

(Titus - Part 14): Temptations of Older Women

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of behavior and the temptations of older women, including gossip, intolerance, and excessive wine consumption, and provides a Christian rule for avoiding these temptations.

Duration: 32:28

Scripture: Titus 2:3

Topics: "Titus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the temptation that older women face in gossiping and spreading rumors. He emphasizes the importance of resisting this temptation and instead focusing on prayer and serving others. The speaker provides a Christian rule for dealing with the temptation to gossip, which involves asking four questions: Is it necessary, is it true, is it kind, and will it help anyone? He encourages listeners to approach gossip with humility and compassion, and to consider the impact their words may have on others.

Transcript

You know, we're following this almost phrase by phrase, and we're now in chapter two. And we have been dealing with the things that become sound doctrine. That is, the things that are in harmony with sound doctrine.

And last Sunday morning, I spoke on verse two. And my sermon was called, The Particular Temptations of Older Men. It says aged here, but aged to us means somebody in their eighties or nineties.

But actually, the word here is very closely related to the word from which we get our elder. Our word elder. The elders which are among you I exhort.

Well, this is very close to it. Not the precise word, but related so. It means simply an older man.

And I gave this talk on the temptations of older men. Now, verse three deals with older women. And I want to speak this morning on the peculiar temptations of older women.

I did not mean last Sunday's sermon to be taken humorously by anybody. Neither do I mean anybody to shrug or smile off what I say this morning. I'd much rather you get angry than to take it in a jocular fashion.

The world is too far spent. The judgment is too near. Time is running out, and we haven't time to be funny.

So, what I say this morning is going to be meant most seriously. That aged women likewise, the older women, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness. For holy women, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.

Now, that is a very brief summary. But it certainly doesn't exhaust instructions of the Holy Ghost to older women. Now, this verse, verse three, and the next one are instructions to women.

The next Sunday morning we'll deal with younger women. As you will see, it occurs there. I'm not putting it in here.

I didn't translate this Bible, nor write it. It's just here. We're coming to it, and when we're through with it, we'll pass on to something else.

Later on, it talks about young men. But here, it's to women. Now, you must keep in mind, as I have been trying to explain, that this was written to the Cretan church.

And these women had been pagan women. Not heathen women, in our use of the word heathen, but pagan women, as you would say that Assyrians or Greeks or Romans were pagans. They were pagan women, but they were now Christian women.

And Paul wanted them to know that the old way that they lived had to end. That they were now Christian women, no longer pagan women, and that the customs of Crete no longer were to be followed by them. They must have a complete transformation of mind and heart.

And they must accept their elevated place in society, in the Christian society. And they must adopt a whole new moral standard. And they must practice a whole new way of life.

Now, we must remember that what our friend Barney said when he was here is not in contradiction to this. He dealt with the imposition of a Western culture upon an Eastern culture. A way of life is what the word culture means and nothing else.

It had nothing to do with skim milk or the opera. But it means a way of life followed by a nation or people. And that he talked here at length three messages about the folly of taking our Western United States way of life and superimposing it upon them in the Philippines or in Thailand or somewhere else.

I agree with him as I think every intelligent person must. But there are practices among the heathen that while they're part of their culture, their way of life, still they're wrong. And wherever they are wrong, they are to be changed.

Christianity does not impose American civilization upon a Thailander. But Christianity says to the Thailander, As far as your way of life is simply custom, it's harmless, all right. But when it's sinful, it must change.

Christianity goes in and boldly takes over and transforms. And so the Holy Ghost said to the pagan women, Now, Christian women, you've lived your pagan lives and we've nothing to say. Now, you've changed.

And if you're going to enjoy the elevation that Christianity gives you, you're going to have to accept the responsibility that Christianity lays upon you. For don't forget that they were elevated by their faith in Jesus Christ. You women of America mustn't forget that Christianity places you higher than any other of the

major religions of the world.

And that while it does not confuse the offices of men and women, it certainly does not, I do not know another religious teacher of whom it could be said Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. In India, they are chattel and have no souls. And if they're real good, they may be born a cow later on.

That sounds funny, but it's just what they believe. In China, they bear the burdens. In Africa, they work the fields while the men hunt.

Among the Indians of this country, they did the same. Women are second-class citizens wherever Christianity has not gone. Where Christianity has gone, they become first-class citizens equal to the man.

But Christianity does not confuse the offices of men and women. Modern American civilization does. But Christianity does not.

It makes them equal, but it does not confuse the two. So said the Holy Ghost, if you women of Crete are going to accept your new elevated place in the esteem of mankind, you're going to have to accept the responsibility to live as becometh holy women. Now, to live as becometh holiness means they're instantly responsible to live holy lives.

