

Titus (Part Two): A Faithful Ministry

Qualifications for Elders

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Given 18-Sep-21; Sermon #1618

I am going to be speaking about the epistle to Titus and I am going to begin with a little bit of review of what I went over in my first sermon on this subject because it has been about a month and some of the details may not have stuck in your brain. But I do not want this to be too exhaustive, just to go over some of the high points and then we will get into the epistle of Titus itself.

We may be living in some of the worst times we have ever faced. Some have had individual experiences that were likely worse. You know, they went through a war or they went through a famine or had a terrible health problem, or what have you. But on the whole, our quality of life has declined precipitously over the last several years. As Paul said to the first century Hebrews, "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin." So, we we have not reached the height of problems, height of trials, persecution, and martyrdom. Those things are probably still years off. (We hope they are years off.) But it may be on the near horizon. We just do not know. God has not given us a timeline with nice little dates and everything so we can get ready for them.

As Bible-believing Christians, we have targets on our back since we are the antithesis of the godless, secular, woke zeitgeist that has taken over the West and is infecting the whole world. I can see just by looking at what I consider a progression of events, that it seems to be just a matter of time. I mean we cannot expect to go sliding into the Kingdom without any kind of testing or suffering because that is the way God has chosen to prepare His people for His Kingdom. You can look that up very easily in Hebrews 2, I Peter 2, and I Peter 4.

Now the members of the early church, the first century church, lived under sometimes intense opposition and anti-God sentiment. Some places were a lot worse than others. Rome, of course, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth,

Colossae, and Crete, where Paul sent Titus to put out some church fires in about AD 63 or so during the building anti-Christian sentiment during the reign of Nero. It was a time at least as bad as this and probably a lot worse. I do not think we have quite the tyrant that Nero was over us, but he is bad enough and all the people, the cabal, that is running the government in this country.

Besides that, Crete and Cretans did not have a good reputation in the Greek speaking world. The people were considered brutish and coarse, as I mentioned last time, they were thought to be inveterate liars, lazy, and gluttonous. They were also plagued by their lusts and had false teachers among them. They just seemed like a terrible bunch of people, yet many of the people who were like this had come into the church and they still had a lot of that carnality hanging around that they needed to get rid of and they needed somebody strong like Titus to help them work through it.

So that is why Paul sent Titus to them. He knew them already. He had worked with Paul on an evangelistic campaign a year or so earlier. He also seems to have had the right temperament for that kind of assignment. As I mentioned in Part One there, Paul often sent him on difficult assignments and often very delicate ones that had to be handled just so. Like when he sent him to Corinth to handle the case of immorality there in the church. Also when he was there, he had to face off against those who really disrespected Paul and show them that they were completely wrong about his motives. And he also had to do things, administrative things, like supervise the collection for the Jerusalem saints.

Titus seems to have been just an all around guy, a great minister, a person everybody respected, and one who had a light touch for the most part. But he could get serious and make things difficult for people when need be. So Paul used him, as I mentioned last time, like a relief pitcher, somebody to go in and put out a fire. He was a good problem solver, he could come up with ideas and things to help people see what they actually needed to do and not what their carnality was telling them to do. So, he seems to have had a good ability to tone down inflamed situations and get people moving toward reconciliation.

Titus' assignment on Crete was difficult because Crete's culture was really one of moral decay, very similar to what ours is. From the tone of what Paul says in his epistle to Titus and other places, Paul seems to have given him instructions, initial instructions, broad instructions, and then sent him off, granting him a great deal of autonomy in dealing with those situations. They were very much of the same mind. Titus understood what Paul expected of him. They had the same faith, which will see as we go into the epistle. And so Paul had no reservations in saying, "Look Titus, we've got a problem on Crete and you need to go there and solve this and this and this, you know what to do. I'll see you in a year." or however it was. He had complete faith in Titus, as he had with Timothy, and he just let him go and do the work that needed to be done. We will see this as we go through his epistle to Titus.

We think of our situation in doing some of these things working with people in the church. You know, we could go and send a minister somewhere where there is a problem and if he had a question he could always phone or text or what have you. He could send an email if he had a question that he needed an answer from somebody older and wiser, but that was not possible back there in the first century. It was a long way, a long time to get from one place to another. Communications were very slow by our standards. So, when Paul sent Timothy out or Titus out, they had to handle it themselves, they had to come up with the solutions on site and Paul was very certain that they could do it, that they would come up with the right solutions.

