

Competent Leadership

Beautifying the Bride, p.3

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Let's go back to Titus and let's go to chapter 1 as we continue with this very practical book that's written to a young pastor named Titus whom Paul has left in Crete. Uh, most likely a lot of, uh, Cretian Jews were at Pentecost and heard Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost and with many thousands of others, was converted and returned back to their homes on the island of Crete and formed little churches all over the island in every city. In addition, Paul ministered there and probably many more were converted and the churches were starting to be organized, but yet they're in a very disorganized state and so Paul leaves Titus in Crete to "set things in order." God is a God of structure and God is a God of order, and he wants his church, as he exhorted the Corinthian believers, that everything is to be done decently and in order. In other words, get your act together. And so we have a brilliant and beautiful and divine outline in the pastoral epistles and particularly this one, the epistle to Titus, of how we're to structure, order and function as a local church, and these are God's absolutes for every Church of every age.

Now, thankfully, all of us do not have the challenge that Titus had. These are particularly crusty people. He's, um, coming up against a lot of harsh Jewish legalism and Jewish superstitions. You know, observe this day, observe that day, you've got these rights and these wrongs. Boy, if you miss one of them, gotcha. You're out, you know? Uh, they had little understanding of grace so there was that false teaching that was in the hearts and minds of many new believers, not to mention the false believers and false teachers who always try to creep in on early church plant work. And then, of course, the Cretians with their Greek and Jewish backgrounds were rough, vile, uh, woolly, unruly kind of people. Uh, liars Paul calls them. Uh, gluttons Paul calls them. So, um, far from being politically correct, when Paul saw a group of people that were disgusting, he called them disgusting. That's the kind of people, though, that Titus is working with and that you gotta understand something, when a person is converted and received into the church, they're just beginning their sanctification, they're just beginning their maturation in Christ, and baby Christians coming out of such a culture are gonna make a lot of messes.

So in the flow of Paul instructing Titus on what to do, he comes to the all important role of leadership in the church, and we talked about this some last week and we're going to continue on today, but I I've entitled this section of the exposition, "Competent Leadership," and the point being whatever else must be established, and by the way, this

goes for any organization, for any athletic team, for any structure out there, basically things rise and fall on the leadership. And so Paul is telling Titus to make sure you get some good, competent men to be the elders, overseers, pastors of the churches so because that's what's going to be necessary to get these churches in shape.

Now look down in verses 7 through 9 for our section we'll cover today. He says,

7 For the overseer [just another word for pastor] must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Competent leadership. I. To have competent leadership, you need men who are above reproach as is fitting for God's steward. Now we talked about that phrase "above reproach" last time because it was in the earlier verses, and the concept of being above reproach means that no accusation sticks. It doesn't mean you're perfect, it doesn't mean you haven't failed, but as God's steward, because of the lofty importance, uh, the one you represent when you call yourself God's steward, because of that position and the one you represent, you must be a man who is above reproach.

Now he uses the word in verse 7 for "overseer." He says, "For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward. "Now the overseer, again, is just another word for the same office that you might use the word elder for, or you might use the word pastor for. For example, up in, uh, verse 5, he uses the word "elder." Down here in verse 7 where we are now, he uses the word "overseer." Same office, different names.

The word overseer is the word, uh, episcopos. We, of course, get the word Episcopalian from it, and it simply has the idea of a superintendent or a Christian officer. Uh, historically in the culture of the day, the overseer was a man who was charged with the duty of seeing that things are done for others rightly. He was overseeing something for someone else and, of course, that's the idea of a steward also.

Now the word "elder," another word for the pastor of the church, comes from presbyteros. We get the word Presbyterian from it. It it it, it emphasizes it's not the overseeing element, but more the maturity and the wisdom. It has the idea of a senior person. So it doesn't mean just maturity in chronological age, but the man who has this office in the church must have mature wisdom and the kind of character that a man of seasoned experience and proper seasoned experience would have.

And then the third word that we see in the New Testament for the same office is the word "shepherd" or "pastor," poimen, and that word simply has the idea of care and control of others' property.

And so in various places like in our text here, Paul used one of the terms and he'll turn around use another one because he's just using different terms to describe the overall work and responsibilities of this office in the church. Generally here we use the word "elder." I'm an elder, but however I'm the pastor/teacher of the church, and we hold that there's always a leader among equals. I'm an equal elder. When we have an elders' meeting, I have one vote and contrary to what some people may think, I don't always get my way because I've got some crusty old elders and they sometimes have strong feelings, but we do deeply love each other and it's a great balance and a great sharpening and a great accountability we have together. But when it comes to leadership and casting the vision, that's the job of the senior pastor/teacher. And we see this throughout the Old Testament and we see the example in the New Testament and we see the example in church history that there would typically be one among the group that God has gifted and called to be the senior leader and cast the vision for the church. However, you could call any of us overseers, you could call any of us elders, you could call any of us pastors. Three different titles that are interchangeable for the same office.

