

Don't Die a Weak, Wishy-washy Old Man

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“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness” (Titus 2:1-2).

This is how Paul begins his Spirit-inspired advice to various demographics in the church. **Older men**, be sure to die with your boots on (verse 2). **Older women**, don't become busy, gossiping do-nothings. Instead, focus your energy on training and nurturing the younger women in the church. Model Christian femininity for them (verses 3-4a). **Young women**, rock at your job as a homemaker. Your refusal to bow to the world's value system proves that the Bible actually works (verses 4b-5). **Young men**, get a grip on your faith and man up. Cut out the locker-room talk, quit making excuses for sin, and start modeling the genuine Christian leadership—something the church so desperately needs (verses 6-8). **Servants**, it's not all about you or “your rights.” Be honest, hard-working, and submissive, even if your owner/boss/manager doesn't deserve your loyalty. After all, you may be the only Bible some people see (verses 9-10).

These commands address with the specific shortcoming you tend to see in each of these

groups of people. (And it wouldn't be a bad idea for shepherds to read Titus 2 every month before the church.)

What's surprising to me, however, is Paul's command for older men to be "sound in faith" (verse 2). **I suppose I find it strange because I typically think of men who have been Christians for a long time as being *least* at risk of being "unsound in faith."** We have this stereotype that older Christians are usually the strongest Christians.

But the more I think about it, the more I see the Spirit's wisdom here. **The history of the Lord's church is full of men who were at one point committed to a sound, zealous faith in their younger years, but their convictions became weak as they aged.** While I won't give real-life examples of this phenomenon (I feel doing so would be counterproductive here), my bookshelves are littered with books written by men who were committed to sound doctrine in their early days, but in their later years they started to compromise.

The word here translated "sound" refers to being both *healthy* and *free from error*. If older men are to be "sound in faith," they must know what they believe with conviction; their faith must be grounded in Scripture. Instead of having a weak, wishy-washy faith, aged Christians should be *bulwarks* of the faith. If you ask them a Bible question, their answers shouldn't be *fuzzy*.

I've known older preachers who were once adamant in their opposition to gambling, divorce, adultery, unauthorized worship, immodest clothing, etc. But as they advanced in age—**especially as their children got entangled in some of these sins**—they became soft. Their beliefs started incorporating worldly pragmatism; they started paying more attention to what those *outside* the church were saying rather than what the Bible said. **Their biblical discernment became murkier, not clearer.**

My words are not meant to offend older Christians who are genuinely trying their best to "fight the good fight" (1 Tim. 1:18). I simply want to call older Christians to hold fast, because it is disheartening to younger Christians (such as myself) when the convictions of those we admire begin to deteriorate due to increasing doctrinal relativism. **My plea to older Christian men is this: Please remain "sound in faith."** It is one thing to modify your beliefs as you continue to study the Bible honestly. But it is an entirely different thing to modify your beliefs to accommodate those who are pressuring you to change. Please, "hold the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), because younger Christians need you.