I do want to read you again what I read you from the *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* about Titus because I think it does a good job of summarizing him.

Titus was a man for the tough tasks. According to Paul, he was dependable, reliable, and diligent, and he had a great capacity for human affection. Possessing both strength and tact, Titus calmed a desperate situation on more than one occasion. He is a good model for Christians who are called to live out their lives as a witness in trying circumstances.

So this is why I chose to give these sermons on the epistle to Titus. We need Paul's instruction on how to navigate these challenging times within the

church and in our interactions with those in the world during a time of moral decay. But we are going to find a great deal of wisdom in this short book, this short epistle, to help us keep the faith as Satan tightens the screws.

Titus 1 is generally outlined in three sections. If you have a New King James, you will see that they put a heading on each paragraph. This is essentially the same as outlining it. So most commentators use very much the same outline and they may just put different titles on them, but it is generally in three sections.

The first section, verse 1-4, is Paul's salutation, how he opens the letter. The next, verses 5-9, are qualities of an approved elder, and verses 10-16 is dealing with rebellious and false teachers. I will not get to the third one today. I was preparing this and found out that I could not get the entire chapter in one sermon, especially because the salutation is so important and I thought I would be able to just kind of skip over it almost, just say, oh yeah, notice this and that is all. But just about every word of the first four verses is packed with meaning and I think you will see that as we go through it.

Now, if we look at the progression of topics: Paul's salutation, qualities of an approved elder, and dealing with rebellious and false teachers, Paul's aim was to first clean up the leadership of the church on Crete. He started at the top. His salutation sets out the divine order and the major cogs that comprise the ministry's function and preaching. His second section highlights the all-important character of the minister. And the third works as a template for dealing with contentious people and false teachers. Like I said, we will see all that as we go through.

But the first section is all-important. So let us read that.

Titus 1:1-4 Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the

commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

The letter at the time Paul wrote this, starts off with a salutation and greeting and it tells, of course, who wrote it and who it is being written to. So Paul is writing it to Titus, that is pretty clear. But Paul describes himself with two phrases and it is actually kind of rare that he does this in his epistles. There is only one other place where he does this, and Peter does it as well, but he calls himself a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ.

We will go back to Romans 1. He uses a very similar one, a little bit different way of laying it out, but he says there.

Romans 1:1 Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.

In II Peter 1, Peter uses this:

II Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

Every other epistle has something a bit different. Usually he only calls himself one thing, either an apostle or he does not give himself a description. He says with Sosthenes or with Titus or with Timothy. So this is kind of rare, and it heightens the purpose of the salutation by using both. Both of these phrases, both of these titles are at the same time humble and exalted. Most of us realize that the word for servant in the New Testament is *doulos* and that means slave or a bondservant. That means someone who is completely under the power of another, and it describes how Paul saw himself. He was entirely at the beck and call of God. He was God's slave and he was happy about it, and would not ask for anything more. Yet, on the other hand, the great Moses was a servant of God and other biblical luminaries were too.

So while it implies full subjugation to God, it is simultaneously a term of honor and of a place of importance within God's Family.

Now, apostle of Jesus Christ is very similar. However, apostle is an official rank in the church, it is right at the top of the ladder under Christ. It means

"an authoritative messenger sent from a greater personage or body." So this was somebody who had full powers of the person who sent him and he could do what he has to do under that writ. Historically the Roman senate sent apostles from that body to give warnings and makes threats and negotiate treaties or enforce its will. So in the church, an apostle occupies a powerful position, but still he does not work for himself. He cannot act in any way against the desires of his boss. He still takes orders from his superior and he has to stick to those orders religiously, pardon the pun.

This is how Paul saw himself. He is a humble servant with divinely appointed powers. He may be just a man and not very powerful looking and a bad speaker, but Christ has given him designated responsibilities over the whole church that are far, far reaching. He was over quite a huge area, a lot of people, and he had power to teach them and to direct them as he saw fit within the parameters that God had given him.

But he clarifies the purpose of his powers with the next words that he writes. He says that his powers as an apostle of Jesus Christ and a servant of God are focused on, as he says here, "according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth, which is according to godliness." So they are focused on building the faith of God's elect and teaching the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. That is the attitude that leads to right living. So while his authority was quite broad, yet it was concentrated on building faith in the membership, teaching them the truth, and instructing them in godliness so that they would conduct themselves properly before God.

