

Titus 1:5-9

5 I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: 6 someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. 7 For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; 8 but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. 9 He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it (NRSV).

Titus was a Gentile colleague of the Apostle Paul. This letter is for instruction in church leadership. Tradition has it that the Apostle Paul wrote the letter but that is disputed by a scholarly consensus. The vocabulary, style, and doctrine do not match the writings that are known to have been Paul written by him. The main points of the letter are faithful devotion to sound teaching, and appointing leaders.

The title of the message is *The Boss*. The idea is that Titus is left in charge of leadership of the congregations in the area. He is not a boss; he is a servant. God is the boss and that is crucial to understanding ministerial leadership. A servant is charged to lead others to do what the boss wants done. For simplicity let's say there are two types of bosses; a good boss with a positive attitude, and a bad boss with a negative attitude. The bad boss will lie, cheat, steal, contribute to a divisive environment, and look out for the self at the expense of others. The good boss will motivate the group by caring for the people. This results in a happier work environment with increased moral, production, and care for the employees. Well in this world that we live in, God is the Boss. God is a very good boss.

God responds to our attitudes. I think it is safe to say that blasphemy against the spirit is the worst thing you can do. There are different interpretations of what blasphemy against the spirit actually is but the Bible is specific, it is an unforgivable sin. Going against the spirit of Lord is what Satan did to Jesus; it is seen through direct attacks on the church, its leadership, and mission. I did a self rating of our attitudes towards God, starting from the worst. The atheist rejects and denies the Lord. Even though prophecy fulfilled is absolute confirmation, the Bible never ages and is always relevant. The agnostics are confused. They don't know what to believe even though there is overwhelming evidence of creation and God's way has been demonstrated repeatedly to be better than human ways. The lapsed are complacent with their lack of devotion and are not at all active. There are people that believe in Jesus but not his church. This is a distorted doctrine of complacency that teaches it is OK to be spiritual but not religious. There are the holidays Christians that belong to a church but only support the ministry of Jesus on special occasions. There is a realm of complacency of people that take the Lord's grace for granted. There are the devoted active participants that study the Bible, focus on sound doctrine, and help with the mission.

In the world we have a problem and a solution. The problem is the same as it always has been from the very first day of humanity. Human desire clashes with the will of God and God responds with love. The solution is Jesus. We cannot follow every word

of Bible. You can debate this if you want to, but the Bible is clear, we all fall short of the glory of God. It is not physically possible to be sinless. God knows this and that is why God gives us grace. What all of us can and should do is focus on Jesus. The most focused doctrine you can have is to seek guidance from Jesus. Study what Jesus said and did. Always take guidance from scripture and check what other people say with what Jesus said and did. This is extremely important. The problem God had when God sent Jesus was not a matter of evil in the world, but the manipulation of doctrine by religious leaders. People can only lead you astray when they don't know the correct doctrine. Look to Jesus for guidance. His practical theology is extremely important.

Titus was left in Crete for a specific reason and mission. The church needed leadership so he was to appoint elders for each town on the island. The significance of each item on the list is debatable. We could cover each one but I think it is better to focus on the main point. God's steward must be a person of integrity, accountability, and respectful character. The denominational leadership insists that clergy must be above reproach. This means not only innocent but beyond the appearance of questionable conduct with no reason to call integrity into question. We are to have a firm grasp of the word in accordance with the teaching of Jesus. We are to teach sound doctrine that focuses on Jesus and refute those who contradict it. You are not expected to be a perfect saint but you need to be honest, and a willing servant that strives to follow Jesus. The connection is Christ. Jesus is a direct connection to God and gives us the guidance we need. No matter what the problems of the world are, Jesus gives us the guidance that we need. All we need to do as a person, church, state, or country is to follow Jesus.

The Holy Spirit guides you to what kind of life you should live and what kind of person you are. Jesus does not just give the commandment to love; he emphasizes it by saying "this is my commandment." It is not a dozen commandments but one. This is the will of God. With this one commandment, all the other commandments fall into place. That you love one another comes with a specific degree of love "as I have loved you." We are to love others like Jesus loves us. Study his life and his word and focus your life on the love and unity of Christ.