Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Call to Lead the Church--Elders, Part 5
Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:3
Code: 54-22

Let's open our Bible to 1 Timothy chapter 3...1 Timothy chapter 3. We are looking at the call and character of church leaders and discussing the qualifications for the ministry. First Timothy 3:1 to 7 is the very familiar text in which Paul writing to Timothy at Ephesus gives him the qualifications necessary for those who lead in the church. Since Timothy is given the responsibility of setting right leaders in the church and getting rid of the wrong leaders, he needs to know what characteristics should mark those that he brings to leadership. The church at Ephesus had fallen into sad times theologically and as well in behavior and their leadership needed to be replaced and the standards need to be established as to who is fit for spiritual leadership.

Here then in 1 Timothy 3:1 to 7 you have the standards for one who pastors or is an elder or overseer in the church. A very high standard is given.

Now before we get into the list again, and we're taking our time because there's so much that we need to talk about, we might just answer the general question, when a person is called to lead the church in general what are they really called to do? And I don't necessarily mean just in specific, their teaching and leading and praying and those kinds of things, ordaining other elders, but within that leading and teaching and praying, what are their objectives? What are their goals? What are they trying to accomplish? What is a church leader to be all about?

Now let me answer that by just giving you a brief list of things that the church leader must focus his life on. These are the priority things. We could spend a lot of time talking about the things we don't need to be doing but if we talk about what we do need to be doing it will adequately fill up our whole life, and the other discussion would be a rather moot discussion. What is it that one called to pastor a church, to lead in the church as an elder or overseer, is really called to do?

First of all, those called into church leadership are called to work for the salvation of the unconverted, to work for the salvation of the unconverted. That's obvious. Whatever else we do in the church, the ultimate primary task and objective is to bring about the salvation of lost souls. So all of the means of the church and all of the disciplines of the church and all of the duties of the church and the functions and programs and ministries of the church have as their ultimate end the salvation of the unconverted, bringing to Christ those that do not know Him. We are called, as was Paul, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. We are called to bring about

the salvation of the unconverted. We are to cry after the impenitent, the unbelieving and apply the great work of converting souls, whatever else we may have to leave undone. This is essential, this is why we're here, to see people who do not know Christ come to know Him. So mark it, when you are called to church leadership, you are called to the task of bringing unconverted sinners to Christ. And even though you may emphasize the edification ministry and even though you may emphasize some kind of design of church program, even though you may have oversight into some area of administration, the ultimate end of everything you do and I do is to bring the unconverted to Christ.

Secondly, it is a supporting priority for the church leader to build up the saved to maturity in Christ. We are called to build up the saved. This includes warning them that are unruly, encouraging the faint hearted, supporting the weak and being patient to all men, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. We are called to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry to the building of the body of Christ. So the priority then of perfecting and polishing the saints for useful service, for strong service for Christ is a top priority. This means we must provide care for those who fall into sin, for those who lose their zeal, for those who disobey the Word, for those who lose their first love, the responsibility of strengthening, restoring those who are overtaken in a sin, feeding, challenging the strong to greater perseverance and even greater strength.

The third thing, and we could spend a lot of time on each but just to touch them, the third thing that we are called to do by way of objective in the ministry is to feed the flock the Word of God regularly...to feed the flock the Word of God regularly. A strong and steady diet of divine truth and exhortation is the core of the church's life. There should be in the heart of the pastor or elder a certain amount of anxiety, a certain amount of pain...Paul calls it travail or birth pains...until the people have Christ formed in them. This means that we are involved also in the ministry of intercession on behalf of those to whom we speak the Word of God.

So we are called then for the work of seeing the unconverted come to salvation. We are called also to build up the saved to maturity in Christ. And we are called to feed the flock of God regularly, to feed them the Word which equips them for service.

Another of our priorities is to give special attention to the spiritual order and devotion of families...to give special attention to the spiritual order and devotion of families. This involves leading families, I think, into proper roles, men into proper roles for men, women into proper roles for women. This involves teaching families how to love each other, how to serve each other, how to combat treacherous destructive things that are happening in the world around them, influences that tend to tear the family apart. This involves teaching the family how to devote themselves to one another, how to devote themselves to God, how to devote themselves to the Word, how to devote themselves to the church, how to devote themselves to the ministry and how to have Christ at the center of everything they do. It is a high priority of ministry in the church to give special attention to the spiritual order and devotion of families.

Another one that helps crystallize what it is that the pastor or elder does, we are to minister to those people who are in special distress. We are to minister to those people who are in special distress. One of the great traditions in ministry and as it ought to be as the Savior gives us the example is to reach out to those people who have unusual problems, whether they are ill, whether they are facing death, whether they have disease or divorce or disappointment, whether they've gone through a disaster, whether they are need of comfort, this becomes a very...a very important matter of commitment on the part of those who serve in the church to minister to people who are in special distress. Very often you sort of see yourself tracking down a certain track in your ministry and all of a sudden a disaster happens in the life of someone and you are diverted to that disaster because of necessity.

I was just a moment ago expressing love and greetings with a family who recently lost a father and husband. And in the midst of my own pattern of ministry, it was necessary and happily so to make a turn from the normal ministry, have the privilege of seeing both the husband who is now dead and the wife come to Jesus Christ and the family be joined together in the Savior. And that kind of thing is that special distress that calls upon the servant of God to give attention. That's part of the ministry.

