

## PROFILE OF A GOD-LOVING FEMALE SLAVE

Titus 2:3-5; 1 Timothy 3:11; Proverbs 31:10-31

### INTRODUCTION

In Titus chapter 2, Paul is encouraging Titus to develop an environment amongst the churches of Crete that promoted and encouraged sound, doctrinal teaching and holy lives. Such an environment was to shine brightly against the backdrop of the unhealthy doctrine, practices, and wicked lifestyles of the Judaizers, the false teachers who had invaded the churches of Crete with their works-righteousness system of salvation. Paul had warned Titus about such men by saying that <sup>16</sup> *They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.* (Titus 1:16) The Judaizers were false teachers who denied the gospel because they taught: (1) that you had to be circumcised and keep the entire Old Testament Law to be saved [cf. v. 10], (2) you had to believe in far-fetched and unbiblical Jewish myths,<sup>1</sup> [cf. v. 14; 3:9] and (3) you had to abstain from eating certain foods. Thus, Paul said they were “worthless” because they taught soul-damning doctrine when they said that saving faith in Christ was not enough for salvation but that you had to do all of these other things.

But as you can see in chapter 2, verse 1, Paul commanded Titus to do the exact opposite by saying “*But as for you speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.*” The word “speak” in verse 1 is a strong command in the original language and we learned that Paul is instructing Titus to speak and teach the things which promote sound, healthy doctrine in the churches. In the face of the immoral teachings of the Judaizers, he wanted Titus, to constantly *impress* upon his people the moral duties of the gospel, regardless of age, gender, or class. He wanted Titus to understand that there is an ideal conduct that promotes the development of godly men and women so that they can further the gospel of grace in their sphere of influence (v. 2:2-6).

Titus and the pastors he appointed couldn't cave in to the desires of the wicked culture around them. They weren't to be intimidated, but they were to be *aggressive* in their teaching of right living and right doctrine (2:1ff). They had to be just as aggressive in their teaching of a holy lifestyle and healthy doctrine as the false teachers were in their *promotion* of an ungodly lifestyle and unsound doctrine. In other words, the pastoral leadership of Crete had to model and provide regular, careful, and practical pastoral instruction about Christian living and about the godly attitudes and behaviors that should naturally flow forth from the heart of an incurable God-lover. The Christians of Crete had been infected by the legalistic thinking of the false teachers, and these people needed learn that living lives of exemplary Christian character couldn't be pre-programmed by non-biblical, legalistic rules and regulations. The life of an incurable God-lover is a life that clearly demonstrates the transforming power of God's grace. Incurable God-lovers are no longer willing and voluntary slaves to their own sinful passions, but instead, they are willing and voluntary slaves of Christ. This brings us to our subject today, that of incurable female slaves of Jesus Christ.

Today we are going to take the time to look at what God requires of “older” female slaves of Christ in verses 3-5 and discuss the practical benefits of having such women in our church. It is important for us to note that just like the “older men” listed in verse 2, the “older women” of the church are to be given special respect because of their age and spiritual maturity because as the apostle Paul mentions in Eph. 6:2 while quoting the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), “the first commandment with a promise” requires honor of *both* mother and father. We know that according to Exodus 21:15, the penalty under the old covenant for striking either parent was death and the severity of sinfulness in bringing disrespect and reproach upon both godly and ungodly parents in the New Covenant era is no less heinous a sin.<sup>2</sup> Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 5:2, that even when an “older” woman does something that is sinful, she should be lovingly and *gently* rebuked as if she is your beloved mother versus rebuking her in a harsh manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. 1:4.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that honoring our ungodly parents by showing respect to them doesn't mean that we have to *condone* their wicked lifestyles, but we must honor them with respect them so as to present an opportunity to proclaim the gospel to them.

