

HOW YOUR LIFE CAN MODEL THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Teaching Through Titus Verse by Verse - Part eight

Sunday, November 13th, 2011, a.m. - Teaching #1514

YOUNG MEN WHO INFLUENCE THE WORLD FOR JESUS

Titus 2:6-10 - "Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. [7] Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. [9] Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, [10] not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."

We're continuing our study of the instructions of the Spirit to specific sub-groups making up the church of Jesus Christ. For the Body to be more than just a crowd of people assembled in one place, each person needs to feel called to his or her ministry and role. And Paul wants Titus to help the people to understand this role right at their *entry point* into the church.

Today we're going to study the role Paul assigned to the *young men* and the *slaves* in the church on the island of Crete.

1) **FIRST, WE LOOK AT PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO THE YOUNG MEN IN THE CHURCH**

Titus 2:6-8 - "Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. [7] Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, *having nothing evil to say about us.*"

That's what this Christless world is looking for. It doesn't merely *reject* Christ. It is constantly looking for opportunities to say something evil - to find fault - with the cause of Christ and those who profess to follow him. Expect that, says Paul.

Because Titus is a young man himself, Paul blends both instruction to the young men in the church and instruction to Titus personally in his own ministry.

We've examined the different groups - the gender and age distinctions in the church at Crete. We studied Paul's words to the older men. We've seen Christ's call to older women and young women. Today Paul *emphasizes the call of God upon the young men*:

- a) **Remember your Creator now, while you are young, so that you will find delight and joy later on in life.** There is a certain myth that has gathered momentum in our world that the season of youth is the season for sowing wild oats, for having fun, and that godliness is something that eventually comes around with old age - when you have nothing fun to do anyway.

But this is a deadly lie. **Youth is the season where much of your life is sown and established.** What you will be when you are old is **determined** by what you do while you are young. There is no **automatic** change of character that will transform your being while you age. **You are determining your destiny today:**

Ecclesiastes 12:1 - "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, *before* the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them....'"

Remember your Creator **now**. Remembering Him now will ensure the delight in His will and pleasure much later on in life. **Remembering** your Creator now will ensure you fulfillment in life much later on. **Forgetting** Him now will rob your future of delight and happiness, no matter what other accomplishments you pile up.

- b) **Remember your creator while you are young because youth is the season where you are blessed with the most strength to be directed into God's service:**

1 John 2:14 - "....I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, ***because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.***"

The president of MTV once said, quote, "We don't **compete** for this world's youth, we **own** them." I pray to God that isn't true. Young men (and women) especially are the ones with the most physical strength either for good or for evil. They can multiply themselves in so many different ways in this world. Youth is the time for **spending energies on things of eternal significance**. Don't waste the most precious part of your whole life.

Young person, hear God's call now. Invest your life for the Lord **now**. Stand out from the crowd **now**. Make a difference **now**.

Shun sin **now**. Get into God's Word **now**. Learn to wait on God in prayer **now**. Establish patterns of disciplined involvement in your local church **now**. This is not just a time to **prepare** for the rest

of your life. Life starts counting now. This *is* your life right now. It is very short. Don't waste one minute of it.

2) TO FOLLOW GOD WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG YOU MUST LEARN EARLY TO CONTROL YOUTHFUL IMPULSES

Titus 2:6 - "Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled." "Titus, don't just *tell* them to be self-controlled. Urge them to be self-controlled. Press this home on their minds over and over again. Do it passionately!"

There are very few places where we see so clearly God's measurement of greatness in the young. There are many standards used in our world to assess the stature of young men. Everything from *power* to *affluence* to *athletic achievement* to *virility* is held up as admirable and worthy of praise and imitation to a generation of young men as they move through life in this world.

But if you're going to follow the Lord and be led by His Spirit - if your aim is to be *great in God's kingdom* - there is a constant exhortation in the Scriptures that needs to be given proper place and priority in every young man's life. That ingredient is *sensibility* or *self-control*.

Self-control is stressed by Paul because, especially in youth, there's a part of life that must constantly be *reigned in*. Especially for the young, life isn't just measured by what you *pursue*. It's also measured by what you *resist* - **2 Timothy 2:22** - "**So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness....**"

Your life is formed specifically by the points where you actively push back against this world's value system. You can't just turn *to* Christ. You must make the effort to turn *from* everything He hates. This is Paul's advice to young Timothy. You can't devote yourself to righteousness until you flee youthful lusts. Paul doesn't mean these lusts only inhabit the young. We all battle with this. But it is *while you are young that you must learn to flee them*. This is so important. If you don't learn to deal with these things while you are young, you will never deal with them properly when you are older. Don't form a life of repeated mistakes and spiritual bondage. So Paul urges the young men to be *self-controlled*. **There is nothing clever or admirable about not taking life seriously**. The person who constantly makes a joke about serious issues is doomed. You certainly don't have to be *gloomy* or *depressing*. But, if you want to make your life count for Jesus while you are young, you will have to see eternal issues more vividly than most of the people you sit in church with each Sunday.

