

Order Within the Church

Titus 2

Galatians 5

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Responsive: Psalm 8

This morning we are going to be in chapter 2 of Titus, where Paul switches focus from the leaders of the church to the congregation, showing as I have been saying over the past few weeks that the leaders set the direction for the church, they are the examples. In a quick summary, Paul implored Titus to appoint leaders who are, blameless as stewards of God, not selfish, or arrogant, not quick tempered, but rather patient, loving, and gracious. Not given to wine or being controlled by addiction, being sober minded, stable, consistent and also not greedy for money or power. But rather be generous, hospitable, love the things that are good, just, holy, and self controlled. These are all things that a leader must be as an example to the church. And as we will see in our passages this morning these standards aren't just for leadership but rather for the whole congregation.

There are certain traits that should basically be inherit in God's people, for they are like their father. The new birth isn't just access into heaven, it isn't just a get out of hell free card. It is a life changing event, a realignment of the soul and person of that individual. When we are called, when we have been given this new birth and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God works in us to be more and more like himself. Just how there are certain family traits that our kids pick up from us, and we have picked up from our parents, and they from theirs, these things which we have been talking about should be traits likewise found in the children of God. In the context of chapter 1, Paul gives instruction to Titus to look for specific and certain things to weed out the false teachers and those who would be seeking their own gain.

At the core of Christianity is a Christ like life, and Christ's ultimate example is the giving of himself for his people. Just as he was a sacrifice given so that we may be justified, and found righteous before God through his death, burial, and resurrection, so to are we as Christians to live, as living sacrifices, that is..giving of ourselves for the glory of God. The natural state of mankind is self, narcissism, seeking what is best for ourselves, even at the expense of others, where the natural state of God's people should be those who seek to elevate one another, giving, hospitable, patient, and loving people just as Jesus was toward us when he gave of himself. We also saw in chapter 1 the teachers who embody the opposite of these things, they are arrogant, self willed, selfish, seeking their own gain. In short, you have unbelievers posing as believers to control, manipulate, and enrich themselves off of the people. Taking advantage of the generosity, and graciousness of God's people.

Some of this is born out of ignorance, which allows these well spoken con-artists to as Paul says, subvert whole households. That is why taking the time to study and go over things, such as this small letter to Titus, and the one to Timothy before it is important for it teaches us to look for the warning signs, to be prepared, so that we do not become victims of those who would seek to cause harm. That is why it is very important who a congregation chooses as their leaders, for in many ways a solid Christ centered leadership focused upon the word of God is the best defense against the deception of false teachers, as they strive to build up and edify one another in the gospel, instructing and teaching so that we are not an ignorant people open to deception and manipulation..but rather that we should be well versed in the things of God, grounded in the scriptures, and focused upon the gospel, for it is only in God's word that we can know him, and it is by reading, and meditating upon his word that we can grow in our faith and walk with him.

To neglect God's word, is to open oneself up to false teachers, false beliefs. Sadly there are many who are ignorant of God's word who have been captured by those who have lead then astray. So it makes the instructions from Paul here in chapter 2 something that is just as important as the instructions for sound biblical leadership we saw in chapter 1. The church body is just that, a body that works together, each fulfilling their role and purpose within it, and we see some of that in our passage this morning, which we should probably go ahead and read. Starting in verse 1 and I want to go ahead and read the entire chapter this morning even though we will likely only be looking at the first few verses. (read Titus 2) So the first 10 verses here give instruction to different groups within the church body, how they are to behave, and influence and help one another. If I was to boil these 2 chapters down to just a single concept, I would say that it is based around influence. Influence of scripture and sound teaching as we see with the leadership in chapter 1 vs 9 "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine both to exhort and convict those who contradict."

Then likewise the leadership's influence on the congregation as they are to lead by example, teaching and preaching the word and ministering to the needs of the people. Now this morning we see the influence of the older to the younger. None of us live in a vacuum, none of us are islands on our own, but we are influenced by others, and likewise influence others. The human experience is intertwined with one another, we are a part of our families, we are a part of the local church expression, we are members of our local society, and citizens of our nation. A trendy term that is tossed around now, is culture building..we see it in our society, and in the corporate world, and as much as I don't like trendy terms or practices...it really is what Paul is talking about here. Setting the culture of the church through proper biblical influence and teaching.

