

## 2. The task of elders

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Jesus told us in His Gospels about the responsibility of much blessings from the Lord:

*Luke 12:48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

"To whom much is given" can be abundant finance, good health, sound minds, spiritual gifts and blessings. If you are one of those blessed recipients from God, when you see Him in heaven, He will ask you what you've done with all those blessings. You'd better have a good answer for it.

There are a good number of Christians who think that it would be nice for them to be pastors or elders even though they don't have the call of God in their lives. I would recommend them to do something else except to be pastors and elders, if they don't have calls of God. Because without His call, it is a miserable thing to be a pastor or elder. Because you have to do everything with your own strength without God.

Those people without calls of God want the spiritual position for their own satisfaction. They are selfish.

Tonight we are going to see apostle Paul advising his spiritual son Titus to beware of false teachers who defile the call of God for the sake of their own personal gain.

### A. SILENCE FALSE TEACHERS

*Titus 1:10-11 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.*

It did not take long for false teachers to arise in the early church. Wherever God sows the truth, satan quickly shows up to sow lies. Titus faced an enemy similar to that described in 1 Timothy – a mixture of Jewish legalism, man-made traditions and mysticism.

In these two verses, we find out the characters and the motives of false teachers:

#### 1) The characters of false teachers

These false teachers would not submit to God's Word or to the authority of God's servant, because they were unruly. NKJV renders 'insubordinate.' NASB and NIV translate it as 'rebellious.' They are all good translations. Beware of teachers who will not put themselves under authority and accountability.

*1Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.*

God has established an order of authority in several different areas of life. There is an order of authority in the home, in the church, in the workplace and in the community. God wants us to recognize the places where He has placed an order of authority in our lives, and He wants us to submit to that authority.

If there were many contentious and “problem people” among God’s people in Paul’s day, we should also expect that there would be such people today. And there are still many insubordinate.

If you’ve noticed, there is not one single false teachers who doesn’t have silver tongue. They all talk smooth and pious outside, but there is no content or substance. When you boil it down, it is nothing but hot air.

I’ve learned that if I want to find out what kind of person I converse with, all I have to do is just let that person talk. Pretty soon, I can learn a lot about that person whether he is sincere or just full of hot air trying to impress others with a bunch of lies.

It is interesting to see how one false teacher copies another’s doctrines to use for his or her own selfish gain. It is not just apostle Paul’s day, but also happens today.

The great tragedy is that they deceive people by their false doctrines. They claim to be teaching truth, but they are peddlers of error. Because they themselves were deceived by satan, they deceived others, teaching things they ought not to teach.

## **2) The motives of false teachers**

There are two motives for false teachers to do what they do: Fame and money. It is certainly not that they care about the people around them. It is all about themselves.

They were not ministering to the church. Rather they were using religion to fill their own pockets. A true servant of God does not minister for personal gain, rather he ministers to help others grow in the faith.

I am sure that many of you have seen several so-called TV evangelists get into money spells to generate tremendous amount of income for themselves. People are gullible enough to send their money to these con-artists. That baffles my minds. Can they not see what fake they are?

## **B. THE PROBLEMS AND THE SOLUTIONS**

*Titus 1:12-14 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.*

The people of Island Crete didn’t have a very good reputation. Even their own people criticized. Their reputation as liars, evil doers and lazy gluttons were so notorious that the Greeks actually formed a verb ‘kretizein’, which means to lie and to cheat.

I know another Greek city had just about the same kind of reputation: Corinth. Corinth represented a life style of loose living. In fact, the immorality of Corinth became so widely known that the Greek verb ‘korinthiazomai’ – to “Corinthianize” – was coined to describe a person who lived a sexually immoral life.

These false teachers tried to teach the things they ought not to, such as Jewish legalism that came through circumcision and Jewish fables which probably described their fanciful interpretations of the genealogies in the Old Testament.

The teaching of legalism is in two phases – one is that you are saved by the Law, and the other is that you are to live by the Law. Both of these teachings are wrong and very dangerous.

We are saved by the grace of God and are actually called to live on a higher level than that of the Ten Commandments. When God says, "You shall not kill," for the legalistic Jews, as long as there is no physical murder, he has not done anything wrong. But for born-again Christian, we are told not to even have a bad thought about that person, because the thought itself is sin against God.

The attitude of some people is, "It makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you believe something." Apostle Paul would not agree with that foolish idea. It makes all the difference between life and death whether or not we believe the truth of the Word or believe lies. We can choose what we want to believe, but we cannot change the consequences.

Two of the false interpretation methods false teachers use is interpreting the Bible in an allegorical manner and personal revelation. They say that the texts of the Bible says this way, but the actual meaning is that. They also claim that God personally reveal something totally different to that false teacher in person.

When the plain sense of Scripture makes good sense, seek no other sense. There is no need to find "deeper meanings" to the plain teachings of the Word of God. Such an approach to the Bible enables a false teacher to find anything he is looking for! That is how people end up having 'isogesis' style doctrines.

### **C. TO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE**

*Titus 1:15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.*

Titus 1:15 is one of those verses that some ignorant people try to use to defend their ungodly practices. "To the pure, all things are pure" is used to excuse all sorts of sin.

Even though the contexts is about eating food since apostle Paul talked about the Jewish legalism, this principle must not be limited in food, but also in applying to things that we know are evil. The difference, for example, between great art and pornography is more than "in the eye of the beholder." For a believer to indulge in sinful, erotic experiences and claim that they were pure because his heart was pure, is to use the Word of God to excuse sin.

If our heart is pure before God, all things are pure. But for a person whose mind is corrupt and polluted, everything is filthy. How important it is that we keep our minds pure and undefiled! Apostle Paul talks about this in Philippians:

*Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

But for those who allow their minds to dwell on impure thoughts, they will always live with the worldly pollution of a corrupt mind. To those who watch worldly entertainment, and who hang around with people who talk dirty, and who listen to filthy jokes and stories, their minds become corrupted, and everything they hear sounds dirty. It is so hard to get something filthy out of our minds, once we put it in.

8 But if we remain pure, our minds will be uncorrupted, and we will see things and hear things in the best and most positive way possible.

## **D. DISQUALIFIED**

*Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*

Doesn't this sound like what is happening in America now? The majority of people in the U.S.A. claims that they know God or they are Christians, but the way they live is anything but God's way. They profess to know God, but in works and lives they deny Him. Talk is cheap.

Ceremonies and rituals cannot change the evil heart of man. Only the Word of God can change the human heart. When the heart is changed, the life will reveal the change. Apostle Paul and James were never in disagreement – they both said that faith without works is dead. Saving faith produces a godly life. As John Calvin said, "Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone."

The word 'disqualified' used in here is the same word from 1 Corinthians 9:26-27.

*1 Corinthians 9:26-27 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

The Greek for 'disqualify' is 'adokimos'. In my opinion, this is one of the most frightening words for any Christian leaders, even lay people. Because by our own choice, we make ourselves 'DISQUALIFY' from the race we are running to the goal of the glory of God.

Ah yes, there are many obstacles, temptations, distractions and brutal enemy force waiting for us in our course. But none of that makes us to be disqualified, but ourselves. Once we start to compromise and start to deny the holy living we need to keep, we are starting an erosion.

## **E. APPLICATIONS**

**1) The only weapon against satan's lie is God's truth from the Bible.**

The Bible has the final authority, not men's opinion.

**2) We can choose what we want to believe, but we cannot change the consequences.**

**3) When we face false doctrines, we must immediately reject it from the beginning. Otherwise, it will spread throughout our midst.**