

The Congregation

1 Corinthians 13

Hebrews 12:1-24

Psalm 84

This morning we are going to pick back up in chapter 2 of Titus. Last week we mainly gave a summary of this chapter, a broad over look as to Paul's writing here as he shifts focus from leadership qualities and requirements to the congregation itself. We see many of the same things from chapter 1 here in chapter 2, just as a leader within a church is an example, and mentor of the people of the church, so to are the people to one another therefore we see many of the same traits brought over. In this chapter Paul is setting up expectations, as he addresses groups within the church, Older men, Older women, young women, young men, and slaves.

Last week we talked about older men within the church, and how they are to be mentors to the younger, pulling from wisdom which should come with age and experience. When I was younger, there was a phrase, which was used to justify the immaturity of youth in a sort of tongue and cheek way, it was, "to be old and wise, you must first be young and stupid." And really there is a bit of truth in that statement, as we grow, learning from our mistakes, which is a form of wisdom that can be passed on in hopes that others may learn from our own mistakes. Paul says, that older men in the church must be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, and in patience. As we touched on a bit last week, normally it is from this group within the church that you would appoint leaders, and teachers. That does not mean that there may not be exceptions to the rule, for someone who is a bit younger may likewise have a maturity beyond their physical age, but generally speaking it is the older who mentor and teach the younger.

Therefore these traits match those of teachers, being sober-minded, not given to addiction, not tossed to and fro by various doctrines and beliefs, settled, and secure in their faith, resting upon the teachings of scripture for wisdom and guidance, who is able to teach, and mentor with patience and love. Drawing upon life experiences in this faith to impart wisdom to those who may be struggling through the very things that have in the past. Much of what a mentor and teacher as the older men in the church are to be has to do with stability. Stability in the faith, stability in the understanding of scripture, not chasing after something new, but resting upon what is known in pursuit of maturity and growth. One of the resources I use in preparing for the sermon each week is a verse by verse commentary by Dr. Grant C. Richison, and his application that he writes of this verse dealing with the mentorship of older men within the church he says, "It is easy for our lives to get out of balance. We can emphasize things that God does not prioritize. God's priorities are to be sound in the faith, in love, and tenacity. It is easy to get off on various trails not at the core of biblical priority. Today we find much of the evangelical Christians on some crusade or another, but how important are those pursuits?

The call here, is stability, being sober minded, it is a challenge set forth to the older men within the church to pursue and be worthy of this role. As we look for advice for various things in this world we should look at who we seek after, being careful in our choices. It would not be wise to get financial advice from someone who is incapable of managing their own money, nor would you get marriage advice from someone who is abusive and full of anger, likewise it would be unwise to get biblical advice from someone whose life does not reflect the truth of the gospel, or whose life is caught in turmoil and instability.

So to first be a mentor to others, we need to be stable within our own beliefs, and in our own lives. And that is the exhortation from Paul here, older men, be stable, be sober minded, be leaders for others to look up to, he says older men should be reverent. They should be living their lives worthy of respect. These older men within the church are to be those who others may look to, they present themselves with honor, and wisdom. And along with that comes being temperate, being self controlled, not given to outburst of wrath, again.. stable. Maturity is the ability to exercise proper restraint in everything. There is a tendency in human nature as we get older to grow more and more cynical in life, but I think that is born out of an improper understanding and focus. One can look back at one's life and see disappointment, failures, and can dwell on those things and become negative, or bitter as those experiences are allowed to color everything that is being experienced later. But the Christian's perspective should not be of one of such meditations, but rather in reflecting upon God's work through all of life. An older Matured Christian has a larger wealth of experience to which to draw from when reflecting upon God's goodness and provision.

A mature believer grows in confidence in God's plan, understanding that God is in control of all things, and reflecting upon our own lives should reveal that truth to us, and instead of bearing bitterness and a cynical outlook, we should embrace the reality of God's work in our own lives. As Paul wrote to the Roman Church (8:28) "And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose" As believers we have hope beyond this life, our lives are not hopeless, nor meaningless, and all that happens within our lives drives us further into God's plan for us. Which ties into the last few things here in verse 2, love, and patience. A mature believer recognizes God's love toward himself, and strives to reflect that love to one another. As John wrote, Christ said, (13:34) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know you are my disciples, if you love one another." It is possible to be sound in doctrine, and biblical understanding...but lack love. This is a key component in the life of the believer, for one can not follow Christ without a love for him, and one can not be a follower of Christ without his love flowing out of them. As we read this morning in 1 Corinthians, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love. I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, but have not love. I am nothing.

