

1. Behaviour that befits the gospel

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Date: 15 July 2007

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn, friends, if we may, to Titus chapter 1 on page 998.

And as I think I mentioned earlier on, my plan, God willing, is for us to study this short but important letter over three Sunday evenings, possibly four Sunday evenings. I haven't quite worked that out yet, either three or four.

But we'll take as our general title, Behaviour that Befits the Gospel. Behaviour that Befits the Gospel. Now, I've chosen that title because throughout this letter, Paul shows us that his chief concern is that the Christian churches, in this case on the island of Crete, but the Christian churches should behave well in a way that is fitting to the Gospel of Christ.

Let me show you some of the main instances of this in the letter. Have a look with me at verse 7 in chapter 2, where Paul is writing to Titus himself and speaking about his own influence in the churches.

Show yourself in all respect to be a model of good works. A model of good works. So, the people are to follow the example of Titus.

[1 : 11] Chapter 2, verse 13. Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Chapter 3, verse 1. Remind them, that's the church members, to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. Chapter 3, verse 8.

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. You're getting the idea.

Verse 14 of the same chapter. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works. And as a foil to all this, look back to chapter 1, verse 16, where Paul is talking about false teachers, unwholesome teachers, and he writes, they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. So, a false Christianity or a debased Christianity will stop people from being able to live well.

[2 : 29] Whereas the wholesome Christianity, which is taught by the apostles, fits people to live a strikingly renewed life, characterized by what Paul calls good works.

Now, the place of good works and renewed behavior in New Testament Christianity is always as the fruit of the gospel. It's the gospel that comes first and transforms a person and causes a revolution.

The gospel grips us first and then the lifestyle follows second. So, you cannot say to a person who is not a Christian, live like a Christian.

That person needs to be converted first. It would be rather like commanding a pig to fly. But once a person is a Christian, then the Christian lifestyle and behavior begins to be seen.

And Paul's concern in this little letter is with the Christian behavior of the Christian people for whom Titus is responsible. So, let me sketch in the background to the letter.

[3 : 33] It was written by the apostle Paul, we don't quite know in which year, but almost certainly in the 50s AD, to Titus, who was one of his most trusted lieutenants in the work of planting churches and building them up in the eastern Mediterranean area.

Now, remember, Paul's work, Paul's lifeblood, Paul's meat and drink, was to travel as far and wide as he could, preaching the good news about Jesus and planting congregations.

His vision was nothing short of the evangelization of the world. But to put this in musical terms, Paul was never a soloist. He was the leader of a fairly big orchestra.

And his most significant fellow players were people like Timothy, Silas, Barnabas, Luke and Titus.

Titus is mentioned in Galatians briefly and at rather more length in 2 Corinthians, where he features

significantly and he has some important work to do.

Titus was a Greek, a Gentile convert. And whenever Paul mentions him, it is always to commend him very warmly. He seems to have been a man of real stature who was able to take on big responsibilities.

[4 : 47] Now, let's notice two things about him from the first chapter of the letter. First from verse 4, Paul writes to him as Titus, my true child in a common faith.

And that term, true child, probably indicates that he'd become a Christian through Paul's ministry. Paul was never married, but he had a large number of spiritual children.

Then secondly, from verse 5, Paul and Titus had obviously been working together on an evangelistic mission to the island of Crete. Now, there's no record in the Acts of the Apostles of Paul carrying out a mission to Crete.

But Acts, of course, does not provide us with an exhaustive history of Paul's activities. And clearly, he and Titus together had been at work in Crete. And the time had come when Paul had left Titus in Crete, had shaken hands with him at the harbour wall, had got on board ship, and had separated from him.

And sometime afterwards, perhaps within a few weeks or months of the separation, Paul had written back to Titus to remind him of what he was supposed to be doing on the island.

[5 : 53] Now, almost certainly, Titus was neither forgetful nor lazy, but even committed people need a poke in the back occasionally with a sharp stick, in case they're tempted to settle down like a jellyfish on the beach.

Now, at first glance, we might think, what on earth has the church in first century Crete got in common with the churches in 21st century Glasgow.

How can a document sent to a church leader in Crete 2,000 years ago have any relevance to the needs of the church in Scotland in 2007?

The answer is, it has enormous relevance. Because the differences between then and there and here and now are trivial and local, whereas the similarities are enormous and universal.

