

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 10.8.2023

PART 31 - GODLY LEADERS

I. INTRODUCTION

Titus 1:5-16

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— 6 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. 7 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, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 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.

10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. 12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 15 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. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

II. APPOINTING GODLY TEACHERS

- Paul states the purpose for which he left Titus in Crete, that is, to appoint elders in every town.
- Titus needs to finish what was started by the apostle.
- "Put what remained into order..." The way Titus is to finish what was started and set into order what is disordered, is through the appointment of elders in every town that has a church.
- Elders are those men who are appointed to the office of overseer, presbyter, elder, bishop, pastor, shepherd, these are interchangeable terms for the same office. The distinction in the terms is to denote function, task, and responsibility.
- These are the leaders of the church, tasked with the pastoral oversight of the flock of God.
- From the very foundation of the church, God intended for the local church to have elders and pastors. (see Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23)
- Elders in every church is the apostolic imperative.

THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

- The job description of the elder has more to do with their character than in a particular set of skills.
- In 1 Tim 3:1, Paul writes, “Therefore an overseer MUST BE...”
- There are mandatory, non-negotiable qualifications that must be met by those who would be appointed to lead the flock of God.
- In our passage, Paul asserts the qualifications in both negative and positive language.
- Negatively—“He MUST NOT BE arrogant, quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.”
- Positively—“He MUST BE above reproach. He must be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.”
- Notice the repetition that they are to be “above reproach” (6,7a).
- They must be blameless. They must have unimpeachable character.
- A godly reputation and character are paramount.

THE EVALUATION OF AN ELDER

- There are three areas Paul emphasizes in the qualifications for elders that are to be evaluated.
- First, concerns the elder’s marriage and family life.
- As we looked in 1 Timothy, the home is where the elders must first be qualified. If he can’t manage his own household, he is unfit to manage God’s household.
- He must demonstrate fidelity to his wife and have children that are obedient and not rebellious.
- Godliness must first be fostered in the home.
- Elders serve as examples to the flock of God in their marriage and family life.
- Second, concerns the elder’s character and conduct.
- The man who would aspire to the office of an overseer must evidence character and conduct of a pursuit of godliness in every aspect of their life.
- Character is the job description of an elder.
- They serve as examples to the flock of what it looks like to follow Christ.
- Third, concerns the elder’s grasp of the truth.
- 9a He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught
- They must possess the truth firmly before they can instruct others in the truth.
- 1 Timothy 3:2 lists one of the qualifications of an elder is that he is “able to teach”.
- He must not only be able to teach but also be loyal to the teaching.
- Teaching is what elders do. And that teaching takes on two dimensions:
- Giving instruction in sound doctrine.
- Rebuking those who contradict sound doctrine.
- The pastor edifies and corrects; instructs and rebukes.
- John Calvin, in his commentary on the pastorals wrote, “*The pastor ought to have two voices: one, for gathering the sheep, and another for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means of doing both, for he who is deeply skilled in it will be able both to govern those who are teachable, and to refute the enemies of the truth.*”

III. SILENCING UNGODLY TEACHERS

- V10 The conjunction “for” links these two sections and gives us the reason why Titus must appoint elders in every town and finish what was started.
- The reason is the proliferation of false teachers who were deceiving people and leading them astray.
- Here is the apostle’s strategy to deal with that situation: when false teachers increase, true teachers must be multiplied.
- More teachers of the truth are needed who can refute error and rebuke those teaching and listening to error.

