

Servant Qualifications Part 2- Nigeria

It's good to see you all here this morning. I recognize that I gave a difficult message yesterday and I will probably give a difficult message today. I don't travel halfway around the world to just comfort you. In Ecclesiastes 7, it says it's better to enter into the house of mourning than into the house of rejoicing because it's in the house of mourning that we're healed. When you enter into the house of mourning, that's required in order to be saved in the first place, but we're to continue to enter into the house of mourning when we sin. So I come with words of comfort, but I want to come with of word of the Lord to heal and to heal the word is like a sword and it cuts and it hurts, but that's how we're made well. I recognize I'm saying things that might be painful to hear, but that's how Miango gets healed, that's how Plateau gets healed, that's how Nigeria gets healed; it's the wielding of the sword of the Word of God. I want to continue in Titus 1, and I made two points to begin with about what the ministry of the elder and pastor is, it's to glorify God. He must increase and we must decrease. This was John the Baptist, the greatest born among women, but he is less than the least that is born in the Spirit of God. His ministry was to decrease so God could increase, that's our ministry too, to decrease so God can be glorified. The other point I wanted to make is that sheep follow. God gives a shepherd because the sheep like to follow the shepherd so our sin gets magnified in our congregations. This doesn't mean that someone has the right to follow a man, every sheep has a responsibility only to follow us when we follow Christ, but it's important for us to recognize that our sin will affect the congregation. I want to continue in verse 8, it says they're hospitable. Do you realize how central hospitality is to true Christianity? Hospitality is commanded in the New Testament; I believe 22 times. It's the most basic way we show love to our neighbor. When you go to Matthew 25, when it talks about how God will gather all the nations when He comes in His second coming and He separates the sheep from the goats, how does He do that? We know from other places in Scripture that He separates them based on who has faith and who does not, but that's not how God says He separates the sheep and the goats. He says He separates it because He was hungry and you gave Me food, those are the sheep. "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (Vs. 35-36) I want you to consider food, drink, clothing, and a place to stay. These are all about hospitality. At the end of time God is going to gather all nations together and He's going to separate it based on who shows hospitality and who doesn't, who loves themselves more than they love their neighbor. We only love our neighbor when we love Christ so this isn't works-based righteousness, this is the evidence of a changed heart, it's the most basic testimony of a heart of stone being changed into a heart of flesh. It's really easy to say we are covered by the righteousness of Christ so our sins are ignored, but God's salvation is greater than that. God's salvation is such that not only are our sins forgiven, but He changes us, we're a different people, a hallowed people unto His name so He can look at us and judge us not based on our faith, but based on the outworking of that faith and those who will not show hospitality and especially to those who are Christ's, they are goats. He didn't change them into sheep, they're still goats. If you're looking for someone to lead a congregation, one of the most basic tests of if they are a goat or sheep, of course it's going to be one of the requirements. If you don't love this world, you don't show hospitality, if you do, you show hospitality. It's easy to show hospitality to those who can give you something in return, but

that's not who Christ is talking about. He's talking about showing hospitality to those who can do nothing to pay you back. When you hold a feast of celebration, don't invite the rich, don't invite your relatives, invite the poor and the suffering because they can't pay you back, you're expecting to be paid back by God and not in this world. This is supposed to be one of the basic testimonies of Christians. John Calvin, who is a very important theologian, was writing in Switzerland and he said they became a pagan country because there are hotels because people don't open their homes. He said this is a sign that we are not part of Christianity, all over the world this idea has been lost. We talk about hospitals; do you know how hospitals were started? It was during the crusades and the church set up places for people to rest. Hospitals come from hospitality, it was about caring for those who were hurt, caring for those who were suffering, it was about caring for those who were in need. They saw it as the most basic aspect of Christianity and the church had a lot of false beliefs at that time, but they were advanced in their view of hospitality compared to us. We can't expect the church to repent until the elders repent and the pastors repent. Are you hospitable? Do you open your home? Not to those who are your friends, not that that's a bad thing to do, but do you open your home to those who