Let me put it more clearly. If the biggest issues of your life as a youth are *fashion, friends, movies, music, FaceBook, Tweeting, texting and money*, you won't even be close to the person God wants you to be.

So Paul tells Titus to remind the young men that, if they want to be used of God, they will have to learn early to put a reign on their natural impulsiveness. The world *caters* to youthful impulsiveness. God wants to *restrain* youthful impulsiveness. The world wants your *money* and your *time* before you've carefully analyzed where it is taking you. God wants your natural impulses and energies *funneled in very specific directions*.

That means, if a young man is going to make his life count for Jesus, he's going to have to learn to say no to a lot of things. The Bible calls this virtue the ability to *rule one's own spirit*: **Proverbs 16:32** - "**Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.**"

Solomon uses anger to illustrate ruling one's spirit. Anger is excused by many people as simply being an *uncontrollable emotion*. But it isn't. Explosive anger is the result of an *uncontrolled spirit* (small "s"). It's the result of years of *undisciplined living*. Anger is just *one* expression of an undisciplined life. The person may be very disciplined in other areas. He may get up very early. He may work very hard. He may be very efficient when it comes to managing other people and making money.

But he has never *applied the same discipline to the most important part of his life - his spirit*. He is missing the central focus in God's mind. He isn't disciplined with his *own self*. He is a small man inside his own skin.

And that's why the Holy Spirit reminds us all that the one who can rule his own spirit is *better* than the one who can take a city. It takes a great deal of power and might to take a city. But it takes even *more power* and *more work* to rule your own spirit. That's the measure of true greatness.

So Paul says these young men are to be *self-controlled*. The NASB says *sensible*. The NKJV says they are to be *sober-minded*. The idea is the same in each case. A sober person can analyze and regulate his life in a way a drunk person cannot. That's Paul's point. Especially in youth, your life will be pulled in a dozen different directions at any given moment. But the Holy Spirit brings into the believer's life, not a *spiritual drunkenness* as some teach, but the fruit of *self-control*:

Galatians 5:22-24 - "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**"

I'll tell you if the Holy Spirit is controlling your life. It really has nothing to do with whether or not you want to dance a thousand miles. It has to do with the fruit of **self-control** being manifested in your life. This is so important for young men. This is Paul's plea. Be a **real** man. Not just a **male**. The greater the strength and energy, the greater the need for **sensible, disciplined living**.

3) TITUS WAS TO BE AN EXAMPLE OF THE VIRTUES HE PREACHED

Titus 2:7-8 - "...Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."

"Titus, show yourself to be a **model**..." That word **model** comes from the word **tupos**. It literally refers to a mark left by a blow with an instrument, like a hammer or sword. Just before the era of the computer we used the term to refer to the use of **type** to set words on paper.

The idea is the mark bears the exact size and shape of the object causing its appearance. Titus, and all teachers, and all parents, must indent people's lives with more than just their **words**. For the life of the kingdom to be transferred from person to person, the example must be strong, visible and consistent.

We simply have no idea of the transforming power of one good example. This is especially true among the young. All it takes is one person willing to step out of the pack. Others are looking for someone to take the lead. Many just aren't strong enough to **start the change process**. But they will follow someone else who does.

We need a church full of young men (and women) who aren't content with using their energies simply to **follow the lowest course of the least spiritual resistance**. We need young men who want to invest their time and strength in **leading the way of godliness**. We desperately need **young fathers** who, in the words of Moses, can impart to their children the things of God because they have them, first of all, burning hot in their own heart. That's how kingdom life passes from one generation to the next.

4) HOW THE GOSPEL IS MADE CREDIBLE IN THE MIDDLE OF DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Titus 2:9-10 - "Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, [10] **not pilfering**, but showing all good faith, **so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**"

Most of us want to put a hand on Paul's shoulder here and say, "Wait a minute. Slaves? What are you doing even **talking** about slaves. There shouldn't **be** any slaves. Surely you can't have anything but condemnation for slavery. "

And, to make it worse, Paul seems to get it all messed up. He should be telling all those **masters** they must release their slaves - that it's a **sin** to own slaves. And Paul says almost **nothing** to the masters and gives his instructions to the slaves. And he has the nerve to tell the slaves they have to be **good** slaves. What's going on here? Is Paul endorsing slavery? Or is there something else going on here? And I'm arguing there is something else happening - something very important and something very strategic and relevant for the cause of Christ.

