

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

01.25.2026 | Sound Doctrine and Sound Living | Titus 2:1–10 | Dr. Clark Fobes | Associate Pastor

And as you're doing so, you can open your Bibles up to Titus chapter 2. We are in this series on the book of Titus on gospel-shaped living and we come this morning to a portion of Titus that Paul will really start to get into how the gospel really shapes the lives of believers. And I must admit when Pastor Ben told me I was gonna preach on this passage, I thought the Taiwan trip couldn't have been better timing because as you'll notice in this passage, there's things about gender roles, marriage, submission of women, homemaking, slaves. So we have our tasks cut out for us this morning.

I'm not gonna be able to get to everything so probably I'll offend or not say enough for any one person about any one thing in this passage. But I'm gonna do something a little bit different that we normally don't do. I'm gonna be reading from the CSB Christian Standard Bible and that's not to throw you all off, but really just because I think the CSB captured a little bit better the heart of the passage. So that will be on the screen as you follow along but it's close enough to the ESV that we're used to reading that hopefully it doesn't throw you off too much.

So Titus chapter 2 starting verse 1 and going through verse 10. In the same way encourage the young men to be self controlled in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. Your message is to be sound beyond reproach so that any opponent will be ashamed because he doesn't have anything bad to say about us. Slave is a way to be self controlled in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. And that's what we're going to be talking about today about us. Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything and to be well pleasing not talking back or stealing but demonstrating utter faithfulness so that they may adorn the teaching of our God our Savior in everything.

One of the big fundamental beliefs or values I should say in our culture today is this value of authenticity. Especially if it means being vulnerable and showing your true self being true to who you are. But I think there's a part of authenticity that's even harder that is not as common in our culture today. And that's when our lives match our confession. Or to put another way that we live in a way that's consistent with what we say we believe. I think a lot of us have probably felt the difficulty in this. There's a common phrase in the workplace called fake it till you make it. Whereas you get into a job you just got to fake it until you make it somehow. You're trying to show that you know the job when really you don't understand what's going on. I think that's something that we also feel socially many times. We feel we have to present a front of who we are that's maybe not so consistent with our personal or private lives. I think this is true of our politics. It's become really easy to what's called virtue signal or say something online. But to live lives that aren't necessarily consistent with those values that we profess to say.

And we've come to this point in the book of Titus. We're up until now Paul has been focusing on the sound doctrine or sound teaching of the church. Teaching that accords with the gospel and that's good and true. Tim we are last week gave us a great warning over multiple warnings of threats of false teaching contrary to the gospel that we need to be on guard for. But today and in this chapter Paul begins to make a shift. Where he connects this sound doctrine or teaching and he doesn't so much as talk about what we need to know. But starts to emphasize that what we know must match how we live. And the fact that you look especially in the next section chapter 2 verse 11 to 15 which we'll look at next week. There's even a shift in language that happens in the whole book of Titus.

Up until now all of Titus up until chapter 2 10 the this word sound doctrines repeated throughout. But from 2 11 and on for the rest of the book there'll be an emphasis on good works. And we'll see the shift happen because what Paul is concerned about now is that our lives match our confession. That we live in a way that's consistent not just authentic but with integrity and consistency. With what we say we believe and I just want to give a quick disclaimer to parents because I know we have a lot of little ones in the room my own included. Some of the things that we mentioned today may feel a little a little mature for her young audience. And instead of trying to shy away from it and not talk about it. I think it's good that we talk about it but in ways that are age appropriate. To present an opportunity for conversation so I will try my best to use language that's not graphic. But more sophisticated maybe some apologize some vocab a little hard. But I'm trying my best to give what needs needs to be given to our young ones. But the main question as we approach this passage is how should the lives of believers or the church. Match our confession of our doctrine. How should our lives match our beliefs or our teachings.

The first fundamental thing we need to understand as we approach this passage is that sound doctrine. Is confirmed through what I'll call sound living. Sound doctrine is confirmed through sound living. There's something we see at the very beginning of this passage. Paul says in verse 1 you're to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching. He's saying here that we need to know what the sound healthy teaching is. But how you know that someone understands true teaching of the gospel will show in how they live. The same word for sound that's used to modify or explain doctrine is used all throughout this passage. But not in relation to doctrine only but in how we live. On verse 2 Paul calls older men to be sound in faith love and steadfast. It's the same word there. In verse 8 where two of these to be sound in word. It's repeated all throughout and the whole point is that Paul is trying to convey that lives of believers should be fitting or match or consistent with what we profess to say. How we live must match what we profess to believe.

