Titus 2:3–8

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

> *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing 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.*

Behaviour as Becometh Holiness

The aged women are to be in behaviour as becometh holiness — Darby renders it, as becometh those who have to say to sacred things. Every Christian has to say to sacred things, and therefore this deportment is not a peculiarity of a certain class but a character that belongs to all who name the name of Christ. When Moses stood at the burning bush, the Lord said to him, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. That is the posture of one who has to say to sacred things: a sense of what is holy, expressed outwardly in the whole deportment. The great spectrum of conduct observed among professing Christians — the diversity as to what is becoming — shows how little this is thought through in many places. There are no exceptions given in the verse.

Not false accusers — the word is the same used for the devil, the diabolos, the slanderer. To go about whispering against persons, seeking to influence others against someone by tale-bearing, is the devil's own work. Every matter must proceed upon the basis of facts, and in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is to be established — that principle runs from the Old Testament through the New. Slander is incompatible with Christian deportment.

Not enslaved to much wine — Darby's rendering is precise. The scripture does not teach teetotalism, but it does forbid enslavement. To be enslaved to anything other than the Lord Jesus is wrong. He who is a bondman of the Lord cannot also be enslaved to drink. And Ephesians draws the contrast directly: be not filled with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.

Teachers of Good Things — and What That Means

The aged women are to be teachers of good things — the word Darby renders as those who impart and enforce by will, counsel, and rebuke, rules of conduct. This is not an authorisation to set up women's teaching meetings where women take the place of a teacher to propound doctrine to be received on the authority of God's Word. The topics that follow in verses 4 and 5 are entirely domestic in character: to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home. There is no doctrine in that list. These are practical, godly things, best passed on in the context of personal relationship and daily life — living counsel to individual cases, as one has aptly expressed it.

And the first qualification for such teaching is that the elder woman herself lives what she would impart. The moral weight of an exhortation is proportional to the life behind it. One who speaks of what she has herself long practised speaks with a weight that no instruction from a stranger can carry. The elder woman who would teach must first know for herself what is right, by time given to God's Word, and then must live it. Growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord

Jesus Christ is what fits her for this work.

Love Their Husbands — Love Their Children — The Domestic Affections

The first two things the young women are to be admonished toward are domestic affections: to be attached to their husbands, to be attached to their children. Strong domestic affections are genuinely nourishing and comforting for everyone within the family. God sees the need of them and desires them in Christian homes. The apostle Paul shows sobriety and comeliness throughout: when it comes to the young women, he defers the communication through the aged women. Titus is not to take a direct role. Christian propriety governs the whole procedure.

Discreet and chaste: these two have deep roots. Discretion is not a mere veneer of seemly behaviour — it comes from deep within and governs how one moves through the world. Chastity, the singleness of heart and affection of a wife toward her own husband, is likewise something entwined deep in the inner person. The word *own* in *obedient to their own husbands* carries weight — the sense of the one the Lord provided, the one that is uniquely mine. Song of Solomon 6:9 speaks of this: *my dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one.* That uniqueness of relationship is behind the word own.

Keepers at home — Darby renders this diligent in home work. The sphere of a wife's responsibility and the place of her diligence is the home. Proverbs 31 gives the fullest picture of what this looks like in practice: the heart of her husband trusted in her, she did not eat the bread of idleness. The comment of one who has long thought on these things is apt here: we are never wiser than Scripture — especially when the currents of the world around us flow in a different direction.

That the Word of God Be Not Blasphemed

The purpose stated in verse 5 is searching: *that the word of God be not blasphemed.* Men will find occasion to speak against the word of God — but what is said in Christian homes must not hand them ammunition. If a Christian departs from the word of God and lives contrary to it, and someone uses that as grounds for blaspheming the word, the reproach falls on the one who departed. The Lord gave no occasion whatsoever for any charge to be brought against the things He said. *Which of you convinces me of sin?* He said. There was no gulf between His words and His walk. That is the standard — and failure is never grounds for lowering it.

Young Men — Exhort to Be Sober Minded

Verse 6 addresses the young men in very few words: *likewise exhort to be sober minded.* The brevity is itself significant. Titus, though an apostolic delegate, would look very much like a clergyman if he were to give the young men an extended list of requirements — a young man standing before a group of young men, giving them a long charge. Instead, by addressing the elder men fully, and the other groups in order, the young men will hear what Titus says to their elders and gather from it what they themselves need. And Titus himself is to be the pattern — *in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works.* The young man learns by seeing a life that embodies the teaching.

The quality pressed upon the young men — sober minded, discreet — is the same quality that runs from the aged men (verse 2) to the aged women (implicit in their deportment) to the young women (verse 5) to the young men (verse 6). It covers everyone. Discretion in God's house is a quality suited to all who gather there, from the oldest to the youngest.

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