There are people, I hate to admit this, who feel that things like that are an intrusion in their schedule when the fact is they are divinely appointed things that God would have at the very head of our list if we could see that our list was like His list.

Another one, in terms of objectives or goals is to administer the Lord's ordinances of baptism and communion. I believe those who are called into leadership in the church have the responsibility to keep the people alert to the death of Christ and alert to the resurrection, to keep the death and the resurrection of Christ in the forefront of the thinking of the people. And that is done by the patterns of the Lord's table and baptism. The Lord's table reminds us of His death, baptism reminds us of His resurrection. We constantly involve ourselves in those ordinances in order that we might demonstrate to the people as reminders that Jesus died and rose again for them.

Another element of objective and purpose in the ministry is to lead the church together in holiness and Christ's likeness so as to be salt and light in the world. To lead the church together in holiness and Christ likeness so that it can be salt and light in the world. The church is to shine as a light in a dark place. It is to penetrate this evil generation. That is essential to the life of the church and therefore must be a priority that is established in the hearts of those who lead the church.

Now you can see then by just this little list of things that we are called to that we have a very very serious responsibility. Working for the salvation of the unconverted, building up the saved to maturity in Christ, feeding the flock the Word of God regularly, not only that but we are called also to give special attention to the spiritual order and devotion of families, to minister to those in special times of

distress, to administer Baptism and communion, to lead the church to holiness and Christ's likeness so it can be salt and light in the world and penetrate the darkness with the saving truth of Christ.

Having said all of that we recognize then that this is a high and holy and sacred calling to which men are called when they are called into the leadership of the church. It involves several things. It involves discipline. Anyone who is going to be successful in fulfilling this divine calling is going to maintain in his own life discipline. There's going to be in his own life selfdenial because your life is not your own. You talk about a person who is called into a task beyond himself, this is it. You are not the master of your own fate, you are not the captain of your own soul, you are not the determiner of your own destiny. You move at the bidding of the Spirit of God. And the work that is done well will be done well then by those who are disciplined and by those who understand selfdenial. Giving yourself to this tremendous immense task of taking the unsaved out of the hand of Satan and from the clutches of death and hell is not an easy task...not an easy task. And even instructing the saints to maturity is not an easy task. And the work demands diligent effort, it demands hard hard toil because rescuing men from hell is no easy job.

It also demands not only the discipline and the selfdenial and the hard work, but it also demands great care, planning and order...the ability to do what is priority, the ability to structure your life to the things that matter. It also involves doing all of this with gentleness and all of this with humility while maintaining passion and severity and zeal and seriousness. It is a matter of being confrontive and dramatic and direct and authoritative and yet being warm and loving and affirming and compassionate. The various things that come together to suit a man for this are quite humanly impossible. And over all of this must come a great amount of patience...a great amount of patience.

Richard Baxter writing in the seventeenth century said, "We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those to whom we seek to do good. When we have studied for them and prayed for them and exhorted them and beseeched them with all earnestness and condescension and given them what we are able and tended them as if they had been our children, we must look that many of them will requite us with scorn and hated and contempt and account us their enemies because we tell them the truth. Now we must endure all this patiently and we must unweariedly hold on in doing good in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves if God per adventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We have to deal with distracted men who will fly in the face of their physician. But we must not therefore neglect their cure. He us unworthy to be a physician who will be driven away from a frenetic patient by a few foul words," end quote. There must be patience.

Now this kind of duty, this kind of goal and objective structure, this kind of necessary ingredients of attitude and temperament all comes together to say this is a very unique man. And because the task is so great and because humanly it is so impossible and because it demands so much, there are only certain people who qualify to do that and those are people who are qualified according to the standards of 1 Timothy 3 and that takes us to our text.

Let's look at it. First Timothy chapter 3..and may I say at the very beginning, please, you understand that I am not intending to set myself up as the perfect fulfillment of all of these things but to simply say to you that by God's grace as much as is humanly possible within me under the power of the Spirit, I strive to fulfill these things. And that's all God requires of those of us who as yet have not been fully glorified. These are things that are true as a general pattern in the life of one qualified to serve in leadership in the church.

And I also would add, if the church would do a better and more careful job of screening people going into ministry, it would have less anxiety when they fail in the ministry and make a black mark on the church. The standards are all here. They are those which are pursued by, if not fully attained, those who fulfill the qualifications for ministry.

Now notice what I said to you before in verse 2 that the first and over arching qualification is blameless. The person who serves in the church is to be a blameless person. That is, there's nothing that can be held against him as a blight on his life. Now that blamelessness then is defined in a series of categories. First, his moral character, then his family life, then his maturity and then his reputation. And that flows down through verse 7.

Now we're looking at his moral character this morning and we'll wrap that up in our discussion today. What is to be the moral character of this man's blamelessness. First of all, and I'll review briefly, verse 2 says he is to be a onewoman man. That is singly devoted to the wife that he has, a onewoman man. It is not an issue of whether or not he is married, previously married, divorced, widowed, that isn't the issue. It isn't status and it isn't circumstance, it is attitude. It is moral character and it is that he is to be a man who is singly and wholly and totally devoted to the woman who is his wife, if indeed he does have a wife. So it's speaking about his moral character.