In other words there's no such thing as good doctrine without ethical living. It's something that's true of Crete. At Crete one of the main problems that Paul is addressing which we saw last week and last couple weeks is that some were teaching things contrary to the gospel. But more importantly their lives were contrary to the gospel. Paul says that they were disrupting whole families for shameful gain. They were unfit for any good works. The end of chapter one Paul says they profess to know God but they deny him by their works. And so really what Paul is trying to get at in this section is that the church must live in a way that proves that they know God and know who he is. I think this is hugely important especially for the Western and American church especially today. I think the Western church has historically really emphasized right belief. There's a lot of good that's come from that. There was a lot of good formulation of precise theology in the Western church over the last 1500 years or so. But I do think it's caused us to at times under emphasize right living.

I think this is this can most clearly be seen in many of our figureheads in American evangelicalism. Unfortunately we've seen countless models of men who are evangelical leaders who profess to be gatekeepers of right doctrine of truth and yet their lives seem to fall far short of that. Certain men proclaim to be preachers of a pure gospel but their lives show something that is living in abject impurity. I mean just the number of evangelical pastors and figureheads that have fallen morally in the last even few years is mind-boggling. People who proclaim to know Jesus but seem to know nothing about his compassion and care for people especially the most vulnerable. Those who proclaim to guard Christian values in America but who in reality really only care about guarding the values of their own people or their own party. Something that's whom we already talked about last week.

Well Paul's trying to say in this passage is that what you know about Jesus really doesn't matter if your life looks nothing like Jesus. See how the church lives will reveal what we actually believe about Jesus. Even the word for sound doctrine here and sound living. It's a word that could also be translated as healthy. So what Paul is essentially saying is healthy doctrine should produce healthy living. You can kind of say it in a way where our doctrine equals our diet. Last year I had my annual physical when I turned the age 38 and my doctor examined me and he said you know have you been eating right? Are you exercising? He said well you know it could be better. I was finishing up my doctorate at the time. He was like well you need to try to lose about five pounds. I was like dang I didn't know my doctor was like my Asian grandmother. But he said you need to lose about five pounds. I was like all right dog man I know. It took me like for like eight months I was trying to lose these five pounds so much so that my daughter just kept asking me like daddy you need to weigh yourself today. You need to lose that weight. And I heard right truth comes from the mouth of infants. And after about eight months I was like I just don't get it. Why am I not losing these five pounds? It's not that much. And my wife just simply said well how are you eating? So well you know I'm not indulging but I'm also not I'm just eating what I want. I eat chocolate. I eat cheese. I eat meat. See I couldn't expect that my diet would lead to a healthy lifestyle.

And so the words and the way that Paul is approaching this he's almost in a sense saying that if there's something wrong with your living of the Christian faith maybe it's actually a sign that there's something wrong with your doctrine of the Christian faith. It's very one simple diagnostic we can do about the church today. When we look at what the church is producing in the lives of people it may show whether our doctrine is actually healthy or not. And Paul's going to go on to give a number of ways that we can see these identifiers for whether we are living healthily or not. But one of the ways that Paul's going to approach this is that sound living is most revealed through our home lives. It's in this most intimate space of the households.

In this passage Paul gives a number of exhortations that were common with what was called the Roman household codes. The house codes of Roman society. These were a set of instructions that were passed on by Rome by the emperor and the governing authorities and were passed into households to teach them how to live in society. And in their minds a healthy household led to the flourishing of society or a healthy society. And in many ways Paul is mimicking that here. By addressing these different groups, older men, older women, younger women, younger men, he's giving the same call that you can look at the health of the church and society by the health of the home. Because if you think about it the home is the most intimate space that we live in. And if there's something unhealthy about our home life where our home life is not producing fruit according with godliness then in that most intimate space there might be something wrong with even our doctrine that we're digesting or consuming. But at the same time Paul's instructions are a bit different here in Titus according to the household codes. You see throughout the New Testament Paul will give these household codes in many of his letters. He does so in Colossians, Ephesians, Peter gives them in the book of first Ephesians and they all give a list of household codes that seem very similar where they address fathers, mothers, children, slaves, even masters at times.

