

Part 4, Thur (Toronto Spiritual Life Convention 1993)

by Eric J. Alexander

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a faithful teaching ministry, marked by sound doctrine, wholesome teaching, and the ability to set an example by doing what is good.

Duration: 57:03

Scripture: Titus 1:10-11, Titus 1:16 - 2:1, Titus 2:7-13

Topics: "Godly Living", "Sound Doctrine"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of living a godly life and setting a good example for others. He emphasizes the need for integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech in teaching the word of God. The grace of God is highlighted as the key factor in transforming people's lives and enabling them to live according to God's standards. The speaker also mentions the necessity of wholesome and sound teaching for the spiritual and moral well-being of believers.

Transcript

So much, and thank you for your presence here today. This fellowship with those who are involved in the Lord's work is a great and special privilege to me. Now, yesterday morning I was trying to open up something of the first chapter of Titus in our time together, and I want to turn this morning to the second chapter of Titus, although we didn't finish the first one yesterday.

I want to read with you chapter two of Titus and think with you about the theme of that chapter, which has been described as directions for a faithful teaching ministry. You will notice how often the word teach or teaching occurs as we read it. Chapter two of Titus then, you must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the word of God.

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything, set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness, and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Now, the title which I think actually appears on one translation of the New Testament, Directions for a Faithful Teaching Ministry, really is a suitable title for this particular chapter of Titus. At the beginning of chapter 2, the NIV from which I was reading fails to translate a strong adversative but, which links the beginning of chapter 2 with the end of chapter 1. Paul is describing in that second part of chapter 1, which we simply read yesterday, the ruinous effects of false teaching. And you will realize that this is the great burden of the Apostle in relation to false teaching.

It is not so much that it fails to meet his own orthodoxy, it is the damage, the moral damage, that false teaching does in the church of God. And he is therefore warning them against the ruinous effects of false teaching. And Titus, by contrast, is therefore to teach at the beginning of verse 2 what is in accord with sound doctrine.

So, the chapter really begins, but as for you, a common way to link different sections as it happens in the pastoral epistles. So, he is appealing in verse 1 both for a contrast and an accord in Titus's ministry. There must be a contrast between Titus and the purveyors of false doctrine, and there must be a harmony between Titus and sound doctrine.

You must teach contrary to what the false teachers teach. You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. What that simply means is that there is a body of truth from which Titus is not to deviate.

Paul calls it sound doctrine, and the word sound, as you probably know, is a characteristic of the pastoral epistles occurring something like eight times throughout these three letters, not only in relation to doctrine, but also, for example, in verse 2 of this chapter to faith, and in verse 8 to speech. It really means healthy or whole, and has the sense of undamaged and free from corruption. It's a very significant thing, I think, that Titus is being warned by Paul against the whole tendency that clearly he sees in the contemporary situation in the church of moving away from that body of sound healthy doctrine and corrupting it, and he is concerned about it, as I say, because of the spiritual and moral condition that teaching produces one way or another in the church, and that is the basis of Paul's counsel to Titus.

There is no question in our own experience, I'm sure you will be aware of it, that the teaching that is ministered in a particular situation does not just affect the orthodoxy of the hearers. It affects the morality of the hearers. Their whole pattern of life will be formed and shaped by the teaching.

That, of course, is why the fruit of the teacher's life and ministry is the test of what he is doing, because there is a moral effect in the lives of people from our teaching. The content of healthy teaching, therefore, is that it will match sound doctrine, and it will produce spiritual and moral health. The doctrine which is unsound will produce spiritual and moral sickness.

So the conclusion that Paul draws is that there is a pressing necessity for wholesome sound teaching for the sake of the spiritual and moral condition of the people. Now you will notice, just for the completeness, that in verse 7 and 8, Paul deals not only with the content of the teaching and its outcome, but with the manner in which Titus is to teach. In verse 7, in everything, set them an example by doing what is good in your teaching.

Show these characteristics. So here is the manner of their teaching, and it is threefold. One is integrity.

That is, Paul is urging Titus, as he has several times urged Timothy, that he is to show in relation to his handling of the truth the same kind of integrity that he would show in handling money, because the word is more often applied to our dealing with finances than with truth in Scripture. But you will see the importance of this. We must be as honest with God's Word as we would want to be with God's money.

And if we keep this whole idea of integrity before us, it will transform the way that we deal with the truth. We will no more consider manipulating the truth in our ministry than we would consider manipulating the accounts in our church life. Now it is a very striking thing to me that very many people will gladly manipulate the truth, who would never dream of manipulating the accounts.