are hungry, to those who are thirsty, to those who are naked, those who need a place to stay? The elders need to be demonstrating that to the church. Paul continues with other things that are important for pastors to do. Yesterday I was talking about the negatives, but today I'm going to talk about the positive things that he says to do. He says you must be a lover of what is good. Again, this is the sign of a mature Christian, his passions aren't for sin, his passion is for holiness. He loves what is good and fundamental to that is the idea of what God says is good, is what is good. We can read the Scriptures and say, 'God couldn't mean that', but to love what is good means that we say it is good even when we don't like what it says. The fall of mankind was because Eve said, in agreement with Satan, what God said was evil was good. That is fundamentally what is wrong with humanity, God says something is good and we say it's bad. That is the most basic rebellion to God and that is the basis of all other rebellion to God. God says read your Bible and we say that's not good, I'd rather watch television. That's the most basic rebellion to God. God says to pray unceasingly and we say we would rather do something else. That's saying what God says is good was not good. Pastors and elders have to love what is good, it means what's coming out of their mouth is not football all the time or what happened on the television program last night. Not that those things can't be discussed, but the most significant portion of your communication has to be about what God said is good, it has to be about declaring the goodness of God. If we really love what is good we're going to talk about it. Think about a young man and young woman that are going to get married, what do they talk about before the wedding? They talk about each other and how they want to be married and the things required for them to be married. If they're truly lovers of each other, this is what their focus is and if we're truly lovers of good, this is going to be reflected in our words, it's going to be reflected in our thoughts and reflected in our actions. We're going to be speaking the Word of God and that's what you want in an elder and pastor, people who love what is good. The next thing is being sober minded. To be sober minded means to not be vain, they're about the important things in the world. It's easy to take a church and make it into a social club, where a bunch of people like to get together and sing and dance, but they're no different than the world. To be sober minded means you want to think about serious things, you want to be asking what God says about this, what verses should I apply when I think about that? This is really key to understand how to make a church glorify God. God sends in soldiers, He sends in famine, He sends in sickness because of the seriousness of sin. If you're looking at the world around

you, you don't say God is about vain things, He is about serious things and we're supposed to be like our Father. The promise is that we will be made like Christ and you don't hear of Christ doing a lot of frivolous things when He's on this earth. Pastors are supposed to lead people to be more like Christ. If your life is about lightweight things and you say you don't want to study the Scripture because it's too deep and you have to think too hard because it's work, then that's the opposite of being sober minded. Sober minded is being serious about things and taking them seriously. When Joshua went up to take Ai after they had destroyed Jericho, after God had shown His power in destroying Jericho, someone stole a few garments and a little bit of gold. Joshua didn't say that wasn't a big deal, he said we need to repent because someone said they would take from the Lord's work so God is judging us for it and people died in battle because of it. That's what it looks like to be sober minded, it's to understand how you have this one sin in the midst of you and it spreads like leaven through the whole lump. If you're vain and don't consider things to have weight then your church will have all these things planted in it that will continue to grow, continue to get bigger, cause bigger and bigger problems, and will destroy the church. I've seen this happen time and time again in America, even in churches that I have pastored, if you don't take small sin seriously enough and you let them grow and they get bigger and bigger until they start to destroy people in the church. To be sober minded is to consider those things to be significant when they are small, when they can be dealt with before they overwhelm you and you don't have the ability to deal with them anymore. A sober minded man is able to do that. Someone who thinks things don't really matter, they're just going to let those seeds of destruction be planted in the church. You want a sober minded man to be an elder, you want a just man. Micah 6:8, the basic duty of man, "but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." That's it! That's what the duty of man is and the first one is what we have to do, we have to do justly. If you have a man who shows biased towards people who are related to him, who judges unjustly, he's not serving God and you should not put him in charge of His church. This is really