And yet in this passage in Titus, Paul instructs Titus to address whole groups of people. This is different than the idea of family according to our Western minds that were a nuclear family. I think Paul's drawing something out here where he's showing that the household or what was called the oikos, the family of the home is broader than simply our idea of the modern Western nuclear isolated family. I think what Paul is approaching when he talks about these whole groups of people according to the household is he's giving an idea of the home that's probably more akin to an Eastern or even Asian understanding of the home. For Asians, every older man is an uncle, every older woman is an auntie, every peer is a cousin. I learned this best from my Filipino friends growing up with Filipinos. I would go to their houses, they introduced me to all these people say, yo, this is my cousin, this is my Tito and Tito. And I just came to realize like you have so many cousins. And my Filipino friends would say, well, actually, technically, they're not my cousin. We just kind of grew up playing together and we just call each other cousin. Filipinos do this best, but I think also it's something that's familiar with Asians because to say call someone an auntie or uncle is a little bit more intimate than just calling them Mr. Or Miss. And so if my kids call you auntie or uncle, it's not because they think you're old. It's a term of endearment that we're trying to recognize something that's maybe more true and biblical that Paul was trying to get across. And that's that the family household is wider than just our own nuclear families. But especially when we belong to the family of faith, we're brought into a new household.

I do believe Paul's trying to convey that in the church, there's a new oikos that we belong to. And so addressing these different groups in the church, he's trying to convey that when you come to Christ, whether you're a part of a traditional family or not, you gain a new family in Christ. And so both how our intimate relationships work together in the home, but also how our relationships work together here in the church home will reflect our sound living or understanding of sound doctrine. And I think this is the beauty of the church today, something that I do believe is incredibly unique about the church on American soil. Because almost every space we enter today, be it the workplace, sports arenas, activist groups, they tend to be focused or solely on one demographic. Sports tend to focus while anyone can enjoy sports, most arenas are packed mostly with men. That's why there's usually more men's bathrooms than women's at sports arenas. Most activist groups tend to focus on just one socioeconomic demographic or one generational demographic. Or even if you do go to places that are more generationally diverse, people are often at odds with each other with generational values and differences.

And yet it's in the church that we have this diverse body where we're called to uphold the same values together. Even though we may have different socioeconomic belongings or backgrounds, we may have different even political adherences. But above all of that, we have a different set of values according to a kingdom not of this world that we're called to uphold and live according to. And so the church is this unique space where we should pay attention to what Paul says about these household codes. And I think throughout this Paul gives three main purposes or maybe evidences even, the purposes of why sound living is important in the home and in the church.

And so the first of these three is that sound living validates the Christian faith. It's the first purpose that Paul gives sound living validates the Christian faith. Now in this section, if you notice there's three clauses throughout this section that's where Paul says in order that or so that and that's why many commentators will break this section down. And the first section in the CSB it's broken down by paragraphs which I like, I don't know if it's like that in the ESV. But in the first

section, there are a number of groups that Paul addresses here. It says address older men, older women, younger women. And there's a lot of different things that we could say about these different groups. But I think Paul's list is not meant to be exhausted actually. It's not as if Paul is saying these are the only things that older men, older women, and younger women are to be characterized by so that the faith would not be blasphemed or spoken ill of. But rather these are things that Paul is choosing to show how the Christian lives in a way contrary or different over and against the culture of Crete. And so for that reason we're not going to look also for the sake of time at every single one of these things we could spend a probably a whole sermon on each of these groups. But we're going to focus on the ones that have most overlap, especially in this section. So sound living validates the Christian faith when self control is upheld. That's the first thing that Paul links throughout this section. He mentioned self control three times.

If you look at verse two, it says older men are to be self controlled. Look at verse four, young women are to love their husbands and love their children. And verse five to be self controlled. Even if you go down a little further to young men in verse six in the same way encourage young men to be self controlled. So he directly says that all these groups, older men, younger women, younger men are to be self controlled. Now, I don't know why he leaves out older women. Maybe it's because older women are just more naturally self controlled than the rest of us. You have a little bit more restraint. But also, when he instructs older women to train younger women in verse, sorry, I'm losing that right now. Verse five, verse three, sorry, they're to teach what is good. Verse four, so they may encourage young women to love their husbands. That word encourage is actually the verbal form of self control. And so even in this, there's implied that older women have self control. They need to train younger women in to be.

