

Series: *Titus: The Gospel for Godly Living*

Lesson: *The Uncommon Man:
A Divine Standard for Pastoral Qualification*

Text: Titus 1:5–9 (L2)

Date: Sunday, November 13, 2011

*Colonial Hills
Baptist Church*

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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BACKGROUND

This section begins with delineation of responsibility from Paul to Titus (v. 5). Paul had previously been in Crete with Titus, and had left his trusted young friend behind for the establishment of the churches on that island. Although believers from Crete had been present on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11), and although Paul had briefly docked at Crete in Acts 27:7-13, the churches on this Mediterranean island were weak and immature. So, apparently after his first imprisonment, Paul and Titus found their way to Crete to begin a work of teaching and strengthening. When Paul left, he entrusted it to Titus to carry on further. The phrase “set in order” has a root from which we get our word orthodontist and indicates a “making straight.” Titus was supposed to straighten up and correct “the things that are wanting [lacking]”—i.e., whatever Paul was unable to accomplish during his limited ministry there. Thus, Paul is passing on his wholistic vision in Colossians 1:28-29 to Titus.

The primary straightening or correction that needed to happen was in the area of leadership, and so Paul “appointed” (or directed) Titus to “ordain elders in every city.” Many churches were troubled by the unruly and deceptive teachers in verse 10, and they had no true and godly leaders to look to for direction and growth. So establishing God-ordained leadership became the primary objective. Without them, the health and effectiveness of God’s church are completely undermined.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us would consider ourselves to be “Average Joes” or “Ordinary Janes.” We’re not really known outside of our family and friend circles, we fit into the middle economic class, we have about the same kind of stuff as most other Americans, and our lives are really quite predictable. We’re unique enough, I’m sure, but we’re also just quite average. We can relate to the “common man,” because we really are the “common man.”

We all love to hear stories about the “common man” in today’s world. We can relate to those stories, and perhaps they cause us to dream about breaking out of our own “common man/Average Joe/Ordinary Jane” mold. Joe the Plumber comes to mind, perhaps, as demonstrative of one story that we enjoyed following, if for no other reason than to watch a fellow “common man” have a unique moment in the limelight. Then, we just went back to being the “common man.”

Nothing is wrong with being a “common man”; in fact, in many ways it’s a unique privilege that we enjoy as citizens of the prosperous and relatively peaceful USA. In this self-made nation, what our history books show to be extraordinary has become ordinary, and the uncommon has become common.

When we come to Titus 1:5-9, we find ourselves reading a description of a most “uncommon man.” In a society of post-modern relativity, the transience of tolerance, the denial of absolute truth, and the vast array of lifestyle choices, the man described in these verses is unique indeed. Regarding this “uncommon man,” an absolute mandate concerning his character is issued, a responsibility-laden task is entrusted, a black-and-white priority focus is commanded, and a distinct example of life is anticipated. These are not common expectations. Rather, this is the divine standard for pastoral qualification. The man described in Titus 1:5-9 is uncommon, indeed, and he’s known to us as the pastor.

In this passage, five unique aspects of qualification are laid upon this “uncommon man.” This chapter addresses the pastor’s office, character, home, lifestyle, and responsibility.

THE PASTOR’S OFFICE (vv. 5b, 7a) – LEADERSHIP

Throughout the New Testament, several interchangeable titles are used for the pastoral office.¹ Three of them are used in Titus 1:5-9.

1. He is called “elder.”

“Elder” translates the original word *presbuteros*, from which our word “presbyter” is derived. This word is used roughly 30 times in Acts through Jude and generally refers to an older man (Acts 2:17; I Timothy 5:1, 2; I Peter 5:5; cf. Hebrews 11:2). However, in Jewish society, it had come to be used as a title for a position of religious leadership (cf. Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12, 23:14; 24:1; 25:15), stressing the seriousness and maturity of that responsibility. Likewise, the early church adopted that title² to underline the sobriety of the pastoral position and the need for a mature man to lead in that office (cf. I Timothy 3:6).



