*Introduction*

Here we are, 4 days into 2015. Has the new year prompted you to make life changes? If so, are you doing them or have you already broken those new year resolutions?

I'm sure for many of us, health and fitness are once again at the top of our priorities for this new year. It's true that all of us could probably do with losing a few pounds or eating less junk food or doing a bit more exercise.

But what about your spiritual life - have you given that any thought for the new year?

Actually, our spiritual growth and 'fitness' should be at the top of our priorities. Because if we are spiritually right, then we will have fewer physical problems, because the spiritual and the physical are linked.

One example I will give of this is that of unforgiveness. God's forgiveness of our sin is dependent on us forgiving those who have wronged us.

***Matt 6:15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.***

***Luke 6:37 ‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.***

***Eph 4:26‘In your anger do not sin’: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,***

So if you are angry with someone and you let it build up and build up, two things are happening:

1. You have not forgiven them

2. You are stating to burn with wanting revenge, or you allow it to consume you from the inside.

Many people do this, they do not forgive and let it go, instead they hold on to it and it becomes their focus, or it will get pushed into the background ready to re-surface at a later date. But the effect it has on you physically will manifest itself in various ways.

Eventually you may become quite ill.

So we need to be right spiritually. Its important.

Over the past 6-8 months, you have been fed from the pulpit things to help equip you spiritually and grow spiritually.

We had a series on the fruit of the Spirit, we have looked at Grace and repentance, direction and destination. Drifting, the armour of God, giving and receiving, as well as things to strengthen our faith like You are important to God, God is always on time and last week - faith for the future.

The Vision day was important and we saw our need to live for Christ and develop our faith and lives to bring glory to our Lord and Saviour.

As we read from the book of Titus in a moment, I want you to ask yourself the following questions:

Is this written for just a Church leader?

Does it speak about me or someone else?

Do I fulfil its conditions?

READ: Titus 2 (all chapter)

PRAYER.

**Is this written for just a Church leader?**

The opening phrase of this chapter is *You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine*.

You would be right in thinking that this is being written to and for Titus. Titus was a Church leader and had responsibilities to teach the members of the Church sound doctrine on how they were to live.

So as we read, we see that Titus has to teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self controlled, sound in faith, love and endurance.

The older women to be reverent, not to slander, not to get addicted to wine, to teach what is good and train the younger women.

The young women are to be trained to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands.

The young men are to be self controlled.

Slaves are to be subject to their masters, to please them, not talk back, not steal and to be trustworthy.

So its for Titus, that means I can switch off from it and not worry about what its saying.

Well, let's ask the second question:

**Does it speak about me or someone else?**

Well, there are 5 different catagories of people here. Do you fit into one of them?

Well, lets take the age of 50 as the dividing point.

Put your hands up if you are 50 or over? - so we have older men and women here!

Put your hands up if you are under 50? - so we have young men and women here!

Any slaves? - well, if you work for someone and have a contract of employment, you probably fit this one as well.

The definition of a slave according to the concise English dictionary is:

A person wholly subject to another; a bondman.

Why is a slave subject to the master, because the master has paid a price for them and they are now his.

Therefore, if we proclaim Christ as our Lord - we are slaves.

**The point I am making here is that this chapter speaks to everyone of us.**

The third question:

**Do I fulfil its conditions?**

Just take a moment to look at your group.

Do you, do I fulfil these things.

Those of us who are men & 50 and over, are we living verse 2

***temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.***

Because if we are not, what hope have those under 50 got of living right lives, we are to live as examples to them, we are to be role models of society as it were.

The problem the world has today, is that young people do not have, on the whole, good role models to emulate, to be like, to aspire to.

Young women, have you been taught how to be a good wife and mother, a homemaker - I know its not PC these days to talk in this way, but God has not changed.

When we read this passage with other bible passages on a similar theme we get the whole and proper picture.

If we were just to take "Young women are to love their husbands and children and be subject to their husbands" we would get a biased view and leave the way open for husbands to be overbearing. But when we put Scripture with Scripture we see that although this is correct - Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church (died for).

There is another question we need to ask:

**Why are we instructed to live this way, why is it so important?**

This chapter gives us three reasons, very important reasons.

1. v5 - So that no-one will malign the Word of God

2. v7 - So that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

3. v10 - So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour (Jesus) attractive.

How often have you heard someone say things like, "and your a Christian?" or "if that's how a Christian behaves I want nothing to do with them" or "What makes you any different from me?"

*Conclusion*

*Do you claim to be a Christian?*

If so, does the grace that has been lavished on you through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus and the faith you have in him cause you to say NO.

***v11-12 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age***

We have not been saved just for eternity, when it begins, but for the here and now!

We are to be different to the world in every part of our lives.

We are to be 'like Christ' at all times - on the rugby pitch, the golfing green, the works party, at work, at school or university, at home, whether meeting in public or private, walking the dog, shopping, out for coffee, even in our thinking, the things we watch on TV!

***upright and godly lives in this present age*** - while we wait for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

So as we start this new year, the challenge for all of us, if we love Christ Jesus our LORD, is that we get spiritually fit, we get close to Him, we walk with Him, we talk with Him, we read His word - so that we become like HIM!

Amen