

Prayer

Lord, speak to me in the quiet moments of this day. Touch my life and remind me to turn and choose Your way instead of mine. Encourage me to exercise the gifts and graces You have given me as a child of God. Walk with me along the pathway of my life and teach me according to Your Wisdom and Love. Lord, speak to me, so I will be ready to do Your will; AMEN.

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Weapons of War

Pray for the day when weapons will not be needed and swords will be 'turned into ploughshares' as prophesied. Pray that the Lord will judge the earth in righteousness.

On-going prayers

- Pray for those charged with the care of children in need
- Pray for all who suffer and have no access to medical care
- Give thanks for the security of the life God has given you

Meditation

Your Glory fills my life, O Lord, my God,

As the oxygen in the air fills our lungs as we breath;

As the light from a bulb fills each corner of a room;

As the life of a child fills the life of its parents;

As the gift of a friend fills the heart with affection;

As the smell of good food fills the appetite with hunger;

As the sound of an orchestra fills a hall full of people;

As the books of a library fill a nation with knowledge;

As the life of Christ fulfils our need for God's love;

Your glory fills my life, O Lord my God, and I rejoice in it!

Bible Study - Titus 2:6-10

⁶ In the same way, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Make yourself into an example of doing what is right in all things, and in your teaching show honesty, respectability, ⁸ and sound speech that is above criticism; then those who oppose you will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

⁹ Slaves must be submissive to their masters in all things; they must please, not answer back, ¹⁰ not pilfer, but in all conscience be committed to what is good, so that they may make the doctrine of God our Saviour attractive.

Review

Here in this passage, Paul continues to advise Titus about what he should teach as a leader of the church in Crete. The two pieces of advice he gives are in stark contrast to each other, for the advice to the 'younger men' (2:6-8) is something we can read, study and accept with ease, as if there was no time or culture difference between the days of Paul

and now. Quite differently, the second piece of advice (2:9,10) is difficult for us, because it is about the submission of slaves to masters; and although the teaching of proper behaviour may appear right and just, the very idea of slavery is offensive.

Nevertheless, we must remember that Paul frequently talked about 'slaves', indeed, he used slavery as a model for the relationship between the Christian and Christ on more than one occasion (see Romans 7:25, 1 Cor 7:22 etc.). All forms of slavery existed in Paul's day, from simple domestic service unlike what we think of as slavery, to more extreme examples. These include the slaves of Emperors and officials of the state, who were kept in large numbers and in appalling conditions for use as labour in their great military, building or sports projects. In everyday life, however, Paul was talking largely about people in domestic service in circumstances more similar to bonded labour, which makes his words easier to accept.

The advice to younger men It is interesting to note that Paul gives advice about 'younger men' nowhere else in his letters. The only other similar passage is in 1 Timothy 4, where Paul says to Timothy; 'let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.' (1 Tim 4:12). As we look carefully at today's passage, it is remarkably similar; indeed, the similarities can help us analyse the text.

Paul begins by recommending 'self control', itself a reminder of Paul's famous comment to Timothy; 'God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but rather a spirit of power and love and self control' (2 Tim 1:7). The advice to be self controlled is therefore something we do well to keep in mind, especially as advice given by Paul to both Timothy and Titus, two younger men who were leaders of the church. Paul then continues, advising Titus to set a personal example to other younger men ('make yourself into an example ...' – 2:7) and his advice is in two parts; firstly to do what is right (2:7) and then secondly to ensure that his speech when teaching is pure and 'above criticism' (2:8). This is remarkably similar to what Paul first said to Timothy, to 'set the believers an example in speech and conduct', but with conduct mentioned first and speech second!

The actual advice is straightforward, for doing what is right and maintaining clear and honest speech, especially when teaching, is always appropriate. What is interesting is the emphasis here on a moral code of correctness and uprightness within both the teacher and leader of God's people, according to the example of both Titus and Timothy. Moreover, this moral code is open and accessible, requiring the leader to be 'honest', 'respectable' and 'above criticism'. There is no room, in Paul's mind, for the Christian leader who is remote, a mystery to the church, and inaccessible to the people of God.

The advice to slaves In the previous section, Paul seems to mix his advice to Titus together with his advice to younger men. Something similar may be true of this next passage about slaves. Clearly, if we allow ourselves to stand back from our offence at slavery, we can see why Paul might wish to advise slaves to be submissive to their masters and suggest their good behaviour. His reasons for doing this are made clear in the text; 'so that they may make the doctrine of God our Saviour attractive' in other words, so that they would be a good example of faith. We might think such advice rather callous today, but we have no good way of assessing its worth (except in a most generalised way) in a time and culture so very different to our own.

However, it is also possible that Paul knew his advice about slaves would be taken not just literally, but figuratively; for he often spoke about the 'slavery' or 'service' of a Christian to his Lord. Read in this light, Paul's advice is quite pertinent; firstly, he advises submission to Christ as Lord and God, pleasing Him in all things. Secondly, he advises refraining from holding things back from our Lord (we can legitimately translate the word for 'pilfering' as 'withholding things for oneself'). Paul goes on to suggest that a Christian should be

committed to what is good 'in all conscience', and should ensure that the doctrines of the church are not compromised by the way they behave. It is quite powerful advice!

I suggest we keep an open mind about the object of Paul's advice to slaves, but accept the general principal of the teaching as it applies to us. In that way, we gain the most from this small but intriguing text.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How easy is it to be self controlled? Discuss why it is that people easily become angry or emotional about what happens to them.
2. How easy is it for younger people to be involved in the leadership of a church? How important is it to have a range of ages in a church leadership team?
3. What is the equivalent of 'slavery' today, in our world and our society. What can be accepted (if any) by the church and what must be fought?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I am struck by the fundamentally moral nature of this advice, and its appeal to people to uprightness and honesty, for example. There is nothing specially 'religious' in such things, except that because God has made us and placed us in His own moral universe, we should expect that Christian faith should reflect the best and highest moral values. Sometimes, it seems that the church attempts to play this down in an effort to appeal to people in the world, but it is my experience that people look up to those who maintain a high moral standard, even if such people are sometimes ridiculed. All of us face the challenge to maintain honesty and integrity and the highest of moral standards.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Reflect on the difficulties of maintaining high moral standards in the workplace and in social life today. In what ways is the Lord challenging you by this text? Pray about this and let the Lord guide you into a clearer understanding of your own responsibilities.*
- *Pray for your own country and its moral standards. Pray for all God's people and ask the Lord to bless them with courage to demonstrate the truths of the Gospel as the visible church of God in the world.*

Final Prayer

Lord God, this day is Your precious gift to all, especially those who own Your name. Keep us from falling, and fulfil Your purposes in us both today and in the future. Bring us to the end of the day rejoicing, and as Your disciples, may we be glad to be of service to You through all we do and say. AMEN