Now, uh, let me go on a little bit further to denote, um, the fact that we were somewhat fond of the word "shepherd" because we all function as under-shepherds under the Chief Shepherd, and that's something every pastor, every shepherd has to constantly bear in mind, "This is not my work and these are not my sheep." Now, even good and godly pastors have used that phrase "my sheep or my church," but they don't mean it possessively, they mean it affectionately because we are the under-shepherds under Christ who is the Chief Shepherd. We are responsible to shepherd another person's flock, and therefore we must always shepherd/pastor, either word, it means the same thing, these sheep according to the dictates of the one true Chief shepherd.

Couple of cross references here. Uh, 1 Peter, um, I think it's 5:3 and 4. Is that what it is? Yes, "yet, nor yet as lording it over those in your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the," definite article, "Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." So Peter is exhorting those pastors to make sure you're an example to the flock and you're not leading like some sort of Roman overlord of them, but you're an example you're in the fight with them for the truths of the gospel and for the health of the church, and then one day you'll give an account how you shepherd or shepherded the Chief Shepherd's flock. Um, that's the one thing that church members need to remember, and I think you have a good concept of that, and that is one reason why you, the Bible tells you to honor your pastors, to submit to your pastors, to love your pastors, and to obey your pastors because they have an accountability to the Chief Shepherd you do not have. You will give an accountability did you follow and honor your under-shepherd, but your under-shepherd will give an accountability for how he led you and oversaw you when he sees the Chief Shepherd. And I want to tell you, I take that very seriously. Very seriously. It's amusing. It's not amusing, it's tragic to me how many men claim to be pastors, and they play loose and fast with the things of God.

Acts 20:28 or verse 28, Paul routing to the or speaking to the Ephesian elder says, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." The

point being, it's not your church, pastor. It's not your church, elders. It's not your church, brother deacons. It's not your church, women's missionary union members. It's not your church, ladies auxiliary. It is Christ's church and we are all instructed to take our proper roles and oversee, i.e. shepherd the church according to the will of God because he purchased it with his own blood.

Now he uses the word here in the same vein of understanding of steward. Look at it again in verse 7, "For the overseer must be above approach as God's steward." Now again, in this day that was a common word in the culture and it was a word used for a house manager. Often they had slaves and they would have one who would have more authority than the others and he would oversee all the house, that would include properly the business of this person, uh, all the household structures and the order and these people did this and these people did that, and he saw to it that everything was managed well for his master, the owner of the house. Well, that's what we are as pastors. We are the stewards of another man's house. Ephesians 2:19 says that the church is God's household, and God said, "I've set up some stewards to oversee My household until I get you all home with Me."

So he says those stewards because of the loftiness, the dignity of the office, the seriousness, the importance of that office, those men must be above reproach. There's no pattern of wrongdoing in their life where the community and the church family would all say, "Well, man, you don't have enough credibility to be the overseer of God's church." Not that you don't sin, and that's one thing I'd like to point out when you're dealing with these, what's often called the qualifications for elders in the church. This isn't done in the the harsh, brash legalism of the Jews of the day where, you know, they'd have their list of do's and list of don'ts and they go back 15 years ago, "You didn't do that one just right. Gotcha. You're out." That's not the spirit of the text and it's not worded that way. Again, if you have that spirit, none of us could be elders, and none of us would qualify as small group leaders or even as church members, I guess you could say. In a week's time, we'd just discipline all of us and quit if you had to go by harsh dictates of crude legalism.

So it is God who owns the house and we are his stewards, his "house managers," and we should be holy as he is holy and all Christians, the Bible says, are stewards of the manifold grace of God, 1 Peter 1:4. So let's be real careful as we go through here to say, well, there's a standard for elders but the rest of us, well, we don't have to really worry about walking according to these standards. That's not what the text is teaching. Absolutely not what the text is teaching But you'll have a brother or sister and a brother or sister, a brother and a sister, and and I've told you this before, brothers and sisters, we have some folks who are saved out of very horrible backgrounds and all that they've known is sin and and and immoralities and and and crudeness and even vileness. I remember a dear lady in our church years ago, who said, "Pastor, my earliest childhood ministry is sitting on the floor and seeing my my parents with who knows what the other people were passed out from drugs and alcohol all over my den. That was my earliest memory." Well, brothers and sisters, you can't bring a a blessed person like that into God's household and say, alright, now you just like the the the the girls in our church who

grew up with strong, disciplined, moral and decent households. Amen? Can I get an amen there?

