

INTRODUCTION

This letter, 1 Timothy, was written so that we may know, from our Lord Jesus Christ, how we ought to conduct ourselves in the house of God, which is the church. Being the disciples of Jesus, this is of great interest to us! We want to know what His commands are for us, so we can obey them!

In studying through chapters 1 and 2 over the past year, we have learned two main things about how we are to conduct ourselves in God's church: we are to maintain sound doctrine, and we are to pray.

We are to maintain sound doctrine

The good news of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, must be preached in the church, according to the pattern of sound words laid down by the apostles in the Bible.

Loving God and loving other people by observing the commands of Jesus Christ in good conscience must be taught in the church, again according to the pattern of sound words laid down by the apostles in the Bible.

Any would-be teachers whose teaching strays from the apostolic doctrine must be charged not to teach that other doctrine. The church must be charged not to give heed to such other doctrine, which does not build up the church, but instead tears it down.

The church must take care that biblical, apostolic doctrine is taught in the church, and nothing else is tolerated.

We are to pray

we are to pray all kinds of prayers, with giving of thanks

we are to pray for all kinds of men, for their salvation

because Jesus Christ has given Himself a ransom for all!

we are to pray for all kinds of government officials, for our peace

that we may be undisturbed

in our worship on the Lord's Day

in our lives in this world every day

that we may be undisturbed

by threats from outside our borders

by threats from inside our borders

we are to pray, and, more generally, to worship as is right and proper for each person

according to his sex

the men are to lift up holy hands, without anger and disputing

the women

-are to adorn themselves for prayer not with outward show, but with graces and good works

-are not to teach, but to learn in silence

-are not to be in authority, but to be in submission

You may well recognize these things I have just said as a summary of what we have learned together over the past year in the study of 1 Timothy chapters 1 and 2.

Today, as we begin our studies in chapter 3, we find that as our Lord Jesus has assigned His church those two priorities---to maintain sound doctrine, and to pray---He also has provided the church with an office or position from which certain men will watch over His church, to see those priorities are observed.

But from what we know of the situation around us today, and what we know of both church history and the history of Israel in the Old Covenant, we see many severe troubles caused by men in office in the churches. Of course our Lord Jesus Christ knows this very well. He has provided a way for His churches to avoid most of those troubles. By His apostles, He has written to us the truth we need to know about the church having officers, so that by acting according to that truth, we can have men in office in the church who will be a blessing to the church. In order for the church to have men in office who are a blessing to the church, who serve well leading the church in sound doctrine and prayer, we need to know the truth about that office, about those men. We need to know the truth about pastors for the church.

TEXT - 1 Timothy 3:1

GEN This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a worthie worke.

KJV This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

NKJV This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

ESV The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

BODY

- I. That the Church Be Kept Sound in Doctrine and Faithful in Prayer, Our Lord Jesus Has Created in the Church the Office of Bishop or Elder or Pastor
 - A. In today's verse, this office is called the office or position of a bishop or overseer
 1. in the NT Greek it is just the one word *episcopo*
 2. in our various English Bibles we see a variety of somewhat awkward phrases
 - a) the office of a bishop
 - b) the position of a bishop
 - c) the office of overseer
 3. "bishop" and "overseer" mean the same thing; that's why some Bibles use one of those words, and other Bibles use the other
 4. and the Greek word here does not mean the person---a bishop or an overseer---it means the position or office of bishop or overseer
 5. we have words for that in English, but they are so obscure or old that they don't get much use
 - a) episcopate
 - b) bishoprick
 - B. In other places in the New Testament, a man who holds this office is called
 1. an elder or presbyter; or
 2. a pastor or shepherd
 - C. Whether the office-holder is called a bishop or overseer, a presbyter or elder, a pastor or shepherd, this is just one office in the church.
 1. 1689.26
 - a) 1689.26.9 "the office of bishop or elder"
 - b) 1689.26.11 "bishops or pastors"
 2. TAARBC constitution IV.A.2
 - a) "pastors/elders/bishops (these terms referring to the same office)"
 - D. This one office, in which men are called by these different descriptions, will hopefully be the subject of the sermon next time, or soon after that

