

Titus 24-08-07a

Good evening, this is Wednesday, the 7th of August, 2024. We're in the penultimate study for Titus. We'll be finishing it up on Sunday morning and the following Wednesday starting a new study.

But we're in chapter three, looking at Paul's exhortations, which I like to call the bees, not the birds, it's the bees. To be or not to be, that is the question. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and time of study will begin.

Father, it is such a wonderful privilege to refresh ourselves at the oasis of living water to be found in your word and in the fellowship of like-minded believers who share an enthusiasm for who we are and why we are here in Jesus Christ. We thank you for him. We thank you that you sent him as your son to rescue us and redeem us from a lost and hopeless condition.

As we look back and see the benefit of his work for us, we also look forward and eagerly anticipate the finalization and fulfillment of our salvation when he returns to take us to himself and enter us into the heavenly realms. We pray that our study tonight will help prepare us for that time and motivate and encourage us to be the people you would have us to be now and in the days to come as we await that glorious final day. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Our passage here, my book opens Titus with the first page on the left and the second page on the right. So you can see 1 1 in the upper left and it goes all the way down to chapter three, verse nine on my second page. So the first two thirds of Titus is pretty well stretched out before me.

And when I flip the page, I just have about two paragraphs and the letter is done. It is a rather short and very action-packed letter. We've seen chapter one, which contains the greetings and begins right away with the importance of leadership.

And we've seen that this is wonderful, essential material if you're organizing a church or reorganizing it or endeavoring to ensure that it is organized in a way that pleases God and is biblically solid. And so the qualifications for elders and what the elders are to do, their qualifications are in verses five through nine and what they are to do is in verses 10 through 16. And that's chapter one, we've seen this in detail.

And we have noted that as with so much of scripture, there is a value above and beyond the literal. All of this is true, all of it is essential. It has great traction in a fellowship of believers, but it also in the same way that Israel represents the individual believer in so many ways, so many examples, so many illustrations and episodes of the Old Testament, we look at the nation of Israel and say, as goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the believer in the New Testament age.

And we learn personal lessons from looking at that corporate narrative in the same way. We look at these instructions for the corporate church and recognize that what is true of the body group should be true of individuals who make up the body. And thus, when you put the individuals together into the group, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

So when it says qualifications for elders, we not only think about a fellowship of believers, a group of believers, a church containing believers, but we think about our own soul and the need for leadership. And we've seen this in detail that we have to recognize what should dominate and what should rule. There is never complete unanimity on hardly anything.

Most people have various emphases, various priorities. Goals are slightly different, experiences are different. And we generally come together and find common ground.

And we hope that our overlap of common ground is very extensive. And those areas where we don't have agreement or harmony or unity, those would be fairly small. And hopefully in the non-essentials, and we focus on those essentials and have widespread unity in that regard.

Think about our human soul. We should also recognize that there are parts of us that God built to be the leadership. We have intellect, we have a reasoning ability, our mentality, and we have our heart or our emotion.

And in the same way that a husband is generally speaking, because he's a man, less emotional than his wife, there is a complimentary, very wonderful balanced fulfillment when you have both an authoritarian reasonableness and a sympathetic emotionalism. We need them both. Different times and different places in the Christian world, you find people that are heavy on emotion.

They want a worship service that's full of elevation and uplift and getting the ghost and so on. And others seem to be very dry and academic, almost like a seminary classroom instead of a worship service. And these are extremes.

And we hope to find in the middle that balance that has both a reasonable, logical, in-depth, studious approach to the word of God that respects it and honors it and treats it as that which proceeds from the mouth of God and is authoritative. And we have a response, an emotional response, an appreciation. We have joy.

And if you look at the fruit of the spirit, do you notice that some of them are more mental and some of them are more emotional? Love leads the list, right? We generally think of love in emotional terms. It has a mental aspect. We need to be judicious in who and what we love.

There are some things we are commanded not to love. There are other people and roles

that we are commanded to love. So there is a mentality element, but you can't talk about love without implicating emotion in some way.

Joy is emotional. Peace is a feeling. Ask the eagles.

Long-suffering, this is more of a calculation. I'm going to be patient and here are my reasons. You can't really have a, I have an emotion of patience.

