

## Titus 1:5-9 Leadership in the Church of God: Management that Produces Order (part 3)

### Management of the Word of God (Sermon 1 of 2)

Let's begin by reading v. 9. **“He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”** In the next two sermons I would like to arrange my points around 3 verbs associated with the management of the Word of God. Paul commands Titus to appoint elders who manage their character, but they must also be able to manage the Word of God. And his instructions are clear. Hold firm, Exhort, Rebuke. I planned to do this in one sermon, but as I progressed this week, it was just too much. So, I've divided it into two parts, emphasizing only one truth today. So, let's begin.

1. The Elder Holds Firm the Gospel. Let me first say that one of the gifts of the elder is the ability to teach. In both 1 Timothy and Titus, we see the necessity of consistent godliness in character. And, right in the middle of these qualities in 1 Tim. 3:4 Paul says, **“able to teach.”** And here in v. 9 he says to Titus, **“able to give instruction in sound doctrine.”** This gift is not mentioned for the deacon, though I would argue a deacon must be one who understands the gospel and holds onto it as the elder does. In 1 Tim. 3:9 concerning the deacon Paul commands, **“They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”**

Now, lots of people are gifted at teaching. I've had some awesome teachers in school and in different contexts in the world, and so have you. But, here, Paul doesn't speak about the teachers of this world. He speaks of the teachers of the **“church of the living God, which is the pillar and buttress of the truth”** (1 Tim. 3:15). Concerning the elder and this gift, Calvin says, *“This is the chief gift of the bishop, who is elected principally for the sake of teaching; for the Church cannot be governed in any other way than by the word.”* Now, I do not think this necessarily means that every elder be gifted in preaching, or standing before people in this context. But, he must grasp understand the gospel and be able to apply the gospel as taught in the Scriptures in an effective manner.

Now, we must turn our attention to the gospel itself. You might say, *“this text doesn't explicitly say ‘gospel’”*; why do you say we must hold onto the gospel. It says *“hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.”* Well, this is essentially to hold on to the gospel. This is the good news of Jesus Christ, his person, his work, EVERYTHING He is and does as He is the fulfillment of ALL God's promises in the OT Word. And this is what Paul came to believe and preach. As a zealous Pharisee with authority of the religious leaders in Jerusalem, Paul persecuted the Church of Christ. But, one day, as he was heading to Damascus to put more Christians in prison, a great light shone from heaven and Paul fell to the ground blinded, and Jesus Christ appeared to him saying, **“Saul, why are you persecuting me?”** (Acts 9, 26). And on that day, Paul was powerfully converted. And in Acts 9 we are told that he spent a number of days with the disciples at Damascus. And there, they preached the Word of the Gospel to Him. And, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul began to see that Christ was the fulfillment of all the OT Scriptures.

As he looked back he understood the pictures of the OT were fulfilled in the Messiah. Jesus was the manna and the meat from heaven. He was the water given at the rock of Horeb. He was the

fire by night and the cloud by day to protect and guide Israel. He was the shepherd who led them through the wilderness. He was the ram in the thicket given in the place of Isaac. The great wrestler of Jacob. The nourishment of the Passover feast, the One who shut the door to Noah's arch, the Great Warrior with sword drawn standing before Joshua. He is the Real High Priest, the Eternal King of David's throne, Daniel's Ancient of Days, the True Israel. By the Spirit, all these truths filled Paul's soul. **"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world"** (Heb. 1:1-2).

And Paul was appointed an Apostle to the Gentiles, to preach these truths as fulfilled in Christ, the Gospel, the good news. From this perspective Christ IS the GOSPEL! But, practically, what do we think of when we hear the word "gospel?" I must admit, our attention is drawn to the cross. As Paul says, **"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified"** (1 Cor. 2:2). As Christians we are drawn to the cross because THIS is where the Gospel most affects us. For the cross of Christ is where we find forgiveness of our sins, the place where we are reconciled with God, the place of peace, the place of comfort. Why? Because the cross is the place where the righteousness of God has been manifested. It is the place where the Son of God laid down his life as a sacrifice for sin. THERE, God put him forward as a propitiation by his blood. This means that ALL God's wrath and anger for sin (our sin) was poured out FULLY upon the sinless ONE, the Son of God. And all who look upon him, trust in him, believe in him, their sins are forgiven.