In 1 Tim. 5:2, Paul gives no qualification on such respect, which applies even to an older person who is immature and inconsiderate. When the apostle himself found it necessary to publicly reprove Euodia and Syntyche, he graciously urged them “*to live in harmony in the Lord*” and asked an unidentified “*true comrade . . . to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel.*” (Phil. 4:2-3)

Paul doesn’t directly tell us in verse 3 how old a woman would have to be to qualify as “older”, however, it seems reasonable to take “older women” as referring to women that are about 60 years old. That is the age that Paul mentions in his first letter to Timothy in regard to widows who qualified for being put on the list to receive financial support from the church and, like the men, this is probably about the age that Paul has in mind here (1 Tim. 5:9).

Such godly “older women” are a rich spiritual resource in the church and they always deserve special esteem and consideration since their service to Christ promotes stability and maturity among the younger women in His church. Paul therefore declared that a Christian widow more than 60 years old who had no family to support her and who “*has fixed her hope on God, and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day,*” who was a faithful and godly wife and mother, and who “*has shown hospitality to strangers, . . . washed the saints’ feet, . . . assisted those in distress, and . . . devoted herself to every good work*” not only should be honored by the church but financially supported as well (1 Tim. 5:3-10). A Biblical ministry to widows is something that most modern evangelically churches have conveniently forgotten to do as they’ve been more concerned with building family life centers and olympic-sized swimming pools than they have been with the care of Christian widows.

In NT times, such Christian “older women” served the church in numerous ways. As Paul mentions later in verse four, a key function of older women was to teach and encourage younger women in the things of the Lord. They also ministered to each other and to women in the church of any age; whether single, married, or widowed. They visited the sick and those who were in prison for the sake of the gospel. They lovingly provided hospitality to Christian travelers, especially for those weary travelers who were involved in some form of Christian ministry.

In strongly pagan towns, church history tells us that Christian women would go through the streets and marketplaces searching for abandoned, unwanted newborns that had been left to die by their parents. Since abortion was both dangerous and expensive in the ancient world and birth-control devices didn’t exist, an unwanted baby was simply abandoned at birth. Some male babies were raised to be slaves or gladiators, and some girls were trained for prostitution. Older Christian women who rescued these infants would give them to church families for adoption thereby not only blessing the local church with their service, but blessing Christian families with their life-giving charity.

## TEACHING & APPLICATION

*Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,<sup>4</sup> so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,<sup>5</sup> to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.* (Titus 2:3-5)

Today we’ll look at verses 3-5 under 4 points:

1. The *Behavior* of Older Women.
2. The *Speech* of Older Women.
3. The *Habits* of Older Women.
4. The *Teaching* of Older Women.

### I. The *Behavior* of Older Women.

**Titus 2:3a** *Older women likewise are to be **reverent** in their behavior . . .*

The word “*reverent*” translates the single Greek word (hieroprepeis) that is used only here in the NT and it is a compound word that means “to stand out, to be conspicuous, to be fit.” – Thayer. These women are to carry themselves and be seen as godly women. They are not to conform to what the pagan women in the culture are doing. John Calvin said that this verse alludes to the fact that many older women want to hold on to their youth and dress like young women. They demean their own maturity and attempt to dress in a culturally fashionable or even flirtatious manner. Though there is nothing wrong per se with a woman adorning herself with pretty clothes (Prov. 31:22 - *She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.*), there is a line that may be crossed that signals sensuality.

Women who are “*reverent in their behavior*” “*adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness,*” and they “*quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness*” (1 Tim. 2:9-11). They are women who, through the bearing of children, have removed the stigma of Eve’s sin and have lived “*in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint*” (v. 15).

Lemuel, the writer of Proverbs 31 reminds the godly woman, “*Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.*” (v. 30) Paul may have had this entire section (vv. 10-31) of Proverbs 31 in mind when he penned his words in Titus 2:3-5.

The word “*behavior*” (katasthma) is also a compound word that essentially means “to stand so as to take a position according to an accepted standard” or “to be honorable in conduct.” (EDNT) Calvin believes that this Greek word can also refer to the way that women dress. He said that they should “give evidence, by their very dress, that they are holy and godly women.” Thus, Older women are to be godly examples of holiness.