And it starts with sound teaching, as we see in verse 1, "But as you for you,, which was a direct charge to Titus, but by which we can likewise apply to the elder, the leader, the teacher, the pastor, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience and the older women likewise." This is building a culture within the church body through proper teaching and preaching, being focused upon the person and work of Christ, and our conduct as children of God. The core of a vibrant, thriving church body is sound doctrine, a Christ focused, God centered teaching rooted in his word. It is when we move away from such a practice that we open ourselves up to false ideas, false teachers, manipulation, and control. Such a teacher builds a culture of subservience, bondage, anxiety, and ignorance.

The teacher is to speak things which are proper to sound doctrine, having a focus upon the truth of scripture as to influence the lives of God's people through his word. In this passage here we see that truth, and behavior are interrelated, sound teaching, brings forth sound behavior. Truth of the gospel effects the very lives of the hearers. Titus was to speak sound doctrine to the people, and seek after those who would likewise do the same and appoint them leaders. This was to counter the teaching and influence of the false teachers who had risen up within the churches, with sound teaching comes sound living, building up Christians to be strong in their faith, secure in their relationship with God, a church body who rests in the one who provides, who serves in love, the one who loves us, to be those who brings glory to the one who has forgiven us.

As I have been saying over the past few weeks as we have gone through chapter 1, sound teaching, being focused upon the word of God goes a long way in defending ourselves against false teachers, against those who would seek to manipulate for their own gain. Christians are generally a generous, gracious people, and if we are not careful it can be easy for others to take advantage. So we must guard ourselves, and protect ourselves, and we do so first and foremost through the word of God.

As we see throughout not only this letter to Titus, but the two written to Timothy as well that we went though, sound doctrine, creates sound living. At the core, when you understand that you are to live our life for Christ, that you are to live your life Christ like, to give of yourself in love, as Christ as given of himself for you it should fundamentally change how you live. The doctrine and understanding of Christ's love, of his sacrifice, should be a driving influence in our own relationships with our spouses, with our children, with our friends, as we see all those relationships reflected in the person Jesus. The doctrinal statement and understanding that the church is the bride of Christ, not only encourages us, and should bring us peace, but likewise gives us insight to our own relationships, Christ laid down his life for his bride, he died for her, a complete and selfless act because he loved her more than his own life that he was willing to lay it down so that she may live. If we can grasp that, if we can understand the immenseness of that love, should it not also influence how to treat our own spouses? This is doctrine, in practical practice, this is "speaking the things which are proper for sound doctrine"

Doctrine is not just some esoteric system that is debated or talked about by old men, it is the influence of our lives as believers. What we believe, will effect how we live, how we act, how we interact with one another. We can even see this in the pattern of how the New Testament epistles were written, these letters of instruction and encouragement, or in some cases rebuke all have a similar pattern, first doctrine, then conduct, we see this in Romans, in Ephesians, in Colossians..Christian conduct is driven by right doctrine. Sadly there are many churches who have left off this essential part of teaching because they believe it breeds controversy, and instead have decided to focus on conduct alone, moral living, and "doing the right thing." But without the teaching of doctrine, and a focus upon the word of God you are instructing people to navigate without a compass...so, what happens, the teacher becomes the compass, right living is defined by the pastor, by the elders, not by scripture.

And because of this, in slips empty moralism, in slips the acceptance of sinful behaviors under an unbiblical based idea of love, because it is no longer God through his word exhorting and teaching, but an individual setting forth their own standards and requirements. If you divorce conduct from doctrine, you have empty moralism, again it is trying to fix the inside issue with outside reformation, where God through the teaching and preaching of his word sets to fix the core problem, the sinful desires of mans heart, by changing the hearts of his people with an inward focused reformation which in turn flows outward to be the people we are called to be. We must first know God, and as we grow in our understanding and faith, our conduct will follow, conduct, the culture of the local expression of the church, all flow from doctrine, from scripture, from God's word.