Yes, indeed, first century Crete was dry and hot and rocky and rural, whereas today's Glasgow is wet and chilly and lively and very urban.

[6 : 59] But people are people, and churches are churches, and sin is sin, and the gospel is the gospel the world over. And we would so underestimate Paul if we thought that he was only concerned for a few churches on the island of Crete.

And we'd completely underestimate God if we thought that he had put this letter into the scriptures only for the sake of first century Crete. This letter is here in the New Testament so as to teach vital principles of church life to all the churches between the time of the apostles and the time of the Lord's return.

And if the churches of the 21st century will but listen to Paul's message to Titus and then act upon it, our churches would be transformed and greatly helped.

Now I've got two main points for you this evening from chapter 1. The first one is about good church leadership from verses 5 to 9. And the second one is about bad church leadership from verses 10 to 16.

But before we look at those two main paragraphs there, let me briefly point out something about verses 1, 2, and 3. This is a slightly longer beginning than we often have in Paul's letters.

[8 : 12] He often begins with just a verse or two. But here we have these three verses. And I suspect the reason for this slightly longer beginning is that Paul is wanting to remind his colleague of the commission that God has given to him, Paul, as an apostle.

He's reminding Titus here of the big picture of the gospel. Less Titus should become so concerned with the practicalities of church life in Crete that he might forget how great and eternal is God's plan of salvation.

It is possible, isn't it, to become so concerned with how the Kirk session has spent £10.95p on kitchen equipment that one forgets the glorious big purpose of the church's existence.

So Titus, my boy, Paul is saying, remember our mission as part of the big canvas that God is painting. So what is the purpose of Paul's apostleship, Paul's calling, according to verse 1?

Look at the verse with me. It is for the faith, the knowledge, and the hope of God's elect. In other words, God's church. Now you'll know that Paul more commonly links together faith, hope, and love.

[9 : 27] Whereas here, it's faith, knowledge, and hope. Knowledge of the truth and hope of eternal life along with faith. So Paul's commission, this commission in which Titus is caught up, is to work to bring people to faith.

And then, of course, to nourish and strengthen, and, if you like, pour fertilizer upon that faith. Then to build up their knowledge of the truth. So the maturing Christian, the one who grows strong and joyful and vigorous in the faith, is the Christian whose knowledge of the truth grows and grows. And, of course, this is not simply head knowledge. As Paul explains at the end of verse 1, it's knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness. That's our first hint of this theme of godly good works, which Paul is going to develop as the letter develops.

And this faith and knowledge go hand in hand with the assured hope of eternal life. Now, that is Paul's work, Paul's goal. It's his driving ambition, to spend his energies in the service of building up God's people in their faith, their knowledge of the truth, and their hope of eternal life.

Now, the mention of hope in verse 2 leads Paul to reflect on the source of that hope of eternal life. And that is God himself. And don't you love the very first thing that Paul says there in verse 2 about God?

[10 : 56] God who never lies. Just look down the page to verse 12. Cretans are always liars.

And we'll come to that a little bit later. But God, Paul is saying, never lies. And verse 2, God has promised eternal life from before time began. So it has always been God's purpose to share eternity, to share his home, the heavens themselves, with his beloved people.

That is a great prospect. I wonder if, especially the older ones amongst us, do you ever feel a bit like Victor Meldrew, with one foot in the grave? Well, the answer to one foot in the grave, Isis, is verse 2.

The God who is incapable of lying has promised eternal life to his elect who trust the Lord Jesus. And verse 3, this eternal life, promised in the mists of eternity, has now been disclosed, manifested, broadcast, in God's word through the preaching with which Paul the Apostle has been entrusted. Now, we'd be quite wrong to see these opening three verses as a kind of standard or formulaic introduction. Paul never wastes words like that.

[12 : 15] He's saying to Titus, My brother, think big thoughts about God. Yes, I'm about to give you some very practical instructions about the nuts and bolts of church life, about church leadership, how to train and teach the church members and so on.

But never forget the big and glorious picture of the gospel. That is the backdrop against which you do all your work. The faith, the knowledge, the hope of God's people, all of which stems from God's promise of eternal life.

Alright, let's turn now to our two main sections, verses 5 to 9 and then 10 to 16. And let me point out the link between those two main sections so that we can see where Paul is taking us before we actually set off.