We're different places, and so even when you come to things like the qualifications for elder, uh, a city like Corinth, and it's probably very true of the island of Crete, it's very likely that every man in the church had practice having a different wife every year. He'd cash in his wife every year and get another one. And so when you say, well, he's got to be the husband of one wife, if you take that in strictest interpretation, you wouldn't have any elders in that church. So there is a relative element to being above reproach. Now, certainly some things are always, uh, out of range or out of limits for any person to be in membership of the church, or to be an elder in the church body, but generally speaking, some things are quite relative. For example, uh, when we installed elders 30 plus years ago here, what those elders had to know and grasp and understand is nothing compared to what an elder who comes on today would have to know and grasp and understand. There's been an amazing amount of things, and I'm going to hit on those at the end of my message, that we've installed in reforming the church to be more biblically healthy that we could, it would be wrong to bring an elder in who didn't grasp much of that. So it's relative, the the standard grows as the church's maturity grows.

All right, I. Is he's got to be above reproach if he's a competent leader for God's church, because that's fitting for God's steward, God's house manager, and that's what he is. Now II: a competent leader is above reproach or he has to be above reproach concerning the lifestyle patterns of behavior in his life. Lifestyle patterns of behavior. Now he mentions five negatives first and then he goes down to six positives. So let's begin on the five negatives and knock these out one at a time here.

So he says the overseer, verse 7 again, must be above reproach as God's steward, "not self-willed." Now that is that his guiding drive in life must not be all about himself. Uh, he this is a man who would have the pattern of running over others, uh, neglecting others to a significant degree as he is full of self-will. In other words, his guiding drive must be God and God's glory, and not about himself. You should not be an elder in the church unless you've resolved in your heart it may cost me everything but I'm going to be faithful to Christ. It's just gotta be there and that didn't mean that God's gonna ask you to do that, but it might happen. You see, in Christianity we're not about these outward works because those can be mimicked and those can be faked. It's more about the inward heart and the convictions of the heart. Jesus should be Lord of his life. He should have maintained a pattern in his life where people would say, "That man's not consumed with self-will." Could you find probably a point here and a point there where some self-will popped up? Yes, you could, but it's not the pattern of his behavior. He doesn't walk in that as a purpose of his life.

I use the phrase a lot when I talk about, uh, how the Bible, um, defines how believers deal with sin and based on the balance of New Testament teaching and certainly the verb tenses involved, what I like to say is when you're a a Christian, you don't quit sinning completely. You do quit some sinning, and certainly the the amount of sinning but you're not squeaky clean now until you get to heaven, unless you believe in John Wesley's

Second Blessing where, boom, something happens and, zap, you quit sinning. But you are going along this way as the purpose and pattern of your life, like our text, "self-willed," conversion happens and you turn and now there's a new purpose and pattern of your life to please Christ and honor his truth though there is some stumbling along the path. But you don't like it when you stumble and you don't want to be around people that help you stumble. You wanna be around people that help pick you back up and get you back on the path, the new purpose and pattern path of serving Jesus.

Alright, let's hurry on. Not self-willed, the next negative that must not be a marked pattern in this man's life is not quick-tempered. Not quick-tempered. You know what that means, quick to anger. Are people on edge around this man basically all the time because they fear he might snap and chop their heads off? Um, to show you how God is gracious and allows us time to maybe get to where he could use us, was it not none other than than the Apostle Peter who pulled out a sword and said, "Tell you what I'll do, I'll just cut your head off." And he missed and cut the guys's ear off. Well, I would say that's kind of quick-tempered. But Peter was growing and he was greatly humbled through that event and God, the Lord Jesus after his resurrection, called him back on the team. So could have been at that time Peter didn't quite qualify as an elder. People could say, "Now wait a minute. We've watched him and, boy, he can snap off and want to cut somebody's head off." Well, it doesn't mean he's a bad guy. He just needs to keep growing in Christ. Give him another week with Jesus and he all of a sudden qualifies as a church elder.

Now when we say not quick-tempered, I always want to say this because this is not talking about righteous indignation. Brothers and sisters, there is a time and we are living in a time when there needs to be firm, bold men who have righteous indignation about the wickedness and the ungodliness that is all around us. We're not talking about effeminate, weak men. We need strong men but men who are meek and that they know how to discipline that strength and only use it when it's a proper and righteous way to use it.

