

(Titus - Part 16): Temptations Peculiar to Young Men

by A.W. Tozer

Young men are tempted by laziness, impulsiveness, and self-indulgence, which can lead to spiritual decline and destruction if left unchecked.

Duration: 41:33

Scripture: Titus 2:6

Topics: "Titus", "Temptations of Young Men", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

A.W. Tozer addresses the unique temptations faced by young men in his sermon on Titus, emphasizing the importance of being sober-minded and setting a pattern of good works. He identifies six key temptations: laziness, impulsiveness, self-indulgence, love of money, pride, and levity, urging young men to resist these pitfalls and develop their mental and spiritual capacities. Tozer stresses the need for serious reflection and deliberate action, warning against the dangers of living a life of ease and frivolity. He draws on biblical examples to illustrate how overcoming these temptations leads to a life of purpose and fulfillment in Christ. The preacher calls for a generation of Christians who are committed to growth and seriousness in their faith.

Transcript

We are studying Titus together these mornings, and beginning with verse 6, Paul says, Teach young men likewise, and exhort them 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, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Now as you know, without intending to do it, but because it seems a natural development of the text, I have over the last three Sunday mornings that I have preached here, preached on temptations peculiar to older men, another sermon on temptations peculiar to older women, and the last Sunday morning, temptations peculiar to young women. This morning, temptations peculiar to young men.

This is not to be sensational, but because it's here, and that seemed to be the easiest way to get at it. Now we want to talk a little about the temptations peculiar to young men, and I want to be understood as being 100% serious here, and I don't want any remarks from anybody, or any kidding, or nudging anybody in the ribs and say that means you. The Holy Ghost is talking here, and we'd better take it pretty seriously.

We'd better get pretty serious about the instructions given by the Holy Apostle as he was moved by the Spirit of God. Now how I arrived at this little list that I'm going to give you briefly, of temptations peculiar to young men, one, by experience, and two, by observation, and three, by reading and by talking to young men and having them come and tell me their woes, and the fourth, by examining Paul's letters to young men. Paul wrote three letters to young men, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.

Those are called the pastoral epistles. They might also be called the epistles to young men, because they're addressed to two young men, two to Timothy, one to Titus. We're dealing with the one to Titus today.

Now I want to mention the list. I only have six here. I suppose I'll dig up a seventh one if I'm going to be a good fundamentalist.

But there are six here that I notice. You may have a different list. The first one is laziness.

Paul said, stir up the gift of God that is in thee, and he addressed that to Timothy. And here to this man, he talked about good works. He said, show yourself to be a pattern of good works.

Which, knowing my own self, and having had sons in our own family, and being a pretty keen observer of the human scene, and reading a lot, and having a lot of people come to me and talk with me, I have concluded that laziness is one of the greatest sins of young Christian men. Now the average young man wants to work enough to make a living and no more. That's all.

He wants to work enough to make a living, and he doesn't want to be bothered with anything more than that. He wants to play, of course, a lot, and he wants to quit studying as soon as he leaves school. And the difference between physical labor and mental labor is very great, though they both take energy and application, lead to exhaustion, and require a lot of rest and refueling.

But the average American will agree to work ten hours a day if you don't let him know that he's got to do some thinking. Thinking is always harder than working. Any man can push a lawnmower, or dig a ditch, or drive a truck.

That's relatively easy. But to do a little thinking is relatively hard. And the man of God here says, Stir up the gift of God that is in thee.

To Timothy he says it. In other words, don't quit your studying as soon as you get out of school. The average person takes the path of least resistance as water finds its way down a hillside after rain, falling into every little crevice and crack getting down the hill the easiest way.

Now the human mind is fluid, but the human mind shouldn't be a puddle of water running down a hillside. There should be a human will back of it directing it. Now that's bad enough for the average person.

That's why we're a race of morons. We might as well admit it. It isn't kind to say it.

But if somebody doesn't say something that's credited to be unkind, we're just going to keep right on until we become cabbages. Cabbages sitting behind the wheels of automobiles. That's what we are mainly now, cabbages.

We die of heart attacks and get all sorts of diseases from lack of exercise. Just cabbages. And we have to have Time Magazine, Life Magazine, and Reader's Digest, or we would, the top of our head would cave in

from want of support for the simple reason that we are not learning.

And we won't read and we won't study. That's bad enough for the world, and that's why we're a generation of morons. But when we become Christians and are born again and get over into the Kingdom of God, it becomes infinitely more tragic when we allow this to happen to us.

