

The Call to Lead the Church--Elders, Part 7

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:6-7

Code: 54-24

Let's open our Bibles together to 1 Timothy chapter 3...1 Timothy chapter 3. And this will be our last message in the section verses 1 through 7 as we look at qualifications for pastors, elders and church leaders. And what a wonderful wonderful series this has been for me, for my own heart, just reexamining the priorities of my own life as one who pastors in the church of Christ, and I hope it's been helpful to all of our church leaders and to you folks who listen as well.

In the series we have really profiled the spiritual virtues of one qualified to lead the church. We have emphasized that it demands men of integrity, men of moral character, men of wisdom, men of dignity, men of virtue. And I just want to bring a little bit of balance to that as an introduction today, if I might, because I don't want anyone to think that any of us who lead in the church are perfect. The standard is very high but it comes short of perfection.

Look with me for a moment to James chapter 3 before we look at that passage, and you will note in James 3:1 James says, "My brethren, stop being so many teachers," in other words, don't pursue the leadership role in the church, "knowing that we shall receive the greater or stricter judgment." It is a very serious responsibility and it brings about a stricter judgment should one fail in the ministry. And failure does come, verse 2, in many things we all stumble. In fact, if a man offend not in word the same is a perfect man. So what James is saying is, don't be in hurry to get into spiritual leadership, realize that when you stumble there your condemnation will be greater, your chastening more serious and in verse 2 he is saying you will stumble because anything less than a perfect man is bound to offend at least in word, if nothing else.

So, we're not saying that there's perfection here, what we're saying is that the Lord has ordained a standard for spiritual leaders and as much as is possible by God's grace and the power of the Spirit, those who lead in the church are to meet that standard. And so we're designing this morning to give a little bit of balance, lest we come off as somewhat pious self righteous and would not want to do that at all. In fact, it would be dishonest for me, for anyone in the leadership of the church to hold ourselves up as if we were perfect, as if we had no spiritual struggles, no spiritual battles, no sins, no failures in life because that's just not true. Our humanness our residing sinfulness, our fallenness does limit the success of our work. And we have to struggle in our lives just as you do in your life to honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was trying to think this week of maybe some areas of struggle in the life of one who leads the church and admittedly these come out of my own heart, but I think they might be somewhat representative of other church leaders. Let me suggest to you some of the areas of weakness that we have. Number one would be the tendency to be discouraged, to fall to the temptation of discouragement is very easy for one in the ministry. And that is a sin. We have high hopes, I have high hopes and high expectations for myself, for my own ministry. I have certain standards that I set for my own preaching, my own study, my own selfdiscipline, my own leadership responsibility. And very often I don't even meet my own standards and so I live with the discouragement that comes because I fail to live up to what I impose upon myself as a standard. I want to preach a certain way, I want my sermons to accomplish a certain thing, I want to give a certain amount of time and energy and effort and diligence to my study. And if I feel that I haven't done that, it can become very discouraging. In fact, as you preach week after week after week, the continual pattern of that, you have your highs and your lows, believe me, and those can become times of great discouragement as well as times of exhilaration when you feel God has unusually blessed your effort.

Discouragement also comes because you set high hopes for the growth of people, high hopes for the development of ministry. And you see people failing or people falling aside, people not fulfilling what you know to be the will of God in their life, people not living up to the expectations that you have for them. Discouragement is a very common difficulty among church leaders. And it doesn't have anything to do with the size of your church because usually discouragement comes from your own life and the lives of the people you work with. It's not the idea that I wish I had more people or I wish I had different people, it's the idea that I wish the people were responding the way I would long for them to respond to the Word of God, or I wish my own life and ministry was all that it ought to be.

That brings me to a second area where one who leads in the church will suffer. I know this from personal experience. And that is the temptation to indifference. Because a person who ministers and who teaches the Word of God and who is a servant of God has such a heavy responsibility, I mean you don't understand what it is every week to have to stand up and speak accurately the Word of God and represent God in an absolutely true and proper way. That's a very heavy responsibility...very heavy. And when you fail to do that to the expectation that you set for yourself, when you...for example...look back over a Sunday and say, "Boy, that wasn't my best and I didn't really catch the essence of what that passage was saying...or I left this out...or I missed that," you can become very discouraged and when you live with discouragement for a while the tendency is to shield yourself from that by developing an indifference to it and saying to yourself, "Well, what's the difference? They only can get a few of the things I say anyway, half of them are asleep and the other half don't care," you know. So you sort of talk yourself out of the seriousness of the responsibility with a bit of indifference. And truly if you're working with people and people fail you and they fall down and you pour out your heart to them and they discourage you and disappoint you, and therefore wound you, the way you insulate yourself from that is to begin to cultivate indifference to people so that you don't feel that anymore. And there's always that temptation and it is a fact that many men in ministry by the

time they have gotten old, though God has wonderfully blessed their ministry, have become bitter and sour and very very distant from people because they have been hurt so many times by unrealized expectations or disappointments that they've eventually built a wall between themselves and people so they can't feel that hurt anymore. And that's always a temptation to one degree or another in the ministry.

