

# A Faithful Pastor in a Godless World

*Beautifying the Bride, p.3*

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Well, let's go back to Titus this morning as we continue through this New Testament epistle. Titus chapter 2. In last week's installment, we saw Titus addressing the young men of the church, telling them to be sensible, I say that's biblically sensible in all things, and now Paul turns from just talking about the young men in general to one young man in particular, Titus himself. So let's look at it together. Titus chapter 2, verses 7 and 8.

7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

So here he talks to this young preacher, Titus, Titus, who's been given the daunting task of getting off a ship, stepping onto the shores of the island of Crete, and then criss-crossing the island of Crete, in Paul's words, to set things in order in the churches. I've said many times to you, Crete was a tough place. It was a wild and wooly place and wicked place, and a lot of the worldliness, carnality, ungodliness had crept into the church in one way or another or into one extent or another, and so Titus has a daunting task, to straighten these things out, to get things put in order, to establish elders then to oversee the progression of the church after he leaves. But one thing was essential, Titus himself must be a faithful man of God lest he lose his moral authority in this task and be deficient in the mission that the apostle Paul has sent him on. So I entitled this "A Faithful Pastor in a Godless World," or a godless culture. So this applies to really any pastor in any generation, but particularly it's a word to younger pastors. Now, lest you think, "Well, I can just kind of chill this morning because this isn't really speaking to me," no, there's a wonderful truth here for every elder, every deacon, every small group leader, anyone who in any ways in leadership, but also to all of us who are striving to honor and be faithful to our Lord in this godless day that we live in because we do parallel the situation in Crete in our present culture. So we're talking about a faithful pastor in a godless culture but the applications are certainly true for all of us.

I. Notice the plan. Paul in effect lays out the plan for how Titus is to function in his ministry as he goes around to these churches preaching to them and in his words straightening them out. Now, subpoint A under the plan would be, "First of all Titus, you've got to make sure you live right." Make sure you live right. You cannot be God's

agent, you cannot be God's instrument to reform these churches if you yourself have glaring patterns of hypocrisy and unfaithfulness in your own life. He begins in verse 7 by simply saying, "in all things show yourselves an example." Uh, all things means all things. You see, one hallmark aspect of Christianity is that we start with a transformation of the inner man; the transformation of the heart is the hallmark aspect of true Christianity and this transformation of our core being must by necessity flow out through the totality of our lives. That's why Paul says, "Now Titus, uh, you don't have just one part over here, the way you're dedicated to the Lord. No, in all things, make sure you're a faithful, consistent Christian witness." And so we think of the verse like 2 Corinthians 5:17 that reminds us, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature," now new creation means the totality has been affected from the innermost part out through every aspect and avenue of our lives and influence, "he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

So this obliterates every concept of compartmentalization of our lives. There's not just one part of our life, now this is my religious life, this is my spiritual life, my my sacred life, and that when I over here, now this is my social life, and then over here, this is my work life. And that's one of the reasons why I'm not really fond of a pie-shaped diagram of our lives. I'm not saying they're wrong or sinful, matter of fact, they can be helpful, but a pie shape tends to say like, this part over here is spiritual, here's my social life, this next pie shape is, well, that's my work life, this pie part down here, well, that's my home life, when really Christianity infuses and informs and transforms the totality of my life. Paul says to Titus, "Now Titus, in all things, show yourself an example or a pattern of good deeds."

So your work life is the Christian work life. Your social life is Christian social life. Your school life, young people up there in the mountains, if you can hear me, it's Christian school life. And every part of your home life, of course, is Christian home life. You know, in our our will illustration, we one of the spokes of the will is home life discipleship and I I put that on there because it needs to be real at home. We believe in the uh church-integrated family. You come to church. Dad, here's the word of God. You all have the the the small group Bible studies. We take the truths of what God gives us at church, and then we take them home, and we talk about them when we rise up in the morning, we talk about them when we walk along the way. Christianity permeates the totality of who you are, or it's not the real thing. Jesus is Lord of my work life, and Jesus is Lord of my social life, and Jesus is Lord of my school life, and Jesus is Lord of my home life. Can I get amen right there? You know, sometimes we just get to talking about stuff and we get to going on and we just forget that simple principle, Jesus is Lord everywhere. Brother Chad, that means we can't separate work life from our Christian life. We talk about that a lot in our Philemon Fellowship. That's what it's about, bringing the truth of our Christianity and the totality of our being.