But if you are a man or woman of integrity, your integrity will be seen in the way you refuse, as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4, to practice cunning or to handle the Word of God deceitfully, you will show absolute integrity in relation to it. Now that is an enormously important thing, because what it means is that we will never allow ourselves to use the Word of God for our own ends, to teach what we wanted to say. And don't tell me that's not a temptation to us.

We will be under the Word of God in the sense that we will simply want to expose it and allow the Word of God itself to be heard with absolute integrity. Now that's a very important principle in a teaching ministry. The second characteristic of this teaching ministry in verse 7 is seriousness.

In your teaching show integrity, seriousness. Now I don't think that that means unaffected solemnity, nor does it mean the suffocation of a natural sense of humor. But it does mean that Paul is anxious that Titus should never be mistaken as anything other than serious about God's Word, that he takes the Word of God seriously, and that when he expounds and teaches it, he expects other people to take it seriously as well.

It is therefore an absence of flippancy and frivolousness about the Word of God. We are to be serious about it in our study of it, and in our teaching of it, or people will not be serious about it in listening to it. So we are to handle the teaching with integrity, with seriousness.

And the third mark also in verse 7, going into verse 8, is unsoundness of speech that cannot be condemned. I think what that means simply is that the teaching of Titus is to be of such a kind that the sheer soundness and wholesomeness of the teaching will itself be so presented that it will be unanswerable. I don't think cannot be condemned means cannot be criticized, but I think it does mean that it is unanswerable, and you see that in the latter half of verse 8, so that those who oppose you may be

ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

So the quality of Titus' teaching is to be marked by integrity in relation to the truth, seriousness in relation to his manner, and soundness of speech which be condemned. Now if you come back with me to verse 2, between verses 2 and 9 there are five categories of people who are to be taught in this teaching ministry with a view to their moral and spiritual transformation. The primary implication, I think, is that this teaching which Paul is urging Titus to undertake must be both sound in content and relevant in application.

And so he turns to five different categories of people divided really according to age and sex and, in the last case, social position. And he begins with the older men. You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine, verse 2, teach the older men.

Now these are the presbutai, what someone has called the gray beards, and they are normally regarded with respect in the community and in the fellowship. But Paul is saying that they are to be in the fellowship, and you can see how he is spreading this teaching in an applicatory fashion round every section of the fellowship of God's people. They are to be respected because they have earned that respect.

In other words, respect does not simply come with age. It has to be earned. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect.

And so they are to be taught to be temperate, not only in relation to wine, I would judge, but as a general restraint upon self-indulgence. They are to be taught self-control, the middle of verse 2, and it's interesting to see that in three out of the five categories of people to whom Titus is to apply his teaching, they are urged to practice self-control. You get it again in verse 5 in relation to the younger women, and in verse 6 in relation to younger men.

But the older men and the younger men and women are urged to practice self-control. In some ways you would expect it in youth, the need for self-control. But my increasing conviction is that in age it is every bit as necessary for us to be disciplined to the end of our days.

Oswald Sanders, whom most of you would have known and many of you would have loved, came to be in our home some months before he died, and I have never been more impressed in my life by the sheer self-discipline and self-control of a man who was what, 90 years of age at the time, as in the life of Oswald Sanders. It was the secret of so much that he was, and clearly that is a mark of what Paul is urging Titus to impress upon those who are in the category of the older men. I don't know if you have come across Lady Antonia Fraser's biography of Oliver Cromwell.

It's a magnificent biography, and in the first introductory page she quotes a comment of John Milton on Oliver Cromwell. What was the secret of Cromwell's extraordinary life, of his magnificent gifts in government and leadership? And she quotes Milton as giving this answer of Cromwell, he first obtained the governance of himself. Now I'm sure that that is the key to so much effective Christian leadership and example.

He first obtained the governance of himself, and Paul urges Titus, teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Now there is the example that they are to set, do you notice? At the heart of this is the idea of being worthy of respect, and that carries with it one of Paul's commonest ideas of being an example to others. And what a glorious thing it is to covet as we grow older that we might be an example of such things as these, self-control, soundness in

faith, that is we have not veered away from the truth in our conviction.

Sound in love, because so often it is easy for truth and love to be rivals rather than friends in our lives. Or alternatives rather than companions. And sound in endurance, that is the evidence of a life where there has been perseverance.

Second group of people in verse 3 are the older women, likewise teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live. Now the whole idea behind this is that the mark of the older woman is that she has to have a godly demeanor. Notice it, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, which seems to have been a characteristic of Cretan life, and Titus as you know was in Crete, but to teach what is good.