Secondly, we noted the word temperate, which means literally wineless, wineless. That is his mind is not clouded by taking in drink. It came also metaphorically to mean alert, watchful, wary, aware, sensitive, wide awake. This is a man who is alert to what's going on. He's alert physiologically and he's also alert in terms of his spirit. He senses what's happening. He is a watchful person. He knows how to read the signs of the times. He understands what's going on around him. He is perceptive.

Thirdly, he is sober minded. That means well disciplined in his mind. His mind is ordered. He has a sure steady thoughtful earnest welldisciplined, wellordered mind. He has control of his pleasures. He has control of his passions. His mind is an ordered mind.

As a result of that, we remember of good behavior which comes next, the fourth of the qualifications in his moral life. That is a wellordered life. A wellordered mind produces a wellordered life. A chaotic

mind produces a chaotic life. So you have an ordered life flowing from an ordered mind. Because everything in his mind has its priority ranking, because everything in his mind has its time and place, everything in his life does as well because as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Fifthly, he is characterized by being given to hospitality which means he loves strangers. He has the ability to love strangers. He is not at all a respecter of persons. He does not hold one race as superior to another. He is able to love strangers. He goes beyond the circle of his own friends and his life is open. He's not a closed person. He's not a recluse. He's not private. He is public in the sense that he opens his life and his heart and his arms and his home and his world to people in need, whether he knows them or whether he does not. He demonstrates the love of Christ, the compassion of God toward those who are in distress and those who have need.

Sixthly, it says at the end of verse 2 he is apt to teach. He is skilled in teaching. He is skilled in teaching. Now this is the only one of the qualifications that has anything to do with what he does functionally. All the rest are strictly characteristics of his life. This does relate to his function but is nonetheless a moral qualification. For the essence of all teaching is in example and it is what he is that is the priority in his ability to communicate to others. So the heart of the task of teaching is his character.

Now when you look at this concept of skilled in teaching and you say, well, if a man's going into the church as an elder, or a leader in the church, an overseer, a pastor of a church, you young men that are looking for that you folks that are trying to evaluate perhaps your own children and whatever, you may be looking at what are the criteria that identify a person as a skilled teacher, let me help you with that. I can't leave this apt to teach or skilled in teaching without at least identifying how you can know a skilled teacher. What marks a skilled teacher? What are the characteristics? And I tried to think this week those things which would be most general so that we get something to grasp at but not something that's stylistic, that would betray the fact that the Spirit has given different styles and different avenues and different approaches in teaching to many people. There are some things that are common denominators and those are the ones that I want to share with you.

Here are the elements that identify a skilled teacher. Number one, example...example. The first and primary issue in teaching is do you live what you say? Therein lies the greatest power the teacher has in his own pattern. You begin right where I told you you had to begin with example. Skilled teachers set a living demonstration of their teaching for people to follow. I mean, that's just basic. If you teach one thing and live another, you are not a skilled teacher, you are a very unskilled teacher. And people will not follow that kind of teaching. You must pattern in your life what you propagate in your lesson.

First Timothy 4:12, Paul writes to Timothy and I'll show you how these are illustrated in the first two epistles to Timothy here. In verse 12, "Let no man despise thy youth," but here's the key to teaching

effectively, no matter what age you are, "be thou an example of the believers." Literally, be the model by which they trace their own life. Be the prototype of what you teach. "In wordthat's what you sayin conductthat's what you doin lovethat's what you feelin spiritthat's your attitudein faiththat's what you believein puritythat's the way you act." In every dimension of life, what you think, what you feel, what you do, what you say in your general attitude, in every dimension of your existence you are to be the prototype of what you are asking people to be. Therein lies the first and foremost factor in being a skilled teacher.

And that's the real challenge. That is the real challenge. Paul says, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." That is the challenge every teacher faces. You are not a skilled teacher unless you can open your life, let it be transparent and say to people you be what I am.

Secondly, a skilled teacher will possess not only an exemplary life but the gift of teaching...the gift of teaching. In Romans 12:7 it talks about the gift of teaching. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 it talks about the gift of teaching. In Ephesians 4:11 it talks about being a pastorteacher. Now there's no question in my mind nor in the Word of God but that there is a gift given to one called to teach. It is a Spirit given endowment that enables one to teach effectively the truth of God. It doesn't necessarily...it's not the kind of a gift that helps you teach nonbiblical material, there isn't a gift of teaching that makes you a better math teacher, there isn't a gift of teaching that makes you a better coach, there isn't a gift of teaching that makes you a better history professor, there is only a gift of teaching related to the articulation of the Word of the living God. It belongs to those who are skilled in teaching God's Word. It is an endowment of the Holy Spirit. It is not a natural thing.

You might be a great teacher in a classroom and not have the gift of teaching the Word of God. You might be a very glib person, you might be a great salesman and not have the gift of teaching the Word of God. It is a spiritual endowment to convey spiritual truth. Sometimes there is a parallel. Sometimes, of course, God has endowed us naturally with certain skills that feed into the use of the gift He gives us through the Spirit. So there is the gift of teaching, the ability to communicate the Word of God effectively, more effectively than the normal or average person.

