

# Godly Leaders

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 June 2007

Preacher: Paul Barker

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] We'll keep open the Bible reading at that page, at page 964, 1 Timothy 3, and this is continuing our sermon series from 1 Timothy, the third out of our six in this series.
- A retired minister rang me this week, and he was despairing at some of the appointments of ministers to Anglican churches in his part of Melbourne, and I actually thought in the back of my mind, uh-oh, what's behind all this?
- Is he going to ask if I want a job somewhere else? But he didn't, and I'm pleased. He's the locum in a church where there is no minister. That is, the minister has left some time ago, and they're looking for a new minister, and he's despairing of the sort of caliber of people that are around, the caliber of people that might get put there, the caliber of a person who was there, and how can he help the people in that church to look properly and to know what to look for when they're looking for a new vicar or minister for their church?
- It's not an unusual scenario. I'm involved as an archdeacon in Melbourne Diocese in about 25 churches, and when they become vacant, when their vicar moves somewhere else, I'm part of the selection procedure for those churches, and it's a big question.
- How do we improve church's discernment for looking for a minister? How do we help people know what sort of questions to ask? It's the same sort of issue that confronted me when a few years ago, and for about five years, I was what's called in Melbourne Diocese an examining chaplain.
- [ 1 : 4 3 ] That meant I was one of the people who interviewed prospective ordination candidates. So if somebody was inquiring about ordination, they would be sent to one of about half a dozen examining chaplains.
- I was one of them. And I would have to interview them and then see whether I thought, yes, we should go to the next step of more formal interviews for this person. And the question is, what sort of things am I looking for in a potential minister?
- The same issue confronted me over the last two years when I was a member of the Board of Nominators in the Diocese of Melbourne, and we were trying to draw up a shortlist for the position of Archbishop for the Synod to elect.
- And we had quite a deal of argumentation amongst members of the Board about what sort of questions we ought to ask, what sorts of things are we looking for in a prospective Archbishop.
- It strikes me that in all of that, rarely, if ever, do people go back to the pastoral epistles, that is the letters to Timothy and Titus in the New Testament.
- [ 2 : 4 4 ] And in particular, 1 Timothy and in the letter to Titus, we find instructions similar to what we get tonight about the sorts of qualities that ought to be looked for in Christian leadership, in the leadership of a Christian church.
- And the thing that is most striking, most striking by comparison with our society, our corporate world, and even by comparison with our church practice, the thing that is most striking here in 1 Timothy, similarly in Titus, is this.
- What is of first priority is not skills, competence, gifts, experience, charisma, inspiration, what is of first priority is godly character.

And that's in essence what this passage is about tonight. Predominantly, what is needed in Christian leadership is first and foremost, essentially, godly character.

What is the quality of person as a person, as a believer, as a Christian? That's the first thing, the main thing. That's far more important, actually, than the ability of leadership in many ways.

[ 4 : 09 ] Now, remember that Paul is writing to Timothy, who's been placed as a sort of delegate of Paul, responsible for bringing the church in Ephesus back to true teaching, and for silencing the false teachers, the wolves, as I called them two weeks ago.

And so remember that that's the context, and therefore the qualities that are required of Christian leaders that Paul goes through here in chapter 3, is in part influenced by that context.

That is, getting the teaching right, the leadership right, in a place where it is not right at the current time. Some of those false teachers are leaders in the congregation, possibly even elders who've gone astray in their false teaching and in their motives.

So what does Paul then say? The first thing he says in verse 1 is that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task.

Now, we need to be very careful here, because in our Anglican terminology, the bishop is a person who's responsible for a whole range of churches. So the bishop, or the archbishop in Melbourne, is responsible for something like 270 church sites and 215 parishes like Doncaster, and under him there are three regional bishops, and each of those has got about 70 churches.

[ 5 : 32 ] That's not what is in mind here. The word is overseer, and in many respects it would be better to leave it translated as overseer, because the term bishop, which comes from the Greek word of oversight, has got now in our terminology so much connotation that is not here in the original writing.

That is, what is being described in verse 1 is the person responsible for the oversight of a church, or maybe a couple of linked or closely united churches.

For example, in Ephesus there might be perhaps one overseer, there may be three or four or so house churches that are under that person's oversight. That is, it's not a bishop of a great big area.

It's somebody with much more hands-on leadership. It's actually more likely that what's described here as bishop in our translation, but overseer, is really somebody in my role as the overseer, or the vicar as we call it, or the senior minister of a church, maybe with more than one congregation, maybe with just one congregation.

