

THE EXPECTATION OF LEADERS

I TIMOTHY 1:1-7 & TITUS 3:8-10

CHURCH LEADERS ARE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF PROTECTING THE CONGREGATION FROM FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE THEOLOGY.

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The Expectation of Leaders

I Timothy 1:1-7 & Titus 3:8-10

Last week we talked about the urgency to be reconciled. In other words, people who need to ask for forgiveness should immediately do so and those who need to extend forgiveness also need to do so quickly. I'd like to kind of summarize what we studied last week by borrowing Bucky Hempen's presentation on eliminating bullies from grade schools. Bucky said that the key to eliminating the bullying culture from elementary schools is not by disciplining the bully or by empowering the victim. Rather it is by changing the attitudes of the onlookers. In other words, the only way a bully can succeed is if those who are onlookers say or do nothing. However, if just a few onlookers speak up or act up, the bullying stops.

My point last week was that if just 10 congregation members or attendees had stood up and told the false teachers they were wrong in doctrine and in the lies and slander they spread, and then told them to be silent; or if just 10 congregation members had approached the board and pastor stating they did not believe the lies, accusations, and false doctrine, the board would have had a platform to stand up and exercise church discipline with some confidence. However, none of that happened. And so last week we kind of chastised those who remained silent or neutral, even after the mediation process was finished.

This week however, we are going to talk about how leaders are to publicly defend truth and to protect the congregation from false teachers and false teaching. In this area, I as the pastor, and those board members who resigned have to say that we did not do a good job in this. We were clearly unprepared to handle this and even though things turned out well, we need to take responsibility for not fighting this battle publicly and to the end.

We were caught like deer in the headlights and found ourselves much like the high school student who was unprepared to take his test. He went into class just as the professor was handing out a true/false test. The student took his seat and started the test. As the teacher strolled up and down the aisles, he noticed this student flipping a coin, and then marking down the answers. The teacher asked the student what he was doing and the student replied that he was getting the answers to the test questions. The teacher shook his head and continued walking. Later, when everyone was finished with the test, the teacher noticed the student was again flipping the coin. The teacher inquired, "Now what are you doing?" to which the student answered, "I'm checking my answers."

I think that when people threw out all these wild and slanderous accusations, we were as confused and as unprepared as this student. We never planned for something like this. Instead we rode out the storm, wrote a carefully prepared response to all the charges, accusations, and corrected all the false doctrine. However, the mediator informed us that we should have stayed and fought.

The main idea of this morning's text is certainly a rebuke to the way we handled the situation. **CHURCH LEADERS ARE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF PROTECTING THE**

CONGREGATION FROM FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE THEOLOGY. In other words, even though we are a congregationally run church, the pastor and the board members are clearly responsible to discipline people who spread lies and teach false doctrine.

CHARGED BY GOD (VS 1-2)

In this morning's texts, we will see that pastors and board members are charged by God to take on these tasks as described in verses 1 and 2 in the first chapter of First Timothy. In other words, **THE JOB DESCRIPTION OF PASTORS AND ELDERS IS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE.**

In verse one, we are reminded that this calling was given by God to the apostles. Paul starts out this letter to Timothy with this phrase, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope" (I Timothy 1:1 / NIV). The Apostle Paul made it clear that He was directly commissioned by Jesus personally on the road to Damascus. His calling was certain. Jesus commissioned him to bring the Gospel message to Gentiles, people he hated in the past. Further, Jesus made it explicit that Paul would suffer a great deal in this calling. Paul often talked about the stress of worrying about the safety and health of the new churches he founded. Calling comes from God.

I just want to point something out here in this verse. Paul said that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ. That meant that he was sent on this mission of informing people of the love of God that was demonstrated through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Secondly, he was commanded by God to go on this mission. Here he refers to God as our Savior. And then he adds that he was sent by Jesus Christ our hope. Paul often uses Savior to refer to Jesus Christ. Jesus was the One Who died for our sin and paid the price for our sin. Jesus saved us.

Listen to how Paul phrases this in the book of Titus:

"⁴To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior" (Titus 1:4 / NIV).

