

Overwatch Elders

Titus 1:10-16

Intro

Last week we considered the ***Qualifications for Elders*** and one of the elements that we touched on was the idea that an elder is an ***overseer*** — that an elder is one who is on ***overwatch duty***...

*I believe that the **overwatch duty** of an elder is written about in...*

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- [expand — overwatch team works from an elevated position — the overwatch team is ***literally above*** the assault team but it is in that elevated position in order to ***serve*** the assault team...]

*I did a little research and found that an **overwatch team** has four primary objectives...*

1) Observation — the overwatch team must be in a physical position to see and understand the situation at hand...

2) Security — the overwatch team must secure their own position so that they are able to serve the assault team...

3) Communication — the overwatch team must be in communication with the assault team so that they may coordinate their mission...

4) Fire Support — the overwatch team must be willing to fire on enemy positions in order to protect the assault team...

- [expand — we should expect our elders to fulfill each of these objectives — ***observation / security / communication / fire support...***]

*With this in mind, I will read the passage that we will be studying this morning in a message I have entitled **Overwatch Elders**...*

Titus 1:10-16 (NKJV)

10 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.

12 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.

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.

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

Let's move into our first section...

1) Situation Report (vs 10-13a)

Before we move into vs 10, we should remind ourselves of the context by reading the passage that we studied last week...

Titus 1:5-9 (NKJV)

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled,

9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

- [expand on vs 9 — qualified elders must hold fast to the word of God — and by sound doctrine (*right teaching*) exhort and convict those who contradict the truth...]

This is the subject that Paul expands on as we move into vs 10...

10 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

From this verse we learn that Titus had a big job in front of him on the island of Crete — because there were many who were causing trouble for believers...

insubordinate — *refusing to submit to authority, undisciplined, disobedient, rebellious...*

idle talkers — *given to vain talking or disputes about trivial things — e.g. podcasters...*

deceivers — *mind-deceiver, mind-misleader...*

*To remind ourselves of the first **insubordinate, idle talking, deceiver**, please turn to...*

Genesis 3:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- [expand — false teachers are always *dangerous* and *destructive* — elders must be diligent in their oversight duties...]

Please turn back to Titus 1 as we look once again at vs 10...

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision

As we consider the context, it is likely that Paul is writing about the **Judaizers** — those who taught that it was not enough to believe in Christ but that you also had to keep the law of Moses...

- [expand — Judaizers followed Paul around in the book of Acts / book of Galatians...]

Now, the legalism of the Judaizers and others always causes the legalist to miss the point...

Because legalism is always about **self** and the pursuit of **self-righteousness** — and this is a **hopeless pursuit...**

- In contrast, Christianity is about turning **from self** and **turning to God** — it is about receiving **Christ's righteousness** through faith in Him...

I believe that the Lord Jesus pointed this out in...

John 5:38-40 (NKJV)

38 “But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.

39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

Continuing on Titus 1, Paul writes in vs...

11 whose mouths must be stopped,

Paul makes it absolutely clear that those who teach false doctrine *must be silenced; they must be muzzled...*

- [expand — false teaching should not be allowed to take root in the church — elders must take action to protect the people...]

Continuing on in vs 11...

whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not,

subvert — *to overturn or overthrow; to ruin one’s inner well-being...*

Unfortunately, these ungodly teachers were overthrowing the faith of entire households through their false doctrine...

- And it is important to understand that **households** are the building blocks of the church — if the faith of households are overturned then eventually that fellowship will fall...

But it is not *only* about the **households** or the church fellowship as ideas — it is about the **individuals** who make up the households and the church fellowship — ***individuals whom God loves...***

- If elders do nothing to stop the false teachers that seek to infiltrate the church then those elders are ***guilty of dereliction of duty...***

[expand — overwatch team — seek to stop the advancement of enemy forces to protect the assault team...]

- Now, we understand that Titus and the elders that he appointed were to step in and stop the false teaching — but this was not to involve *physical violence...*

Paul makes this clear in...

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV)

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Now, elders are able to fulfill this calling of **pulling down strongholds** and **casting down arguments** by clothing themselves in the armor of God, by abiding in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and by diligently studying the Word of God...
[expand]

- [expand — importance of **discipline** in the life of an overwatch elder...]

Continuing on in Titus 1:11, Paul writes that the false teachers teach what they do...

for the sake of dishonest gain.

And this is how it has been all throughout history — false teachers are motivated by the *profit* that they can receive from the people that they are deceiving...

Peter wrote of these sort of false teachers in...