And so the question is, why is Paul so concerned with self control? Why is it that this is the most consistent theme throughout this passage, especially in relation to Crete? This could have had a broad meaning. Paul says they should be self controlled in everything when he calls on young men. I think because restraint and self control was not the way of the Roman Empire. That's why the phrase *Carpe Diem* came out of the Roman Empire sees the day. It fled into or filled into everything that they did, their leisure, their luxury, their pursuits, food, but especially sex. And I think this is one of the main reasons why Paul says to be self controlled because especially in Crete, Crete was known to be even more liberal of a part of the Roman Empire than the rest of Rome. The women there were particularly known to be more sexually liberal than the rest of the Roman Empire.

And so even when Paul gives, he gives hints of this throughout the rest of the passage, when he says that older men are to be sober minded. Older women are to not be excessively drunk on wine. Younger men are to have integrity. Younger women are to be pure. Paul gives a lot of hints in his language that he is alluding to the self control when it came to the marital fidelity or sexual lifestyles of the believers because of what was going on in Crete. And I think just as in Crete back then in the first century, so today our church needs to pursue such purity in all things, but especially our private and romantic lives. Now, if you hear that word purity and you grew up in the 80s and 90s like me, especially in the church, you may have this like knee-jerk reaction to it because of something called purity culture. Purity culture was this movement that called the church something that I think was really good in pursuing purity, especially as pornography and lust was rising. And yet it did so in a way that really held guilt and shame over your head if you were not pure, if you were failing in that area. And so for a good reason, there's been some correction to purity culture, but I think maybe sometimes we go too far and we throw the purity out with purity culture. Because today not only is our younger generations more sexually liberal than ever before, but Christians are also more exposed to sexual things more than before. Pornography use is on the rise as it continues to be more easily accessed. Divorced rates can seem to be consistently high regardless of religious convictions. Affairs and cheating are rampant.

And I think if sound living or healthy living is a sign of our healthy sound doctrine, then we need to look no further than how the church is doing in this area of sexual purity. Like I said, the number of high profile pastors that have failed morally in this area of their marriage is, I don't think it's just a sobering reality. I think it is when we see every time a high profile figure in Christianity fails in their marriage or fails morally, it is sobering. But I think there's something else we should pay attention to. Maybe it's indicting. Maybe it's revealing something that's what our doctrine is producing is not actually healthy. I wonder if Paul were to come to the American church today and look at that. And he would point to these signs and people as a sign that there's something wrong with what the American church is producing. So I think perhaps now more than ever, the world needs a church that is pure in our most intimate spaces in life.

Because remember the purpose of this section, Paul says it validates the Christian faith. He says that in verse five, he says, "So that God's word would not be slandered." Paul's linking the purity of God's people with the validation of the word of God. Because when we live lives that are consistent with what we profess, that hold up the values we believe in, I think it reveals that we believe there's a better kingdom and world to come than what's to be had just right here and right now. As C.S. Lewis said it best when he said that we're our desires are not strong enough. We're too easily pleased by small desires of the world like sex and drink and food when there's far more to be had in the heavenly kingdom. So I think what that means is if you are a younger person that maybe struggles with purity or lust in your life, yes, you should pursue purity for your own sake and joy in Christ. But I do think there's a higher calling to this.

When young people pursue purity and value it, we're showing forth the gospel that is worth holding out and waiting for. We show that there's a greater world to live for, a greater intimacy to live for than just what's to be had here on this life. If you're married, our marriages need a deep commitment to uphold that purity. And this is part of the reason we really want to care for marriages in our church with this marriage conference. Because we know that as marriages are deeply pure and committed to one another, they uphold and display the covenant marriage of God with his people. See, purity is one of the ways that we validate the Christian faith so the word of God is not slandered in the world. And I think this is definitely something that only the church can offer in our society today. I mean really not many other groups in American culture care about purity the way the church should at least.