A third one where your humanness really surfaces is what I would call busy laziness. It's very easy to be busy in the ministry. I mean, you can be busy, busy but business can be a form of laziness. There are many people who stay very busy. They go all day, all week long doing exactly what they want to do, not necessarily what needs to be done. They are very busy but they are lazy in the sense that they have not disciplined themselves to do what needs to be done whether they want to do it or not. And that's the test of commitment. That's the real test of character. Not how busy are you, but how diligent are you at doing what you don't want to do but know has to be done...that's the test of character. It's always a temptation to give in to the line of least resistance and stay busy doing good things but not the priority things...not the priority things.

And I think, too, there's always the temptation to be lazy when you say to yourself, "There's so many souls to bring to Christ, there's so many ministries to do, there's so much work, there's so many Christians to instruct, there's so many things to teach," you just sort of get tired thinking about it. And you say I can't do it all, I think what I need is a break. I've got to get away. I hear that...people say, "You've got to get away...boy, you need rest, you've got to get away." No, I don't need to get away and I don't need rest, I need to do what I would rather do than anything else.

I remember being at a pastors conference, we had about...I don't know, over a thousand pastors and they brought in a lot of motivational speakers. And we were all told to really give something that's going to stir these men to commitment. They're all pastors. And we're going to get these pastors fired up and hot for the Lord and going back to their churches to just, you know, blaze through their cities and we were really having a great week. And the last message of the whole conference, the speaker got up and spoke on why the pastor needs a lot of recreation and time off...and just literally took the life out of everything. And by the time he was done, everybody was saying, "Yeah, that's what I've been waiting to hear...that's what I need, I need a break...I need a vacation." I mean,...we want to hear that that we're overworked. But I'm afraid sometimes that's the flesh talking and sometimes our busyness may be accomplishing a very very little in terms of eternal consequences. But it's tempting to be very busy doing things that really don't amount to a whole lot and then telling yourself how really busy you are and how you need you break.

A fourth area that I feel really manifests my own weakness is the area of constant temptation to compromise. And by that I don't mean compromise in some gross sense but I mean in the sense that you begin to pull back what ought to be said for the sake of pleasing men. You want to gain popularity.

I was curious this week, we had a wonderful pastors conference here with our Korean brothers and we just had a great great time of fellowship. And one of them asked me a question, he said, "You know, if you preach so clearly the Bible and if you take a stand on biblical issues, what do you do if someone disagrees with you?" And he was very serious, you know, because it was a concern to him somebody might disagree with me and apparently from his viewpoint the approach was to try to find a way to walk between everybody so that everyone's sort of happy. And I just simply pointed out if you say one thing and he says something else, one of you is wrong. So hold to the truth. And I went on to talk about how important it is not to compromise the truth and if there's two different views running around, or three or four or five, we've got to find out the right one and get everybody on board, we don't just walk between all of that and try to keep people happy. But let's face it, all of us would like to avoid conflict. I don't particularly like conflict, I would just as soon avoid it. I would like that the community would think well of us. I would like some day to pick up the newspaper and have it say on the front page, "Grace Community Church is a wonderful church and we the editorial staff of this paper want to encourage everyone to go there. They have a wonderful pastor and staff and they love people over there and they teach the Bible and everyone needs to learn the Bible." I just would like that. I'd like them to say how nice we are and...sure. It's just absolutely no way, that's not going to happen.

And I said to one of the editors the other day, I said, "Do you know that there are about, I don't know, eight thousand people that gather every Sunday morning of the year in the valley to make a statement and nobody ever covers it?" And you know, the response is, "Where?" And I said, "At Grace Community Church. But if a hundred people take a placard and walk down the middle of the street, you'll have all the people there taking a picture of it. Why don't you come and take a picture of all these 8,000 who are basically protesting every week? They're protesting sin and debauchery in society and a lack of love and we hold this thing constantly but nobody shows up to film it."

I mean, all of us, I think, would like to have approval. We would like to have people applaud us. And so the temptation is there to sort of back off and maybe restrain the truth and limit the message a little bit so that you gain some acceptance and sort of put yourself in a position to be better liked in the community.