When we leave undeveloped the vast riches of the soul, undeveloped completely the vast riches of the soul, like a farmer who has 10,000 acres of rich black loam, and all he does with it is to have a little garden half a block in size, and all the acres and thousands of acres lie there fallow, never produce anything but briars and weeds. The human beings are doing that. God never intended it.

When he redeemed us, he redeemed our mentality. And he meant that we should develop our mentalities. That's almost a bad word in the day in which we live among Christians.

But nevertheless, you have it. God saved your mind when he saved your soul and saved your body too. And he means that we should develop all the resources that we have.

And yet the average Christian man is willing to get old and shrink up and accept suspended growth as normal when actually it's abnormal. And it's tragic for everybody to live like that, but it's much more tragic for the Christian. Stir up the gift of God that is in thee, says Paul.

And elsewhere he rouses men to activity. And the book of Proverbs is a book more or less devoted to getting people up off their easy chairs and onto their feet and onto their knees and then up onto their feet in order to work. But the average person just won't.

Here's a newspaper lying here and a good book lying there. And we just can't bring ourselves to read the good book. Moody Bible Institute put out under the sponsorship and editorship of Wilbur Smith a series of books that they called the Wycliffe series, Wycliffe Library.

They were good books. But do you know what happened to that series? Do you know what happened to that library? They had to suspend publication. And the former head of Moody Publications told me that they were not moving.

They're lying on the shelf. What's moving? Religious fiction. That's moving.

Religious fiction. Or a wild and wooly blood and thunder tale of some missionary that got killed. They'll read that and they'll milk that for all that it's worth because it thrills them.

But to do a little reading, people just won't do it, a little thinking, laziness, mental laziness. Now you don't have to believe me, young fellow. You can smile and shrug and make a quip if you want to about this.

But just as sure as two and two add up to four, just as certain as the blue sky arches over this city this morning, just so certain you've either got to stir yourself or get old and shrink up and settle down to become a dried up cabbage. You'll get married. You'll have two or three or four children.

And you'll have a car which you'll keep turning in on another one and staying always in debt. And you'll get along, but you'll just get old and you'll dry up. It'll happen, and when it's all over, this magnificent machine called the mind which God has given you, you'll be feeding into it nothing but moronic pictures and capsule bits of reading you borrow from the cheapest magazines.

Now the second temptation peculiar to young men is impulsiveness. This may seem to contradict the other, but it does not. That is, a man's very health and high spirits, young man, works against him.

He's constantly tempted to do things impulsively without thinking them through. Paul said therefore to Timothy, Lay hands suddenly on no man. Why did he say that? Now lay hands on a man didn't mean to treat him rough.

It meant to ordain him. And Timothy was there to pick out men that the church felt were equipped for the ministry and ordain them. And Paul had noticed that Timothy tempted to ordain his friends or get all blessed up about somebody and ordain him before he had time to prove him.

So he said, Don't do that, Timothy. Watch it. Lay hands suddenly on no man.

Let every man prove himself. Now a temptation of young men is to act on impulse and waive the labor of mature deliberation. Watch it, young man.

And particularly the big steps. There are certain big steps. What kind of work you're going to engage in for a lifetime or whether you're not going to engage in any, but just hop around from job to job, which God forbid.

Another big job is where you're going to live. Another big task, I mean, to discover and determine. Another one is your marriage.

There's so much impulsive marrying these days that there's a tremendously high rate of divorce. And it comes from impulse. They just act on impulse.

Now that doesn't mean that these people are not lazy. You can be lazy and impulsive. In fact, you can be too lazy to deliberate and think things through and be forced to act on impulse.

Now watch that. Watch it. You say, Are you wanting to screw an old man's head down on my shoulders? No, God forbid that I should screw an old gray-haired head down on your young neck.

But I'd like to have you listen to the Holy Ghost and lay hands suddenly on no man and do nothing else suddenly. But take it easy and think things through and wait on God. When Jesus would do that which turned out to be one of the most strategically important acts of his life apart from his redemptive work on the cross, that is, choosing his disciples, you know what he did? He spent all night in prayer.

Well, he had them all around him there. He saw fine young men everywhere and he might have said, Well, I'm embarrassed to know who to choose. Look at them here, great droves of fine young Jews.

But he went to his father and spent one night asking his heavenly father to make him wise enough to know who the real disciple should be or the apostle. So after a night in prayer, he called unto him his disciples and picked out his twelve. So if even the very Son of God who had to take his time and move with deliberation, I recommend that you learn it.

Acting on impulse will get you in trouble. Well, in their self-indulgence, there's the third thing that a young man's tempted to do. So Paul said, Be sober and endure hardness and be temperate.

