

The King's Groomsman

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[0 : 00] Please turn in your Bibles to Titus chapter 1. Titus chapter 1. Today's sermon is The King's Groomsman.

There is a majestic nation unlike anything in this world. The king of that land is powerful and good. He is at war with his wicked enemy.

His enemy has ravished a distant corner of the king's empire and held all of its inhabitants as slaves. Now the king's son, the crowned prince, chose to love a slave girl who was held in the clutches of that wicked enemy.

At the perfect moment, the prince launched the king's surprise ambush and defeated the enemy. He stood up and gave a victory speech in which he promised he would marry the girl he loves.

Well, the father called the prince home and placed the king's crown upon his son's head. And the son king is making preparations for his marriage banquet right now.

[1 : 09] It will be the most epic celebration, so much better than anything you can imagine. And the prince sent his spirit to perfect and beautify his bride before they get married and enjoy each other forever.

And he enlists now, during this time of preparation, the brothers of the bride as his groomsmen to be her bodyguards. They must be willing to give their lives in obedience to the king for the sake of his beloved.

They are charged by the king to protect his fiancée and to present her pure to him. Christ calls the church his bride.

Elders are the stewards, the bodyguards, the groomsmen of the church. And Paul told Titus to care for the bride of Christ. The way to do it, beginning at verse five, was to put it in order by appointing elders in every town as I directed you, Paul wrote.

This is verse five, Titus one and verse six. 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.

[2 : 29] For an overseer as God's steward must be above reproach. 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 instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

The doctrine that Paul teaches us here in these verses is this. God shows his uncompromising care for his bride by requiring of his stewards a high standard of doctrine and life.

The king's groomsmen. We'll see this in four different movements. Number one, the king's high standard. Number two, what the king prohibits.

Number three, what the king requires. And finally, their charge, hold firm the sword. So first, the king's high standards, picking up on verses five and the beginning of verse six.

[3 : 44] Paul tells Titus to put in order the church. Now, the work of putting a church in order is really powered by and carried out in an extension of the work that the Holy Spirit always does.

Think about all of what you know of the Bible, every single Bible story you know from cover to cover. The Holy Spirit is the one who beautifies and perfects and completes God's work.

It's the Holy Spirit who brings order to chaos. Think about the waters of creation, darkness, but the Spirit hovering. And as God speaks, it comes to be and the Spirit beautifies it.

The Word of God brings forth the trees and the Spirit puts the flowers on them and the fruit and makes them to bloom and blossom and multiply. Think about the construction of the temple.

The Holy Spirit came onto the eyes and the mind and the design and the hands of the artist and made the temple beautiful. Now Christ, He looked at the temple of God abandoned and abused by those who were greedy, turned it into a marketplace.

[5 : 00] He called it a den of robbers. And the Spirit inside Jesus in His incarnate body came in like a lion to the temple, toppled over their tables, threw their money to the ground and rebuked them by the power of the Spirit.

He said, this is to be a house of prayer for the nations. The work of the Spirit is powerful. And so the work of putting the church in order is carrying out what the Spirit does.

And He doesn't do it by a mighty strong man stepping up. He does it through a plurality of elders. See, Paul, speaking to Titus on this island of Crete where every village is somewhat isolated, He says, appoint elders, plural, in every town.

There's not going to be one central command in the capital city barking out orders to all of these congregations or giving them edicts of how they are to worship God. No. The Holy Spirit inside each of these believers with the Scripture in their hands has all that they need to appoint their elders, their stewards, the groomsmen of the king as a body, a body of elders that will share the weight of watching over the souls in the congregation.

Together they will be accountable to God. There will be checks and balances because these are men who God saved out of their sin. They are now His saints but they are ordinary men with weaknesses and they need help from each other and from the congregation.

[6 : 40] And they will bring their diverse gifts so there will be variety and there will be balance and they will show the care that the church deserves. That's what Christ requires. Now I think it's so important that we don't miss this.

The king is not negotiating. He's not proposing or offering guidelines. He's not giving you a philosophy of ministry. This is not up for discussion. See the terms are legal terms.

If. If he says. If there are men who qualify. So there are grounds and sanctions built in. There's a standard and that standard is high.

It will not be dropped. And think how important this is. We understand the need for standards. You are not allowed to build without a permit. And if you talk to a civil engineer it's a lot of pressure.

You're the one that has to sign off saying these plans are sound. You can build because this foundation is stable. There are lives at stake. Think about in a school.