The clue is found listed two times in our text. It's in **verse 5** and again, even more directly, in **verse 10 - Titus 2:5 & 10** - "**....train the young women....to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.....2:10....slaves are to be submissive to their own masters....not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**"

These are stunning verses. They probe the depths of what motivates our action. Or rather, what **most** motivates our actions. And they reveal that eliminating all injustice, however praiseworthy a goal that is, isn't necessarily the most powerful way to bring glory to God. Paul knew he had a short span of years left. He knew he wasn't going to change the ethical values of the whole world.

But he knows something else. He knew, and wrote, that God worked everything together for good for those who loved Him. And he knew that nothing - absolutely **nothing** - demonstrated the power of the gospel of Christ Jesus like the response it brought to personal wrong suffered and personal rights abused.

Let me ask you an important question. Where does the gospel get its greatest evangelistic boost in our world? I think that question is very important because most Christians give the wrong answer to it.

Most people think that the gospel gets its highest endorsement when someone of great fame or reputation embraces it. A whole industry has been built around Christian superstars. But Paul indicates something very different in these verses. Slaves were at the bottom of the pole in the New Testament church. They were the social outcasts, mistreated, without rights, frequently uneducated and hopelessly locked into their own miserable set of circumstances.

Then they were reached somehow by the gospel. They believed the good news about Jesus Christ and the power of resurrection life and the hope of eternal reward and destiny in Christ.

And now comes the truly glorious part. Yes, **more** glorious than even the wonderful elimination of slavery entirely. Incredibly, these slaves didn't just get **saved**. Hear this next sentence carefully - with thoughtful ears. **They relished their opportunity to shine for Christ more than their personal freedom**. They sensed their **mission**. Paul says these poor, mistreated slaves actually had a great potential to **"adorn the doctrine of God our Savior"**(10).

This is something we need to think about because it contains a message for all of us in varying degrees today. Why didn't Paul or James or Peter or Jesus come out and march against slavery in the New Testament? Why in the world would Paul tell these converted slaves to **"be submissive to their own masters in everything?"** How fair is that?

Why didn't Paul tell these slaves to get out of those ungodly relationships and establish their freedom in Christ? Why didn't he chastize these slave owners as wicked and ungodly? Why is there such a silence in the face of this apparent wickedness?

Let's look at it from a different angle. **How would these wicked slave owners be reached with the gospel?** The plain fact is that in the early church the vast majority of new converts weren't reached by organized missionary effort. They were reached through the changed lives of those with whom they came in contact.

And with whom do slave owners have the most close contact? With **slaves**. And Paul said these slaves had the best opportunity to **"adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."** But there was a price for such a mission. They couldn't do it by **leaving**. They had to **stay**. And they couldn't do it by **fighting**. They had to **serve**.

Let's face it, there would be great temptation of **pilfer (10)** from a master who had cheated you repeatedly over the years. In fact, you would almost **expect** a slave to steal from such a master if he got the opportunity. And, right at that point, Paul says the greatest opportunity for evangelism presented itself. When mistreated slaves, who had plenty of reason to respond in kind to unjust masters, manifested the love and purity and grace of Jesus **when nobody else would** they adorned the doctrine of God.

It is a fact that multiplied numbers of wealthy land owners came to Jesus through the work and witness of their slaves. This is how the early church grew. The poor and mistreated **saw and seized their chance to shine for Jesus**. They lived lives their masters couldn't argue with. The poor made the rich **jealous** and **hungry** with their spiritually transformed lives.

You see, if the greatest evil in the world was slavery (and it **was** a terrible evil), God would have wiped it out instantly. But the greatest evil Jesus came to right wasn't slavery. The greatest problem was missing God's salvation through Jesus Christ, God the Son. The greatest problem was a lost eternity. And God actually used the slaves of that day to reach others with His love and bring them into His kingdom.

It has always worked this way. Remember the thief on the cross who asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom? What made this criminal call out to Jesus? What did he **see** in Jesus? He saw One who, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, **"...was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth."**

Now, you and I aren't slaves. We don't really suffer that much persecution at all. But hard times do come periodically. Why does God leave a wonderful Christian woman with an ungodly husband? Why doesn't He want her to leave. Why does God leave devout Christians to suffer ridicule from fellow workers or fellow students? Why doesn't He always make our situations more pleasant and bearable when we ask Him for help?

Remember these important thoughts from the book of Titus. If God's ultimate concern were our comfort, he would deliver us right away. But our comfort **isn't** God's first concern. It never **has** been. His own **glory** is His first concern. And God is **most** glorified, and His Gospel most **readily embraced** when Christians shine where nobody else would.

Sooner or later, if you're alert to it, God will bring every Christian to some kind of unfair, unkind, undeserved mistreatment. Sooner or later, if you're alert to it - if you don't let your own anger or self-pity blind you to what is really happening - God will use your response to some situation to **"adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."**

What an honor! God help us not to be so self-centered that we miss His divine plan. Somebody desperately needs to see your supernatural response to life because of the presence of Jesus in your heart.