And what does behavior mean? In behavior as becometh holiness, what does it mean? It means dress, general appearance, conversation, deportment, and moral conduct. I won't say anything about dress because you know I have been almost careless in my attitude toward the way women dress. I got burnt when I was a younger fellow with so much preaching on dress.

And I reacted from it so that I don't pay much attention to what a woman wears. If anybody asks me, what did I say? Who is that this that spoke to me? And my wife will say, how is she dressed? I never can answer. I never know.

I don't know. We can't identify a woman by her dress. But only one thing I'd like to say to you older women.

And there's nobody here like that at all, and I mean it. But is there anything more painfully pathetic than to see the aging Christmas tree who has long ago lost everything except a desire and makes up for what she hasn't got by tinsel and shiny gift cards? I think this is pathetic, really. It's terrible.

It's just simply terrible. Only one thing worse that I know of, and that is an old, battered, worn-out, leather-leaf, cheeked, old man with his teeth gone trying to make passes at the girls. That's next to this.

But this is second to it. I mean, that's worse than this. Well, anyway, general appearance and conversation and deportment and moral conduct.

Dean Spence said this. I thought it would be nice to quote it to you. He said that about these women, these older women, about her, there should be something in her general appearance, in her dress, in her speech, in her everyday behavior, which the younger and more thoughtless sisters could respect and reverence and hope someday to equal.

Now we come to the particular temptations of older women. Remember, I do not say that all older women fall into this. Just as my talk last Sunday, I did not say or mean to imply that all older men did or were guilty of the things that we named.

But just as if man, 55 to 57 years old, goes to a doctor, and if that doctor is any more than one that grinds the mouth, if he's the kind that sees his patient as a human being instead of merely a number, he sets him down and talks with him. Now he said, Mr. Smith, you're 55, you're 57. You can't live the way you did when you were 30.

There are certain things that you're likely to get. You've got to realize that physically you are now mature and developed to a place where these are your dangers, and they'll tell you what they are. Now it's the same thing with an older man.

There are certain weaknesses or temptations, certain moral bents or dispositional directions, which an older man's life will take that isn't true of a younger man. But just as a man can live to be 90 and not get any of the diseases he's warned about, so a Christian can happily live on and not be guilty of any of these things. And so the Christian women of this congregation or any congregation can, in the grace of God and by the transforming power of the Spirit and by prayer and the reading of the Word, stay clean from these things.

And if you have, you have, and I don't in any wise mean to say otherwise, but I want to be taken seriously. Let me name them for you. First one, Paul names himself here, gossip, evil speaking.

And of course, this is an occupational hazard for older women because they don't have the responsibilities. The younger women with her four children and her husband coming home hungry as a bear and her responsibilities doesn't have the time. But the older woman does because she has fewer things to occupy her and fewer things to do.

And so naturally she begins to think about her friends and pretty soon begins to talk about her friends. And then if she's human and if the grace of God hasn't worked within her, she begins to speak evilly of some of her friends. You see, certain people derive pleasure from detraction.

They love to hew other people down to their size. And they enjoy horrifying and shocking people. When I was a young boy at home, there was an old lady.

I've forgotten her name now. She was a very vivacious, busy woman. Now you will smile and think I'm trying to be humorous, but honestly I'm serious when I say that that woman talked incessantly, incessantly, literally incessantly.

Nobody could talk when she was around, and I remember as a boy watching her talk. And her tongue went in and out so fast it was worn thin. It was like a tiny piece of soap that has been worn thinner and thinner and thinner and you could almost shave with it.

That was her tongue. In and out it went. And I was sort of horrified by that.

Now my mother never did anything but smile. She didn't say a word about that old lady. But I as a young fellow, I was horrified to see that.

Here was a woman that might have been an example to all the neighborhood, but she was too, but not a good example. Now she enjoyed horrifying people or shocking them. In and out went that little mouse, her tongue.

Did you hear about so-and-so? Did you hear about so-and-so? Did you hear about where he was seen, where he was seen? Did you hear about her coming home at night and finding him drunk? Did you hear about it? And so it went. Now that is an occupational hazard for people who don't have anything else to do. Chances are if you spend two or three hours praying for missionaries, you won't have any time left to do that.

And a lot of you do spend that time. A lot of you spend your time on your Sunday school lesson and writing letters to people in college and people on the mission field. And you don't have time for this.

But it is nevertheless an occupational hazard. It is one of the particular temptations of older women. Now the Christian rule for this is very simple.