Why is maturity so important to the pastoral office? How should the sense of seriousness be displayed? Cf. I Timothy 3:4, 6; I Peter 5:3-4; Acts 20:28-31.

¹ In Acts 20:17, 28 and I Peter 5:1-3, the Bible uses “elder,” “bishop,” and “pastor” (verb-form) interchangeably. I Timothy 3:1-7 provides the qualifications for a “bishop,” while Titus 1:5-9 offers a matching standard for “elders.” Ephesians 4:11 labels this leadership office as that of “pastor-teacher,” while Philippians 1:1 makes it clear that the two offices within the church are “bishop” (or “elder” or “pastor”) and “deacon.”

² Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; I Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1; II John 1; III John 1

This word simply serves to highlight the nature of the pastoral office—that it is one of dignity, reverence, and distinction—for the pastor serves as the “under-shepherd” and spokesperson for God. The pastor, then, should be a mature man, especially in his relationship with God and practice of personally applying God’s Word to His life.

2. He is called “overseer.”

Another word used to label the pastoral office is “bishop” or “overseer” (Gk. *episkopos*), from which our word “episcopate” is taken. While this particular Greek word is used exclusively in the New Testament to describe the pastoral office³ (with one exception, which we’ll discuss soon), the associated noun and verb forms help us understand what is being stressed.

In Acts 1:20, the word “bishoprick” (Gk. *episkope*—also “office” [NASB, NKJV, ESV] or “place of leadership” [NIV]) is the associated noun, and it is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *pāquddah* in Psalm 109:8.⁴ That Hebrew word means “watch, sentry, supervision, care.” It denotes an administration over affairs and a responsibility over lives, even in the dealing out of punishment (cf. HALOT).

So this idea of “overseer” has to do with more than just wisely handling the finances, budgets, facilities, etc. of the local ministry. It more importantly has to do with the watching over and care of the local body of believers. This oversight concerns both paperwork and people; both lists and lives. That’s why Hebrews 13:17 encourages us to submit to and obey our leaders, for “they watch⁵ for your souls, as they that must give account.” Pastors should be taking care to direct the lives of people down



Discuss (1) what this kind of “watching over” looks like; and (2) how believers can be practicing this among themselves (cf. Hebrews 12:15). *Ideas:* sharing truth, encouraging with hope, prayer, confrontation, partnering, Christian education, etc.

the paths of righteousness (cf. Psalm 23:3). Hebrews 12:15 uses the verb form of *episkopos* to underline the responsibility of every believer to “look carefully/diligently” (KJV, NKJV; “see to it”—NET, NASB, NIV) in their ministry to other believers.

In Luke 19:44 and I Peter 2:12, this word is translated “visitation,” carrying the idea of “watching over” and “denoting a time when God intervenes directly in human affairs,

³ Acts 20:27; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; cf. verb-form in I Peter 5:2 and noun-form in I Timothy 3:1


⁴ As expected, the Septuagint also uses this Greek word *episkope* in its translation of Psalm 109[8]:8.

⁵ Gk. *agrupneo*, meaning “to be vigilant in awareness” or “to be alertly concerned about” (HALOT)

either for blessing or for judgment.”⁶ This has already happened in Christ's first advent (Luke 19:44) and will happen again at His second (I Peter 2:12). Between His first and second advents, Christ is still called the “the Shepherd and Bishop [*episkopos*] of your souls” (I Peter 2:25). This again highlights the personal, life-focused orientation of this oversight and administration. The incredible reality is that the Great Overseer has entrusted the “watching over” of His sheep into the care of pastoral overseers (cf. Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3)!

3. He is called “steward.”

Verse 7 calls the pastor “a steward of God.” In the New Testament culture, a steward was the manager of his master's home. He didn't own the home, but he basically ran its affairs, depending on the level of authority given to him by the master (e.g., Joseph in Potiphar's house). The steward's goal was to manage his master's house as well as (or perhaps better than) the master himself would.

