

# The True Gospel and the True Teacher

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 March 2023

Preacher: Edward Lobb

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I said we are going to be reading tonight in Paul's letter to Titus, and we're going to turn there now and read together from Titus chapter 1.

We find Titus towards the end of the New Testament after Paul's letters to Timothy, 1st and 2nd Timothy, then Titus. And I'm going to read the whole of chapter 1.

Titus chapter 1 then at verse 1. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior.

To Titus, my true child in a common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and to appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

[ 1 : 30 ] If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach, mustn't be arrogant, or quick-tempered, or drunkard, or violent, or greedy for gain.

But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sign doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party, and they must be silenced, since they're upsetting whole families or households by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy drunkards. This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

[ 3 : 01 ] To the pure, all things are pure. But to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. But both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, good evening, friends. Let's open up our Bibles at Titus.

Titus chapter 1. The plan, God willing, is that we spend five weeks in this short letter, right through March and into the first Sunday in April.

And I do hope that Paul's message here to his trusted lieutenant, Titus, will grip our minds and fire our hearts. Do let me encourage you to read the whole letter through, perhaps in the next few days when you can at home.

[ 4 : 08 ] Because reading the whole of a New Testament letter gives you a feel for its historical context. And it helps us to get close to Paul. Getting close to Paul is always a bracing experience.

If you ever feel sluggish and peely-wally in the Christian life, reading Paul is like diving into a Scottish river. It's very bracing. Now, I want to take the first nine verses of chapter 1 today.

But before we dive in, let me say a little bit by way of introduction to the whole letter. This man, Titus, is one of Paul's most trusted fellow soldiers in the great work of evangelizing the world.

That was what Paul aimed to do, to evangelize the whole world. Paul had many trusted friends who were fellow workers. Paul was never a solo worker.

We sometimes think of him like that. But he was never like that. He was like an army general who was deploying his troops as skillfully as he could across the Mediterranean region.

[ 5 : 10 ] Now, this particular letter was sent to Titus on the island of Crete. If you have a look at chapter 1, verse 5, you'll see that. This is why I left you in Crete.

Now, there's no record in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul or anybody else went to Crete to preach the gospel. That reminds us, by the way, that the book of Acts is far from being a complete history of the church's first 30 years.

It just gives us a few snapshots of the most significant things that were happening in that first 30 years or so. But clearly, Crete had been visited, and the gospel had been preached there, probably by Paul himself.

And verse 5 shows that small churches had been founded in a number of Cretan towns. And they now needed to be given shape and strength by the appointment of suitable leaders.

So Paul is writing to Titus on the island to remind him of his responsibility to get these churches organized and sorted out. It's not likely, of course, that Titus had forgotten why he was to be on Crete.

[ 6 : 17 ] But Paul wanted to give him strong encouragement to roll up his sleeves and get on with this work. We can't say for certain where Paul was when he wrote this letter, but we may have a clue by looking at the end at chapter 3, verse 12.

3, 12. He says, Now, Nicopolis was a long way away.

It was a town in western Greece, not far from the isle of Corfu, where some of you may have lain in the past on a beach covered with factor 50 sunblock. But chapter 3, verse 12 here shows us that Paul was either already at Nicopolis, or he was on his way there when he wrote to Titus.

And that same verse, 3, 12, shows us also that Paul was not expecting Titus to remain on the isle of Crete forever and a day. Not at all. He was only to be there for perhaps a few months.

Then he was to join Paul at Nicopolis after either Artemis or Tychicus had arrived at Crete to take over leadership on the island from Titus. It's a little example of General Paul deploying his troops.

[ 7 : 31 ] So he's saying to Titus, I'm going to send to you either Artemis or Tychicus. Not quite sure which one it'll be at this stage. But when one of those reaches you, hand the baton on to him and get on the first boat to Nicopolis.

And I'll give you your further marching orders when you get there. Well, now what is this letter all about? To put it very simply, it's about belief and behavior and the relationship between the two.

The purpose of Titus' stay on the island is to teach the Christians how to live. To teach them what godly Christian behavior looks like. What the Christian lifestyle looks like.

But it's always the belief that shapes the behavior. It's the gospel that they believe that determines the way they live. And the way they live, the Christian lifestyle, is almost entirely about the way that they relate to other people.

Godly Christian living is relational. It's about the way we relate to Christian people and to those who are not Christians. And Paul has three areas of life particularly in mind in this letter.

[ 8 : 42 ] The church, the home, and the world or the wider community. Chapter one is largely about the church. What kind of leaders need to be appointed if the church is to be well taught and well disciplined.