When you're tempted to pass on a juicy bit about somebody, ask yourself four questions. Is it necessary? Is any end going to be served by my passing this on? Second, is it true? Have I checked on it? Nobody has any right to pass on a juicy bit of story about anybody unless he's checked to know whether it's so. Because the man who makes the story up or the woman who makes the story up is a liar.

If it isn't true, it's a lie. And the person who passes it on without checking is half a liar. Because they have passed on a lie without checking to find that it was.

And then is it kind? And by kind I mean are you speaking kindly? It isn't a question of whether if a thing is true and you have to tell it and it's proper and necessary that you do tell it. It doesn't mean that you have to be soft and paw over people I've been pawed over and then stabbed. I don't mean that.

I mean are you speaking kindly? A surgeon sometime has to cut deep into flesh. A surgeon of my acquaintance told me this. I think I used this illustration two of the years ago.

It was fresh in my mind then. He told me that a woman came to him. Her husband brought her.

She had something wrong with one of her legs. And upon examination he said, This is cancer and there's only one thing to do, and that's to amputate. And they flew up and left him in a huff.

They said, We'll go to Mayo's. They went to Mayo's. And a few days later they were back very humble and chastened into his office and said, Doctor, we're sorry that we blew up on you.

We should have known better. Mayo's confirmed what you've said and we want to know now when can you operate? And this man said to me, Brother Tozer, he was a Christian doctor, he said, I spent a long time in prayer for here was a fine woman, good, well-built woman. And he said, then we got her ready and he said when she lay there and I had to take my instruments and cut into that beautiful body, he said, I cried like a child.

There was a surgeon who had to cut, but he was kind. It's necessary sometimes that we have to amputate. But the man that can enjoy doing it is a cynical and cruel man.

We only ought to amputate when we're able to weep. So I ask you now, Sister, when you were tempted to tell that on the other sister, are you doing this kindly? Is there a kind reason back of it? And fourthly, will it help anyone? Will it help the one spoken of or will it help the one spoken to? If it doesn't help the one spoken of, let us have an illustration. Let's have an illustration.

Suppose that I had a daughter 18 or 19 years old and she suddenly fell into company with a young woman whose background I knew. And I knew that this young woman whom she had suddenly fallen into fellowship with was a wicked, sinister, evil woman and that she had been in the habit of taking young Christian girls and gaining their confidence and leading them away. I would have to tell that daughter and tell her the whole thing, but it would be for her good.

And the answer to the question, is it necessary and does it do any good? Yes, it was necessary to save a young life. I don't anticipate anything like that, but I'm using an illustration merely. So there are times when it's necessary for you, an older woman, to say, watch so-and-so.

Pray and look out. There's danger there. And if you're doing it for somebody's good, then you can do it and it's not gossip and it's not evil speaking.

But the temptation is to rattle on half-true stories or stories with no meaning behind them and enjoy it. Second is intolerance. Intolerance is the incapacity to understand anything with which we don't agree.

It's the incapacity to sympathize with or even endure anything with which we don't agree. Now I have that in me. My grandmother on the farm used to say, big as a sheep.

It's in me as huge as a sheep, and I have to fight that all the time. I don't know I succeed in licking it wholly, but at least God knows I've got my dukes up. I'm not going to take this thing lying down.

But intolerance is the incapacity to understand or sympathize with anything with which you don't agree. So watch that, Mama, because that's the temptation of an older woman as well as an older man. Then censoriousness, fault-finding, carping attitude, the weakness of advancing years.

Can't forgive a young woman for being young. Can't forgive a pretty woman for being pretty. Can't forgive an attractive woman for being attractive.

And that seems to tend conveniently to forget the foibles of their own youth. Fourth is suspicion. And as I mulled over this word suspicion last week, I said to myself, what creates suspicion? Why do I suspect a young fellow, and why does the old woman suspect a young woman? Could it be the ghost of our own past? Could it be the ghost of our own yesterdays rising to remind us that that's the way young people do and we'd better watch out and pretty soon we're suspicious of our kids instead of trusting them? And fifth I don't have to mention to this congregation that is wine.

To you that has no significance because in your level of American society people don't drink, or at least as soon as they're converted they don't. But in Crete, Bacchus was worshipped and Bacchus was the god of wine. And there are great camp meetings in those days, there are great Bacchus conferences and camp meetings where one of the practices was to everybody get roaring drunk in the name of Bacchus.