But also beyond this, the Christian faith is validated when not just the sexual relations in the home are upheld, but also the whole home life is upheld and put in order. If you look at verse four and five again, we're told that they're to teach what is good so that they may encourage young women to love their husbands, love their children, be self-controlled, pure workers at home kind and in submission to their husbands. These are things that I think are harder for us to digest in our modern American culture. Because often I'll admit that these words of working in the home and submission have been unfortunately abused in conservative Christian circles. I've even heard some conservative pastors say that it's a waste of time for women to pursue college degrees because it puts them into debt when they should really only be caring about the home.

I think that's a horrible, abhorrent reading of these verses. Because just because Paul says that women were to care for the home and love their children doesn't mean that men shouldn't be doing that. It doesn't mean that men should be going off working in the workplace and women should only be in the home. But again, I think there's something going on behind the curtain in Crete that maybe can help us understand a bit more what Paul is trying to say without actually losing this heart of submission and working in the home. See, I mentioned that in Crete, the women were known to be some of the more liberal ones in Roman society. This included their lascivious lifestyles, but it also led to how they would neglect the home life. It was something called the new Roman woman, and no one did it better than Crete. The new Roman woman was known to go off and have sexual freedom and liberty in her life. She could pursue her own pursuits and it was often at the detriment of the home of her duties to her husband and her children.

So much so that often these Roman household codes would directly attack this idea of the new women because they believe that when the home or house life was neglected, again, Roman society was in danger of disintegrating. And so the translation, at least in the CSB, is women should be working at home. And I don't think this should be taken away, some translations say it as homemakers, as if women are the only ones that are making in the home, but rather they're not to neglect their duties in the home like many of these new Roman women were. I think it's similar to his letter to Timothy. Paul warns that young widows should not be idle. I think that Stephen goes into play where there was some danger, whether it was true or not in the eyes of Romans or just in the lives of the believers. There was a potential danger that when women were coming to faith, they were leaving behind their Roman paganism. The Roman world feared that they would start neglecting their duties to their non-believing husbands and family members.

And what Paul is trying to remind them to say is those false teachers are disrupting homes. They're disrupting whole families. And while the gospel may divide over religious beliefs, it should not bring chaos in the home. There needs to be an order in the home that's upheld and not neglected. And when Paul calls wives to care for their children, to love their husbands, to uphold the home life, to submit to their husbands, he was even giving them in a sense of agency that was unique at their time. I mentioned those Roman household codes. They were most often given not to all the different groups in the household like we see in Paul's letters. They were usually only given to one person in the home, the head

of the households. And it was that husbands or man's job to keep everyone else in order. And so there's a subtle subversion that Paul is doing when he directly addresses people other than husbands. When he addresses young women directly, he's giving them this sense of dignity and agency to willfully submit themselves rather than to just be subordinate or subjugated to men as was expected in the Roman Empire.

I think perhaps the best way to summarize what Paul is trying to say here is in his own words, when he says that young women are to love their husbands and love their children. Because in loving their husbands and their children, they were winning over the people in their home according to the love of Christ. As often as I mentioned, there would be, as Peter says, women are to win their husbands over with good works to show that Christianity was for the good of the home. But especially loving children, there's a curious thing in the Greek translation that we don't get as much here in verse four, where we're told that women were to love their husbands and love their children. That possessive there is not there. It's the best way to put it. The there is not there in the Greek. It can just be read there to love children. I do think there's an implication or it's implied that they're to love their own children. But I also think it's intended to be more broad and ambiguous.

Because Paul is concerned again, if the church is a new household of God, then it's in the church that the home life families are upheld. And it's not just that we care for our own children. That is so common in American society where we're self protective with our own families, but don't care too much about others. Where we care about our own children and their well being, but when other children are stripped off the streets, we don't really care about it. No, Paul is saying love children. Because in loving children, there's this self giving sacrifice that was uncommon in Rome at the time. Children, I've mentioned this before, but children were just seen as commodities in the Roman Empire. Children were easily discarded, especially young women, if they weren't to the likings or advantage or honor of their families.

Those born with special needs were often killed with through infanticide. And the early church, part of the reason it grew so much was because they love children. They grew through biological growth because families had kids, but they also welcomed in the vulnerable children in society. And so how is the Christian faith validated when families are in order and upheld? Well, it's validated because the church shows that we are not just about protecting and caring for ourselves. When we love others and even submit to them at our detriment, there's a self giving that's characteristic of our king who gave of himself for the flourishing good of others. So in the same way, the church is a love and care for the next generation to love the vulnerable, to love families so that society can flourish as we give of ourselves the way our savior gave of himself for the good of others.