So that's the job that's being described in these first verses, more like my job than a bishop's job as we would call it in the Anglican terminology. And notice that Paul encourages aspiration to that.

[ 6 : 51 ] Don't shy away from godly ambition. If God is leading you or calling you to aspire to be the overseer of a congregation, to be the minister of a church or congregation, it's a noble and good thing.

And I would want to echo what Paul is encouraging at the beginning here, is to encourage you that if this is where God is leading you, don't shy away from that. Don't shrink back from that.

Because the ministry of godly leadership is a fundamental importance for the church and indeed for the world. Then he goes on from verse 2 to describe the actual qualities needed for the person.

In the first verse, the word is the office of bishop, *episcopae*. In the second verse, the actual person is the *episkopos*. And that's where we get the term episcopal church, for example, a church with bishops.

And the first thing is that the person must be above reproach. It's a general term. It refers to observable conduct, speech included, as well as action and behavior in general.

[ 8 : 05 ] And they must be above reproach with an untarnished reputation. There is nothing that if mud were thrown, it wouldn't stick. There is nothing there that would bring them reproach as a person.

A person of good character. Not perfect, of course, nobody's perfect. But a person of high standing of character and behavior. And then follow six virtues.

Six positives. Married only once. Well, I could sit down now. Because I'm not married once.

I'm not married more than once. But I'm not married at all. The thrust here, I think, is not to say that the overseer must be married and married only once.

Rather, the thrust is most likely faithful in their marriage. Not adulterous. Not polygamous. Not divorced and remarried and divorced and remarried.

[ 9 : 07 ] Maybe the possibility is there for a widow who's been remarried. But really, the thrust, the essence of it is faithful in marriage. In a sense, we know that because Paul was single, it seems.

The apostle Paul. And maybe Timothy was. We're not told of any wife. Maybe others of the apostles were as well. So it doesn't seem to be excluding single people in marriage. It's about faithfulness in marriage that seems to be the important thing.

They are to be temperate. That is sober. But sober in the head sense rather than the drinking sense. I mean, they're to be sober from drink as well.

But that issue comes up later. That is to be morally balanced. Wise. Making wise judgments in that. But also temperate in the sense that they're not easily rather fired up or angered or provoked.

That is, they have a balanced demeanor. Then we're told they're sensible. That's the same word for self-control that we saw last week in chapter 2, verse 9.

[ 10 : 15 ] A gift of the spirit elsewhere in Galatians 5. That is somebody who is disciplined. Somebody who's not out of control in any area of life.

Respectable. A general word. Well behaved. Dignified. An honourable sort of person. People would respect them. And hospitable.

A high virtue, actually, in the Greco-Roman world of this day. And especially to strangers, where you don't really have the hotels that we're used to. So people, as they travel, would depend upon other people's hospitality to take them into their house.

Something that, in fact, has been the case up until only in modern times, really. In the last couple of hundred years, I suppose, have hotels become more popular. So in the ancient world, people would, if they were travelling, would need to find hospitable people to stay with.

Even if they were people they didn't know. Well, there's six virtues. Well, there's five, rather. And the sixth is the closest we get to a skill. An apt teacher.

[ 11 : 24 ] We read at the end of verse 2. An apt teacher is, of course, most important in the context of the false teaching that's going on in Ephesus. It's got a connotation, too, not just of somebody who will teach the truth, but actually practice what they preach.

Who will back up the teaching with their life. That is, an apt teacher is somebody who teaches the truth and lives by the truth. And that will include correcting and it will include rebuking error as well.

Now, verse 3 keeps on the list. But now it adds some vices to the virtues. The vices to be excluded. The virtues to be included. So, not to be a drunkard or a violent person.

The two go together. And it may be drunkenness that might lead to violence. Although, the violence may not necessarily be tied to the drunkenness. It's actually describing, in a sense, a typical Australian male.

Or at least, in some quarters. But it shows, again, somebody whose life is stable. Who's exercising discipline and self-control.

[ 12 : 32 ] Somebody who is, in a sense, personally reliable. That is, they're not vulnerable to times of being under the influence of drink and prone to violence and so on.

Somebody who's dependable, in a sense. It doesn't mean a teetotaler either. Later on, in the same letter, Paul will say to Timothy, take a little wine for your stomach. So, it's not advocating teetotaling.

No alcohol at all. But rather, somebody who's not a drunkard. A person, then, who is gentle. But not quarrelsome. Probably the two are in contrast with each other.