## **II. The Speech of Older Women.**

“Older women” are “not [to be] malicious gossips.” They must refuse to listen to, much less propagate, slanderous or demeaning words about others. Just as men are more inclined to abuse others physically, women are more inclined to abuse others verbally, which can be even more destructive.

Paul is not referring simply to unfavorable idle chatter about a person, as bad as that is. “Malicious gossips” translates *diabolous*, a compound Greek word which carries the idea of “one who is a female devil that hurls slander and false accusations.” This word root is used 34 times in the NT as a title of Satan, whom Jesus describes as the “father of lies.” (John 8:44) So, a gossip is one who throws accusations against someone. Though men can certainly gossip, Paul uses this word (*diabolous*) twice to describe a specific sin of women both here in verse 3 and in 1 Tim. 3:11 where he says of women servants, “*Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.*” This then brings us to point # 3,

## **III. The Habits of Older Women.**

“Older women” are not to be “enslaved to much wine,” which is a strong phrase that refers to the sin of drunkenness. As many of them have done throughout history, older people on Crete sometimes turned to drink as a way of ridding themselves of the pains, frustrations, and loneliness of old age. The word translated “enslaved” here (*douloo*) means literally “to be enslaved or entrapped, to be held and controlled by” and “to be given over to” something. The grammar of the original language (perfect passive participle of *didomi* - “to give”) combined with the idea of “being given over to” could lead to a very accurate translation such as “to have been given over to by means of entrapment/enslavement.” Thus, the sinful gravitating of older women to “much wine” ended up becoming more of a prison than a means of escape. Worse still, an older believer who becomes entrapped by this sin brings dishonor to the Lord’s name, mars the reputation of the church, and, more often than not, leads others into following his or her ungodly example. In the Cretan culture, older men as well as older women could be enslaved to alcohol, but it seems to have been a sin that *especially* gripped older women.

## **IV. The Teaching of Older Women.**

On the positive side, “older women” are supposed to be known for “*teaching what is good,*<sup>4</sup> *so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,*<sup>5</sup> *to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.*” (Titus 2:3b-5) The word *kalodidaskalos* (“good teaching”) refers to instruction in that which is noble, excellent, and lofty and this is the only place it appears in the NT.<sup>3</sup> In this context, it includes the “teaching” of “what is” holy and godly. Having taught their own children well, older women now have the responsibility for “teaching” younger women in the church and encouraging them to also be righteous and godly wives and mothers so that the word of God will not be blasphemed (vv. 4-5). This brings us to a much needed modern application of Paul’s teaching to Titus.

## APPLICATION

1. *Behavior* - The most important thing a Christian older or younger woman sitting here must understand is that they are not to conform to what the pagan women in this culture are doing. As Calvin said earlier, many older women want to hold on to their youth and dress like young women so as to still have sex appeal and even be flirtatious at times. Such behavior is unacceptable for Christian women. Again, there is nothing wrong per se with a woman wearing pretty clothes (Prov. 31:22), but there *is* a line that may be crossed that signals sensuality. Women who are “*reverent in their behavior*” as Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:9-11 will seek to “*adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness,*” and they will “*quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness*” like any other sensible Christian and won’t attempt to fight against the teachings found in God’s word (1 Tim. 2:11-12). They are women who have sought to remove the stigma of Eve’s sin through the bearing of children (if possible), and have lived “*in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint*” (v. 15).

When women draw attention to themselves through their provocative clothing, their provocative behaviors, and their sensual lifestyles, they reveal an inner wickedness that is rooted in fleshly vanity, lust, and sensuality. A woman behaving in such a manner reveals that she has a hidden agenda; an agenda that doesn’t mind causing the Christian men in her own church to look at her, think about her, and even behave sinfully with her in inappropriate ways. Such wicked thinking in the minds of older and even younger women is driven by a desire to allure weak men, wreck the faith of some, and upset whole houses through adulterous desires (Prov. 6:26-7:1-27). You don’t think such doesn’t occur? How many times have you heard about indiscretions occurring in ministries on the 5 O’clock news? Such behavior drags the gospel of Christ through the mud, and it shows a terrible lack of maturity and discernment at best among the leadership and the more heinous aspects of such behavior are usually indicative of a stony heart that has yet to taste the regenerating grace of God (Ezek. 36:25-27).