In 1 Timothy 4, would you look at verse 14? And again I want to illustrate this aspect of it with Paul's writing to Timothy, he says to Timothy, "Don't neglect the gift that is in you." And obviously the gift he refers to there is the gift of teaching. "It was given to you through prophecy," that is God spoke and said you were to receive it, "it was confirmed by the elders who put their hands on you, now you need to make sure that you don't neglect it, meditate on true things, take heed to yourself and to doctrine, continue in those things." So here is Paul telling Timothy to keep using this gift.

Second Timothy 1:6, "I put you in remembrance, stir up the gift of God which is in you." Now I don't want to go into a whole thing on spiritual gifts but just to remind you that we are endowed by the Spirit of God to serve the body of Christ. Every Christian has a gift, some have gifts in the area of

teaching. And I believe to be a pastorteacher, to be an elder in the church, and to be a skilled teacher would mean that you need to have had given to you by God's Spirit the gift of teaching.

You say, "How do I know if I have it?" Two things basically. One, do you have a strong and consuming desire to teach? Two, do the people you teach think you have the gift? Very important. There are people running around saying I have the gift..I have the gift, and their class is coming after them saying no he doesn't, no he doesn't. You don't want to be under some illusion, you don't want to seek some place of preeminence, you don't want to rise in your own ego to a place where you are revered and esteemed a teacher if you do not have the gift. The gift of teaching is a Holy Spirit endowment that is given by God specially to those called to teach.

You know, sometimes people say to me, in fact this is quite common, "How do you get that out of the Scripture? I read that verse so many times, I don't see that." Other people will say, "How is it that you can do...convey Scripture and other people can't?" And the answer to that is very simple. It is a gift given by the Spirit of God. It is different maybe than your gift, you have a gift to do things with a facility spiritually that I don't have and that's the way the Lord has structured His body. So skill in teaching involves exemplary life and the gift of teaching.

Thirdly, a skilled teacher will have a reservoir of doctrinal understanding...a skilled teacher will have a reservoir of doctrinal understanding. In 1 Timothy 4, again verse 6, he says, "A good minister of Jesus Christ," 1 Timothy 4:6, "is one nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine." And he says, "Timothy, you've attained to that."

You know what set Timothy apart as such a skilled teacher was the tremendous reservoir of biblical knowledge that he had. In 1 Timothy 6:20, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to your trust." What did he mean? He meant doctrine, sound doctrine. Second Timothy chapter 1 verse 13, he says to Timothy, "Hold fast that form of sound words which you have heard of me." Verse 14, "That good thing committed to you, keep it by the power of the Holy Spirit." Don't let go and he's referring again to truth, to sound doctrine. Chapter 3 verse 15, "Timothy, from a child you have known the holy Scriptures." What a great legacy.

Now, beloved, let me tell you something. The more reservoir that a spiritual teacher has the more skilled will be his teaching. And there's something wonderful to be said about a great spiritual heritage, something wonderful. Timothy was beginning to be equipped for the role of teaching when he was just a child because he learned the Scriptures. And there came into his life a deep reservoir of truth out of which one teaches.

Someone said to me recently, "Can you...do you have to prepare for every sermon? Can't you just get up and teach right off the top of your head?" The answer to that is yes, I can get up and just say whatever comes to my mind and it might be half way interesting in part. I could do that, I mean, I

have the ability to stand up and talk and say things to you and maybe could keep your attention for a while and I also have somewhat of a reservoir and that's the real issue. Yes, I said to this person, I can speak not just superficially but I could speak for a while right out of the depth of a reservoir that began to be filled right when I was born because for all my life long I have learned the Word of God. I learned it as a little child. I learned it in Christian school. I learned it in college. I learned it in seminary and I've been learning it ever since. And because of that, if for example there was a confiscation of Bibles in the United States and every one of us had to depend only on what we had in our reservoir, there would be some by God's grace because of their Christian heritage that would have a greater reservoir than others, and there's a richness to that. Now I'm not saying that if you are a new Christian and you're out trying to pastor a church you can't be a skilled teacher. All I'm saying is you've got a lot to make up for. There's a lot of work that has to be done to fill that reservoir.

By the time I begin to teach the Word of God...began to teach the Word of God here at Grace Church, so much of what I believed was already solidly in place that I didn't have to take every passage and start from zero to figure out what it meant because I already had a reservoir of understanding.

I mentioned to you that some time back that recently in a discussion with some Christian leaders they were selecting some people to consider for a very important task in the Christian world, a very important one. They gave six names. And I said, "Isn't that interesting? Did you notice that all six of these men named had pastors, wellknown pastors for fathers?" And they said, "We didn't notice that." And I said, "What does that say about the depth and richness of Christian heritage in terms of Christian leadership?" It's a tremendous commentary on that. So that underpinning of doctrinal understanding...and I would simply put it this way, any skilled teacher has first proven to be a skilled pupil. You are apt to learn before you are apt to teach.

Fourthly, another element or very important factor in being skilled to teach is the attitude of humility. Attitude is as important as content. If you were to teach truth with arrogance, you would undermine the very truth you were teaching. The attitude of humility is so essential. That's why Paul writing again in 2 Timothy 2 says that the one who is the servant of the Lord doesn't argue, he is gentle, in meekness he instructs. He instructs in meekness. There is a humility of heart and that conveyed attitude of humility is essential to effective teaching. Wherever you have an arrogant teacher, wherever you have a self seeking teacher, you have someone who literally is contradicting an attitude the things the Word of God is saying.