Well, the third negative he says that must not be a marked pattern in a man who's going to be an elder is "not addicted to wine." Literally, the Greek means not staying near wine. Now wine was drunk in the New Testament era primarily because water was so often, um, hard to get, at least water that was pure and clean and would not make you sick, and the fermentation processes in wine would would, uh, kill the bacterias, and so it was a safer drink. But but there should have been disciplines in their life so that they are not using the wine as an intoxicant. They're not using the wine or the alcoholic beverage as a as a social thing. It's not something they are seeking after. They are not known to be at cocktail hour. They are not known as social drinkers. They are not known to give the, uh, impression that they are under the influence of the intoxicant. That's not something you see in their lives. And surely in today's world we ought to conclude that it's just not wise as Christians to use alcoholic beverages in a social way. I know there's some medicinal elements and those kind of things that people keep private. I'm not running an FBI agency to look in your cabinet at home or what your special homebrew cough medicine is. But you're not to be long over wine. You're not to be a seeker of alcohol. A man is marked by that he's not qualified for the office.

Now we come to the next one, the next negative that must not be marked or a man's life must not be marked by, and that's "not pugnacious." That's real close to not being quick-tempered. Actually, scholars could use that word in either place, but I think this is a little more the idea of just quarrelsome, contentious. Uh, maybe it's the next logical step after being quick-tempered, but nevertheless I think you get the idea. The man's marked by, boy, he's always bringing up some antagonistic thing. He's always playing the devil's advocate, always kind of stirring things up. Now, look, some guys just have fun but, I mean, if guys do that and they're serious and that's a pattern, then he's not ready to be a church elder.

Well, the last negative that must not be common or marked as a pattern in a man's life if he's elder material, he must not be "fond of sordid gain," the text says. You could say shameful gain. It's greediness that bends the corners on morals and ethics and propriety just to gain more money. If a person has a pattern of that and they're known in the community for that, they should not be considered as a church elder.

Now we move to B) the positives. He gives six positives that must be in a person's life. First of all, he says, verse 8, "hospitable, but he must be hospitable." Literally the word there means a lover of strangers. A lover of strangers. He's fond of guests. Now this does not mean an elder has to be known as one in the church who gives grace house, great house parties. That's not what it's saying. The context is that Christians in this day, sometimes if not often, found themselves homeless and wandering because of persecution, and when one of those wandered into your city and they claimed Christ and they needed lodging, the point is take care of them. Now, in today's world we'd give them a hotel room or even rent them a house and whatever our finances are better. Well, in this day the hotels were not safe and not decent places and so it was necessary because of the persecution that there be a hospitable spirit, a lover of those who know Christ even though they're strangers to us and not a member of our church.

Um, I think there's a great parallel here. I think this idea includes how they took care of traveling missionary church planters. It was God's will that as these preachers of the gospel, these traveling missionary church planters would come through, that the church should take them in and house them and love them and encourage them, uh, give them some money and send them out on their way. For example, Philemon 1:22. Paul writes to Philemon who had a church in his house and says, "At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you." So Paul literally after he got so many churches established, would hobnob around the country and stay with those established churches and they would house him, show hospitality, and then also help him to go on his way and minister in other places.

Ah, another example, Romans 15:24, "whenever I go to Spain for I hope to see you in passing," notice what he says, "and to be helped on my way there by you," in other words, I'll stay there and you'll help me financially to keep me going on in my church planter work, "when I have enjoyed your company for a while," uh, saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. I'm sorry, that's the wrong phrase. That doesn't go with Romans 15:24. Nevertheless, Paul is saying, "As I come through, show

me hospitality." So I think there's a strong emphasis here that this hospitality is centered on, or at least it includes the traveling missionary church planters and how every local church should get in on helping these guys as they come through.

Then he gives the next positive here that must mark a man's life if he is elder material, "loving what is good," verse 8. Loving what is good. Uh, let's see. Yeah, that's verse 8. The idea here is to be a promoter of virtue, loving that which is good in God's eyes. He's a man who is wise in this way. He loves what is wholesome and upright. You do not see him as a pattern taking part in things that are contrary to Christian values, Christian virtue and Christian goodness.

And then we have the word "sensible," another positive that must mark his life. Interesting word, the word "sensible" comes from two words and it means literally "to save the mind," to save the mind or sound in mind, or safe in mind. In other words, his thinking is sound. His thinking is sober. His his thinking is balanced. He he does not fall into these ever-contradictory positions because he follows his emotions, I'm gonna use Paul's phrase, like a silly woman would. Remember, there's a difference between silly women and principled women, but women are emotional beings, and Satan knows that, and that's what we're seeing in our culture today. We're following all these dictates of silly women in our culture. That's why we're having these constantly changing definitions of what moral is and what marriage is and what sex is. And it's just right, it's just like they move the goal post every time you think you've got it figured out. He says, well, a man that's qualified for the office of elder cannot be marked by that kind of silliness, following one thing... He's he sound in mind. He's balanced in his thinking and self-control.

Uh, the next one he has to be "just," the idea here is keeping the commands of God. He's equitable in character and in actions.

