

Titus 2:1–3

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.

But Speak Thou — The Contrast

Chapter 2 opens with a pointed contrast. The end of chapter 1 had catalogued the disorder in Crete — the vain talkers, the deceivers, those who subvert whole houses, whose minds and consciences are defiled, who profess to know God but deny Him in their works. Now Darby's translation preserves the emphasis in the original: *But do thou speak the things which become sound doctrine*. The *thou* is emphatic. Titus, in contrast to all of that babblings and disorder, is to speak the things that belong to healthy teaching.

The task of speaking such things is harder than it sounds. James wrote that no man can tame the tongue — it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. The tongue that Titus had to use for order is the same instrument that in the hands of the disorderly was subverting whole houses. The answer is not the tongue itself but what it is given to say and whose authority stands behind it. What Titus spoke was not his own notions — it was the things that become sound doctrine, rooted in the word committed to the apostle Paul.

Sound Doctrine Forms Practice

It has been noticed throughout this epistle that there is an inseparable connection between doctrine and practice. Chapter 2 applies this in very practical domestic terms: aged men, aged women, young women, young men, servants — all are to be addressed, and what is said to each must be in accordance with sound doctrine. Not notions, not sentimentalities, not psychological theories, not the fashionable notions of the current age — but what the word of God teaches. Practice separated from doctrine is the practice of the flesh. The exhortation that no one can trace back to any doctrine is an exhortation from someone's own mind.

The order in which the groups are addressed is significant. It does not begin with the young men, though they might be thought most in need of order. It does not begin with the young women. It begins with the aged men — those most responsible — and works from there. The one who is most conscious of his own need of order will be most eager to hear himself addressed first, rather than being occupied with the disorder of others.

The Aged Men — Sober, Grave, Temperate, Sound

Four things are pressed upon the aged men: sober, grave, temperate, and sound in faith, love, and patience. Sober here carries the thought of temperance and self-restraint rather than freedom from drunkenness. It is an evenness of disposition, a steadiness that allows for sound judgment. A passionate person — one who gets hot under the collar — cannot see things as they truly are, because the passions distort the view.

Grave carries the thought of weight and substance. A grave man has something about him that is not light or frivolous. Levity is the opposite — that floating lightness without solid substance. What gravity is in the physical world — the force that draws things down to what is real and solid — gravity of character

does for a man's bearing: it gives him weight and substance, something to take seriously.

Temperate — Darby renders this discreet in verse 2 and also in verse 6. Discretion runs from the aged men to the young men, catching everyone in between. It is a quality of propriety and balance: knowing what is suitable to the house of God, avoiding unseemliness, maintaining proper relationships. In God's house, undue familiarity is not discretion.

Then sound in faith, love, and patience — three things. These are not three additional requirements alongside the four; the four and the three together make seven, the number of completeness. Sound means healthy: not defective, not lacking in any part. One can have a love that is unsound — sentimental, indulgent, calling evil good because it does not want to cause discomfort. One can have a patience that is unsound — mere passivity, without the hope that true patience is always connected with. The apostle calls for faith and love and patience that are genuinely healthy, that are what those things are meant to be as God has described them.

Patience in this context is the enduring constancy that is connected with hope — these three, faith, love, and patience, answer closely to faith, love, and hope. They are the three that abide (1 Corinthians 13:13), the same three that characterized the Thessalonians in chapter 1 of that epistle. They are not things that an aged man should be developing only in old age — they are to have been growing throughout a life of Christian discipleship. What is looked for in the aged man should have been taking shape from the time of the new birth onward. The aged man should be the grown fruit of what was planted at conversion.

The Aged Women — In Behaviour as Becometh Holiness

The aged women are to be in behaviour as becometh holiness — or as becometh a holy character, a priestly character. Their whole bearing and manner of life is to

be consistent with what is sacred. Not false accusers — the Greek word is the same used for the devil, the slanderer. Slandorous talk is devilish in character; it does not belong in the conduct of a woman whose life is meant to express holiness.

Not given to much wine — the same care for discretion and order that runs through the qualifications for the overseer applies also to the aged woman. And then the positive: teachers of good things. This is not the public teaching that 1 Timothy 2 reserves for men, but the practical wisdom and godly instruction that an older woman is fitted to pass on to younger women — in the home, in the daily contexts of life. The qualification for this teaching is the life that backs it up: a life in behaviour as becometh holiness, free from slander, free from excess, shaped by godly character. The aged woman who teaches good things teaches first by what she is.

— *Study ends* —