Here Paul refers to God as Father and Jesus as Savior. There is no confusion in Paul's mind. Jesus Christ is God. God the Father is God. Grace, peace, and hope only come from God. If our hope is in anything worldly such as money, power, or notoriety, we will never have peace and we will never experience grace. If our hope is in the finished work of God through the work of Jesus, we will find grace. We will be forgiven of all our sin and cleansed from all our unrighteousness. We will have peace because our relationship with God is restored and healthy. Our hope is not wishful thinking. Our hope is the anticipation of spending eternity with God when He chooses to call us home. In the meantime, we are called by God to accomplish all the good works He has prepared in advance for us to do. God first called the Apostles to guide the church through difficult times.

In the first half of verse 2 we see that the Apostles are the ones who passed on the calling to us. There was no way the Apostles could minister to all the churches they planted, nor could they be present to nurture them and protect them from false teaching. And so we see here that Paul called Timothy to pastor this troubled church in Ephesus. We are going to also study a passage

from Titus. Paul commissioned Titus to troubleshoot the church on Crete. Both Titus and Timothy were handpicked by Paul and trained by Paul. Paul called them and appointed them to be his representative in these local churches. Many Christian Churches still claim to have their pastors ordained in the apostolic succession by the laying on of hands. Other Christian churches believe that the Jesus through the Apostles have passed down the Apostolic mission throughout the centuries. So when Pastors are ordained, they are ordained with the intent they will carry out the apostolic mission of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ and charged with the duty of educating and protecting their congregations.

In the second half of verse 2, we are reminded that the Holy Spirit passes on this calling to us. Grace, mercy and peace come to us by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also applies the blood of Christ to us. All gifts come from God. As Pastors and leaders, we must understand that we are called by God the Holy Spirit and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to minister on our own power will be ineffective and devoid of God's grace, mercy, peace, hope, and authority. The Apostles were charged with the duties of preaching the Gospel and of protecting the congregations from false doctrine and false teachers. That calling has been passed down to pastors and church leaders. The point is this. **THE JOB DESCRIPTION OF PASTORS AND ELDERS IS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE.** As we look back at our church history and where we find ourselves today, the leaders must reaffirm their calling by taking seriously the charge to preach the Gospel and protect the congregation from false teaching.

CHARGED TO CORRECT FALSE TEACHING (VS 3-7)

Verses 3-7 focus on the fact that leaders are charged to correct false teaching. In other words, **CHURCH LEADERS ARE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING FALSE TEACHING.** In the cultural atmosphere of valuing each person's opinion equally and the feeling that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, one wonders why the church gets so cranked up about false teaching. Verses 3-5 point out the fact that false teaching leads to division. Before we get into the false teachings themselves, let me just point out the job Paul gives to this young Pastor Timothy. Timothy is a young man sent to pastor this troubled church. Paul says he is to "command" the false teachers to stop teaching false doctrines. I can imagine that Timothy was probably timid and a little bit anxious about this task. I don't think that any pastors going through seminary training think they will ever have to face these things. I have to say that I was totally caught off guard when these people got up and started to teach false doctrine, slander me, and slander the board members. I have to admit that I didn't know what to do. But now looking at this morning's passage, the word used for command here is a military term. For example, when a sergeant commands his soldiers to complete a task, the order carries the full force of the Company Commander, the Battalion Commander, the Commanding General, the President of the United States who is the Commander in Chief, and the Code of Military Justice. I think this is a very important point for pastors and leaders. When Paul told Timothy to command these false teachers to stop, the command carried the authority all the way from the church's Commander and Chief, God Himself. Paul is clear here that Timothy is to tell these false teachers to stop teaching false doctrine and to stop creating allegories, illustrations, and stories that are confusing. People at our church were teaching false doctrines concerning the nature of church structure, concerning the biblical description of relationships between church leaders and the congregation. One person actually claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to teach false doctrine. Further, as far as harmful allegories, I was referred to as

Satan's virus and the board was described as being infected with Satan's virus. The board and I were accused of misappropriating funds and deviously making plans secretly. The board and I were accused of not being fair with people in leadership positions that had repeatedly acted out sexually. Again, I have to say once again that the mediator said that none of these charges made against me or the board were true. They all proved to be lies.

However, that is neither here nor there. I laid out this situation in order to show where the board and I failed to take action against these people swiftly and publicly. According to this passage, it seems to me that we should have publicly and aggressively rebuked these people, their lies, and their false teaching. We should have immediately commanded them to repent and if they refused, we should have disciplined them swiftly.

