

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, October 20 2024

Sober, Sober, Sober – Titus 2
Part 3

Titus 3:14 *“And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.”*

Today we will resume our examination of Paul’s instruction to “speak thou the things which become sound doctrine”, ministering continual and specific provocation to practical godliness within the church, according to each member’s need and circumstance.

Titus 2:1-10 *“1 ¶ But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: 2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. 6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 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. 9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”*

Our goal is to examine and apply the practical instruction that the Holy Spirit provided for each of the demographics in the passage. As a reminder of what we have covered so far:

- Aged men – Sermon 5/12/2024
- Aged women
- Young women
- Young men – Sermon 6/30/24 + 10/20/24 (today)
- Preachers
- Servants

Summarizing the previous sermon:

The instruction that we are considering is for the elder men to exhort young men to be **sober minded**.

- This is not just instruction for young men; it applies to every demographic, all day, every day. It's why the sermon series is titled the way it is. The need to be sober is threaded throughout the entire passage. The fact that Paul is so pointed in his instruction to young men just speaks to the particular focus that young men must have. The fact is: every one of us has to make this our daily labor. We are forgetful sons and daughters of Adam that have to be renewed to this work continually.
- “Sober”:
 - Dictionary:
 - Not intoxicated
 - marked by sedate or gravely or earnestly thoughtful character or demeanor
 - marked by temperance, moderation, or seriousness
 - Greek:
 - Sophroneo [so-fron-eh'-o] (4993)
 - to exercise self control; to put a moderate estimate upon one's self, think of one's self soberly; to curb one's passions
 - This word is a verb; it indicates work that must be done.
 - Working definition:
 - Self-aware is central to sober-mindedness, and it is the opposite of self-absorbed. It is the insatiable pursuit of our natural flesh to feed our lust and pride. Our fleshly hearts cry out: “I want!”, “I deserve!”. Our flesh is intoxicated by the target of our desires; our focus is earthly and sensual; we desire escapism; it is short-sided and selfish. Self-awareness starts with shifting our view – on every topic - to God and eternity, and where we stand in relation. So much of the flesh instantly falls away when we remember what manner of creature we are, and where our hope of salvation lies. Sobering up from our worldly intoxication, and forcing our minds to self-awareness, means that we will then guide our decisions and behaviors from a spirit that is based on pleasing God, and serving others, rather than a spirit that wants to always and only serve ourselves. In short: sober self-awareness seeks to please God, and serve our fellow man; intoxicated, proud, lustful hearts seek to please ourselves.

In part 2 of this sermon series, we began to work our way through some condensed commentary from JC Ryle's book: 'Thoughts for Young Men', wherein he endeavors to exhort young men to be sober minded. Now we will read through the rest of it.

“Thoughts For Young Men” - Introduction:

“I am going to follow the Apostle's advice to ‘exhort the young men to be sober minded.’ There are four things which I propose to do”:

1. I will mention some general REASONS why young men need exhorting.
2. I will note some special DANGERS which young men need to be warned about.
3. I will give some general COUNSEL which I beg young men to receive.
4. I will set down some special RULES OF CONDUCT which I strongly advise young men to follow.

In part 2 of this sermon series, we covered 1) general REASONS, and 2) special DANGERS. To review:

- *1) General REASONS:*
 - *Death and judgment are waiting for young men, even as it waits for others, and they nearly all seem to forget it.*
 - *What young men will be, in all probability depends on what they are now, and they seem to forget this.*
 - *The devil uses special diligence to destroy the souls of young men, and they don't seem to know it.*
 - *Young men need exhorting because of the sorrow it will save them, to begin serving God now.*
- *2) Special DANGERS:*
 - *One danger to young men is PRIDE.*
 - *Another danger to young men is the LOVE OF PLEASURE.*
 - *Another danger to young men is THOUGHTLESSNESS.*
- *Moving on now to parts 3 and 4 of Ryle's book:*

General Counsel:

- **Try to get a clear view of the evil of sin.** Oh, don't let the devil succeed in persuading you that sin is a small matter! Think for a moment what the Bible says about sin; how it dwells naturally in the heart of every man and woman alive (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23), how it defiles our thoughts, words, and actions, and that continually (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19), how it renders us all guilty and abominable in the sight of a holy God (Isaiah 64:6; Habakkuk 1:13), how it leaves us utterly without hope of salvation, if we look to ourselves (Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:20), how its fruit in this world is shame, and its wages in the world to come--death (Romans 6:21, 23). Think calmly about all this. Think, moreover, of all the misery and sorrow that sin has caused, and is causing, to this very day. Pain, disease, death, strifes, quarrels, divisions, envy, jealousy, malice, deceit, fraud, and cheating, violence, oppression, robbery, selfishness, unkindness, and ingratitude; all these are the fruits of sin. Sin is the parent of them all. It is sin that has so marred and spoiled the face of God's creation. Young men, consider these things, and you

will not wonder that we preach as we do. Will you play with poison? Will you sport with hell? Will you take fire in your hand? Will you harbor your deadliest enemy in your arms? Oh, awake to a sense of sin's sinfulness and danger! Remember the words of Solomon: "Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour." (Proverbs 14:9).

- **Seek to become acquainted with our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is, indeed, the principal thing in Christianity. This is the cornerstone of Christianity. Till you know this, my warnings and advice will be useless, and your endeavors, whatever they may be, will be in vain. A watch that does not keep time is as useless as religion without Christ. But don't let me be misunderstood. It is not the mere knowing of Christ's name that I mean, it is the knowing of His mercy, grace, and power, the knowing of Him not by the hearing of the ear, but by the experience of your hearts. I want you to know Him by faith, I want you, as Paul says, to know "the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" (Philippians 3:10). I want you to be able to say of Him, He is my peace and my strength, my life and my consolation, my Physician and my Shepherd, my Savior and my God. Why do I make such a point of this? I do it because in Christ alone "all His [God's] fullness dwells" (Colossians 1:19), because in Him alone there is a full supply of all that we require for the needs of our souls. Of ourselves we are all poor, empty creatures, empty of righteousness and peace, empty of strength and comfort, empty of courage and patience, empty of power to stand, or go on, or make progress in this evil world. It is in Christ alone that all these things are to be found--grace, peace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is just in proportion as we live upon Him, that we are strong Christians. It is only when self is nothing and Christ is all our confidence, it is only then that we shall do great exploits. Only then are we armed for the battle of life, and shall overcome. Only then are we prepared for the journey of life, and shall move forward. To live on Christ, to draw all from Christ, to do all in the strength of Christ, to be ever looking to Christ; this is the true secret of spiritual prosperity. "I can do all things," says Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13).
- **Never forget that nothing is so important as your soul.** Your soul is eternal. It will live forever. The world and all that it contains will pass away -- firm, solid, beautiful, well-ordered as it is, the world will come to an end. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10). The works of statesmen, writers, painters, architects, are all short lived: your soul will outlive them all. The angel's voice shall proclaim one day, that "there should be time no longer!" (Revelation 10:6). Try, I beg you, to realize the fact, that your soul is the

one thing worth living for. It is the part of you which ought always be considered first. No place, no employment is good for you, which injures your soul. No friend, no companion deserves your confidence, who makes light of your soul's concerns. The man who hurts you, your property, your character, only does you temporary harm. Your true enemy is the one who plots to damage your soul. Think for a moment why you were born into the world. Not merely to eat and drink, and indulge the desires of the flesh, not merely to dress up your body, and follow its lusts wherever they may lead you, not merely to work, and sleep, and laugh, and talk, and enjoy yourselves, and think of nothing but time. No! you were meant for something higher and better than this. You were placed here to train for eternity. Your body was only intended to be a house for your immortal spirit. It is flying in the face of God's purposes to do as many do--to make the soul a servant to the body, and not the body a servant to the soul. Set your immortal soul before your mind's eye, and when men ask you why you live as you do, answer them in his spirit, "I live for my soul." Believe me, the day is fast coming when the soul will be the one thing men will think of, and the only question of importance will be this, "Is my soul lost or saved?"