And we'll look at that in a few minutes time. Then chapter two is largely about the home. How Christian people at different ages and different stages in life are to behave in a way that honors the Lord.

And chapter three, at least in its earlier part, teaches Christians how to behave in relation to secular authorities. How to engage with people who make and administer the law and to others in the wider community.

So Paul's emphasis throughout the letter is on how to live. How Christians should behave in the church, in the home, and in the world.

And Paul uses the term good works several times to make this point. Look at chapter two, verse 14. A people who are zealous for good works.

[ 9 : 42 ] Or chapter three, verse eight. Believers are to devote themselves to good works. Chapter three, verse 14. Again, people devoting themselves to good works.

And by good works, Paul doesn't narrowly mean acts of charity. I'm sure he would include that. But he means much more broadly a good, wholesome, attractive, godly lifestyle.

But it's the belief that produces the behavior. It's the gospel that generates the godly lifestyle. And there are one or two lovely moments in all the chapters where Paul reminds Titus of the glorious news of salvation that lies behind the radical new lifestyle of the Christian church.

So it's the gospel that shapes Christian behavior. Now, as for Titus himself, he's a rather shadowy figure in the New Testament.

He doesn't appear at all in the Acts of the Apostles. But we know that he was a Gentile. And we can be quite sure that he was a man of considerable quality and toughness.

[10:46] I say that because the one place in the New Testament where he does appear quite a lot is Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. He's mentioned nine times in 2 Corinthians, always with affection and confidence.

Paul trusted him. He was a man that Paul could entrust with difficult and demanding work. He had to grasp some very difficult nettles in the church at Corinth. And there's one moment in 2 Corinthians when Paul says how deeply he was comforted and relieved when Titus finally caught up with him, having been separated from him for a while.

And Titus had journeyed from Corinth and had brought Paul the good news that the church in Corinth was actually in better shape than Paul had feared. So it was a good moment for Paul.

But I think we can say with confidence that Titus and Timothy were Paul's two most trusted lieutenants. They were the men that Paul sent somewhere when there was trouble in a church that needed to be sorted out by a confident leader.

They were Paul's chief troubleshooters. Well, let's turn now to our passage, verses 1 to 9. And I'd like to take it in two sections. First of all, verses 1 to 4, which is the opening introduction, and then verses 5 to 9.

[12:01] And in verses 1 to 4, Paul is reminding Titus of the eternal truthfulness of God and of the gospel. Now, when you look at the first three verses, which are obviously the introduction to the letter, you might ask yourself, but why does Paul need to say all this to Titus?

After all, these two men know each other well. They've been working together for years. This is the kind of basic material which they must have discussed hundreds of times together. Titus knows the truths laid out in verses 1 to 3 like the back of his own hand.

Well, all that is true. Of course, Titus knows these things just as well as Paul does. But Paul is reminding Titus of these things to encourage him. He's not teaching him things that he doesn't know.

He's restating things that he does know so as to bring up freshly into Titus' mind the thrilling truths which are the basis of the Christian faith.

Thrilling, mind-expanding, eternity-embracing truths, the very foundations of Christianity. Paul knows that Titus needs to be thinking frequently about these things because Paul knows that every Christian needs to be frequently dwelling on these great, wonderful realities.

[13:20] We never grow out of needing to keep dwelling on them. If we ever think that we've grown beyond the basics of the gospel, we're in a dangerous place. Now, we don't have the whole gospel here in this short summary.

There's no explicit mention of the cross or the resurrection, though the death and resurrection of Jesus are certainly implied in the phrase, Christ Jesus, our Savior, in verse 4.

But what Paul is emphasizing in verses 1, 2, and 3 is first his own role, and second, the eternal dimensions of God's kind purposes for his people.

So first there's Paul's own role, and he describes himself in verse 1 in two phrases, as a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The first phrase emphasizes his humble lowliness. He is a servant. But the second phrase emphasizes his commanding authority.

[14:22] He is an apostle of Jesus the King. And an apostle is much more than an ambassador or an emissary. The king speaks through him. The apostle is the mouthpiece of the Son of God himself.

And this means that Paul's writings are not secondary. They're not second-class scripture. They are the words of Jesus through the apostle. They carry all the authority of Jesus. And this is why, if you look onto chapter 2, verse 15, Titus is to declare these things, to exhort and rebuke with all

authority.

And says Paul at the end of verse 15, Let no one disregard you. Titus is not himself an apostle. But as he passes on the teaching of the apostle, he must insist on its authority.