Well, Paul writes to Titus. This is Titus. In effect, "No doubt Titus, you've observed the rank hypocrisy that is so abounding in the Cretan culture." And by the way, it abounds in our culture. Matter of fact, hypocrisy is the hallmark aspect of the ungodly. The ungodly love to parade through the earth promoting their virtue and promoting their goodness and

promoting how they're gonna help those who have need and are the downcast or the oppressed. The problem is they never live up to their profession. And now it it's amazing to me when you look at those who reject God and reject the gospel, yet they parade themselves as the great healers and helpers and saviors and virtuous ones of our culture. How brazenly, openly hypocritical they are.

I just thought about this for a while and I say this about our culture so we can get a feel for the same type principles, our same type things we're going on with the Cretans and that Titus would be dealing with this in the Cretan culture. Think of our own culture, for example. We have the world-savers today. They're going to save us from the climate crisis. You ever heard about those guys? They get on their big jumbo private jets and fly somewhere in Europe to some exotic, beautiful place, and with all of their private jets, leave this giant carbon footprint but that's okay as long as us regular folks don't do that. If the peasants don't do such a thing, they can do it because they're important. They're special. But the rest of us shouldn't be doing those kinds of things. Matter of fact, you need to buy you an electric car. Stupidest thing I've ever seen. I looked it up the other day. If I bought one of those new electric Ford pickup trucks and put my four-wheeler trailer on it, I could not go to my hunting camp on the Tennessee state line and come back without stopping to charge the thing for three hours. Can you think of a dumber thing on earth than that? About 45 or 50 miles and you're done unless you can stop for three hours. Chief, I hope y'all don't get all police cars that are electric. We need you to come when we need you to come. "I'll be there in three hours. I know you're getting murdered right now, but you know, we got to charge this thing."

It's just crazy but my point is the rank hypocrisy is just blazing and it's it's all... The feminists. The feminists who hate all things connected to Western Christian heritage, the feminists who have nothing good to say about Christianity and yet in all of their preaching, in all of their doing, in all of their virtue signaling, they never have one bad thing to say about the religion of Islam and Islam is full of the most horrendous oppressions and mistreatment of women and girls. Brazen hypocrisy, brazen hypocrisy.

And then there's this open borders crowd. Haven't we heard a lot about that? Leave the borders wide open. Everywhere should be a sanctuary city unless you drop a couple of busloads in our town and we'll load them up and ship them out as quick as you unloaded them. You see, we want you to use your money and your houses and your towns, but not our gated communities. Brazen hypocrisy.

And that's the kind of thing that's common in ungodly cultures. The Communist Revolution paraded its banner out there that we're here to lift up and protect the oppressed, the misused, and the disadvantaged, and Lenin and Stalin slaughtered 60 million of their own countrymen in the Communist Revolution. That's brazen hypocrisy.

It's always been like this, brothers and sisters. It was like this in Crete. It's like that today. Perhaps there are some who mean well and want to do well, but their movement is absolutely inconsistent and that was very, very true in the Cretan culture. "Titus, make sure you are consistent. Make sure in all things, you're not a hypocrite." You're you're an

example, he says here, a pattern of good deeds. Matter of fact, uh the Cretan culture was so bad, remember what Paul said in Titus 1:12, and 13? He said, one of themselves, one of their own Cretan citizens, a prophet of their own said Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy drunken, lazy gluttons rather and this testimony is true. For this reason, reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith. "Titus, you're gonna have to call men, women, young people out of the hypocrisy of this culture. So Titus, you're gonna have to make sure you're a faithful, godly man in this godless culture." But these type people always find a way to proclaim their virtue and proclaim their goodness no matter how brazenly evil and sinful they are in conduct and in character.

"So Titus in all things show yourself," actually the word "example" here in our text could be "pattern," and that that's a phrase I've used many, many times with you that as a Christian you don't become perfect, but you establish a new purpose and pattern of life so that no one can bring a credible accusation against you. Titus is the apostle Paul's associate. He has this daunting assignment to reform these churches, establish and train the new pastors for these churches, so he must maintain credibility above that of the average religious or civic leader in the Cretan culture of his day. So the man of God is to be one who is not like the culture. He doesn't flow with the culture. He doesn't change with the culture. Truth remains the truth.

