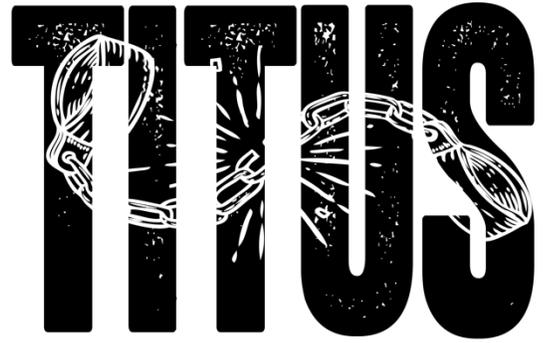


October 20, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

The Prime of Life
Titus 2:1-2



When is the prime of life?

- Is it when we are the most fit and beautiful in our 20s and 30s?
- Is it when we don't have wrinkles and we don't groan when we get out of bed?
- Is it right out of college when we have all the answers to the world's problems?

Many, including me, would argue that the last two decades of life are usually the prime of life, spiritually speaking. Our older disciples of Jesus have accepted their own finiteness; they have accepted the imperfections of this present world and they have realized how the world's pleasures can't satisfy.

The older generation have seen the hand of God, have seen prayers answered, have seen God's love walk them through tragic circumstances, and they have seen the power of forgiveness and the healing work of the Holy Spirit. They can speak to these things on a deep, profound level because they have experienced them.

The tragedy is that many saints forfeit the prime of their lives through moral failure, bitterness and resentment, unforgiveness, and a list of "what ifs and could haves".

But Paul has a different plan for the older men on the island of Crete. According to Paul in the book of Titus, when you and I find ourselves in the fourth quarter of life, God calls us to drive those legs into that end zone with every ounce of spiritual, emotional and physical strength left in our bodies. At the beginning of Titus chapter 2, Paul gets very specific about what is going to allow our older men to get into that end zone.

¹ *But as for you, communicate the behavior that goes with sound teaching.*

² *Older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. (Titus 2:1-2)*

Chapter 2 begins with an emphatic pronoun, "But as for you . . ." It's in contrast to the false teachers who don't preach sound doctrine, who turn people away from the truth, who subvert households, and whose lives are abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

It's directed to Titus, "Hey, you, Titus! Here's what I want you to do. I want you to teach older men, older women, younger men, younger women, and slaves what spiritual maturity looks like as they live out their assignments in Crete. Communicate the behavior that goes with sound teaching!"

It describes six qualities of older men: temperate, dignified, self-controlled, and sound in faith, love and endurance:

Temperate (<i>nephalios</i>)	They need to be restrained and sober. This is a Greek word that literally means they are not to be intoxicated with wine or alcohol. Remember, Cretans were known as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. You must avoid the drunken parties on that island. Christ wants you to stand out and not indulge your appetites and remember your priorities.
Dignified (<i>semnos</i>)	It means honorable and worthy of respect. It means he's the kind of man who over the years has won the respect of his children, his wife, co-workers and friends.
Self-controlled (<i>sophron</i>)	Similar to restrained, but goes further into the area of sound judgment against impulsiveness; measured restraint.
Sound in faith (<i>pistis</i>)	Literally "wholesome in faith." Believing in Christ, which determines Christian identity and expresses itself in the good works that God has for us.
Sound in love (<i>agape</i>)	They must be sound in agape love - other-centered love - exercise-of-the-will kind of love. Paul says (1 Cor. 13:1-3) you can speak the tongues of men and angels, but if you don't have agape, you are a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
Sound in endurance (<i>hypomone</i>)	At the end of 1 Corinthians 13 we hear that the greatest virtues are faith, hope, and love. Here Paul exchanges hope with endurance for these older men. It fits because patience, endurance, and perseverance flow out of hope. <i>Hypomone</i> (endurance) allows one to endure tribulation and allows one to be transformed by tribulation (Rom. 5:3-4, 2 Cor 1:6, 2 Thes. 1:4).

God wants us at the end of our lives - however many years He gives us - applying our hearts to wisdom, serving the younger generations by the will of God, making disciples of all the nations, praying always, loving our spouses, mentoring our children and grandchildren, blessing our neighbors and seeking first His kingdom.

OUR SWANSONG PRAYER:

In Psalm 71, King David late in life has this prayer:

So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? (Psalm 71:18-19)

Older men, is this your swansong prayer?

David says that the reason he wants to live is because he has a message that the generations must hear!

Give me a chance, O God, to teach another generation about Your might, Your power, Your righteousness, You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?

