

Part 2, Wed (Toronto Spiritual Life Convention 1993)

by Eric J. Alexander

The sermon emphasizes the importance of servanthood, apostolic ministry, and the knowledge of truth in Christian ministry, with a focus on the ultimate hope of eternal glory.

Duration: 59:18

Scripture: Titus 1:9

Topics: "Evangelism", "Godliness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the proclamation of the gospel in evangelism. He refers to the example of Paul in Corinth, who faced difficulties but was encouraged by God's message that there were many people in the city who would come to faith. The speaker highlights that Paul's ministry had two main purposes: evangelism and teaching. He explains that the goal of faith and knowledge is godliness, and that the ultimate hope of believers is the promise of eternal life. The speaker also emphasizes the need for moral transformation and godliness in the Christian church today, which can be achieved through the knowledge of the truth.

Transcript

You would realize what I mean when I say that it is a mixed blessing to be ministering to one's brethren in the ministry. Not many of us choose to do that sort of thing, do we? We would all of us be very diffident about the idea. And I am conscious of a great measure of diffidence in doing so this morning.

What I want to suggest to you is that we might first read chapter one of Titus, although I'm not at all sure if we'll get to the end of it this morning. And afterwards, in our time of discussion, I'm not sure, Winston, when we are supposed to finish all together. When I'm finished? That's a very dangerous thing to say to me.

But I think that it would be a good thing if we were able to have a period of discussion which may not be related to precisely what I am going to expound from Titus. It may be there are other considerations and other burdens and concerns that some of us have that we would like to share. In no sense am I some kind of oracle who will answer questions, but it is an opportunity for us to talk together and share together some mutual concerns and burdens.

Let me turn with you then to Titus chapter one. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God who does not lie promised before the beginning of time.

And at his appointed season, he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. To Titus, my true son in our common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach, and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

Even one of their own prophets has said, are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.

They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good. Now I suppose it would be a natural thing for us to turn to what we call the pastoral epistles. For an occasion like this, probably Titus to most of us is the least familiar of the three pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. And Titus is certainly not to most of us the familiar figure that Timothy is.

Although interestingly it is to Titus that John Calvin likens himself, when he writes to William Farrell in Geneva and dedicated his commentary on Titus in fact to Farrell, and writes to him in November 1549, I bear the same relation to you as Paul made Titus bear to him. I think there never has been in ordinary life a circle of friends so heartily bound to each other as we have been in our ministry. Our alliance and friendship have been entirely consecrated to Christ's name as it was with Titus and Paul.

Titus appears nowhere in Acts, which is rather strange in some ways since he is a close companion and fellow labourer of Paul. Some have thought that he doesn't appear in Acts perhaps because he is a relative of Luke, and that may well be so. Let me just fill in a little of Titus' background for us then.

What do we know of Titus? The very first thing that is obvious from the first chapter of the epistle is that he was Paul's spiritual son. In Titus 1.4 and in 1 Timothy 1.2 you get almost identical descriptions of Titus and Timothy. What it means when he says, Titus, my true son in our common faith, is that Titus had been brought to faith in Christ clearly under Paul's ministry, and that there was a credible evidence of the grace of God at work in his life.

He is my true son. Now, of course, that's a very special relationship. Paul describes himself related in many different ways to people to whom he addresses himself.

He is an apostle, on occasions a brother, a teacher, a servant, a fellow labourer, but to a select group he is a father. You will remember how he writes to the Corinthians, you have ten thousand guardians or tutors in Christ, but only one father. And the relationship of a spiritual father to his spiritual children is a very special kind of relationship.

So Timothy was Paul's spiritual child or son. He was also Paul's cherished spiritual companion. In especially his letters to the Corinthians, Paul writes of how close he had been to Titus.

Obviously there was a bond between them. In 2 Corinthians 2.13, for example, I had no peace of mind, I did not find my brother Titus. And in 2 Corinthians 7.6, God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

And it's very clear that Titus bears a special relationship of companionship in the gospel to Paul. He was also his trusted fellow worker. In 2 Corinthians 8.23, he says, He is my partner and fellow worker.