 What must be in the heart of a steward in order for Him to be a faithful and God-honoring steward? *Humility, the knowledge of God, submission, skillful application of God's Word to situations, energy, sense of responsibility*


Pastoral stewards have been entrusted with the care of God's flock (Acts 20:28), God's house (I Timothy 3:5, 15). Such stewards must be dependent and wise, understanding well the Master and submitting one's own agenda to His! These stewards will not be perfect, but they must be faithful (I Corinthians 4:1-2). These stewards represent the master, and they therefore must be blameless (Titus 1:7).

Application: The uncommon nature of pastoral ministry is evident enough when one considers its descriptive titles. The pastor must be mature and reverential in his relationship with God; he must be carefully watching over the spiritual well-being of each sheep; and he must be submissively managing the precious Body that Christ purchased with His death. Then pastor, then, is certainly an “uncommon man,” a leader among men.

Transition: Having addressed the role of this “uncommon man,” the divine standard for the pastor is now crystallized in our next point. When you peel back all the responsibilities and all the personality traits and all the lifestyle patterns of the pastor, you should discover a character of integrity.

Twice in our passage, the pastor is called to be “blameless” or “above reproach” (NASB, ESV; Gk. *anegkletos*—“not being called into account”). In other words, the pastor must be a man of integrity. A similar word is used in I Timothy 3:2⁷ for the pastor, and the loftiness of this word is underlined by its use in I Corinthians 1:8 and Colossians 1:22. According to those verses, Jesus Christ will one day present all believers “blameless” and “beyond reproach” before Him. This is nothing short of perfection in which sin is finally and completely eradicated.

When these words are used to provide the standard for a pastor, they cannot mean this kind of sinless perfection, for that will not become a reality until glory. They do, however, suggest a very godly and righteous character, both internally and externally—“clean hands and a pure heart” (Psalm 24:4).

 Why is integrity the foundation of God's standard for pastors? Why not love or preaching, etc.? *Integrity has to do with consistency, faithfulness, honesty—the truth. This is the backbone of God's attributes, guaranteeing the unchangeableness of His Person and Word. It must be the backbone of His ministers so that His ministry is not undermined.*

These words also cannot mean that the qualified pastor will never have an accusation thrown at him, for the pastor's own Overseer was falsely accused and maligned (cf. Isaiah 53; Romans 15:3). No, pastors may certainly be defamed and oppressed at times, as will all believers who have accepted the offense of the cross (cf. John 15:18-20; I Timothy 4:10). And those accusations may stick with that pastor till death and beyond, even as Jesus “made Himself of no reputation...to death” (Philippians 2:5-8). So, it may be that while people charge the pastor with “reproach” or “blame,” the pastor will—with God as His witness—know that “I have walked in mine integrity” (Psalm 26:1).

On the other hand, it could also be that while people laud the pastor as above reproach and honorable, he will be secretly harboring much blame and sin. And so, only the Holy Spirit who can see into the heart of man has the best read on that pastor's life and can accurately render the verdict of integrity or hypocrisy. Therefore, we should be slow to indict a pastor, even as Paul admonished in I Timothy 5:19. Where blatant reproach is discovered, the pastor should be clearly rebuked (I Timothy 5:20); but sometimes, when questionmarks and confusion cause the heroic pastor to seem more human

⁶ NET note #33, I Peter 2:12.


⁷ Gk. *anepileptos* (“not being laid ahold of”), also used of non-pastoral believers in I Timothy 5:7; 6:14. Likewise, *anegkletos* is used for non-pastoral leaders in I Timothy 3:10.

and create uncertainty as to his seeming perfection,^{8 9} we must remember that our Chief Overseer is both omniscient and wise, and He will bring any secret things to light (Ecclesiastes 12:14) and He will “judge the quick and the dead [preachers] at His appearing and his kingdom” (I Timothy 4:1).

In those circumstances, our responsibility is not to put the pastor on trial and pass judgment ourselves. This passage is not encouraging the church to engage in a type of witch-hunt to weed out those church leaders who are less than blameless. Rather, in those times of doubt and distrust, we must look to the Chief Shepherd, rejoicing in the One who is always consistent and blameless, trusting His wisdom and timing, and asking Him for understanding and exposure.

