

Set in Order – Sermon 4 – Titus 1:7-9 – Holding the line in a crooked world

Intro:

1) Word picture – speed square

- a. When a tradesman wants to cut a straight line – it's not wise to "eyeball" it
 - i. Rather – he uses a straight edge
- b. Without the use of a speed square/straight edge – every cut veers a little crooked
 - i. This small drift may not be noticeable at first, but the crookedness is realized the more the task goes on
 - 1. 1/8 inch off could have you off an entire inch 8 studs in

2) This is what's happening in our world today

- a. Every generation drifts a little more from God's truth – just a small step here, a compromise there
- b. Soon – the normal becomes "crooked"

3) God's Word is still our straight edge – keeping us in line even in a crooked world

- a. In Titus 1:7-9, Paul tells Titus to find leaders who live by the "straight edge"
 - i. Men whose life and doctrine "hold the line" even when everything else is slanted

4) Our text today is the second half of God's qualification list for the formal leaders of His church

- a. Context - Paul is addressing the ordaining of "elders"
 - i. Official office of the church – the leader
- b. Notice in V7 Paul calls this person "bishop"
 - i. Bishop – *Episkopos* – lit. one who sees or watches over
 - 1. Term emphasizes the leadership responsibilities of the pastor
 - ii. We could say – the Elder Bishops the church
- c. What Paul is about to say for the Bishop is not a suggestion, it's a divine necessity
 - i. Must be – of a necessity
- d. Blameless – without accusation, above reproach, not case against him
 - i. V6 – blameless in how he conducts his home
 - ii. V7 – blameless in how he conducts himself

5) Listen to how the leader of the church is supposed to fulfill his role– as the steward of God

- a. Steward – *Oikonomos* – house + law/order
 - i. This is a reference to household manager, the estate administrator
 - ii. In the Greco- Roman world, the steward was entrusted with the master’s resources and is accountable to the master for how he manages
 - iii. The steward had considerable amount of responsibility and authority
 - 1. Oversee the function of the home, the family, finances, crops, other servants
 - iv. Interesting – the steward was often either a slave or a freedman (former slave)
 - 1. This denotes for us that the bishop is not the “master” of the church, but as a redeemed person, is given the responsibility to manager the masters house

6) In Verses 7-9 we are confronted with a list of qualifications that God calls His bishops/elders to live out

- a. You’re not off the hook – you may not be stepping into the role of elder/bishop, but these standards are marks of great spiritual maturity and double as a worthy aim for a Christian life
- b. These traits are good to know
 - i. For the pastor – to remain accountable
 - ii. For the church – to know what to look for in a leader
 - iii. For the individual – to aim for spiritual maturity

7) What we see in V7-9 is this: in a world gone crooked, God calls men to lead His church who will hold the line and not veer off

- a. Sermon: Holding the line in a crooked world
- b. Text: Titus 1:7-9
 - i. V7 – lists 5 character traits stated in the negative – avoid
 - ii. V8 – 6 character traits stated in the positive – embrace

The Elder and His Conduct – V7

1) The Elder's balance

- a. Not self-willed – self + desire (*Hedone*) translated – lust
- b. The elder does not lean into his own desires, but is in constant pursuit of God's will
- c. "Unusually strong adjective that denotes arrogant self-interest that asserts its own will with utter disregard for how others might be affected." – J. Mac
- d. The word describes a person who always pushes to have their way done
 - i. Denotes a person who is a dictator rather than a real leader
- e. Further – this word not only implies they disregard the counsel of others, but that they are in the habit of disregarding the counsel of God
 - i. They have no real regard for the will of God
- f. Statement – a self-willed leader insists on his own opinions, even when they are wrong
- g. Counter-cultural element – the world often values a "self-willed" leader
 - i. A person who is self-assertive, self-seeking, self-aggressive,
 - ii. Yet – the very characteristics that may win you a position in the world actually disqualifies you from a leadership position in the church
- h. What this doesn't mean:
 - i. An elder shouldn't be decisive
 - 1. His decisions are to be made based on God's Word
 - ii. An elder shouldn't have desires
 - 1. He should desire the will of God
 - iii. An elder should heed all counsel
 - 1. He should sift counsel through the filter of God's Word
- i. Easy way to remember it – the overseer keeps watch for God's will