2. *Speech* – Older women are not to be “tale-bearers.” Scripture is replete with cursings for such people. I shall read quite a number of these verses so that you’ll gain a full appreciation of what God thinks about a gossip (Lev. 19:16; Ps. 34:13; 101:5; Pro. 6:19; 10:18; 11:9; 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20; Matt. 12:36; Eph. 4:29, 31; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 3:11; 5:13; Titus 3:1; Jas. 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:1; 1 Pet. 3:10).
3. *Habits* – As mentioned earlier, the sinful entrapment of the older women on Crete to “much wine” was more of a prison than a means of escape. The entrapment of older women through the means of alcohol is not prevalent in our culture, but older women take up various sinful habits in order to rid themselves of the despair often associated with old age (such as being a fixture in a lazy-boy recliner watching Judge-Judy versus being active in discipling the younger women of the church). Thus, older women must ensure that they are fixing their hope *on the Lord*, and not the sinful enticements of the flesh in an effort to drown out the despair often associated with old age.

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<sup>3</sup> Some commentators (Couch) think that Paul made up this word to make his point.

4. *Teaching* – Women have a tremendous power in the home setting in which they are able to support the biblical teaching of the father (Deut. 6 & Eph. 6:2) by teaching what is good and right in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. By being homemakers (v. 5) women mold and shape their children in godly ways and attitudes. In modern times, many children are shipped off to day care centers where they are herded through the activities of the day while mom heads off to work with a briefcase in hand. Very little moral instruction is given and certainly moral principles rooted in the Scriptures cannot be taught (unless of course it is a *Christian Day Care*). Very little moral instruction is given in a quiet and peaceful environment. The truth is, the loss of motherhood in the last 50 years cannot be recovered unless it starts with our local churches. Secularism has no basis for motherhood, but only a rampant and dangerous feminism rooted in anti-Christian human philosophy. In reference to the motherhood with younger women, these older Christian women must be “good teachers.” As one commentary said, “Aged women should be an example to younger women in the teaching and practice of all that is pure and good. It is impossible to exaggerate the value of the influence of one good woman.”<sup>4</sup>

**Question: Who are the “Women” of 1 Timothy 3:11 and what is their ministry?**

Before answering this question, I am obligated to mention that there is a historic debate as to whether or not Christian churches should have women deacons. There are Calvinistic, complimentary Bible-believing scholars on both sides of this issue. The elders of Shepherd’s Fellowship have studied this issue extensively, and after much consultation with the literature and other trustworthy pastors, not only do we believe that women deacons are mentioned in the Bible, but we also believe that 1 Timothy 3:11 gives the qualifications for them. I will briefly teach through both views because doing so builds your discernment; then I will explain why we think the Bible teaches that churches can have women deacons.

**Position # 1: The Bible does not teach women deacons:** Women cannot be deacons because deacons exercise authority over males. If Paul wanted to refer to women deacons in 1 Timothy 3:11 he would have clearly said so.<sup>5</sup> Instead, verse 11 is referring to the qualifications for deacon’s wives, not women deacons.

