

A Few Godly Men

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Date: 27 May 2018

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[0:00] You know, we don't entrust our kids to just anybody. The volunteers serving a king's kids, we know them.

We trust them. We've done background checks on them. Do you know why? The welfare of our kids depends on it. Maybe you have some older parents that you've been caring for and the time has come for you to entrust them to others to care for them.

You weren't able to help them. And you needed a level of care for your elderly parents that you couldn't give. And so you send them to some kind of assisted care facility and you're going to want to know who these people are you're sending your parents to.

You need to know them and trust them. Why? Because the well-being of your parents depends on it. This morning we're going to see that God our Father entrusts the welfare of His children, the blood bought of Jesus, to a few godly men in a local church called elders.

This morning we're going to be talking about leadership in the local church. God doesn't entrust His blood bought to just anybody. He entrusts those He's purchased with the blood of Jesus to qualified men that He will hold accountable on the last day.

[1:43] And do you know why? The spiritual well-being of the church depends on it. The spiritual well-being of our church depends in large part on the spiritual well-being of the elders that lead this church.

Therefore, we must trust God and His Word in determining which men are to be appointed as elders in this church.

In short, leadership matters to a church. So if you'd open up your Bibles to the book of Titus. We started a study of Titus last week. And this morning we're going to look at a passage on the qualifications of elders.

And I'd like to read it for you. Titus chapter 1, verses 5 through 16. Hear the word of the Lord. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.

[2:59] He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give sound doctrine, instruction in sound doctrine, and also rebuke those who contradict it.

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works.

[4:11] They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. The spiritual well-being of our church, of Christ the King Church, our spiritual health depends in large part on the spiritual health of the men

who give leadership to this church.

And so we've got to be very careful to obey what God says in His Word about appointing men to the office of elders. So this morning, I want you to see three things from this passage. An elder's responsibility, an elder's qualifications, and an elder's unique call to confront falsehood.

We're going to spend the bulk of our time on that middle point, the qualifications of elders, but let's look at the responsibility of an elder. God is calling not just a few good men, He's calling a few godly men.

In chapter 1, verse 5, we see the reason, the purpose, Paul left Titus in Crete. This is why I, Paul, left you, Titus, in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

So just a little background. Paul and Titus, an apostolic gospel band, had shared the gospel through town after town in Crete, first century, and evidently there was a response response of repentance and faith to the gospel preached, and there now were Christians in every town, many towns throughout Crete.

[5:46] And so Paul, for a reason, we are not given, he's got to split, and so he writes this letter to Titus and says, Titus, I've left you for this reason that you put in order what remained.

And so what needed to be put in order? Remember, these churches were young churches in Crete. At this point, they didn't have elders of their own. And so what needed to be put in order among many things was a foundation in each of the churches throughout Crete.

And we're not talking a foundation of concrete. We're not talking about a building campaign. We're talking about a believing campaign. That the doctrine that is the foundation of these churches in Crete, what Paul calls sound doctrine, the foundation of Jesus Christ, who He is, what He's done, and it's all revealed throughout the pages of this book called the Bible.

At this time, in first century Crete, there was a clear and present danger. There were false teachers seeking to exert influence on these new Christians and these churches.

And so what Paul is realizing to Titus is, Titus, I've got to go, but you need to stay put and you need to get these churches established on the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ.

[7:20] Paul's very concerned about the spiritual health of these churches. And he knows that the spiritual health of these churches depends upon the soundness of the doctrine that they are being taught.

Healthy doctrine leads to healthy living. And so what Paul is referring to primarily when he talks about putting what remained in order, he's talking about getting doctrine in order.

Getting what they believe to be true, right. And so then he goes into talking about appointing elders in every city. The spiritual health of a local congregation is dependent upon, in large part, the spiritual health of the men appointed to lead it.

To appoint is this official act of designating someone into an office. And at this point in history, here we have an apostolic delegate, Titus, appointing men into positions of office, these elders.

We don't have any apostolic delegates anymore. And so this process of appointing elders is something we do as a church. And so we have a year-long process.

