

Leadership Requirements Titus 1:6-8

Romans 5:1-11
Ephesians 2:1-13
Responsive Psalm 84

Over the past 2 weeks we have been looking at the first few verses of this letter that Paul had written to Titus, one of his associates, and friends who was sent to the Island of Crete to set the church in order there. It was my intention in that introduction to attempt to get a feel for who Titus was, and his relationship that he had with Paul. But now starting this week we are going to be getting into the meat of this letter, in the verses we are looking at today Paul is setting forth the standards of what to look for when appointing a leader within a church congregation, as that was Titus' mission. In the authority given to him as Paul's advocate, he was to appoint leaders in each congregation, and make sure they were standing upon good sound doctrine, rooting out the false teachers, liars, and manipulators. So this morning we will be looking specifically at verses 6-9, where these requirements are listed in Paul's letter. So let's just start by reading again the first 9 verses, Titus, 1:1-9. (read)

Some of this we began to touch on last week, the first requirement that Paul lays forth here that Titus should be looking for, is that this man whom he would appoint as a leader within any of the church congregations should be blameless. As I had said last week, this doesn't mean sinless, because if the goal was to find a sinless person to lead a church you would never find any leaders. What Paul is getting at here, is that there should be no open, obvious patterns of sinful behavior..you would not appoint a leader who is known for having run ins with the law, or who is known as a drunkard, or who has been involved in scandal. A leader in the church is just that, one who should be living as an example to the others, whose life should reflect what is being taught. Those who would be leaders of a congregation have a greater responsibility, for they carry the weight of that congregation on their shoulders, that are to stand as examples to that congregation, and be mature in the faith.

I think that is why Paul used the term Elder here, it carries with it experience, and maturity. It isn't just a title, or station within in the church, I think it also has to do with who these leaders are among the congregation itself. In many tribal situations the leaders are those who are the old ones, with age comes experience, and wisdom as lessons are learned throughout life. I think that same concept holds true here, now that isn't to say that the oldest in a group is be default qualified, there maybe some who are younger who match the qualifications laid out here better, but in general the principle stands that one must be mature in this faith to be a leader in this faith. For leadership brings with it a responsibility that a newer believer may struggle to handle, as they themselves are learning and growing and maturing. Some churches I think take this concept to far, putting their leaders on pedestals, acting as if they have reached some sort of perfection. We can see this within the structure of the Catholic church, with the priests, and the pope, but as we know there is much scandal which has been exposed over the past few decades within the Catholic church within the leadership of that organization.

The leaders are treated as those who are above such, but it would seem that some, are indeed guilty of some of the most vile of sins by our own standards. Right away falling short of this first standard, to be blameless. Because that station of Priest is held so high within that organization the problems and issues are often hidden, and swept away with very little accountability or justice. This is the danger of holding such a position with to high of a view, elevating such men to such levels as to be acting in the place and authority of Christ.

Elders are to be leaders, to be examples, to be faithful and mature in their Christian walk not caught up in controversy or open sin. That is why Paul says, they are to be the husband of one wife, and have faithful children. Marriage can go a long way as a shield of protection against many of the pitfalls and temptations in this life. Something that the Catholic church denies their leadership, is the very thing that opens them up to their scandals. Now I don't think that this requirement is a hard and fast requirement, for if it was...Paul himself would have been disqualified. There are many single men who are highly qualified as leaders, and in fact Paul said he wished more could be like him, 1 Corinthians 7, lets go over there and read that real quick because that deals with this very issue as Paul lays down why exactly he would write this to Titus.

“Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me; it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due to her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with the consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self control. But I say this as a concession, not a commandment.” I think that many who read this leave this part out, Paul's instruction here isn't a commandment, though many pastors and councilors seem to treat this section of scripture as one when counseling married couples. These are good principles, and ways that marriage can be a defense again sin and temptation, and that each the husband and wife are to work together to strengthen one another in all things.

Paul recognizes this struggle, and it is a temptation for many, so he says, by all means marry, do not deprive yourself as some do, and open yourself up to temptation and falling to sin. This he says is a concession not a commandment, as he goes on to say, verse 7 “For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them to remain even as I am; but if they can not exercise self control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” So, marriage itself is not a requirement of leadership, as Paul says he wishes that all could be like him, but knowing that is not the reality encourages marriage. Either way, whether married or single, the requirement still stands that a leader should be blameless in these things, for as we know just because one is married does not make them pure of lust and sexual sins either.