Those are the words in Timothy and Titus. Be sober and the translators, they can't get together on the word sober. They say reserved or self-possessed or temperate or cautious, and it means all of those

things.

At least the translators throw in all of those words. And endure hardness, he said. Now, self-indulgence is, we're tempted, a young man's tempted to this probably more than others.

And now, how does this self-indulgence, and where does it show itself? Well, it manifests itself in three directions. It manifests itself in sex, food, and pleasures. Pleasures of body, mind, and soul.

I'm going to deliberately pass over the first for the reason that some of you want me to discuss it. And all I would do if I did discuss it at any length would be to embarrass the tender-minded and feed the suggestions of the carnal-minded. And I don't want to do either.

I only want to remind you that God made you and he built sex into your disposition. And self-indulgence is going to harm and do terrific harm. We'll talk about food.

I know young men ask to eat more than an older man, but I'm a little shy of the fellow who is proud of being a chowhound, always. Every company, every barracks had a chowhound in it when I was in the service for a short time. The fellow who was known to be first in line and went around for seconds three times.

He was the chowhound. Well, my friend, that's cute, and it's always an object of fun, and it's finally laughed at so much or about so much that it becomes, after a while, it becomes quite the thing. But let me remind you, most solemnly young fellow, a chowhound now and a fat old cabbage 20 years from now.

And you can't escape it, and you might just as well accept it. And if I have a lot of you go out mad, go out mad. I just want to tell you, self-indulgence will get you.

I said up at Ottawa in the pre-council service that what we needed was lean, muscular godliness. And the poor fellow who was the publicity man missed me altogether, and it's appeared now in the religious news press stuff that I said that we were too lean in our Christianity. What I said was we weren't lean enough.

What I said was that we were too fat, and we had too much grease. We needed a lean godliness. I always pity people who get quoted in the papers because you never know whether they said it or not.

Never condemn anybody for anything you read in the newspaper. A few times I get quoted and never get quoted right. So remember that we need leanness and muscularliness, muscularity, instead of fatness.

Then there are the pleasures of the mind and of the soul. Pleasures, just fun, just fun. Remember what happened in Rome in the old days? Those cynical Roman emperors knew this.

They said the public wants two things, bread and circuses. Give them that and you can control them. Give them that and that's all they want, bread and circuses, food and fun.

So self-indulgence ate like termites at the heart of the Iron Empire until when the Goths and Vandals came down from the north, tough muscular men who lived off the land and who slept on the ground, tough muscular men, they smashed into the Roman Empire and it collapsed like an eggshell. America is the land of bread and circuses. We'd vote for the devil with three horns if he'd get two and a half cents an hour more in our pay and keep the prices down so we can eat enough to get too fat.

That's the spirit we're living in now. And I haven't a word to say to the world, let the world do that. The only message I have for the world is repent, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, but I'm preaching to people who are supposed to be Christians and I warn you that we can borrow from the world an excessive love of bread and circuses and collapse as a result.

Protestantism in America today is so shot through and through, so honeycombed with self-indulgence, that if Russia took over, we'd collapse. We haven't got enough internal strength to stand up. I remember what Franklin Roosevelt said, I don't often quote that man, but he said this and I remember it well.

He said, it's better to meet death on your feet than to live on your knees. And I still believe that, I still believe it. I believe it's better to live free Americans, die free Americans, than to grovel on our knees.

But if we continue to glorify bread and circuses, we'll get so soft and spongy and brittle, that we'll cave in when the time comes. Look what happened to France, poor France. Second World War, Maginot Line was going to protect her.

The Germans leaked the Maginot Line and those blubbery, overfed, oversexed, over-fun, loving Frenchmen threw up their hands and said, uncle, uncle. And you think it can't happen here, but it can happen here. So let's watch it.

Watch self-indulgence. Better be lean and muscular and self-possessed and sure of yourself than to be soft and spongy and in love with fun. Then there's love of money.

Love of money. Look what it did to people back there. Look at Jacob.

Jacob wanted his brother's birthright, which meant his brother's goods, and he got them. But look what he got with them. Balaam wanted the riches Balak could give him, and he got it, but he died fighting against God's people.

Judas, for 30 pieces of silver, sold the Lord of Glory. The rich young ruler said, what must I do to be saved? And when Jesus told him to give up his money, he sadly went away. So far as we know, never came back.

And all down the years, in the Bible and since Bible times, you'll see what a terrible thing love of money is. Some people say money's the root of all evil, but the Bible didn't say that. Never said it.

You show me where the Bible says that money is the root of all evil, and I'll buy you dinner. First person, of course, that comes gets the dinner. The rest wouldn't.