The next one, "devout." The idea is being undefiled by sin. He he's free from the indulgences and wallowings in wickedness. Uh, he's observing the dictates of true religion. I would say this would include things like he's faithful to church, he's faithful to small groups, he ministers in the body, he's faithful to care and work during the the missions conferences, he he's committed to the things a devout man would be committed to.

And then you come down to the last part there, "self-control," last part of verse 8. The idea is he has power over himself. He understands that there can be too much of a good thing. If Satan can't get you doing bad things, he'll get you doing too much of good things which becomes a bad thing. So prone to impulsiveness and being unbalanced in his life.

Now if you review the last two ones, devout and then self-controlled, you have the idea that devout means he avoids that which is evil, self-control means he's moderate even in the things that are good. What is the Proverb that says about honey? If you find honey, eat it, but don't eat too much. Be balanced in that. Have some self-control.

Well, again, I would guess every elder in this church needs to resign if you're going to come at this with a harsh, uh, legalistic, uh, interpretation. If somebody can point to something a month ago, six months ago, six years ago, 15 years ago and say, "Aha, you lost your temper, that there," whatever it was. But that's not the spirit of the text. The spirit of the text is do these things mark a person? Are these the patterns of their behavior?

Alright, III. and and we're getting now to why these character qualifications are so important. Roman III. A proven conviction concerning biblical authority. A proven conviction concerning biblical authority. Look at it there in verse 9, "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching." Holding fast. Now, I agree with the scholars who say this verse really links up to verse 7 when he says he must be above approach as God's steward, then there's a parentheses of these character qualities which are important, by the way, but they're important to the end that he's the one, verse 9, who's holding fast the faithful word in accordance with the teaching. He's God's steward, gotta have all these character traits, who's holding fast to the faithful word which is accordance with the teaching. So those list of character traits in between the phrase "God's steward" in verse 7, and "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching," verse 9, those character traits can be viewed as a parentheses. I'm not saying they're unimportant. I'm saying they serve another end than just being, uh, important in themselves. The point is, if he's the man who handles the word, there must not be the distractions of unchristian character that mark his life. Are you with me? That's the point I think Paul's making in this text.

So the character traits are of vital importance to the end that the elder's supreme task is preaching the word, and there does not need to be the distractions of unseemly character and behavior in his life. The phrase there in verse 9 "holding fast the faithful word," holding fast is the middle voice. It means he's a man who holds himself to it. He lashes himself to this task. He lashes himself to the conviction of biblical authority. He does not let himself be moved from "Thus saith the Scriptures." Every argument, every debate, every issue is what does the Scripture teach? He lashes himself to that. He didn't kind of float off here a little bit and float off there a little bit. My goodness, what would our country be today if every man in the pulpit this Sunday was lashing himself with a conviction concerning the authority of the Scriptures? My, how much better off we'd be as a people. His preaching ministry is marked by resoluteness, seriousness, conviction, resolve. He holds that the holy word is the final authority for all doctrine and practice and it is the final authority in every dispute.

Now he continues with that phrase and so we're going to do something I did last time and not as long as I did last time, but he continues and he says, "not just holding fast the faithful word," he continues, "which is in accordance with," definite article, "the teaching." In other words, Paul is saying, "We know there's been the doctrines of Christianity that have been handed down to us, the teaching." Teaching and doctrine, same word. "There's been the doctrines of the faith that have been given to us and the man who fulfills the office of overseer, elder, pastor," use the title you want, "must be a man who goes back to the original dictates of what is the Christian faith." By the way, the

Christian faith is not and has not been evolving. The Christian faith does not have to catch up with the times. It was once for all delivered to the saints and that's and, by the way, it's not, well, it's going to take some courage. We'll get to that in just a moment, though.

"In accordance with the teaching," again, goes back to the apostles' doctrine. God revealed these things to the apostles, they primarily were the agents that he used to pen the New Testament, and thus we have the finished word of God on what is Christianity and he's got to be a man who holds to that fast. Jude 1:3 again. I love this verse because it just lays it down so concisely. "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation," we're all saved the exact same way, not 2, 3, 4, 5 different ways of salvation, "I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly," same idea as holding fast here, "contend earnestly for," definite article, "the faith," that's not your saving faith, that's not individual personal saving faith, that means the body of teaching which is Christianity. Hold to it. Do not veer off from it. It "was once for all handed down to the saints."

Ephesians 4:11 and 12, so once it was handed down to the saints through the apostles, penned as sacred Scripture. Now what do we do? Ephesians 4:11 and 12, "He gave some as apostles," and that's passed away, "and some as prophets," that's passed away, "and some as evangelists," I believe that's primarily church planters and then pastor/teachers. Pastor/teachers now are responsible to use, to strongly hold to the authority of that body of teaching that was once for all handed down to the church.