Another temptation that I think comes to those in leadership is the temptation to pride...especially where God is gracious and blesses the ministry. It can create very proud feelings...look what I have done...look what I've accomplished...and you're always getting that temptation coming at you, a constant self gratification. Also, when you have successful ministry and you've borne a lot of the burden of that, there's another way in which pride comes to you and that's sort of in...I guess you could call it an air of royalty. You get to the place where you think you're the king that created the kingdom, and so you have a right to call all the shots. And instead of letting things happen through the normal channels, you want to sort of pontificate and send out papal edicts as if you were the local

pope.

I remember being in a group of twelve pastors and we were..eleven of us were white pastors and one was a black pastor. And we were...they decided that we'd all discuss our problems in the churches we were pastoring. And all of them were large churches across America. This meeting took place in the midwest. And so everybody was saying, "Well I've got this problem...and I've got that problem," and most of the problems had to do with leadership...difficulty in developing leadership, growing leadership, some guys had been betrayed by certain people in their church in leadership and they started factions, or whatever it was. And I remember when we came to the black pastor and he said, "I don't know why you white people have so much trouble with your leadership." He said, "In my church the pastor is the king and if you don't agree with the pastor you aren't a leader."

Well, that's an interesting approach and all of us said, "Where do we sign up?" I mean, there's something in us...there's something in us that says look, that would be a great way to go, you know, just to do it. The problem with that is it breeds unaccountability. And pretty soon you're not answerable to anybody and you're calling all the shots and frankly you've got to live with your successes and live with your failures, too, and you never develop any leadership in that kind of a system. But there's always the temptation first to selfdefense, self justification, and then an abuse of authority and then unaccountability. And pride pushes you in those directions. And we have that temptation coming at us in leadership.

And I could say sixthly, if you're numbering these things, there's always those general temptations that come as well. I believe that we have to keep the armor of the Lord on because the enemy is after us as much as anybody and probably more. Satan would do everything he could within his power to try to trip up a servant of God in a place of prominence leading the people of God. I know that.

I was talking to some young men yesterday and I said to them, "There's little doubt in my mind...they were asking about whether we ought to be concerned about demons and demons attacking Christians and I said..."you know, I don't concern myself with that although I believe with all heart that demons and maybe the devil himself work overtime on me, I think, because the price is pretty high if I go down in terms of the range of ministry and the approach that it would bring on the cause of Christ." And so I'm sure they work on me, but what is thrilling to me is so far I haven't noticed them gaining any ground because of the power of God. And that's what's so wonderful, that the fact that it says in Scripture, "Greater is He that is in you that he that is in the world," is a reality because I know if they're attacking people, I must be one of them somewhere down the line they're after and they're not successful. And in fact I see myself growing spiritually and I see our church gaining victory and God blessing and so I'm confident that I have nothing to fear as long as I walk in obedience to God's will in the energy of His Spirit. That's a very hopeful thing.

But nonetheless those kinds of onslaughts and temptations do come. And in all honesty, you know, when you've got all this coming at you, discouragement, indifference and laziness, compromise, pride, general temptation, be honest, and I'll be honest too, who is going to be the person who never falls? Well nobody. I mean, somewhere along the line in those battles, we're going to feel like giving up, we're going to become indifferent, we're going to be prideful sometime, we're going to fall in temptation and maybe speak a word we should have never spoken to someone in unkindness or whatever it is. I mean, that's going to happen, we are far from perfect. And we do fall in stumbling with our lips, only a perfect man would not do that.

And so I want you to understand that though we put the qualifications high, they're not so high that everybody would be disqualified in God's grace, He by His Spirit can make us what He wants us to be, as close to these standards as possible.

Now let's look at the standards again. So we then who are called to spiritual leadership in the church must be measured as to our suitability for this by the qualifications given in verses 2 through 7. A bishop or overseer, elder, pastor must be blameless, that's the overarching one, that's the highest standard, that's the farreaching one. Another way to translate that would be unrebukable, that's how it is in chapter 6 verse 14. We are to be beyond reproach in terms of life.

Now that blamelessness has a definition in four categories. First, moral character in verses 2 and 3. And he looks at the blamelessness of moral character and defines it as a onewoman man, temperatethat means alert, watchful, disciplined mind, a disciplined life, loving strangers, skilled in teaching, not a drinker, not violent, patient, not a brawler and free from the love of money. Those are the moral areas of life by which a man is qualified.

Then in verses 4 and 5 last week we looked at family life. Leadership in the church is predicated on successful spiritual leadership in the family. And there are several things here, onehe must rule well his own house. That means his children, his servants if he has any, his resources, his assets, his bank account, how does he do in managing all the resources that are a part of a household. Secondly, he must have children who are submissive with dignity and Titus 1 says they must be believing children that is children who affirm faith in the gospel of Christ. So here the family life then becomes another standard by which a man's suitability for leadership in the church must be measured. Does he rule well? Does he have submissive and dignified children, responding well to his leadership and does he have children who affirm the faith of Christ personally? They're converted, that's the family. If he doesn't have that kind of family, verse 5 says, and hasn't shown that kind of leadership, how will he ever be able to take care of a church of God?