Paul will demonstrate in the following verses that this concept of blamelessness does take on a tangible form, one which provides the church with an objective standard against which to evaluate their leaders. However, since blamelessness is foundationally a heart-thing, then this standard becomes an especially sobering one for the pastor himself, for he alone has the best read on whether or not he’s hitting the mark.

Application: For those who will lead His church as His steward (v. 7a), God expects nothing short of through-and-through integrity—from one side of that man to the other, from the top to the bottom, that man must be godly and righteous. While accusations may come, while blame may be cast, the pastor knows himself to be without sentence in the sight of God. This is a high calling indeed—a daunting standard! But the pastor has help. If he will commit himself to nothing lower than this standard, the saving grace of God will be His success (Psalm 26:11), for God Himself will uphold him in his integrity (Psalm 41:12). The Chief Shepherd is strong on behalf of those whom He calls to be under-shepherds!

 How can a pastor achieve and maintain such blamelessness? Through salvation, it is already His—preach that to yourself! Know God—like Moses, exposure to the light may cause a reflecting. Etc.

Transition: As was briefly mentioned above, integrity will by its very nature express itself in a certain lifestyle. This exemplary lifestyle will be addressed later on, but for now, we’ll move on to verse 6 and consider that whatever that

⁸ Or even when some pastor just doesn’t “feel” right to us—we may sometimes sense that a church leader is getting away with something and is less than blameless, even when we can’t put our finger on something.

⁹ It may be helpful to recognize that the ones who are in the best position to make a judgment call as to the integrity of a given pastor is that pastor’s flock (cf. I Thessalonians 2:10). It is wise to leave off judging another sheep’s pastor, when we really know nothing of that man or his ministry. We have, however, been witnesses of our shepherd, and are in a position to evaluate him by his fruits more accurately and graciously.

exemplary life looks like, it should look like that first at home. The pastor should be an “uncommon man,” first, in front of his family.


THE PASTOR’S HOME (v. 6) – PRIORITY

The pastor’s home is his first congregation. His wife and children are his primary flock. If he cannot pastor them, he is not fit to pastor the body of Christ (I Timothy 3:4-5). The pastor must be careful to keep a priority on the discipling of his wife and children. In our passage, the first two specific qualifications for a pastor after the overarching call to blamelessness deal with the pastor’s family.

1. *The pastor must be a one-woman man.*

Rather than dealing with the questions about singleness, divorce, and remarriage that often accompany this phrase,¹⁰ let’s address the heart-issue that Paul seems to be getting at. The Greek phrase literally reads, “a one-woman man” and cuts to the mindset underlying any accompanying relationships. MacArthur comments,

Being the husband of one wife refers to the singularity of a man’s faithfulness to the woman who is his wife and implies inner as well as outward sexual purity. It is quite possible, and all too common, for a husband to be married to only one woman yet not be a one-woman man, because he has sexual desires for other women besides his wife or engages in impure behavior with another woman....An elder must have an unsullied, lifelong reputation for devotion to his spouse and to sexual purity. He must be completely free of...all such moral stains that tarnish the reputation of Christ and His church.¹¹

 What are some ways in which a believer may secretly fail to be a “one-woman man” or a “one-man woman”? [various]

The pastor must have an undistracted commitment to Christ that is mirrored by an undistracted devotion to his wife, and this starts in his heart and mind. If in his heart/mind, the pastor is not a “one-woman man,” then he is not a “one-Lord man” either—his spiritual devotion is as divided as his physical desires.

¹⁰ A few of these are briefly handled by MacArthur: “Although polygamy is clearly forbidden in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2), that is not Paul’s point here. Being married to only one spouse at a time applies to all believers, not just church leaders. Nor is the reference to a widower who has remarried, a practice that is perfectly permissible (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Tim. 5:14). Nor is Paul saying that an elder must be married. If that were his point, he simply could have stated such...and apparently he was not married (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). Likewise, the apostle is not here referring explicitly to divorce or he would have mentioned it.” (MacArthur, John. *Titus in the MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996. Pp. 27-28).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

2. *The pastor must disciple his children.*

The nature of the pastor's family provides a reliable barometer as to the nature of that man's church ministry. MacArthur explains, "If you want to know if [the pastor] is able to lead the unsaved to faith in Christ and to help them grow in obedience and holiness, simply examine the effectiveness of his efforts with his own children."

