self-consumed, narcissistic, I'm going to do it my way and think my way and approach it my way, and God will say, "Okay, I'll just pull back and let's see where that gets to." Because if you are God's child and you continue to harden your heart, then God will break you. Better to have hundreds of little brokennesses along the journey than hard brokenness because you kept instead of heeding, heeding the message, hardening your heart.

Psalm 119:71, the psalmist said, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, That I might learn Thy statutes." Even the psalmist had to say, "The Lord Lord woke me up. He brought some difficulty my way and it's caused me to look afresh at the word of God and not take it casually and not let familiarity breed contempt in my heart, but to freshly begin to be humble repentor again, and take into my heart and life healthy spiritual living."