In all his dealings with the churches on Crete, he must press home Paul's instructions. And we too, of course, are equally under the instructions of the apostles.

And we can't afford to disregard them any more than the Cretan Christians could. But Paul explains further what his work and role as an apostle of Jesus is.

[ 15 : 33 ] Have a look at verse 1. It is, Now it's a slight change there from Paul's familiar threesome of faith, hope, and love.

Here it is faith, knowledge, and hope. Paul is saying the purpose of his apostleship is to deepen and develop the faith, the knowledge, and the hope of God's elect, the New Testament people of God.

So let's think for a moment about these three words, because they belong very closely together.

Faith and knowledge first. Faith and knowledge. They are two fundamental characteristics of God's people.

And faith and knowledge feed each other and fuel each other. People who are not Christians sometimes think that we Christians have blind faith, as though we're putting our trust in something we can know nothing about.

But the opposite is true. We put our trust in the Lord because we know something about him. Even at the very beginning of the Christian life, we have some knowledge of him.

[ 16 : 47 ] And as time goes on and we study the Bible, our knowledge of him grows immensely, and our faith grows and deepens, fueled by the growth in our knowledge. And let me give a very simple homely example or illustration.

I trust the fish suppers that I buy at the Blue Lagoon. I trust that they are wholesome and not laced with arsenic.

If I didn't trust them, I would take my fish supper to a laboratory and have it tested for poison. But I do trust the man at the Blue Lagoon that he's putting on salt and vinegar when he does this and not salt and arsenic.

But my faith in my fish supper is based on my knowledge that the fish and chip trade in Scotland is a reliable institution that has faithfully served the public for a long time and is not in the habit of employing poisoners to serve fish suppers.

So my knowledge of fish and chip shops, based on rather extensive experience of them, fuels my faith in their product.

[ 17 : 57 ] Now that's a very humdrum example of the way that faith and knowledge build each other up. They work together. It's just the same principle in the Christian life. Our faith, our trust grows as our knowledge grows.

And that's what Paul's apostolic mission is for. It's for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. And this knowledge, verse 2, sustains our hope, which means our sure and certain expectation of eternal life.

And Paul immediately explains why our hope of eternal life is so sure and certain. Look at verse 2. It is because of God, who never lies, promising it before the ages began.

In other words, before the creation of the world, he promised these things. And to put that mildly, that is a long-standing promise. So faith, knowledge, and hope belong together.

And they're rooted in the fact that God never lies. Cannot lie. He has promised eternal life to those who trust him. And that's why we can view our own mortality serenely and without fear.

[ 19 : 05 ] God never lies. Now you and I, even at our best, have at least a tendency to be less than fully truthful. But God never lies.

He promised believers eternal life before Genesis chapter 1, verse 1. And verse 3, this good news has now been manifested to the world through the preaching of the gospel with which Paul has been entrusted.

Now there's a phrase in verse 1 which we need to notice carefully. The faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. Not truth, but the truth.

The truth that comes from the God who never lies. Just to dip into John's gospel for a moment. You know that Jesus speaks of himself there as the truth.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the truth. It is a striking revelation. Startling. So the truth is not a philosophical concept.

[ 20 : 06 ] Not primarily. It's not a logically flawless argument. It's a person. Jesus Christ. Jesus also says in John's gospel, this is towards the end when he's being questioned by Pontius Pilate.

He says to Pilate, I've come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. So Jesus is the truth.

He bears witness to the truth and he speaks the truth. And when Paul uses this phrase, the truth, and he uses it many times in his letters, he means all that is eternally and absolutely true about God.

The truth that is revealed in the scriptures and supremely in the person and accomplishments of Jesus Christ. The whole good news about judgment and salvation.

Paul doesn't blunt the sharp edges of what he's saying by simply speaking of truth. It's the truth. And in a world like ours, which is dominated by half truths, half lies, and total lies, it's a joy and a wonder that we can have knowledge of the truth.

[ 21 : 17 ] But, and here's a problem, our minds have been conditioned because of the intellectual drift of the modern Western world. Our minds have been conditioned to find it very hard to believe that anything can be truly true.

The idea of a single, compelling, overarching truth is very distasteful to the modern world. Educated, atheistic intellectuals would say to us, are you really so naive as to believe in an absolute truth?

Surely it's better to say that everything is infinitely nuanced. Really, there are 500 shades of gray, but nothing in black or white. To which the apostle Paul replies, the Christian rejoices in the knowledge of the truth.