Love for Christ, and the love for one another is our driving force. Yes, as Paul points out, correct doctrine and sound faith are cornerstones of belief, but along with it is love, the love of God, and the love for one another..and one way that love is expressed is through patience. There are 2 aspects of patience here, patience with one another, and patience in life's circumstances. We are to be patient with one another because we are to love one another, we are all different personalities, we all have our own strengths and weakness but through Christ's love of us, we are to patiently love one another. The other aspect is patience within our own life circumstances, again going back to Christian maturity, referencing those moments of God's provision in our lives, as we are faced with new trials, new hardships we can be encouraged by those which came before, as we patiently await God's work through whatever that situation maybe. Knowing, and believing that God will provide, knowing and believing that promise that all things work together for the good of those who are called. As we rest in him in all things.

Patient people know how to handle hardships, patience breeds perseverance and endurance, and endurance does not accept defeat in problems or hardships but rather perseveres in the face of them. Never being discouraged, never losing heart even when things seemingly are not going “our way” Putting our confidence in God, who works all things according to his purpose. As Hebrews 12 says, again as we read this morning “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The prize, is worthy the race...though the race maybe difficult, though we may feel the desire to quit at times..we must endure, we must persevere, we must patiently run looking to the prize, which is Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. A Mature believer strives, they run the race knowing that they will get the prize in the end, with a heart and mind focused upon what is before them not what they are maybe going through at that moment, and in that mindset looking and striving toward Christ, we can endure, all things, with patience and love.

In verse 3 Paul shifts focus to the next group within the church, he says, “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” Paul is addressing a different set of temptations here, but the core of the message is the same, to be a people, whether male or female that lives worthy of the calling by which they have been called. The standard here Paul says, to be reverent, which the Greek word used here that we translated to reverent is *hieroprepes*, which means, befitting holiness, or suited to a sacred character. It is a combination of 2 Greek words, *heiron* meaning temple, or sacred, and *prepei* meaning fitting.

Paul charges older women within the church to live a life befitting of a godly life. And in doing avoid behaviors that are common place among non-believers. There is a call here to take seriously the idea that we belong to God, and that our lives are a reflection of that belief. Paul addresses a few things here that are different then in his list for older men, because these are temptations that generally befall women, though as with all things there are exceptions to the rule. Can men be gossipers? Sure, can women have anger issues? Of course, the message here is to address the temptations that befall both men and women and imploring both of them to be reverent, holy, as good stewards of the gospel message. For we are to be the examples to the younger generation, we are to exhort and encourage them in their own Christian walk as we see in the following verses as Paul addresses some of the issues that may effect them as well.

Verse 4, “that they may admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, home makers, good, obedient to their own husbands that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” Paul makes some statements here that are considered controversial today. And while it may look a little different today, for there are circumstances in today’s life that was maybe not present at that time, such as the reality that it is common today that both the husband and wife work jobs outside the house, which was not common practice at the time of Paul’s writing. It changes the dynamic but doesn’t change the message. The Older women within the church are to live in a way that reflects proper biblical womanhood, and encourage and teach the younger generation the same.

Paul's exhortation here to "teach younger women to love their husbands" stands as a polar opposite to what society tells our younger women. This is a giving of self, loving another often involves putting the interests of another over self. Our society tells young women to dream big and chase those dreams and let nothing stand in your way. These 2 things are at odds with one another, marriage and individuality, one is a vow to live for another, the other is pursuit of selfish goals. Our society likes to say marriage enslaves women, keeps them from their highest potential, but that is not true for God has designed marriage. Men and women were made for one another, to find joy, and fulfillment in each other. Each called to give of themselves for the other, and this is a high calling because it is an example and reflection of God's relationship with us.