That the church be kept sound in doctrine and faithful in prayer, our Lord Jesus has created in the church the office of bishop or elder or pastor

II. That the Bishops or Elders or Pastors in the Church Be Like Good Shepherds, Not Like Bad Shepherds, Our Lord's Apostles Have Told Us the Truth About Pastors for the Church

- A. Bishops in the church can be like bad shepherds or like good shepherds
 - 1. The Bible tells us of men in office who are like bad shepherds, who destroy and scatter the sheep
 - 2. The Bible also tells us that when God blesses His people by setting the Son of David over them, one of the blessings He provides is men who are like good shepherds, who feed and care for the flock
- B. Of course the church wants and needs bishops who are like good shepherds
- C. There are many ideas churches use to determine who will make good shepherds
- D. But only what the Bible says on the this subject is entirely true, faithful, trustworthy
 - 1. this could be said of the whole Bible; all the Holy Scriptures have this quality - see 2 Timothy 3:16
 - 2. it also could be said more specifically about all the apostles' instructions written to the churches; they are known to be entirely true, faithful, trustworthy, because although they are written by His apostles, they are the commands of the Lord Himself - see 1 Corinthians 14:37
 - 3. in this case it refers to the saying in verse 1, and the expounding of that saying that makes up the rest of chapter 3

That the church be kept sound in doctrine and faithful in prayer, our Lord Jesus has created in the church the office of bishop or elder or pastor

That the bishops or elders or pastors in the church be like good shepherds, not like bad shepherds, our Lord's apostles have told us the truth about pastors for the church

III. Now We, the Church, Are to Submit Ourselves to the Truth About Pastors for the Church

- A. In your conscience, agree with the assertion that only what the Bible says is a trustworthy rule for how the church approves of or disapproves of men for the office of bishop or elder or pastor
 1. this requires humility; it is humiliating to realize you have been holding up man-made ideas above or beside the word of God, and to have to let go of those ideas
 2. support yourself in this change of mind with the profound importance of maintaining sound doctrine and prayer in the church
- B. Again, in your conscience, set up two folders in which to put ideas about how the church knows who can occupy the office of bishop or elder or pastor
 1. into one folder, be ready to place all ideas that are not from the Bible
 - a) “he has a passion for ...”
 - b) “he is very involved in the community”
 - c) “we really like him”
 - d) “he has a great sense of humor”
 - e) “he’s really cool”
 2. into another folder, be ready to place all ideas that are from the Bible
- C. Because this passage, and the one in Titus chapter 1, are specifically about how the church chooses men for office in the church, let these verses govern how you use any other scriptures for this purpose
- D. You men who are the disciples of Jesus Christ, and who have some idea forming in your mind about the possibility of being a bishop, and elder, a pastor in the future: let the truth about pastors for the church inform your aspirations.
 1. do not set your heart on some ideas about pastors that is merely human imagination
 2. instead, set your heart on the apostolic truth about pastors
 3. learn these verses by heart from reading them so often and meditating over them so much
 4. pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, that by the work of the Holy Spirit in you, you will be a man of such character
- E. The same thing goes for the office of deacon. Let every man who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus aspire to be ready and able to serve as a deacon if called upon by the church to do so. But let the truth about deacons inform your aspirations.
 1. work toward being a man of the character described in this chapter
 2. pray that God will make you into such a man

F. Sometime in your life, you probably will find yourself in the uncomfortable position of having to decide what church to join.

1. maybe because you moved because you got married, or because you got a new job, or because you went away to school
2. maybe because the church you had been with had become corrupted in ways or to a degree that made you have to leave it

One important factor in making that decision will be the issue of whether or not the church is ruled by the truth about pastors for the church.