The truth of the Bible and the truthfulness of the Bible began to be doubted in the middle of the 19th century in Europe. At that time, a type of scholarship arose initially in Germany, but it soon spread to Britain and America.

Scholarship which dedicated itself to examining the human origins of the books of the Bible. Now, it's good to delve into the lives of Peter and Paul, the evangelists and the Old Testament prophets, because the Bible, like Jesus, is both human and divine.

[ 22 : 39 ] And to understand the Bible's message most clearly, we need to learn about its human authors as well as about its divine author. It's the words of God through the words of men.

So, for example, Paul's letters come to us much more powerfully and persuasively if we know something of Paul's own life, something of his own joys and sorrows and sufferings. But the problem with this new 19th century scholarship was that it became so interested in the human origins of the Bible, but it largely forgot the divine authorship of the Bible.

It regarded the human authors as frail, fallible men who could not be trusted to make no mistakes. So the understanding of the Bible as God's infallible word began to be diminished.

And Satan's ancient question, did God really say these things? That question began to sound loudly in the studies of English and Scottish ministers as they prepared their sermons in the second half of the 19th century.

But that was the thin end of a wedge. And that wedge has been driven so deeply now into the older denominations like the Church of England and the Church of Scotland that those churches have almost lost touch with the powerful and life-transforming Christianity of the Bible.

[ 24 : 04 ] Now, friends, we mustn't despair. All is not lost. God is never left wondering what to do next. If a section of the Church today is sinking away into oblivion, God can be trusted to have plans.

He has more resources than we can dream of. But for us, let's trust that Paul's words are divine as well as human. And let's rejoice that we can have the knowledge of the truth which accords with the godly lifestyle.

So although this letter to Titus is going to be largely about how Titus is to teach the Christian life to the churches in Crete, Paul begins by reminding his younger friend of the rock-solid basis on which Titus' life is built.

The faith of God's people, their knowledge of the truth, and their sure hope of eternal life which God who never lies promised before the ages began.

Once Titus is reminded of these things, he will have the stomach to get on with the challenging task of doing what Paul is asking of him in the rest of the letter. Well, let's turn now to verses 5 to 9 where Paul describes the qualities required in Christian leaders.

[ 25 : 18 ] So verse 5, this is why I left you in Crete so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

As I directed you. In other words, I've told you before that you must do this and I'm telling you again in clear words because it's absolutely important that you get this right. Appoint elders in every town, the right sort of elders.

Now the unstated assumption behind verse 5 is the belief that churches need leadership. Churches without leadership are like ships without a rudder.

A church needs to be directed. Can you imagine what this church would be like without structures of leadership? However, it's not structures of leadership that Paul is interested in here.

His concern is with the character of the men who are fit to be leaders. There's very little in the New Testament actually about structures of church leadership. Paul does distinguish in 1 Timothy chapter 3 between elders and deacons.

[ 26 : 24 ] Elders are more senior and carry more responsibility than deacons. But just how a church organizes its leadership is not Paul's concern. That's for later generations to work out on the ground.

Now Paul uses two different words for church leaders in this passage. He speaks of elders in verse 5 and an overseer in verse 7. But Paul uses these two terms interchangeably.

He's not talking about two different roles here. In Paul's language, elders are overseers and overseers are elders. As far as we're concerned today, the modern equivalent is primarily those who are commissioned into pastoral ministry.

Though there are many other people who have senior responsible roles in the church and they mustn't think that they have nothing to learn from verses 6 to 9. But it's primarily the pastors that Paul has in mind.

So it's not leadership structure, it's the character of the leaders that Paul is concerned about. And it's clear from this paragraph that the leaders are to be men.

[ 27 : 30 ] It's only those who have not read Paul carefully who complain that he is misogynistic. Paul is nothing of the sort. It's clear from other passages in Paul, particularly Romans chapter 16, that he has great respect and admiration for many Christian women and many of the ones that he knew held responsible positions in the churches.

But the role of the elder or the overseer is a role for men, but not for any and every man. And here's where the passage is so challenging, because these leaders must be men of a certain character.

And if there's one dominant quality that stands at the center of this profile, it's the quality of self-discipline or self-control, as we'll see in a moment. But let's start at the top of the list.

First, verse 6, the elder must be above reproach. And Paul expands that a little bit in verse 7, an overseer as God's steward, as God's steward must be above reproach.

So if he's God's steward, it means he's entrusted with the responsibility of dispensing good food to the household. He's a responsible butler. He must bring all the truth out of the Lord's storerooms and cupboards and present it in bite-sized pieces to the hungry family.