Now that brings us to the third and the fourth and we'll look at them and bring this passage to a conclusion. The third category in which the blameless qualification has to be applied is in the matter

of maturity...the matter of maturity. There is missing in verses 2 and 3 a very important spiritual characteristic and that's the characteristic of humility. And if you've wondered where humility was, here it is coming up in verse 6 as we shall see.

Now when you think about someone to be appointed as pastor, elder, or overseer, verse 6 says, "He should not be a neophytos, a neophyte, neos means new and the other word means planted." He should not be newly planted. That means a new convert, newly baptized. That word "newly planted" is used only here in the New Testament, it's used outside the New Testament to speak of planting trees, the actual planting of trees in the ground. It refers then to a recent convert.

Paul says to Timothy, "Don't put a man in spiritual oversight as a pastor or elder who is a new convert, recently baptized." That's very basic and very a point of important.

Now why? And I want you to watch this because this is perhaps a bit unexpected. Why? "Lest being lifted up with pride," stop there. The issue here is not that he might not be a good teacher of the Bible, it's not that he might prove to be less than a strong leader, it is not that he might not be well versed in the Old Testament Scripture, the issue here is if you lift up a new convert in the church and give him a position with other mature godly men, he's going to have a battle with...what...with pride. That's the issue. It doesn't mean that he's not qualified, in fact he may be qualified according to verses 2 and 3, he may live an absolutely impeccable life and blameless, he may have a marvelous family life, but if he's a new Christian, if he's relatively new in the faith, the tendency is going to be for him to feel proud about having been elevated to that level of leadership occupied by older more mature godly men who have been in the church for many years. Now that is particularly true in Ephesus where Timothy is when Paul writes, because the Ephesian church has been around for several years and it has grown elders. In fact the first batch of elders Paul himself disciplined, didn't he, over a threeyear period and set them in place. And now several more years have passed and so there is a maturity level and the role of pastor or elder or overseer is seen as one attained to by very mature men.

Now admittedly some of the pastors in Ephesus needed to be put out. You look back at chapter 1 verse 20, Hymenaeus and Alexander were delivered to Satan to learn not to blasphemed. I'm sure they were two of the leading pastors in that church. But the place of pastor belonged to those apart from those unqualified who had attained to it, those who needed to be rebuked as it says later in this epistle and put down, it still was a position for those who had been in the faith for a period of time in which they'd proven their maturity. And to lift up a new Christian to that level would have caused him to say, "Boy, I've arrived, look at me I'm a brand new Christian and I'm right in there with these guys," and it would have put him open to pride.

Now in contrast to that, look at Titus chapter 1 for a moment, I want to show you something comparatively to help you understand a little better this point. In Titus chapter 1 you have a whole

different situation. Paul writing to Titus is writing to a man ministering on the island of Crete. Now the island of Crete was different than Ephesus. The Ephesian church had been around for many years. The church at Crete was very very new, very young, and frankly there weren't very many Christians who had been Christians for a long period of time. Therefore when he starts out in verse 6 discussing elders, the same as bishops in 1 Timothy 3, the same as pastors, he says about them they are to be blameless and then he goes basically through the same qualifications but it is curious to note that it nowhere says not a novice, not a new convert. And the reason that's not an issue in Crete is because in Crete everybody was a relatively new convert. And so putting up a man to an eldership that was a new convert would not have tended to puff him up because everybody else at that point was also a new convert. You see the point? Whereas in Ephesus, to lift up a new convert would have given him the idea that he had instantly attained to a level of spiritual maturity that took most men many years. But in Crete, since the church was relatively new all together, there is no instruction in that regard since putting a man in that position of leadership would not necessarily have puffed him up since the others who were there would have been relatively new Christians also.

Now what that tells us then, beloved, is this, the issue here is not that an elder has to be so long a Christian or an elder has to be so old in terms of age, the word "elder" means spiritual maturity used in reference to the church. It's not talking about his age particularly physical although there's a certain amount of years implied in spiritual maturity. But an elder in the church is one who is mature spiritually. Well maturity in any church is relative to the age of that church, isn't it? Here we are in a church like Grace Community Church. We are a mature church by standards of comparison with other parts of the world. We perhaps are third, fourth, some of us fifth, sixth generation Christians. The church has been here in this place 30 years. We have been teaching the Word of God here for 30 years. Men have grown up. There's a tremendous amount of maturity here. You think of the elders here as mature men who really know the Word and teach the Word and have spent years preparing for that kind of leadership.