And I think that is why we get this practical instruction here from Paul about the older being the example to the younger. The mature Christian is one who has been with God awhile, who has lived through hardships, who has grown in their faith through study and prayer..and it is these who are to by the influence to the younger. This really is the basic concept it almost all societies, respect and wisdom from the aged. Some societies do this better then others, ours seems to want to mock the older generations as irrelevant, or past their usefulness, but that is a foolish society who is unwilling and unable to learn from the mistakes and wisdom of others. In both Jewish and Greek society those in advanced age where revered, and respected for they have a wealth of life experiences to pull from in the giving of guidance and instruction. So this concept that Paul is writing about here, wouldn't have been anything new, but he felt the need to bring it up so maybe it was an issue within the churches at Crete. There is always the issue of seeking after new things, there is an excitement in what is new, but not always a benefit.

I think many of our churches have this area wrong, Paul advocates that it should be the older who influence the church, but we have flipped it to be the younger. We seek the young energetic leader, we chose entertainment that appeals to the younger crowd, we tailor the message preached to be hop and exciting, but without doctrine, without a focus upon Christ and the word of God, again it is just empty moralism. Paul lists 6 groups here in this chapter, and the expectations of each starting with the older men. These are those who should be the pillars within the church, men whose faith has been tried, who has some experience under their belt, some life behind them from which they have learned and grown. But I think that it should also be noted, that physical age isn't a natural shoe in either. There are many who are mature in age, and immature in heart, though wisdom is to come with age, it doesn't always. We have a case here in both Timothy and Titus, relatively young men who are strong in the faith, and mature in their Christian walk who are themselves pillars of the faith. So, it may sound like I am counteracting myself here, by first focusing on age, then flipping it on its head...but what I am saying is what should be standard...but sometimes isn't. It should be a reality that someone who is a bit older should be a bit wiser, should be a bit more mature, both in this life, and in their faith...but that is not always the case, just as someone who is a bit younger might actually be a bit more mature and their life and faith then someone who is older.

This ends up sort of being a rebuke to the immature people of the older generation, for that is not who they should be. The age old standard in society was as I said, respect to the older, wisdom passed down to the younger, but in our society that isn't always the case either. But that does not negate what Paul is saying here, but rather is a rebuke and should be a wake up call for some to step up, grow up, and take on the role they should. So, what we see here in Paul's writing, this should be the ideal, the older mentor the younger, guide them in faith, guide them in wisdom which is why Paul says, in verse 2, "that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith love, and patience." Being sober refers to be serious minded, being vigilant. These older men, are to be clear-headed with sound judgment drawing from their life, and faith experiences. But doing so in patience, and love, being temperate, not given to anger. Notice that these traits, are all the same requirements for leadership within the church? This isn't necessarily because these older men hold office within the church necessarily, but they are still leaders, and are called to be such.

As I have said over the past few weeks, these standards though they are set out as a tool to find those who would be teachers and elders or leaders within a church body, they are things that should likewise be in all of us who name the name of Christ. For we are all teachers, we are all leaders to someone, our families, our friends, our co-workers. Looking again at verse 7 of chapter 1, this shouldn't just be descriptors of a pastor, but it should be of all who believe. "be blameless, as stewards of God, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, and self controlled. This is nothing more than a repurposed list that Paul wrote in Galatians which we read this morning, in reference to all who believe, "but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such there is no law." We are all ministers of the gospel, and we should all be striving to live a life worthy of the message we represent, nothing will undermine what you teach more than hypocrisy. We have all heard the adage, "Do what I say, not what I do"...for the Christian, it should be, "Do as I say, and as I do." For we are to be examples to one another, we are to live for one another, with a heart and mind focused upon bringing glory to God.

This morning my intention was to sort of set the stage for the next week or so as we will start looking into these 5 individual groups that Paul mentions here within the church, and his instruction to each of them. Remembering that a church body is just that, a body each of us with our roles and purposes within that body as we work together in this ministry to the glory of God. Exhorting and encouraging one another in the faith.