

The 21st Century Woman of Grace: Reverent in Behavior—A Lifestyle Representing God Titus 2:3a

As we each open to Colossians 2 this morning, I am reminded of the full and rich lives almost all of us lead. Our culture presses upon us with expectations, deadlines, stress, and a never-ending list of assignments and duties. So much so that, sometimes we rejoice just to get one item checked off, don't we?

When vital things in our lives are completed they give such a great feeling: a completed assignment so our work is done; a completely balanced diet so we are healthy; all our requirements completed, so the pressures are off. All of those areas of life make us feel:

The Joy of Completion

The dictionary defines this word "complete" as:

com·plete *adj.*, = Having all necessary or normal parts, components, or steps; Having come to an end; concluded.

In our spiritual lives God says that we are "complete in Christ" (Col. 2:9).

*Colossians 2:9-10 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and **you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power. NKJV*

The word Paul used for complete is **pleroo** which means 'full or filled to the full'.

A reverent lifestyle can only flow from Christ. That is the one amazing spiritual truth we'd all do well to ponder, until we started realizing that: **God wants to overflow into our lives through Christ all we need for living the lifestyle of godliness.**

We know that, believe that, rest in that—and then often feel so incomplete on a day-to-day basis.

Have you ever felt less than 'complete'? Are there parts of your life that you are unsure about what it is exactly that God wants for you? Anything that is important to God, and that involves how to live our life—He has clearly expressed in His desires for us.

Anything that God desires for us to know and do—He has written down and given to us.

God has left a complete way of life for us in His Word, and that is most clearly written down in Titus 2.

And for women of every age, God has reduced the items needed to live the complete life pleasing to Him, into a list containing just 33 words¹ in the Greek language.

That complete list contains God's expectations for any women to completely please Him by their daily lives. God gives the 12 qualities all born-again women are to use to measure their lives against.

This morning we can read that amazing list found in God's Word at Titus 2, as we **stand**, listen to God's expectations for the woman completed in Christ:

*Titus 2:3-5 the **older women** likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—4 that they admonish the **young women** to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. NKJV*

Pray

After seeing that list I'm so glad that we already know that the good news for every lady present and listening is that:

God is not looking for A Superwoman

One of the most beloved chapters for women, wives, and mothers is that venerable old chapter 31 of Proverbs. There we see in the Old Testament that incredible woman of virtue whose "priceless-ness" is beyond rubies—she is the woman of excellence, the mother of mothers, and the wife that excels them all.

For centuries the Proverbs 31 woman has been extolled and held forth as a model for all, but for many she seems to be superwoman. In fact when that passage is read, often on Mother's Day, many women sit a little lower in their seats as this Proverbs 31 woman seems to never sleep, never tire, never fail, and seems to be just plain perfect.

¹ presbutida" wsautw" en katasthmati ieroprepei" mh diabolou" mh oinw pollw dedoulwmena" kalodidaskalou" ⁴ ina swfronizwsin ta" nea" filandrou" einai filoteknou" ⁵ swfrona" agna" oikourou" agaqa" upotassomena" toi" idioi" andrasin ina mh o logo" tou qeou blasfmhtai Stephen's *Textus Receptus* (1550)

Much as we love the example of Proverbs 31, ***the passage never says that this is God's command for every woman***—it is just a picture of what one virtuous woman's life was like.

This passage was never intended to be a one size fits all for all women of all ages. It is just to be an inspiring look at what a virtuous woman was like 3,000 years ago.

So God does not expect every godly woman:

to stay up all night, to sew clothes for every member of her household, to be a gourmet chef, to sell her wares to others on the side, and to be an expert on every possible domestic topic.

Proverbs 31 is an inspiring picture of all the ways a woman can bless her husband and children, but most of us could never do all that she did and survive.

But on the opposite end of the spectrum from the inspirational Proverbs 31 woman is the God designed Titus 2 woman of grace.

Titus 2: God' Plan For ALL Women

Titus 2 is not meant to be an inspirational picture of some yesteryear woman of virtue from 2,000 years ago.