2) The Elder's Behavior

- a. Not soon angry – not easily stirred to wrath
 - i. It not quick-tempered, not hot-headed
 - ii. "an elder is to have a warm heart but a cool head"
- b. The bishop must not be "short-fused"
- c. The bishop must not be prone to fits of rage and anger
 - i. He doesn't throw temper-tantrums
- d. Why is this such an important character trait?
 - i. It evidences whether the elder is filled with the Spirit of God
 - 1. Gal. 5:22 – longsuffering – opposite of soon angry
 - 2. Wrath is a work of the flesh – Gal. 5:20
- e. In Greek moral philosophy, this word was used to describe someone who would "boil easily"
- f. Statements to live by:
 - i. A person easily angered is a person easily manipulated
 - ii. Anger may win the argument, but it loses authority

3) The Elder's Boundaries

- a. Not given to wine
- b. Fascinating Paul would have to add this to the list
 - i. Indicates this was a real problem, or at least a large temptation
- c. There's a definitiveness about this qualification
 - i. Para – at, by, along side
 - ii. Onios – wine
 - iii. To be along side wine, to be “at” wine
- d. In other words – wine is not a companion to the elder
 - i. 1 Tim. 3:3 – not given to wine
- e. I agree with MacArthur's application of this trait
 - i. “Most elders in modern cultures have no justifiable reason for drinking any alcoholic beverages and putting themselves in the way of temptation. They also have a responsibility, even more than other believers, to avoid exercising a Christian liberty that might “somehow become a stumbling block to the weak: and cause a fellow believer to be “ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.” (1 Cor. 8:9,11)
- f. The spirit-filled man need not to be a wine-filled man

4) The Elder's Bridling

- a. No striker – not a brawler, not a fist fighter
- b. Seems like an unnecessary prohibition, but evidently in the NT times, it was not uncommon for grown men to settle a dispute with fists
 - i. My experience – Panama
- c. Contrary to culture – the elder must exercise restraint
 - i. 2 Tim. 2:24,25
- d. This does not mean the elder does not defend himself, his family, or his church, it means he is restrained and solves issues in a Godly manner
- e. Further – by extension, this word also includes verbal quarreling
 - i. Sometimes words can hurt a person more deeply than fists
 - ii. An elder must not be mean, abusive, or retaliatory, even if provoked
 - iii. Why does this matter?
 - 1. Because an elder is often in a position where the most sensitive details of one's life are shared with him, and he is not to use that in an abusive manner
- f. Elders are to build up the church, not tear it down
 - i. The shepherd feeds sheep and fights wolves
- g. This is a call for resolved self-control

5) The Elder's Business

- a. Not given to filthy lucre – not greedy for shameful gain
 - i. Compound word – filthy/shame + profit/gain
- b. Here Paul is referring to a person who lives without honor and integrity in business
 - i. Seeking wealth and financial gain no matter the cost
- c. Wisdom – All Christian, including pastors, have a right to make a good living for themselves and family
 - i. Luke 10:7 – “..for the labourer is worthy of his hire..”
 - ii. Some may wrongly conclude that this trait means it's wrong for a pastor to be paid as a full-time minister
 - 1. 1 Cor. 9:11,14
 - 2. 1 Tim. 5:17 – honor – a term indicating monetary value and esteem
 - iii. This issue here is not paycheck, its pursuit
- d. Why is this character trait relevant in the text?
 - i. False teachers in the first century entered eldership for the pay
 - 1. Their motive was silver, not souls
 - ii. We still see this today
- e. The elder must have integrity in his labor – especially if it is in the word
- f. Counter-cultural element – Crete was a place of liars and swindlers
 - i. Merchants seeking to make a deal and make money
 - ii. This trait would have caused the elder to stand out

Outline

Phrase	Focus	Meaning in Context
“Not self-willed”	Attitude	Humble servant, not dictator
“Not soon angry”	Temperament	Controlled, patient leader
“Not given to wine”	Discipline	Temperate, sober judgment
“No striker”	Conduct	Gentle, not combative
“Not given to filthy lucre”	Motive	Serving God, not self-interest