key to understand, someone who judges one person one way and another person another way, maybe because one guy gives more to the church than the other, that's contrary to the basic nature of God. He had to send Jesus Christ to pay for our sins because to ignore our sins without paying for them would be unjust and God is just. It is important that men of God are just, that means just in their dealings, they're not trying to rip off one person at the expense of the other, they're not trying to deceive, they're not trying to be unfair, this is the basic duty of man because this is a basic characteristic of God. If you choose unjust leaders, you will have an unjust church and you won't have a testimony to the world. Nigeria has much corruption in it, you see it in the legal system with judges, you see it in the government and it's because it's in the church. The church is the light of the world and the world walks according to the light given to it by the church and elders are the shepherds of the sheep and the path they walk is guided by what their shepherd says is righteous, just and good. If you want to fix the corruption in Nigeria, it starts in the house of God and the leaders in the house of God. Only appoint just leaders, it's really for us to blame people who are outside, to say look how bad President Buhari is, how bad the governor of Plateau state is, I know this judge took a bribe or this police officer stopped me and wouldn't let me go until I gave a bribe. See that as a statement of the church. What happens when the light shines forth? If you turn the light on in a dark room what happens? Does the darkness stay? It doesn't stay! If you light the light of Jesus Christ in this community, the darkness will flee. Judgement starts in the house of God for a reason. You want justice in Nigeria, get justice in your own heart, demand justice in your churches. I can tell you how to heal Nigeria, it starts with the

people who are called by God's name to repent, to deal with their own sin, to deal with the sin in the church and then Nigeria will be healed. God has told us how we do it, but if you just think lightly of these things, if you don't deal with injustice in your churches, if you accept that and allow it to run rampant, then understand what you're doing to everyone around you. Understand how the people who are called by the name of God are destroying the people around them. Stand with boldness for the truth, stand with boldness for justice. God has appointed you leaders of the church, you need to fix what's happening in the church. Think of it with a disobedient child, if he's disobedient do you give him things he wants or take away things he wants? Do you say, 'You rebel against me so now I will give you more of your favorite food.' Or do you say, 'You're a son who wants to honor his father so therefore I will do something you find pleasing.'? This is what we do as fathers, God set us where we are as a picture of who He is as a Father. What do you expect Him to do for His children if His children rebel against Him, if they don't do His will? Do you expect Him to bless you? That would be being an evil Father. He's not just a good Father, He's the perfect Father and as earthly fathers we know how to give good gifts to our children, we desire to give good gifts to our children. God desires to give you good gifts, but if you rebel against Him, why would He? It would encourage your rebellion and say that it's fine and doesn't matter. For Nigeria to be healed you need to see the world through the eyes of God. For your churches to be healed you need to see the world through the eyes of God. Nothing happens by chance, there is nothing that God considers to be meaningless or frivolous, He is serious about everything He does and He's taught us through what it means to be father and son, what it means to be a husband and wife, He put these relationships in our lives to we can understand our relationship with Him. When we think of basic aspects of these relationships, make sure you say that this is teaching you something about who God is. We understand as a father, if a child sins and you are a good father you chastise them and if that child works hard to be a blessing, then you desire to bless him. This is the most basic aspect of our relationship with God. He desires to bless us, but He won't bless us if we are disobedient and rebel, that's why it says He scourges every son He receives in Ephesians 12. One of the most basic ways to rebel is to be unjust. Don't be unjust. That's what Nigeria needs most in my years of coming here, the bribery and cheating, but as long as the testimony of Nigeria is being unjust, you should not expect your land to be healed because God is a good Father to His church and you're not shining forth light or it wouldn't be this way. It starts with the leaders. For Miango, it starts with the people seated in this room. I know there are other denominations, but for here and now it starts with you. The leaders of God's people must be just, they must be holy, they must not be seeking after the world, they must be looking towards God. If you want someone who looks like the world, and I can tell you how to find someone who looks like the world, they say words that never offend, they sing and dance like the