THE NATURE OF UNGODLY TEACHERS

- 10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.
- First, they are insubordinate, rebellious, and reject authority.
- They think they are a law unto themselves and don’t need to submit to the leadership God has established in His church.
- Ultimately what they are rebelling against is the authority of God’s Word.
- Second, they are empty talkers.
- They’re all talk, no substance.
- What they teach has no life because it is devoid of the truth.
- Third, they are deceivers.
- They are actively leading people astray.
- They seem to know what they are doing is deceptive.
- Paul calls out a particular group that fits this characterization, the circumcision party!
- Who is Paul referring to? We don’t exactly know what the nature of the false teaching was but this indicates that they were a Jewish group teaching people to follow Jewish myths (14).
- They were teaching that the gospel was not enough and they also either needed to follow the law or hold to certain man-made traditions and commandments.
- Paul amplifies their corrupt character by calling attention to their rotten reputation.
- 12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true.
- He is quoting a 6th Century BC Cretan philosopher-poet named Epimenides of Knossos.
- Cretans were infamous for their lying that the Greeks coined the verb “krētizō” which means to ‘lie’ or ‘cheat.’
- The statement is certainly an unflattering characterization which Paul seems to confirm as generally accepted truth.
- Paul is applying this general statement about Cretan culture to the rebellious false teachers.
- They fit the stereotype. They are truly Cretan in the worst possible ways.

THE ERROR OF UNGODLY TEACHERS

- Paul discloses the fundamental errors of these ungodly and false teachers.
- The first fundamental error is that they devoted themselves to myths and man-made traditions.
- 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.
- They devoted themselves and taught others to devote themselves to myths, things that were not true.

- Jewish mythology had a strong influence in the early church in areas with a large Jewish presence.
 - But their error was also in devoting themselves to the commands of people, traditions of men, who had abandoned the truth.
 - Instead of devotion to the true and living Word of God and submitting themselves to the Author of life and the teaching of his apostles, they were submitting themselves to opinions of men who did not love the truth and who had left the truth behind.
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- The second fundamental error of these ungodly and false teachers was their misunderstanding of true godliness.
 - 15 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.
 - As we looked at in our study in 1 Timothy, the external and outward expressions of purity were what they were commanding others to follow.
 - They were putting people in bondage with their man-made rules that could never bring about the true purity of heart and moral change that only the Holy Spirit can produce.
 - 1 Timothy 4:1-5 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.
 - Their false teaching is that one must deny themselves certain fleshly appetites through rule keeping in order to be truly pure.
 - Colossians 2:18, 20-23 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)— according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.
 - Outward expressions of purity without an inner transformation of heart and gospel-driven motivations, will not keep you from your sinful and selfish heart.
 - If we have been transformed by the grace of God and we are trusting in Christ, we know that the way to holiness and godliness is not by following man-made commands and rules.
 - We are sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit from the inside out not the outside in.
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- The third fundamental error of these false teachers, they professed to know God but denied him by their works.
 - 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.
 - Words and deeds were not in alignment. They made a claim about Christ but denied him by their corrupt character.
 - Our actions reveal what we truly believe in our heart.
 - What we devote ourselves to, how we spend our time, what we make a priority, what we give most of our money to, all reveal the desires of our heart.

- These false teachers were the polar opposite of what true godly teachers are in character and conduct.

DEALING WITH UNGODLY TEACHERS

- 11 They must be silenced...” They need to shut up!
- Titus must confront them. He can't have a casual or laid-back attitude in addressing them directly.
- Titus has to take action to stop their teaching and blunt their influence.
- We know their influence was growing because Paul writes, “they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach” (11).
- These false teachers were taking advantage of some through their false teaching and then profiting from it.
- False teaching is deadly. That's why we have so many warnings in Scripture.
- 13 Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,
- The goal of rebuking those who are teaching or listening to error is that they might be sound in the faith.
- An elders' stern rebuke is with the aim of bringing those who are in error to a healthy knowledge of the truth and sound doctrine.

CONCLUSION

- Godly leaders are needed in the local church.
- The challenge is that these kinds of men are in short supply.
- And despite the need, we dare not loosen the standards God's Word places on the appointment of elders in the local church.
- Pray God raises up more godly leaders in our church.
- Noting the qualifications placed on such men, pray for your pastors.
- Lastly, I want to exhort you all to live a life of godliness that is fueled by the grace we have in Christ Jesus and the knowledge of the truth.
- And if your actions are not consistent with the truth you confess, I implore you to repent and turn to Christ and find true life that leads to godliness.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?