And he was entrusted with certain tasks. For example, here we discover that in verse 5 of chapter 1, he has been left in Crete to straighten out what was left unfinished and to appoint elders in every town. The last we hear of Titus is that he is in the area that we would know as Dalmatia, the Yugoslavian coastline probably in 2 Timothy 4.10. Now at the beginning of the epistle, Paul introduces himself to us and describes himself, do you notice, in terms of the two constraints which dominate his own life.

In verse 1, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. And the two constraints are first the obligation of bond service to God and the second the authority of apostleship from Jesus Christ. The first means not so much, I think, that Paul is referring to his work for God, a servant of God.

He is rather referring to his will in relation to God. The whole posture that the apostle has taken up in his Christian ministry and the posture that Paul has adopted is that of servanthood. His will is submitted to the will of God and the whole gait of the man in his ministry is that of servanthood.

The principal feature of Paul's life is that of being a servant of God. And it's an enormously important thing, I think, because, of course, it is in this that he is reflecting the ministry of Jesus. The essence of Jesus' ministry is servanthood.

And the servant character and the servant bearing is of the very essence of Christian ministry. And Paul is speaking principally, I think, of this. Now, that covers and affects so many areas of life that it is possible for us to understand the whole of our ministry in these terms.

It affects, for example, our personal relationship to God, the quality of our own personal lives of which this first chapter has so much to say. The essence of what makes a man of God is that he is utterly submitted to the will of God in the whole area of his being. There is no part of his life which is not subjugated and submitted to the will of God.

He is a servant of God before he ever begins to serve God. And that's not a distinction that is always made. We cannot go out into God's service until we are God's servants in the sense that our whole being is at his disposal and under his government and mastery.

That affects our relationship to the truth and to our fellow laborers in so many different ways. If we are submitted to him as his servants, then, as we will see in this first chapter, we are submitted to the gospel that he has entrusted to us. We also have our relationships with one another sorted out, as our Lord himself said to the disciples, Do not be called rabbi or giving yourself titles.

He said you have one master and you are all brothers. So this question of servanthood affects our relationship with each other as well as our relationship to him and our relationship to the truth. But the second clarifies where Paul's authority derives from and that is his apostleship.

He has received it directly from Christ. Now that, of course, is not only Paul's authority. By derivation, it is our authority.

Not that we are apostles, but that we derive our authority from apostolic truth. We teach apostolic truth and our authority is, in a derived sense, the same as the Apostle Paul's. Now, you can see how, having explained what he is, Paul then goes on to explain what he is for.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. There is this remarkable concentration in the life of the apostle, so that it becomes obvious what his life is for. I am more and more impressed by this in the New Testament that you can grasp this almost immediately when you encounter the apostle in the pages of the New Testament.

He is a man whose life is for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. Now, that speaks of a quality of life, of a clarity in the life of a minister of Jesus Christ that you know what he is for, what his life is for, what his existence is all about. That clarity is not always apparent in us, is it? But it was apparent, obviously, in the apostle.

You could tell what the man was for. Now, notice that there are two things that he says his life is for. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

Now, these two things simply mean that Paul's life is engaged for two great purposes in his ministry. One is evangelism and the other is teaching. Do you notice? For the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

So his ministry is focused upon saving faith and saving knowledge. And you have there one of the most compact descriptions of a biblical and apostolic ministry. Its twofold concern is that the elect may come to faith and that they may grow in the knowledge of the truth which leads to godliness.

Now, I think that is probably one of the most comprehensive and significant descriptions of the Christian ministry that you find in the New Testament. He is not concerned with the one apart from the other. There is a tendency, I think, in some of our circles to divorce the two.

As though our only concern were for evangelism to bring people into the kingdom. Or as though our only concern were for teaching to help people to grow in godliness. But the real balance of an apostolic ministry is that we need to have a zeal to see the elect come to faith.