A gentle person is not a soft touch. Not somebody who'll be walked over by everybody. But on the other hand, somebody who's not, sort of, by nature, a controversialist.

A provocateur. Somebody who's always, you know, rubbing up wrong ways against people. I'm sure you probably know people who are like that. You never quite feel at ease with them.

[ 13 : 32 ] Well, a gentle person who's not quarrelsome. Who's not always picking an argument. Or not always being difficult. A gentle person is what a Christian leader is to be. And that has connotations of humility.

Somebody of mercy and forgiveness. So that they're not always, sort of, claiming their rights and jumping in antagonistically with people in conversation. Somebody who's courteous. Somebody who's tolerant.

They're the sorts of things behind this. And then somebody who's not a lover of money. That is, not necessarily excluding wealthy people. But certainly excluding those who are driven by wealth.

And in the ancient world, you could teach for gain. For profit. That is, people would get up on street corners or whatever. And people would come and pay some money to hear them speak. A bit like, sort of, preacher buskers, I suppose.

And it's easy, of course, for any of us to actually love money. And to be honest, in the job that I'm in, there's quite a temptation sometimes, or it could be for some ministers, to gain money through various ways.

[ 14 : 36 ] People trust a minister. So they don't always, you know, they give you money and say, oh, can you give this to so-and-so? Or can you put this in the office? Or do whatever. And thankfully for me, that's not a difficult temptation.

But I can imagine for some people it would be with areas in which there's perhaps low accountability. Well, these vices that are mentioned in verse 3, the drunkenness, the violence, the quarrelsomeness, the love of money, they undo ministry very quickly.

Very quickly indeed. Verse 4 shifts gear a little bit. It looks at the private life of the person. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way.

You see, the state of family life is a good indicator about how well this person will be the manager of the household of God's family over a congregation. As verse 5 goes on to say, if someone does not know how to manage his own household, well, how can he take care of God's church or God's household?

Now, this actually is quite countercultural. It's countercultural because in our society, the private and the public are kept well apart. And so people argue, well, what a public person does in their private life is their business.

[ 15 : 55 ] It doesn't matter. So this sort of argument gets brought out whenever there's some scandal with a politician, for example, or a footballer or somebody else. The Shane Warne sort of thing. Well, we're not going to discipline him because of his private life.

He can still play for the Australian team and so on. Now, of course, occasionally the scandal is so great that the private spills into the public and disqualifies a person from some sort of office. I remember when I lived in England in the early 90s before coming here to Doncaster, the then Tory government of John Major was racked almost every month by some major sex scandal of one of its politicians.

And this argument kept being trotted out, sometimes without any effect, as people were disqualified from ministry or from the government. But in our society on the whole, there's this separation of private and public.

Bill Clinton's presidency was a good example of that separation, I think. But it also occurs in the church sometimes, very sadly. On the board of nominators, as we looked for an archbishop, there were those who thought it was absolutely wrong to ask anything about the family of the person that we were considering.

Despite the injunction here, for example, in 1 Timothy and in the pastoral letters about the person's family life. Also, we should also say that just as I commented before that the person need not necessarily be married, nor need they necessarily have children.

[ 17 : 23 ] In fact, children is plural here. So if you want to be very pedantic, you could say that the overseer must be both male, married, and with two or more children. But I think it's sort of the norm or the assumption that's being stated here.

I don't think a person's disqualified if they have one child. Children is plural, you see, in verse 4. And as I say, I don't think they're disqualified if they're single either. Verse 6 argues against a recent convert.

The recent convert may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. I'm not sure that that's limited entirely to recent converts. But certainly a person who's a recent convert, immature in their faith, may not yet have the depth of character in order to lead a Christian church.

And certainly conceit and ego, which is what's behind it, not the sort of pride in office. You know, I am the vicar sort of stuff. Or I am a bishop.

That's quite a temptation for some. I remember hearing the story of somebody, I won't say who this is, not that you would know probably anyway. But who in meetings, when things were not going their way, would actually thump the desk and say, I am the dean.

[ 18 : 43 ] It's a bit like Anthony Trollope, Barchester Towers sort of stuff, written in the 19th century Victorian age. But it does occur, let me tell you, that pride and ego in Christian leadership.

And something to be avoided. And then finally in verse 7 in this section, the person must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

Notice both 6 and 7 have this warning of the condemnation or the snare of the devil. And we ought not to ignore the fact that the devil seeks to bring down Christian leaders.