Do you remember when Israel was in the dessert and they were complaining about no water, no food; they were fighting against Moses and God, the VERY ONE who had brought them so far. And you know what happened? God sent fiery snakes all throughout the camp. And their bites were fatal. People were dying right and left. We cannot imagine the chaos, the fear! Let me read what happened. **"And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us."** So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, **"Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."** So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live" (Num. 21:7-9) Brothers and sisters, we are "bitten" with something much more serious than a poisonous snake. We are bitten with sin. By nature, we are children of wrath (Eph. 2). But as Moses raised the bronze serpent on the pole, that those who looked upon it were healed. So, God has put forth his Son and placed him on the cross. And those who look upon him by faith will be healed, but not from a serpent bit, but from the curse of God itself, sin and death! This is the Gospel!

And also, brothers and sisters, when we think of the Gospel, we do not stop with the cross, we also proclaim the resurrection. Jesus did not stay in the grave. He conquered death! Because He lives, we live! And now He sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven where He reigns now. And we await his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, where he will make all his enemies his footstool. ALL of this is the Gospel! When we think of the child in the manger, as Christians we should rejoice over all these things! These are the "faithful" or "trustworthy" words taught to the Apostle Paul, that he handed down to Timothy and Titus. Look at Tit. 3:4-8: **"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in**

righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things . . .”

It is to this gospel that we must “hold firm.” Parents, have you ever sent your kids with a check or some money to pay for something at school and you say over and over, “*Don’t lose it. Make sure you hold onto until you give it to your teacher?*” Have you ever climbed a rope in gym class and got up near the top? Would you all of a sudden let go? NO! You hold on for dear life. And if we let go, we fall to our doom. The gospel is our life. “**For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith . . .**” I have a couple applications as we finish this morning.

Application. We MUST hold firm to the gospel! Paul says of the elder, “**He MUST . . .**” (v. 9). I would argue that if we do not hold firm to the gospel, we will eventually cease to be a Christian church. Countless churches throughout the centuries have, over time, lost the gospel. And this doesn’t happen overnight. It will happen as the emphasis of preaching and teaching by the leadership of the church move toward other things, other emphases. This could be an emphasis on good works, such as building hospitals or schools or homeless shelters or orphanages, etc. Now, we must do good works! We will be involved in many of these things and more. But, we must not emphasize these things apart from the preaching and teaching of the good news of Jesus Christ!

I will emphasize this truth in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this sermon, but another way we lose the gospel is by neglecting to teach the whole counsel of God. It can be tempting to the elder/pastor to only teach those things that are “easy,” only preaching topically, instead of going through books of the Bible. When we go through books, we can’t leave anything out; we are forced to deal with every doctrine, every difficulty. If the pastor starts to leave out certain doctrines, they may, eventually lose the gospel itself.

Application: This command is not negotiable. The elder MUST hold firm the gospel. There are many issues that fall into important, but lesser categories. The Gospel is FIRST priority. If the pastor loses the gospel, does not teach it, does not understand it, does not cling to it with all his might, those under his care will move to other pastures. And those pastures will not be so green. Remember our words from last week from 1 Tim. 4:6 “**If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.**” And v. 11: “**Command and teach these things.**” And then in v. 16: “**Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.**” Brothers and sisters, sometimes I may not preach what you want me to preach. But, I must preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this is the power of God for your salvation, my salvation, and the salvation of the world (Rom. 1:16; 1 Tim. 4:9-10).

And, it follows that it is your responsibility as a Christian to also hold tightly this gospel. And, as a church, we must hold on to the gospel. Think about it. If the gospel is the truth and the power of God for salvation for the world and the church does not hold onto it or teach it or spread this

news to others, then what REAL good are we? We may build a hospital or a school. We might open a food pantry or a home for the homeless. We may stand for justice and show no discrimination or partiality in our actions and judgments. We may build the most equitable cities and societies. But, if we neglect to hold firm to the gospel and teach it to the nations, we will miss the truth altogether and present no REAL solution to the issues in this world. As Fathers and mothers, we may teach all the good moral principles to our children, and teach them to be hard-work, good citizens, we may teach them to do good to their neighbor, but if we fail to teach them the gospel, we've missed EVERYTHING! What good is this?

It is important that we hear the gospel regularly in church and that we learn to preach the gospel to ourselves throughout the week. Our life depends on it. We need the power of the gospel to be saved. We need the power of the gospel to life. We need the power of the gospel to be sanctified. This is why Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in the churches, elders that MUST "hold firm" the gospel of Jesus Christ!