[8:36] It's called the elder training course. And we have men come through this elder training course for a year. And what we focus on is their character, their creed, what they believe, sound doctrine, their competence in being able to communicate God's Word, their ability to interact with other people, camaraderie.

And after that process, we have this thing called the nomination process in which we actually put men forward for the church to affirm with a vote.

And that's what we're going to do on June 10th. This is our process for appointing elders from within us. What I want you to notice about these elders that Titus is to appoint is that there's a little letter on the end of that word elders.

It's the letter S. Elders. Not elder. The normal practice of leadership in the early church was for a church to be led by a team of godly men giving overall leadership to that church.

It's called a plurality of elders. A team of elders working together to love a church unto Jesus. It's the normal New Testament model for leadership in the local church.

[10:04] It's for the spiritual health of a church. And it's interesting that in this passage not only do we see these men who are going to be leading the church called elders but they're described by another name.

Look in verse 7. They are overseers. They're synonymous. They're talking about the same group of men. Elders, talking about the nature of these guys.

They're proven. Overseers describe kind of what they do. They oversee the overall health of a church. And then when you read a passage like Ephesians 4.11 or 1 Peter 5.1-4 there's another word that gets used for these men.

Pastors. Shepherds of the flock. And so these guys who give overall leadership to a church this team of men they're a team of elders of overseers of pastors of shepherds.

It's a plurality of leadership. And it's to bless the church. God does it this way because he loves his people. He has good for them.

[11:10] So Christ the King Church our church is a local church led by a team of elders a plurality of elders. Do you know why? Our Bible say so. And so we have a team of elders because we're seeking to obey and live according to the scriptures.

Which gets me to the point of responsibility. Serving a church as one of its elders is a very serious responsibility. Do you know who God will hold uniquely accountable if there is some kind of false teaching that begins to permeate our church?

Do you know who he'll hold accountable? The elders of this church. We will have to give an account. Would you flip in your Bibles start flipping to the right to the book of Hebrews and turn to Hebrews chapter 13 verse 7.

We read this. It should sober everybody up in the room. Remember your leaders. Those who spoke to you the word of God consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

And then look at verse 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls. Oversight as those who will have to give an account.

[12:38] We will have to give an account. It is a very serious responsibility to undertake the role of elder. It's of utmost importance.

And the reason why is the spiritual health of this church depends largely upon it. God loves his church. God wants good for his people.

He wants his people to be experiencing the spiritual health that results from believing sound doctrine and that spiritual health shows up in lives of godliness and good works.

And so he raises up qualified men to exercise a godly influence in and through a church for that church is good. The sobering thing about this is that elders have a responsibility for the blood bought of Jesus.

God himself is entrusting to their limited care the people he's purchased with the blood of Jesus. It's a very serious responsibility. responsibility.

[13:52] That's why a pastor from a bygone era Robert Murray McShane said the greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.

holiness. This is a very grave and serious undertaking but it's God's design. And it's from here when we're recalling the nature of this responsibility it helps us to understand why the qualifications for an elder are so significant.

God's not can trust his care the care for his church just anybody. So now let's turn to an elder's qualifications and this is from verses 6 through 8 actually 6 through 9 and what we're going to see is Paul's going to emphasize character and competence a character that has been shaped by God's grace and a competence in handling God's word.

His character must be shaped by God's grace. In verses 6 and 7 you see a little phrase repeated and this is we're back in Titus chapter 1 it's little phrase above reproach verse 6 if anyone is above reproach the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery and subordination for an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach that phrase above reproach is the way that Paul summarizes where a man who's going to be an elder where he must be in his character he must be above reproach so what does that mean well it literally means to be blameless do you know what Teflon is Teflon is that coating on some kind of a cooking surface that keeps something from sticking here's what