[7 : 43] There's a standard for the type of person you will allow to speak and to work with children. You know these young ones who are being formed. There's a very high standard.

We understand that. Why would it be any different for a church? Why would Christ turn his most beloved possession over to low standards? No there are high standards.

words. But it's also very generous. And there's a few words that show us that. He says based on all these standards. But look at the words anyone. If anyone is.

So you can find faults and you can nitpick every single potential elder. You can point to their previous sin. You can point to their life before Christ. You could even point to ways they have stumbled and fallen into sin.

But the word here is if anyone is. And in the Greek that word is in the present tense active voice. So not talking about your past.

[8 : 42] Talking about right now. Currently. Actively pursuing this. Who is worthy of such a task? Paul said. The stakes are so high.

And God is holy. Holy holy. Who is able to even stand in his presence and care for his most beloved possession. The church. It must be a man who is deeply repentant of past sin and who is settled in God's grace and now is actively, presently pursuing the right walk with God and qualified over time.

I also love how it's generous because he says anyone, if anyone. And here's why. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of abundance. It's not a power struggle within the church.

It's not clamoring over influence or who gets decision-making power. No. King Jesus is the one who's in charge. And everyone else is a groomsman to the bride.

And there's an abundance. Jesus looked out over the multitudes and had mercy on them. And he told his disciples, can't you see? Every town we go to, the fields are ripe unto harvest.

[9 : 57] These souls are like a white field ready to be brought to the kingdom of God. What we're lacking are qualified workers. Christ would never compromise quality for quantity.

The stakes are not going to get lower. The standard will not drop. He loves his church too much. But listen, every single Christian, every member of the church is called to grow in sanctification, to become more and more like your King Jesus.

You are called, every single one of you is called to be a gospel witness. So men, you are called to aspire to grow. Anyone that you have in your home, everyone that you love, you are called to be a groomsman of the King for them.

You ought to aspire to being an elder and to being qualified and to growing in these ways. You are the elder, the shepherd, the one accountable to God for your home. Praise God, church.

Praise God for how he sees us as his bride. And praise him for how he shows his uncompromising care for you.

[11 : 08] And he provides you with a high standard of the church, both in your doctrine, what you believe, and in life, how we live. And this ought to be modeled, not perfectly, but aspiring to be like Christ at every moment by the elders, his stewards, his groomsman and bodyguard of the bride.

Well, that's number one, the King's high standards. Number two is what the King prohibits. So, let your eyes go down to the back part of verse six, read verse seven, and verse eight.

And from those two and a half verses, I'm going to separate him into the negative commands and then the positive. So, first what the King's prohibits on the negative side, and next what the King requires on the positive side.

And think of this like a covenant contract, all right? These are the terms of being in the relationship with God. Now, these are not conditions for salvation, but these are duties of faithful churches.

If you love God, you don't get to ignore this. This is what he calls the church to. So, he says the children ought to not be open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

[12 : 29] Because if your children don't respect you, and if they despise the ministry of God's word and instead choose the world in self-indulgence, then there probably is something else going on while they're young at least.

You know, later as they become adults, they will be responsible and accountable to God, not the parents. But while they're young, while they're in your household, that's a very important charge.

You know, in the household, there should be discipline. It's a loving, restorative discipline. But if you're not able to practice that loving, restorative discipline in your own household, you will not be qualified to practice that in the household of God.

God, the man must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.

What do all those have in common? Well, it's really a love for self more than a love for God and a love for others, isn't it? You're arrogant or greedy for gain.

[13 : 33] You love yourself. If you're a drunkard or violent and quick-tempered, you lack the self-control that comes from the Holy Spirit constraining you by the Spirit's love.

There's a Japanese proverb that goes something like this, that first, the man takes a drink. Then, the drink takes a drink.

Then, the drink takes the man. Hmm. So, is it the Spirit that controls you? Are you constrained by the love of your King?

Is the Spirit showing evidence of working in your life and increasing your love for God more than your love for yourself? Is it the Spirit that's now transforming you and you are having more and more of a love for God and for His kingdom and His glory and for walking with Him every moment, loving Him, enjoying His righteousness working itself out in your life?

Because biblically qualified elders must be men who are joyfully under God's ordained authority. These are not self-promoters.

[14 : 48] These are not arrogant or greedy men. They are under the fear and the trembling and the delight and the joy of God, the King of Kings.

elders. In fact, to be an elder of a church means you're submitting to many layers of authority. Think about it. The elders, every individual elder is under the authority of the congregation.