This means that Paul's authority was almost completely spiritual. He did not have the authority over a member's business. You know, what kind of business he could run or anything like that. He could not tell him whether he should buy a horse or a donkey as his next vehicle. That was just not part of of his purview. His responsibilities were spiritual in nature. God did not give him authority to manage people's lives. He did give him authority to preach the truth and build their faith and teach them wisdom to live in a way that pleases God, and correct them in love if they strayed from the path.

We put it, in times past, ministers, even apostles with all that authority, are shepherds, not sheriffs. It is not their job to to drive people. It is to lead them and to help them make decisions on their own. Because, as I mentioned

recently, it is not the ministry's job to make decisions for people, because that does not build any character in the person that we are making the decision for. We are just reflecting our own character in what we tell them to do. Our job is to lay out God's truth, give you the knowledge, and then you make the decision based on your relationship with God using the Holy Spirit.

That brings us to verse 2. "In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." So, Paul brings hope of eternal life into the discussion. This is the goal toward which God has appointed him to serve Him. It is not his personal eternal life that he has in mind here, but that of the members of the church. He works to build our faith and to add to our knowledge and increase our godliness to ensure that *we* reach the goal of the Kingdom of God. Of course, Paul would do that for himself. But his job was to lead the church, lead other people to eternal life as well as he can with the skills, the wisdom, and whatever else God gifted him with as an apostle.

Hope of eternal life, of course, is the resurrection from the dead when Christ returns. And the apostle's job is to do whatever he can, to use all his skills to make sure the people whom God has put under him reach that goal. That God has promised it, that is what lies out there ahead of us. It is ours, it is sure if we continue in the faith, if we endure to the end, and as Paul says, He never lies, He is not going to trick us, bait and switch, or anything like that at the end because that has always been a part of the plan.

But He needs His ministers, human beings in the church, leaders, shepherds, however you want to put it, to gently lead the people toward that end, how to shepherd them toward the Kingdom of God. The ministry are necessary parts of the process He has laid out because it is not an easy goal to attain and there is a lot of pain and suffering and trial along the way, as we well know, and a good minister will be there to help. And as I said, he cannot make the decisions for you, but he can be a guide and a support as you work your way through these trials. Most of that help, let us say, is through preaching.

Titus 1:3 but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior.

So his primary responsibility is preaching and teaching. That is the chief way a minister conveys faith and knowledge and godliness and hope. Of course there is also personal counsel, but that is in many ways just a subset of teaching. Paul acknowledged that God our Savior, Jesus Christ, had personally committed the gospel, the wonderful message of the Kingdom of God to him. And he was going to do that come hell or high water, as the saying goes. Remember what had happened to him on the road to Damascus. It was such a life-changing experience that it was burned into his memory and energized every day of his life.

I Corinthians 15:1-11 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas [or Peter], then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. But I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Go back to Acts 9. This is the road to Damascus section. But I want toward the end of it where God tells him what his commission was.

Acts 9:15-16 The Lord said to him [This is to Ananias who was supposed to tell Paul.], "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to

bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

And then finally, I Corinthians 9. He really took it seriously. The man was dedicated beyond anything I have ever known.

I Corinthians 9:16-18 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

This burned within him. He was charged there in Damascus with taking the Word of God to Israel and to Gentiles and to the nations, to kings, and he took it *so seriously*. And he was rewarded for it definitely: Fourteen epistles, probably, depending on whether we are counting the book of Hebrews. But he preached all across the Mediterranean. Tradition says he went to England and Spain and he was just a powerhouse. He could not stop preaching. And the man was just amazing!

By the way, the word "commandment" in verse 3, "which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior" is *epitage*. That is Strong's #2003. It is the word that Paul uses throughout his epistles for a divine command or a divine authorization. What we are seeing in the salutation is Paul repeatedly emphasizing, not necessarily to Titus but to the Cretan's, that his authority over the church and the preaching of the gospel was a direct commission from God Himself. So he is not pulling any punches.

