

**August 16, 2009**

**Titus 2 Part 3: 2-10**

Alright good morning – glad you are back today. Grab your Bibles and turn to Titus chapter 2. This is our third look at this chapter and we'll cover a lot of the meat of it today.

I don't know how many of you are hunters or just have been to a sporting goods store recently, but it is amazing how camouflage has grown into a big business. Of course we all know what camouflage is – it is designed to allow you to blend in with your surroundings without being easily detected – so it gives you the appearance of being something that you are not. And seriously – you can find just about anything in camouflage these days – equipment, guns, panchos, clothes, - it has become so common place that you can even find camouflage underwear though I'm not sure how that is supposed to help you blend in – but I'm not going to ask.

And while using that stuff on hunting trips or in the military may be wise, trying to camouflage your Christian character and virtues is not. And yet it seems that many professing Christians prefer the camouflage of a worldly appearance over the virtues of the Christian life. And yet part of the very reason Jesus came and died in our place and rose again – if you want to skip ahead to **Titus 2:14** that we haven't really covered yet – was *“to purify for himself a people who are his very own, eager to do what is good.”*

So it is strange when those who claim to have known the grace that takes us as enemies of God and slaves to sin and redeems us into children of God whose character looks more and more like Jesus – it is strange when we prefer worldly, godless shades of camouflage to living as a people for God's own possession.

And yet we know it happens. It shows up in attitudes and both secret and not-so-secret habits, and all kinds of things. And that's what was apparently happening on the island of Crete. They faced the danger of betraying the gospel in their lifestyles and so Paul gives Titus instructions for exhorting the varied ages and genders and levels of Cretan Christians because – and here's the umbrella today – **at every STAGE and STATION of life, Christian character and practice must reflect the effectiveness of the gospel.** And that doesn't happen on auto-pilot.

In the past two weeks we have seen the relationship between our belief and our behavior – that the doctrines God wants taught in his church and that we believe cannot be separated from our practice – from how God wants us to live every day. That as Christians, **God's blueprint for his church to reach the world around us is through our lives being TRANSFORMED by the gospel we believe.**

And we saw as Paul laid out several different categories of Christians that make up the churches in Crete that **God's blueprint for INTERDEPENDENCE in the body of Christ means that each believer bears some responsibility for those around him or her.** So now we can look deeper at those categories and responsibilities.

But remember, we shouldn't be looking for any fixed scheme of teaching here in Titus – Paul's aim was only to indicate briefly the topics that godly teachers in Crete specifically should deal with. He isn't trying to go into every detail – but he reminds everyone about his or her own calling by citing a few examples and everyone becomes aware that God has given each a clear command about what duty they should be engaged in. So even as we look at the specifics, I want us to keep a good hold on the wide angle lens rather than the magnifying lens this morning.

We won't be able to get through all the groups today, but I want us to keep in mind the whole presentation so that none of us feels picked on before we get to cover all the categories. So let's look again at verses 2 through 10.

(TEXT)

Now - let's begin where Paul does – with the older generations. We don't need to come up with some cut off age for each of these. You can figure that the older generation is probably no longer having babies or raising small children while the younger were of child bearing age. But like we saw two

weeks ago – **spiritually, the vast majority of us have people on BOTH SIDES of us generationally who need us to fulfill God’s plan for each of those roles.** But – in verse 2 Paul starts with the older men. Read that with me:

*“Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.”*

John Stott summarizes this exhortation as a call for dignity and maturity in older men. It begins with them being **temperate** – sometimes translated as sober – but **refers not only to the use of alcohol, but regarding the things of the WORLD.** An older man – a temperate man – **has learned the high cost of SELF-INDULGENT living** – to pull back the reins of desires. He’s learned dreams and reality and accumulation and loss what really has value. So he knows that indulging in worldly practices as an older man is just as bad if not worse as when he was younger – and yet we find all the time men who cast off their moral anchors if you will in their 50s and 60s to pursue these fantasies drummed up by imagination of renewing their youthfulness – but all it does is display their foolishness.

