

Week of October 21-27

ATTRACTIVE?

Scripture Reading: Read Titus 3

When is the last time you were stuck in a slow-moving grocery checkout lane? It happens to all of us at one time or another. When it does, it's not uncommon for folks to scan the magazine rack to see if there is anything worth reading while they're waiting. One time when I was doing so, I happened to catch the front page of a newspaper tabloid that included a picture of a number of faces of famous actresses who were shown with and without their makeup. It's incredible to look at the difference between the pictures and to realize how dependent many of these actresses are on their stylists to make them look good and how illusionary their beauty really is. Only a few had a natural beauty that was apparent without makeup.

God's plan for the church was that we would radiate a spiritual beauty to the world that was attractive. Notice how Paul describes it in Ephesians: *"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."* When our lives reflect the teachings of Christ and our character reflects his, there is a spiritual beauty to the church that is attractive. Conversely, when we live hypocritically and fail to reflect Christ's character, we're ugly to the world and not worth looking at.

Sadly, this was what was occurring on Crete. The church wasn't sound in its doctrine and, as a result, it was not very holy in its practice. Oh, it may have put on some makeup on Sundays and tried to convince the community that it was attractive but underneath the mask, in the day to day life of the church, it was not very beautiful. As a result, the church's reputation was suffering and believers were subject to ridicule.

Paul sought to reverse this condition by challenging the church to live holy lives, consistent with sound doctrine. Several times, for example, in today's chapter reading, Paul emphasizes the importance of doing good (3:1, 8, 14). This theme of good living is found in the previous chapter as well when Paul challenged Titus to set an example by doing what is good (2:7) and when he noted that Christ redeemed us to purify for himself a people that are *"eager to do what is good"* (2:14).

Paul knew that no amount of Sunday makeup could cover up for Monday-Saturday ugliness. What was necessary was for the church to once again reflect the character and teachings of Christ in its daily life. This would restore her beauty. In addition, such a godly lifestyle would, as Paul made clear in his instructions to slaves, *"make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."* The same truth applies twenty centuries later. Think about that the next time you're waiting in the grocery line with nothing to do!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Skim through Titus and look at how often Paul stresses both the importance and the connection of godly living and sound doctrine. Commit yourself in prayer to making the gospel attractive by living both godly and consistently in your day to day life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Take-a-way: *The church is most attractive when it reflects the beauty of Christ.*