In verses 5 to 9, Paul is directing Titus to appoint the right kind of leaders, the right kind of elders, to lead the churches. And he gives Titus a most searching list of the qualities or qualifications which a man needs to have if he is to be an elder.

But verses 10 to 16 explain why Paul has written as he does in verses 5 to 9. You see, the first word in verse 10 gives the game away.

[13 : 33] Why has Paul written about the good elder in verses 5 to 9? For there are many leaders and influential people about who are insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers, who must be silenced.

And then Paul pulls no punches in telling Titus what these disgraceful people are like. So the reason why Titus is to appoint suitable elders in the churches, remember this scenario here, there are very new churches here in Crete.

They've only been up and running for months or just a year or two, so they need the right sort of leaders. And the reason why Titus is to appoint suitable leaders is that if suitable elders are not appointed, the churches will inevitably be led up the garden path by people who are exerting influence for all the wrong reasons.

Now in a moment, in about 30 seconds, I'm going to ask you to put your hand up if you fall into one of the following categories.

Okay, so listen carefully. First category is you are an elder, either in this church or perhaps at another church and you're visiting here, but you're an elder. Second category, you could see

yourself as being a church elder one day.

[14:46] Maybe not in the next five years, maybe in 20 years, but you could see it happening. Thirdly, you're somebody who has, you're not an elder, but you have a teaching responsibility in this church or perhaps in some other way of teaching the Bible.

Fourthly, you're a man or a woman or a child, we have a few children here, who however vaguely, you're considering the possibility of being a Bible teacher, a missionary, a minister, a gospel worker of some kind.

It may be a very vague thought at this stage, but that thought has been there. You've registered it somewhere between your left ear and your right ear over the last few months and years. All right, now, all those four categories, raise a hand.

Come on. I thought there'd be a few dozen. Thank you very much. All right, hands down. I thought there'd be a number like that. Now, this is an issue, isn't it? I don't know how many hands went up, at least 30, possibly 40.

But it's not only an issue for those who've just put their hands up, it's an issue for all of us. Because even those who haven't put their hands up are likely to be on the receiving end of the ministrations of those who have put their hand up at some future point.

[15:57] It's an issue for all of us, therefore. The right kind of leadership is essential to churches if those churches are to be godly and happy and functioning as they ought to.

So here's our first main section. And let me just encourage you by saying the first section will be rather longer than the second one. So when we finish the first, we'll be almost there. So first main section, verses 5 to 9.

Titus is to appoint the right kind of leaders for the churches. Now, in our modern churches, it's quite striking that the quality of leaders is not always the first concern of denominations.

If you go to meetings of Anglican synods, as I have often in the past, and I guess this is probably just the same in Church of Scotland presbyteries, the discussions will often revolve around questions of structure, organisation, administration, buildings, and money, and especially money. But rarely, if ever, about the quality of leadership. Paul never hesitates to talk about money when he needs to. But in this passage under our nose, he's making the point that godly leadership, humanly speaking, is the key to the strength and the character of good churches.

[17:18] Let's notice then a few points about the eldership of the churches from these verses. First, Paul assumes that there will be a group of elders. Have a look at verse 5.

I want you to appoint elders, plural, in every town, not simply an elder in every town. I think we can safely say that Paul would not have recognised a one-man ministry set-up as a healthy form of Christian leadership.

You'll find that in many churches down in England, and I guess some in Scotland too. So Paul assumes that leadership and responsibility will be shared amongst a group of recognised leaders. Then secondly, as you read verses 5, 6, and 7, it's clear that the elder, or elders mentioned in verse 5, are the same people as the overseer who is mentioned in verse 7.

Paul uses two words in the Greek, *presbyteros*, *presbyter* for elder, and *episkopos*, which translates overseer or bishop, in verse 7, but he's not distinguishing between those two roles or offices, despite church history.

[18:25] And then thirdly, in a modern Presbyterian church like this one, there's clearly an overlap between the role of the elder and the role of the minister. So you think of the Kirk Session, the ordained elders of the church.

They clearly share with the minister the responsibility of caring for church members, encouraging them, and teaching them. But it's also true that the minister has a greater and graver level of responsibility all of his own.

He is, if you like, the head teacher. So the prime responsibility for teaching the church, for training the church, and setting the direction for the church is his.