If somebody came into this church, brand new baby Christian, instantly he was shot up to an elder, there would be a tremendous amount of temptation in his own heart to see himself as having arrived at the highest level of spiritual leadership rather rapidly and he would be commending himself and falling into the sin of pride. On the other hand, were you to be a missionary, go to a primitive portion of the world, win some people to Jesus Christ, establish a church, stick around six months and want to leave them with a pastor, you'd have to pick somebody out of the group. That person might become the pastor of that church. If brought over here it would take ten years to become an elder at Grace Community Church because of the relative nature of what spiritual maturity means in any given congregation.

There are young men who graduate from seminary here who are not elders at Grace Church because they...relative to where this church has..is, still need more seasoning. You say, "Well, can they teach?" Sure, many of them are excellent teachers of the Word. "Well are their lives qualified?"

Sure their lives are qualified. "Is their family right?" Sure their family is right but to lift them up instantaneously to that level would bring them into reproach because of pride. The truth of the matter is they may go from here before they ever become an elder at Grace Church and become the pastor of another church. But in the view of that other church, they come in as a spiritual expert, in a sense, as someone who is perhaps more mature than the people who are there at that time. So it's a relative thing and the issue needs to be made clear. I want you to understand that those appointed to ministry, the thing you want to protect them against is pride. It isn't a question of how long have they been a Christian, it's a question of how will lifting them up affect them. In some situations there won't be place for pride, in others there will and that's what you're guarding against.

Now the word here that applies to them, not a novice, has as its opposite that they should be mature. They should be mature. Now mature again is relative. They should be an elder in the sense of spiritually they should be older, in their spiritual age. Their spiritual age should be older. Now what does that mean? It depends upon the congregation, older than the standard recognized as the congregational level. They've got to be more mature than the congregation and in being lifted up it has to be certain that they would not be prone to being proud.

Now go back to verse 6 and see if that's not exactly what it says...not a neophyte or a novice, lest being lifted up with pride. That verb is a very interesting verb...tuphoo, it means to puff up like smoke. We don't want them to get puffed up like a big...like a big cloud, a false sense of spirituality, all puffed up, getting their head up in smoke and thinking they're up in the air where they're not, getting their head in the clouds might be another way to transliterate it. You don't want that. You don't want them proud.

Why? Look at this, what a statement. "Lest being lifted up with pride, puffed up, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Boy, that is serious. You'd think it would say, "Unless being lifted up with pride he loses effectiveness, or lest being lifted up with pride he failed to fulfill his task, or lest being lifted up in pride he fall into sin." No, very serious, lifted up by pride he falls into the condemnation of the devil.

Now what does that mean? Some people think it means that he'll be condemned by the devil but no where in Scripture is the devil ever seen as the condemner or the judge. God is always presented in Scripture as the judge, He is the one who condemns. Therefore this is best seen as what we would call an objective genitive, he falls into the judgment God pronounced on the devil. It is the judgment that God brought on the devil. He fall into the same condemnation the devil fell into. Since God is always presented as the judge and not the devil, that seems to be the best approach. Also, the context is strongly in favor of that because it is a warning against pride and a man being lifted up in pride will be cast down. The devil, that's what happened to him. He was lifted up in pride and what happened? He was cast down. So the contextual parallel is pretty clear.

The judgment or the condemnation of the devil was a demotion from high position. And that's exactly what God says will happen to the man lifted up too soon. He becomes proud about it. He gets to be smokeheaded, or he gets his head in the clouds, he's got a false standard of his own spirituality. He's a little bit too pious. He feels proud and he's going to get cut down just like the devil did.

Now let's remember that event a little bit to help us see the richness of the thought. The Bible talks about the existence of different angels. I'm sure you remember these terms but they're all different ranks and kinds of angels. There are cherubim, seraphim, arch angels, principalities, powers and rulers and they all refer to differing functions that angels have. Some angels are higher and some angels are lower. They're different. Just as God created men with different capacities, so angels the same.

The highest ranking angels are cherubim. And they appear always around the throne of God, always in the midst of His presence. Exodus 25, Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel 10, Revelation 4 verses 6 to 8, they're always right around the presence of God, the Cherubim. Now we know three Cherubim. They are surpassing in beauty. They are surpassing in power. And they are highest in rank of all the angels. So above all the angelic hosts rank the Cherubim. At the top of the Cherubim list there are three leading Cherubim. One we know very well, Gabriel. Gabriel's task is to reveal and interpret God's purpose and program for His Kingdom. He is a revelation kind of angel, a Cherub.

The second one that we know so very well is Michael. And Michael is super angel. He's the commander and chief of the heavenly armies. So you have Gabriel and Michael, two lovely names and wonderful names that we use to name our sons. But the third cherub and the most beautiful and the most powerful and the most glorious of all of them was a cherub by the name of Lucifer. And I might suggest to you, believe it or not, that maybe the most lovely name of all three is the name Lucifer, it means son of the dawn, son of the morning, morning star. But because of what he became it is so despised that no one would ever name his child Lucifer...hopefully.