The Elder and his Character – V8

1) The Elder's Compassion

- a. A lover of hospitality – affection (philos) + stranger (xenos)
- b. An elder must be ready to extend practical help to anyone who needs it
 - i. Compassion – see the need, have the ability, moved to fulfill it
- c. An elder is one who does good to others – Gal. 6:20
- d. An elder shows genuine care, not just lip service
- e. 1st century aspect – hospitality in the Bible times was often vital and a ready way to show one love
 - i. Inns were often unsafe or morally compromised
 - ii. Opening one's home to a stranger was to show them care, love, and blessing

2) The Elder's Commitment

- a. Lover of good men – lit. lover of good
 - i. Denotes having a strong affection for that which is intrinsically good
- b. The discernment to love what is good is birthed out of time spent with God
 - i. Ps. 119:68
 - ii. Ps. 37:3
 - iii. Phil. 4:8
- c. Practical application – a pastor's influential circle should be filled with good people
- d. Your pastor should be known for being a good guy

3) The Elder's control

- a. Sober – of a sound mind, possessing a self-controlled mind
 - i. Compound – to save + mind
 - ii. To have a saved mind
- b. This word describes a person who is disciplined in thought and balanced in judgment
- c. Some translate this word – sensible
 - i. “A sensible person is in command of his mind”
- d. A pastor is to be wise, disciplined in thought, logical, and focused
 - i. Cringe – when pastors like to play dumb
- e. A pastor should have a ready mind and discern though the distractions of this world

4) The Elder's Conduct

- a. Just – upright, denotes what is proper, right, fitting
 - i. Frequently translated as “righteous”
- b. It's a character trait of God Himself – John 17:25
- c. A pastor should be a righteous person whose conduct reflects the just character of God
- d. This word is often applied horizontally – how one acts/treats others

5) The Elder's Consecration

- a. Holy – unpolluted with wickedness
 - i. Not the common word for holy, but closely related and similarly applied
- b. Indicates a person's devotion
 - i. "It was used to refer to that which was true to divine direction and purpose, to genuine obedience to Go's will." – J. Mac
- c. Again – this word is used of God – Rev. 15:4
- d. Together with "just" this encompasses both the horizontal and vertical righteousness
 - i. Just to others
 - ii. Holy to God

6) The Elder's Constraint

- a. Temperate – self-controlled
 - i. Compound – in + power = having the power within
- b. The pastor is to live an exemplary life on the outside because he submits to the Holy Spirit on the inside
- c. An elder is to monitor his life to maintain these qualifications
- d. A temperate pastor walks with God with integrity in his heart
 - i. Temperance is a fruit of the Spirit – Gal. 5:22
- e. An elder does not explode under pressure nor indulge under pleasure

Outline

Word	Focus	Greek Root Meaning	Contrast to Cretan Culture
Lover of hospitality	Social	"Friend to strangers"	Culture of greed → open generosity
Lover of good	Moral	"Friend of virtue"	Culture of vice → delight in goodness
Sober	Mental	"Sound-minded"	Culture of indulgence → self-control
Just	Relational	"Fair, righteous"	Culture of corruption → integrity
Holy	Spiritual	"Devout toward God"	Culture of idolatry → reverence
Temperate	Personal	"Inner control"	Culture of impulse → discipline

The Elder and his Convictions

1) V9 closes this section on elders with an overall emphasis on the task of the elder

- a. The elder is to have bible-centric leadership
- b. V9 is the capstone of the description of Godly leadership
- c. This is the ministry expectation of the pastor

2) An Elder is in Possession of truth

- a. Holding fast – to strongly cling to or adhere to
 - i. Nautical term – a sailor would hold to a rope in a storm
- b. The elder is to white-knuckle God's truth
 - i. The elder is not easily swayed by the trends of worldliness
- c. Holding fast – present tense – continually holding fast
- d. Notice what he hold on to – the faithful word
 - i. The trustworthy message
 - ii. The elder is called to respect God's Word, study God's Word, believe God's Word, obey God's Word, and cling to God's Word
 - iii. The elder is nourished by the Word of God then nourishes others by it
- e. An elder's leadership is not built on his personality, charisma, charm, education, or administrative excellence
 - i. The elder is called to be a man of the WORD

