

INTRODUCTION

What we have here in 1 Timothy chapter 3 is trustworthy, reliable, faithful, true information from our Lord Jesus, so that we can know how to have good ministers in His church. Other ideas we might have about how to have good ministers for the church might not be good ideas. But the instruction we get on this subject in the Bible is known to be good, and is known to be what our own Lord Jesus has given us by His apostles. So the task before us these several weeks is to master this material, so that we, as a church, over the years, can be able to make wise choices about what ministers to have in this church. That's what we studied two times ago, from 1 Timothy 3 verse 1.

The office or position of a church's ministers is, in this verse, called the office or position of a bishop, which means "overseer." In other places the Bible calls this office "presbyter," which means "elder." You might be most used to hearing this office referred to as the position of "pastor," which means, "shepherd." That is because both Paul and Peter told us to understand the office of presbyter, elder, bishop, overseer, pastor by the metaphor of shepherds caring for a flock of sheep. Of course our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is Himself the Good Shepherd, who loves the sheep. He is the One Shepherd, who has laid down His life for the one flock, when He died on the cross for our sins. Yet, having taken His life back up again when He rose from the dead, He ascended to the throne of heaven; but one day He will come back again. On that great day of judgment, He will separate all His sheep from the rest of mankind, and welcome His sheep into the kingdom prepared for them. Until that day, He has ordained that men in the office of bishop would care for His sheep here on earth, each church being like a flock of sheep with shepherds. That's what we worked on last week.

Today we continue to work on what we're told in verse 1. There the Bible says that a man in the office of bishop does a good work. While we are still here in verse 1, and while the metaphor of a flock of sheep with shepherds is still fresh on our minds, let's look into that concept. What is that work or task of the bishop that is said to be a "good work"? Continuing in the metaphor of a flock of sheep with shepherds, the good work of the bishop is the two-fold work of a shepherd, to lead the flock to good pasture, while also protecting them from wolves. In plain language, the good work of the bishop is to teach the church what is true, while also resisting the teaching of what is false.

TEXT

1 Timothy 3:1

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

BODY

- I. The Good Work of the Bishop Is Essentially the Task of Anyone with Others Placed Under His Care
 - A. You provide what is good for those under your care, while keeping away what is bad for them
 - B. Example: a mother with her baby; she keeps the baby in good health
 1. by providing her baby his milk
 2. by keeping out the cold with blankets wrapped snugly around him, and with the warmth of her own body as she holds him close to her
 - C. Example: shepherds with their flock; they keep the sheep in good health
 1. by leading the sheep to what they need, grass to eat
 2. by keeping the flock together, and keeping away predators such as wolves and lions
 - D. So it is with church bishops; their work is to maintain the church in sound doctrine
 1. by teaching the church what is true from the Bible
 2. while also resisting any teaching that is not true

The good work of the bishop is essentially the task of anyone with others placed under his care

II. The Good Work of the Bishop Is Described in Plain Language Here in the Pastoral Epistles

A. 1 Timothy

1. 1 Timothy 4:12-16 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (13) Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to **doctrine**. (14) Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. (15) Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. (16) Take heed unto thyself, and unto **the doctrine**; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.
 - a) see that Timothy is to give his attention to doctrine or teaching
 - b) he also is to take care that he set a good example
 - c) that is how our Lord Jesus did when He was here: he both taught us the truth both in words and by example
2. 1 Timothy 1:3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

B. Titus 1:7-9

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; (8) But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; (9) Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

1. he exhorts the church with sound doctrine
2. by sound doctrine he also rebukes or convinces or convicts those who speak against it

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The good work of the bishop is described in plain language here in the pastoral epistles

III. The Seriousness of The Good Work of the Bishop Appears in the Severity of the Metaphor of the Flock Threatened By Wolves

- A. Our Lord Jesus taught us to think of false teachers as wolves among sheep
Matthew 7:13-15 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
1. it is of the greatest importance that you enter the straight or narrow gate, rather than the wide gate; because only the narrow gate leads to eternal life with God; the wide gate leads to eternal destruction in hell with the devil
 2. but teachers of false doctrine will try to send you to the wide gate
 3. thus our Savior likens them to wolves, who want to get the sheep away from the flock and the shepherds so they can kill them
- B. The apostle Paul instructed us according to our Lord's use of that metaphor
Acts 20:28-31 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
1. consider the severity of this metaphor: men teaching false doctrine are like wolves attacking sheep
 2. see Paul's analysis of what false teachers are doing
 - a) sometimes they come at the church from outside it; sometimes they arise from within the church
 - b) they speak perverse or twisted things
 - (1) not obviously false; not having no connection to the truth
 - (2) just distorted, altered somewhat
 - c) they are interested in having men follow them
 - (1) maybe by creating a group or party or clique within a church
 - (2) maybe by getting members to leave their church and form a new group or church with them