Now, we need to be like Jesus said in Matthew 5:13 through 16, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless," that is, you're inconsistent, you are an outward hypocrite, "how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine," be faithful and consistent, "before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The pastor, particularly maybe young pastors who are faced with a lot of temptations, maybe older pastors aren't quite as often faced with, must make sure he's consistent and credible so he will not lose his moral authority in his ministry.

Well, first of all, the plan for a faithful pastor in a godless world is you need to live right. Secondly, he says, you need to preach right. Subpoint B, preach right. Now verse 7, he continues here and he says, uh "likewise in all things, show yourself an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine." Now the word "doctrine" here is highly unlikely that in this context it refers to that body of doctrine we hold to, the the doctrines of the faith we might say. That's not what this is referring to. Uh Paul knew that Titus held to the doctrines of the faith but here this word "doctrine" refers to the very act of teaching. Uh I would put it this way, he's saying, "Titus, preach right by making sure the motives in your preaching and the manner of your preaching are right." Did you hear me?

Now, small group leaders, that goes for you. The motives of your teaching and the manner of your teaching needs to be pure, true, right, purity in that. The word "purity" means an uncorruptedness. In other words, as you teach, your teaching is not corrupted by sinful, selfish, unsound motives, or sinful or unsound methods or style in your

teaching or in your preaching. That's what Titus, or rather Paul, is getting here to Titus, let there be no corruption of insincere, self-serving, man-pleasing motives and manner in the way you preach.

Now, preachers and especially young preachers are tempted to use the pulpit for personal popularity or self-advancement and this must be repented of and set aside. And by the way, preachers out there, young preachers that may listen to this ministry, this is not a one-time repentance. It's an everyday repentance. It's certainly an every weekend repentance, it's an every Sunday repentance. One of the things I strive to pray toward as I'm preparing my message and before I preach it is, "Lord, what is pleasing to You? Lord, what is pleasing to You?"

So he gives out a modifier here about preaching right concerning the motive and the manner and he says with purity in doctrine, last part of verse 7, dignified. There is there is to be a dignity, Titus, in your style, if you will, in your motive and in the manner of your preaching and in your teaching. This word "dignified" or dignity means a seriousness. "Titus, there needs to be a reverence, a respect for the gravitas, the weightiness of what you're dealing with. This is the gospel of God." This is the salvation of God through his Son. Uh the pulpit must not be marked by frivolous things and and silly things. Now, we're not in any way saying there's no place for some humor or or lightness, that's a reality of our personalities and makeup, but our ministry should not be marked by such things. It it's become common and it has been for years and often when I'll look at a large Bible conference or a retreat type conference and they'll list the conference preachers and I remember one not too long ago that the first two preachers, the first thing they said about those preachers was how funny they were. Nothing wrong with having some funnies but that shouldn't mark who you are. That's not dignity, dignified as Paul tells Titus he ought to be in the pulpit.

And if I might get on one of my hobby horses for just a moment here, how a man dresses as he leads and preaches to the church does matter. Dress is not everything, but it is something. I saw a video clip of a preacher this week and he made a great point. He did a good job and he had on a T-shirt, an old faded kind of T-shirt and old jeans that looked faded out. And I didn't see his feet, but I've been told by people that he's one of these guys that often wear flip flops when he gets up to preach. Brothers and sisters, I do not think the man of God should come to the pulpit of God and preach the word of God dressed like he just left a goat auction in Franklin County, Alabama. Or he just ran his trot lines down on Bear Creek. Because look, he didn't, he don't, look, this is not, well, this is just who I am. No, it's not, he's intentionally dressing that way to be cool. It lacks a proper dignity. Now, you don't have to dress the way Brother Jeff dresses. I understand that, and I'm not about that, but this intentionality to show a lack of respect for the office. Why? Because we want to fit in. We want to be thought as cool. We want to be thought as one of the guys. Here's what they don't understand: it's the Spirit of God that bonds those people to their pastor, not that pastor's cleverness or craftiness or faddishness. And by the way, if the Spirit of God does not use my preaching to apprehend your heart and cause you to love me and me to love you, we have nothing anyway. You mean to tell me I gotta keep up with the latest fads and dress to keep my people coming to my church?

