

(Titus - Part 13): Temptations of Older Men

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon discusses the unique temptations faced by older men and emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine and unity in the church across all age groups.

Duration: 39:48

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Titus 2:1-8

Topics: "Titus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his concerns about the use of gadgets and gimmicks in serving God. He emphasizes that despite our differences in age and circumstances, we are all human beings with similar fears, desires, and needs. The speaker believes that it is important to reach people wherever they are, whether they are in old folks homes, hospitals, prisons, or on the streets. He also criticizes the division between young and older Christians, and the tendency of older Christians to reminisce about the past instead of focusing on the present. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of evangelizing and spreading the gospel to everyone, regardless of their location or age.

Transcript

In the book of Titus, the little epistle of Paul to Titus, second chapter, the Holy Spirit says, Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine, that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. The young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded, in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, and that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Now, I have not dragged anything in here by the feet. This is what the Holy Spirit says. The Holy Spirit here instructs four classes, older men, older women, young women, and young men.

In this aged here, where it says that aged men be sober, actually the word aged is very closely related to the word elder, from which, in the New Testament, the rulers of the churches were taken. This hasn't to do with men in their adult age. It has to do with responsible men, older in years, and probably in the faith, same with older women, women whose families are reared, and who have a time to go about, could be a

great blessing, but also could be dangerous and harmful.

Then the young women who have their homes and their families, and the young men, husbands and wives, these are the four classes mentioned here. Now, I want to point out to you that in the church, there is no such thing known as a double standard. In the New Testament, godliness is for all.

Christ's teaching mentions no classes, if you will remember the Sermon on the Mount. So far as I can recall, now, I didn't read the whole four gospels, to check on this, but as far as I can recall, our Lord does not address himself directly to any one class, but to everybody. The multitudes came unto him, and he said, or his disciples came to him, and he said, he addressed himself to the people without classes.

Now, this may sound very shocking in the day in which we live, but I want you to notice that Christ had no youth program in his time. You say then, Mr. Tozer, why does your church? The answer is this, that our Lord said, preach the gospel to everybody. Go into all the world and give the gospel to everybody, and set that against the Old Testament, and the obedience that we see demonstrated in the New, and we arrive at this, that people are to be evangelized wherever they may be found.

If it's old folks in an old folks' home, sick people in a hospital, prisoners in a penitentiary, heathen in their blindness, railroad men or factory men where they gather, people on the streets, wherever we can reach people, we're to reach them. And since young people are gregarious, tend to run together, it would seem to be a normal way to fulfill the Lord's command to give the gospel to everybody, to take advantage of that gregariousness, and when they bring them together as young people, to give the word to them. That is one thing, but it's quite another thing to separate a young Christian from an older Christian, and as the churches are doing, to divide them from each other.

You know that isn't done in the Old Testament, it isn't done in the New, and there was never anything like that heard of until later times, until the time democracies took over, when there's a division line between the old and the young. In the home there's no such division line, they live together, they eat together, they die together, old and young. And so it is in the church, they worship together in the church of God, old and young, up and down the scale, from the old man or woman to the newest Christian, youngest Christian, they worship together.

So there was no such thing known as the problem of the teenager. That has been whipped up by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, badly and overtrained, and newspapers and magazines who know that they have a bonanza. All you have to do is to write an article on how tough it is to be between 12 and 20, and you can sell it, just anything, that there's nothing to it really, because a teenager is simply a person who in his development is no longer 12 and hasn't reached 20.

He's in what they call the teens. And somebody noticed that that particular period there was a little turbulence, but everybody that's reared family knows that, and they know that from the age of little Stevie and even younger on up into the 20s, there are differences, but you can take it in your stride and with a smile, instead of making so much out of it. But now we've made so much out of it that teenagers actually think of themselves as being people apart.

They feel that when they reach 13, they resigned from the human race. And then when they reach 20, they put in their application for re-entry back into the human race. And in the meantime, between 13 and 20, they are a people unto themselves.

And when you get them converted, they won't even pray with the old people, and they don't want to do anything the old people do, nor sing any songs the old people sing. This never grew out of a normal need. This grew out of pressure by over-educated eggheads.

And there is nothing in the Bible to give any basis for it at all. My brethren, the same blood that cleanses an old man cleanses a young man. And the same spirit that brings righteousness to the heart of an elderly woman brings righteousness to the heart of a young woman.