And an equal zeal to see believers grow by the knowledge of the truth into godliness. And whenever a minister of Christ loses the zeal for one or other of these, he begins to need to reassess the whole of his

ministry. Do you notice how Paul holds certain things together? He holds together election and evangelism.

Far from being an embarrassment in his thinking about bringing people to faith, election is what makes evangelism possible for Paul. It is not a strange subject that is some esoteric interest in the margins of life. It is the very heart of what evangelism is about.

I imagine that this was what he recognized when in Corinth he had been going through some great difficulties. And God came to him, do you remember, in a dream in the middle of the night and said to him, Be of good cheer. He was discouraged about the situation in the city and God said to him, Be of good cheer, I have much people in this city.

Now they hadn't of course been converted yet. But the whole point was that the proclamation of the gospel was the means by which the eternal God drew to himself those who were his own people. And the very power for evangelism Paul finds in God's electing work of grace.

So that there is no division between the two, nor any kind of embarrassment. He holds election and evangelism together. Do you notice how he also holds together truth and godliness? For the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

How are we to see this quality of godliness that we so desperately need in the Christian church in our generation? My brothers and sisters, I think there was probably never a time when we so urgently needed to see the quality of life of our people changed. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit not producing some kind of dramatic experience merely, but producing moral transformation and Christ likeness and godliness. And this is what the knowledge of the truth is for.

Now let me say to you that I think that there are many people within some of our circles who are very eager to produce a knowledge of the truth and themselves to increase in the knowledge of the truth. But the knowledge of the truth in apostolic terms is not to make us clever. It is to make us Christ-like.

That's the whole point of theology really. It is to make men and women Christ-like. And those of us who have the great privilege of bathing our souls day by day in the truth of God and filling our minds with the knowledge of it and exercising our intellect in it, we need to grasp that for us chiefly, as Paul is about to tell us when he talks about the qualifications of elders, for us chiefly, it ought to make us not so much unusual in our theological knowledge as unusual in the quality of our godliness.

I've been reading again for another purpose some of the men of the 19th century in Scotland of Murray MacShane's era. I went into a church and found Andrew Bonner's Bible in three volumes, a most remarkable thing to see. Andrew Bonner had his Bible particularly bound in three volumes with interleaved blank pages.

At a time when that was probably seldom if ever done. Do you know the extraordinary thing? Right from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Malachi in the Old Testament, there is not a single square inch of blank paper. It is filled, filled not only with comment, filled with Hebrew script.

Now, this is not a professor in a university, this is a man who is laboring in a parish in the middle of Glasgow. Then when you turn over to the New Testament, he has two pages between every page. And they are all solidly black with the work the man has been doing in this.

But now, what were men like Bonner and MacShane known for? I tell you what they were known for. They were known for their godliness. They were known for their Christ-likeness, for the beauty of their character.

That is what truth did to them. And I sometimes am concerned when I move among some of our modern theological students and find them very eager to argue for the truth and to convince other people of their orthodoxy, that there can become a detachment, you know, a detachment from the real purpose for which God has given truth, which is to produce godliness. And here, the apostle says that he is a servant and an apostle for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

Now, if you notice in verse 2, while the goal of faith and knowledge in this world is godliness, the ultimate hope on which saving faith and saving knowledge rests is the hope of glory. A faith and a knowledge, verse 2, resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. I think that he is speaking there not of that eternal life which we receive as we believe, but of the eternal life which is the eternal glory of which he is speaking in chapter 3, verse 7, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

There is this forward-looking dimension in all the apostles' life and ministry. I was speaking to some of our own elders just the other week, and we were sharing together how little we were aware in one another of that heavenly-mindedness that seems to have been the characteristic of some of the great days of God's grace in the church. You know, you get this rather cheap jibe that somebody is so heavenly-minded they're no earthly use.

And I was saying to our elders that in thirty years in the ministry I've never met anybody like that. I've met impractical people. I've met unrealistic people.

But I've never met anybody who was so heavenly-minded that they were of no earthly use, because the great problem is that we are all so earthly-minded. And the apostles' great concern is with the hope. You know, we are not merely saved by grace through faith.