Now let's find out what happened to Lucifer. Go back in your Bible to Ezekiel chapter 28. In the first ten verses of Ezekiel 28 the prophet speaks against the prince of Tyre, or the king of the city of Tyre. God is bringing a judgment on Tyre and the ruler of Tyre is going to be judged with the city. The judgment of Tyre comes in verse...chapter 27 and then the ruler in the first ten verses of chapter 28. He talks about this man who claimed to be a god, in verse 28 he says, "I am a god, I sit in the seat of god." In verse 9, "I am a god..." and so forth. He really had a God complex, he thought he was a god, he was a very proud boastful man, a very evil ruler. In fact verse 10 his judgment comes, "You will die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of a foreigner for I have spoken it, says the Lord God." So God pronounces death on the king of Tyre because he's such a proud and godless individual.

Then in verse 11 the Lord goes behind the pride of the king of Tyre to speak of the source of that kind of pride. "The word of the Lord came unto me saying, son of man...son of man refers to Ezekiel...take up a lamentation on the king of Tyre," only this time he isn't talking to the king of Tyre, he goes behind the king to the one who was the source of that ugly pride, Satan himself. This is very much like Jesus in Matthew saying to Peter, "Get thee behind Me...whom?...Satan." He's talking to Peter but really talking to the source of Peter's sin. So here he's talking to the king but the source of the king's sin behind the king.

And he describes, beginning in verse 12, Satan or Lucifer who was energizing this proud evil king. He says of him, "Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." What does it mean "thou sealest up the sum," you're the living end. You are it. You are the summation of all that I created of beauty and wonder and glory and wisdom and perfection. The epitome of angelic creation, the most beautiful spectacular angel God made.

His preexistence is discussed in verse 13. "You have been in Eden," now that couldn't have been true of the king of Tyre, "You have been in Eden, the garden of God." That may well be the earthly Eden because Lucifer was there Genesis 3 says, he was tempting there. But it may well also be the paradise of heaven that the Eden of eternity, the Eden of heaven. He was there too. And the description seems to fit the Eden of heaven better than the Eden of earth. He appeared in the Eden of earth but when he appeared there he appeared as a snake. "But you have been in Eden the garden of God, the glory of the paradise of heaven." And then he describes the incredible beauty. "Every precious stone was your covering," and he lists a whole lot of precious stones. And he talks about the workmanship of your timbrels and your flutes was prepared in you in the day you were created.

I believe Lucifer was not only the most beautiful angel, not only the most psychedelically glorious angel with all the sparkling jewels and everything else used to describe his eminence and his personality, but I believe also he was the supreme musician of heaven. If the angels were designed by God to give Him praise, they needed to have a leader and I believe he was heaven's choir director, the consummate musician. Music around the world today, my friends, is what you are seeing Lucifer produce in his fallen state...in his fallen state. And that's why in Ephesians when the Apostle Paul says, "Now that you're filled with the Spirit, speak to yourselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs," only in Christ through the Spirit can the curse on music be reversed. And that's why our music can again give glory to God as the music of Lucifer once did. His profession then, he must have been the musician of heaven, the heavenly choir director.

Verse 14 further says about him, "You are the anointed cherub that covers and I have set you so." In other words, you have a place in my presence around my throne, you are near me, you cover me in some sense. "And you were in the holy mountain of God," that's the throne, the high and lifted up

throne that Isaiah saw. "And you walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire," probably the glorious flaming Shekinah of God. And right in the Shekinah of God and right in His throne and right on His high and holy mountain, there is Lucifer leading the angelic choirs in praise to God, this incredibly beautiful creature.

Verse 15 says, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created," perfect, flawless, no sin. "Until iniquity was found in you." And not only were you sinful, verse 16, but you merchandised your sin. He drew a third of the angels with him in his rebellion, says Revelation 12:9. And because of this, catch the middle of verse 16, "I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire."

Now when Lucifer sinned, his sin was a sin of pride, the result was God threw him out. God cut him down. What was his sin specifically? Look at Isaiah 14 just briefly. Isaiah 14 give us that. Starting in verse 12 it says, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer? Why did you fall? Why were you cut down? Son of the morning...why? Why are you cut down to the ground, he says? Here's why, for you said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." In other words, I'll take over for God. Five "I wills," there's his problem, his problem is pride. Five times he said "I will" and once God said "no you won't." Verse 15, "You'll be brought down to Sheol to the sides of the pit and you'll become a spectacle and people will see you and they'll say, Is this the one who made the earth to tremble?" You're going to be humiliated.