And in the New Testament, there is no excuse for wrongdoing made for an older man, because he's older, or a younger woman, because she's younger. Righteousness brought by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost enters into the individual, whatever his age may be, whether it be the boy Jesus at 12, when the Spirit was in him, or whether it be, whatever it may be, and the Spirit was in Jesus, though he was anointed for his ministry at 30. He nevertheless grew in faith and in spirit and physically when he was a boy on up through every period of his life.

So our Lord Jesus knew every one of these stages except old age. He died when he was about 33. But remember, nothing is excused to a young Christian because he's a young Christian.

The Bible makes no allowances for a Christian because he's young in years, and it never mentions the teenage problem which we've whipped up and which people are getting rich on now. So let's get that straight. We might as well be realistic, and if everybody else in the whole Christian world want to think crooked, let's you and me think straight about things, will you? Let's think straight.

If everybody wants to think crooked, you can't help them. Let them think crooked. I went through my mail yesterday morning, just before the preachers had prayer in this study, and honestly, I had to pray 10 minutes to get out of the gloom.

I have an envelope full. It's called a workshop envelope. I'm going to give it to Mr. Chase.

But brother, I don't know. I don't know whether all these gadgets they've given us to serve God with these days are necessary or not. One envelope contains, or one envelope is marked, ideas unlimited.

And in that envelope, there's a fellow. I don't know who he is or whether he's a man or whether it's a woman, but it sounds like a rather feminine man. And he has cards there which he says have a touch of humor with a punch line guaranteed to bring Sunday school people out to Sunday school.

Well, all this to me is a frightful and rather frightening thing that we forget that we're just human beings, you and I, and we're all more or less alike. We're afraid of the same things. We love the same things.

We eat about the same food, and we're just alike. And what age we are doesn't matter much, although the Bible recognizes that there are temptations, for instance, of a young man of 18 that a man of 80 is not likely to have. So the Bible does give us notice these particular temptations and says now watch out and here's the way you're to be.

And that's proper and right that it should be so. Redemption, my friends, is adequate for all ages. And if redemption broke down in the life of somebody 17 or 77 or 49 or any other age you might imagine, it would mean that the redemption in Christ Jesus was inadequate.

But that redemption is 100% perfect. It includes everybody. It includes all ages and all colors.

And it includes farmers and carpenters and businessmen and professional men or artisans or teachers or whatever people do. It includes them, includes students and housewives and nurses and just whatever you happen to be doing. The Word of God finds you there just as the rain falls upon the meadow and finds every stalk of grass whichever way it may be bent or however long or short it may be or whatever color, yellow or deep green or light green.

The rain falls from heaven and the sun shines upon it all. So the grace of God brings salvation and comes to everybody. And yet I say the Spirit recognizes varied temptations and particular dangers facing different ages and the two sexes and different positions and different relationships.

So he gives rules for older men and older women and younger women and younger men, same gospel, same book, same letter, same sermon, same everything, but merely applying it to people in different stages. So this what I've said up to now is introductory to a little talk I want to give called Admonitions to Older Men or the Particular Temptations of Older Men. I really should have advertised that and got that into the newspaper.

We'd have had a lot of old fellows here, I suppose, to know what their attempted particular temptations would be. But I want to name eight that the older person is particularly likely to fall into, which a younger man wouldn't. Now, this is not from introspection.

This is from observation. I want you to get that, that this is from observation only. But here, let me name them for you.

And if any of you old fellows should incline to not like this, I can still run fast. And I don't think you'll dislike it because I don't say it's true of everybody. And of course, due to depression, it isn't true of them.

But I have noticed that there are eight faults which old fellows are likely to fall into or older men. It can start anywhere. I have met middle-aged people who are still in their 20s.

And I have met young people who are in their 70s. I submit that R.R. Brown is not one day over 35, except he's physically a little older. And I have met people that are 35 that are over 70.

But by and large, these are the faults that older men tend to fall into. Next week, ladies, you'll get a little idea unlimited from me about older women because it tells us here you saw. I'm not dragging this in.

It's here. I have noticed these eight faults, and I'll name them. And then I'll take all the time that I have to talk about them in close.