Think about that for a moment. You know, that's basically saying I don't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. I don't believe the Holy Spirit of God is going to apprehend men's hearts and make them hungry for the truth so I've got to do all these things to keep them interested. Well, again, if you went to a lawyer, if you went to a doctor, if you went to a banker and he had on a stained, faded t-shirt, cutoffs with holes in them and flip-flops on, you would probably say, I don't know if this is the guy I want to be my lawyer. He doesn't have a respect for the responsibilities that he has.

Okay, enough about this. There's so many things to be said there, but he's saying, "Timothy, there ought to be a dignity," because I'm sure, now listen to me, I'm sure a lot that was going on in the Cretan culture was so frivolous and and clown-centered, if you will. He's saying, "Titus, don't be like those clowns in Crete. You're a man of God. Carry yourself differently." Now, secondly, uh let me back up here. Oh, me. I got to say this. We talked about believing right. No, we talked about preaching right, and then I put two pages of notes over so I'm going to preach this and skip that and then preach the rest of it, all right? C in our outline, let's get that.... you're you're under the the plan. He said, in the plan, you've got to live right, you've got to preach right with dignity. Now thirdly, you've got to believe right. Now I would have probably reversed that order. Now this is C in our outline, believe right. I would have probably reversed that order and said believe right first, but that's not the order Paul gives. He talks about first the style, the motive, the manner of your preaching. Now he gets to the actual doctrine that you preach. That's what I call believe right.

In verse 8, if you will, look at verse 8. He says, "I want you to be sound in speech which is beyond reproach." Sound in speech, sound is the idea of healthy, that which is life-giving, that which is edifying. And what is that? That's the true doctrines of the faith. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what's healthy. That's what's edifying. That's what changes lives. "Titus, hold to the great doctrines of the faith once for all given to the saints." So this is the content of the preaching. He's already spoken, "Now now now Titus, have some dignity, have some genuineness as to your motives and your manner, but now also in the very content of your doctrine, make sure you are sound and holding to the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints," which brings me to the Roman Catholic system. You probably heard that the the Pope has now announced that the Catholic Church can now bless same-sex couples and then they do what the Roman system has always done, they shuck and jibe and weave and do all these word salads to say, "But it we're we're but we're not actually blessing the marriage of them and we're not actually giving our blessing as this is like holy matrimony," uh but uh and I think here's the Pope's words, "because we've realized God never rejects anyone who comes to Him." Boy, that sounds good, doesn't it? We never reject anyone, God never rejects anyone who comes to him. I've got, I've got listen, Pope, listen just for a minute: our God rejects everyone who comes to him apart from repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. Everyone who tries to approach God outside of repentance and faith in Christ, God rejects them. But the the Roman Catholic system has been doing this for for generations and generations and generations. They know how to say we're still holding to biblical orthodoxy, but we found ways to make sure our popularity or our power, and our profits stay in place. It's pure wickedness.

"Titus," Paul says, "Titus, stay with the truth. Stay with sound doctrine. Don't be veered off because many of the Cretan culture are gonna put pressure on you to bend the corners on doctrine. Titus, sound in speech. Sound in your doctrinal convictions." Now, II. II. The plan, "Titus, you're going to have to live right, preach right, and believe right in this godless world," now, II., a key of a faithful ministry. Now our subpoints will be components of the one key, if you will. You could make them three keys, but I like to view these as three parts of the whole. First thing he's gonna tell Titus is, "Titus, if you'll do this, A, your opponent's wounds will only be superficial wounds. And there'll be some wounds. There'll be some flaming arrows thrown at you. There'll be some blows come your way, Titus, but God will cause them not to be mortal wounds. They'll only be superficial. In one sense, they'll just kind of bounce off of you." That's what the phrase here in verse 8, when he says, "sound in speech which is beyond reproach so the opponent will be put to shame having nothing bad to say about us." Now when he says the opponent will be uh put to shame and you will be above reproach, the idea of reproach there means something that can stick, something that can remain and has credibility. He says, "None of this is gonna do that. The fiery arrows they cast at you will not have a lasting effect."

Now now brothers and sisters, if you live for Jesus in the workplace, if you live for Jesus in the culture, there are gonna be times when folks are gonna hurt you. They're gonna slander you. They they're gonna undermine you. It may cost you a job. I don't know. But God will cause that flaming missile to only be a superficial blow. Give it a little time, two things will happen. God will extinguish that flaming arrow and secondly, he'll use it to grow you and mature you and build you. He'll use it for your good, everything the enemy might do against us.