Here is what I reasoned, even though it was wrong. Since I played sports at a competitive level for a long time, I learned that whoever retaliated was the one usually caught by the umpire and thrown out of the game. Let me give you an example. I played shortstop. If a runner slid into second base and then elbowed me as he popped up, the umpire would almost never catch that. However, if I lost my cool and shoved the guy or punched him, the umpire would see that and I would be ejected from the game. So I guess that unconsciously I had formed a thinking pattern in my brain that said retaliation will never turn out well. Therefore, I remained quiet and urged the board to remain quiet. What we did was then carefully research and write an answer to all the lies, accusations, and false doctrines. We simply responded to all the attacks by calmly informing the congregation we would answer all these charges in a written document. After we completed the document, we invited all who were involved in this rebellion to come in and work towards reconciliation before we publicly released the document. And then finally, we released the written response to the congregation. That proved to be too little too late.

Read carefully what Paul says here at the end of verse 4. People who teach false doctrine and spread stories promote controversy and as a result God's work is put on hold. As verse 5 points out the goal of this command is love that comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Next week will see that leaders are to build up the congregation in faith, love, and unity. False teachers threaten that unity. These kinds of people end up causing division in the church. By failing to rebuke these people swiftly, publicly, and aggressively we allowed to division to ravage our church. That will not happen that way again.

But the damage does not end at division. Verses 6-7 illustrate the damaging effect of false teaching leading to confusion. Here is one of the most frightening things about false teachers. They lead people astray. They draw people's attention away from our primary mission of a church to accomplish God's work in the neighborhood it finds itself in. Listen to verse 6:

"⁶Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk" (1 Timothy 1:6 / NIV).

It seems to me that many people were led astray by these false teachers. People were unwilling to really search out facts and get at the truth. People just started repeating the lies and spreading false stories. Even to this day, there are a few here that are still operating on what they have heard other people say or tell them. And there are a few who are still holding on to personal opinions that have no grounding in any truth whatsoever. When false teachers are aloud to

spread false teaching and false information, people become confused and actually start to believe and live by false doctrine and start to make harmful decisions that affect them and others around them. I have come to believe that ultimately, the confusion caused by false teachers never really disappears totally. There is always residual damage and confusion that remains behind. I really do feel badly for the few who continue to remain confused and divided.

Again, by allowing all this stuff to go on for so long, was a horrible mistake I made and the board allowed it to go on as well. The more I read these passages, the more I'm convinced I should have fought back early and aggressively. I'm pretty sure the board feels that as well. Again this is no excuse but I can tell you another reason I failed to act. I never in my wildest imagination thought people would even be tempted to believe these lies, slander, and false teachings. My thought that the false doctrines and the false accusations were so far over the top that no one could possibly be confused. That assumption turned out to be wrong as well. I have served here faithfully for 18 years. Most of the board members involved had served faithfully for many, many years. I have never handled or touched money. I have no idea what people give. I have devoted myself whole-heartedly to ministering here at Devon. I resigned my commission in the Army. I resigned my position from college teaching, and I have almost never accepted an outside speaking engagement. I have devoted myself totally to serving you. I know that the board has devoted themselves totally to serving you as well. So for some of you to be confused by the lies and slander, we were in total shock. I also thought that we had a congregation that read, studied, and understood the Bible, yet by the lack of outright support, that proved to be a false assumption as well. In the future, we will make no assumptions. We will just meet false teachings and malicious people head on.

I think another reason we have to take on false teachers quickly, aggressively, and publicly is because as verse 7 points out, false teachers are led by delusion. I'd like quote Paul here:

"⁷They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm" (1 Timothy 1:7 / NIV).

The thing about false teachers is that they often view themselves smarter, more competent, and more important, than in fact they really are. In church, these false teachers think they are the informal leaders of a church. They enjoy being looked up to. They fancy themselves righteous, mature, and very capable at handling the word of God. Oftentimes people want to establish themselves as leaders because they have been overlooked in the past. Look, Paul is pretty clear about this. They have deluded themselves into thinking they are righteous and competent. They gather together and feed one another's egos. I can tell you that the mediator told me that he met with all the people concerned and when he challenged their theology and the way they handled Scripture, they simply kept arguing with him and telling him that he was wrong. He said that they continued to believe they were right. From a pastor's perspective, it is frightening to see people be so blinded and deluded. I had taught here and preached here for 18 years, had ministered to all these people faithfully. I had never lied to them and yet they refused to believe the truth as I told it to them and as the mediator told it to them. It's frightening to see people blinded and deluded. Again, this whole thing took me by surprise and I didn't know what to do, especially since it's not in my nature to even want to deal with this kind of stuff. **CHURCH LEADERS ARE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING FALSE TEACHING.**