Like I said, this is not to Titus because Titus knew all this. Paul is aiming beyond him at the Cretans who would most likely have read the letter or at least gotten most of the content of the letter through Titus. It is almost if he were saying to them, God has personally directed me and Titus to clean up

and bolster the faith and knowledge of the church in Crete. This is something God wants done. He is giving me the express command to do this and it is your job to respond properly to it.

He is making sure that the people know that he is not doing this just willy-nilly because he hates them or he is picky or what have you. He is doing this because God says it needs to be done. So he is trying to get the people there in Crete to look beyond Titus, look beyond Paul, and see that this is actually Jesus Christ Himself teaching them, moving them along, helping them to have faith and reaching the hope of eternal life in His Kingdom.

Let us go on to verse 4. Verse 4 is standard in a lot of epistles, except for one phrase where he says, "a true son in our common faith." The only other person that he says this about, as far as I can find, is Timothy. Paul likely had a hand in bringing both Timothy and Titus into the faith. We know, certainly, he did for Timothy, and since Paul uses similar language to Timothy, that it is likely that he means the same thing about Titus. He was probably the one who preached to him and counseled him and maybe even baptized him. I do not know, but it is probable.

True son is interesting because we should not define true here as meaning the opposite of false. The word really means "authentic" or "genuine." So put that in there: "To Titus my authentic son in our common faith" or my genuine son.

He was saying that Titus was the real deal. He was genuine in his convictions and he was genuine in being a servant of Paul and to the church. Titus was not a person that you could find any hypocrisy in, nothing was put on, what you see is what you got. And he really meant it. He is one of those people that if he says something, everybody knew that was what he believed. He was not going to lie, he was not going to obfuscate in any way. He was going to give it to you straight. He had genuine faith and he was authentic in everything he did. So he was a real person, a real quality person that they could trust.

Now we also have to kind of key into the phrase "our common faith." By pointing this out, by using this phrase, Paul is signaling to the Cretans that he and Titus believed the same way. It is their common faith, they do not have

any disputes about what the gospel is and most of the details, if not all of the details of the Word of God and how they should be applied. They believe the same way and they teach the same things. So he is telling them here, then, by saying this, that it does not matter that Paul is not there to teach them. What they would receive from Titus is what they would get from Paul if he were there.

Titus' preaching had the full backing of Paul, that is how much he trusted him. He understood that Titus was such a straight arrow and had been taught fully, that what he could do to help the Cretans improve would be the same things that he would do if he were there personally. So he is indicating that they were not to despise Titus because he was not the apostle. We could say, I do not know if this is why is right, but he then goes on into the the standard "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior," and we just normally skip that thinking it is just a normal salutation.

But we should take this a little bit seriously because after just saying that he has the full backing of Paul and they were not to despise Titus, he asked that grace, mercy, and peace from God and Christ be with them, be in their interactions, and smooth out any of the problems that might come up between Titus and the people there. So asking for grace, mercy, and peace is one of those prayers that I hope we all pray every once in a while about our interactions with one another because we could sure use it.

Let us go into the second section, verses 5-9. I am going to read the whole thing and I wrote a note to myself here that I do not want to belabor this section because it is fairly straightforward. But the rest of the sermon is pretty much on this. Hopefully I am not belaboring it, but it is an important part of what Paul had to say to Titus, an important part in resolving some of the problems that were there in Crete.

Titus 1:5-9 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is

good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Paul and Titus, when they had both been on Crete, had evangelized up and down the island. And it may have been a whirlwind type of thing where they did not have a whole lot of time to stay in one particular area. Maybe they would stay a week or two or a month, but they had to move on because they had a plan about how they were going to evangelize from one tip to the other of the island.

But because they had done this, because it had been kind of a whirlwind trip, some of the administrative tasks had not been done. So Paul left Titus to organize the congregations under elders, and elders are, if I can just give you a general definition of an elder, it is men who show good faith, leadership skills, and whom those in the congregations respect. That is a fair definition. If Titus could choose a good set of such men, Paul is implying, he would have gone a long way towards stabilizing matters in Crete because as the leadership goes, so goes the congregation in many cases.

Titus' first job, then, was to set up an organization among the various congregations as well as within the congregations and see what is lacking and fill those positions. Because I am sure there were a lot of things that Paul and Titus had not had the opportunity to teach them. But after a few months coming back through in these churches, I think Titus could probably get a good idea of who the people respected, who seemed to be upright, and, as he mentions here a couple times in the next few verses, blameless, that he could start working things out so that the people would have some leadership whether or not Titus was there personally or not.