These children may be of any age, for after all Paul has just referred to Titus with the same word (v. 4). That they may be engaged in "rioting" suggests that Paul may primarily have in mind grown children. Whatever their age, they should be "faithful" children. Whether you take that to mean that the children should be obedient and submissive or interpret that to be referring to saving faith, "a child who is old enough to be saved, but is not, can hardly be considered faithful. He would be *unfaithful* in by far the most important way."¹² Where the children are perhaps too young to understand the gospel, the honorable pastor will be obeying Timothy's standard in I Timothy 3:4-5—ruling "well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity."

A profession of salvation is not the only benchmark of qualification when it comes to the pastor's kids. A pastor must be discipling his children so that they, too, become examples of Christ, not engaging in "riot" (i.e., profligacy, debauchery, etc.) or "unruly" behavior (i.e., lack of discipline, disobedient, rebellious, insubordinate, etc.).

Such a standard may cause fear within a pastor who is watching his unbelieving children quickly grow up. "What if they don't ever accept Christ?" we may ask. While God is certainly sovereign in the salvation of individuals, it's important to remember that "the Lord uses believers to witness the gospel to unbelievers by what they say and by how they live."¹³ A pastor living a blameless, grace-filled life in the home can claim the promises of Matthew 5:16¹⁴ and I Peter 2:11-12¹⁵ for his unsaved children. Then, when the gospel is believed and a relationship with Christ is initiated, the pastor must be careful to practice Ephesians 6:4—"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

¹² Ibid., p. 30.

¹³ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁴ "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

¹⁵ "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Application: Once again, MacArthur puts the priority of a pastor's home into clear perspective: "No matter how godly and self-giving a man himself may be in the Lord's service, children of his who do not believe and who are known for their dissipation or rebellion distract from the credibility of his leadership. If he cannot bring his own children to salvation and to godly living he will not have the confidence of the church in his ability to lead other unbelievers to salvation or to lead his congregation in godly living."¹⁶ In this book, Paul puts a premium on the gospel's purpose of generating godliness within God's people. If the pastor cannot lead his family in that gospel-purpose, then he is not prepared or exercised to shepherd God's flock in experiencing the "power of God unto salvation" (cf. Romans 1:15-17). Thus, his family is his priority, and his home is his proving ground.

Transition: Living a gospel-produced life before his family and his flock is of the utmost importance for the pastor. Such a lifestyle will help to evangelize his unsaved children/sheep and disciple his believing children/sheep. Furthermore, as was seen earlier, without this external example, the blamelessness of the pastor may be legitimately called into question. So, we turn our attention now to verses 7-8 and consider another aspect of qualification for this "uncommon man."

THE PASTOR'S LIFESTYLE (vv. 7-8) – EXAMPLE

The pastor's character of integrity will overflow into example of life, and a blameless pastor will be a model believer. MacArthur writes,

Paul...is declaring that leaders of Christ's church must have no sinful defect in their lives that could justly call their virtue, their righteousness, or their godliness into question and indict them. There must be nothing in their lives to disqualify them as models of moral and spiritual character for believers under their care to emulate....The Lord does, however, call all elders to be godly leaders, men who by their exemplary lives as well as by their sound teaching and preaching set a pattern of virtue and devotion to the Lord for other believers to follow.¹⁷

Verses 7-8 provide a list of behaviors that will be "put off" and characteristics that will be "put on" in the life of a pastor of integrity. By this lifestyle, the pastor provides an example of Christ for his people to follow (cf. I Corinthians 11:1; I Timothy 4:12; I Peter 5:3; also cf. Philippians 3:17; I Thessalonians 1:6; II

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

Thessalonians 3:7, 9). In this outline of integrity, the church is provided with a standard by which to evaluate their leaders (cf. I Thessalonians 2:7-12).