world, they do all the world's techniques to attract people, they're not drawing a people to be separate from the world, they're drawing a people to be proud to be like the world. What I mean by that is they do all the things the world does, but they say they are the children of God, we have God as our Father. Without holiness, no one sees God. That's in Hebrews 10 I believe, without holiness no one sees God. It's really easy to get a big congregation, just use all the same techniques that the world uses to draw big crowds in. That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians that he came not using rhetoric, not using fancy words. Paul was trained as a Jew, he was trained in techniques to manipulate people and he goes to Corinth and says there is no place for this in the house of God. It's easy to bring people in, but he said he wouldn't do that, he would let the cross of Christ do that so his church was not filled with the world. He doesn't say that, but that's

why you don't use the rhetoric of the world. Have to be holy, have to be self-controlled. There's always opportunities for elders or pastors because they have been given authority, to take advantage of that position. One of the most basic requirements for an elder is that they have self-control to walk by those opportunities. It could be opportunities with money, women, making it about them rather than God, so they have to exhibit self-control because you are entrusting something precious to them. The most precious things in all of creation, because the church of Jesus Christ is the purpose of all creation. Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." All of creation is for the good of His church, for those who have been saved and those who will be saved. Gold and silver aren't the precious things in salvation. If someone is going to be unfaithful with gold and silver they're going to be unfaithful with the church. If they are unfaithful with their time, because God says to redeem the time for the days are full of evil and arguably time is the second most precious thing in creation, if they are unfaithful with their time they will be unfaithful with the most precious gift, the flock of Jesus Christ. You need self-controlled people to be elders and pastors. Notice all these other things we talked about aren't at all about the ministry, they're about what you do with your family, how you live your life, how you open your home. It's not until verse 9 that he starts to talk about the responsibility of an elder. It says, "holding fast to the faithful word that he has been taught." By holding fast, it's like the picture of a boat that's anchored somewhere. It's not going to move, it's anchored fast. That's the responsibility of an elder. It says in 2 Timothy 4, that whether it's in season or out of season, the message of a minister of God is the same, he holds fast to the word of God. When heresies rise up in the church he doesn't flow with the heresy. Sure, that's a way to get a lot more people to follow you, but that's not a qualified elder. A qualified elder says he actually believes what the Scriptures speak of, I will hold to it regardless of what the world says, I will not go to and fro based on the fads of the world. They will teach the same thing Paul taught because earlier in the same book he tells Timothy to find people who will teach the same things he said, that is what God has done for 2,000 years. He raises up men that say the same thing Paul said, the world does not need a new message, it needs a faithful repetition of the old message. It doesn't need a man who will come up with a new thing, come up with a new technique to manipulate people. What God desires is men who will be faithful to come up and do what Paul did, do what Titus and Timothy did, do what men have been called to do in every generation. The church isn't supposed to change according to the fads of the world, the world is to change because of the perseverance of the church. While all the world swirls around and chases the latest fad, the church continues to stand on the Rock that is Jesus Christ, it continues to build its house on the Rock and the house is obedient to the commands of Christ. That is the message that is the message for the church in every generation, not new things and new techniques, but the old path. That's what God has commanded for the church to find because that's what's required to be an elder in the church of God. One is where he stands and the next thing is what he does with that. "That he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." It is really easy for us to think of the two responsibilities of elders that Peter talks about in Acts 6, prayer and the ministry of the Word. It's easy to think of the ministry of the Word as standing in the pulpit and preaching and that is part of the ministry of the Word, but there are other serious aspects of it. In 1 Timothy 3, it talks about that ministry of the Word as a qualification of elders and pastors, that they must be able to teach, they have to be able to preach the Word of God, but the ministry of the Word is greater than that. The ministry of the Word is wielding the sword in life and that's what Titus