2 Peter 2:3 (NKJV)

3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words...

Whenever we listen to a teacher we should ask ourselves the following question...

“Is this teacher trying to get something out of me?” — [send him money, buy his books, go to his seminars or conferences?...]

Continuing on in Titus 1 to vs 12-13...

12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

13 This testimony is true.

Ouch! Apparently the people of Crete had a very bad reputation in Paul's day — and Titus was to be aware of this...[expand]

With that said, let's move on to our second and final section...

2) Mission Objectives (vs 13b-16)

Continuing on in vs 13, Paul instructs...

Therefore rebuke them sharply,

rebuke — *to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing...*

sharply — *severely, rigorously...*

From this command to Titus we understand that those who were teaching falsely must be *confronted in a strong manner...*

- And this makes sense, because ***if a person is bold enough to teach what is false — then elders must be bold enough to rebuke them...***[expand]

*And please notice that this confrontation is for the good of the people **and** for the good of the one who is teaching falsely...*

Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

sound in the faith — *free from error; correct...*

The goal of this strong rebuke is two-fold...

1) The strong rebuke is to protect the people of the fellowship by eliminating false teaching from the fellowship...

2) The strong rebuke is to help the false teacher see the error of his ways — receive correction and instruction — and then get on the right path...

Becoming **sound in the faith** will be a blessing for both the teacher and for the one who listens to them...

And this can happen as the one who was teaching falsely repents and chooses to bring their teaching in line with the Bible...

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Continuing on in Titus 1 to vs...

14 not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

Jewish fables — *tales, legends, stories, myths...*

commandments of men — *man-made rules and regulations...*

False teachers commonly reject the truth of the word of God and substitute their own commandments instead...

To see this, let's first turn to...

Matthew 15:1-9 (NKJV)

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" —

6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

DANGER — Obeying the commandments of men generally results in disobeying the commandments of God...[expand]

Now let's turn to...

Colossians 2:20-23 (NKJV)

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—

21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”

22 which all concern things which perish with the using—
according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Obeying the **commandments of men** is a way of ***fighting the flesh with the flesh*** — it will not result in spiritual change because it is ***not aided by the Spirit of God or by the grace of God...***

- However, God will aid us by His Spirit and by His grace if we are willing to do things His way — if we will seek to obey His commandments...[*2 Greatest Commandments*...]

Let's turn back to Titus 1 as we move into vs...

15 To the pure all things are pure,

In other words, the one who trusts in the righteousness of Christ — the one who is purified by Christ — doesn't need to bother with outward things to seek purity...

For more on this topic, let's turn to...

Romans 14 (NKJV)

1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

**11 For it is written:
"As I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."**

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Back to 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.

For the person who refuses to trust in Christ for righteousness, *they must try to become righteous through their own works* — and they can never make it — they can never become righteous in that way...

- *And I believe that this is reason why the Pharisees were so angry — because their mind and conscience were defiled...*

They knew they were impure — but they could never become righteous through their works...

- So they lived false lives of self-righteousness legalism — but they could never experience peace and joy in the Lord because the Lord refused to aid them in their selfish quest...

16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him,

These defiled unbelievers claim that they know God but their works tell the real story — their works show that they do not know God at all...

In contrast to these guys, the Lord Jesus says in...

Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

We also read in...

John 6:28-29 (NKJV)

28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

So, two of the primary marks of a true teacher are a ***trust in the Lord Jesus*** and ***good works that glorify God the Father...***

Continuing on in Titus 1:16 we read that these false teachers

profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

From this list it seems like we should be able to spot false teachers...

abominable — *something that causes disgust...*

disobedient — *unwilling to be persuaded; unteachable...*

disqualified for every good work.

Was used of coins or metal that didn't measure up...

- Unapproved, not meeting the standard; rejected, worthless...

Unless these false teachers repented they would be unable to do any good work — they would be unable to do anything that pleased God...

Conclusion

*We will stop here for today — but before we move into our time of communion I will remind you of four things you should be looking for in **overwatch elders**...*

*1) **Observation** — elders should be aware of the situation at hand and make decisions accordingly...*

*2) **Security** — elders should make sure that their personal walk with the Lord is healthy because they will not be able to minister to others if they are not secure in their relationship with the Lord...*

*3) **Communication** — elders should communicate clearly with those that they are watching over so that those that they are watching over may fulfill the mission that God has called them to...*

*4) **Fire Support** — elders must be willing to confront false teachers so that the people of the fellowship will not be overthrown and so that the false teachers might repent...*