God's grace is to an elder God's grace is Teflon to a man God's grace operating in a man's life to such a degree that any accusation that comes to him any accusation of some kind of hypocrisy it doesn't stick because this man has been so shaped by God's grace that he's above reproach you look at a man's life who's got this kind of character shaped by God's grace and you're able to conclude from looking at him that not only is there a God but the God that this man is living for I got to pay attention because this guy's living a consistent and compelling life to be above reproach it doesn't mean sinless it doesn't mean this guy's not going to make a mistake from time to time but what it does mean is this this man's character has been proven to such agree that it will assure the church that when he does sin that when he does make a mistake it is out of character and he owns it affirm that this man is a man of

[17:22] God's grace so this isn't a call this above approach isn't a call to be sinlessly perfect but a call for men who are proven in their characters being consistent and compelling in the way that they live out their knowledge of the truth their lives authenticate the message they proclaim it it's not theory it's real God's grace having had effect you know by the end of the summer all of us are going to have really nice tans and the reason is we're going to be exposed to the summer sun over a duration of time what we're describing here is that this above reproach is a man who's been exposed to God's grace over a period of time and he shows it and it has an effect and so what we see happen in verses 6 7 and 8 is that

Paul kind of helps us understand what this above reproach means he points to godliness in the home and then he points to godliness in conduct and so if you would look at verse 6 if anyone is above reproach the husband of one wife literally a one woman man the emphasis here is on a pattern of faithfulness to one woman fidelity fidelity to your bride it has bearing on man man readiness to serve the church now this does raise the question to many people can a man who's been divorced serve as an elder does that automatically disqualify him well if you look at this passage and then a passage in 1 Timothy 3 there's no formulas that Paul gives he doesn't say hey if a man has been divorced he's disqualified from ever his wife for a season an extended season that doesn't mean he's disqualified if he has a divorce in his background is he a man shaped by God's grace does he understand what he contributed to that divorce is he willing to talk about it openly the emphasis here is on faithfulness to a one woman now we all know that a guy can be sexually faithful to his wife but be a real jerk so what we need to understand here is it's a certain kind of faithfulness to his wife a Christ like faithfulness to his wife in Ephesians 5 25 kind of faithfulness to his wife where a husband gladly lays down his wife like Jesus laid down his wife for his bride the church so you know what we're looking for as a church we're looking for men who love their wives in such a way that they regularly lay their lives down for them if a guy is willing to do that for his bride he's going to do that for the church as well

Christ bride the husband of one wife his children are believers his children are believers now there's debate over what that word believer means it could mean his children are born again followers of Jesus or it could mean that his children are obedient that they're submissive to their dad and I think the latter translation is better because of where Paul goes in the text notice what he says verse six his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination he focuses on their behavior debauchery by the way is wild living wild out living and insubordination is rebellion if you flip to first Timothy chapter three and the parallel passage of this in verse five we read this for if someone excuse me verse four an elder must manage his own household well with all dignity keeping his children submissive and so the idea here is not an elder's children being born again like any of us can ensure that happening but rather that the elder is set the thermostat on his home on grace and so his children are raised in an atmosphere of grace and so whether or not they have put the stake in the ground for

Jesus his children have grown up in a context where they honor their mother and their father they're submissive proof is in the pudding so we go on Paul says an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach you see that in verse seven a steward in the first century was a man entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing and managing the household of the head of the home oftentimes a steward was given responsibility for the day to day financial operations as well as the different members of the home for their education and care what Paul is saying there is if a man is unable to

manage his own household well he has no business seeking to be an overseer or a steward of [23:28] God's family that's what he's saying what we're seeing here is godliness in the home the exposure of grace in a man that affects the way that he loves his wife and affects the way that he raises his children the home is the proving ground of Christian leadership it's in the details you cannot fake who you are in your home it's clear for those who are living with you we go from godliness in the home to godliness in conduct and Paul lays out five must not be he must not be arrogant he must not be quick tempered he must not be a drunkard he must not be violent he must not be greedy for gain he must not be these things and what he's describing is a man's character how he lives normal patterns of life arrogant is this idea of being self governing self willed self centered quick tempered you're ruled by your anger a drunkard you're ruled by alcohol violent you're ruled by lashing out on people greedy for gain you're ruled by the desire for money or possessions and