- **Determine as long as you live to make the Bible your guide and adviser.** The Bible is God's merciful provision for sinful man's soul, the map by which he must steer his course. All that we need to know, in order to make us peaceful, holy, or happy, is richly contained there. Read it with the prayer that the Holy Spirit's grace will help you understand it. It has been said, "A man may just as soon read the Scripture without eyes, as understand the spirit of it without grace." Read it reverently, as the Word of God, not of man, believing implicitly that what it approves is right, and what it condemns is wrong. Be very sure that every doctrine which will not stand the test of Scripture is false. This will keep you from being tossed to and fro, and carried about by the dangerous opinions of these latter days. Be very sure that every practice in your life which is contrary to Scripture, is sinful and must be given up. This will settle many a question of conscience, and cut the knot of many a doubt. Remember how differently two kings of Judah read the Word of God: Jehoiakim read it, and at once tore the page to pieces, and burned it in the fire (Jeremiah 36:23). And why? Because his heart rebelled against it, and he was resolved not to obey. Josiah read it, and at once tore his clothes, and cried mightily to the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:19). And why? Because his heart was tender and obedient. He was ready to do anything which Scripture showed him was his duty. Oh that you may follow the last of these two, and not the first! And read it regularly. This is the only way to become "mighty in the Scriptures." A quick glance at the Bible now and then does little good. At that rate you will never become familiar with its treasures, or feel the sword of the Spirit fitted to your hand in the hour of conflict. But store up your mind with Scripture, by diligent reading, and you will

soon discover its value and power. Texts will rise up in your hearts in the moment of temptation. Commands will suggest themselves in times of doubt. Promises will come across your thoughts in the time of discouragement. And thus you will experience the truth of David's words, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11); and of Solomon's words, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." (Proverbs 6:22). I dwell on these things more because this is an age of reading. There seems no end to the producing of many books, though few of them are really profitable. There seems a rage for cheap printing and publishing. Newspapers of every sort abound, and the tone of some, which have the widest circulation, speaks badly for the taste of the age. Amid the flood of dangerous reading, I plead for my Master's book, I call upon you not to forget the book of the soul. Do not let newspapers, novels, and romances be read, while the prophets and Apostles be despised. Do not let the exciting and sensual swallow up your attention, while the edifying and the sanctifying can find no place in your mind. Young men, give the Bible the honor due to it every day you live. Whatever you read, read that first. And beware of bad books: there are plenty in this day. Take heed what you read. I suspect there is more harm done to souls in this way than most people have an idea is possible. Value all books in proportion as they are agreeable to Scripture. Those that are nearest to it are the best, and those that are farthest from it, and most contrary to it, the worst.

- **Never make an intimate friend of anyone who is not a friend of God.** Understand me, I do not speak of acquaintances. I do not mean that you ought to have nothing to do with anyone but true Christians. To take such a line is neither possible nor desirable in this world. But I do advise you to be very careful in your choice of friends. Do not open all your heart to a man merely because he is clever, agreeable, good-natured, and kind. These things are all very well in their way, but they are not everything. Never be satisfied with the friendship of any one who will not be useful to your soul. Believe me, the importance of this advice cannot be overrated. There is no telling the harm that is done by associating with godless companions and friends. The devil has few better helps in ruining a man's soul. Grant him this help, and he cares little for all the armor with which you may be armed against him. Good education, early habits of morality, sermons, books, all, he knows well, will avail you little, if you will only cling to ungodly friends. You may resist many open temptations, refuse many plain snares; but once you take up a bad companion, and he is content. That awful chapter which describes Amnon's wicked conduct about Tamar, almost begins with these words, "But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man." (2 Samuel 13:3). You must remember, we are all creatures of imitation: precept may teach us, but it is example that draws us.

There is that in us all, that we are always disposed to catch the ways of those with whom we live; and the more we like them, the stronger does the disposition grow. Without our being aware of it, they influence our tastes and opinions; we gradually give up what they dislike, and take up what they like, in order to become closer friends with them. And, worst of all, we catch their ways in things that are wrong far quicker than in things that are right. Health, unhappily, is not contagious, but disease is. It is far more easy to catch a chill than to impart a warmth; and to make each other's religion dwindle away, than grow and prosper. Young men, I ask you to take these things to heart. Before you let any one become your constant companion, before you get into the habit of telling him everything, and going to him with all your troubles and all your pleasures--before you do this, just think of what I have been saying; ask yourself, "Will this be a useful friendship to me or not?" " Evil communications" does indeed "corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). I wish that text were written in the hearts of all young men. Good friends are among our greatest blessings; they may keep us away from much evil, remind us of our course, speak an appropriate word at the right time, draw us upward, and draw us on. But a bad friend is a burden, a weight continually dragging, us down, and chaining us to earth. Remember the words of Solomon: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. " (Proverbs 13:20).