I have a policy of patience. I have a goal or a priority to maintain patience, but it's not really a feeling. I don't just wake up some morning and say, you know, I feel incredibly patient today.

It's more on the mental side. Gentleness, gentleness is more of the emotional side. Most of these are a mix, but there's a larger proportion of one, a lesser proportion of another.

So when we look at Titus chapter one, and we see that it is important to have leadership, what parts of our soul should lead? Should we lead with emotion? Should we lead with how we feel or how we want others to feel? No, that is why this letter begins with a group and for us as individuals with the exhortation to set in order things that are lacking. And if we don't have good leadership in our individual soul, it's going to be very difficult to have a stable structure in our family or in our other relationships. And the qualifications for leadership are not emotional.

He doesn't say he should be a loving man. It doesn't say that he should be a joyful man. It doesn't say that he should be a very sensitive and caring man.

What does it say? He's got a policy. When he makes a pledge to a woman, he's with that woman till death do us part. He has a policy of structure and effective implementation of obedience for his children.

And they under his roof are not guilty of dissipation or insubordination. He himself is blameless. These are policies.

These are practices. Blamelessness is not a feeling. Blamelessness is the result of self-control and knowing what is right and what is wrong, clinging to the right and departing from what is wrong.

Not self-willed, not quick-tempered. Temper is often an emotional outburst, isn't it? It's an emotion of anger, often unreasonable anger. If somebody could slow down and set the emotion aside, they might realize that they're making a mountain out of a molehill.

They're being selfish. They're being unfair. They don't have the whole story.

It's not reasonable. It's not logical. It's an emotion.

So not quick-tempered means he isn't dominated by emotion. Not given to wine. Once

again, this is self-control.

I will not let self-indulgence and desiring to feel good dominate my decisions. Not violent, not greedy for money. Greed is not really an emotion.

Greed is where do you put money in the acquisition of goods and status in your priority list? Do you have a good ordered set of priorities? He is hospitable, a lover of what is good. This is not an emotional love. This is a policy love.

I prioritize, I make a goal of what is good. Sober-minded. This is not emotional, not unstable, not wishy-washy or driven about by every wind.

Just holy and self-controlled. So you see, and we've been through these, we've reviewed this a number of times, but as we draw to the conclusion of our study, I think it is important to remember, if I think back on Titus six months from now or a year from now, what did I learn from this letter? Well, you got to organize a church. I don't think that's it.

I don't think that's why we're here undertaking this study. Particularly the nature of our church is such that a lot of this isn't primarily applicable because we're not meeting in a confederated physical group. We don't have a large group with widows and other things that require the kind of onsite organization you find in local groups.

So why would we even study the pastoral epistles if it isn't good for something even more important? And it is even more important for us as individual believers to see that these characteristics, these goals and values and priorities, these structures are in place within us. People say, why study the Old Testament? It's just a bunch of dusty Israelites dropping in the wilderness and failing God and being judged and taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and what's the good of all of that? And they didn't even have the Holy Spirit. Jesus hadn't come yet, so what's the point? The point is we learn so much for our individual lives studying those examples.

I believe the same is true when we look at the letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus. This is primarily for us to digest and implement in our sanctuary, our temple, our soul. Therefore, we should take all of these to heart.

Women could say, well, he's talking about elders and their men, he's going to be a husband of one wife, so I'm going to tune out until it comes to the women. Can't do that because you have a soul and you have an intellect, you have a will, you have an emotion, you have a fallen nature, you've got a new nature, and they're in conflict and at war with one another. You've got the pull of the old nature, but you've got the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that are renewing the new man that is free and strong and able, and this tension is going to be resolved, and part of it is the way you resolve tensions in a group.

You need structure, you need delegated responsibilities and authorities, and that's what

you have here. Why, in verse 10, many insubordinate. Now, what kind of insubordination is in the group? It's the same kind that we can perpetrate if we're not squared away, so what do we do when we haven't sorted out the basis on which we set our priorities, make our decisions, choose our words, invest our time and our resources? If we don't do it on the basis of God's Word and God's wishes and God's commands, what will end up happening? These are the symptoms, idle talking, deceiving, letting people think one thing when something else is really true.