As the first purpose is the longest one, the next will be a little quicker. The second purpose of why sound living matters is because it vindicates the church. Sound living vindicates the church when believers' actions and words are above reproach. This comes in the next section to young men in verses seven to eight. Paul says, young men are to be self-controlled in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. He says Titus is meant to be this model or example because Titus was likely a young man himself. So Paul's telling Titus as a young man, show what a young man looks like and he says to have integrity and dignity in your teaching. At first reading of these words, we may think that Paul's trying to say that your teaching itself needs to be respectable. That word dignity is same word used of older men to be dignified or worthy of respect, reverence. But taken in context, as Paul says, model good works and your message is to be beyond reproach. Again, it's the same idea that it's not just about the teaching having integrity or dignity, but your teaching matching your lifestyle to have integrity and dignity.

See, while we should care about the gospel and the teaching of God not being slandered, what Paul says here is his focus is not so much on the teaching, but on us, the people. If you notice that there, if you look at verse eight, your message is to be sound beyond reproach so that any opponent will be ashamed because he doesn't have anything bad to say about the teaching. So he says us because what Paul is trying to convey that when our lives again match our teaching, they will not say anything bad about us. The church itself will be vindicated. Now, this doesn't mean that we should dictate our lives and always care so much about what the outside world thinks of Christians. But I do think it means if people are constantly speaking evil of believers and the church, then maybe that's something to be paid attention to. Because if the whole world hates the church, then maybe again, there's something wrong with our doctrine. Our lives can be lived in such a way where even if people disagree with our message, they cannot disagree with our lives and our lifestyle.

And again, I think this is something that needs to be heeded today because historically, the church has really believed that well thought and good arguments would win people to the faith. Good apologetics, good well reasoning is what wins people to the faith. And I think that may have been true for a season of the church's history, but I think we've come to a place in church history today where people have heard the arguments. They understand the truth of Christianity. They just don't like the way the church lives. This is especially evident in a segment of Christian nationalism that we already talked about last week, that believes the church needs to win the world back from the culture, to fight and win the culture wars, to stand firm by any means necessary. And while Paul does say we should stand firm for the truth, he talks about rebuking false teachers in chapter one. As I mentioned, even in chapter one, in this transition to chapter two, Paul's emphasis is on teaching that accords with examples of good works, godliness.

So standing firm for the faith then, according to Paul, is not only by rebuking people and telling them where they believe something wrong, as if the church is only a polemical identity, always just saying what we're against. But rather what Paul is trying to show is that the church stands firm when we stand firm and what we believe is right and we live accordingly. Maybe even more than our words about saying who we're against or what we're against, our lives demonstrate who we are and what we're for, namely the kingdom of God and Jesus as the king. I think there's a reason too why this is directed at young men, because young men, out of a zeal for rightness and truth and soundness, can often tend towards a zealousness that's aggressive.

And I must confess, I've been there before as a young pastor and seminarian. I was quick to jump on every theological debate to argue for right teaching, because I thought I was defending the truth. Unfortunately, I didn't realize until I was a little bit older that I was really just a young jerk with an education. That doesn't really go too far in vindicating the church, in showing that there's nothing worth slandering about God's people. See, the truth of the gospel is brought to light when God's people live away in conformity, where people look at us and say we may disagree with the gospel they preach or what they stand for, but we can't disagree with the way they're living.

And when the church lives in such a way, Paul says, we will silence our enemies and put them to shame so that the gospel will shine forth. That's the last purpose of why sound living matters. Sound living unveils the gospel. It's the third and last purpose. Sound living unveils the gospel. And it's curious that Paul mentions this when he gets to the section of slaves. He addresses slaves in verse 9 and at the end of this in verse 10, he says, demonstrating utter faithfulness so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior and everything. It's revealing the truth of God as Savior in everything. And yet he does so through slaves. Now there's a lot that could be said here. Is Paul defending slavery as many Southern Christians believed in their era of chattel slavery? Was this Paul just not trying to just not overlooking injustice and not caring about it?