Another point here I think that Paul is making and we touched on this last week, is the married to one wife statement. Polygamy was much more common on those days that it is today, there are some who still practice today but for the most part it is looked down on, and even prohibited by our nations laws. Much of this has to do with the exclusiveness of God, the symbology of Marriage is used throughout all of scripture. The church is Christ's bride, he is our husband, the head of our household, God is a jealous God who will not tolerate other so called god's or beliefs, in the old testament he likened Israel to playing the harlot, being his people, married to him..yet going out and worshipping idols, not being faithful to that relationship. God's relationship with his people is exclusive, just as a marriage is to be exclusive. It is a dedication, through all things to one another. Christ doesn't leave the church when she disappoints or angers him, Christ doesn't leave us though we still yet struggle with sin, he is faithful to the upmost, gracious beyond deserving, and loves us beyond our own comprehension of love.

Marriage is a picture of our relationship with God, it is singular, it is intimate, there are no secrets, therefore, likewise one who would stand as a leader in the ministry of God's word should be singularly focused in his marriage, and in his ministry. One of the signs to look for when choosing a leader, is how he treats his wife and children, for that is how he is going to treat the congregation. A controlling, authoritarian, husband and father, is going to be a controlling, authoritarian leader. A patient, slow to anger, understanding husband and father, is going to be a patient, slow to anger and understanding leader. Much can be determined by how a man treats his family, and it gives a window into how he will be as a leader of the church congregation. Marriage is an institution created by God, from the beginning, he created Eve as a companion, and helper to Adam, and Adam was to be a companion and helper to Eve, both created perfectly to accommodate, and fulfill the needed roles that neither are able to fulfill on their own, together being stronger than alone. That is what marriage should be, 2 people living as one, stronger together as each has their own strength and weakness and each fulfilling the needs of the other in those differences.

Again we get a picture of Christ in marriage, he fulfilled salvation for us, and through him we are born again, made alive, able to know God, and love him. This was not something that we could ever accomplish on our own, our own sin is our weakness, our own sin has condemned us to hell, but Christ, the perfect lamb of God loved us that he gave his life to cover that sin, our great husband has provided where we could not, and this is why we love him, this is why we serve him, this is why we seek to please him, because he provides for us. We are stronger with him, and can endure all things because of him. So, we remain faithful to him, the one who provides, and he to us, his beloved bride of whom he laid down his life and died so that we may live with him in eternity. There is much loss and grief in this world, one of the greatest being the passing of a spouse, for when a spouse dies, a part of you dies with them. But this is not the case with God, when we die is when we are united with him, as we live now, is like being in a long distance relationship, but upon our death we are brought into his very presence, that is why the Psalmist wrote, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

For at that moment, we are not longer separated, our relationship is no longer a long distance relationship looking at pictures and shadows, communicating through prayers, but we will be face to face with the one who gave his life so that we may be with him. So as you can see, this concept and idea of Marriage carries with it many pictures and metaphors of our own relationship with God, and it is God who designed it that way. So when appointing a leader, it is upmost important to assess their own marriage if they are married, for it can be a direct correlation to their own relationship with God, and as I said earlier, how they treat their spouse, and their own household is how they will treat the congregation. An associated part of that, is his children as well if he has any. Paul says that any who would be a leader must have believing children, who are not accused of dissipation or insubordination. Basically saying that they should not be wild, should be respectful, and believing. Again giving a picture into how he will be as a leader of the congregation based on how he orders and leads his own household.

There are a few caveats though, this standard applies to those who are still living under the guidance and control of this potential leader, that is they are still children accountable to him. Once they become adults and are on their own they are accountable for their own decision and actions and should not necessarily reflect upon the leader. But one thing that might come into consideration is how he reacts to his children, who many ended up leaving the church in their adulthood. Again this all goes back to the standard of being blameless, if a leader has unruly, rebellious children under his care and authority that creates an issue within that congregation.

Our Society today seems to have bred little anarchists, under the guise of independence, but what it really has created is selfish narcissistic personalities who are rebellious and disrespectful to authority, and have little to no thought of anyone outside of themselves. They likewise grow up to be selfish narcissistic adults, with little respect for others focused upon their own self gratification and needs. These things are the polar opposite of what a Christian is called to be, humble, gracious, with a focus upon others instead of self. If a leader can not show leadership within his own home, among his own children then how will he be able to lead a group of adults in a church congregation? In some Reformed circles they have this concept and idea that children are covered by their parents until they reach an age of accountability. What that age is, is debated, what that means is also debated, and it is honestly not a belief or idea drawn from scripture for no where is there such a concept. But in principle that concept sort of applies here for the leadership.