God says none of that can be in the leadership of a church men cannot be ruled by themselves or their passions what these all have in common is a self centeredness that gives way to a self serving of one's passions so let's say we see a brother in the church who's got an anger problem or someone who's greedy for gain maybe lashes out on people do you know what that means well maybe they're not ready to be an elder yet they just need more time in the oven of God's grace in the oven of God's grace God heats up a Christian's character in order to mold that character to be like Jesus and so if there's a brother or sister for that matter a

Christian where we're seeing these qualities in they need more time in God's oven of grace but they cannot be true of a man serving as an elder of a church we go from must not be to the must be again think of these as descriptions of normal ongoing character traits provenness godliness resulting from exposure to God's grace and we read verse 8 he must be hospitable son together literally that word means a lover of the stranger a lover of the foreigner a lover of one on the outside it's the complete opposite of being self centered others oriented and so here's how you see that when you see a man in a church who has not been prodded but he moves towards others others he doesn't know others who are new to the church he moves towards them because he's got a love for the outsider love for someone who's new that is a quality that marks an elder he's to be a lover of good he wants what's best for people and he wants what's best for people so much that he's willing to say hard things to them because he loves them so much faithful are the wounds of a friendly elder so an elder wants someone's good even above their own comfort what we're seeing here is God's grace operating in a man's life because he's been exposed to it he's to be self-controlled by God's grace he governs his passions his passions don't govern him he is upright he is a righteous dude because he walks in the ways of God's commands unashamed he's got a reputation not of cutting corners and cooking the books but of doing the right thing even at cost he's upright he's holy set apart his upright living by God's grace has set him apart from those around him and it's not just that he lives that way he wants to live that way he has this insatiable appetite to be like God and God's holiness because God's holiness is good brings you back to that

Robert Murrick McShane quote the greatest need of my people is my personal holiness and then he's disciplined he's aimed in his living like a serious athlete remember the winter Olympics in South Korea those athletes you got to live a certain way to be an Olympic athlete you're saying no to a lot of things so that you can say yes to competing and going for gold in the Olympics disciplined Paul uses that same word in 1 Corinthians 9:27 he says this but I discipline my body and keep it under control lest after preaching to others I myself shall be disqualified if after he preaches and his character is sullied do you know what that does?

it brings reproach on the message so he's going to discipline his body and make it his life so he doesn't disqualify himself and bring reproach on the name of Jesus an elder is a man who is aimed and purposed in his living disciplined to live a holy life and saying no to just other things to say yes to godliness and so it's not infrequent where a man who is set out to be an elder says hey will this honor God?

[30:19] will this use of time honor God? will these words honor God? will this bless other people? he's purposely living his life by God's grace for God's glory it's not theory it's proven it's how he's living his life

and it gives an assurance to a church that this man is the real deal and so God entrusts the care of his church to men like that for the good of his church so the overall emphasis on what qualifies a man so far has been on his character they live lives that adorn the truth of the gospel they live lives that authenticate the reality of God's grace in a person's life they live Teflon like lives accusations don't stick they're not sinlessly perfect they'll make mistakes but they own it the church is confident in them and the church listens to them because they have a character and a life worth listening to which brings us to being competent in handling God's word we read in verse 9 he must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that I may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it this skill of being able to handle God's word well is a not it's a must in a man who's going to be an elder it's not optional it's the characteristic that differentiates an elder from the role of deacon he's got to be able to communicate the truth of God's word effectively to others for a man to serve as an elder he must have a firm grip on the truth revealed about Jesus in this book let's say we have a game and we call it the grip game and I bring out a 12 by 12 inch piece of plywood and I come up to you and I hold it out to you and I say okay grip it and pull whoever gets the piece of wood wins you've got the stronger grip and so we pull and I win because I got the stronger grip but what happens if