So, example, gift of teaching, doctrinal reservoir, humility...let me give you a fifth and a rather obvious one, a skilled teacher has a life marked by holiness. Not absolute perfection but a commitment to things spiritual and divine. In 1 Timothy chapter 4 and you remember this, verse 8, Paul says to Timothy in verse 7, he says, "Exercise yourself to godliness." And then in verse 8 he says, "Godliness is profitable to all things because it contains the promise of life that is now and that which is to come." It is eternal, so give yourself to godliness. Verse 15, "Give yourself wholly to things that

are true." Verse 16, "Take heed to yourself, continue to live out those things which will save you as well as those to whom you speak." The spiritual character of the man then is at the core of his teaching.

Chapter 6 verse 3 again mentions the word "godliness." And then verse 11, "O man of God, follow righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience," there's that word meekness again. So the attitude of humility and the life of holiness.

In 2 Timothy would you notice chapter 2 for a moment, verse 20? He says, "In a great house there are gold vessels, silver vessels, wooden vessels and some made out of pottery." And your house is like that. You've got the good stuff, and then you've got the other stuff that everybody normally eats off of. And when the company comes, you bring out the good stuff. You have some vessels to honor and some vessels to dishonor. And so it is with men who would serve God. If you purge yourself, that's godliness, that's holiness, then you'll be a vessel to honor. You're sanctified. You're fit for the Master's use. You're prepared unto every good work. In order to be so prepared you flee youthful lust, you follow righteousness, faith and love and peace along with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It's the pure heart, it's the holiness of life that makes the teacher the skilled teacher.

An exemplary life, the gift of teaching, a doctrinal foundation, humility and holiness...and sixthly, another factor in the character of a skilled teacher is diligence in biblical study...diligence in biblical study. No matter how deep the reservoir, no matter how much we may know, no matter how much we have the gift of teaching, there is necessarily a commitment to the discipline of study. First Timothy 5:17 says that the elders that rule well are to be counted worthy of double pay, especially the ones who work hard in the Word and doctrine. The assumption there is that the faithful men will work hard. And the word means to work to weariness. Wearing themselves in the teaching and the study of the Word of God.

You remember 2 Timothy 2:15 don't you? Familiar terms in the Authorized, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." You must be a diligent student, be diligent so that the work you do is not something to be ashamed of. You should be...be able with no guilt and no impingement on your confidence to teach and preach what you have learned because you've done your study in the Word of God. A source of teaching is always the revelation of God and so the student must be the student of that revelation, faithful and diligent in searching its truths out.

Then number seven in this list and these kind of flow sequentially. If you are a diligent Bible student, you're inputting the Word all the time, you'll note that another mark, I believe, of a skilled teacher, is avoidance of error...avoidance of error. It is a tragedy to recite how many wellmeaning people gifted by God's Spirit, called into the ministry, instead of going someplace where they could learn to strengthen their faith, went to a school that undermined their faith. They may have maintained the

basics of their faith but invariably with very few exceptions they lose their conviction, they lose their courage of conviction, they're not sure that they have the answers anymore and they have lost their their strength, they have lost their courage. It literally sucks the very strength out of ministry to be constantly having to fight against error. Questions...questions...questions, criticism of everything you believe..the end result is a softening of conviction.

Notice 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 2...I'm sorry, verse 4, 1 Timothy 1:4, he says to Timothy, "Don't you give heed to fables and endless genealogies," he calls it other doctrine in verse 3, "because they minister questions." All they do is serve you questions, questions, questions, "Which are not godly edifying." They don't build you up. You go and you get attacked all the time with questions, questions, questions and it begins to suck the strength out of your conviction. Don't do that. Don't you give heed. In other words, don't listen to it at all. There are some people who want to tell us that you're not scholarly if you haven't studied under the people who attack your faith. The Scripture, I believe, calls us away from that. Don't even give heed to that. All it does is create questions that do not edify, they do not build up to godliness.

Chapter 4 verse 7, "Refuse...strong words...don't listenhe said in verse 4 chapter 1, don't listen, here he says refuse, "profane, evil and old wives fables." Refuse them, don't even hear them, push them away. Second Timothy...pardon me, 1 Timothy 6, he says, "Avoiding...verse 20, 1 Timothy 6:20...avoiding profane and vain babblings and the oppositions of knowledge falsely so called." He says don't listen to it, refuse it, and avoid it, stay away from it. It does not help, it does not produce godly edification. Verse 21 of chapter 6 says, "Some listening to that stuff have erred concerning the faith." Some? Many, many, many.

Now 2 Timothy chapter 2, look at verse 16, "Shun profane and vain babblings." Don't listen, refuse, avoid, shun, all very strong words, "For all they do is increase unto more...what?...ungodliness...ungodliness." Keep in mind, will you, anybody who attacks the truth of the Scripture does so not because of intellectual attitudes but because of ungodliness. People want to alter the text of Scripture because they do not want it to confront their ungodliness. And all it does is increase that ungodliness. You expose yourself to that and you expose yourself to the real reason. And look what he calls it in verse 17, "Their word will eat as does a gangrene." Don't call it scholarship, call it gangrene and that will help you deal with it. And Hymenaeus and Philetus did that and concerning the truth they erred, came up with some bizarre view of the resurrection and overthrew the faith of people. But this is always coming under the name of scholarship, under the name of academia. It's nothing more than gangrene.