Of course the elders help him and support him a great deal. But rightly and properly, the minister takes the lead in teaching the Bible and applying the Bible's teaching to the life of the congregation. Now in Paul's day, obviously there wasn't the same kind of developed Presbyterian structure that we're familiar with in the Church of Scotland. But I'm inclined to think that the primary application of verses 5 to 9 is to the people that we think of today as the ministers.

[19 : 35] Now there is indeed an application to those that we think of as elders and to all who are Bible teachers and responsible leaders. But I think it is most true to Paul's thought here if we think first and foremost of ministers and those who are called to roles of senior leadership in the churches as we read about his teaching about elders here.

So what does the suitable senior leader look like? Paul focuses on three aspects of his life. First, on his home and family life.

So verse 6. He is to be the husband of one wife and his children are to be believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

Now isn't that in sharp contrast to the way of the world? You think of the typical interview situation where people are called in to be interviewed for jobs in the secular workplace.

The one thing that you are not supposed to discuss with them is their home and family life, is it? So questions like are you married? is a question you mustn't ask.

[20 : 46] A question like are you faithful to your spouse? is certainly a question that you are not supposed to ask. Do you have children? That too is thought to be a discriminatory question.

So the world fools itself into thinking that matters of that kind don't affect a person's ability to do their job. But they affect it deeply.

The work of the church leader is of course much more than a job. It's a comprehensive way of life. It involves everything a person is and does. Now that's why a church leader if he's married needs to be unshifably loyal to his wife.

Faithfulness within marriage is a subsection of what it means to be faithful to the Lord. When we hear of church leaders who are unfaithful to their wives we immediately know that however gifted they may be they can't really be trusted.

That phrase the husband of one wife means more than simply being legally married to just one woman. It's surely to do with a man's heart and attitude as well.

[21 : 57] He is to be a one woman man to have eyes for no one but his wife whom he cherishes and loves. Now of course Paul is not ruling out the bachelor here.

He was after all a bachelor himself. And he's not ruling out the widower who marries for a second time. But he's telling Titus that the Christian leader in the local church is to be a chaste person and deeply committed to his own wife.

And still in verse 6 his children if he has children are to be believers and not a wild bunch of ne'er-do-wells. The implication is that if a man cannot show effective leadership in his own home he's not going to be equipped to give effective leadership in the congregation.

In verse 6 Paul is probably using the word children to refer to young children who are still at home and still minors and therefore under their parents care rather than grown up children who must now take responsibility for themselves.

But the point of verse 6 is that a man needs to be of such a kind that he's a good model both of marital faithfulness and also of family leadership.

[23 : 10] When I was a parish minister in England there were several times when I had to interview a younger man who was applying for the post of assistant minister. And these younger men were usually married men though often too young to have a quiver full of children.

But when a young man would come and be interviewed I would always look him in the eye and say to him do you love your wife? And I would always say to him are you committed to being faithful to her?

Now if we avoid asking that kind of question of our future church leaders we are not taking our responsibilities seriously. Now secondly in verses 7 and 8 Paul focuses on the leader's character and behaviour and in verse 7 you'll see he lists five qualities that the leader must not possess. Arrogance quick temper drunkenness violence and greed for money. And then in verse 8 he lists six qualities which the leader must possess.

So he needs to be hospitable a lover of good self-controlled upright holy and disciplined. Now aren't these two lists interesting?

[24 : 23] They make uncomfortable reading because they're so searching. Anyone who's a minister or a leader in any way we shrink don't we when we read these lists. We say to ourselves who is sufficient for these things?

They're so searching and so demanding and they're so different from the qualities which are sought in the secular workplace. The secular workplace is looking for flair and energy and the ability to

make lots of money innovation decisiveness opportunism administrative skill and even a certain ruthlessness in dealing with people.

Now flair and energy are no bad things for a church leader to have but Paul is concerned here to go to the inner springs of a man's life in verses 7 and 8. Look at that negative list in verse 7.

That list is probing a person's susceptibility to temptations. Verse 7 opens up five major areas of temptation.

We've already dealt with one in verse 6 and there are these five more pride temper alcohol power and money. Now everybody is tempted in those areas.

[25 : 39] Isn't that true? Everybody. But Paul is saying that the person who is fit for church leadership needs to be someone whose track record is unsullied in those five areas.

A church whose ministers or elders are compromised in any of those areas that church is bound to suffer. The arrogant leader will crush people and leave them unloved.

The quick tempered leader the leader who bursts out angrily will hurt people and will forfeit their trust. The leader who drinks too much will always forfeit people's respect.