If that is true of me personally, something is wrong. If there's something that I want to hide, there's something wrong with me. Instead of figuring out better ways to hide it, I need to figure out how to fix it.

I should not be a deceiver. If I'm truthful and there's nothing to hide, I can be truthful to the core, and that's gonna be a blessing to me and everyone else. But if there is deception going on, I need to figure out why do I feel the need to deceive? I don't want someone to know a bad thing.

Instead of figuring out ways to make sure they don't find out, why don't I get rid of the bad thing, right? So whether it's in a group or in the individual soul, we need to think about this. If we're just going on and there's no change, if we study the Word of God together week by week by week, four sessions a week, and we are not changing, and we are not becoming more stable, more fruitful, more peaceful, more joyful, more loving, more patient, more gentle, able to find and implement and appreciate the good, more faithful, more humble, and more self-controlled. I've just gone through the fruit of the Spirit again, Galatians 6, 7, and 8. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

"Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. "He that sows to his flesh "shall of the flesh reap corruption. "He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap." Life everlasting.

Day by day, we're planting the seeds, we're growing a crop. So as we go back and review these, I'm not gonna go through every verse, but remember, when you think back on Titus, what is this letter about? It is Christians living in a fallen world. Remember Crete? Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.

Three strikes against them. Cretans, that was back in chapter one, verse 12. A prophet of their own has said Cretans are liars, evil creatures, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

Lazy glutton is complete self-indulgence, self-gratification. The priority is I wanna feel good. Evil beast means the higher life sensitivity to heavenly things and divine purposes is entirely absent.

And you can only do evil. Remember that's the description back in Genesis chapter six, when God looks down and sees that the hearts of men are only evil all the day. Then

comes the flood.

Well, that's chapter one in a nutshell. Before we do anything else, if we hope to continue to progress, and a lot of us have made progress over the months and years in our Christian life, and we feel like we're significantly down the road from where we started, but there is no standing still in spiritual life and growth. We are either advancing or we are retreating.

We don't just kind of camp out and tread water. We don't mark time march, as they say in the military. Mark time march, your feet are going up and down, but the group's not moving.

We advance, we progress. We're heading on the upward way. New heights we're gaining every day.

Praying as we go, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. I wanna progress. Anytime I picture the narrow road through the straight gate, do you ever picture it as being downhill and the straight gates down there in a valley? Does it ever come to your mind that way? For me, when I think about the narrow road, it's going up Mount Zion, and the gate is at the top.

I can't see what's through the gate. I just know from what God has said that that's where I wanna be, but it's an upward climb. And there's a lot of hazards on either side, and it's a narrow trail.

You gotta stay on the trail. You get off the trail and slip on the rocks, you're gonna go tumbling down to the bottom of the mountain again. You don't slip and fall downward to glory.

You don't fall into the narrow gate. It's upward. And if we are here drawing breath, it doesn't matter our age, condition, circumstance.

If we are here, God has a plan for us, and that plan involves advance. And it's against opposition. We wrestle against principalities and powers.

So it's important to be organized. If you took your typical high school social studies classroom and just grabbed everybody in it and put them in a van, took them to a military base, put them all in cammies, handed them weapons, and said, you see that little hill over there? Go take it. There's some instructors there who are gonna oppose you, so go take it.

There's interlocking fields of fire. There's live rounds, so be careful. They're gonna be shooting at you with real bullets.

There's a creek, there's a hill, there's a little bit of cover. Go take that hill. This would be

sending these children to certain death.

Why? Enumerate the reasons. It sounds like a silly example, but why would a social studies group from high school be unable to take a military objective that is defended by opposition with live rounds? A, they don't know anything. B, they are not organized.

There's no structure, there's no plan, there's no authority to say, I know you don't like wading into a hail of bullets, but this has to be done. There's no motivation. Why should I take your hill? Why should I follow your instructions? What's in it for me? What's the point? It's suicide, it's crazy.

I'm not doing that. And they would scatter and flee. So all of those things are what we need.

We need knowledge and understanding. We need training. We need to understand who we are and why we're here and why the objective is important.

We need to have motivation that it is worth doing, even at the cost of our personal priorities and preferences. We need to be organized and understand structure and authority and receive a plan, find our part in that plan and execute it faithfully. There's all the difference in the world.

