

Establishing Godly Leadership

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. All right. Well, let's pray then.

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you that we have time to look at it now. We ask that as we do so, you would help us to see what you have to say and that you would enable us by your spirit to put it into practice for your glory's sake.

Amen. Charles Blondin was a Frenchman who lived in the 1800s.

He was a famous person. He was a performer, a tightrope walker. And he performed many amazing feats in that discipline.

And his most famous one was to walk on a wire stretched across the expanse of the Niagara Falls on the border between Canada and the US.

[1 : 12] And he did this trick a number of times. He went across and he did various variations. He went across on stilts. He pushed a wheelbarrow across.

He went across with somebody on his back. On one occasion, he went across. He stopped in the middle and cooked an omelette and ate it and went across. Anyhow, the story goes that one day, there was a large crowd gathered on one side and he went across and back pushing a wheelbarrow.

And the crowd was mightily impressed and applauded and acclaimed him. And after he'd done that, he stopped and addressed the crowd and he said he was going to add another degree of difficulty. He was going to push the wheelbarrow across with somebody inside it. Did they believe he could do that? And the crowd, you know, of course we do. Of course we do.

He said, OK, I'm looking for volunteers. The crowd went very, very quiet. You see, it's one thing to say you believe something.

[2 : 31] It's another thing to actually put that into practice, to put your life on the line, like those people way back then were challenged to do.

The passage in Titus that we have had read to us and in fact the entire book of Titus centres around this whole issue of right belief being intricately tied into right living.

So if you could open up to Titus chapter 1 on page 968 of these pure Bibles, we're going to look through this.

And as we do, we're going to be challenged about whether our faith and our actions, our faith and our living, really do match up.

And if they don't, then maybe we have to have some questions over our faith. We need to look at how, what we believe is lived out.

[3 : 47] So Titus chapter 1 verse 5. Titus, Paul is addressing Titus and saying, I left you behind in Crete for this reason so that you should put in order what remained to be done and should appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

Now we don't know much about the founding of the church in Crete. There were people in Crete in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And maybe they took the gospel back and the church survived from those days.

But what does seem clear is that the time that Paul is writing here, the church in Crete is still young. It's still struggling. There's not a very established church.

And they did have significant problems, as we'll see. So Titus was left there to get the church established. And it seems like he had two main tasks.

The first one is the one mentioned in this verse to appoint elders in all the churches in all the different cities on Crete, but also to speak against some of the false teaching that was coming up in the church.

[5 : 10] And we'll see more about that in a minute also. So he knew about these tasks, of course. Paul had already told him that this letter is a reminder to him and also maybe a proof of his apostolic authority to carry out these things.

So he is to appoint elders in every town. Now, when we look back on this passage from the 21st century perspective, sometimes we get a little bit caught up in the titles.

We've taken the descriptions of church eldership or church leadership like elder and later on in verse 7, bishop, and we've made those into positions and titles and part of a church structure. But back in those days, they didn't have those structures. So the terms that are used in verse 5, the elder, and what's mentioned in verse 7 as a bishop really refers to the same person.

Bishop actually means overseer. I don't quite know how the name bishop came about. Something to do with Latin, no doubt. But the Greek word is just an overseer.

[6 : 42] And so it's talking about the same person, the same position. It's a position of leadership in the church. And we shouldn't try and squeeze that into our modern-day categories of vicar, curate, lay reader, bishop, elder, moderator, deacon, reverend, or whatever we call themselves.

So that's the first thing. Let's just look at what these leaders are supposed to be. Now, Paul says that these people should be someone, verse 6, someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery, and not rebellious.

Now, the first thing I notice when I read this list of qualifications is that Paul doesn't start his list with academic qualifications.

He doesn't say, well, it has to be a degree holder. He doesn't start with the churchmanship and how he conducts himself in church or his gifting or even his theology.

He starts by looking at the potential leader's moral suitability first. Now, as we'll see shortly, he does go on to talk about their theology, but that theology has to be matched with godly character.

[8 : 15] You see, the integrity of godly character and good teaching or scriptural teaching go together.

And that integrity of life is important because it shows that true faith affects how we live. It affects the whole of our life.

belief in Jesus is not something we can squeeze off to the side on a Sunday and then live like everybody else the rest of the time.

If we believe in Jesus, if we have faith that Jesus died for us, then that affects the whole of our life. Everything we do, everything we think, everything we say. So this person is to be blameless.

[9 : 15] That is, there's to be no basis for accusation against him. No one can point a finger at this person. Not to say that they're perfect, but there is an integrity in that what they say is what they really do.

and the first place it's seen is in the leader's home life. Now, Paul says that he's someone who's got to be married and has children and et cetera, but he's not really saying that.

He's not really saying it has to be a male who has two or more children and who's married et cetera. That's just the normal profile profile in that setting of who the candidates might be.

And his point is that this has got to be a person who keeps God's standards for marriage. Literally, Paul puts it, he's to be a one woman man.

And so it's talking about God's standards for marriage. And this is somebody who has kept to that.