So he talks about appointing elders in verse 5. This is the Greek word *presbyteros*, and in verse 7, he calls them bishops or the margin says overseers. This is *episcopos*. I do not think it is a good idea to try to make too narrow a definition of these terms or try to figure out how much they are different or like one another, because an elder and a bishop or an overseer is pretty much the same. They are fairly synonymous. So we should not try to squeeze a minuscule difference between them.

If anything, elder implies maturity and dignity, but not necessarily aged. I mean, you had some pretty young elders at the time. Titus was an elder, Timothy was an elder. And it had a lot to do with a person's personal maturity and seriousness about his calling. On the other hand, overseer describes his work. So elder implies maturity and dignity and overseer describes the work that he does to watch over the flock like a shepherd. That is what *episcopos* means. He also adds in verse 7 the title steward to the mix. This is *oikonomos*, which is the basis for the English word, economics. It is one who has power and responsibility over something under another's authority or an administrator or a manager.

These are all parts of the same job. A minister, an elder, wears a lot of different hats so he has to be mature and dignified. He has to watch over the flock and he also has to manage the church as an administrator. It is all part and parcel of taking care of a local church. So, like I said, we should not try too hard to separate these into various ranks. It is not necessary.

Now, Paul stresses here, in verses 6 and 7, that an elder be blameless. Other translations read "above reproach." It implies a person who cannot be accused of wrongdoing, who lives a very good life, nobody can say anything bad against him. It is someone with a spotless record. Someone who is a straight arrow, has no black marks staining his character, or anything that will bring dishonor to him, the church, or God. It is someone who does not have skeletons in his closet that will come out later and bring blasphemy to God. It is a person who is pretty upright. That is the chief qualification, it seems. Not just that they believe, but they are personally upright in their actions and treat people fairly and do not have any hidden sins.

The remaining descriptors that are there in verse 6: The husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of dissipation or insubordination, give us an idea of what Paul had in mind. In particular, what you could see of a person's life is shown in his family. He and his wife have a good relationship. Are his children well brought up? Are they respectful or are they wild and doing all sort of things that would also bring any kind of dishonor upon the man or the church? So does he have his family life in order?

Let us go back a few pages to I Timothy 3. Paul writes something very similar to Timothy about the qualifications of overseers, bishop as it is translated often. I want to read that to give you the flavor of it. It is very similar to what he writes to Titus but a few differences.

I Timothy 3:1-7 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

So Titus, in being given this charge from the apostle Paul about appointing elders in every city, had to make some pretty close evaluations of the people he put in charge of the local churches. It was something that he had to study. He had to converse with these men and kind of in a way do an investigation, find out who would be the best person, talk to people, find out who they respected, who they felt was an outstanding Christian and had the skills to then lead the various congregations in his absence or Paul's absence. So it was not an easy task. Hopefully God gave him insight into these things. I am sure He did and he was able to find them.

But we have to understand that this was Crete and Paul was giving him a huge task that might have been very difficult to fulfill because the Cretans are not known for being blameless. So he had to find the diamond in the rough in these various cities. And I expect that it happened. We are not given the results of it, but this was the template that he had to put up to these men to find out whether they qualified or not.

Verse 7. The descriptions of an elder here in his blamelessness are all negative ones. He uses negatives to show what kind of people Titus should

avoid. I will read verse 7 and then I will give you my interpretations of these words.

Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money.

They are pretty straightforward, but these descriptions cover things like pride or being an overbearing person. That would be the first one, not self-willed. The next one has to do with not quick-tempered, It means an elder should not be given to anger. That should not be his first place to go. He should be calm and try to figure these things out without flaring into anger.

The next one, not given to wine. It certainly means that he should not be an alcoholic, but this covers all kinds of addictions. He is not to be a person who has given to any kind of addiction. The next one is easy, not violent. An elder should not be violent at all. If he is, he should be thrown out on his ear. And he should not pursue dishonest gain. He should not try to make money off his ministry or some kind of crooked side business, or what have you.

Someone who clearly manifests any of these tendencies are immediately disqualified. Those are not character traits that bring glory to God or provide a good example to church members or to the world.

Instead, in verse 8 Paul provides positive traits to look for. Let us read verse 8.

Titus 1:8 hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled.