So the challenge to be temperate effects the next two descriptions. That they are to be **worthy of respect** and self-controlled. A life worthy...of respect. Age is a very minimal cause for respect. It’s there – it matters – I’m not saying it’s not – but Paul’s phrase here **isn’t about older men getting respect because they are old. It is about older men being WORTHY of respect.** Every older man should set as his goal to come to the latter years of his life and be able to say with Paul from **2 Timothy 4:7:** *“I have fought the fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”* **Every older Christian man in this category should want to be able to say “follow me as I FOLLOW CHRIST.”** To be able to say to the younger men in his church “Let me show you how to live life through what you are going through.” Temperate – worthy of respect – which is also tied to the next phrase: **self controlled.**

Now this is really interesting – in fact it is one of the few times that going back to the original language that Paul wrote this in really helps. This characteristic of being self controlled is really important in this chapter. What the Greek shows us that we may or may not pick up on in the English translation is that every group Paul addresses here are instructed in one way or another to be self-controlled. And in all but one of the categories, there is actually a form of the word itself – **sophron** – used and then in verse 12 which we haven’t gotten to yet – Paul reveals how this characteristic is intimately tied to the very grace of salvation and the reason why Jesus redeems us in the first place. So this is a big deal that we’ll come back to 4 or 5 times in these verses.

And obviously in this context of the older men, self control in day to day life **is what ENABLES temperance and therefore CREATES a life worthy of respect,** but we’ll see more as we go through this.

Finally, Paul tells Titus to instruct the older men to be **sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.** The descriptive word “sound” we’ve looked at already in our study of Titus and it means healthy or life-giving. And so what we see here in many ways is **the ministry of the older men. They lead by EXAMPLE.** They are sound in faith which refers to trusting God. These guys have weathered the storms of life by holding to their confidence in the Lord.

Sound in love – their love for God, for His people, for the lost – which shows up in looking for opportunities to serve – they haven’t given up on service or retired from Christian action – they maintain their witness for the Lord in love.

Finally – their example is one of perseverance. They are to be sound in endurance. Many older men fall into the “what’s the use” attitude – why get up, why get dressed, why get out of my house, why be around people? Here’s the use – you are to be sound in endurance. Again John Stott explains that this endurance “implies a constant bearing up under trials with an inexhaustible hope in Christ. The enduring older man relies upon all that God has promised being fulfilled.”

Dignity and maturity. Worthy of respect and self controlled. From here, Paul moves to the counterpart of the older man – the older woman. Look at **verse 3 and the first part of 4**: *“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women...”*

The “likewise” or “similarly” we see a few times in this chapter just links all of this together and equates all the different categories in God’s church. But what the NIV translates as “reverent in the way they live” is a really interesting turn of phrase.

The “**in the way they live**” part **indicates an OUTWARD expression of inward character** – again the connection between what we believe in here and what we do out here. But the word translated as “**reverent**” is a really unique Greek compound. It is used often in other Greek literature, but this is the only place it is use in the Bible. It basically **describes how a PRIESTESS would serve in a temple**.

So Paul is telling Titus to guide **older Christian women to do life in such a way that they are always conscious of living in SERVICE to the Lord**. This is a whole lot like the instruction for the older men to be worthy of respect.

For the older women, though, Titus has to give a further restraint in that they are not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine. Apparently the older women in Crete enjoyed getting together for some good gossip and drinking sessions!

Which of course are specific behaviors that violate the “reverent in the way they live” expectation. And just like the older men lead by example being sound in faith, love, and endurance – the same thing is true for the older women only Paul actually explains it more. He ends verse 3 and starts verse 4 with the instruction that instead of drinking and gossiping, they are to “*teach what is good*” and to “*train the younger women.*”

Again, we see the mutual responsibility here. The phrase “**teach what is good**” here is not really the idea of some formal thing – it’s not conducting seminars or writing a book or making tapes or holding formal classes. It is **the idea of the very life they live becoming a PATTERN for goodness**. Older women have to see that the young women in their lives are crucial. And they are there. They may be your daughters, your daughter’s in law. Maybe your granddaughters or your daughter’s friends or your nieces or those you know because of friendships – maybe your friends’ daughters – people in the church family – whatever. Paul is saying they are to come alongside these younger women and show them how to live – nurture them in godliness.