[10 : 33] and those under his authority have no reason to be rebellious. What it really, our translation has it that his children are to be believers, but actually it's his children are to be faithful.

People who are able to live under the authority of their parent.

In Ephesians chapter four, I think it is, chapter six, Paul says that fathers are not to exasperate their children.

And that's what the idea that this is here, that it's a reflection of the person's character, that his children have no reason to rebel, to be rebellious against him.

Okay. So as Paul starts to talk about these qualifications, in the start of verse seven, he sort of interjects with a qualification or a reason why these qualifications are important.

[11 : 51] He says, for a bishop as God's steward must be blameless. Someone who is an overseer which is what bishop means, is a steward in God's household, responsible for looking after those who belong to God himself.

So this is not just a small thing, this is not just a normal job, and therefore, he says, those who do it must be blameless.

what follows next is a list of things that the leader must not be, that is, five vices that he lists, followed by a list of the things that the leader should be, seven or six or seven virtues of what he should be.

Paul says, a bishop as God's steward must be blameless, he must not be arrogant or quick tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain, but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout and self-controlled.

And then he goes on in verse nine to say that he must have a firm grasp of the teaching, the trustworthy teaching, et cetera. We'll come to that. But as I look at those lists, as I look at the list of vices, the negative things, the things that the leader must not be, I can't help but think how modern that list sounds, how prevalent some of those things are in our society.

[13:40] I don't want to or need to spend a lot of time on these because we all recognize them. But just listen to them and see what I mean.

See if you can recognize them in the world around you. People who are arrogant, haughty, thinking themselves a cut above everybody else, quick-tempered or easily angered.

addicted to wine. One of the things that really struck us when we first came back from Nigeria was how in Australian culture drunkenness is seen as something admirable or something funny.

and I guess it's always been there and just having been out of this culture and coming back into it. We have a real culture of glorifying drunkenness. Violent. Again, we tend to glorify violence in much of our entertainment, don't we?

[15:03] it's more wonder that we are a violent society. And the fifth one that's listed there, greedy for gain. That's how we measure success, isn't it?

All of our advertising is directed towards gain and we become greedy for it. The point here is that the godly person, the one who is suitable for leader, is to be recognized by not being those things. And it's sort of challenging. Are you recognized by not being those things, being in contrast to the society around you? You see, godliness here is mentioned as a prerequisite for leadership, for leadership, but it's also something that we are all called to.

Godliness is godliness and whether we're potential leaders or not, these descriptions can speak into our lives, can't they? people and a similar glance at what the leader is supposed to be is very telling.

And many of these descriptions seem unfortunately unfamiliar to us. Hospitality, the readiness to welcome others to share in your life.

[16:50] We like to keep our personal lives private. And for many of us, personal and private are synonyms. They mean the same thing to us.

Should they? a lover of goodness. Wouldn't it be great to be known as a lover of goodness?

Everything, being somebody who delights in everything that's wholesome and lovely and beautiful and wonderful. Isn't it sad that it's such a novelty to think of that?

a prudent or wise person. Wisdom can be understood as knowing the right way that knowledge can be used.

Wisdom is knowing how to use knowledge. And in the past 20 years or so, we have an explosion of accessibility to knowledge.

[18:06] Everybody can access all kinds of knowledge in ways that we couldn't in the past. But not everybody knows how to make best use of that knowledge.

knowledge. The book of Proverbs and also in the book of Psalms, the little phrase comes up again and again.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now, when you use my definition of wisdom as right use of knowledge, then that starts to resonate a bit, doesn't it?

Because the fear of the Lord is the right use of the highest level of knowledge. Knowledge about God himself is put to its right use when we fear and worship that God.

The next two descriptions, upright and devout, really go together. Upright, or literally righteous or just, and it's implied, in dealing with other people, in relation to other people.

[19:50] And devout or holy, the implication is towards God. So, being just and righteous towards other people, being holy and devout towards God is relating rightly to God and to people.

God's love. And this is not just something you can do once. It's not something you can pretend because it's an orientation of your entire life, isn't it?

Not something you can cover over. God's setting the bar pretty high, but he's got one last one.

Self-controlled. Self-controlled means not being mastered by the forces that are at play in our lives. And we get that all the time, don't we? We hear it around us. It felt so right. Why shouldn't I do it? I'm this way because of my upbringing.

[21 : 06] It's just too much of a temptation. Self-control is rejecting those sorts of statements. Self-control is also listed by Paul in the book of Galatians as one of the fruits of the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

when a believer lets the Holy Spirit have full control in our lives, one of the things that comes out is that we are able to be self-controlled.

And finally, in verse 9, Paul gets to the person's theology. Finally, we make it to theology. We've been expecting it all the way through. What does a leader need to be?

Finally, he must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

having a firm belief and knowing and basing that belief on something real, something that's not just an airy fairy idea that I think it's right, but it's based on the teaching that has been passed on to us, that is the scriptures, what we have in front of us.

[22 : 57] And this is important, not just so that the leader, the person who has this knowledge has all the answers, that's not the important thing, the important thing is so that the leader can do two very important things, Paul says.