CHARGED TO NEUTRALIZE FALSE TEACHERS (TITUS 3:8-10)

Finally, pastors and leaders are charged to neutralize false teachers as described in Titus 3:8-10. In other words, **CHURCH LEADERS ARE COMMANDED TO DISCIPLINE FALSE TEACHERS.** I have to tell you, this is a task that I don't really like. I tend to always be too Pollyannaish. I tend to make excuses for people because I want to always think the best. I know that disciplining people is also a distasteful task for board members. As we listened to the mediator chide us, we realized that as we looked back, we should have been exercising some sort of church discipline for years. Let me just tell you this. I still find exercising church discipline as a really distasteful thing. I don't like to do it. I'm pretty sure that there are no board members who would in any way enjoy this task. However, we must do it if required in order to ensure the church is healthy.

Verse 8 in Titus 3 lays out the purpose of the church. Please bear with me one more time as I quote from Ephesians. After emphasizing that we are saved by grace through faith, Paul goes on to explain what our purpose is once we are saved:

“¹⁰For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10 / NLT).

Our purpose as individual believers and as a church is to accomplish all the good works God has planned for us ahead of time. We should be about the business of preaching the Gospel and ministering to the people God brings into our lives. Look at another little sentence in the Titus verse, “These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.” This requires that every Christian understands that the good of the community is much more important than our own individual desires and needs. There is no doubt as to why our society is in decline. We have taught and promoted individualism. We have become a nation of narcissists. The real disaster is when people bring this “me-first-attitude” into the church. The church is not a place we come to get our needs met. The church is a place we come to get trained to do ministry in this lost and hurting world. Church is not a place we come to feel good. Church is a place where we allow God to search us and know us, and to point out any wicked ways we still have in us. It is a place where we come and allow God to mold us and make us into the Christian community He wants us to be.

I think this is also worth reading. At the beginning of verse 8. Paul says that this is a trustworthy saying. What saying is he referring to? Let me just read how he described it in verses 1-7:

“¹Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ²to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

³At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ

our Savior,⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:1-7 / NIV).

So you see, we are saved by God’s grace and because of His incredible love. The church is not a building or an institution. It is all individual Christians joined together by the Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ as the head. We are to carry on the work Jesus left us with. Pastors and leaders are charged with teaching the truths of Scripture. My sermons are recorded both by word and transcript and placed on our website. I hand out outlines each week and warn you if I think my interpretation may be even a little off. Anyone can go to our website and check out if what I preach is biblical or not.

Verse 9 lays out the effect of false teaching. These false teachers and self-appointed leaders cause arguments and quarrels about stuff that doesn’t benefit anyone. They are divisive and simply interested in serving themselves and getting their own needs and agendas met. They will destroy a church.

Verse 10 describes the fate of false teachers. The mediator also quoted this verse to us several times:

“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (Titus 3:10 / NIV).

I can’t begin to tell you how badly we failed at this. We should have sternly warned people to stop spreading lies, false accusations, and slander. We should have warned them to quit teaching false doctrine. We should have disciplined several people. But we didn’t. These were not little things like the color of the carpet or the songs we choose in worship. These were full blown harmful false teachings. These teachings undermined the nature of biblical leadership and undermined the structure of the church. The accusations were lies and were hurtful. In the end, the whole character and competence of the leaders were brought into question. I can promise this will not happen without a fight in the future. The point here is clear. **CHURCH LEADERS ARE COMMANDED TO DISCIPLINE FALSE TEACHERS.**

There is no doubt the mediator was correct when he took us aside and said we dropped the ball by first of all not disciplining these people. We dropped the ball by allowing them to spread this poison. We especially dropped the ball in resigning. **CHURCH LEADERS ARE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF PROTECTING THE CONGREGATION FROM FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE THEOLOGY.**

Look, I now realize that I should have gotten up and fought this publicly. I should have challenged these people right away and I should have asked the board to discipline. I know the board feels the same way. Here is what we could have done and should have done. This is what we will do in the future. We should have stayed and fought to censure these people and have them disciplined publicly. If they chose to fight, we should have brought it to a congregational vote. If the congregation chose to follow them, then so be it, you could simply vote us out. But my promise is this. I will make sure that false teachings and the divisive people are exposed and brought out into the open. And we will take the appropriate action. We will not go away in

silence. If you are truly the sheep of this congregation, then we as shepherds will protect you. I promise.