[ 28 : 51 ] But as God's steward, he must be above reproach. And Paul uses that phrase twice in verse 6 and again in verse 7 for emphasis. Above reproach doesn't mean flawless or sinless.

If it did, nobody could qualify. What it means is that his character must have nothing about it which could subject him to allegations or accusations, allegations of any kind of improper behavior.

Pastors and elders occupy a public office so their public reputation is important. They're scrutinized by the world as well as by the church. So what is required?

Well, first, from verse 6, he needs to be a man who keeps his marriage vows, both in the spirit as well as in the letter. In our ESV Bible, the phrase is the husband of one wife.

But Paul's Greek, and I think there's a footnote on this, Paul's Greek literally reads a man of one woman. Or we might say a one woman man. A man who has eyes only for his wife.

[ 30 : 00 ] A man who not only knows the commandment you shall not commit adultery, but has learned to hate the very idea of adultery. Women members of a congregation need to be able to trust their leaders in this way.

They need to know that they're not even going to be flirted with, let alone subjected to improper advances. And when pastors go wrong at this point, great damage is done to a church because trust is broken down and it is not easily rebuilt.

So, brother leaders, we have to take very great care over our behavior in all of this. Relationships between men and women in a congregation are rather like a Ming vase.

Very precious but easily broken. Now, Paul's concern in verse 6 is not only for marital fidelity. He's also concerned about the quality of a leader's family life, that his children are believers and not running wild or behaving in a debauched and lawless fashion.

The word used for children here refers to younger children who are minors and therefore still under their parents' responsibility. You may know that in 1 Timothy chapter 3 there's a parallel passage to this one in Titus chapter 1, almost identical but slightly different.

[ 31 : 18 ] In the 1 Timothy passage, Paul adds that if a man doesn't know how to manage his own household, how can he possibly manage the Lord's church? There's a powerful logic there.

If he can't run and discipline the lives of a small number of people under his own roof, he's not likely to be able to organize and manage a much larger number of people in the church.

Really, a church leader's role boils down to two main areas of responsibility. To teach the truth and to take care of the Lord's family.

And a man's ability to care for the church will be a reflection of his ability to manage life in his own home. We must move on now to verses 7 and 8.

Look with me halfway through verse 7 and you'll see the word not. He must not be. And then look at the beginning of verse 8 and you'll see the word but.

[ 32 : 20 ] Bible truth is often clarified with a not this but that structure. And that's what we have here. Five negatives in verse 7 followed by six positives in verse 8.

We need the negatives just as much as the positives. So here are the negatives in verse 7. I'll just comment briefly on each. First, he must not be arrogant. Leadership positions can bring a certain prestige and a man can begin to think ah, I'm rather important around here.

I'll throw my weight around. I won't listen to any criticism. I'll have my way. And he can become overbearing and autocratic. No, says Paul, not that.

Second, not quick tempered. The Greek word means choleric or peppery, short fused. Now pastors quite often have to tangle with really difficult and demanding situations, situations that require a lot of patience.

so the temptation can be to get cross. Grr! That was cross. No, says Paul, no, not like that. Thirdly, not a drunkard.

[ 33 : 33 ] The Bible never requires teetotalism, but a church leader who drinks excessively cannot be fit to lead or teach. Fourth, not violent. The 1 Timothy passage adds the words but gentle.

Not violent, but gentle. Now gifted leaders are quite often forceful personalities, but they have to learn to curb that forcefulness. You'll be aware, I'm sure, that in recent years a number of Christian leaders in this country and elsewhere have been accused by colleagues or members of their churches of being bullies.

Now I suspect that some of those allegations are better founded than others, but it's a warning to those in leadership positions that good leadership is a matter of example and humble service rather than self-assertion and force and riding roughshod over people.

Fifth, not greedy for gain. Hunger for money will always corrode a Christian leader's character. We can't trust leaders if we know that the gathering of wealth is a major factor in their thinking.

So we have these five negatives, they're very necessary and every bit as important as the positives in verse 8 which we'll look at now. First, hospitable.

[ 34 : 54 ] The church leader's home. The church leader's home is not surrounded by a moat and a drawbridge. Now of course he needs some privacy and time off and holidays, but mostly his door is open.

Come in my friend, he says. It's all here. Food, comfortable chair, hot water, soap, if that should be required, bed for the night. An open door is closely related to an open heart.