In other words, you will not be appointed to be an elder unless the congregation calls you. So you're submitting to their collective call as a congregation. Every individual elder is also under the authority of the current body of elders.

Or in a church plant, it's the ascending church, their body of elders that have appointed you following God's instructions. Elders are also submissive to the secular government when it comes to civil matters.

And this has been exciting lately. It's been very important for us to work through this. We are living in the overlap of the ages. How does that look for the church? Well, on civil matters, we are still submissive.

[15 : 57] Yes, we are. We pay taxes. We follow traffic law. There are so many ways where we must be submissive. You don't get to go around living however you want, even when it comes to the law of the land.

Now, their highest authority will always be God. And if there's ever a conflict, it's God's law that wins. So the law, the moral law of God, is your rule for life.

That's a wonderful guide to you. You can know you're walking right with God. We have the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, which Christ himself provides for us as a way to be prepared as his bride, not to earn our salvation, but to become beautiful in the work of the Spirit in our lives.

The elders are also in submission to the Word of God. See, the Bible is over every single elder and every church. And finally, it's the Holy Spirit within your heart and within the church that must rule the man.

So let me ask us this. What does your life preach right now? What type of God is your life preaching? When your friends look at your life or evaluate what your church is all about, do they see anything different?

[17 : 12] The church is called to live out the gospel, and this must be modeled by the elders. Aren't you grateful that our loving God shows his uncompromising care for his bride by providing such a high standard of doctrine in life?

Praise him for his wisdom in setting the church up in order in this way, making us beautiful through the leadership of these elders through whom he brings his order.

Number three, on the positive side now, what the king requires. Let's look at those same verses, 6b through 8. And why does the king, why does Jesus have any right to establish the positive requirements, what you must be to be qualified?

Well, because the church belongs to him. See, at most, a pastor or an elder is a steward of God. You won't own it, ever. It's never your church.

You are merely an appointed, a delegated overseer of what belongs to King Jesus because he purchased the church with his precious blood. And you can never fulfill the works or earn what Christ earned.

[18 : 32] You can never do it. You will always fall short. But if you walk with the Lord and he's called you and raised you up and you've been appointed, you do get to serve him as his steward.

But just always remember your place before the king. So on the positive side, the elder must be the husband of one wife, we're told. And it doesn't mean that every elder must be married.

It means that every man must be a one woman man. So you may be single, but you must be sexually pure. Men must be pure. Must be pure with their eyes, your mind, your emotions.

You belong to God and the church is his bride. And your children, if you do have kids in a family, your children are believers. They respect their father and they receive his loving discipleship within the home during family worship.

The household of the elder will never be perfect, but it should model the warmth, the care, the teaching, the orderliness of the church. The man must be above reproach.

[19 : 40] See, if a man is opening himself up to be, you know, sued or accused in some way, it's a big threat to the church. And this is really a protection against scandal and disgracing the name of the Holy God.

And we all know, we all know, probably every year, major leaders in the evangelical world who have claimed to be Christian, and sometimes they're not even under the authority of a biblical church.

And if they are, that congregation and that body of elders has failed by not holding them to account sooner and allowing them to disgrace the name of God publicly in so many ways.

And so it's a very important charge. Men, you must be submissive to the local church, not only for your sake, but for the name of Jesus Christ, for his glory and his reputation in the world.

And here's a very important application for all of us. See, the king does require that the bride is being prepared for the marriage.

[20 : 46] Marriage is a picture of Christ taking his people for himself. And Christ loved the church with a self-sacrificing kind of love.

So when you truly, truly, and honestly examine your own heart, what evidence do you see of the Holy Spirit growing you to make you more ready for King Jesus?

You will see his face one day. And when anyone repents and believes, when you get saved, you know what happens is the Holy Spirit moves into your life.

He dwells with you in your inner being. And the Holy Spirit, in your mind, your heart, your soul, he starts to put things in order. He sees the chaos and he brings you to repent after one sin after another.

And he brings you to see how walking with God is so peaceful and so life-giving. And the Holy Spirit, as he arranges your life, he invites the Father and the Son.

[21 : 51] And he says, Sinclair Ferguson put it this way so powerfully, the Spirit inviting Father and Son, come in. We can dwell here in this soul. This is the type of life we can enjoy dwelling in.

And the Spirit promises to bear his fruit in your life more and more over time. So if God is sanctifying you, be encouraged.

God is preparing you as his bride. He is calling you to the high standard of doctrine and life that he requires of his church and which should be modeled by the elder.