But know what the Bible says is that the love of money is a root of all evil. It doesn't say that money is the root of all evil. Not even Paul could make a statement like that stand, because the Donnys know nothing about money, but they certainly know plenty about evil.

And a man may have not a dime in his pocket, and yet may be full of iniquity. No, money's not the root of all evil. The love of money is a root from which all evil may spring.

That's what the Bible truly says. Then there's pride. Watch it, young fellow.

Pride of strength. Your strength is pretty small. You're proud of your athletic ability, your prowess.

Isn't it pathetic that when a baseball player's 32, they call him an old man? Isn't that pathetic? Strength pretty soon fades out on you, young man. There's a little word called ephemeral, and it's always had a strange fascination for me. Ephemeral.

It comes from the word ephemerid, and the word ephemerid is the name of a fly, a fly that lives only a few hours. If it is hatched in the morning, it dies before the sunset. It lives a day, sometimes not a full day.

That's an ephemerid. And from that we get our word ephemeral. The strength of a man's legs is ephemeral, for the day, for the hour.

And you'd better get rich in something that won't die when the sun sets. There isn't a man anywhere on the North American continent, or on any of the nine continents of the world, that has enough muscle to compete with an ordinary blue-nosed mule. Any Arkansas hee-haw mule out of the bush has more strength in his one right leg than any living man has in all of his body.

And I choose, if I'm going to compete, I choose to compete up on a level where I don't have as my honorable opponent an ordinary bobtailed mule. So my young friend, if you're inclined to be very proud of your strength, just use your imagination a little and look forward to the time when your voice is cracking and you have no strength left. David got him no heat.

You remember David the soldier? He got so old and he got him no heat. Didn't have electric blankets in those days. Poor old David.

Then there is the pride of knowledge. And knowledge is pitifully small. The reason a young man is so proud of his knowledge is he hasn't lived long enough to find out how little he knows.

And the reason an older man tends to be a little more cautious in his appraisal of his own knowledge is he's been around long enough to find out the number of things he'll never be able to know while the world stands. Levity is another one I'm through. Levity.

Paul exhorts us here, the young men here, to gravity and sincerity. You remember that? Gravity and sincerity. Now a sense of humor, as I've said many times, is a healthy thing.

It is a healthy thing. Missionaries testify to the value of a sense of humor on the field. If you're caught somewhere and have to drink muddy water or somebody brings you an egg that when you open it, it smells to high heaven, there are two ways to take, for a missionary to take that.

One is to take it seriously and be hurt by it and pity himself. The other way is to laugh long and loud and they do the second. They get rid of all these foolish things.

There's the missionary who told of the woman once among the Orient. She started to cook dinner for them and she noticed that the vessel in which she was going to boil the potatoes wasn't clean, so she spit on the edge of her apron and wiped it out, so it was clean. And the missionary that told her told her with a rollicking good humor.

He had taken it right. I remember another missionary now in heaven who used to tell about sleeping on stone beds in China, brick beds in China. He said he never thanked God so much in his life he had two sides.

He said because when one side got practically worn out and tired, he said he could turn over and rest it and let the other side take it. Now that's using your sense of humor right. That's using it right.

And I don't say we must walk around looking sober and never have a pleasantry. No, I don't. You know well, know better.

I don't have to defend myself on that. But I will say this, that it is a destructive thing when it gets control of a man. If a man controls his sense of humor, it's his servant.

When it gets in control of him, he becomes its slave. And I have known ministers who got the reputation of being funny and they're never quoted for anything except something funny they said. I pray to God Almighty that he'll let me be right and say something that's serious that I can be quoted for something serious that I've said.

I'm not talking about ministers now for the moment though Titus was a minister. But I have noticed that there's hardly a group of young Christians anywhere but what has at least one shallow-brained clown who imagines himself a born humorist who gets his ideas off the radio and out of readers' digest, but nevertheless reconditions them and uses them on the Christian group of young people with the joke and the quip and the story and the pun and the double meaning until it's practically impossible for some young people's groups ever to get serious because they've got the self-anointed clown there, the fool, court fool with his cap and bells, keeping everything funny. He thinks he's the life of the party, he's the bore of the world.

Such persons, thank God there are not many, but they're enough to ruin the average young people's group any time, of course, except when they're actually having a service. And even then, some of them can't keep still. Never permit the conversation to get serious.

There are some serious things happening in the world, boy, and you'd better gear into them now while you can, while you're intelligent and alive and healthy enough to think them through. You'd better leave the quips to Bob Hope, let Robert Q. Lewis be the clown. You're a Christian.

You'd better be a serious, grave Christian. Says gravity and sincerity. The reader's digest have its fun.