God's Word presents the Titus Two woman as God's plan, God's desire, and God's marching orders for all women in Christ of any age in any era of Christ's Church.

This Complete Woman is saved by grace, and energized by the Spirit of God to live such an extraordinary life that the world, her husband, and her children all notice that she is different because she is in step with the Spirit and Word of God.

Christ's church grew into the potent force for changing the world in the quiet nurturing sessions that Titus 2 women performed in practical discipleship. Just as important as the preaching and teaching of the doctrines of God's Word was the modeling and nurturing of individual saints through practical hands-on lessons in godly living.

Basically, a Titus 2 woman is a godly disciple of Christ who loves God, loves His Word, and finds her strength to live each day in the Lord.

- If married, she is a wife who loves her husband in such a profound way that he appears deeply satisfied in her love;
- and if she is a mother, her children know they are deeply loved.

Whether single or married, mother, wife, or alone: Look for a woman that over the long haul radiates love, contentment, peace, and joy, and you have found the Titus 2 woman.

So what is most important for every woman? If God could reduce your priorities down to a "do the most vital thing first" list, what would rise to the top?

Since God has done that, look at the topmost direction of life in verse 3:

God Desires Every Woman to be Reverent in Behavior:

Living holy in an unholy world

*v. 3a "the older women likewise, that they be **reverent in behavior**"*

Paul first draws a word from the Roman world to capture the entire bearing of these godly role model women in Christ's church. He uses the word that meant to operate as a priest in a temple.

In the ancient world the prime temples to the chief gods were intentionally built outside of town. People had to stop, take a bath, change into special clothes and then walk down a "sacred way" often stretching a mile or more to the temple. They were led down the sacred path by individuals who acted as representatives of the gods.

The Greek word translated "reverent" is used only here in the Bible, and it conveys the idea of priest-like. That word for 'acting as a representative of a god' is the word Paul uses to describe the devout and godly character of the Titus 2 woman. Older women are to live like holy priests serving in the presence of God. Their sacred personal devotion to the Lord has slowly come to influence every aspect of their lives.

To us who live in the front end of the 21st Century, Temples, priests and priestesses, and the overwhelming influence that the worship of the Pantheon of Graeco-Roman gods held over daily life in New Testament days is remote, and hard to fathom. But the world of the Bible was filled with pagan deities and their false worship.

Paul stayed and taught the longest of all his ministry life, in the shadow of the largest of all the temples. Ephesus was home to the epicenter of worship in Roman Asia (modern day Turkey). Think of how this Temple dominated the lives of people in that great city.

Paul's communication to believers used the imagery of the world around them.

Life revolved around the gods. Holidays, festivals, athletics, travel, and even daily work, all fell under the dominant influence of cultural religion. Towering above everything else in life, the temples of those gods stood as constant reminders of the need to worship the gods.

If you had arrived at Ephesus with Paul, there would be only one sight that would catch your eyes. It wouldn't be the bustling harbor that was full with boats. It wouldn't be the roads that were lined with the exotic spices and the goods coming in from the East. No,

what would catch all our eyes would be the lustrous, golden gleam of the largest building ever built in the ancient world, the temple of Diana.

This most amazing temple ever built in the ancient world, (the size of city block, ten stories high, covered with gold), was the temple of Diana. Four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens, it was 425 feet long, 225 feet wide, and filled with a forest of over 120 intricately carved, 30,000 pound, 60 foot high columns, all gifts from kings all across the ancient world. Each of these columns around the altar to Artemis (the Greek name), or Diana (the Roman name), was covered with life size figures completely covered with pure gold.

Paul explained that Christ can change your life no matter how strong the world's tug, no matter how overpowering the world's enticements: Christ's power worked in Ephesus in formerly sin-enslaved pagans, and thus it can work in anyone, anytime, and anywhere!

Ephesus in the First Century

So every believer in Ephesus, or that ever traveled around the Roman Empire, had felt the immensity of this Temple. Thus the idea that the True God of Heaven, wanted His children to behave like they were servants of His Temple, really communicated to them. Think of it, as they looked at this unbelievably beautiful building each believer knew they had been invited to be a part of something FAR better.