3) An Elder is to have Precision in Teaching

- a. The elder doesn't invent doctrine, he has inherited it and faithfully passes it along
 - i. As he has been taught
- b. Elders are stewards of revelation, not authors of innovation
- c. An elder knows – truth is not to be updated, but rather upheld

4) An Elder is to give Proclamation of Doctrine

- a. It is the responsibility of the elder to teach
 - i. 1 Tim. 3:2 – apt to teach

- b. Notice what his teachings produce
 - i. Health to the congregation
 - 1. Sound – health, we get our English word hygiene from it
 - a. Greek physicians used this word for a body free from infection
 - b. Paul uses it for a church free from falsehood
 - 2. Sound doctrine produces spiritual well-being
 - ii. Encouragement
 - 1. Exhort – to encourage, comfort, come along side
 - 2. Same root for the term “Comforter” when speaking of the Holy Spirit
 - a. John 14:16
 - 3. Sound doctrine doesn’t just inform, it inspires and encourages
 - iii. Exposes
 - 1. Convince – expose, prove guilty, to convict
 - 2. Gainsayer – Lit. to say against
- c. The faithful elder encourages believers and refute falsehood through the Word of God

5) The Elder knows the Bible is not just a resource, it is Divine revelation

- a. The elder never treats God’s Word as supplementary, but primary
- b. It is not a text, it is the ONLY text

Closing application

1) These verses give us guidelines for the qualifications of elders

- a. But that's not the only takeaway
- b. These qualifications speak of spiritual maturity which every believer should be concerned with
- c. Remember – Paul told Elder Timothy to be an example to believer – 1 Tim. 4:12

2) Godly Leadership Is About Stewardship, Not Status

- a. “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.” (v.7)
- b. Key Truth: Paul calls the leader a steward, not a celebrity. A steward manages what belongs to someone else — in this case, God’s people and God’s truth.
- c. Application:
 - i. In our day of self-branding, church politics, and influencer culture, Titus reminds us that spiritual leadership is sacred trust, not personal platform.
 - ii. In your work: lead as one accountable to God, not driven by applause.
 - iii. In your home: model faithful care over what God’s entrusted — your marriage, children, and time.
 - iv. In your service: remember that everything you oversee is on loan from the Lord.
- d. Faithful stewardship means managing God’s resources with God’s character

3) True Godliness Begins in Private Before It Shines in Public

- a. “Not self-willed, not soon angry... but a lover of hospitality, sober, just, holy, temperate.” (vv.7–8)
- b. Key Truth: Paul moves from what a leader must not be to what he must be — showing that spiritual credibility begins at home and in the heart.
- c. Application:
 - i. In a world that rewards charisma over character, Titus 1 reminds us that the power of the gospel is seen in quiet consistency, not public performance.
 - ii. Your temper, tone, and treatment of others say more about your theology than your titles.
 - iii. The “holy” life is not about perfection, but about pattern — consistent self-control, fairness, and purity.
 - iv. Real godliness thrives not in church visibility but in daily integrity — how you treat your family, employees, and even those who oppose you
- d. The home is still the first seminary, and character is still the loudest sermon.

4) Convictional Living Requires Clinging to Truth in a Culture of Lies

- a. "Holding fast the faithful word... that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (v.9)
- b. Key Truth: Paul ends this section reminding Titus that leadership is anchored in the Word. Without conviction rooted in Scripture, compassion and conduct eventually drift.
- c. Application:
 - i. In a culture of moral relativism and spiritual compromise, believers must cling tightly to God's Word when others loosen their grip.
 - ii. Build your worldview around Scripture, not sentiment.
 - iii. Encourage others with healthy, life-giving doctrine ("sound" = hygienic).
 - iv. Don't just defend truth — demonstrate it through gracious correction and courageous faith.
- d. The Word of God must not only be preached from our lips but proven in our lives.