Special Rules For Young Men

- **Resolve at once, by God's help, to break off every known sin, however small.** Look within, each one of you. Examine your own hearts. Do you see there any habit or custom which you know is wrong in the sight of God? If you do, don't delay for a moment in attacking it. It may be a little one, but it is not any less dangerous. A small leak will sink a great ship, and a small spark will kindle a great fire, and a little allowed sin in like manner will ruin an immortal soul. Take my advice, and never spare a little sin. Israel was commanded to kill every Canaanite, both great and small. Act on the same principle, and show no mercy to little sins. They may look small and insignificant, but mind what I say, resist them, make no compromise, let no sin lodge quietly and undisturbed in your heart. There is nothing finer than the point of a needle, but when it has made a hole, it draws all the thread after it. Remember the Apostle's words, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6).
- **Resolve, by God's help, to shun everything which may prove an occasion of sin.** It is an excellent saying, "He that would be safe from the acts of evil, must widely avoid the occasions." It is not enough that we determine not to commit sin, we must carefully keep at a distance from all approaches to it. By this test we ought to examine the ways we spend our time--the books that we read, the friends that

we visit, the part of society which we interact with. We must not be content with saying, "There is nothing wrong here;" we must go further, and say, "Is there anything here which may cause me to sin?" This is one great reason why idleness is to be avoided. It is not that doing nothing is of itself so wicked; it is the opportunity it affords to evil and empty thoughts; it is the wide door it opens for Satan to throw in the seeds of bad things; it is this which is mainly to be feared. If David had not given opportunity to the devil, by walking on his house-top in Jerusalem with nothing to do, he probably never would have seen Bathsheba bathing, nor murdered her husband Uriah. This, too, is one good reason why worldly entertainments are so objectionable. It may be difficult, in some instances, to show that they are, in themselves, positively unscriptural and wrong. But there is little difficulty in showing that the tendency of almost all of them is most injurious to the soul. They sow the seeds of an earthly and sensual frame of mind. They war against the life of faith. They promote an unhealthy and unnatural craving after excitement. They minister to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. They dim the view of heaven and eternity, and give a false color to the things of time. They take away time for private prayer, and Scripture reading, and calm communion with God. The man who mingles in them is like one who gives Satan an advantage. He has a battle to fight, and he gives his enemy the help of sun, and wind, and hill. It would indeed be strange if he did not find himself continually overcome. Young men, endeavor, as much as you can, to keep clear of everything which may prove injurious to your soul. It is dangerous to play tricks with sharp tools: it is far more dangerous to take liberties with your immortal soul. He that would be safe must not come near the brink of danger. He must look on his heart as a barrel of gunpowder, and be cautious not to handle one spark of temptation more than he can help. What is the use of your praying, "Lord keep me from temptation," unless you are careful not to run into it and "keep me from evil," unless you show a desire to keep out of its way.

- **Resolve never to forget the eye of God.** The eye of God! Think of that. Everywhere, in every house, in every field, in every room, in every company, alone or in a crowd, the eye of God is always on you. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3), and they are eyes that read hearts as well as actions. Endeavor, I beg you, to realize this fact. Remember that you have to deal with an all-seeing God, a God who never sleeps, a God who understands your thoughts, and with whom the night shines as the day. You may leave your father's house, and go away, like the prodigal, into a far country, and think that there is nobody to watch your conduct; but the eye and ear of God are there before you. You may deceive your parents or employers, you may tell them lies, and act one way before their faces, and another behind their backs, but you cannot deceive God. Yes; men entertain thoughts in private, and say words in