And the only way they can do that goes back to the instruction here to be self-controlled. You say – wait Brett – I don’t see any “self controlled” in this section. Well – we don’t in English. But when verse 4 says that they are to “**train the younger women**” – it is a unique form of that same Greek word *sophron* again. It means **to train or teach someone SELF-CONTROL** – to provide balancing guidance. So **inherent in the command for the older women to teach the younger women how to live self controlled is the necessity of their OWN HABIT of self control**.

See this is a unique ministry of older women. Paul tells Titus to teach the older men – the older women – the younger men – the slaves – but the older women are to be reverent in their behavior so they can train the younger women. That’s not saying that Titus is not to teach younger women what is in accord with sound doctrine, back in verse 1, but is acknowledging that Titus did not understand the peculiar demands of being a wife and mother – just like no man can fully grasp.

But older women who had remained faithful to Christ would have much to pass along to younger ladies. Some things don’t change – and this is one of them – I can exhort and instruct and counsel younger women but I will always fall way short of what they need. That can only come from older women who see that God has taken them through various circumstances and demands of life so they can teach the younger women to be self controlled – to help them live and think sensibly and soundly regarding their roles in life.

But an older woman who has grown cynical or careless – especially one who spends her time in gossip and drinking sessions – has nothing to offer the next generation.

We will look at the other side of this coin – the younger men and women as well as the category of slaves next week so we don't try and rush through it, but use that wide angle lens here and pull out with me some key truths in God's blueprint for his church here in Titus.

In a society like ours with an increasingly aging or top heavy population but a culture that increasingly dismisses the older generations, God steps in and reminds us of his plan. **Not only are the older generations of Christians not to be dismissed, they are CRUCIAL to God's church.**

Like we saw a couple of weeks ago, **God designed his church so that the older believers might not only be sharpened by the younger, but that they might teach – train – lead – the YOUNGER.**

Which means the older believers in this room must see themselves as having much to contribute to God's church and to God's people. They must realize that for good or bad they are being watched and listened to.

And what we are beginning to see come to the surface through Paul's instructions to Titus of what to teach these groups is first of all that **if these older believers are going to fulfill their function in the church, they must live CONSISTENTLY worthy of respect – reverent in the way they live.** And crucial to that process, is the characteristic of self control – sensible, wise, discerning life in faith.

That if we believe God's truth, it doesn't stop determining our actions – our morals – our decisions – our lives – our behavior when we hit a cultural retirement age. No – instead at every stage and station of life, Christian character and practice must reflect the effectiveness of the gospel. We don't settle into being camouflaged by the ways or attitudes of the world.

All of which brings several questions to the surface today:

**Older men and women – older believers – The question is not WAS your life worthy of respect but IS your life worthy of respect?** Your not dead – so until you are dead – the issue is “is your life worthy of respect?”

Day to day what has more defining influence on your life – what consumes your thoughts and attitudes more, your age or your relationship with Jesus Christ?

**How are you making an IMPACT for Christ in the lives of younger believers around you?** How are you being used by God in his blueprint for his church to teach and train the generations behind you that will make or break the success of the church?

Those of you who are in the younger generation groups – you're not off the hook today just because we'll cover your stuff next week – listen, if God has such high expectations and value for the older believers in your life, do you? Who are you following? Who are you watching? Are you modeling your life and doing your version of Christianity on your own intelligence or **are you allowing, even pursuing, a godly MENTOR to speak and train a respect-worthy and self-controlled life into you?**

And one more thing. Remember that yes this chapter is dealing with basically age-based categories for the most part, but the reality of God's church is that for the vast majority of us, there are older and younger – or maybe better to say less and more mature – generations of believers on both sides of you – even if you are in the younger age category – even if you are still a student. So **the principles of a respectable and self controlled life and the responsibility of training those coming behind you is an expectation that ALL of us need to acknowledge and throw ourselves into in order for God's CHURCH to be the very utmost for God's glory.**

And that's what we want. That's why God gives us His blueprint for His church here in Titus. So let's pray that we live that way together this morning and we'll be back to finish the categories God gives us here next Sunday.