It's why Paul and the New Testament exhorts us to pray for leaders in part because the devil will undo the work of the gospel by targeting the leaders of churches.

And here the condemnation of the devil will be seen in conceit. And also in verse 7, the snare of the devil is public disgrace. And you don't need me to tell you there's been plenty of that from church leaders around the world in recent decades.

[ 19 : 47 ] It also fits the theme of this letter that the church is falling into disrepute in Ephesus. We saw that reflected last week with the emphasis on praying for the kings and rulers and leaders so that the church and Christians may lead a peaceable, quiet life.

That is that the church is not in disrepute for the sake of the gospel. Not for the sake of the comfort of Christians, but for the sake of the spread of the gospel. And here it seems that the false teachers are bringing the church of Ephesus into disrepute by their quarrelsomeness, by their diversiveness, by their controversialness in their nature.

Well, there's some descriptions, some qualities, and almost entirely they are qualities to do with character, looking for godly character in the overseers of Christian congregations.

The shape of this list is no doubt influenced by the church problems in Ephesus and the false teachers. And it interestingly, in that context, goes to character.

Because good character will usually be associated with good teaching and bad character not. So much ministry is undone by ungodly character of church leaders.

[ 21 : 09 ] By their anger, their inconsistency, their laziness, their dishonesty, their pride, their bullying, their quarreling. I see all of those things in ministers around about the place.

Their desire for power or wealth, for ambition or sexual desire is also sadly very common. Character is necessary qualification for Christian leadership.

Without godly character, all the gifts in the world come to naught. Well, Paul moves on now to talk about deacons. He doesn't actually talk about the duties of the overseer, what they have to do.

And he doesn't talk about the duties of the deacons, what they have to do. He doesn't talk about how the overseer and the deacons relate to each other. And nor does he actually explain how the deacons and the overseer relate to or are or are not elders.

So there's lots of questions that are unanswered in this. But again, it's the qualities. And it does seem that there is some overseer has some higher authority or responsibility than the deacons as well.

[ 22 : 21 ] And again, for the deacons, whatever their duties precisely are, character is the key. Again, we get a list of virtues and they parallel those for the overseer.

So they're not a completely different list of what is looked for. So the deacons likewise must be serious. I don't think that means that they've got no sense of humor, although it's quite attractive to be thought that I don't need a sense of humor.

Because it's sadly lacking, of course. But it means the same as what was earlier, respectable, actually. Somebody whose commands respect within the church and within society.

And then secondly, they're not double-tongued. A rare word meaning duplicitous. That is, somebody who'll say one thing to another person and then they'll say a different thing to someone else.

Let me tell you that is very common in church leadership. Usually because leaders are too weak or gutless to say the hard things to some people.

[ 23 : 21 ] And what is difficult becomes a huge mess. Sometimes which other people have to pick up. And I face that in one area of being an archdeacon just in the last month or two.

That is, somebody is promised something which the person has no intent of giving them. And somebody over here is told something completely different. And of course the expectations of one are wrongly inflated.

And then it provides clashes between the people who have been addressed. That's being duplicitous, double-tongued. It's dishonest, it's deceptive. But it's usually a mark of weakness in a person.

And then we're told in verse 8 as well that they're not indulging in much wine. That is, a little bit of wine for your stomach or whatever, that's okay.

But addiction to, drunkenness, a proclivity towards drunkenness, that's prohibited. And they're not greedy for money. More or less the same as what we saw earlier about not being a lover of money.

[ 24 : 28 ] And then note verse 9. They must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. That's a striking statement.

Holding fast to the mystery of faith. Well, the mystery of faith is simply the gospel. And we're going to come to that at the end of the passage tonight. Holding fast to it has got a sense of, you know, strong grip upon it.

Not just sort of a loose hold. And it's personal, so that it's your personal faith that you're holding fast to. But it's also got the sense of holding fast to it for the sake of passing it on as well.

And so probably it implies that these deacons have some teaching role in verse 9. And with a clear conscience, certainly picks up the right teaching or the right gospel.

So it's the right teaching in verse of chapter 1 verse 4 that leads to a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith in chapter 1 verse 5 as we saw two weeks ago.

[ 25 : 36 ] So clearly the exhortation here is to right teaching and right holding personally to the truth. And certainly with the implication, I think, of passing it on in some form of teaching ministry.

And that certainly is a counter to the false teachers who are in Ephesus at this time. That's the thrust of the early part of chapter 1 which we saw a fortnight ago.