Well, finally, here's the charge to these bodyguards, these elders, these groomsmen of the king. Hold firm the sword. Let's read verse 9.

And remember, even before that, remember Ephesians 6, 17, the only offensive weapon in the Christian's armory is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

[22 : 53] And we're told in verse 9, he must hold firm to the trustworthy Word as taught. Hold firm the sword. Hold firm the Bible, the Word of God.

And why? So that the elder may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine for the purification of the bride and for the honor of the king's name.

The Word of God, we're told in Hebrews 4, 12, worth memorizing, it is living inactive, it's sharper than any two-edged sword. How does the Word of God work that way?

Well, it pierces to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and it discerns the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.

You know this from reading God's Word, from sitting under the preaching of the gospel. You know how God's Word pierces your soul, your inner being, doesn't it? And it helps you discern, shows you what will please God.

[23 : 56] Well, by the power of the Spirit, we are called, church, to wield the scriptures. Every Christian has the sword. We are not a weaponless army. Every believer must pick it up, sharpen your handle of it, one with the other, practice, use the Word, learn the truth, minister God's Word one to another, teach God's Word to your beloved ones, start with your own family, call your parent, call your grandparent, talk about God and His Word.

And you also need to be able to be on the defensive and protect the precious bride. You need to be able to rebuke those who contradict God's Word.

Yeah, it's amazing. You look around and you see evangelical leaders, it's like there are, there's no care for remembering some of these cautions, and these are legal terms.

In fact, you will be disqualified from being an elder if you don't uphold God's Word. You link arms, you go to these meetings with others who clearly have a wrong view of God and disregard His Word, and you're going to sit there or even pray with them and associate.

This is very concerning. It shows a disregard for the clear instruction of the Word of God. If anyone claims God's authority apart from the Word of God, from the Bible, as revealed to us, that man is an imposter and a danger to the bride of Christ.

[25 : 31] And biblically qualified elders must handle that. You must hold firm to the Word of God. That's what Paul says to Titus, for all the churches.

This was not his idea. This was entrusted to him by Christ Himself. How can we forget this so easily, church? How can so many who claim to be Christians disregard these instructions and think they know better?

I remember the time in the Middle Ages. You know, you think about the power of the established church and you think about the abuses that were going on. The religious elite controlled what people would hear.

People didn't care to or have the way to study God's Word for themselves. And they lived in misery. So what happened with the Reformation is that the Word of God increasingly became available.

With Gutenberg Press, the Renaissance was a return to the original source, ad fontes. And as people read God's Word, they began to understand it with the help of the Holy Spirit and ask questions.

[26 : 41] people would realize these were abusive religious leaders. They were not working for King Jesus. They were working for his great enemy. These were synagogues of Satan.

They had to flee from them. And they could gather in every town and village and appoint their own elders for order and biblical instruction in the Word.

And man, we now have it on every device. You could buy hundreds of copies at no cost. And do we love God's Word? Do we listen to it in that way?

And if so, why are we so weak in our doctrine? Why do we seem to not care about the truth of the Word of God? Why don't our lives conform to the Gospel? Why do we send so few to global gospel mission?

Why are there so many hundreds, thousands of unreached people in tribes and nations? Christian, if you truly follow Christ, you must know the teaching of the Bible.

[27 : 42] It seems like we're in a time where even within so-called Christian churches, there are more wolves and deceivers than there are biblically equipped warriors. Know God's Word.

Wield the sword. Be careful. Don't take in anything you want from YouTube. Be discerning. Listen to trusted elders. God shows His uncompromising care for you, His bride, by requiring of His true stewards a high standard of doctrine in life.

The King's standards for the church are high because He loves you. That was our first point. The King prohibits disqualified leaders and elders in a church because He loves you.

The King requires much of the church and of its elders because Christ loves you. Hold firm to the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Do this in obedience to Jesus. Defend the truth because the Spirit of God is preparing you through the ministry of the biblical church for eternity with King Jesus.

[28 : 58] Look forward to that day. Revelation 19, John reports, when I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying, Hallelujah!

For the Lord, our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

Are you ready, church? Make yourself ready for the Lamb of God and the marriage supper of King Jesus to His church.

You're His bride. And pray for stewards. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up more laborers and make yourself ready.

Christ calls you to a high standard of doctrine and life. And you can sing like the church has sung for thousands of years from Psalm 36.

[30 : 06] How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house.

And you give them drink from the river of your delights. grace. For with you is the fountain of life. And in your light do we see light.

All glory be to King Jesus. Amen.