Chapter 3, he says in verses 15 and 16, "Just stick with the Scripture, it's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness and it makes the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So the skilled teacher avoids lies, he avoids errors, he avoids the things that undermine the faith, that shipwreck the faith, the things that eat like gangrene, the things

that only bring arguments and strife and he teaches the perfecting Word of God. That's why in 2 Timothy 4 Paul says to Timothy, "I charge you before God, the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the living and dead at His appearing in His Kingdom, preach the Word and be diligent in season, out of season," and so forth. Stick with that. Preach the Word. You're always going to have those people who want to heap to themselves teachers having itching ears because they want to hear what they want to hear.

So, the skilled teacher has an exemplary life, the gift of teaching, doctrinal reservoir, humility, holiness, he's diligent in his biblical study, he avoid errors and finally as a result of those things he has strong courage and consistent conviction. The skilled teacher teaches with conviction. In 1 Timothy 1:18, "I charge you...he says...I commit this charge to you, Timothy," verse 19, "hold the faith and hold your good conscience, don't waver." That's the skilled teacher. Boy, he holds his convictions, he holds to the faith, he says, "Some have put it away, they've become shipwreck like Hymenaeus and Alexander and I had to turn them over to Satan to teach them not to blaspheme."

Chapter 4 again of 1 Timothy, same idea. Verse 11, "These things command and teach." And verse 13, "Until I come, you give attendance to reading the text, applying the text, explaining the text." That's what reading, exhortation and doctrine are, you stick with the Scripture and you read it and you teach it and you apply it and you take heed to it. Verse 15, and you meditate on it. Stick with the book. As we just read in 6:20, don't give yourself to other stuff. Let your conviction stay strong.

He says in 2 Timothy 1:15 that everybody in Asia has turned away from me, the idea is don't you do that, Timothy, don't you do that. You stay there faithful and true.

Now go to chapter 4 of 2 Timothy as we just summarized. Look at Paul's testimony, "I have...I am not ready to be offered," he says, verse 6, "the time of my departure is at hand." Then I love this, "I have fought a good fight, and it wasn't easy, I have finished my course and I have...what? isn't that wonderful?...I have kept the faith." He's right where he was when he started. The courage of conviction, he's unwavering. Contrast verse 10, Demas who forsook him having loved the present world.

So these are the things that I believe are the identifying marks of a skilled teacher, so essential in spiritual leadership. Now let's go back to 1 Timothy 3 and finish our little list here. Verse 3, and this would be number seven in the list of qualifications of moral character for one who leads a church. It says in the Authorized, "Not given to wine," the word is paroinosand it basically means a drinker, not a drinker. It isn't a reference to someone who drinks unto drunkenness, that's obvious. You wouldn't have to include drunkenness here, anyone would know that a drunk was not fit to lead the church. Whether he drinks to drunkenness or not isn't the issue, the issue is whether he has a reputation as a drinker. You can go back to the word "temperate" and we saw there the idea of wineless, but here it's another idea. There it has to do with his watchfulness and his clear headedness and his alertness.

Here it has the idea of his associations. He is not a drinker. He doesn't frequent bars and taverns and inns, he doesn't sit around in all the noisy scenes associated with drinking and make those his habitat. He doesn't find his place in the tavern and the saloon and the bar. That's the issue here. He is not a drinker.

In fact, 1 Thessalonians 5:22 tells us to avoid all appearance of evil. It means all outward display of evil. We are certainly not to occupy ourself with that. In chapter 3, the same chapter verse 8, it gives the same qualification for a deacon basically, he's not to be a drinker either. There's no place for that in leadership. Look at Isaiah 28:7 for a moment and the tragedy of Israel. Isaiah says in 28:7, speaking of the leaders of Israel, "But they also have erred through wine." They have erred through their drunkenness. They've made stupid judgments. "And through strong drink they are out of the way." What does that mean? They've turned from God's path. They're leading everybody astray. Everybody is following the leaders and they're leading everybody astray, they're out of the path, they're out of God's way. "The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink, they error in vision, they stumble in judgment, all the tables are full of vomit and filthiness so that there's no place clean." Nice bunch of leaders, right?

It always grieves my heart when I get a report of someone supposedly in leadership in the spiritual ministry who is known as a drinker. Obviously not many are known publicly as that but some are found to be so by some and what a sad thing it is when they are exposed. Here were the leaders of Israel making stupid judgments, perverting the truth of God, leading people out of the path and all because they were erring through drink. That's why in Proverbs 31 it says, "Wine is not for kings and princes," and that's why in Leviticus 10:9 it says, "It's not for priests," anybody in spiritual leadership stays away from anything that blurs their...their vision.

In Isaiah 56:9, listen to what it says, "All you beasts of the field come to devour all you beasts in the forest." Why? Here it is, "His watchman...that's the leaders of Israel...are blind, they are all ignorant, they are dumb dogs, they can't bark." In other words, they don't even warn, you know, like the watchdog who doesn't bark when the robber comes. "Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber, they're greedy dogs that can never have enough, they are shepherds that cannot understand, they all look to their own way, everyone for his gain from his quarter. This is what they say, Come, I'll fetch wine and we'll fill ourselves with strong drink and tomorrow will be as this day and much more abundant." We'll just keep drinking day after day. That's the spiritual leadership of Israel. Is it any wonder that they went to the depths that they did?