Alright, so we come to IV. If he's going to be a competent leader for the church, he has to also have a courageous devotion to biblical preaching. So he's gotta have a bold conviction about the faith once for all handed down to saints, and that's why it's just, uh, beyond comprehension the things you can see on the the the internet concerning, well, this preacher is saying this and this preacher is saying that. We've got Andy Stanley, Charles Stanley's son, who's who has become an out and out heretic. Absolutely. And and when, while Andy's expressing his new view, I'm like, Christianity has been around, been around 2,000 years and we had to wait for Andy Stanley to tell us the old faith is not what we need to follow anymore. He's got some new twist, some new insight. And on and on and on we could go with guys. One day I'm going to make a list of the people you don't need to listen to. It's just astonishing. It's not hard. My grandchildren could listen to them and say, "That's not the doctrine once for all given to the saints." They're floating off in all... Here's what I'm gonna say, what are they gonna do when they're old? Right now they all dress like they're going to a chicken fight and they get in the pulpit and they try to act cool and clever and trendy and up-to-date, what are you gonna do when you're 70? It don't look good to have cut-off shorts and flip-flops when you're 70. It just don't look good. You look like an idiot. You outta I look like a man of God because if you give people the faith once for all delivered to the saints, that's good yesterday, that's good today, that's good tomorrow, that's good next year. And if somebody stumbles upon your sermon 100 years from now, it's still good then too. It's not trendy. It doesn't fade away. Am I making myself clear?

He's going to have to be IV, courageous in his devotion to biblical preaching. That is, context, he's holding faith to that faithful word which was given, handed over to the Saints, not coming up with new stuff. If it's new, it ain't true. Well, two two parts to this he gives in verse 9. We're about done. Two parts. A) building up the sheep. He says, first of all, "so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine." First, he's got to exhort the sheep in sound doctrine. Now again, that's why the character qualities are so important because the sheep are probably not going to want to listen to a guy whose lifestyle clearly doesn't look like a Christian. Alright?

Building up the sheep, his words, exhorting in sound doctrine. You can't build up the sheep if you're sentimental and following your emotional whims about what truth is or is not because then if you teach from sentimentalities and man's feelings, you just become a person teaching man-centered, sentimental mush. There must be a doctrinal integrity and the courage of conviction to be able to exhort in sound doctrine.

Now the word "exhort," parakletos, is the same words used of the Holy Spirit. Parakletos, he's one who comes alongside. It's the idea of the pastor preaching the word so that he's taking the sheep and saying, "Brothers and sisters, were all in this together," and he exhorts and he guides them from the word of God, because they want to hear it. They they want to understand it. They want to grasp it. They wanna march in lockstep with their pastor as we go forward for the glory of God. And you have done that so very, very well here as I was the human instrument God used to change a lot of things in this church, and it was not an easy journey, but so many of you were so willing to say, "Pastor, we don't understand it all. This is pretty new to us too. But we see it in the word of God, and we're going to come alongside you." And that's the feature of exhortation, coming alongside, exhorting and guiding and marching on together.

He uses the word "sound" here, holding fast the faithful word. I'm sorry, I've got to go to a different text here. Oh, 1 Timothy 3:2. Um, no, I'm sorry. It's in our text. Verse 9. He'll be able to exhort in sound doctrine, huios. Huios is a word we get our word "hygiene" from. It literally means healthy or clean. What a powerful picture. If you're preaching sound doctrine, you're preaching healthy things and it's building healthy souls in your church. If you're preaching unsound doctrine, you're preaching sickly things and you'll produce sickly souls. That's a powerful picture there that that brings out. The teaching of false teachers is sick. It leads to anemia and soul-sickness. But the teaching of true teachers and sound doctoring produces healthy souls and healthy human flourishing, and all to the glory of God.

So that's the that's the exhortation. That's one side of what he's got to be committed to doing and have shown some gifts at doing, and that is holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching. Nothing new now. The established teaching of Christian the Christian faith so that he can exhort the sheep, build up the sheet with sound doctrine and here's the other part, B) putting down the contenders. Here's the way he words it, "and to refute those who contradict." To refute those who contradict. Now, I'm going to tell you what, Abraham Lincoln used to say that he loved to see his preacher preach like he was fighting a swarm of bees. Well, Titus is about to walk into a swarm of

bees and a swarm of hornets, and a lot of rats and mice and all kind of vermin, and so he's going to have to be manly as he refutes those who would contradict what God says a church ought to be, what it ought to believe, how it ought to be structured, and how it ought to function.