They are loquacity, that is, talkativeness, gluttony, resentfulness, stubbornness, fault-finding, churlishness, a propensity to reminisce, and levity. These are the eight sins of older men. I have observed, and I've been around a while observing, there's first loquacity, which of course means talkativeness.

Now, that's not true of all older men because older men are wonderfully, a lot of them are wonderfully and blessedly silent. But loquacity is nevertheless a fault that older men do tend to have. It's a habit often found among them, just endlessly talk.

Loquacity. Well, let's mark that down. Second, gluttony.

You smile at this and you say, well, it's the young men who eat. Yes, they eat more because they need more. They're either growing up and needing it or they're working hard and needing it.

But when a man gets old, one by one, his pleasures tend to taper off. The things he used to enjoy, one by one, he can't enjoy anymore. But there is usually one left, and that's eating.

And that's about all that the older man can enjoy. Mother Nature's walked out on him on almost all of his pleasures. He can't play anymore.

He doesn't have the opportunities anymore for pleasure that he used to have. So he just proceeds to eat himself to death. I've known older men.

I know a dear old brother. God bless him. He's in heaven now.

He's not as high up as he'd have been if he'd got control of himself sooner. But he's in heaven by the grace of God. But at all the camp meetings, he always was head to, at least not more than three from the front at the cafeteria.

I think he had probably left the meeting early to get there. And he would bend over and eat as if it was really something to enjoy. And he had a reputation of drinking, literally floating himself in coffee.

Now, I drink coffee and I eat. And I suppose most of you do that. But it's one thing to eat.

It's another thing to develop a gluttonous disposition and take revenge on all of the pleasures that Mother Nature's taken away from you by working hard and overworking the one. Now, we've got a cure for that and a remedy. Get a hold of yourself and learn to miss a meal occasionally that you might get yourself by the scurf of the neck, Grandpa.

And say, now I'm getting old and I can't play the way I used to. And the things that used to interest me are slowly disappearing. And there's only one thing I can do with any success anymore, and that's eat.

But I'm not going to let that beat me. I like Tom Harris' fasting. Down here at the hospital, the Catholics couldn't get over it that a Protestant fasted.

What a shame that the blessed work of fasting has to belong to the Catholics and that they're surprised to hear that a Protestant ever fasted. Then there's resentment. And there's a reason for all of this, you see.

The older man finds himself left out of so many things. It's a shocking thing as you get along, and you find that you're not wanted in certain circles anymore. And so we develop self-pity and tend to get our feelings hurt.

And thus we have resentful. It's, I've known some dear men of God who were good men, really good men, tearfully tender and worshipful. And yet you had to handle them with kid gloves.

I've known them. Some of them have been right in this church, who are gone now to heaven. But they soiled their escutcheon.

They soiled their garments in their old age by their sensitivity and their resentment. And you had to watch them carefully lest they get their feelings hurt. Well, that's number three.

Number four is stubbornness. And there's a good reason back of this. As we get older, we tend to get stubborn.

The reason is that we've lost our power to adopt or adapt, I mean. And we've been relieved of our command. Here's the man.

He's 27, 8, 9, 35 years old. And he's got a family, three or four children and an obedient wife. And he may be small at the factory or at the shop or at the office.

But when he comes home, he expects to be obeyed. Then that family grows up. And one by one, they go away.

And he sits there in the chair. And he can't get, he's got the psychology of command with nobody to command. And so he takes revenge by becoming irrationally obstinate.

And so that the slightest suggestion he takes as a personal affront. Now, that's what I mean by stubbornness. That's mental and emotional rigidity that comes from advancing years.

It's a rigor mortis of the disposition, if you know what I mean. Then there's fault finding. That is the result of resistance to change.

And a kind of a forlorn egotism. Such a man will back only what he originates. And give only to that which he personally has helped to create.

And he'll snipe at other men's ideas, unlimited or otherwise. As being a repudiation of his leadership. Now, that's the older person's weakness.

And the next one is churlishness. You know, I've discovered why older people tend to get churlish. And again, it isn't introspection.

It's observation that has led me to these conclusions. You see, it's partly the result of a low-grade pain that never quite goes away. The older person has a continual gnawing and he can't tell where it is.