**Position # 2: The Bible mentions women deacons:** The qualifications for women deacons *are* referred to in 1 Timothy 3:11 and one is even mentioned by name in Romans 16:1. In 1st Timothy 3:8, the word “likewise” (Gk. *hosautos*) is used to indicate a second group of people distinct from the elders, namely, male deacons. In 3:11, “likewise” is used again to indicate a third group of people distinct from the male deacons whom the NASB refers to as “women”. We think that Paul mentions “women” in 3:11 to indicate female deacons/servants because there is no feminine form of the word “deacon” in Greek. Paul used the masculine form of the word because that is the only form of the word that exists in Greek. Had Paul used the word “deacon” in 1 Timothy 3:11 it would have made no sense to the readers, thus he had to use the word “women” to distinguish them from their male counterparts. Also, because there are no qualifications given for elder’s wives, there is no reason to assume that these would be qualifications for deacon’s wives. Finally, in Romans 16:1, a woman named Phoebe is called a “servant” (Gk. *diakonos*) of the church at Cenchrea. Therefore, the elders of Shepherd’s Fellowship hold that women can and should be encouraged to serve as deacons, given they are qualified per 1 Timothy 3:11 and understand their gender appropriate roles per Titus 2:3-5.

According to our studies, New Testament deacons, whether male or female, do *not* exercise any ruling authority. They are “ministers of mercy”, officially *servicing* the body by organizing service, helping those in the body with pressing needs (food, shelter, clothing – Acts 6:2ff), helping with widows and orphans (Acts 6:2ff; James 1:27), and ministering to the practical needs of the body, thus freeing up the elders for prayer and the ministry of the word. While male deacons can publicly address a mixed congregation of adults on the Lord’s

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<sup>4</sup> *The Preachers Complete Homiletic Commentary*, 31 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.) Vol. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1992), 116.

Day through teaching and preaching, women cannot and will not in this church as such is a clear violation of the word of God (1 Corinthians 14:33b-35; Timothy 2:11-12). Women deacons are to be subject to their own husbands and the established male eldership of the church so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Therefore, their responsibilities will be different than those of the male deacons since their focus will be upon discipling women and assisting the eldership in meeting the spiritual and material needs of the women in the congregation. Thus, they should teach younger women how to be chaste, keepers at home, how to love their husbands and love their children so that the word of God will not be dishonored. This is why in our Ruling Principles under Section # 5 on Women Servants we say this:

### **1. Composition and Qualifications**

All women servants shall consist of female members possessing the qualifications and attributes described in Titus 2:3-5, 1 Timothy 3:11 and Romans 16:1-2. **A woman servant shall be a woman of dignity, reverent, not a malicious gossip, sober-minded, sensible in all things, pure, kind, not addicted to wine, not fond of dishonest gain, teaching what is good to other women, a worker at home, subject to her own husband and the established leadership of the church** so that the word of God will not be dishonored (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:9-15).

### **2. Responsibilities**

**The ministry of a woman servant is that of a female deacon of the church with an emphasis on the ministry of discipling women and assisting the elders in meeting their spiritual needs. It also includes the honorable task of serving the physical and practical needs of the church and performing other appropriate duties as assigned by the Eldership, thus freeing the Elders to fulfill their ministry as leaders and watchmen over the souls of the congregation through prayer and teaching the Word of God. . . .**

Summary: The things that women servants should be doing are the same types of things older women are instructed to do in Titus 2:3-5. While not every godly older woman can serve as a woman deacon, every godly woman deacon should be doing the things listed in Titus 2:3-5! This is why we call our women deacons “Titus 2 Women” or “Women Servants”. Such a title not only tells you *who* they are but *what* their role is.

## **CONCLUSION**

Older women have much to live up to as they seek to be “teachers of good.” They must do these things, lest the church be in peril through their neglect, their lust, their gossip, and their poor example. May God give all women here, especially the older women and the women servants, the grace to be a ‘teacher of what is good’ and the maturity and sanctification to know that they best serve the church when they model godliness before the young women.

*Prayer: Father, I pray that you’ll raise up the older women in this congregation to teach “what is good” to the younger women so that the church and our homes will function properly. May You work within them to keep them modest and reverent in their behavior, may You stop their mouths when they desire to speak slander against their fellow Christians, may You bring conviction to them for such sins, and may you bring the encouragement and grace that they need to continue to cultivate a lifestyle that promotes godliness and charity rather than laziness and lethargy. We praise You that You will use them to minister to our younger women so that Your church will bring you the maximum glory. In Christ’s name, Amen.*