So they are to avoid these excesses of the world around them, and to maintain a godly demeanor. Now one of the reasons for that is that they will have a ministry amongst the younger women particularly. And you will see again the idea of a model coming in, just as the older men are to be worthy of respect, the older women are to live with a godly demeanor, so that the younger women will be taught.

And Paul moves into this third category, describing this major ministry of the older women to the younger women. There are areas, of course, where men cannot really begin to be true teachers of these younger women, but the people who are ideally suited to do so are the older women. And they are the key to the establishing of a school of domestic godliness.

Now my dear friends, if there is one thing that we need within our Christian fellowships and families in the Church of Christ in our generation, it is a school of domestic godliness. And the older women are to teach the younger women that they might become self-controlled, loving wives, busy at home, kind, subject to their husbands. And do you notice the reason for that? It is not simply for the sake of domestic godliness for its own sake.

It is so that no one will malign the Word of God. Now there is, of course, a tremendous evangelistic impact in a community, as well as within the wider fellowship of a church, through the domestic godliness of which Paul is here speaking. It is for this reason, of course, that the high and holy calling of a Christian woman who is a Christian wife and a Christian mother and a Christian homemaker needs to be affirmed in our generation.

There is a grave tendency, I think, to demean the calling of a Christian mother and a Christian wife and a Christian homemaker, and to regard it as somehow or other second-rate, either intellectually or in other ways. But Paul is urging Titus to teach the older women such a godly demeanor that they will in turn become the teachers of the younger women, so that there may be established these centers of domestic godliness in order that no one will malign the Word of God. Now let me say that within the family of God's people there is another application of that whole matter, and it refers not just to married women and to women who have husbands and children.

It refers very often, in my experience, to single women or widowed women who have been the teachers of the young. I think of three godly ladies within our own congregation who have never been married and yet have been the implements in the hand of God in creating this very thing that Paul is here speaking about. Amongst younger women they have been mothers in Israel to some of these younger women.

Now that, of course, in no sense denies the validity of the woman who is called by God to serve Him in a career. It in no sense invalidates the particular gifts that God may give to some women which are used in other spheres. My great concern is that our tendency in the modern world, I think largely affected by the secular thinking of the godless, is to demean the idea of the godly woman who is a mother and homemaker or a mother in Israel and a teacher of younger women.

So, says Paul, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the word of God. Now to the young men, verses six and seven.

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything, set them an example by doing what is good. Titus is, of course, himself a young man and he is to urge the young men to exercise the same self-control that is obviously so important to Paul.

And in this, as in everything else, he is to teach them by example. That, you will remember, is where Paul told Timothy his authority would come from. Don't let anybody despise your youthfulness, he says, but be an example.

Set an example. This is exactly the same counsel that he is giving to Titus. The point of it is, of course, not simply that people might ape what you do in a mindless sort of way.

It is that we all of us have the need of a model. And that's why Paul so often says something like this, be imitators of me as I am of Christ. Or to the Philippians, whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice.

Now that is something that we all of us in some sense need. And of course, it is an essential part of the teaching ministry. We do not simply teach by our words.

We probably teach much more effectually by our lives. People read what we are. And if there is a contradiction, they will find it more difficult to hear what we say.

And it may be that we are able to proclaim and teach convincingly the truth as it is written. But clearly, Paul is saying, we need to be able to bring to people the truth as it becomes incarnate in our own lives. And that example, people will be looking for, my brothers and sisters, they will be looking for that example.

I vividly remember when I came first to St. George's Tron, I went into a home where there was a bereavement and a youngish man had died. And his mother was telling me how he had come to faith in Christ. And what had happened was that he was in St. George's Tron during the ministry of Tom Allen, of whom many of you will know.

And his mother said to me, you know, when Mr. Allen came to this church, Stephen, her son, began to come very regularly. He came into our home one day. And when he went away, Stephen said to me, there is something about Mr. Allen that is so different from anybody else I know.

And at night, she said, after that, for years, not weeks, she would be kneeling down by his bedside with him. And his prayer was almost consistently this, Lord Jesus, make me like you and like Mr. Allen. I was greatly struck by that because, you know, I think one of the things that we greatly need is models of godliness within our fellowships, so that people will say, young people, perhaps, young men of older men,

young women of older women, Lord, as I grow up into Christ, make me like that.

Now, there is no point in saying, ah, but they ought to have the Lord as their model. Of course they should. But Paul says, be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

And it's not surprising, therefore, that we find people like E.M. Bounds saying, while the church is on a stretch, if not on a strain, to find better methods, God is looking for better men. For men are God's methods. And while the church is looking for better methods, God is looking for better men.