The point is of being above reproach is that no credible person can find anything really at fault with your ministry, your doctrine and in the way you conduct yourself. So when he says, um notice it there in uh verse 8, sound in speech which is beyond reproach so that, in other words, to this end, this this key fruit I'm gonna put together for you as we go through here, this key result will come to place. One part of the key result is the flaming arrows of your enemy will not give you a mortal wound. God will make sure that they do not.

Now this takes some time. Some pastors are out there and I've talked to many of them and they're right in the middle of the fray and they're suffering and there's opposition and it looks like their opposition is winning and they might say to me, "Wait a minute now, you said a part of the key fruit of a faithful ministry is I'll not have a mortal wound." Well, I said, you're still here. You're still functioning. And and what you need to do is grab yourself by the nap of the neck, throw yourself in your study and go preach again next Sunday. It takes some time. Now, now those of you who have been around here a long time, you've lived the reality that the flaming missiles of the opponents did not mortally wound us, actually helped us, and because some of you prayed that I'd be a faithful man of God, God used them to humble me, to grow me, to make me more desperate and more dependent upon him and give you more of the pastor you deserve to

have. So it was good for you and good for me. It takes time, though, to see the reality of these things come to fruition.

All right. Now, let me skip what I got out of order a while ago. I don't know how in the world the girls are gonna get this all edited back in shape again. Second component of this fruit that comes from a faithful ministry in a godless world is your opponents will be brought to shame. Your opponents are brought to shame. Notice how he words it here in verse 8, "sound in speech which is beyond reproach so that," to the end that, "the opponent will be put to shame." That's a passive verb, which means the action comes back. The the the noun, the primary person is acting on himself. Here's what he's saying, "If you'll live right, Timothy, and you'll be the man of God you're supposed to be, and you preach right, and your motives are right, and your manners right, there's a godly respect and dignity, you're holding to the doctrines of the faith, there will come a time to those who are your adversaries will themselves say to themselves, 'I'm ashamed of opposing Titus. I'm ashamed of trying to discredit Titus. I'm ashamed of trying to stand against the doctrines that Titus preached.'" That's some amazing stuff right there now. God will cause them to say that to themselves is what the text is saying. God will cause, now that didn't mean they're gonna join up with you every time. It doesn't mean they'll support you, but they'll come to a humbled recognition in their own heart, "I don't need to mess with those people down at that church. They're not perfect, but they're genuine and they're for real, and I'm ashamed I've tried to undermine them." Powerful stuff. Why didn't somebody preach this to me 25 years ago?

So, if the man of God, small group leader, Christian mother, father, young person in the school, church elder, it goes for all of us, if we will conduct ourselves the way Paul told Titus to conduct himself, then over time, those who at first were perhaps vicious, caustic, loud adversaries and opponents will come to see that their attitude and their conclusions and their actions were shameful toward you. The word "opponent" here is the word he uses in verse 8, so that the opponent." Let me you think about that word for just a moment, it means the opposite of you. It means as a Christian, as committed Christian, committed pastor, you're going in one direction and you're facing up to people who often claim to be Christians, but they're really headed in a different direction. As Dr. Al Mohler, Southern Seminary said, we live in a day where we churches cannot afford to be mildly biblical. A lot of these people are mildly biblical and you're trying to be fully biblical and so they're opposite of you. They see things opposite of the way you see them. That's what the word opponent means. It also means contrary to you. Actually, it's used of a contrary wind or a stiff headwind. They come against you, try to blow you back and push you back all the time.

Let me ask you something: whatever happened to cross bearing? Why do you think you can work out your little style of Christianity that makes you hunky-dory with all the things going on in the world? Who told you that? Who told you you could be faithful to Jesus Christ and not take up your own cross of opposition, of adversarial, of contrary winds against you? What happened to cross bearing as a disciple of Jesus Christ in this world? Brothers, it's part and parcel of our Christian pilgrimage. Luke 9:23 and 24, "And He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself,' in



other words, what you think's cool, right, what makes what you think will fit in, what you think will make you get ahead, you deny that, "take up your cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life," well, I'm gonna follow Jesus, but I'm not gonna give up this, this, and this, "whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Whatever happened to cross bearing Christianity?