I remember when I was called by the wife of a very prominent Christian who has written books and who has ministered effectively by the judgment of some. And she said, "I wish you could help my husband." And I said, "Well, I'd be happy to." And she said, "He's got a very severe drinking problem, he's a drinker." So I said, "Well, I'll do what I can." And so he came to meet with me at the

office and we talked and I said, "How can we...how can we set up an accountability kind of relationship where we can deal with some of these issues?" There were other factors that, of course, were wrong in his life, too, as a result of this one and in combination with it. And I said, "What shall we do?"

And he said, "Well, let's meet every week and that way I'll have that accountability." So the next week came and we were planning to meet here and I got a phone call, "I can't come, meet me down where I am," and gave me an address and I went down and it was a restaurant. I walked in and he was sitting at the bar talking to a barmaid drinking. And so, I went over and said hello and said, "Let's go over to another part of this place," where there was a restaurant and I said, "This is the first and only time I will ever meet you in a place like this. If we're going to do anything about this we're going to meet in another place, not here." And that is the last time he ever met with me. And to this day goes on with a ministry of sorts that would be known to you if you were to know who it was. But what is curious to me is that in very clear biblical terminologies, the man is disqualified, he's a drinker. I'm not saying he's an alcoholic, I'm saying he frequents bars and that's exactly what this term is discussing here. That man has no part in ministry. Why? Because he's a poor example, because he chooses the company of people who are not the kind of people who choose the company of God. Something wrong, so you want a man whose associations are very very different from the associations of the world.

Would you please notice again now verse 3 says he is not violent. I think this is wonderful. You're not to be a pastor if the way you handle things is with your fists or with instruments of violence. That seems kind of obvious, doesn't it? It literally means not a giver of blows, plektes, not a giver of blows. He doesn't punch people when he gets upset. By the way, this is connected to the guy who is a drinker, usually. People who drink result...the result of it often is violence. The idea is here is a person who is not quick tempered, one who doesn't resort to physical violence. I remember the pastor who told me about the fight he had with his deacon. The deacon punched him and away they went. I'm sure he wasn't the only one. But you don't want people who deal with difficulty through violent physical reactions. No place for that. This leadership demands a man who can deal with things with a cool mind, with gentleness, who doesn't fight. You remember what I said that Paul said to Timothy in chapter 2 if 2 Timothy, "The servant of the Lord must not fight, he must not strife, he doesn't deal with things like that." He does not resort to violence.

And it's not only physical violence, I think we could imply also that it's verbal violence. His tongue is not to be a lashing tongue which reaches out in strife. First Timothy 6 talks about using the tongue to bring about strife and railings. The tongue can be an instrument of violence. It can, as James 3 says and we'll get into that in some weeks, it can set on fire all of nature, the tongue can be such a violent violent instrument. So the man then who leads the church is not to deal with difficulty through violent physical or verbal means.

Notice then, and we skipped one in the Authorized version, it's not in the better manuscripts and it's covered by the last one, so we go to the one that says, "patient...patient," epieikes, it means to be considerate and genial and forbearing and gracious and gentle. Aristotle said it has the idea of a person who easily pardons human failure. It's a beautiful virtue. A person who easily pardons human failure. And it's used in 2 Timothy 2:23, it says the servant...2:24 rather, 2:23 says, "Don't start fights," 2:24 says, "Be gentle and patient." Patient...what does it mean? You remember good, not evil. You don't build up a chronolog of everything everybody ever did against you. Listen, that messes up people's ministry. I have known people in the ministry who get out of the ministry, who leave churches because they cannot get over the fact that somebody criticized them, somebody said something against them, somebody did something that upset them and they carry around a list of grievances that eventually makes it impossible for them to serve anybody. That's all they can see. There's something wonderful about having a bad memory, I'm sort of living testimony to that. One of the blessings of having a bad memory is you can't remember bad things that people did, and that's good. Of course you also can't remember good things either and that's bad.

But I don't know how you are, I..I...I really like to cultivate in my own mind forgetting things that have been done that were wrong. I don't like to bring those up. That's why I don't like gossip. I don't like to drag up stuff from the past that somebody did. I don't want to talk about that. I just soon not even think about...that has no particular virtue, all that does is cloud your mind with things to anger you. Patience is the ease of pardoning human failure, focusing on the good done by others rather than injury and retaliation, all of that. And that's the kind of person you want. You don't want a person who holds grudges.

And then not a brawler, amachos, again this is a quarrelsome thing, it's very much like the other term we looked at which talks about coming to blows, but it doesn't so much mean using physical violence, it means a quarrelsome person. Nothing is more difficult in a plurality of leadership, leading a church, then to have somebody who just likes to quarrel about everything. And I just praise God continually month after month at Grace Church that people on our leadership team are peace making people. We never say to each other, "Boy, we've got to go to this meeting, oh brother, we've got to present this and I know so andso is going to argue about everything." We don't talk like that because everyone seems to pursue peace. And that's again 2 Timothy 2 where he reminded Timothy not to be a..one who strifes and argues but to be gentle and patient, peace making.