God was FAR more amazing, MUCH more awesome, and ALWAYS powerfully available. Unlike that humanly designed structure—which ended up being completely destroyed by the barbarians from the North just a couple of hundred years later in 263AD.

So God's representatives behave reverently as His Temples alive and walking their days on Earth.

So this consecrated, godly woman heeds what Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as [a person] thinks in [their] heart, so [they are]." The Titus 2 woman knows that whatever she reads, listens to, watches, and allows to stay in her mind is what she will become.

When Paul wrote another city filled with pagan temples he explained the key to reverent behavior. Look at Philippians 4:8, where we find the diet that a godly, reverent mind is to hunger after. As we read these words, ask yourself, is this what I hunger for?

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble (honorable ESV), whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report (commendable ESV), if *there is* any virtue (excellence ESV) and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (NKJV)

So a godly woman (or any believer) who wants to act reverent in behavior goes on a mental diet.

Every child of God who wants to live a holy life in an unholy world start to watch what their mind feeds upon.

Simply put: Garbage avoided, defilement avoided.

Now the other side of the equation: any woman who allows anything, whether TV, movies, magazines, music, gaming, or any other media to stimulate her flesh by feeding her mind with lying, profanity, illegitimate sex, gossiping, occultic images, and so much more—will slowly have their mind depart from the healthy diet that God's Word clearly described.

Stop feeding on what is Philippians 4:8: “noble, dignified, pure, lovely, worthy of respect, and promoting holiness” and soon after their actions will follow their mind away from being “reverent in behavior.”

A reverent woman knows that:

God Seeks Consecration

Godly women who represent God well have simply taken the truth of Romans 12:1-2 seriously. Look again at the choice that a godly woman must make, to allow the Lord to guard her mind, which is the ultimate source of her behavior:

I beseech (appeal ESV/urge NAS) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable (spiritual worship ESV) service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV)

See how central our minds are to our spiritual ministry for the Lord in life? Women of grace first must present themselves to the Lord, so they begin to live life the way God asked them to live—

- as a walking temple of God,
- as a consecrated priest of God,
- as a living sacrifice, and
- as a bondservant of the Lord.

Godly women seek to be Titus 2:3: reverent in their behavior. From this word, chosen first by the Spirit of God for Paul to use for women, we can draw some practical applications.

First, above all the other choices they make in life, God wants women to live, act, walk, and talk in such a way that can only be attributed to God. They are to become more and more a living representative of God, to those that know them.

The Choices Christ Seeks

Let's look at the choices Paul taught to women so that they could live the lifestyle of reverent behavior that pointed to the Holy God.

1. **As God's Representative:**

I choose to surrender to Him daily. Romans 12:1-2 I beseech (appeal ESV/urge NAS) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable (spiritual worship ESV) service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV)

Have you started a daily renewal of your surrender? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

2. **As God's Representative:**

I choose to live as the Temple of God. I Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Have you started walking around as God's Holy Temple Woman, a mobile dwelling place of God? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

3. **As God's Representative:**

I choose to follow my calling in Christ: *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10).

Have you truly comprehended what a special calling God has given to you? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

4. **As God's Representative:**

I choose to practice the spiritual secret of putting off and putting on: *Put off your former conduct [lifestyle], be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Have you learned their spiritual secret of putting off the old habits and putting on the new in Christ? Are you being renewed by getting God's Word deep within your heart? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

5. As God's Representative:

I choose to commit to a life of truth and kindness: "putting away lying", "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor", "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:25, 32).

Are you committed to honesty and kindness? Are you willing to humbly forgive others—even when ill treated? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

6. As God's Representative:

I choose to release all my anger and hurt to God: "Be angry, and do not sin" ... nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor ... that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice (Ephesians 4:26–31).

Have you released your anger and pride to God? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

7. As God's Representative:

I choose to repent of my past: ... But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks (Ephesians 5:3–4).

Have you repented of those old ways that grieve, displease, and quench the work of the Spirit in your life? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!

8. As God's Representative:

I choose to resist evil influences: Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them (Ephesians 5:11).

Do you seek to turn away from all evil influences? As God's representative, He desires you to do so today!