I look it over, too, sometimes. I even read the funny things in it, occasionally. But I am determined by the grace of God that this deadly thing is not going to ruin me.

This double meaning to everything that is said, this pun, this quip, this joke. We have a politician. He can't get defeated by what he puns about it.

He can't make a speech, but what he's punning and joking continues. And he is a smart cookie, without any doubt. And the stage certainly missed something when he went into politics.

But I wouldn't vote for him, if for no other reason, just because he's a clown. I don't want a cap and bell in the White House. We've got enough of them in Congress.

Be sober-minded, says the Holy Ghost. So the temptations that I see, young men, are particularly peculiar to young men. Laziness, impulsiveness, self-indulgence, the love of earthly goods, big cars and cars without tops, pride and levity.

You keep right on those six, and you're a whole lot better off. Now, I wondered yesterday, when I thought this over, I wondered if any man was ever free from the temptation, these temptations. I wondered about Joseph.

We think so much of Joseph. Don't you suppose that there were lots of times when Joseph was tempted to just lie down, fold his hands under his head, and just let the world go by? He didn't do it, though. So that's why it was Joseph.

Don't you suppose there were plenty of times when Daniel was tempted to act impulsively and without waiting on God, but he didn't do it. He prayed it through and got wisdom from God and stood up before kings. Don't you suppose there would be a time when, say, Nehemiah was tempted to be self-indulgent and let himself go and have fun while it was day, because the night comes when no man can eat? Well, he didn't do it, and so he led Israel back and built the walls of Zion.

Don't you suppose there were times when Stephen had the temptation? Don't you suppose he, as a young man, dreamed of marrying that beauty queen and having that beautiful house and having an estate and all the rest, but he sat on that temptation, conquered it by the grace of God, and was a grave and serious man? And even as a young man, they could not stand against the wisdom and spirit by which he spake. Don't you think there were times when David Brainerd tended to be proud of himself when he flexed his muscles and looked in the glass and said, Dave, you're a fine boy? But Dave got that under his feet. Don't you suppose there was a time when Mary McShane and Samuel Rutherford were tempted to pun and quip and be the clown? I suppose so.

They were human beings. Even Scotch people have sense of humor. Maybe not as big, but they have it.

So don't you think these holy men, such as McShane and Rutherford, don't you think they had their temptations? Yes, young man, they did. But the proof that they conquered them is in the fact that they have left to the world the legacy of saintliness that they did. If they had not conquered them, they would have conquered McShane and Rutherford and the rest.

So nobody's pleading for dour godliness. I'm only saying, let's watch. Let the conversation settle down to seriousness sometimes.

People never forget, as a young fellow, I'll tell this on myself and then I'll close. Never forget, when I was a young preacher, I learned my lesson. A young woman came to the house.

Oh, I think she was in her teens yet. She was a cute little fat thing, and our children were around there. She came over, and we just talked, and I teased her.

And that's about all I did, was just tease her. I forget her name now forever, but I remember teasing her. And the kids were around there, and we had a nice time.

And then, later on, I found that this girl was in serious difficulty, spiritually. And she had come to me for help. But I was the life of the party.

I knew more quips and more jokes, and so I had fun. And after a while, she left. And I never did help her.

I hoped she got help, but God Almighty knows she didn't get from me. And when I found how I'd failed this woman, I prayed, I think I prayed, and I certainly have tried to stop that kind of deal. That's the temptation

of the young man.

He is the Mark Twain of the 20th century. Be serious. Be grave.

Be sober-minded. Rush into nothing. Put a bridle on your appetites.

Don't yield to self-indulgence. Stir yourself up, and get up off your easy chair and get going. Shake your head till your brain begins to function.

Get some good books. Read up on them. Find out what God has for you.

Now, there it is, my brethren. There it is. There it is, young fellow.

You can dismiss me. It's a gray beard. And say, what is that fellow? Well, he's been dead for years and doesn't know it.

All right. Have your fun. Pun all you will.

But when it's over, it's either listen to God or be one more cabbage. And the Church of Christ is filled with sanctified cabbages. Vegetating.

Working enough to make a living. They'll be on Social Security when they retire. So let the world go by, and we'll sit and grow sluggish.

God is going to raise up another generation of Christians, I think, who will be different. I pray so, anyhow. Now, that's the temptations of young men.

Now, if I wanted to, my next sermon would be on the temptations peculiar to the working man. But I'm deliberately not going to preach it. Because in verse 9 it tells, and elsewhere, about the temptations of working men.

But I'm not going to get involved in that. We're all working men. Well, I guess that's all for this morning.

All right.

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