I think it is also important to point out, that in Paul's exhortation to women here, this is not defining or commanding a certain role, but rather he is speaking to women in their situation in the first century. The modern mind looks at this and says Paul was a chauvinist, telling women to obey their husbands, to be home makers. These things must be understood by the broader aspect of scripture, while he says obey their own husbands, there is also the call for husbands to give of themselves as Christ gave to the church. This is not a license for control, nor abuse, but is an exhortation of giving of self to the other in love. Both a husband, and a wife are to give of themselves for the other, and do so because of love. Though at times it may look different, or take on different roles, the core of the reality remains, husbands are to lay down their lives for their wives, and wives are to give of their lives for their husbands. At its core, the requirement here is the same, though they are expressed in different ways. Equality of the sexes does not negate the distinction of the sexes. God himself created those distinctions between male and female, each with their own role and purpose. God designed these things to benefit one another, the husband is to cherish his wife, and she to respect him. Again both is a giving of self to the other. This is the core of a Christian marriage, Christ gave himself for his church, and we likewise give of ourselves for one another. As parents, and married couples within the church, we are to be examples to the younger generation.

Verse 8 Paul likewise challenges young men. Titus was to be an example to these young men, as a younger man himself strong in the faith, and as the messenger set by Paul, he was to be an example himself to the young men in Crete. Titus was to challenge the young men within the church, challenge them to be sober-minded, to understand the principle of self-restraint. Youth has with it, its own temptations and Paul is calling young men to be sober-minded, thoughtful, and focused so that they are not caught up in the impulsiveness that often accompanies youth. Titus was to teach this, by himself encompassing these things in verse 7 Paul writes, "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, and incorruptibility, sound speech which can not be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed having nothing evil to say of you. We can take this instruction ourselves, to be a pattern of good examples to others. We are to reflect God in our lives, and good works ultimately flow outward from God's work of salvation and grace in our lives. Our reputation comes from our character, when people observe our lives they should be seeing a reflection of a character that comes from God. True Christian character should be recognizable. And though Paul is specifically calling for Timothy to be this example, this is good instruction for all of us.

And lastly this morning, in verse 9, is the exhortation to bond-servants, to slaves to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not to answer back. Slavery was widespread throughout the Roman empire, and the church would have been a large part of that first century congregation. These slaves are not like our idea of slaves here in America, they were often prisoners of

war, from many nations, and creeds, often well educated and skilled workers as tradesmen or even leaders in their own communities before Roman capture.

Paul is not advocating for slaves to rise up, but again to be a reflection of God in their status. When Christ stood before the councils as an innocent man, when he was hung on the cross as an innocent man he did not encourage his followers to rebel, but to lay down their lives in submission to what was unfolding. There is also practical wisdom here, a slave who was obedient is a slave who was not getting punished for insubordination. The new testament doesn't argue for slavery, but again is teaching in the situation where many were at. The bible asserts, that all believers are equal whether male or female, slave or free, in Christ we are one. And though there is a call to obedience here, the church had a great influence in the abolition of slavery. That all being said, many of the same principles can apply to our own situations at work. While in the case of slavery, there was no pay, the principles still apply of respecting those in authority over us. Doing our jobs, being respectful of our leaders, again has a practical effect of avoiding punishment. The insubordinate, rebellious, worker is one who will constantly struggle.

Ultimately understanding that our jobs, that the very things that we have are given to us by God, therefore we work as unto the Lord. What it comes down to, whatever we find ourselves in, as maybe the older generation within a church, or maybe the younger generation, or as workers, or leaders at a job, our conduct in all that we do is to reflect Christ. And it is by that conduct that we honor and bring glory to him, as good stewards of the word of God. Living out what the bible teaches, so that our actions match our words and we can be effective witness of God's goodness and mercy. Each aspect of life has its own challenges, each person deals with their own temptations and sinful desires, but we are to recognize such, and strive to put such away and live a life worthy of the calling by which we have been called. No matter which group Paul was addressing here in this passage this morning, a unifying thread throughout, is to be sober-minded, and respectful, not to be brash, or impetuous, given to extremes, but rather calm, gentle, and caring as a reflection of Christ to others. That is the challenge that is put before us today, no matter where you fit in to these groups that Paul is addressing, the core point is that we are living a life that shows Christ in us. That our actions reflect our inward reality, that Christ works in us, and through us showing the world what it truly is to be his followers.