We are saved by grace through faith in hope. And we really do need to have some awareness of the glory that awaits us in all our ministry, in all our life, in all our bearing. The quality of our life needs to be refined and beautified by what our forefathers called heavenly-mindedness.

Do you notice incidentally the three ages which the apostle ties together in verses two and three? The age before history began at the end of verse two, which God who does not lie promised before the beginning of time. And then the age when history was the stage for God's revelation in verse three. At his appointed season he brought his word to light.

And then the age when history is ended in the beginning of verse two. A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life which God who does not lie promised. Now what links these three ages together is the preaching of the apostolic gospel.

In verse three he says at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. That preaching has its roots in eternity before time. It has its ultimate fulfillment in eternity beyond time.

And it has its foundation in the revelation made in time and history. So the context of apostolic preaching ministry is the purposes of God which stretch from eternity to eternity. And it is through preaching that the

sovereign eternal God brings his word to light, brings the elect to faith, brings the believer to godliness, and brings the godly to glory.

Now that is the context in which Paul sees the ministry of preaching that God has given to him. At his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me. Now if that is the context of his preaching ministry you notice the constraint of his preaching ministry is twofold.

It is first of all a sacred trust. Verse three the preaching entrusted to me. This is how Paul sees every servant of God.

Of course in chapter 1 verse 7 he says an overseer is entrusted with God's work. And the whole concept of stewardship is one that dominates Paul's view of Christian ministry. And the significance of it is obviously that the steward is required to be faithful.

Faithful to God and faithful to the gospel. So the constraint upon his ministry of preaching is that it is entrusted to him by God. But the second constraint is that it is a command of God our Savior.

He brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. Now that command of course is unique in the case of the Apostle. Who is commissioned to apostleship in a sense that is peculiar to the Apostles.

But it is something which is reflected in our own call and commission to the ministry of the word. We have both a stewardship to fulfill and a command to obey. And Paul's whole thinking about his own ministry of the gospel is within these kind of brackets.

It means that he is constrained to be faithful to God and to the gospel. And obedient to the command that God has given him to minister his word. These then are the pictures that he gives us of himself and by implication of Titus.

And the remainder of chapter 1 of Titus falls into two related sections. And I want to look briefly at these with you first. The character and qualifications of true elders or servants of God.

And elder is a word that is used or overseer to describe every form of Christian ministry that God has given to us. In our particular calling whether it is that of a ruling elder or a teaching elder. And the other part of the chapter is concerned with the character and destructiveness of false teachers.

The first is from verse 5 to verse 9. And the character and destructiveness of false teachers from verse 10 to verse 16. It's very obvious that Paul and Titus had labored together in Crete. Although probably Paul did not found the church in Crete.

And he left Titus there with the unfinished business of appointing leaders within the churches. And so his directions to Titus were to appoint elders in every town. Verse 5. He uses the two words which are common of course for elders, elder and overseer.

And it's commonly acknowledged that they refer to the same person. Possibly elder describes the maturity and experience and character. While overseer refers to his task and function.

Now one of the vital things that Paul is pressing upon Titus for the sake. And he does so also I was going to say to Timothy. For the sake of the church and its well-being.

For the sake of the cause of Christ and the spread of the gospel. The quality of leadership which is appointed is of the essence of the apostles concern. It is going to affect everything in the church.

And so he sets down for us certain requirements for the eldership. And you will notice that they are almost all until we come to verse 9. Concerned with the elders character. What the apostle is taken up with is the quality of life of these men.

Who are to be appointed as leaders within the church. Notice for instance the general requirement in the introductory verse in verse 6. He sets down for us the general requirements in relation to society. In relation to marriage and in relation to the family.

An elder must be blameless. The husband of but one wife. A man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

Now notice that first qualification for an example. An elder must be blameless. Very obviously that does not mean sinless.

There are no sinless elders because there are no sinless Christians. The word actually means not called. That is that no accusation can be made against him.