C. Learn a helpful summary of wolfish of false teachers

1. if you are not okay, they want to convince you that you are okay (you saw this in how the Lord Jesus warned about the narrow gate and the wide gate)
 - a) if you are not trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, you definitely are not okay; but they would convince you that somehow you are okay
 - b) if you are not repentant toward God regarding sin, but are still living in sin, you are not okay; but they would convince you that somehow you are okay
2. if you already are okay, they would convince you that you are not okay
 - a) if you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, you definitely are okay; but they would convince you that somehow you are not okay---that you need to do something to secure salvation
 - b) if you are repentant toward God regarding sin, and obeying His commands from the heart, you are okay; but they would convince you that somehow you are not okay---that you need to obey some other rules in order for your life to be pleasing to God
 - c) this is much of the material in the letter to the Galatians
 - (1) Gal 1:6-7
 - (2) Gal 3:1-3
 - (3) Gal 4:9-11

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The seriousness of the good work of the bishop appears in the severity of the metaphor of the flock threatened by wolves

IV. We Have Needed the Good Work of the Bishop Right in This Church

A. Persons

1. woman who wanted to speak as a prophet
2. man who said the great white spirit was the Holy Spirit
3. couple who were observing the Passover, and wanted others to do so
4. a friendly, pleasant, talkative, man who spoke a steady stream of errors
5. a man who was very impressive, and tried to impose a false law on the young men
6. a man who talked about being slain in the spirit
7. a man who was found to be giving a very impressive show of religion, but was not living in love toward others in business

B. In all these cases, your church's bishops defended the church against these people

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V. The Good Work of Bishops Still Is Needed in This Church and Others

A. You and your church are doing well in the Lord

B. False teachers tell you that there is something you and your church are neglecting, that is essential for obedience to Christ

1. the OT ceremonial laws must be observed

a) holy days

b) circumcision

c) food laws

2. Christians have to move out to the country, grow their own organic food, homeschool, and have ten children

3. man-made holy days must be observed

a) Christmas, Easter

b) liturgical calendar

c) Reformation Day

d) Mother's Day, Father's Day, Veterans' Day

4. your babies are covenant children, and so must be sprinkled

5. many activities must be conducted for the sake of evangelism

6. there must be programs for children and youth and women and men and singles and everybody

7. some group is the true church

a) Roman Catholic

b) Eastern Orthodox

8. you have to support Israel, visit Israel, believe in the temple being rebuilt

9. you have to read the latest book by the biggest megachurch and do what they recommend

10. you have to assertively become multi-cultural, multi-racial

11. or whatever else!

C. The false teachers tell you that if your church isn't sufficiently enthusiastic about those things, your church is seriously flawed, and you shouldn't be in that church, and instead should be with them.

D. This will keep happening until our Lord Jesus comes back

E. The good work of the bishops keeps the church together, keeps the sheep from scattering and being harmed by such misguided people

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CONCLUSION

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The good work of bishops still is needed in this church and others

The good work of the bishop is the two-fold work of a shepherd, to lead the flock to good pasture, while also protecting them from wolves. In plain language, the good work of the bishop is to teach the church what is true, while also resisting the teaching of what is false.

The work of the bishop being such a good work, such a needed and beneficial work, let us heed the instructions our Lord gives us here in 1 Timothy 3, so the church can, over the years ahead, have such bishops as will do this good work of feeding and protecting the flock, as servants of the Lord Jesus the chief Shepherd.

Anna - Prelude (please choose)

Anna - Trinity 702 "Wonderful Grace of Jesus"

Rita - Trinity 70 "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven" (Psalm 103)

Allison - Trinity 147 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Dillon - Call to Worship: Ezekiel 34:11-16

Jeremiah - Scripture Reading - Psalm 103

Thad - Congregational Prayer

Jeff - Benediction: Luke 12:32