The word "contradict," he says, "Titus, you're gonna have to take the word of God, and these elders might take the word of God, and they're gonna have to refute those who contradict," that means those who speak against your sound doctrine. Uh, the scholars tell us this word "refute" is a really strong word and it has more than the idea of reproof which is just shine the light. It includes reproof, but it actually has the idea of convincing and putting to shame. You convince people, you expose the error of the argument, and then you tell them to hush, don't do that in the church anymore. You, you put them down and these are not my words, but I think they apply here, one scholar said, you expose their arguments as baseless and then you beat them down. Wait a minute, no preacher outta be beating down anybody. If they're trying as an intentionality of their hearts and minds to bring in error into the church and hurt the church, they must be beat down. Exposed and beat down. Maybe sometimes they're exposed and they repent, and that's okay. Praise the Lord, that's what we hope will happen. But sometimes there's just naysayers and troublemakers and factious people, and they've got to be rooted out and put in their place.

So because there are strong sinners in Crete, Paul tells Titus the church elders must be strong rebukers in the churches of Crete. This speaks to the authority that Paul is telling the pastor he must possess, particularly in this kind of context, in this kind of setting. So in effect, the pastor must have two voices. He preaches the word that was once for all given to the saints, i.e. what he says in verse 9, that is the faithful word which is according to, definite article, the teaching and that is to bring the sheep along and build up the sheep. That's one of his voices. The other voice he has is to drive out the contenders. You know, a faithful shepherd in the old world and, well, by the way, there's a lot of shepherds today who do this very thing, Pam and I've seen them, we've seen them in Idaho. We saw them overseas again. We were in Greece and a lot of times they'll have a big old stick and they'll use that stick to exhort the sheep and guide them along to the water, to the grass or where they need to be to be safe. But if a wolf comes in at at dawn or dusk, rather, they'll take that same rod and they'll break that wolf down. He didn't belong in there with sheep. That sheep might be allowed to, but he's wolfie and he cannot be allowed.

So we see that God's word is powerful. It is sufficient to build up the church, that's God's sheep, and to break down stubborn opposition. Now for the pastor/elders of the church, nothing is more refreshing and nothing is more joy-producing than seeing God's sheep glad to receive the exhortations of the word of God. And for the pastor/elder of the church, nothing is more grievous to the spirit and nothing more troubles your soul than to have than, rather, to have to strongly refute those who contradict. In fact. I'm convinced I deal with maladies in my emotional and physical constitution today that's due to the rigors of two plus decades of warfare refuting those who contend against sound doctrine. And so I say a lot of this because while we're not in this stage as the church, a lot of

pastors are. And I remember how there were so very, very few, almost nobody to help me in those early days. And I want us to be a voice to help young pastors who are doing what Paul told Titus the elders must do, exhort the sheep, but refute those who contradict.

So I'm going to close by just briefly mentioning seven points of doctrine and practice where we, in effect, built up the sheep and had to put down the contenders. Number 1 would be a healthy understanding of biblical theology. That is, what is God's main purpose that unfolds in the Scriptures? It's not man-centered. It's not about just keeping people out of hell, as important as that is, God's main message is, "I'm going to save for Myself a people who will love Me and enjoy Me, and I'm going to love them and enjoy them and I'm going to keep them for all eternity and it's all going to glorify Me." That's biblical theology and so you've got to get that down. You've got to have that in your heart of hearts. That's a foundation stone and then everything else fits under that. God is about saving for himself a people that he can love and enjoy them, and they will love and enjoy him and that will glorify him for all eternity.

2. A healthy understanding of the doctrines of grace. And by the way, my, what a pushback. My, how many contenders. My, how many naysayers. My, how many criticisms we received for holding to the doctrines of grace. Sometimes it's nicknamed Calvinism, but it shouldn't be because Paul wrote it before Calvin ever lived. And Father Augustine wrote it before, before, um, all the the modern Reformers took off with it. But we were able to establish that.

3. A healthy understanding of the gospel conversion and church membership. How much contention, how much naysaying, how much pushback, how much accusation we had to walk through and for more than a few months, many years when we began to tell people that just repeating a prayer is not enough assurance to get you into heaven. Our children are too important to ask them to repeat a prayer when they're five or six and then say, "You're done." I'm sorry this is not in the Bible to do that. We've got to know are the biblical evidences of repentance and faith there? And so we begin to teach and try to learn and try to do a better job. I don't know what could be wrong with making extra sure our children know Christ versus some silly hoop jump, some going through the motions thing that the Bible does not teach anything about. And by the way, our forefathers, our Baptist forefathers, didn't practice a lot of these shenanigans and so many of these evangelists manipulations that just got people to move. And you remember that, um, we had we had revival meetings where up to 100 people got saved. Well, at least we thought they got saved. And then a year, two years later, we couldn't find over 90% of them. And so we thought something's wrong and, my, I mean, I went into excessive study mode trying to figure out, "What is wrong? Am I doing something? Is my belief wrong? What are we doing wrong?" And just reading church history and studying the text and God will just keep bringing back, "Nope, this is the right track. Stay on it." But it wasn't easy refuting that teaching and those who would contradict the solid teaching concerning the gospel conversion membership. So much I could say, don't have time to say it.