The violent leader maybe not physically violent but verbally violent will ride roughshod over others. That can wreak havoc in a congregation and the leader who is greedy for money ends up serving himself rather than other people.

But just let's look now at the positive qualities in verse 8. I won't go through these item by item but let's notice the quality of hospitality first of all. An eagerness to welcome people into the home and look after them to feed them with the fatted calf if necessary and to care for them.

[26 : 50] So the church leader is not somebody who is aloof who lives in a kind of ivory tower and is hard to get access to. He shares his very life with people. Look at the last quality which is mentioned in verse 8.

Disciplined. Now essentially this is the quality of self mastery and self control and it's a fitting climax to the list just as it is the last mentioned of the ninefold fruit of the spirit in Galatians chapter 5.

And self discipline is not simply the climax of verse 8. It's also if you think about it the antidote to all five of the vices of verse 7. It's the absence of self discipline which leads to arrogance to bad temper to drunkenness or violence or the love of money.

Now you folk who put your hands up a few minutes ago and that includes me do you quail as you look at this list in verses 7 and 8 not to mention verse 6 and verse 9 as well.

It's enough to make the archangel Gabriel quail isn't it? But it's here and it's in the Bible. It is not negotiable. And in any case if Paul were to set a lower standard for church leaders we would smell a rat.

[28 : 08] We know it's got to be like this. And let's thank God as we look around the churches that there are so many people who do fulfil these requirements because they are a great blessing those people to the churches that they serve.

So Paul speaks of the church leader's home and family life his character and behaviour and then thirdly of his ability to hold true doctrine tenaciously to teach it and to refute or rebuke those who contradict it.

Now this is an essential task of the church leader to teach the truth of the Bible and also to hold firmly to it. It's a task which requires a certain level of intellectual ability.

Ministers and elders need to have something between the ears and some degree of ability to communicate the truth. But I think verse nine shows us that something more than mental ability is needed.

There also needs to be moral courage. Why should the church leader need to hold firm to the trustworthy word? The answer is because he will be put under strong pressure to relax his grip on it.

[29 : 19] Why should he sometimes need to rebuke or refute people? The answer is because people will sometimes strongly contradict his teaching from the Bible. So he needs to be a person who continues to study the scriptures.

Not only when he's at college, perhaps for a few years in early life, but throughout his life, in his thirties, his forties, his going grey fifties, his going greyer sixties, his increasingly arthritic seventies, his eighties, and if he lives longer, even longer.

He needs to keep going. His convictions, drawn from the Bible, need to be not only strongly held, but as the years pass, they need to be held with increasing depth and understanding.

Only then will he have the maturity of conviction, which is able both to give sound instruction and to refute positions which contradict the word of the Lord.

The Bible teacher needs to be able to teach the truth and expose the lie. Both of those things. Now there's one phrase in Paul's description of the good church leader, which I haven't yet commented on, but it's so important that having said it once in verse six, Paul repeats it in verse seven.

[30 : 42] And it's the little phrase above reproach. Verse six, if anyone is above reproach. Now this doesn't of course mean sinless or flawless. If it meant that, nobody could qualify.

It carries the idea of a public profile that no one can charge with misbehavior. So the church leader needs to be someone around whom there is no whiff of moral suspicion.

So if somebody is put forward as a candidate for leadership or eldership, and people begin to raise questions about his integrity with regard to money or sex or alcohol or bad temper or any form of indiscipline, Paul is saying that such a person ought not to be made a leader.

The good name of the gospel, the good name of the church, is inevitably tied up with the reputation of the leaders. I think that's why our hearts sink and even mourn when we hear of a church leader being accused in public of some kind of bad behavior.

We know that the Lord's name is being dishonored, not just the name of the church and the gospel people. We're now to our second main section, and as I said I'll be much briefer on this one.

[31 : 54] Paul's point here in verses 10 to 16 is that Titus needs to silence to stop the wrong kind of church leader. Now we've already noticed the link between verses 5 to 9 and verses 10 to 16.

The right kind of leaders must be appointed because the wrong kind of leaders, verse 10, are many. Let's ask just two questions of this final paragraph. First, what characterizes the false leader?

And secondly, what is Titus to do about the false leader? So first, what characterizes these people? Well, it's an ugly collection of features. Verse 10, there are many of them.