requires, that when someone comes with false doctrine, when they come with things that contradict the Word of God, they must be able to take the Word of God and say, 'Here is why what you say is false.' When Paul says to Titus this is what's required, he doesn't even mention preaching, he doesn't mention teaching, he says you have to be able to deal with those who bring false doctrines into the church because what has always happened in the church of Jesus Christ, and it's about in half the epistles in the New Testament, about how wolves came into the church. Dealing with those who say they are Christ when they are not in a basic ministry of the Word is to deal with those bringing in false doctrine. Verse 10 says that there are many insubordinates. It is not about being insubordinate to us as a pastor or elder, it's about not being subordinate to God and not being willing to submit to His Word, contradicting what the Lord Jesus Christ has said to us in His Word. Paul is saying to Titus that there will be many like this so an elder and pastor has to be able to deal with them. If you don't deal with them it says in 2 Timothy 3, their teaching is like a cancer in the church. That's what happens when you have leaders who cannot wield the Word of God to stop those who contradict sound doctrine. One of the most basic duties of an elder and pastor is to make sure the church continues to stand firmly on the Word of God, that they don't wander off the rock that is Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 24, that there will be many christ's that come in that preach a different gospel than what the true Messiah taught and they will lead many astray. That didn't just happen 2,000 years ago, Paul is saying that's still required today, you still have to find men who can stop the bringing in of false things. Notice what it says, both idle talkers and deceivers. They bring it in in two ways, one is they bring in false things that you have to say these are untrue things that are being taught. For the sake of your church you have to be willing to say that what they are saying is a lie. If you're not willing to say that to people in your congregation, you shouldn't be an elder or pastor because it is the role of the pastor to make sure the church is standing on the Word of God. Opinions of man will always come into the church; it is the requirement of the pastor to say what the opinion of God is. The other thing is idle talkers. Remember what I said, that elders and pastors have to be sober minded. One of the ways that false doctrine gets brought into the church is that people just start to talk about frivolous things, they start to say it doesn't matter what God says about certain things, we're all brothers in Christ. Instead of saying that God said these things are serious. You have to be willing to say that it matters which Christ you believe in. You can't just say that because someone mentioned the name of Christ that they believe in the God of the Bible, they have to be standing on sound doctrine and if they say these things don't matter, they are the idle talker that Paul says, if a man won't deal with them, they are not fit to be an elder in the church of God. In verse 10 it concludes with, "especially those of the circumcision." The major tax on the church of Jesus Christ are not coming from the Jews anymore, but the equivalent to us is that they will come from the church. You especially have to be willing to confront people who are saying these things don't really matter or saying false things about what God said. You have to be willing to say it even if they are from the church or this is what happens, what's in verse 11. "Their mouths must be stopped or they will subvert whole households." They're that seed that get planted in the church that grows up to destroy it all, they're the leaven that gets planted in the lump that spreads through the whole lump. The role of an elder and pastor is a serious role because God has given you the duty to protect His church from those who would attack it, those who would distort its message, those who would say those things don't really matter, because they're going to destroy the households in your church and destroy the households in Miango. This is where destruction comes and He's commanded elders and pastors to stand in the gap. Where you are

falling short of these things, repent, consider them seriously and repent because God has trusted the most precious thing in the world in your hands. Let me pray for you. Oh Lord God, we do pray that You guide these men to their duty. You grant them the strength to repent where they are falling short. We pray that You give them a boldness to fight for Your truths even when those around them are saying these things don't matter, we should just be friends, we should just consider ourselves brothers. May they shine forth the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Healing Light of the world. You have given us a sword; I pray You teach these men how to use it for it is how the world will be conquered. You have promised it, You have sent Your Son to seal it, You have set Him at Your right hand, You have given Him all authority in heaven and earth, You have given Him a rod of iron to destroy the nations who rebel against You, and we are His army. May we be faithful soldiers. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.