Notice the fifth category. It is slaves, verses 9 and 10. Now, this is not an age or a sex group, but a social group, clearly, and I think we may apply it to two spheres.

I know there is discussion and difference about this, but it seems to me we may apply it to two spheres where lessons are to be learned from this particular teaching for our own sphere. First, to the sphere of the employer and employee relationship, and secondly, to the difficult situations and circumstances of all kinds in which people have to live, because this clearly is one of these in the first century, the extraordinary difficulty of living in a situation of the slave. And there are certain lessons that Paul urges Titus that are to be learned within this context.

One, a humble acknowledgement of our subordination to others. Teach them to be subject to their masters in everything. The whole business of subordination to others is one of the areas in modern life where I think we need to apply the truth of Scripture to the lives of people.

A ready willingness to be in subordination to other people. Secondly, a genuine attempt to give satisfaction. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them.

Now, in the whole area of the employer-employee relationship, this is something that business people in the city of Glasgow again and again tell me they are finding so difficult to inculcate into the lives of those who are their employees. And I think it ought to be a Christian characteristic, a willingness to acknowledge our subordination to others, and an attempt to give genuine satisfaction. Thirdly, a specific refusal to be argumentative or objectionable, to try to please them and not to talk back to them.

Now, it's a very significant thing, I think, that there is arising, certainly this is true in Britain, within the context of the employer-employee relationship, a lack of respect for seniority. Somebody came to me and said the other day that he wanted to explain to me why a young man in our congregation for whom I had written a reference was being dismissed. And he came to me and said, I am being dismissed because I am faithful to Christ in this place.

And he said, they are dismissing me because I'm being faithful to the Lord. Now, very significantly, his boss came to me because I had written the reference and crossed the road. He was in an office building on the other side of the street.

And he came to me and said, I want to explain to you, Mr. Alexander, why it is that I'm dismissing this man. Well, I said, I'd be very interested to know. He said, the first thing I want to tell you is it's got nothing whatsoever to do with his Christian faith.

I'm not a Christian, but he said, I respect the beliefs of people in our company who are. But he said, he is one of the most angular, difficult, objectionable, and impertinent young men I've ever come across. He says, he persists in calling me by my first name in company.

Now, I think this is the very thing the apostle is saying. If practical biblical godliness does not make a difference to somebody's relationship with their employer in the workplace, that employer is not going to be impressed by tracts handed to him, or books given to him, or whatever. This is the basic thing.

Fourth, a clear stand for absolute honesty. Verse 10, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted. A visible commitment to fidelity.

Now that's an area where in the modern world, we greatly need that kind of Christian testimony. When I was in New Mills in Ayrshire, we had a very wild young man who was converted. I remember Tom Reese coming to see me in the very early days of our ministry there.

When we arrived, there was one converted man in the congregation, and he was 82. And he said to me, I have prayed for 40 years for somebody to come to this place. Tom Reese came within the first year or two that we were there.

He said, you know what I would do if I were here as minister? I said, no. He said, I would pray that God would raise up a Lazarus. Now, we prayed that God would raise up a Lazarus.

You will remember that when Lazarus was raised, many of them believed an account of him. And the Lazarus who was raised was a rough character whom I first met when he was dead drunk, leaning up against the wall of the village hotel. And he became a strong, godly young man who is now an elder in that church.

But I remember him coming back from an interview that he had for a job. He didn't have a job for a long time, didn't want a job, but he was a trained car mechanic. And he went over to a nearby town and was interviewed.

I said to him, how did you get on? He said, absolutely amazing. I got the job. I've got it.

First one I've applied for and I got it. I said, how did the interview go? Well, he said, he said to me, why should I employ you? Tell me, why should I take you on? And he said, I said to him, well, I'm a Christian and there are advantages and disadvantages in employing me. He said, the disadvantage to you is that I'll never work on a Sunday.

And he said, I want to have my Sundays because I'm a young Christian and I need to be at church and learn about God. So he said, I won't work on a Sunday. And if you want me to work on a Sunday, I don't want the job.

But the advantage to you in employing me is that having become a Christian, I will never steal anything that belongs to you, either in terms of your time or anything in this garage. Nothing that belongs to you will I ever touch and make my own. And you can rely on the fact that whether you're here or a hundred miles away, I will be doing my job diligently because I'll be doing it for God, not for you.

He said he gave me the job. He now is the managing director of a large engineering concern in Ayrshire, not surprisingly. But you see, this is this visible commitment to absolute fidelity.