Now do you understand what I'm driving at?" Listen carefully. Don't lift up a novice lest being lifted up he becomes proud and fall into the same condemnation that the devil fell into. The parallel is perfect. Satan was lifted up. He fell into pride and God cut him down. And that's exactly the parallel that the Apostle Paul wants Timothy to understand. Now go back to 1 Timothy. Don't lift a person up too soon, they'll fall to pride and God Himself will cut them down.

I believe God deals with the diotrophies(?) of the church, like the one mentioned in 3 John 9. And we don't want to bring a person into that kind of situation. We don't want to elevate someone to the level of spiritual leadership where when they've reached that level of leadership they recognize that they have now attained a standard that makes them somebody special. They enter into pride and then God has to come along for the sake of the purity of His church and cut them down. But He'll do it, so much does He love His church, so committed is He to the people He has purchased with His own precious blood.

Beloved, leadership must involve humility. And so the church must protect itself and its good men from being lifted up too soon into vulnerability and thus being devastated. The sign of spiritual maturity, Jesus said, if anyone would be cheap among you, let him be your...what?...your

servant...your servant. That's what the Lord is after.

The test of maturity or the standard of maturity can be also called the standard of humility...humility. And there must be great caution so that you don't lift someone up that the Lord has to cut down. It's a great responsibility.

Well then the fourth area, we'll close with just a brief look at verse 7, the man set apart to pastor or lead the church as an elder or an overseer must also be tested as to reputation. Verse 7, "Moreover...or in addition to, it means...he must...that is to say it is necessary...for him to have a good report." That little phrase "good report," kalosis good, it means not only good inwardly but good outwardly. It not only means that he's got character but it means he has a reputation that is good. There is an excellency on the outside as well. He is to have an excellent testimony. The report means testimony. In fact, it speaks martureo, we get the word martyr from it, but it basically speaks of..of a certifying testimony. He is to be certified by the testimony of people as to his character. And what people? Look at this. "He must have a good report of them who are...where?...outside." Outside what? Outside the church. What is his reputation in the community? A man chosen to be an elder, a man chosen to be a pastor in the church must have a reputation for righteousness, for moral character, for love and kindness and generosity and goodness among everybody in the community that knows him.

Now I'm not saying they're all going to agree with his theology because that's not the case. I'm not going to say that there won't be antagonism out there, but the people who know him know that he is a man of moral character. Why? Because how can you raise a man to leadership, expect him to impact that community if the community has no regard for his character? A man can't reach people who have no respect for him. He can't bring anything but reproach on Christ and that's what it says. Look at it. Moreover he must have a good certifying testimony from those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach...the word means disgrace.

Beloved, it's so sad to know how many men have disgraced the church, isn't it?...and the Lord, what a thought. The sin of a man will be a disgrace. This is why he has to be blameless. And I'm not just talking about the sin that he commits while he's in the ministry. It could be some sins in the past for which he has gained an evil reputation. So a man must be evaluated as to his ongoing reputation in the community, lest he bring disgrace upon the church.

I always think about Romans 2 when I think about that. Verse 24, what an indictment of Israel. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." What a statement. The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. It's so important what your reputation is in the community. Oh that is pointed out to me so many times because many people know who I am and I get myself into some of the most interesting situations. The other night our family was walking through a furniture store, we were looking to buy a little table. And, you know, when you've got the

kids with you and you're trying to go through a furniture store and keep everything coordinated and virtuous, you know, and everybody's talking and saying "I like this...and I like that...well what about this, Dad?" And we were having a great time. And so I said to the man who was working there, I said, "Well I think everybody kind of likes this little table and maybe we ought to get the price on that and then one other little thing." And he kind of smiled and he said to me, he said, "I know who you are." And I thought, "Oh no, let me do a little inventory on what's been going on for the last twenty minutes here." He said, "I appreciate so much your ministry."

There's a real visibility. Now your world maybe not as big as mine in terms of people who know you, but those who do know you need to see a blameless life. And if you're to be in spiritual leadership, it's so wonderful if the people out there can say, "I don't agree with what they teach but I'll tell you one thing, that man has character." And that's what the Bible is really after. You know, in Philippians 2 verse 15 it's so well summed up, "That you may be blameless and harmless, children of God without rebuke." In other words, they can't rebuke you for anything. Without rebuke, "In the middle of a crooked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life." Isn't that great? Wow, what a calling...what a calling! What a thought.

In Colossians chapter 4, I think it's verse 5, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are outside," that same reference, to those outside the church, walk in wisdom toward them. "And let your speech be always with grace and seasoned with salt that you may know how you ought to answer every man." Boy, that outside reputation is important.