1. *What the pastor must not be (v. 7).*

- NOT “self-willed” – “Here is the headstrong, stubborn man who demands his own way without regard for others.”¹⁸
- NOT “soon angry” – The pastor must not be prone to or quick to anger.
- NOT “given to wine” – “The overseer must not be a drinker.”¹⁹
- NOT a “stiker” – Literally having the idea of hitting or smiting, the word could be translated “pugnacious” or “contentious.” “Such a person is not offensively aggressive.”²⁰ Cf. II Timothy 2:24-25.
- NOT “given to filthy lucre” – Kent suggests the inference is that the leader would “have the opportunity to yield to this impulse...anyone who has access to church finances has opportunity to act dishonestly.”²¹

2. *What the pastor must be (v. 8).*

- “A lover of hospitality” – In a day in which “there were not many suitable accommodations for Christian travelers”²² and the plight of widows and orphans was severe, the leader needed to display this “love of strangers” (lit.).
- “A lover of good” – While the KJV adds “men,” the English phrase stands by itself as one Greek word and simply means “loving what is good.” The pastor “should be an ally and advocate of everything worth while.”²³ Cf. Philippians 4:8.
- “Sober” – This “describes a person who is sober minded and coolheaded....The sensible person is in command of his mind. He has control of the things he thinks about and does....He knows his priorities and is devoted to them.”²⁴
- “Just” – This word “denotes that which is proper, right, and fitting, and is frequently rendered ‘righteous’...it may be best to see it as meaning ‘fairness,’ a commitment to and understanding of that which is just and equitable.” It describes “a man who reflects the just and fair character of God Himself.”²⁵

- “Holy” – This refers to “that which was true to divine direction and purpose, to genuine obedience to God’s will.”²⁶ It has the “sense of unpoluted” holiness.²⁷
- “Temperate” – This is self-control, holding oneself in check. MacArthur gets to the root of this quality: the pastor “lives an exemplary life on the outside because he submits to the Holy Spirit’s control on the inside.”²⁸



How does this passage apply to the non-pastor? *If this character of integrity and lifestyle of distinction are primarily for the purpose of exemplifying Christlikeness for the church, then the church should be striving to follow in the leader’s footsteps, “as he follows Christ.” Furthermore, “Some church members want to lower the standards for ministers in order to make their own sinful living seem more acceptable” (MacArthur, p. 19)*

Application: These are the qualifications for pastoral leadership that flow out of a heart of integrity and a commitment to God’s mission in vv. 1-4. The wise pastor will dependently strive for consistency in these areas, and the wise church will expect these characteristics in their leaders.

Transition: From Titus 1:5-9, we’ve considered four aspects of the divine standard for this “uncommon man,” the pastor: we’ve considered the leadership

of the pastor’s office, the integrity of his character, the priority of his home, and the example of his lifestyle. Finally, we look at verse 9 and are instructed concerning the pastor’s responsibility, which is teaching.

THE PASTOR’S RESPONSIBILITY (v. 9) – TEACHING

The final verse of this passage highlights the primary responsibility that should arrest the pastor’s attention. The verse could be translated, “Clinging to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, in order that he might be able both to exhort in the sound teaching and to rebuke those who speak against it.” Notice two aspects of this responsibility.

1. *His message must be God’s Word.*

Having seen in verses 1-3 the foundational role that the preaching of the gospel plays in the success of the church’s mission, it’s no surprise to see that ministry being stressed for the church’s leaders. Pastors should cling to the “faithful word” (cf. v. 2-3) that is in accordance with “the teaching.” The “teaching” here refers to the “apostles’ teaching” (cf. Acts 2:42), which was eventually recorded and compiled into our New Testament. So, a pastor’s message is “faithful” only when it conforms to the accepted body

¹⁸ Kent, Homer A. Jr. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Revised Ed. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1986. P. 214,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 134.

²² Ibid., p. 128.

²³ Ibid., p. 214.