Which will defame his character and be clearly proved. That is he is to be above reproach is another way that the apostle describes it. He is to be of good reputation is another description in his letter to Timothy.

Now the whole point about this you see is. That the quality of the man's life is absolutely basic to his usefulness in service. And his reputation in society needs to be above reproach.

That is one of the reasons of course that when we are engaged in selecting candidates for the ministry. As I am involved in this in the Church of Scotland. We take very wide references from all over the place.

We ask all manner of people about the quality of this particular candidates life. And the reason we are concerned about that is. That the man I am affects the work that I do.

Now as I have often said to divinity students. That is not a correlation that you make in many other spheres of life. In many other spheres of life you can divide a man's character from his effectiveness professionally.

But you cannot do that in the Christian ministry. Because the man I am affects the work I do. And Paul says an elder must be blameless therefore.

He must be above reproach. Now we have had great problems in the Church of Scotland. As many of you may know because it has been made very public.

About some of the candidates who have come in to the ministry. We now have two men in the ministry. Who have been convicted and served time in prison for murder.

One who murdered his mother. Now at the General Assembly when this issue was raised. And the man's candidacy was being tested.

One of our former moderators the most gracious and delightful man. Made a plea which undoubtedly swept the whole of the assembly behind him. He made a plea that this candidature might be supported.

And he said this. The issue which is at stake here is the doctrine of regeneration. Now many of us began to listen.

Because we had not heard pleas made about the doctrine of regeneration. In the General Assembly for a long time. And we wondered what this was going to be.

He said the issue is the doctrine of regeneration. Is it or is it not true that a man like this may be born again. And changed by God's grace.

And therefore qualifies for the ministry. Now it was a most moving and obviously a most effective speech. But it was of course total nonsense.

For this reason the doctrine which was at issue there. Was not the doctrine of regeneration at all. It was the doctrine of ordination.

For all repentant sinners may be regenerated. But not all regenerate sinners may be ordained. That's the principle.

There are particular qualifications that God has set down in Scripture. For those who are going to hold office and leadership in the church. And one of them is that the man must be of unsullied reputation.

Amongst those who are outside. And clearly that was not so. Now we have this burgeoning into every area of life.

We have a man today. Who left his wife and children. And went off with someone else's wife.

And is not married to her but is living with her. And is teaching divinity students in the university. Now it is that you see.

Which is the result of not taking seriously this whole question. Of the qualifications for Christian leadership. And Christian service.

And that very slackness. My brothers and sisters. It moves into the life of evangelical ministers in almost every sphere.

This kind of thing has a penetrating permeating effect. And it makes us careless. And I want to say to you that one of the things I believe God is saying to us in our generation.

In terms of Christian leadership and Christian ministry. Is that with all our heart and all our being. We need to guard our own souls.

And guard our own life. An elder must be blameless. His marriage must be one that bears testimony to biblical standards.

His home and family. To Titus Paul says if a man cannot manage his own family. Which is a microcosm of the church.

How will he manage the church of God? And clearly there is a quality of life that is to be seen in terms of domestic godliness. Now you will notice how he goes on. Verse seven.

We don't have time to look in detail at these. But let me just read them with you. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work.

And he repeats it again. He must be blameless. That is his character must match his calling.

His preaching must be exhibited in his daily life. Not overbearing. That is he must not be self-willed as some translations have it.

Not interested in merely satisfying his own self-interest. He must not be overbearing. Not quick tempered.

Not given to excess. Not violent. Pursuing dishonest gain.

He must be a man in other words of integrity. And probably that word covers so many of the things that the apostle is saying. If he is a man of integrity in relation to other things.

He will have integrity in relation to the truth. Rather he must be hospitable. One who loves what is good.

Here is the positive side. Who is self-controlled. Upright.

Holy. And disciplined. Now you see the picture.

It is a picture of godliness in practice. And it is not an unattractive kind of godliness. You notice that beautiful description.

He must be hospitable. You know that that English word of course comes from the same root as the word hospital. And here is this picture of a beautiful Christ-like godliness.