So the man should be friendly and open to new people. He should be a person who gets along with people and people like him. He has to put his best foot forward for the church that way. He needs to be a person who promotes good in everything. He has to be a person who, as it says here, is sober-minded. That is, it is a person who controls himself. He acts rationally and discreetly and is not silly in any way, serious enough and sober-minded enough to treat the problems in the church with the right seriousness. Paul says he has to live by godly standards. That is, just, as he puts it here in verse

8. He has to live by godly standards and evaluate others and situations by those righteous standards. He cannot have his own standards, he has to have the standards of God.

The next one is holy. The elder has to be personally devout. He has to be prayerful. He has to study, he has to keep learning himself. People have to see that he abides by all the things that he preaches, and all the Word of God. So he has to be personally pious, if you want to use that word. He has to be righteous.

And the final one is self-controlled, or he has to practice self-discipline.

If you notice these last three: just, holy, self-controlled, these are three traits, each one of which points in a different direction. *Just* points toward other people. That is how he treats others. He does it in a godly way. Being *holy* has to do with his attitude toward God and his submission to God. So we had first towards others and towards God. And then the last one, being *self-disciplined*, is how he is toward himself. So he is true and faithful to everyone, and to God, and to himself.

Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

This verse covers doctrinal faithfulness or doctrinal fitness. An elder must have a firm hold on the gospel, on God's Word, on what he has been taught by his predecessors. In this case, the apostle Paul and Titus. He cannot afford in any way to inject his own twist on Scripture, but he has to teach sound doctrine. He needs to have the Word of God before him all the time and not move from it at all. Paul here says that God's Word is faithful, that is, it is reliable. But when you start putting anything foreign, any foreign element into God's Word or you take out certain things that remove vital pieces of the message, then the Bible—God's Word—loses its stability to do what God intends it to do, which is to bring His chosen people into the Kingdom of God.

If you have a factor missing or you added a factor that is not necessary or is false, then it is going to ruin things. It is going to skew the message and the

people who receive the message will, if things continue in that direction, go off the path to the Kingdom of God. So adding spurious ideas makes it impossible to exhort and convict people who contradict, because what happens is that one's arguments lose their punch because they are not anymore backed by truth and the wholeness of God's way when either added to or subtracted from. This has been an important constant principle in God's Word from at least Moses' day.

Let us go back to Deuteronomy 4:2 just to touch bases there.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. [Notice this principle is put into the context of entering the Promised Land. And of course, it is similar with us, but spiritually, we can consider it as in the context of entering the Kingdom of God.] You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

Deuteronomy 4:6 "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples."

And notice it is one of the last things that is said in Scripture, in Revelation 22.

Revelation 22:18-19 [John says] For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

This is a very similar principle that Paul is writing to Titus and using as a qualification for elders. That they need to make sure that, if he is to do his job properly, that is, the elder, he must stand behind the Bible in its fullness—in its wholeness, nothing taken out, nothing added in—because

God designed the Book to be taken full strength, without dilution, either by taking out or adding in. Now that is how God's Word can be truly effective in providing truth to believers and refuting the falsehoods of unbelievers.

So, his final statement here about qualification of an elder is, it is a man who relies on God's Word and is able to use God's Word in the various jobs that he is going to be given.

Now Paul says something very similar to Timothy. Actually, it is just right across the page in II Timothy 3:10. We will read all the way down through chapter 4, verse 5. It is a little fuller discussion of this principle.

II Timothy 3:10-17 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 4:1-5 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

I think that Paul in his last years stresses to his most faithful evangelists the necessity of sticking to God's Word. I imagine that heresies were multiplying across the Christian world and he could foresee the church disintegrating because of them. And the only way to stop it or at least to slow it down was the faithful preaching of Scripture, by faithful men who stood firm in the truth. Firm reliance on God's Word is the key to any man's successful ministry and this is a lesson for all members of God's church, not just the ministry.

Look at all the strange ideas in the world today and some of them are just crazy. And I do not know how some people have absorbed many of them, but they have. It is just mind boggling and I am planning on speaking about one of them on opening night of the Feast that has bamboozled about 40% of professing Christians, at least in the United States. They have fallen for it because they do not know and therefore do not follow the Word of God. This is a big reason why this nation and the other nations of the West are in such a mess and why we need to hold on to Christ and His Word during this time.