G. Consider that to pray for God's blessing on the church, while not submitting to the truth about pastors for the church is presumption

1. Lord, please bless this church; help us reach the lost; help us grow in holiness
2. we're not going to be ruled by the truth You have given us regarding pastors for the church
3. but You should bless us as a church anyway

CONCLUSION

That the church be kept sound in doctrine and faithful in prayer, our Lord Jesus has created in the church the office of bishop or elder or pastor

That the bishops or elders or pastors in the church be like good shepherds, not like bad shepherds, our Lord's apostles have told us the truth about pastors for the church

Now we, the church, are to submit ourselves to the truth about pastors for the church

Anna - Prelude (please choose something)

Anna - Trinity 174 "Praise the Savior Now and Ever"

Allison - Trinity 644 "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us"

Rita - Trinity 263 "The Heav'ns Declare Thy Glory, Lord"

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:103-105

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Benediction: Hebrews 13:20-21

The letter was originally written to Timothy, a young man very mature in the faith, assigned by Paul to work in the large church in the big city of Ephesus. So the instructions are particularly applicable to pastors, which also being generally applicable to the whole church.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has sent His Holy Spirit to inspire the apostle Paul to write this letter, which is then the very word of God. We have the word of God on the subject of pastors for the church.

latin *episcopatum*

1. We are to maintain sound doctrine.
 - a. that is, the church's teaching must be sound in itself, and it must produce soundness in those who are learning it
 - b. The church must take care that no doctrine other than the biblical, apostolic doctrine is taught in the church, because
 - i. only that doctrine gives all glory to God's grace in Jesus Christ,
 - ii. only that doctrine proclaims salvation by God's grace to sinners, and
 - iii. only that doctrine teaches the Lord's disciples to obey what He has commanded.
 - c. the church must not tolerate any teaching different from what the apostles taught
 - d. sound doctrine must be maintained against the threat of teachers who have turned aside
 - e. sound doctrine must be maintained over against the threat of false doctrine regarding God's law
 - i. God's law is good in itself; and it is good for us if used lawfully---that is, if taught correctly
 - ii. but there will be those who go about trying to teach people from God's law, but who do not know how to teach it rightly
 1. rather than using it to convict sinners of their sins,
 2. they use it to impose
 - iii. we, the disciples of Jesus Christ, to conduct ourselves well in God's church, are not to give heed to such false doctrine from misuse of God's law, but are instead to charge any such people not to teach any doctrine other than what our Lord's apostles taught us
 - f. sound doctrine must be maintained over against the threat of false doctrine regarding the Gospel

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is perfect. What the bible says about Him is perfect. When Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote about Him, as the Holy Spirit carried them along, what they wrote was perfect. When our Lord's apostles wrote to the churches about Jesus Christ, what they wrote was perfect, the very word of God breathed out by the Holy Spirit.

When they preached to sinners, they preached forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ; they preached the gospel, the good news!

What the Lord Jesus said, as recorded in the bible, and what the apostles preached and wrote, as found in the bible

- gives all glory to God for His grace shown to sinners in Jesus Christ, and
- gives us all the benefit available to us from God's hand

To teach something different, to vary from the apostolic doctrine, is to fail to give God all the glory, and to fail to give us all the benefit.

What God commands all men everywhere for their salvation does involve us trying to save ourselves by doing enough good works. Jesus Christ has done the necessary works in all righteousness; He has taken the punishment sinners deserve when He was nailed to the cross. Now God commands all everywhere not to try to cover their sins with good works, but believe in Jesus Christ and repent, turning from their sins to follow Jesus.

So, to command something else, different from repentance and faith in Christ, is to unpreach the gospel of salvation by God's grace and preach salvation by good works, which is not good news, because impossible, because it is impossible for us to be saved that way.

What our Lord instructs is morally right, in keeping with love, obedient to the Ten Commandments; to instruct something else...

The church must take care that no doctrine other than the biblical, apostolic doctrine is taught in the church, because only that doctrine gives all glory to God's grace in Jesus Christ, only that doctrine proclaims salvation by God's grace to sinners, and only that doctrine teaches the Lord's disciples to obey what He has commanded.