We can't really compare Roman slavery with American slavery. They're very different. The most clear one being that American slavery was based on race, whereas Roman slavery was based on socioeconomic status. But also Roman slavery had a wider range. There were slaves that were mistreated and abused and born into slavery. But there are also slaves that sold themselves into slavery to find provision under a good and benevolent master. The range is far wider than what we saw in American history. But the reality is that slaves were still mistreated. Slaves are still at the bottom of society in the Roman Empire, and they were often overlooked and seen as the lowest people in the Roman Empire.

Paul is not so much concerned with overthrowing slavery or the institution of slavery here, but he is more focused on the status of slaves. Yet as I mentioned in the Roman household code, slaves would never have been addressed. Masters would have been addressed. Slaves would just submit to their masters. But I love how in every single instance of Paul's household codes, slaves are always addressed. I think that showed that there was this coming of faith of those of the lowest classes in the first century, but also there was a subverting or changing of the power dynamics according to the kingdom of God. And that's also seen in how Paul describes what slaves were to do. He says there to adorn in everything, adorn the teaching of God our Savior.

That word for adorn is a word that was often reserved for women who had put on fine jewelry and clothing and gold. Peter uses in 1 Peter when he says women should not adorn themselves with the fine jewelry or cloth of the world. The adorning of the Roman values was reserved for the most honored and highest in society. And yet by using this word, Paul is saying that slaves, even when they have to submit out because they have no choice, even when they can't talk back

when they've done nothing wrong. Even when he says don't steal and try to increase your socioeconomic status because you have a greater inheritance in the kingdom to come. By doing all that, you're adorning the word, you're showing forth the beauty and honor of the gospel and the kingdom of heaven. Because when those who are lowest in society stop striving after the honor and riches of the world, they show that they really do believe there's something greater to come. I think one of the principles that we can draw from slaves today is that those that are lowly in society, those who have not, can maybe be some of the greatest demonstrations of the truth and beauty of the gospel.

Because for those of us that have the means to live comfortably, we have what we need, we're not for wanting, we've climbed in society to some sense. When we say, well yeah, we believe there's a kingdom to come and God's riches are better and we believe that Jesus is good, it's almost easy to say that when everything's going well. But when you have nothing in society, when people look at you and despise you in our worlds, when you're not clamoring to just make it and buy into the hustle of our culture, then it really speaks something if you say, I believe I have a better inheritance to come. See, in the lowliest position, Paul is saying that the gospel shines forth from the overlooked and undervalued places in the world. When God's people from places of poverty and weakness and dishonor still cling to the truth of the gospel, they shine forth the beauty of the kingdom of God that maybe is not as evident anywhere else in the church.

See, the purpose of the kingdom is to show that the purpose of sound living at the end of the day is to show that there's a greater kingdom to come. We validate the faith we believe in, sound living vindicates the church as we live here, but it unveils the gospel that there's something greater to come. These purposes won't always be fulfilled in the world. In fact, we could argue that the church is not doing so well in validating our faith, in being vindicated in how we live, in adorning the gospel, unveiling it. We've not had a good track record and even some of the things that are being said about what's going on politically today seem to hurt our witness and bring about public blasphemy for good reason. But I think in these moments, we trust and remember that ultimately it's Christ, our king, who's in the work of bringing about these purposes. Jesus is the one who perfectly validated the Christian faith through how we lived. In submitting to Rome, even to his death, and yet in doing so, bringing a whole new order that's subverted the powers that be. Jesus vindicated the church when he showed that there was a new life and a new way to live.

But most importantly, he unveiled the gospel that as he came in human flesh, that we had everything in heaven and became lowly, he displayed the beauty of God that came for sinners. He's in the process of making his people beautiful too. We may struggle and fail to display the gospel in our lives in a way that shines forth the beauty of Christ. We may have fits of anger. We may act just like the world at times. We may fail and fall in purity and sexually, but in those moments, we trust we have a king that's in the process to bring about his kingdom. And until that kingdom comes, the church's protest in the world, the church's political message, is that we have a greater kingdom to come. We live according to a different values, and those values will show themselves forth as we live according to that confession. So that we don't just say we believe Jesus is worth it. We live according to it, because we believe we have a greater king and kingdom to come.