I'm pulling against you and it's just completely impossible for me to pull it out of your grip you've got like a vice-like grip an elder must have a vice-like grip on this book he's controlled by it and he's ruled by it he references it he comes back to it over and over again a church must be convinced that the leaders of their church will never give up their grit on the truth of God's word if I start preaching something other than the Bible here you yank me that's it an elder is so convinced of the truthfulness of this book and of its life-giving ability that he's never going to abandon it how pleasing it would be to God if if the members of Christ the King Church if they say of their elders you know what they're not the flashiest guys around but man do they love

God's word and they keep telling us God's word over and over and over again and we love them for it elders must be competent in their ability to rightly handle the word of truth do you know why because your spiritual health depends on it this book and the doctrines revealed the sound doctrine the healthy doctrine of this book leads to healthy living Paul points to two ways he says an elder must be able to instruct in sound doctrine and those two words sound doctrine both are important doctrine means teaching what the Bible teaches about Christ is the doctrine of Christ what the Bible teaches about the end times is the doctrine of the end times what the Bible teaches about sin is the doctrine of sin what the Bible teaches about salvation is the doctrine of salvation but you'll notice it's sound doctrine and the Greek word underneath that word sound is a word that we get hygiene from as in like your health as in like dental hygiene your well-being

Bible doctrine knowledge of the truth is healthy for the body of the church do you remember the milk campaign milk it does milk it does the body good you remember that milk it does milk it does the body good milk it does milk it does the body good doctrine does doctrine does Christ's body good sound doctrine you need it and we need elders who are going to instruct the church in sound doctrine you can call an elder a doctrine hygienist if you would like they're seeking to bring health to the body of Christ through the teaching of doctrine but you also notice at the end of verse nine and this is where we'll close for this morning not only to give instruction and sound doctrine they're also to rebuke those who contradict it to rebuke those who contradict it back to first century

Crete there are these false teachers who are seeking to influence the church with teaching that does not focus on Jesus it's true today there are false teachers all over all over the internet and what Paul says to Titus is these elders must be able to sniff out false teaching and rebuke it to expose it to show it for what it is to confront those who are speaking against the sound doctrine revealed in the bible do you know how do you know how an elder does that let alone a Christian let me say it this way the secret service has a division that deals with counterfeit currency and the way that the men and women of this division figure out what counterfeit money is is they spend their time focused on the real stuff the people in this division they know what a twenty dollar bill tastes

like they know what it smells like

[37:55] I'm sure they know what it sounds like they absolutely know what it feels like they're so familiar with the real stuff that when they come into contact with the false stuff it becomes very clear to them shortly so a way elders detect false doctrine is in part because they've been spending so much time in the sound doctrine you smell it like sour milk it's not good for the body what Paul is telling Titus is that he must be careful to appoint men as elders who've got proven character shaped by the grace of the gospel and they have a competence to communicate the truth of the gospel that these men can instruct in sound doctrine and rebuke those who oppose it and in verses 10 through 16 Paul shows what elders must do and when they rebuke false teachers they're to silence them they're to rebuke them with the hope that they will restore them to sound doctrine and then at the end of

Titus chapter 3 9 and 10 if there are false teachers who don't repent of their false teaching in a church elders show them the door they're not good for us and we've done it at least five times here we've asked people to leave because they have been divisive in their instruction of false doctrine well I've covered the waterfront the main point is this the spiritual well-being of our church depends in large part on the spiritual well-being of the elders of our church so we must trust God's word to appoint men as elders for the good of this church let's pray God in heaven we thank you so much for your word and we thank you so much for the men you are raising up in our midst godly men proven character competent in the word and it is a joy

God to see you work by your spirit and raising them up God we pray that you would continue to raise up from our midst men who have been exposed to your grace have a proven character and are competent in the teaching of it God we pray all this we thank you for this and we pray above all else God that you would make Christ the King Church a healthy church a church in which you delight in a church who is experiencing greater measures of godliness exercising our faith in good works having an influence God would you protect our church from false teachers and God would you use the elders of this church to bring soundness to this body we ask this in Jesus name amen amen