And so of course when Paul wrote to these women here, these women who lived a lifetime nearly now in Crete, and he knew there, he knew how they lived, he knew they'd worshipped the god Bacchus and he knew that they had commonly when they met in their religious feasts they drank and enjoyed themselves. Well he said you've got to stop that. He said as Christians, we Christians don't do that.

So don't be given over as the pagan women are to much wine. Paul made his admonition very sharp. He said you older women, you've had a lifetime to get used to drinking but he said now you've got to break that.

As a Christian, no more of it. Now I'm almost finished. But he said teachers of good things.

That is by worthy example and by personal contact with your children and grandchildren and neighbors and friends. You can be an outstanding example. Just to think of somebody that's not here anymore.

I wonder how many of you women have been definitely influenced, strongly influenced in the right direction by Mrs. Gillespie who used to be in our congregation. Now she didn't dress in the latest sack outfit. I don't recall too well but it occurs to me just trying to visualize it that usually she was a little bit behind in her style but oh the example of godliness there.

The example of godliness and living for the whole world and I'm preaching to some people right now whose lives have been stamped by that one. Teaching, teachers of good things, setting a worthy example. Now after hearing what the men heard last Sunday morning and the women heard, older women heard this Sunday morning and what the younger women will hear next Sunday morning.

There are two ways we can react to it. Remember when our Lord Jesus Christ said these words, one of you shall betray me. Do you remember what his disciples said? Do you remember what they could have said? Said Lord it's he, Lord it's he, no Lord it's he, it's he but they didn't.

They said Lord is it I? And do you know something? That saved those disciples. That saved them. They scattered and fled but if they had not said Lord is it I they never would have returned.

But they saved themselves by an attitude of quick humility and saying oh God am I the one. With this story I'm finished. About six weeks ago I think it would be we ran in the Alliance Witness an article written by Furman Miller of Tocco Falls, Georgia.

A very brilliant and godly young man. It was just a little imaginative deal working with Nicodemus and was called what would you have said at the funeral of Nicodemus? The way he worked it out was this. He said Nicodemus was a shadowy character.

Came by night. Hardly knew whose side he was on. He wasn't bad, he wasn't good.

He was in a twilight zone and when he came to die what would you have said at his funeral? Could you have preached him into heaven joyously or would you have had to circuitously wind around and hope for the best? And he said some people are an embarrassment to the man who preaches their funeral sermon. You don't know what to say. Well, of course, we get letters.

We get letters about almost everything. And usually they don't mean too much. They're just comments.

Very often they're saying, Oh, praise the Lord. I'm glad for that. And that's all right too.

But we got two letters from two older men. Octogenarians. One of them said that article about Nicodemus is an atrocity.

Nicodemus was a better man than you made him out to be. Why, Dr. So-and-so in his book Thus and Thus said that Nicodemus was a better man, was a good man. And he spent a couple of pages putting us in our places and quoting from the authorities to show that all this was wrong.

Got a letter from another old man and I don't mind telling you who the other old man was. David Fand of Georgia. He wrote him.

Great big scrawl. Hardly make it out. And he said, Brother, I've been reading that.

You know how he talks. He said, he's in Atlanta. I've been reading that article.

He said, when I read that article, what would you say at the funeral of Nicodemus? I fell down on my knees and I said, oh, God help me to live so that when I die I won't embarrass the preacher. There's two ways to react to the same thing. One wrote to fight for two pages on the interpretation.

Another man wrote to scrawl over two pages, 83 years old he is, to scrawl over two pages penitence and sorrow of heart and humility and the longing to be Christlike. That's the two ways you can take sermons such as I'm giving you now. You can fight me and say, who does that whippersnapper imagine he is that he sets us older women in a place and talks us down.

Or you can say, oh, God, I heard thy voice through it all and I want thee to save me from falling into these snares that nature has set for older people. Now take your choice. Go out mad or go out deeply humbled.

A woman last week after I'd preached to men, I don't know who the woman was, I just heard her quoted. A woman last week after I'd preached to men said, well, the pastor preached to men this morning but he certainly talked to my heart. I want God to help me or words to that effect.

So shall we take it that way? When Paul, our teacher in the Holy Ghost turns to us and says, now you older men, live like Christians, watch out, there are temptations you can fall into. You older women, watch it, there are temptations you can fall into. Shall we fight him? Or shall we say, oh Lord, is it I? You do the latter.

You will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord and you'll be worthy of the communion service that follows and the communion service does follow and it's for all of the Lord's children. Anybody visiting us this morning may consider yourself welcome to share with us in the body and blood of the Lord. Brethren will gather please and we will have our monthly communion service.

It's not for our members, it's for the members of the body of Christ. Wherever they may be.

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