It isn't bad enough to go to the doctor and isn't good enough to let him sleep. And being cheerful under those circumstances is like trying to be cheerful when your feet hurt. And so he grunts and barks and snarls at people.

He doesn't mean it. He loves people, but his feet hurt. In his case, his feet hurt all over him.

So that he's not in real pain or they take him to the hospital. But he just feels it enough all over that it's kind of like your feet hurting. And that's a churlishness.

I know that a lot of churlish old people don't hate you. And they're not so bad. And their lifetime has proved they're not so bad.

But they just can't relax and be charitable and friendly because their feet hurt all over them. And then there is the seventh one. And that is a propensity to reminisce.

And not everybody like that. Not every old man's churlish. I know some very sweet old men.

Not every old man finds fault. Some dear old Christian brothers are quick to pull a blanket of love over everybody's faults. Not every old man is stubborn.

Some of the tenderest, kindest old men, Christian men. Not every old man's resentful. But some have learned to smile and roll with the blow.

I'm not saying you're not making a blanket indictment. I'm only pointing out that just as high blood pressure is a disease of advancing years, so these are dispositional flaws that may be present in advancing years. And yet not all men who are getting older have high blood pressure.

I don't, for instance, believe it or not. I take mine out in nervous twitching. And the result is I haven't any high blood pressure.

It's normal. And hardening of the arteries is a disease of older men. But I don't have that.

They say your arteries are soft as if they were made of rubber. So I haven't got those two things wrong with me. And there are Christians that don't have all these.

And I think there are some that don't have any of them. But the Holy Ghost simply warns us that we are to look out for these natural weaknesses of advancing years. It could happen in your 40s or earlier either.

Now, this propensity to reminisce. That's one reason I don't usually enjoy the company. When I go away, like last week over to Houghton College or in three or four weeks up to Canada to council, you never see me sitting around with the old man.

The reason is that they reminisce all the time. And talk sharp about a generation that's long gone, their inhabitants of a little world that is no more. Nothing interesting is happening now.

Every interesting thing already happened. They are the faithful historian of trivialities and the chroniclers of the insignificant and the inane. And I don't like it.

I don't like it. I remember once I got into a taxi cab with a famous and celebrated preacher. He and I were preaching at the same convention in a certain city in one of the great halls where they were meeting.

And we were at the same hotel and we happened to be getting the same taxi cab to go together to the hallway where one of us was to preach. Very likely he, because I don't think he came when I was preaching. But you know, we talked all the way over, but it was a one-way conversation.

It was what they call unilateral. Now, that's what they call it over the radio. It was unilateral.

I sat and listened while he gave me a running description of how great he was and where all he'd served and where he'd been. And I didn't like it because partly, I suppose, I wanted to talk about myself a little too. But I just remember that, that he bothered me.

Now he's far better known than I am. And I think he's done a far bigger job than I've ever done. But he's got this disease of reminiscence.

Yes, I served so-and-so in so many years. Yes, I was there. I knew so-and-so and I, my dear Lord.

And I didn't care one little thing about it particularly because I knew most of it, common knowledge. But he was the historian of the trivial and the chronicler of the things that don't matter. And that's one reason I go around with young fellas usually when I get to these conferences.

Now, honestly, truly, if I were as honest as I ought to be, I would suppose that apart from the spirituality of it, if there's any there, another reason I go around with younger men is because they listen. And I can't get a word in over the old fellas. No, I suppose honesty would compel me to make that admission.

Pray for me. And I'm not fooling. But this propensity to reminisce, what a bore it can become.

And then one more is levity. Now, a bit of dry humor, I repeat, I don't mind. I enjoy it.

I think it's a blessing to be able sometimes to relax with a smile when things are getting tough and you're not feeling good all over. And to see some bit of humor in the world is all right. I believe I find it in the book of Proverbs.

And I think one of the funniest thing ever happened to is when David got into a tight spot and drooled down his beard and scratched the wall, made little animal sounds in order to make the king think he was insane. The king said, take that mad man out of here. And I can imagine David grabbing himself, bending over and roaring with laughter and everybody else the same.

The Bible isn't a book wholly devoid of laughter. And I think there will be laughter in the world to come. There will be the relaxed joy of a happy people.

For the scripture tells us of the bridegroom and the bride and the joy of the wedding feast and the laughter and shouting of the happy people at the wedding feast. That's one thing. It's quite another thing to have developed a habit of never seeing anything serious in life.