So Paul is urging the deacons to hold fast. And in holding fast, passing on the true teaching of the true gospel, the mystery of faith. And they're to be tested.

Verse 10, let them be tested. That may mean a probation period. So they may appoint an elder, a deacon rather, and give them a testing period. Or it may also mean that they've got to be tested before they become a deacon.

So if they prove themselves, then let them serve as deacons, as verse 10 says. Verse 11 now directs its attention specifically to women deacons.

[ 26 : 38 ] Our translation simply says women. And you can see in the footnote the possibility is, and the most likely addressee, the women deacons in particular.

Not that they're separated entirely from the male deacons. There's no word for woman deacon. That's why there's some ambiguity in the translation. But given that it's addressing deacons in verses 8 and 9 and 10, and again in verse 12, the most likely scenario is that it's just highlighting now the women deacons.

Not that they're outside the instructions of verses 8 to 9 and 10 and 12, but there's some added instructions for them. And remember the women in particular seemed to be a problem, as we saw last week in Ephesus, with their clothes and their wrong teaching and their lack of learning and lack of listening.

So here the women must likewise be serious. So there's an emphatic turning to these women deacons. And not slanderers. Well, the men were not to be, or the other deacons in general were not to be duplicitous or double-tongued.

Here slander is not quite the same thing. Speaking evil or maliciously of somebody else is to be prohibited. And faithful in all things.

[ 27 : 53 ] And this idea of being faithful ties in or runs similar to the holding fast in the previous verse. So they personally have to be faithful, not only in what they believe, but in their ministry as well.

Now, some would argue that it may not imply teaching, but I think that's probably the most likely scenario in the expression, faithful in all things. It's got the sense of holding fast to the truth of the gospel and passing it on faithfully.

Then verse 11. Some argue that the boldness in the faith is simply personal assurance.

Some argue that the boldness through their serving well means that they gain in boldness in their ministry and in their teaching as well. Certainly false teaching and faulty character are friends.

They go together. The engine room for a godly minister is their character. Without good and godly character, all the gifts in the world are nothing.

[ 29 : 25 ] And so when I interview staff, for example, to employ here, when I've interviewed potential ordination candidates, when I was an examining chaplain, when I'm involved, for example, as an archdeacon and so on, what I try to probe behind is character.

Character, is it going to be easily tempted into wrong things? Character, is it stable under God or under stress or provocation? Provocation, does it collapse into an addiction or a temptation, into laziness or bullying or something like that?

It's hard to get behind, let me tell you in an interview. But that's what I'm trying to probe. Because if there isn't godly character, the skills are more easy to see in a way. If there isn't godly character, I don't want the skills that go with it.

And I've heard of many ministers, actually, many churches, who sort of have reservations about the character of the person. They say, oh, but they're such a good preacher, such a good pastor.

They're so competent with the kids or the youth. We really thought their skills would be great. But if there's ungodly character, it all falls apart in a disaster sooner or later.

[ 30 : 35 ] This emphasis on character is not the emphasis of our corporate world. It's not the emphasis, sadly, on the priority in our churches today, either. Now, competence does matter. I don't want somebody with godly character and no competence.

But I certainly need good competence if I'm looking for people to employ in a church. Competence never comes at the expense of character. You see, no amount of skill compensates for lack of character.

No level or high degree of, say, strategic acumen is a substitute for godliness. No degree of theological astuteness makes up for immorality.

No abundance of eloquence in a pulpit replaces the need for godly character. And, of course, if God's gospel's goal is godliness, as it is, then godliness must be inherent in a minister of the gospel.

Otherwise, the gospel ministry is a sham. The only skill in this list, really, is the skill of teaching. Back in verse 2.

[ 31 : 44 ] Explicitly it's there for overseers, and implicitly there, at least, implicitly, in verse 9 and 11 and 13, I think, for the deacons as well.

That's why Paul then finishes this chapter with a statement summarizing the gospel so that the teaching is right. He says in verses 14 and 15, I hope to come to you soon, but I'm writing these instructions to you so that if I'm delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

That's the church's responsibility, to hold up to be a foundation for the truth. And whilst we might look around part of the church today and bewail its efforts at passing on and holding fast to the truth, the fact is that you and I are here because the church for 2,000 years has, in fact, passed on the gospel under the grace of God.

Often not well, but it's done it. And we're here because the gospel's been passed down for 2,000 years. The heartbeat of this letter is true teaching and true teachers.