And it does matter enormously. Calvin says it is reserved for the gospel to teach that in the lowliest of all spheres of life, it is possible to find a setting where the jewel of God's saving grace may sparkle. Now you will notice again, the reason for this, and Paul repeats this in several places at the end of verse 10, to

show that they can be fully trusted so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Now that is where the teaching is made attractive, in the quality of the lives of God's people. Notice how Paul is concerned with this at the end of verse 5, in the quality of living of the godly women. He says the reason is so that no one will malign the word of God.

At the end of verse 8, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. At the end of verse 10, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. Now let me, as I finish, turn with you to what is really the motivation for such a way of life.

This is a description of what Titus was to teach. But the question that arises is how are people to be persuaded to live in this way? How can they be enabled to live in this way? Because this is not merely a case of giving people lectures, and you will notice how Paul goes on to tell us there is a simple answer to this question. How can people be persuaded and enabled to live in this way? Verse 11, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Now it is only that that will produce this moral transformation in people's lives which will command and underscore and validate the word of God. It is the grace of God that will do it. Not our persuasiveness, not any intellectual conquests of our own, not our own personal magnetism, but the moral revolution which is the work of the grace of God in someone's life.

Now that is why it is so vital, my brothers and sisters, that in our ministry of the gospel of the grace of God, we should be so thorough that people learn what the grace of God in Jesus Christ does. It does not merely alter my eternal destination. What Jesus Christ was accomplishing by His death and resurrection was a moral transformation of life.

And one of the problems that people have who discover that having been converted and then seeing no transformation in their lives, they go off to some second stage of experience hoping that they are now going to find the power to live a different life. But the power for the new life is in the gospel. And if we have devalued one thing more than any other in our modern age, we have devalued the terminology of the gospel.

Do we really believe that regeneration makes somebody a new creature? Do we believe that they have a new nature and that nature is the nature of God Himself? Do we really believe that when God redeems, He delivers us out of the bondage of sin and translates us into the kingdom of His dear Son and brings us under His rule and government? That is what the gospel is. And it is the grace of God that has appeared. Now you will notice that he uses this whole idea of the epiphany.

The epiphania is the appearing of the grace of God. But notice there is another epiphania in verse 13. While we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior.

Now notice there are two educative influences. The educative power of grace, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

That is the appearing of grace. But the appearing of glory also has an educative constraint. He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

Now you see, this waiting for the epiphania of glory, that has a moral consequence too. We who have this hope purify ourselves. That is the point of the waiting for the coming.

The waiting for the coming of the Savior does not merely produce intellectual gymnastics about the time or events of His coming. It produces moral revolution. And that is what Paul is saying.

So we live between these two appearings. We live between the appearing of grace and the appearing of glory. And both have an educative transforming effect upon our lives.

And we need to teach this because the grace of God teaches us. The coming glory teaches us to live in the light of His coming. So says Paul to Timothy, these are the things you should teach.

These things encourage and rebuke with all authority. What a great ministry that encouraging is, incidentally. I've gone over my time, which is my habit, but let me say a word to you about the ministry of encouraging.

Encouraging. It is a very vital ministry for many discouraged people in our generation. There are many discouraged believers living in very difficult circumstances in the world in which we live.

Those of us who are pastors, I think we have a special calling in these days to encourage the weak and the needy and the discouraged and those who are cast down, to encourage them in godliness. Now we will encourage them by our lives most of all. There is no question whatsoever about that.

That's how we encourage other people. They will look at us, please God, and they will say, God, if you have done that for them, you can do it for me. But we can encourage them with our lips as well.

Just let me say this to you. I have been so thankful to God in my life for some who have come alongside me and been encouragers, but I'm intrigued about one thing, and I leave it with you and I'm done. It seems to me that we are best at encouraging people when they have done well.

When I need encouraged is when I've done badly and I'm trying to scrape myself off the floor as it were. That's when I need encouraged. But we tend to encourage people when they've done well.

You know, it comes naturally to us then, but there is a spiritual encouragement that comes to people when they've done badly and says to them in the words of the prophet, rejoice not against me, O mine adversary. When I fall, I shall rise again. When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.

Now get up and in God's name, go on. Let's pray together. Father, for your holy word, we return our heartfelt thanks to you.

We so often have to acknowledge to you, Lord, that we feel like kindergarten children in some graduate school, and we scarcely begin to fathom the depths of your word. But we pray today that you would help us and make us faithful teachers of it and wise appliers of it to our people for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2340.mp3>

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