private, and do acts in private, which they would be ashamed and blush to have exposed before the world. The sound of a footstep coming has stopped many a deed of wickedness. A knock at the door has caused many an evil work to be hastily suspended, and hurriedly laid aside. But oh, what miserable folly is all this! There is an all-seeing Witness with us wherever we go. Lock the door, pull down the blind, turn out the light; it doesn't matter, it makes no difference; God is everywhere, you cannot shut Him out, or prevent His seeing. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13). Young men, I ask all of you to read Psalm 139. I advise all of you to learn it by heart. Make it the test of all your dealings in this world's business: say to yourself often, "Do I remember that God sees me?" Live as in the sight of God. This is what Abraham did, he walked before Him. This is what Enoch did, he walked with Him. This is what heaven itself will be, the eternal presence of God. Do nothing that you would not like God to see. Say nothing, you would not like God to hear. Write nothing, you would not like God to read. Go no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me." Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, "What are you doing?"

- **Be diligent in the practice of your Christianity.** Be regular in going to church, whenever it is open for prayer and preaching, and it is in your power to attend. I would not want to leave any false impression on your minds. Do not go away and say I told you that going to church made up the whole of Christianity. I will tell you no such thing. I have no wish to see you grow up formalists and Pharisees. If you think the mere carrying of your body to a certain building, at certain times, on a certain day in the week, will make you a Christian, and prepare you to meet God, I tell you flatly you are miserably deceived. All services without heart-service are unprofitable and vain. They only are true worshipers who "worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." (John 4:23). But the practices of Christianity are not to be despised because they are not saviors. The value of the practices of Christianity, like other things, depends, in a great measure, on the manner and spirit in which we use them. A spirit of disregard for this day is growing up among us with fearful rapidity, and not least among young men. Sunday vacations, Sunday visiting, Sunday excursions, to the exclusion of church attendance and honoring of the Lord, are becoming more common every year than they were, and are doing infinite harm to souls. Young men, be jealous on this point. Resolve not to miss church on Sunday and the fellowship of God's people. Fellowship and worship are a foretaste and a fragment of heaven. The man who finds them a burden and not a privilege, may be sure that his heart stands in need of a mighty change.

- **Resolve that wherever you are, you will pray.** Prayer is the life-breath of a man's soul. Without it, we may have a name to live, and be counted Christians; but we are dead in the sight of God. The feeling that we must cry to God for mercy and peace is a mark of salvation; and the habit of spreading before Him our soul's needs is an evidence that we have the spirit of adoption. And prayer is the appointed way to obtain the relief of our spiritual necessities. It opens the treasury, and sets the fountain flowing. If we don't have, it is because we don't ask. Prayer is the way to procure the outpouring of the Spirit upon our hearts. Jesus has promised the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He is ready to come down with all His precious gifts, renewing, sanctifying, purifying, strengthening, cheering, encouraging, enlightening, teaching, directing, guiding, into all truth. But then He waits to be asked. And here it is, I say it with sorrow, here it is that men fall short so miserably. Few indeed are to be found who pray: there are many who go down on their knees, and say a form perhaps, but few who pray; few who cry out to God, few who call on the Lord, few who seek as if they wanted to find, few who knock as if they hungered and thirsted, few who wrestle, few who strive with God earnestly for an answer, few who give Him no rest, few who continue in prayer, few who pray always without ceasing and do not grow weak. Yes: few pray! It is just one of the things assumed as a matter of course, but seldom practiced; a thing which is everybody's business, but in fact hardly anybody performs. God has no speechless children. If you are to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, you must pray: it is in vain to look for strength in the hour of trial, if it has not been sought for. I can believe that you find it difficult to do, difficulties about opportunities to pray, and times to pray, and places to pray. I dare not lay down too strict rules on such points as these. I leave them to your own conscience. You must be guided by circumstances. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed on a mountain; Isaac prayed in the fields; Hezekiah turned his face to the wall as he lay upon his bed; Daniel prayed by the riverside; Peter, the Apostle, on the housetop. All that I contend for is this, you must know what it is to "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matthew 6:6). Without this, all my advice and counsel is useless. This is that piece of spiritual armor which Paul names last in his list, in Ephesians 6, but it is in truth that is first in value and importance. This is that meat which you must eat daily, if you would travel safely through the wilderness of this life.

I love you all. Amen.