And the content must be right. Possibly the summary that follows in verse 16 is shaped by the wrong teaching. Notice that verse 16 begins, the mystery of our religion is great.



[ 33 : 12 ] Great is the mystery of our religion. And what were the words of the people of Ephesus when Paul was ministering there? Great is Artemis. Some say that this sort of sentence structure picks that up and reflects that.

Or in contrast, great or even greater is the mystery of our religion. And mystery, don't think the mystery is something that's just behind a smoke screen, something that's unfathomable.

That's how liberal Christianity uses the language of mystery today. something that we can't know, something that's unknowable. It's not the biblical use of the word mystery. Whenever Paul and the New Testament use the word mystery, what they mean is something that's, in one sense, difficult to understand, but has now been revealed in Christ.

So the mystery of our faith or the mystery of our religion is the gospel that's been revealed. It's not confusing. It's not unknown. It's actually known, not because we're clever, but because God has revealed it to us.

That's the gospel. And the word that's translated for religion is actually the word for godliness back in chapter 2, verse 2 as well. So the godliness, again, comes to the fore in the content of the gospel that follows.

[ 34 : 25 ] And six things are listed in those final words of verse 16. Six things. He, Jesus that is, was revealed in flesh.

That is, he was fully human. He was incarnate. And by saying he was revealed in flesh is also language that suggests or points us to the fact that he existed before he was human.

That is, Jesus existed in heaven as the son of God, as spirit, before he was born as a baby in Bethlehem and lived on earth. So the incarnation is the first thing, which ends, well, sort of ends in a sense with his crucifixion.

Secondly, vindicated by the spirit. That's the language of the first century referring to the resurrection of Jesus. put to death as a criminal, but God vindicated him by raising him from the dead because he was innocent and sinless.

And so he was lifted up, in a sense, into the spiritual realm of heaven. So the resurrection, in effect, is line two. Seen by angels. That may refer to the angels at the resurrection.

[ 35 : 40 ] May well, more likely refer to the angels in heaven. It may refer, therefore, to Jesus' ascension to heaven. It may still refer to the resurrection. But then notice the shift in lines four and five.

This summary of faith includes our obligation. Proclaimed among Gentiles. You see, the gospel is not just a statement of theology.

It's to be proclaimed to the world. And that again fits the emphasis we saw last week in praying for kings and rulers because God wills that all will be saved. So in this summary of the gospel is again a corrective, I think, to the false teaching in Ephesus.

It is for all people, Gentiles, that is, non-Jews, explicitly. But not only is it proclaimed, believed in throughout the world. Well, at this end of Paul's life, as he's writing these words, the gospel, in one sense, hasn't literally gone to every end of the world.

But it had certainly travelled far and seen many converts in many countries by the time Paul was in his last years before being put to death in Rome.

[ 36 : 51 ] And then finally, taken up in glory. Possibly referring to Jesus' ascension to heaven. Some suggest, possibly if it's strictly chronological, which it may not be, the taking up in glory to heaven with the Lord Jesus after his second coming.

Notice the focus on Jesus, the heart of the gospel. Not just God out there, but Jesus Christ. And notice that the gospel has the missiological imperative to proclaim among the Gentiles and to be believed all through the world.

Lines 4 and 5. And all of this is correcting the false teachers, it seems, in Ephesus. Well, the priority remains crucial for us to have godly leaders in churches today.

In our church of the western world in particular, which is so often wracked by heresy, schism, immorality, lack of leadership, and lack of evangelism and mission, these criteria seem to me as relevant today as they did in Ephesus in the middle of the first century AD.

What is needed is godliness flowing from the true gospel that's necessary for godly ministry. But let me finish with a note of encouragement to you tonight.

[ 38 : 22 ] Let me encourage you to pray about whether God is leading you to aspire to be an overseer in his church. You see, such people don't just sort of appear out of nowhere.

They come out of churches taught the gospel, believing the gospel. So let me urge you and encourage you to think and pray is god leading you.

Test yourself with the godly character that's required here. And if god is leading you perhaps do talk to me about it or to me because we want to encourage you in that.

Our church, not just the Anglican church in Melbourne but the church and not just Anglican but the church worldwide remains in desperate need for more and more godly leaders.

Is god calling you? If he is and you're aspiring to that it's a noble task. Don't be ashamed of that. Don't believe it's a greedy ambition unless it is.

[ 39 : 30 ] And may God raise up many more godly men and women to teach so that Jesus is exalted by all on the final day. Amen.