²⁴ MacArthur, p. 41.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kent, p. 215.

²⁸ MacArthur, p. 42.

of truth contained in our New Testament, which is guaranteed to be faithful because it was given by the unlying God (Titus 1:2-3).

The pastor, then, is called not only to be a Bible preacher, but also to be a Bible student. He must be regularly checking his message against the faithful teaching of the New Testament. Only then does he have authority from God and the confidence that he's preaching the hope-giving, truth-proclaiming, faith-instilling, godliness-producing message from God (vv. 1-4). The church needs God's message from him, not his own message from God's Word.²⁹

2. *His goal must be the understanding of truth and error.*

The pastor has been given two goals in his Word-centered ministerial approach. Positively, he is to exhort believers in correct teaching (or "sound doctrine"). This word, "exhort," means to "urge, beseech, and encourage"—the idea is an earnest impressing of God's Word into the minds and lives of God's people. Such teaching is literally "healthy" or "sound" teaching, stressing not only the accuracy of it (i.e., it conforms to the truth of God's Word), but also the benefit of it (i.e., it protects and preserves life). The pastor, then, should strive to be both comprehensive and practical in his preaching (cf. Ezra 7:10; II Timothy 4:2). He should seek to establish people in the truth (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16).

Negatively, the pastor should be able to refute those who contradict the "faithful word." In other words, "the Lord's preachers and teachers are to be polemicists against unsound doctrine that goes under the guise of biblical truth."³⁰ These contradictors are described in vv. 10-16 and were a constant source of warning from Paul (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5, 20-21). They literally "speak against" such healthy teaching that accords with God's Word, and they must be rebuked (Gk. "exposed, convicted, reprov'd, corrected"). The pastor cannot quietly ignore them, hoping others will follow his lead. He is obliged to verbally defend God's Word, even publicly against the opponents. Otherwise, they may wreak terrible damage within the church (vv. 10-16), effectively crippling the mission of the church (vv. 1-4).

Application: It is no wonder then, that Paul did not want the "verbal leaders" of the church to "leave the Word of God" in Acts 6:2 (cf. v. 4, 7). Gracious, godly, quiet men do not cut it. God's "un-common men" must be willing to study, to speak, and to stand. They must make the truth of God's Word the bedrock of their personal lives and the foundation of their public interactions.

When the pastor commits himself to the God-given responsibility of teaching the truth of God's Word, Paul encourages, "In doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16). This responsibility is the most important task within the church, for the church is, after all, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). Pastors, then, must give themselves to maintaining that support-structure and proclaiming the truth.

CONCLUSION

The pastor is indeed called to be an "uncommon man"; but he also serves an "uncommon God" who will enable him to meet His qualifications (vv. 5-9) and fulfill His mission (vv. 1-4).

While the application has been primarily for pastors, as it should, let's consider some bullet points of application for the flock from this passage. These thoughts will primarily center around the question, "How can we help our pastor maintain his qualification?"

1. Pray for your pastor, asking God to impress upon him the need for integrity and to enable him with grace to be a godly example.
2. Don't be a stumbling block to your pastor, by providing an opportunity for him to sin. Rather, follow in the example of Christlikeness that he's providing.
3. Encourage your pastor by modeling these Christlike characteristics in return. In this way, you can even provoke him to love and good works.
4. In the spirit of I Corinthians 13, forgive and be forbearing with your pastor. Furthermore, submit to your pastor, not because he's a better man, but because he is God's authority as God's elder, overseer, and steward.
5. Humbly feed from the Word of God as your pastor faithfully and responsibly teaches it. Stand with him when he stands for truth.
6. Graciously remove a pastor who fails to walk according to the divine standard God has established for His men. Failure to do so will be to further damage the health of the church and the reputation of its Lord.

²⁹ For a personal study from these pastoral epistles on the fundamental importance of accurate, Word-based preaching, consider the following texts: I Timothy 4:6-16; 5:17; 6:2; II Timothy 1:8, 11, 13-14; 2:2; 3:14-17; 4:2; also cf. Acts 20:32.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 51.