Which makes the man's life and home like a hospital to the wounded and the sick and the needy. There is a positive side to this. It is a place of healing.

His life is like that. And in relation to the truth he must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught. So that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

So you see these twin qualifications on the one hand. He is to be a man in whose life there are the lineaments of biblical godliness. And on the other hand he is to be a man in whose life there is an absolute crystal clarity about the truth.

There is no more vagueness in his attitude to the truth than there is in his attitude to righteousness. Now it is true as I was saying earlier that it is possible for us to become unbalanced on one side or the other. But I think again this whole matter of integrity affects both of these areas.

Integrity in terms of our character and integrity in our relationship to the truth of God. We have no more liberty to depart from the apostolic gospel than we do from the divine law. That means that our life will be marked by a love for the law of God that is displayed in true biblical godliness.

And by a love for the truth of the gospel which will not permit us to depart from it in any area of our teaching. Now I don't think that just means that we will be rigidly orthodox. I think it does mean that we will be committed to the apostolic gospel in all its parts.

But I think it also means that if we are called to be servants of the gospel. We will give ourselves to apostolic truth and apostolic doctrine so that our souls and our minds are steeped in it. My dear brothers

and sisters, I think this is one of the areas where Christian leaders in our generation and especially perhaps those who have the pressures upon them in their early days in the ministry.

They desperately need to see the importance of soaking themselves in the truth. Now that has a great deal to do with the way we spend our time. We must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught.

Now it is this whole area of the instruction of our own souls that I am thinking about. It is not simply that we are to sign some orthodox doctrinal statement and say that we hold to it with all our being. It is that we are to become students of the word of God in our daily life.

Now not all of us are scholars. I am not a scholar. But all of us are called to be students.

And I just wonder sometimes whether in the distribution of our time and the resources of our energies, we have given enough place to this whole matter of retaining the calling to study throughout our ministry. I think, for example, of what so many of our own men find themselves doing in the mornings. It is one of the great problems of the ministry, isn't it? That immediately, certainly this is true in Britain, immediately you are out of theological college and into the ministry.

The structure that surrounded your life and directed it has gone. There is no framework really. And in the mornings particularly, it may be that in the afternoons people will expect you to do this, that or the other.

But the mornings are largely there for you to use as you think best. And I think one of the most disastrous things that happens to many people is that in the mornings they become administrators and not students. And it is possible for us to find that we have this whole realm of becoming acquainted with the truth of God swept aside from our lives by other pressures.

I think for this reason that it's a great pity that it is becoming increasingly common in Britain for a minister to have an office instead of a study and to spend more of his time in his office than he does in his study. Now I believe that whatever the change in organization may mean, it is absolutely essential that we give ourselves time to become students of the faith once delivered to the saints. Therefore, says Paul, he must hold firmly to the trustworthy message.

That is, in order that he might encourage others by sound doctrine. Now that's how people are to be encouraged, you see, and refute those who oppose it. And for the rest of the chapter, he is taken up with those who oppose the sound doctrine and how they ought to refute their opposition.

But it seems to me an enormously important thing for us that we give ourselves to this twofold ministry that the apostle is concerned with. The ministry of practicing biblical godliness and the ministry of preaching the biblical gospel. The two are merged together because what we preach, we need to practice.

The authenticating of so much of our preaching ministry is in the daily manner of our life that we live before men and women in the world. And so many of them in our generation who never read the Bible will first of all see the outworking of truth in our own lives. And God may make us by that able faithful ministers of the new covenant.

Now let's spend a moment in prayer and then I'm going to hand over to Winston and it may be that we have time for discussion. Our gracious God and Father, we thank you this morning for such a high and holy calling with which you have called us. We think of the days in which we live with such moral confusion

and such doctrinal confusion.

And we pray that you would raise up more and more in our generation those who have clarity of godliness in their own lives and utter conviction concerning the truth as you have entrusted it to us. Lord, hear us and bless us and be with us in fellowship together through Christ our Savior. Amen.

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