If you look at Christianity as it is widely understood and practiced today, it's a high school social studies class trying to take a hill and not even trying. They've scattered and gone elsewhere. They understand nothing.

They have no organization. They have no purpose. They have no real hope.

They have a self-defined hope of their own making that in many cases isn't even biblical. So this is important. The qualities of a sound church, we have seen in chapter two, these are also qualities of sound believers.

You can't have a church that has these qualities if the individuals in the church lack them. So when it talks about men and you're a woman, you can't skip that part. When it talks about women and you're a man, you can't skip that part.

Think about the intellectual, the initiating and responding parts of our nature. And you can get shot at from all sides if you say, well, the man is the intellectual and the woman is the emotion. Not at all.

Many, probably most women are smarter than their husbands. We're not talking about capacity. We're talking about function.

In the same way that you say, well, the officers are up there having meetings and goals and priorities and making the plans and issuing the five paragraph instructions and the rest of it. So they must be smarter than the enlisted man. That is a false assumption.

There are plenty of really smart people in the enlisted ranks. It's a matter of function, not of quality. I don't know why people have such a hard time with this, but you say, well, women are in a support role.

Well, that's subordinate, that's diminished. That's not as important, not as good. Anybody that has been supported will tell you that that is crazy talk.

You can't do that. Look at anybody that is successful. They've got support all over the place.

Pick your billionaire, pick your athlete, pick your star. Have you ever looked at the credits of some movie you watched and one of the main stars, you know, assistant to Mr. Pitt, hairdresser for Mr. Pitt, makeup for Mr. Pitt, stunt double for Mr. Pitt, you know, secretary scheduling, there's like, you know, 27 people that are all working for Brad Pitt. I haven't seen a Brad Pitt movie.

I'm just assuming that's because he's typical. But look at the credits. You're always seeing, you know, assistant, hair, makeup, scheduling, you know, and there's a bunch of people that don't even get listed in the credits that work for those successful people.

It's the same with your Elon Musks and your Bezos's and your, you know, Bill Gates's and the rest of them. There's huge amount of support and they couldn't do what they do without support. And they value their support and they keep their support and they handsomely reward their support.

Support is great. But to look at these instructions, the older men to be sober, reverent, temperate, all of us, male or female, young or old, need to look at the leadership aspect of our own soul and ensure, is my mentality really on solid ground? I think I'm then thinking my way through life and I'm objectively and solidly and biblically setting my goals and values and priorities. Well, let's just do a gut check.

Is my thinking sober? Is it reverent? Is it God oriented? Am I thinking about what God thinks? Is it self-controlled, temperate? Is it moderate? Is it balanced and not pegging the meter on full or empty or hot or cold? Is it sound in faith? Is what I am thinking and planning and implementing in my life, does it reflect sound faith? We talked about this idea of soundness, sound doctrine, sound words, sound faith. Is my own thinking, whoever I am, is love an outworking and a product of it? Is there benefit to others, even if there is sacrifice to myself and love? Is it patient? Am I willing to wait? Can I give it a rest? Can I stop and take a beat? Am I willing to endure for a time? Remember, God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, labor of love, and what of hope. It's a good verse.

You have to look it up because I don't know the reference, but I think about it all the time. God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, your labor of love, and your

patience of hope. So that's verse two of chapter two.

Older women, even if you're a man, the emotional side, the more impulsive or feeling side, the side that has more sensitivity, more compassion, more willingness to do what ladies do for their children. Self-sacrifice is a great part of what women do for each other, for their husbands, and for their kids. So reverent in behavior.

If I get emotional, does it reflect reverence or does it reflect anger and impatience? If emotion's coming out of me, is it beneficial to others or am I making a giant pain out of myself? When I get stirred up, do I slander? Do I start flinging fertilizer at politicians or at the boss or at the clients or at somebody else in my periphery, you know, the family or whoever? It says not slanderers. Notice how slander keeps coming up. To have an ability to control the tongue is something James talks about.

We've seen it many times. Not giving too much wine. I don't decide to aggravate and exaggerate and inflate and amplify feelings that I have by knocking out my inhibitions.