Matthew 5:11, Jesus said, "Blessed are you," not if, "when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me." Paul's writing Titus, and he's basically saying, "Titus, this is gonna go on. They're going to persecute you, they're going to slander you, they're going to say false things about you to discredit you, Titus. But you can live in such a way that over time, it's not an absolute guarantee, but as a general rule, those people given enough time will turn to feel ashamed of themselves."

But these adversaries, these antagonists, these contrary winds are gonna be there for a season and they do come and go some, but I'll tell you what my pilgrimage has been here. It's really... when I was studying this this week, boy, my mind went back to all kinds of things that we went through together here and the number of individuals who left us, many who were caustic and critical and quite honestly said false things to make us look as bad as they could. Today literally I can see those people in town and hug their neck and they will hug mine and we both mean it. They don't owe me anything because over time they've been brought to a conclusion, "I didn't need to be that way. I shouldn't have done it that way." And my thought is, yeah, and I'd be just like you if it wasn't for the grace of God. Amen, folks? We'd be, look, why why did you stay with the truth, because you're so smart and wise? No, because God apprehended your hearts and illumined your minds and at times you were afraid, at times you were fearful, and at times you thought, "What is that crazy preacher gonna bring us into next?" But you said, "I think it's right. As far as I know, it's biblical. I'm gonna hang in there."

And now, I don't go anywhere that I don't sense from all of our community leaders, love and respect for what we are. But it took some time. And just in total transparency, God had to work on Jeff Noblit. God was growing me. And God couldn't trust me with fair weather all the time. Amen? I I I've got some little outpatient surgeries coming up. Have y'all ever had any outpatient surgery? You turn 63, they just want to do a bunch of them. They just, "Oh, we need to take this out. We need to plug this up. We need to cut this." So I've got some of that coming up. I forgot what I was going to say. That happens when you get 63.

Well, the three parts of the of the key fruit of a faithful pastor, or any faithful Christian's life, the key, the third component, C, their opposition, efforts against you will cease. God will change them sometimes to even be a supporter. I preach every Sunday to people that used to hate me. Don't say that real loud, Brother David. He said, "That's right." You didn't hate me when you came. You just didn't know anything. Well, he said, well, he's not sure. He kind of did. Honestly, it's just the truth and I'm not unique and I'm not special, any man of God who goes into a typical congregation and faithfully preaches and

leads that congregation, he's gonna have a lot of people that don't like him but God will apprehend a lot of their hearts and they'll turn to support him over time. I've literally preached, and I've been preaching for 43 years, I've literally preached and watched people who would sit back there and just kind of like, "Oh brother," and then one Sunday, I'd notice this right here. Y'all can't see me over there, I'll do it over here too. One Sunday, they would they'd kind of be leaning up, and then they'd kind of lean up like this and it was clear as a bell to me the Spirit of God is apprehending their hearts. And I've had some of those precious, dear folks converted and became the most stalwart supporters of our ministry.

Boy, this is not even up. Do you know the history of the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee? Mr. Ryman was a big whiskey salesman. He'd float his boats down the Cumberland River and time off there, now Nashville was a a rural, poor city in those days, to say the least, and he made a fortune off hauling that whiskey down the Cumberland River and selling that whiskey. And I forgot the man's name, but there was a flaming, I believe, Methodist evangelist in Nashville, and somebody challenged Mr. Ryman to go hear him and he went he went to hear this event just as a joke. "I'm gonna go listen to him. Okay, I'll go do it," and ready to ridicule the man and he went there and heard the man preach and was gloriously converted. He sold his boats, he sold his whiskey and used his money to build the Ryman Auditorium for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. An enemy, an enemy, a ridiculer, a headwind, an opposer, an adversary became his great supporter, this evangelist's great supporter. God just does stuff like that over time.

When I talk to our preachers, I say, "Brothers, you better have a 20-year vision for your ministry. Don't think it's going to happen in five or seven or 12. Have a 20-year vision to see the great fruit that God want to give you and show you in your ministry." A great biblical illustration. Let's look at it first of all, verse 8 here. How's my time? Oh, goodness, I'm doing great. I said that to aggravate some of you that want to get home.

