

The Character of a Healthy Church (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 April 2015

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] We're still journeying through Titus, and we're targeting May 19th will be our last lesson, which is good because it dovetails with the ladies.

And I think some men ought to be in the building when the ladies are here. Had a few church break-ins and whatnot. The last time that I was up here, I can't tell you that, I was up here yesterday, we began looking at the character of a healthy church.

And our goal was to look at the biblical model established by the Spirit of God and then hold our own church up to that scrutiny or that standard.

Well, we followed Scripture by looking at older men, and there's a few of us in here, and older women. And Paul defined those folks as in his 60s.

I mentioned that to Diane, and she said, what does Paul know? And then we looked at younger women, and that's where we left off. So today, we're going to pick up our lesson by looking at what the Bible has to say about younger men in the church.

[1:37] And most of you in this room fit into this category. And here's what God has to say on this vitally important topic.

I'm in Titus 2, verses 6 to 8. Likewise, urge the young men to be sensible in all things. And show yourself to be an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. So Paul here urges the young men to be sensible in all things. And the Greek word there for urge is to strongly entreat someone.

The word sensible is used broadly, applied broadly, meaning exercise common sense in all things. It calls upon the young men in the church to exercise good judgment and self-control.

Now, we all know from previous studies that Paul's spiritual protege was Timothy. And this is what he had to say to him concerning this topic in 2 Timothy 2.22.

[3:01] He says, Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.

Young men can be impulsive. They can be volatile. They can be arrogant. By the way, so can some older men.

And we should know better. There was your amen. I was just about to say. Well, you've just heard from one of the older men. Right there. Paul says to these young men, exercise self-control and show good sense to bring your lives into line with God's desire for his church.

Now, you young guys in here, this is to you. And actually, it's to all of us. Paul understood just how important self-control was for the body of Christ.

Self-control, in fact, as you all know, made it to the list of the fruit of the Spirit. It's the last one in the fruit there. To master this was to please the Lord.

[4:26] And in talking about self-control, Paul had this to say to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 9. Paul understood that without exercising self-control, he stood a tremendous risk of being disqualified from serving the Lord.

And let me say, Paul lived in fear of that. He did not want to be disqualified. He worked at not being disqualified. Well, Paul writing to Timothy, I'm sorry, to Titus, who's out here looking for men to minister to the churches on Crete.

He says this. He says, show yourself. He's talking to Titus. And by extension, all of us. Show yourself to be an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is beyond reproach.

So Paul is passing on to Titus what God expects from him as he cares for the young men that are under his care in Crete.

And he gives to Titus a personal charge. He wants him to be an example for the young men to emulate.

[6:20] He wants them to pattern their lives after. And he wants to do this in two ways. He wants to give them verbal instruction on how to live a godly life.

And additionally, he wants to live such a life as an example of godly living. His words and his lifestyle had to correspond with each other.

An example is someone to model your life after. It was a copy of the original. Now, certainly we can do that with physical objects, a statue or whatever.

But it is also a principle of living such as virtue. Well, I want to be like that guy. He's a virtuous guy. He's got integrity. I want to emulate him.

There are a lot of men in this room I should pattern my life after. A lot of them. If you're going to give advice or counsel to anyone, you've got to follow that by living as an example.

[7:27] I cannot counsel a young man to love his wife if I don't love my wife. How am I going to do that?

How in the world will I do that? See, that leaves the realm of advice and enters into the realm of hypocrisy. And we know what the Lord has to say about hypocrisy.

Jesus didn't like hypocrisy. Religious hypocrisy was at the very top of his list of dislikes. In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus says, You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

Now, examples are to do those things that are good, to do those things that will be remembered long after the one doing them is gone.

I mean, let's face it. We're sitting here talking about the Apostle Paul. He died 2,000 years ago. We still remember. Paul told the Ephesian elders that they were to help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said it was more blessed to give than to receive.

[8:47] Paul could say with confidence that other believers should imitate him just as he had imitated Christ. And I wonder how many of us could counsel someone to be imitators of ourselves.

You know, I'd have to really think long and hard about that. Well, just do what I do. No, do what I say. You know, I'd really have to think about it. In verses 7 and 8, the Apostle Paul gives several examples of the behavior that the Lord is looking for in spiritual leadership.

And I'm sure this would be good in all leadership, but here he singles out the young men in the church. First, he says, be an example when it comes to good deeds.

And the word for good here does not mean something superficial, but something that is genuine and righteous and noble and excellent. Titus, like all true ministers, was to live what he preached.

I heard Dr. MacArthur not long ago, he said, my wife is totally unreasonable. She expects me to live up to everything that I preach on. He said, the woman is unreasonable. Live what you preach.

[10:09] His deeds were to reflect who he was and to reflect the fact that he had a legitimate calling from the Lord.

Now, we all know that believers have been created for good works that the Lord himself has prepared for us to do before we were even saved.

And you can read about that in Ephesians 2:10. We all know pretty much Ephesians 2:8 and 9. I always say, well, but keep reading. You've got to find out why he saved you by grace through faith and not of yourselves.

Created unto good works. Second, Titus was to be an example to the young men in the purity of his doctrine. Young men, hold pure doctrine.

Maintain pure doctrine. He was to preach that which was pure, orthodox doctrine. No mixture of error.

[11:18] At the same time, he was to avoid all things that were morally corrupt. Put together, the young men were to live lives of moral purity that corresponded to the purity of the doctrine that was to be proclaimed.

Titus was gathering men around him that were going to proclaim doctrine. They had to live it. They had to believe it. They had to know it. Titus was to accept the example of living a dignified life.

That is a life that is fixed on God. Young men are to honor God in all that they do. This touches the totality of life, not just church life.

Not just church life. It is impossible to divorce your Christianity from home life, from work life, from recreating life.

If you try to do that, you will leak all over. And I'm sad to say in my lifetime, I've sprung a number of leaks in my 35-year walk with the Lord.

[12 : 30] But you can't divorce those two. You can't. One pastor I remember hearing said, you can't live a bifurcated life. Well, I'm this way at work, but I'm this way at church, and I'm this way at home.

Now, being dignified doesn't mean you are devoid of a sense of humor. If it does, Wes and I are in big trouble.

Amen. There's a great example right there. You can laugh. You can enjoy life. But you can also distinguish between that which is important and that which is trivial.

Another thing, Titus was to set the example of being sound in speech that is beyond reproach.

Sound is being well, healthy, and whole.

The issue being spoken of here is our day-to-day conversations. What we say, guys, marks us out as spiritual men or not.

[13 : 37] And trust me when I say this, and the pastor said this many times, the world is watching us. And what are they watching us to do? Trip.

Trip up. Mess up. But we're always under that magnifying glass. When we, whether young or old, set the godly example, there is an impact.

We are to have an effect, if you will, on people. And Paul is going to talk to Titus about the effect in verse 2 and the second part of chapter 2, verse 8.

In order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. This has application to all members of the true church.

It applies to older men, older women, younger women, young men. When we live lives as God has ordained in His Word, those who oppose God are put to shame.

[14 : 50] Why? Because they cannot bring a legitimate charge against us before the Lord or before even other people.

They can bring a lie, an illegitimate charge, but not a legitimate. Holy living puts to shame any and all critics of Christ, His church, and His people.

It just tears them up. What should happen when someone opposed to God, Christ, and His church make an allegation or unfounded charge against a believer?

The public testimony of that believer's life should be so commonly known that the accused is embarrassed by his false claim. He should be laughed out of the room.

And I feel fairly certain that I've told you this story before, but I'm never bashful about telling it over and over, any of my stories.

[15 : 53] I had an officer who didn't like me. This was the early 90s. He's now gone to his reward through the LDS church. He started a rumor that I was having an affair with a woman, not my wife.

One interesting piece of that was I'd never met her. I mean, she could have walked into the room, but I wouldn't have known her. And a few weeks later, she was actually killed in an airplane crash out at the airport.

The first time I ever lay dives under was in the newspaper. They had a picture of her deceased, not the body, but, I mean, you know, for the funeral. And two things happened I always remembered.

I had an old crusty captain, John Evans. God helped John. Your dad did his funeral, Mike. I told him about the Lord, and no evidence he ever came to faith.

Died of a heart attack. Told me one time, he said, you know I'm a stupid man. I said, why do you say that, John? He said, because I know the way to eternal life, and I won't do anything about it.

What a sad commentary.

[16 : 58] But when that accusation was made, John looked at that officer, and he said, not this chief. They'd had a problem with some previous chiefs, but he said, not this chief.

And then I felt obligated to go home and tell Diane, because I wanted her to hear it, you know, from a third party. She starts laughing. And she said, when do you find time?

You know, I mean, my gosh, she knew where I was at every moment, every day. When do you find time? And that made me feel good. The impact or effect of a life of godliness is perhaps best emulated in the area of lifestyle evangelism.

The effectiveness of evangelism never comes from man-made methods, marketing strategies.

These are hollow things.

Of course, we're into that in a lot of places. But true evangelism springs from moral virtue, purity, and godliness as your life is put on display to the lost.

[18:06] It is vitally important the lost look at your life as a proof text of the truthfulness of God's word. That's what's being judged by the lost.

The lost should look at you and realize the power of Christ to redeem men from sin. The gospel is best believed by being best lived.

That's how we present the gospel. We live it. We live the gospel. The unbeliever is best put to shame when he really has nothing bad to say about you.

It is probably a weak example, but a couple of years ago I went through a number of lawsuits brought by a disgruntled employee at the police department. The attorneys representing the suing party had nothing, therefore they had to make up stuff.

They literally did. They had to lie and make up stuff if they had any chance of winning. A lot of that was done to anger me, hoping that if I got angry it would give them something worthwhile.

[19:13] I just remained silent. That always makes lawyers really mad. But my silence was very difficult for my officers.

And I had young officers come to me, and this was just a couple of years ago, pleading for me to say something or to strike back. Because a lot of this was in the newspaper.

Well, I didn't do so. But I told my officers, always remember something, my officers. Always remember, we have truth on our side. We have truth on our side.

And I assured them that one day we would stand before a jury and or a judge and expose the lies of the other side.

And as it turned out, I wasn't required to stand before a jury. All I had to do was stand before the chief federal judge of the Northern District of Oklahoma, who looked at the opposing lawyers and said, you guys are not being truthful.

[20:24] Said, you've not been truthful about the police chief, about his department. You've not presented a shred of evidence that anything is amiss there. And I'm tossing the case out.

So they went to the Tenth Circuit, Court of Appeals in Colorado, and they got embarrassed again because they said, you guys are not being honest.

And in the end, they had nothing bad to say about me or really my department because I had not done any of the things they'd accused me of. I just hadn't done them.

Wasn't even there in some cases. Please understand, young or old, we represent Christ in all that we do.

Good or bad, but we represent Christ. It can be good. It can be bad. Strive to never discredit Christ by the life you put on display to others.

[21:28] But remember, that battle, yeah, we can argue the battle's out here, and it is, but the real battle is inside. And trust me, guys, it rages in all of us.

It rages in all of us. Don't live one life publicly and another when you're alone. But it's a struggle. It's a struggle for me, I'm sure for many of you.

Someone has rightly said that character is what we do when we're alone. If you want to know the type of person you are, just review what you do when nobody's around.

Paul then goes into an interesting area, and he starts talking about slaves. And slavery was prevalent in that culture in that day.

And he's got something to say about slaves. It's difficult for us to equate slavery, so I'm using employees.

[22:35] Now, some of you, David, you know how it is with your boss. I know him well. He says this, urge bond slaves. When you see bond slaves, that's slaves.

Urge slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing and not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

Now, here Paul is going to talk about the responsibility of slaves. Let's carry it to the 21st century, employees in the workplace. The first four categories we looked at are older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and that's based upon age.

Here, the category is based upon social standing. It's social standing. And in Paul's day, many workers were slaved, owned, and controlled by someone else.

Slavery was an essential part of the Roman Empire. It drove much of its economy. Some slaves in Rome were abused, even killed by their masters.

[23:51] Others were given great responsibilities, ran household farms, even family businesses. Paul does not address the issue of slavery.

He offers no judgment on its fairness or its morality. I'm not talking about that. Now, he does touch on that, I think, in the book of Philemon, although some would say it was very subtle.

But he told Philemon, he said, accept your former slave back now as a brother. That's pretty simple language, one or two sentences.

But essentially, although it took a few thousand years, it destroyed slavery, certainly in the Christian nations. A Christian brother can't own another Christian brother and be in fellowship with the Lord. And it wiped it out. But it was very subtle. Now, in our day and in our country, we've outlawed slavery. And now, under capitalism, a man and a woman can work to support their family.

[25:07] But we in the workplace should adhere to the same biblical standards that Paul laid down for slaves. And they're interesting. First of all, he says, be submissive.

Urge slaves to be subject to their own masters and everything. A Christian worker, slave or free, is to be submissive or subject to their masters or employers.

Being subject to is a military term, meaning that obedience is required, not suggested.

Disobedience is to be absolute with two exceptions.

Disobedience is to be subject to their own masters. And it applies to all of us. But it certainly applies in my world. We are not to obey an unlawful order.

And we're not to obey an immoral order. An order that conflicts with Scripture. Now, Caesar doesn't understand that.

[26:05] And so you may be required to pay a penalty. It may cost you your job or whatever. But we're not to obey an immoral or an unlawful order.

And we have to be willing to accept the punishment exacted regardless of what that may entail. The Lord will make it right someday. He'll make it right.

If you're dissatisfied in your employment, you may become necessary to seek work elsewhere.

Proper submission to authority is essential.

The Lord talks about that throughout the New Testament especially. It is required for families, our relationship to the government. It is essential in the workplace. It is also essential in the church because we have an order in the church.

Paul also says that we are to live under the biblical standard and commit ourselves to excellence. He calls it this in verse 9.

[27:07] We are to be well-pleasing. We're to be well-pleasing. A Christian worker should be well-pleasing to his employers. We had a young man who grew up in his church.

I dare say that only Mike and I will recognize the name Jim Belcher. And I knew him third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade. We played Little League.

His dad, of course, Jim Costas. When I was in the FBI, the air traffic controllers went on strike nationwide.

Some of you are all after remembering that. As an FBI agent, we went to every air traffic controller in our area in North Oklahoma and gave them a letter written by President Reagan, which said, you've got to go back to work.

You're government employees. You can't strike. And that was just the way it was. And they, many of them did.

[28:09] Some of them didn't. A guy that I served a letter on in Tulsa, he was nine months from retirement. I said, you might want to really think about this. He said, I don't think Reagan will fire us. I said, I think this president will.

That guy went back to work. But my focus is Jim Belcher. He was in Lubbock. Refused to strike.

And he said, why? I said, because I took an oath and swore to God that I wouldn't do that. And Jim walked with the Lord.

And he got rocks through his window. What's the big windows? It's the windows. The big windows. Yeah, the big windows. He lost windows in his home, in his windshield, in his car.

When it was all over, he was the supervisor in Lubbock of the air traffic controllers. We're to be well-pleasing. That usually means be an excellent worker.

The word well-pleasing in the New Testament almost always refers to our relationship with God. We're to be well-pleasing to him.

[29:08] In the workplace, we ultimately report to the Lord. That's your ultimate boss. Christ Jesus is the ultimate overseer.

We cannot be well-pleasing to him if we are in rebellion to our employer or to our government. And Paul had this to say to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6, verses 1 to 2.

All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.

Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved.

Teach and preach these principles. We are to work hard. We're to be honest with our employer. It is not wrong to advance.

[30:15] It is not wrong to increase our salary. But these should not be our ultimate objective. Ultimately, strive to be well-pleasing to the Lord.

By honoring Him in the workplace, you may draw others to the cross. They'll want what you have. Paul then says to Titus, you've got to be respectful.

In verse 9c, the third part of that verse, he says, don't be argumentative. Now, that is not just an outburst of anger. It literally means we should not speak against our employer.

We are not to contradict. We are not to speak against. We are not to mouth off. Being argumentative is the very opposite of being submissive and well-pleasing.

He also says be honest, but he words it this way, not pilfering. That's an interesting word, isn't it? What is that?

[31:19] That is stealing by embezzlement. Every fall, and we've studied this, and it happens locally. Every fall, corporations in America, including those in this town, suffer millions in lost pens, pencils, and paper tablets.

Where do they go? School. They're brought home. They're given to their kids, and they take them to school.

At Phillips, they used to literally stock up because they knew September was coming. They used to have a great example of pilfering.

Ananias and Sapphira. They sold their property and made a pledge to the Holy Spirit. We're going to give all of it to the Lord.

And what did they do? They withheld some, didn't they? Now, what if they'd said, hey, we've sold this property. We're going to give some to the Lord. No one would have criticized them.

[32:36] No one would have criticized them. But they lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter confronted them because the Lord obviously gave him a vision. And their description was so serious that Ananias was struck dead.

And then the wife came in a few hours later and said, where's my husband? And they said, the feet of the men that took him out to bear are now going to take you out. And she's struck dead. And it's interesting, too, because it says, and great fear came over the church.

You think? Wow. Great fear came over the church. And then Paul's got some advice for you youngsters and you oldsters.

Be loyal, showing all good faith. The word used here is better rendered faithfulness, showing good faithfulness. We are to faithfully do whatever the Lord has called us to do.

Young men, you are to be trustworthy, reliable, and dependable. And it doesn't matter whether you're being watched by your employer or not. After all, we're never alone, are we?

[33:48] We're never alone. We're even called on to show our faith or faithfulness. As Christians, our loyalty should never come into question.

Listen, many in the workforce today are not loyal. Never let that be said of us. Well, Paul says, we do this, there's going to be a result.

Paul was always results-oriented, wasn't he? So what should the result of all this be? This is, you young men, listen, here's the result of living the type of life I've described tonight.

That you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. What makes the church attractive and influential in the world today?

Why should people today be drawn to the Lord and to his church? Guys, it's not programs. It is not marketing strategies.

[34 : 49] I remember a few years ago we were looking at retail marketers and doing what they did, you know, to try to bring people in. It's not the promise of health, wealth, and prosperity.

It is not so we can be healed. People are drawn to the church by virtue and holiness of God's people who are the church.

I told you before, the church is not brick and mortar. The church is people. And they're to be holy and righteous and pure and virtuous and put that on display to a dying, darkening world.

Because of this, we are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. At work, we're to be submissive, excellent workers, respectful, honest, and loyal servants.

We have a message to the unsaved about God. We have a message. The message is He's our Savior.

[35 : 51] He has saved us from our sins. And we want to extend that message and say, and He can be their Savior as well. We're to tell them not only by what we say, but how we work and what we do at work.

So, young guys, you have a charge from the Lord. And now you've got to go out there and live it. Thank you.