And go back now to 1 Timothy 3 and let me wrap it up. Why? "Well lest he fall into disgrace and the trap of the devil." Boy, there's nothing the devil would want more than to set a trap to discredit the man in spiritual service, right? Sure...sure. I mean, that would be his full time occupation, I think, to trap those who serve the Lord. He wants spiritual leaders to fall easy prey into some skillfully laid snare and that devil who goes around as the hunter of souls, as the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, his aim is to destroy the credibility and integrity of the leaders of the church and to trap them. And again I believe this should be interpreted that way because God doesn't set traps. This would be a subjective genitive, this is a trap sent by Satan to catch us. And that's why we have to be so cautious and that takes us right back, doesn't it, to that first thing we said when we started this morning, that we are going to be tempted and we are weak and we have those areas where Satan works on us and we are going to stumble. The one who doesn't offend with his tongue is a perfect man and we will stumble so we have to be so very cautious. We don't want to fall into Satan's trap, we want to be a leader that leads others out of his traps.

And so, God identifies these men...their moral character, their family life, their maturity and their reputation. And, beloved, the future of the church, I believe with all my heart, is predicated on the fact that these are the kind of people that must be in leadership. And that is a constant and ongoing process. Why? What have we been saying all along? Why? Why does God want these kind of men

in leadership? You say, because they're holy vessels and Christ can mediate His rule through them. That's right. But there's a second reason, and it is this, because they are the models and the point is, all these qualifications are not just for them, they are for them to model so they can become true of all of us. And that's why we say there's no double standard here. Do you think the Lord wants anything less of the rest of us than to be blameless? Anything less than a onewoman man, a temperate man, a man with a disciplined mind and a woman with a disciplined mind, does He want any less than good behavior, than hospitality, than skillful teaching? Does he want any less than good families? Does he want any less than spiritual maturity? Does he want any less than a good reputation? Of course not, but that's not going to happen at the grass roots level if it isn't being modeled at the leadership level.

Ephesus needed to examine its leaders and so do we..so does the church today. I talked a man recently who was trying to convince that a certain preacher had accurate theology. And I said to him, "That's what bothers me," I said, "that isn't the issue, what I'm saying to you is that man has no business in the ministry whatever his theology is because of his life." In fact, to be honest with you, I wish he was a heretic, then he could discredit heresy...not truth. It's basic.

Now you say, "Are there these kind of men?" Sure, God makes these kind of men, we need to pray that God will raise these kind of men up. The future of this church depends on God bringing these kind of men. And God has a plan and, I mean, He's doing it, He's building these kind of men.

Some years ago I gave to my sons a little poem that puts it this way: "When God wants to drill and man and thrill a man and skill a man, when God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part, when He years with all His heart to create so great and bold a man that all the world shall be amazed, watch His methods, watch His ways. How He ruthlessly perfects whom He royally elects, how He hammers him and hurts him and with mighty blows converts him into trial shapes of clay which only God understands while His tortured heart is crying and He lifts beseeching hands, how He bends but never breaks when his good He undertakes, when He uses whom He chooses and with every purposes fuses him, by every act induces him to try his splendor out, God knows what he's about."

I believe He's building those men and it's up to the church to recognize them, to put them in the place of leadership as the standard for all of our lives for His glory, let's pray together.

We love You, Lord, and we thank You not only for dying on our behalf and redeeming us, not only for giving us the Word, but, Lord, for putting us in the church and then designing that Godly men should be our strength to help us who are so weak, by providing teaching and the example of life. O God, thank You, that You for those men who have been for me the example. Men in the past and men even in the present, men I desire to pattern my life after. And thank You, Lord, for bringing to this church so many godly men and for building others. Even now we see You working and we know You know what You're about. Build many great men to lead Your church. Your church has so many

needs and so many places but none greater than that godly men with blameless lives who bring no disgrace on You and who are skilled in teaching and even more skilled in living should lead the advancement of the Kingdom in this world.

Thank You, Lord, that we are the rich in spiritual heritage and for what You've given to us we humbly praise You and beseech You that we should never take for granted the abundance of spiritual leadership that we have enjoyed. Lord, may we know as well that to us much has been given and from us shall much be required.

While your heads are bowed in just a closing moment in our fellowship. This has been a wonderfully refreshing series in my heart. I need that focus of what God wants me to be. And I trust, too, that in days ahead I and the men who stand along side me equally called by God and equally gifted together shall provide a better example than ever even in the past for You, that we might see the strengthening of the church, that we might see the salvation of the lost, that in all things He might be praised. And I want just to ask you in your heart if you will covenant to pray for the leaders of this church and pray also for God to raise up leaders for His church around this nation and across the world, pray, too, that somehow God will overrule the charlatans and the fakes and the frauds and those who usurp the preeminence but are unqualified and who eat away the souls of men and women.

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