Second, a lover of good, a man with a big heart who rejoices in all that is good, all that's good in the world as well as in the church. Third, self-controlled.

I'll come back to that one. Fourth, upright, straightforward and honest in all his dealings. Fifth, holy, a man who knows that he's been set apart, for the service of a holy God.

Six, disciplined. He goes to bed on time, he gets up on time, he works a full day, he enjoys his downtime, but doesn't overindulge it.

[ 36 : 00 ] Now back to self-controlled. Self-control is the central characteristic that governs everything in verses six and seven and eight.

Self-control over sex, temper, alcohol, money, use of time. The man qualified for the role of leadership needs to be master of himself.

Now that's a tough call, but friends, would we want to be led by men who cannot conform to the standards set out here by the apostle? I think not. These are moral qualities, they're qualities of character.

And as we turn finally to verse nine, we're still in the realm of moral character. Verse nine, he must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Now this verse nine is about teaching ability, but it's not as though we leave the realm of moral character at this point and turn to something purely intellectual. Not at all.

[ 37 : 10 ] Look at the key verbs here. Hold firm to the word. Rebuke those who contradict it. We're in the realm here of courage and character, not simply intellectual ability.

So why does Paul say he must hold firm to the truth, the trustworthy word as passed on? Well, he must hold firm to it with real tenacity because he will find that he's under great pressure to loosen his grip on it.

Today's Bible teachers and pastors are under great pressure from the modern world to alter their thinking, to make it more compatible with the views of modern society.

For example, secular people will say to the Bible teacher, to the pastor, loosen up, man. If you want people to keep coming to your church, you're going to have to soften the Bible's hard edges.

I mean, speak of God as the loving father. That's absolutely fine. But God as the judge who sends people to hell, you can't say that in the 21st century. That idea is exclusive and we live in an inclusive age.

[ 38 : 19 ] And as for your medieval, almost anti-diluvian views on gender and sexuality, people will have your guts for garters if you keep on with all that. In fact, you'll probably end up serving time at his majesty's pleasure and you'll deserve it.

To which the Bible teacher replies, but I have no warrant and no wish to dilute the Bible's teaching on anything. I'm God's steward.

It's him I serve, not the changing fashions of the world. Now, we must also notice this second half of verse 9. The Christian leader must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.

That means to unfold the wonderful Bible gospel clearly and in a way that people can understand it. But that's not all. He must also be willing and able to rebuke or refute those who contradict it.

So he has to say in his teaching, there are going to be two sides to it. He has to say, this is the truth about God and mankind. This is true. This is true. This is true. But there are strong counter-opinions.

[ 39 : 26 ] People contradict these great truths and these contradictory opinions need to be identified and exposed and demolished. And if they're not identified and demolished, Christian people will start to believe them and be taken in by them.

So the Christian teacher has a double responsibility, both to teach the truth and to refute the arguments that oppose it and to show people why these arguments are false.

Not simply to say this is a false position, but to explain from the Bible why it's a false position. And that requires courage. I remember years ago when our Cornhill training course first started, I used to say things to the students like, this final thing about teaching is an intellectual quality.

It's much more than that. It's a moral quality. We have to say to our young preachers today, if you're not prepared to exercise courage in your teaching, don't be a teacher. Now the pressure on Titus to find the right people for leadership is intensified by the fact that there are plenty of people around who will lead the churches astray if they possibly can.

Just look on to verse 10 because verse 10 gives us the reason for verses 6 to 9. He says there are many, not just a few, but many, who are insubordinate, people who are not willing to submit to proper authority, just want to cast it aside, say it doesn't matter, insubordination to God as well.

[ 40 : 57 ] Empty talkers and deceivers. And we'll look at their characters and their influence next week. But that's why Paul has to lay out the character of the true teacher here because there are so many other people around who will contradict it and they have to be silenced.

So we'll look at their character and their influence next week. And I also want to ask the question next week, how do churches identify and encourage the right kind of leader? How do Bible-believing churches like ours provide the right kind of leaders for the longer-term future? Do we just hope for the best or are there steps that we can actively take as we seek out the right sort of people? Well, let's bow our heads and we'll pray now.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for those Christian leaders who teach us the truth today and we thank you for those who have taught us the Bible in the past, explaining the truth that we hold and helping us to understand and reject false views that contradict the Bible's teaching.

Raise up, we pray, many new leaders who will be competent to teach the truth and to refute and expose the lies. the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

[ 42 : 23 ] So please, dear Father, send more laborers well-equipped for their work into the harvest field to bring in a harvest for eternity. We ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen.