

Sound Doctrine #4 Younger men

Intro: Paul's letter to Titus includes instructions to be given to four distinct groups in the church based on age and sex. He is not only to "speak" the things that make for sound doctrine; he is to exhort or "encourage" them to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (v. 6). Tonight let's consider sound doctrine for "younger men".

Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:6-8)

Evidence after Information

Throughout the series we have seen that Paul's concern is that how we live may discredit the cause of Christ. To the younger women he urges a holy life "that the word of God may not be dishonored". Here Paul puts the stress on the church as the object of scorn or ridicule: "that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us" (Tit. 2:8).

Paul's words are based on the assumption that the church has opponents, that is, those who seek to do it harm.

Moreover he implies that the adversary will naturally speak evil of the church.

However he shows that if the Christian lives as he should, then such opponents will be "put to shame" (embarrassed by being discredited) by the godly life of the younger man.

Characteristics of younger men

Sensible

The idea is "self-mastery" (Guthrie), an especially needed virtue in view of the background culture.

Strabo observed that in Crete in particular younger males were sought out for homosexual relationships by older men and that such was considered a "rite of passage" to manhood.

The male assumed the "toga virilis" around the age of 18 with which there was the implication that a male was already mature enough for sexual advances. It caused Tacitus to write, "The elegant banquet...along with the use of the toga...are the enticements of Romanization, to vice and servitude" (Winter, p. 164).

(By the way, Paul's qualification of an elder, that he is to be a "husband of one wife", should be understood in light of this background. The Greek text uses the expression, "a one-woman man". This does not appear to refer to a man who has been married more than once, but to a man who participated in the after-dinners and thus had

sexual relationship with more than one woman! A “one-woman man” is qualified to serve by his sexual loyalty to his wife alone.) The cultural expectation for younger men was not very high. Cicero wrote, “If there is anyone who thinks that youth should be forbidden affairs even with courtesans, he is doubtless eminently austere, but his view is contrary not only to the license of this age, but also to the custom and concessions of our ancestors”. What Cicero affirms is not only that young men were following long standing tradition in being sexually active but also that such was to be expected among them! In an earlier lesson on the men, I mentioned the commonly practiced sexual immorality at the banquets and also the fights and brawls that often broke out as the men were intoxicated. Thus, the exhortation to “self-master” or “self-control” stood at the heart of the Christian young man’s behavior! Lack of self-control would be manifest in three key areas:

Abuse of wine
Temper
Sexuality

Titus, along with the other younger men, was encouraged to be an example of good deeds, i.e. to show others the way to live.

In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine

Here, by the way, Paul include Titus in his directives; thus, we can conclude that he was a “younger man”.

The metaphor is derived from the “impress of a die”. I.e. the “die” stamps out a pattern. It’s the word from which we get the word “type” as for example in “typewriter”.

With purity in doctrine

As a teacher of the word Titus was called upon to make sure his message was “pure”, that is, “untainted” by error. This was especially important in view of the false teaching that was being offered on the island of Crete. (Cf. 1:10-19)

Dignified

This word “semnotes” means “serious”.

KJV adds “sincerity”; but newer versions drop the term due to a lack of manuscript evidence.

Sound in speech which is beyond reproach

The word “sound” means “healthy” or “wholesome”.

The word “logos” means “speech” or word and refers to the content of Titus’ teaching.

Application for our time

There is a tendency for the society and church to have low expectations of younger men

Like the ancient world, our society still expects young men to “sow their wild oats”. Young men often do so and then pray for a crop failure! But, they will reap what they sow!

As parents we should have higher expectations of male youths. Young men need to hear the importance of building good habits of behavior early in life, of developing self-control in all things, especially in the area of sexuality and temper.

Young men can make an excellent contribution to the cause of Christ.

It is clear that God intended the leadership of the church to given to mature spiritual males, as is indicated from Titus one. However, Titus, as a young man, could have great impact upon the cause of Christ as a younger man and teacher of sound doctrine; and so young men today. Churches need to encourage younger men to pursue a spiritual life. We need to encourage young men to preach the gospel and to live the holy life.

Our training program is a good contribution toward this goal in giving young men the opportunity to prepare for preaching.

Young people need to be given opportunities to train for spiritual service (training classes, youth nights).

It would be a good idea for churches to become better informed about why young men do not aspire to preach or to serve in leadership roles. Ask the children of elders and preachers why they did not aspire to lead and preach. The answers could be useful in setting the conditions to attract young men to preaching and leadership.

Conclusion: I challenge the young men among us to rise to the standards of God’s word. It is a real joy to see younger men who want to serve the Lord.

As I get older the more important it is to me to help those who are younger become strong and well-informed in the gospel. I do indeed hope that when I leave this life I will have influenced other men to preach the word of God and carry on the great work of preaching the gospel.