Verse 8, "sound in speech which is beyond reproach so that the opponent will be but shame, having nothing bad to say about us." Nothing bad. In other words, they've ceased their opposition. They've ceased their adversarial attacks. Joseph is a great example of this. Joseph is in pagan Egypt and no Egyptian would have anything good to think or say about a devout Jew. The values were just too different. The convictions were just too too at contrast. But God moved on Joseph's master's heart and turned his heart to favor Joseph. Instead of being an adversary or an opposition, he became one who favored Joseph. Listen to what the Bible says. Genesis 39, verses 2, 3, 4, "The LORD was with Joseph," now, there's the key, that's like Titus. "Titus, be the real thing now. Here's the plan. Live right, preach right, believe right, be the real thing." And then, that means the Lord's with Titus too, "The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him." So whatever antagonistic opposition, disdain, critical spirit the Egyptian master may have had toward Joseph was taken away because he saw, "This this guy's real. He's got something real." Now, the Bible didn't tell us that Potiphar his master became a devout Jew, but he respected Joseph because he lived what he talked. Verse 4,

"So Joseph found favor in his sight," found favor in his sight, the adversarial viewpoint ceased, "and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge."

This is also what the Bible means in Proverbs 21:1. Proverbs 21:1, and "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." In other words, the king is in God's hands, and he can turn his heart to give the Christians favor if he wants to. He can turn that person who's against you to be for you, or at least to cease their adversarial actions.

And then again, in Proverbs 16:7, "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." They're still his enemies, but they've ceased their attacks. God can change the hearts of those who are against us, and that's one of the key fruits of a faithful ministry; over time, we see they come to shame, they cease their attacks, and can even become our friends and supporters.

Our Lord is hanging on the cross. He's he's hanging and dying between two thieves who are hurling the most caustic and vicious abuse at him. The Bible says the earth was darkened. God the Father and God the Son were doing the work no one else could enter into, and in that darkness, the Bible says, Jesus cries out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." And he breathes his last. Watching all of this at the foot of the cross was a Roman soldier, a centurion, and this Roman soldier had no doubt been involved in nailing the nails through Jesus' hands and nailing the nails through Jesus' feet, perhaps he is the one who plunged the spear into Jesus' side, certainly he was one of those who gambled for Jesus' clothes at the foot of the cross, was caustic, critical, contemptible, disdainful, disrespectful in every way of our Savior. But not anymore. This centurion seeing Jesus and the way he died, the Bible says he began praising God and saying, "Certainly this man was a righteous man." He came to shame. "I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed at the way I viewed Him. I'm ashamed at the way I thought of Him. I'm ashamed of what I did to Him." That's gone now, that's ceased now. You see, our Lord lived perfectly, the principle Paul taught Titus, God will change those enemies if you live right.

Well, Jesus lived the truth. Jesus taught the truth. Jesus was the truth. Here's the powerful thing, are you listening to me? If we as Christians will live the truth with innocence, clear conscience, it will powerfully affect those, even those who oppose us over time. Jesus powerfully lived that truth. Well, the apostle Paul says, "Titus," he didn't say these words, but it's there, uh "You have a daunting task. It's very, very difficult with a lot of contrary things and people gonna be a lot of headwinds, gonna be a lot of trials. Uh you know how the Cretans are, they're just a vile people, bunch of liars." That's what Paul says they are, bunch of liars. "They're full of frivolity and foolishness. Your ministry can't be like them, Titus. You've got to be faithful to your convictions. You've got to live it right, preach with the right motives and the right style and manner, have dignity about the things of God. And Titus, if that's the case, a key fruit will be your enemies will be brought to shame and it means they themselves will bring that shame on themselves, and their attacks against you will cease and you can go on in your ministry."

Don't you love the word of God? Where else can you go and find stuff like that? It's amazing. Now, now where are you in your setting? Maybe in the work environment, school environment, neighborhood, and you know some people that don't agree with you or support you? Be sweet, be kind, but unflinchingly firm in what you believe. Now we could say, don't be a hypocrite. Well, let me ask you something, you ever known anybody that was perfectly not a hypocrite? No, but here's what you can do: if you blow it, make it right. "I'm a Christian and I shouldn't have said that. I'm a Christian and I shouldn't have that attitude. Will you forgive me?" And that's a powerful way to get you back on track to seeing this truth, this principle come true in your own life.

Well, a faithful preacher in a godless world.

Let's pray together.