They are insubordinate. We'll return to that because that's important. They're empty talkers. They have a lot to say. But their talk is vain and it leads people up the garden path.

It's deceptive. Verse 11, their motive is to amass money and they're prepared to ruin whole families for the sake of growing richer. Verse 12, they're liars.

[33 : 03] Look at that quotation which comes from a Cretan or a Greek poet from I think about five or six hundred years before Paul. Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

And Paul says this testimony is true. We perhaps feel rather uncomfortable about ethnic or national stereotypes of that kind. But apparently the people of Crete in those days were infamous over being economical with the truth to the point that the Greeks coined two words.

They coined a verb, Cretizo, which meant to lie or cheat, and they coined a noun, Cretismos, meaning a falsehood. So it was obviously, it was well known around the Greek speaking world.

What else? Verse 14, they devote themselves not to the revelation of God in scripture, but to Jewish myths and the commands of people, people who turn away from the truth.

So they're following men rather than God. And then verse 16, they profess to know God, but their lives deny their words. Now going back to verse 10, it's the word insubordinate which perhaps shows us their character most clearly.

[34 : 19] It means fundamentally unwilling to submit to God's authority. Think of it, God himself speaks from heaven through the scriptures and he reveals his character and his will in the Bible.

And the false teachers blow a raspberry at the divine revelation and they say I will not submit to it. It's the heart of sin, isn't it? Man feels that he knows better than God, so rather than gladly submitting to the Bible, he locks the Bible away in a back cupboard or he treats it as a museum piece.

So secondly, what is Titus to do with these teachers who will not submit to God? Two things, verse 11, they must be silenced, verse 13, they must be rebuked.

Now the Tituses of the 21st century will find it difficult to do those things. It will always be difficult and costly to follow Paul's instructions here, but follow him we must if our churches are to be preserved in health and vigour.

Today's Tituses will be tempted not to follow Paul in perhaps three different ways. first, there will be the temptation to be a defeatist.

[35 : 37] Well, what can you do? People will say these things and who am I to speak out against them? Shrugging. Secondly, there's the temptation to be a pluralist.

Well, everybody has a right to his own opinion, so if the reverend so-and-so down the road says things which don't accord with the biblical truth, maybe he has a valid viewpoint nonetheless. Or thirdly, there's the temptation to be a secessionist, to withdraw.

Our churches are full of false teaching, so let's separate ourselves from our denomination and let the denomination go to the dogs. No. Paul counsels Titus to be none of these things, neither a defeatist, nor a pluralist, nor a secessionist.

Paul's answer to the presence of many false teachers is to appoint true teachers. That's what this chapter is all about. Yes, the false teachers must be tackled, addressed, rebuked, silenced.

Their positions must be exposed for what they really are. So Bible-believing teachers must write against false teaching and preach against false teaching. But the greater answer to false teaching is to multiply true teaching and true teachers.

[36 : 56] So doesn't this first chapter of this little letter challenge us to identify and train and commission the people in our own ranks who match up to the kind of profile that Paul gives us in verses six to nine.

So friends, let's encourage each other and let's nourish big dreams and big thoughts about multiplying true teaching. Let's nourish big thoughts of recapturing our broken down united kingdom for the gospel.

Paul's strategy is God's strategy. Select and train and appoint the right kind of leaders and do it in big numbers. How many leaders and teachers do we send out from St. George's Tron each year? Three or four or five? Something like that? I'm not sure. Shouldn't it be a dozen or fifteen? Just look around these faces here. In God's goodness, a church like ours could be strategically very significant in bringing the gospel back to Scotland and of course further afield as well.

So let's pray friends for our children that they should be missionaries and Bible teachers and preachers, for our teenagers, our young adults and our older adults as well, that over the years many should become leaders and teachers according to this pattern of verses six to nine.

[38 : 21] Let's pray for our training institutions, that they will be vigorous and biblical and joyful and evangelistically fired up. To be a person in the mould of verses six to nine is daunting, but by the grace of God, not impossible.

I suppose we can shy away from it because it seems to be such a lot of hassle and it seems to offer little pay. Well, maybe so, but the Lord can be trusted to sustain true leaders and teachers and to make their work fruitful.

So let's work in our church and think about one another's potential and let's pray that God will stir us up and the people of many other churches too, so that the false teaching of our age will be met and overcome by the teaching of the truth.

Well, let's bow our heads and we'll pray together.