I've known people that were wonderful, normal, shirt-off-the-back kind of people, sober, but if they had too much to drink, it's Mr. Hyde instead of Dr. Jekyll. Not everyone is this way, but I've seen people that were scary when they were given too much wine. Teachers of good things.

And notice that teaching good things is on the woman's side. Men are to be apt to teach. Elders are to be apt to teach.

So are women. So whether this is an intellectual exercise, whether you are, there's a lot of feelings going on, a lot of empathy or compassion or whatever else, there is teaching on both the man's side and the woman's side. All of us, our soul has these male and female qualities and aspects that are sort of emphasized on one side and on the other.

And by the way, there are only two of these. So you don't find any third, any Christian is gonna have a lot to answer for if they support more than there being men and women. Look at your Bible.

So, and admonishing younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet. Notice the admonishment comes in terms of direction. Direct your love at your husband.

Direct your love at your children. Not at your friends, not at your hobbies, not at your personal passions, not at a celebrity, not at some abstraction, not at a cause. Your love as a young woman has to be aimed at the right objects.

For all of these things, whether it's faith, hope or love, they all have an object and it is all about the object. Anybody can have faith, what do you place it in? Anyone can love, who or what do you love? Anyone can be expectant and hopeful, but what are you expecting

and waiting for and why? So you can follow this through the rest of chapter two and into chapter three. Look at each of these verses, each of these aspects and say, what part of me is this scripture inspired by God in the hands of the Holy Spirit? What part of me does this educate and minister to and benefit? Don't be thinking, well, you know, that church ought to have better elders.

I see it right here in my Bible. I should have a orderly soul, an orderly soul set in order the things that are lacking. All of us have things that are lacking.

The best way to make that list is for each of us to do it for ourselves. It's a dangerous thing to, you know, label a new piece of paper and say, well, I'm gonna put another person's name here and I'll tell you what's lacking in their soul. This, you haven't lived and you can't know unless you end up being a pastor or a teacher when this doesn't happen in our group, but in past experiences, years gone by, somebody would come up and greet me so warmly with a smile and just pumping my hand with both of their hands and saying, that was such a wonderful message.

I know, fill in the blank here, that really needs to hear that. I would like to get a tape of that and I wanna give it to so-and-so. And I think it's facepalm.

It's, oh my gosh, you can't jump straight to so-and-so needs to hear this. It has to be plowed into my own soil. And guess what? If so-and-so is not there to hear it, that is either a result of their choices or God is gonna provide that information to them in another way.

You don't have to move heaven and earth and to get God's word to people and be diagnosing their soul problems. It's well-intentioned, but it's dangerous. The best place to take everything we learn from this letter is to plow it into the soil of our own field.

Who are you to judge another man's servant to his own master, he will stand or fall. And if you are not that person's master, you have no business trying to shoot spiritual bullets at them or try to bring them what you would consider to be spiritual baskets of fruit. You can say, I have found a wonderful source of Bible teaching and spiritual fellowship that is doing me a great deal of good.

And if that's something you're looking for, you are certainly welcome to join me. That's fine, but to take the content and try to force feed it, let me get the feeding tube. If I could just get it past your tonsils, I'm gonna pour and you're gonna be blessed.

Sorry, no. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart, God says, not somebody else's heart. So we have to take this for ourselves.

We have to apply it to ourselves. Let God guide, if we're ever gonna say something to somebody else, we can express appreciation. We can certainly say, I have learned a lot.

I have benefited. I can tell you that just studying this has benefited me enormously. I am so grateful that God had Paul write this letter and send it to Titus and it got preserved and it has come down to me and I am convicted.

I am rebuked, corrected and instructed in righteousness. There are things that are happening in a very positive way for me. And how long have I been a believer? 63 years.

And I'm so grateful that God is still chipping away, hammering away, breaking up the rocks in the soil, hoping that more seed can get planted and bear fruit. It is never too late. It's never too much.

But we have to realize that this is for me, not the elder down the road, not the woman that lost her husband, me. Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God is what we live by. I don't pick and choose.

I don't deflect it and say, well, I'll send this to so-and-so, me, you and I. Well, this brings us to chapter three and we're going to look at some very fascinating aspects of this chapter that once again, are individually applicable when we come back from the break.