But you say, Mr. Tozer, that is the young man's fault. You'd be surprised how serious minded young people get. You'd be surprised how seriously they take life.

Now they hold you off with a quip. I'll admit that. They tend to want to do that.

But if you can get past that to them, you'll find them very serious, most of them. So that instead of levity being the fault of youth, it's the fault of older people. Because they've developed a cynical attitude toward life and everything has become funny.

And I don't think that there's anything else that I know quite so disgusting as the funny old fellow that you never can talk seriously with. Who wants to remind you of a story he heard. Now one story is enough.

When I get with preachers, I'll allow one or two. But beyond that, it bores me and I'm finished. I want to talk about something serious.

But I get with men who sit around a table and just roar from the time they sit down and tuck their napkin in their collar till they leave. And I admit, I just plain don't like it. There are plenty of serious things to talk about.

And it's still more repulsive when it gets a little bit shady in color. So my brethren, remember these are the faults that we're likely to get when we get out of our twenties. When I said older men, you thought I meant old men up in their seventies.

No, not necessarily. It's just whenever that thing catches up with you, wherever you are. Now, those are the faults of older men.

Now let's get to our text. Hear what the Holy Spirit says. You older men, says the Holy Ghost, here's the way you're to be.

You're to be sober and grave and temperate, sound in faith and in love. And in patience, there's the cure for all these diseases. There's the way to head off these flaws and faults that are beginning to show like cracks in China.

Sobriety, what a beautiful thing sobriety is, if it's pleasant. Sobriety and gravity are two beautiful words. Sober doesn't mean not getting drunk.

I've looked that up very carefully in the Greek lexicon, and it doesn't have to do with drunkenness by wine only, but any kind of drunkenness, anything that makes your head untrustworthy, sobriety. And then there's gravity. Of course, that we've talked about in levity.

Here's the opposite of gravity. Then there's temperance. There's the control of your appetite.

A great many of the old English people used to die of gout. Gout came from overeating. One of the most celebrated preachers of his generation died of gout.

He was over fat and died of gout. He's one of God's greatest men. He missed this, evidently, in all of his careful Bible study, he missed this.

Sound in faith and in love and in patience. There's the old brother. His family may have gone now.

A lot of things might have happened to him that could have crimped him and hardened him and given him emotional rigidity, made him stubborn and churlish, but it didn't. Patience and love and faith and temperance and gravity and sobriety. He got them all because he started early enough and he learned to cultivate sober-mindedness and love and patience.

Thus, the older Christian man comes to the end of his life relaxed and peaceful and cheerful resignation and with no regrets like dear old Joseph, no, Jacob. Jacob said of Jacob that he pulled his feet into bed with him and he leaned on the top of his staff. Oh, Jacob, those old feet that took him so far astray when he was younger.

He'd gotten him in control. He'd gotten himself in control. He'd had his name changed.

Well, I'll honestly say to you, brethren, that I have not preached my sermon here sneakingly describing any one man in this congregation or any two or ten. There's a minimum of this kind of thing present in our church. But to head off any of it, I've preached this with the thought that we who are older, not any longer young men, can take this seriously and go to the Lord with the open Bible and pray, surrender, and see whether we can't get delivered from the natural faults of older men.

Just as you might go to a doctor, say, now, doctor, I'm past 55 and I understand that things begin to set in about that time. Look me over. What am I doing that I shouldn't do? How am I eating that I shouldn't be? So a man can come to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, now, Lord, thou has blessed me up through my youth.

And now I'm older and the scriptures warn about certain faults of older men. And I come to thee, Lord, and ask thee to help me so that I won't fall into these snares and my disposition won't become soured or hardened, but that I'll become like a beautiful day as the sun goes down, the sky goes pink and

rose-colored, that there will be a mellowness all over my life, that my grandchildren, my children, my neighbors, my friends will know that my Christian life hasn't been an empty profession, but it's been real. Now, you can't possibly be offended, can you, you older men? You can't possibly brush this aside, either, nor shrug it off.

This is serious. For the Holy Ghost says, speak thou that the aged men be sober, or the older men, for that's what the word means, be sober, be grave, be temperate, sound in faith and in love and in patience. May God grant that to us.

Amen.

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