4. A healthy understanding of the centrality of the local church. I remember so distinctly for years and years, uh, people would come into our church and they'd say, "We want to

join your church but here's our ministry. We have this ministry and we have this ministry." Not that those were all wrong, but the point is the church had a lot of ministry that needed to go on and they didn't have much heart for that. They had a lot of heart for that stuff out there. Well, I didn't find any Bible foundation for all those other ministries. Again, not that they're all evil, but it's the it's the the propriety, the priority of what is right and good. Exhaust yourself in solid, biblical, local church ministry then do the other thing. When you get married, you take a spouse, you exhaust yourself in your duties to your spouse and your home, and then you help others. Amen? The centrality of the local church to the totality of God's purposes to work in the world. My, how we got pushbacks on that.

5. A healthy understanding of missions. As we went to a personalized strategic approach to world missions, 1001 times I would hear the cry, "That's not Southern Baptist. That's not Southern Baptist." Well, yippee yi yo ki yay. Who cares? It's biblical and it's right. And by the way, you may remember this, but the head of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board came here and brought 65 missions leaders from around the world to study how we do missions because he said it's the best missions example that he had ever seen. So God vindicates if you stay with what's right. But later he found out the other churches weren't willing to do what we do so it didn't go all that far. But that's what he did and that's what he said.

6. A healthy understanding of church discipline. My, did we not get the cries of, "You're a cult. He's Jim Jones." Strife, factiousness, contentions on and on and on we could go. Can I just say something about church discipline? Now listen to what I'm gonna tell you. We have never, never, never removed a person under church discipline for sin. We've never, ever removed anybody in this church because of sin. We've only removed people when they refuse to repent of sin. There's a big difference. We're all sinners but we ought to be humble, repenting sinners. And anywhere at anytime brother or sister is in a quagmire of sin, we go with a loving compassion, considering ourselves, amen, and say, "Brother, if you're willing to try, we're for you." Okay? But I'm going to tell you in the early years it was like, "Leave me alone. You're not gonna tell me what to do. I'll sin how I want to sin." They didn't really say that, that's what they meant. "And I've asked Jesus to save me and I'm going to heaven. I don't even have to come to church." Just another, the errors were error on top of error on top of error that we had to refute and walk through to get where we are today.

Got one more, healthy competent leadership. We realized when we first started together years ago that pretty much the deacons were the only leadership structure we had in the church and, uh, you just kind of would put a list of names out there and whoever, whatever men got the most check marks, he became a deacon. Well, that's not necessarily totally wrong, but we found out there were a lot of deacons, there were some wonderful and godly deacons, by the way, but there are a lot of people on the deacon body that had no biblical qualifications to be on the deacon body, much less elders, then it took eight years to install elders and what a what a journey that was. I've had people get red in the face and scream in my face about, "You're going to ruin this church, and da, da, da." Here's what I'm saying: if you're going to be elder material, you have to be a man who

holds fast to the teaching that's established once for all given to the saints and be able to refute those who contradict. And God will bless and God will glorify his own name.

Competent leadership in the church. Pray for us who are in leadership. I've never felt more that we are what we are by the grace of God, um, and I'm even more amazed that, and see, here's the thing, when you start changing these things even the good brothers and sisters who are with you have never seen it before. So even though they're not against you, they almost don't know how to be with you because it's new to them too. And so you feel extremely alone. So when you're on the island of Crete and there's every abomination in the world getting into the church and you take the old book and you begin to refute the stuff that's coming in the church that's not of God, it's going to be hard because even those who might be with you have never seen it and they're hesitant themselves. And that's kind of changed today. If I were to reverse course on any of these things, y'all be calling me in in a week and saying, "What are you doing?" So you've become fanatics. You've become radical. You've become a cult. Um, one of our elders, he texted me, I guess it was yesterday and he talked about, uh, the grace of God in his life and his family's life through Grace Life Church of the Shoals, and I said, "Well, hopefully we're just normal." That's we, we're we're we're not, this is not exceptional. This is normal Christianity. And if you'll read church history, you'll find out what we're doing today used to be common among Baptists. We've just drifted away from it.

Well, anyway, if you're on the island of Crete, or if you're in Muscle Shoals, AL, you're going to have to have some resolve when it comes time to take the settled truth of God's word and refute those who contradict.