Firstly, to be able to preach and teach the truth, and secondly, to be able to refute those who preach and teach something else.

And if we skip on to verse 10, we see why this is so important. So in verses 10 to 13, right down to the start of verse 13, we have a description of the opponents, the people who are teaching other things in Crete.

There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. They must be silenced. Since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what is not right to teach, it was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes and lazy gluttons.

That testimony is true. Pretty heavy stuff. But what our translation lacks from the Greek is one little word, it missed it.

[24 : 30] At the start of verse 10, it says, for, for, there are many rebellious people. So it links it back to verse 9.

The reason why it's so important that the leader be able to teach and preach and refute is because these people are about.

These people are wanting to cause all sorts of havoc. You see, for Titus and the church in Crete, this is not an academic exercise.

This isn't theoretical. This is real. It really matters what you believe when you are faced with this sort of teaching. And Paul's wanting to say it really matters what you believe anyhow.

Now, these false teachers were getting around and were causing all kinds of havoc. Our translation, again, is a bit weak.

[25 : 37] It says upsetting families. Well, it's more than just upsetting. It's causing chaos. It's really disrupting the whole thing. And they were doing it in order for gain, for money, money.

Or as Tyndale's translation puts it, for filthy lucre. But it's not the money that's filthy. It's the motivation of the heart, of the people who are out to do it.

They were peddling theology, ideas about God, not so that people would be godly, not so that they would be led into truth, but so that they could get something from them.

And that's why it's sorted. That's why it's filthy. So we don't know exactly what this teaching was.

We see in verse 10 that it's of the circumcision, and then again in verse 14 it refers to Jewish myths. So it has something to do with Judaism. And it advocated the following of certain practices or rituals in order to be right with God.

[26 : 57] And the teaching seemed to discount the need for godly living amongst believers. Just do these few things and you'll be right, they were saying.

And Paul said, no, they must be silenced. This cannot go on. In fact, Paul gets quite politically incorrect here.

And he says some things that on the face of it looks pretty racist. When he says, Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons, and then he follows it up with his endorsement, this

testimony is true.

Can't get much more blunt than that. He's quoting the Cretan poet Epimenides who lived around 600 BC.

So I don't know anything more about the poet. It must have been pretty uninteresting reading. If he said those sorts of things about his own people, I wouldn't want to read anything more.

[28 : 12] But Paul is quoting this person and saying it's true, but he's not actually saying that it's true of all Cretans.

he's just said, he's spent verses talking about how there were some who were qualified to be leaders who had this godly character.

So he's not saying that it's true of all people without exception, but he's applying it to these false teachers. churches. And even then, even then, he holds hope that they might turn away from their falsehood and turn to Christ.

So they're not in an irredeemable situation. He goes on, for this reason, rebuke them sharply so that they may become sound in faith.

The leaders were to be silenced by sharp rebuke, but the purpose of the sharp rebuke was not so that Titus could win the argument and so be seen as the great winner and victor over the falsehood, but it was there they were to be rebuked so that those who had gone away from the true teaching might become sound in faith, come back to the true faith.

[29 : 53] See, Paul is always having gospel orientation, gospel interests. He's gospel oriented.

He's not seeking to defeat anybody, but to convert them. You see, if he wins, if he beats them in argument, he gets the glory.

But if they repent and turn to God, it's God who gets the glory. God and this really challenges me.

Those who oppose us as Christians, why do we want to answer them? Is it so that we are defended, so that we are seen to be reasonable people, so that we can be shown to be right?

Or is it so that they can see the truth and turn to the living God and turn from their sins and be saved? And it goes beyond this.

[31 : 14] Whenever I have an argument, why do I like to be right? Why do I like to be proved on the right side?

And usually it's so that I look good. God is not a gospel centred attitude.

Should it not be that we should be standing for truth so that God is always glorified? God is not to be as I say, I find this quite challenging.

Let's go on and when we move down to verses 14 and 15, it says that these people might become converted to become sound in faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth.

And then he says something strange, to the pure, all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure, their very minds and consciences are corrupted. And I found it a little bit difficult to see where verse 15 fits in.

[32 : 44] About why does he go on about the pure and the pure and the corrupt and the corrupt, it just didn't make any sense to me. It seems a bit out of place. Until we look at the nature of the heresy that these people were teaching.

They were saying that purity is attained through doing certain rituals and obeying certain laws.

And what you do other than that doesn't really matter because you are pure by virtue of having done those prescribed acts. And Paul is saying, well, actually, those who are pure through faith in Christ and his death for us and his resurrection for us, then the whole world opens up and all of life can be lived in purity.

For those who are corrupt and unbelieving in the sufficiency of Christ to cleanse from sin, then nothing can be pure. There is no way that purity can be attained if you haven't believed that Christ is the way to attain it.

Their minds and their consciences are corrupt and the only way of purifying it is through faith in Christ. Being acceptable to God is only possible through faith in Christ.

[34 : 37] Christ, you miss that and you cannot gain God's approval no matter how many laws or rituals you keep or perform.

And this is as important to us today as it was to them back then. We can only be right with God through faith in Christ.