Our kids eventually grow up, it is our hope and Christian parents that they will grow to know the Lord, to be upstanding, honest, caring and giving people who love God. But we have no power over the soul, it is God who calls, and there comes a time when children grow up and they are accountable to themselves, as parents we no longer have the authority over them as when they were young, and we are no longer the guardian or watchmen as we once were when they were younger. So I wouldn't say that this requirement of believing children extend into the adulthood of those children, for the father has no control over his adult children as they live their own lives and make their own choices. There comes an age where a persons children no longer reflect upon themselves, that is you don't look upon a 25 year old son or daughter of a pastor, and judge that pastor by the decisions his adult children make. Even our unbelieving society understands the concept that as individuals we are responsible for ourselves, the only issue is that our society tries to apply this principle which should be applied to adults, they are applying to children encouraging them to disrespect, and disobey their parents.

Seeking to undermine this standard the Paul puts into place here, of a solid family structure. What we would consider normal family, some today are calling archaic, bigoted, racists, and wrong. There are now political movements within this country with the purpose of destruction of the nuclear family unit, with claims that the tradition standard of a married man and women is racial discrimination, your household was seen by them as a threat, and an act of hatred toward them simply because you have a loving spouse, and good children. I say this only to point out, the importance of this standard that Paul writes, maybe even much more today, for the concept and idea of a nuclear family has been under attack, where in Paul's day it was widely accepted as the norm. It is rebellion against God's created order, seeking to undermine what is right, and what is good and replace it with dysfunction and rebellion as the normal

The family unit and dynamic are a picture of God and his relationship with us. Scripture often refers to him as our Father, one who cares and provides, and yes, even scolds so that we learn and grow and are able to mature. Christ is our husband, we his bride, he loves us unconditionally, we are the most beautiful thing to him, and our relationship with him the most important, so much so that he laid down his life for us. Being that marriage, and the family unit are a direct correlation with God's revelation about himself that puts a lot of importance on this those relationships, it is not something to be taken lightly nor should it be undermined or re-evaluated and changed. God created men and women to need one another, to balance out one another, and that relationship to bring forth the next generation, any concept of marriage outside of God ordained is a perversion of this glorious created gift he gave mankind, a shadow of his own relationship with us, a morsel of the taste of love that he has for us, You think you love your spouse...God loves you more, you think you love your children, God loves you more.

This is why dysfunction in the family unit is something that Paul says should disqualify a leader, for they are to be a reflection of God to the people, bearing his message of love, hope, and reconciliation, and if those things are not in their own lives, how are they to teach others, when their own lives do not line up with their teaching? And I think I will leave it there this morning, as we will be taking probably the next few weeks to look over each of these qualifications for leadership. We can not discount the meaning of the things that God has put into place, we can not gloss over the shadows which point to him. The way a Christian marriage should work, is by putting God first and seeing your spouse through that lens. We are redeemed sinners, yet still struggle with sin, far from perfect, full of flaws, who disappoint, anger, and upset one another..but just as we can only understand a fraction of God's love, we can also only understand a fraction of God's anger....and he put his anger aside, his judgment aside for his bride and loves us. A Christ centered marriage should reflect this Christ centered love, able to forgive, patient, loving, and kind because Christ is all those things to us though we can be the worst to him at times, yet he loves us with a perfect love, and forgives us with a perfect forgiveness. God doesn't hold grudges against his bride, and nor should we hold grudges with our spouses, or even one another as we are all forgiven sinners.

Next week we will continue in verse 8 talking about some of these other necessary traits that Paul says Titus should be looking for when appointing leaders. As we go through all of these the point to remember, it isn't to find the sinless, but to find the one who is striving to be Christ like, who is mature enough in their own faith and walk with Christ that they can stand as a reflection of that to the people in their community. For as we said last week, there isn't much that undermines a ministry greater than hypocrisy. And though these are definitely traits to look for when appointing leaders of a congregation, these are also things that should be reflective of all who claim Christ as well, as we all strive to be more like him, and as we outreach to our own communities in hopes to bring the light of this gospel message to the dark and dying world.