And then finally in verse 3, "not covetous," aphilarguros, the twopart word, threepart word really with an alphaprimitive makes it a negative, but the two main parts mean to love silver, not be a lover of silver. What a corruption that is in the ministry to love money. And you see people as means to getting money, everybody you look at becomes simply an avenue for you to get rich. That is such a temptation. And that's why in 1 Timothy 6 Paul says in verse 6 to Timothy, "Godliness with contentment is great gain, Timothy." We brought nothing into the world, it's certain we're going to

do...what?...take nothing out. That's why I'm always so happy when they get that casket in the funeral home and everybody leaves the room and the guy starts taking off all the jewelry. I don't see why they want...some people want to leave it all on the guy. I mean, he's not going anywhere with it. Take nothing out.

"If you have food and raiment, be content, but the people who pursue riches fall into temptations, snares, foolish hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition." Why? Because the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people have coveted after money, they have erred from the faith, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

I remember an evangelist that came to the valley years ago when I first came to Grace. He was all over the valley preaching crusades and evangelism and, boy, everybody was hooplaing this guy and people were giving me his tapes. And it was a few years later that I saw him on television and they were doing a special on him, I think it was "60 Minutes," and his shirt was unbuttoned to his stomach and he had gold chains hanging around his neck and gold rings on his fingers and he said, "I'm out of that business, I'm into riches." By the way, someone told me last week he's back in evangelism now, so maybe he got tired of his money, but...that's the kind of thing that is such a prostitution and such a temptation, very often.

Just to give you close to home. A few weeks ago I got a letter from someone that said, "I'd like you to speak at a banquet we're having." I said, "I can't do that." We wrote back and thanked him very kindly and said I wouldn't be able to do that. Wrote me back again and said, "We'd like you to come and be our speaker and I'll give you a $5000 honorarium." Well I've never ever had a $5000 honorarium or anything remotely related to that. And so I realized I was in a very difficult position, right? If I say yes, the guy knows that I will speak for money. If I say no, I'm nuts. I mean, it was only across town, too, see. So, I'm saying to the Lord, "Now how do I do this." And so I wrote him and said if you would allow me the privilege of taking the money and giving it to someone other than myself, then I'd be happy to do that because I can think of some areas of ministry where there's some great need and it would be a joy for me to be able to know that that was provided for those ministries. So I said I'll do it on that basis. But you have to guard yourself very much, very cautiously.

Anyone of you who was offered $5000 for a 40 minute message could probably think of something to say. And it would be a very small problem for me to come up with something. And so it's easy to get tempted and those things are tests of where your heart is. One of the things I've done in my own life, I write a lot of books and so publishers would want me to write a book and you can get into a negotiating situation with royalties on books and things like that. I've always had a simple policy and that is I never negotiate a contract. If I want to write a book and I feel the publisher's committed to publishing it, I'll accept whatever they offer. It doesn't matter what it is. If I don't seek it then I can accept it from the Lord. As soon as I get into the negotiation, then I'm in the struggle to see how much money I can get. So that's something I will never do, have never done and I've told the

publishers I work with that, that's probably why I get such low royalties. But that's all right. I don't want it to be any different because I feel that as one who serves the Lord Jesus Christ and whose needs are met by the church and by your gracious and kind generosity to me, I never want to get into a situation where I am trying my best to get certain amounts of money. I don't want to do that. That's not something that I am interested in. I want to keep myself clean from that kind of involvement. But that kind of temptation can be there.

There's a simple principle I've used and that is this, if you seek for nothing you can take whatever comes as from the Lord. So I don't ever seek...people say, "How much do you charge for this?" I don't charge anything for anything. That's something that's up to the ministry, if they want to give me something fine, if they don't, fine, it doesn't matter to me. But when you go out and pursue money, you corrupt everything. And if you can sit back and say whatever the Lord gives I'll take and it's up to Him, you know. If someone gives you something and you didn't seek it, then it comes from the Lord and you can say thank you and you become a steward of it. As soon as you start to pursue it, then it's something that you've grasped after and you've got it but you don't know whether its yours because it's what you wanted or yours because God gave it to you. So it's very simple for me in the ministry to just draw the line at the bottom and say I don't seek anything. Whatever the Lord provides, I thank Him and praise Him and He's been very generous.

Free from the love of money. This is the kind of person morally who's qualified to serve in the leadership of the church of Jesus Christ. He doesn't have any earthbound desires. You see, earthbound desires and a covetous spirit clip the wings of faith, clip the wings of love and clip the wings of power, believe me. He's not greedy, he's not stingy, he's not indulgent, he's not ambitious. That's the sum of verses 2 and 3, the moral character of the man who leads the church.

My prayer is that God will give us such men, that God will make us such men because we're not all we ought to be. And we thank God that in His grace He's allowed us to lead in His church who are still pursuing the fulfillment of all those things. You pray for us and for the church around the world. Let me say in closing, I believe it is becoming increasingly more difficult in our culture to find people like this because our culture is so insidiously corrupting. To find men so qualified becomes more and more difficult. What a challenge. Well, let's bow in prayer.

Father, help us who are given the responsibility in the church to do as we should, to be what we should be that we might lead your people right. We thank You for the high and holy privilege of spiritual leadership and we plead for the grace and the power to do it in a way that brings you honor and glory for Christ's sake. Amen.

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