

Sunday September 6, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Ross)

Good morning and welcome. Spring is in the air and new growth is starting all around us. Despite the difficulties of Covid it's a glorious day to be alive and to enjoy all that God has given us. Today we begin to explore the book of Titus. Paul wrote the book of Titus for his companion. Titus was to visit Crete, infamous for its sin, and restore order to house churches there. Part of his job was to replace corrupt teachers in the churches with godly leaders.

Where would you start? The original strong leader has gone and the early drive, vitality and faithfulness of the people of the church in Crete has been overshadowed by the lies, evil and laziness of the local population. Titus has a job ahead of him. However, Paul has some good advice for Titus, to help him with the problem, and, as we work through this letter, we'll find that it still holds true for us today.

We'll need to consider how seriously our beliefs about God figure in the overall scheme of our lives? We'll be reminded that our beliefs about God impact every decision we make and that a church that, through its leaders, teaches and preaches sound doctrine will see results in the lives of its people. Not only will people be saved from their sins, but God's grace will also motivate them to live out that saving faith with renewed and purified lives.

Prayer. *Father, as we come to you this morning, we want to praise you, and say thank you for all that you give us. We want to reflect on the glory of creation that is around us. As Spring begins, we want to recognise that it is a season of optimism and hope, and that the optimism and hope in our lives is centred on the faith you have given us. We live a resurrection life reflected in the new life springing up around us. Thank you, Lord, for the hope that you bring, the renewal that you bring, both to this world and to our hearts and lives.*

We want to pause and thank you for the blessings surrounding us. For another day, for family, friends, for food on the table. You are the source of all good things and we praise you for the simple things that bring us joy. Help us keep our eyes on you today and everyday so our lives may be filled with praise and joy.

As we begin to look at Titus today, and the qualities of leaders, we want to thank you for those that you have given us here in Charlestown, for those who built this church family, and those who continue to shepherd it and make it grow. We want to thank you for their faithfulness to your word, their encouragement of us, and the example that they set.

We know Lord, that we constantly fall short of your standards. We ask for your forgiveness, that you will give us a better understanding of our behaviour and the strength to overcome the temptations that confront us each day. Quieten and humble our minds today so that we can come before you ready to worship, willing to learn and able to serve you better when we leave this morning to go about our daily lives. Amen

Song – O for a thousand tongues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2e475ww32Jg>

Song – Behold our God <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrli3Lkf58>

Bible Reading – Titus 1:1-9 (NIV)

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised

before the beginning of time,³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,

⁴To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour. ⁵The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild & disobedient. ⁷Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹He 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.

Announcements

- **Church Services this term.** We are now entering our seventh week of 4 services a week so most people have worked out what they need to do and by when. Thank you. There are just a few people
 - **Who are not registering and turn up.** Please register if you possibly can
 - **Who are not letting Stephen know on Sunday morning if they can't come.** If you do that someone else might be able to take your place.
 - **Who are on rosters and are not registering.** We need to replace you if you can't come so please let us know.
- **Face masks.** Currently the NSW State government strongly recommended that people wear Face masks if they attend places of worship but stopped short from saying you had to wear face masks. We would strongly recommend that you do wear Face masks in church at the current time. There will be some washable facemasks available from the back of the Church if you would like one.
- **Hunter Women.** There will be an invitation to gather around God's word and an opportunity to meet other Presbyterian women and learn from each other. It will be held on Thursday 10th September from 9:30-12:30am at Grace Presbyterian, Warabrook. Study leaders Bev Paterson & Susan Ravenhall. If interested please talk to Annette Phyllis.
- **Focus for September – Sport/Leisure.** It is important that all of us live a balanced life – that we find time for the physical, the mental, the relational and the spiritual. The New Testament regularly used sports in its pages. We should **“run the race with perseverance”** (Hebrews 12:1), *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7), *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly, I do not fight like a man beating the air.”* Sport can teach us about the Christian life. But the Christian life must influence how we conduct ourselves in sport. Do you have enough sport and leisure to achieve balance in your life? Do you have too much sport and leisure in your life?
- **Prayer meetings.** Don't forget we now have just one prayer meeting for the church, each Monday at 7m on ZOOM. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89793950885>
- **Lords Supper TODAY.** Please prepare yourself and your family, whether you are going to be physically at Church or watching via our interactive service for this opportunity to remember Jesus and to prepare yourself for the Lord's return. Like last quarter we will be using pre-prepared juice and wafers. If you remember some people had trouble opening up the juice component so you might have something sharp available in case you need it!
- **Charlestown Work Day.** Please put Saturday 18th October in your diaries for a much needed work day around the church. More details to come.

- **Browns on Holidays.** Jon and Ang will be on holidays for the next 2 weeks. If you need any pastoral assistance please ring Stephen

Kids Talk – QUIZ WORX <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1i4DbE1-Wtn3EB-deKmXHI9laqVVjMku1>

OR Lord's Supper https://youtu.be/a2_fiARKWBU

Can we celebrate the Lord's Supper at home by ourselves? Doesn't it break the symbolism involved where we are all eating from the same loaf of bread and drinking from the same bottle of grape juice? Didn't Jesus say do this **as often as you meet** in remembrance of me. What if we can't meet together this morning? What if there is only some of us meeting together this morning, can we all still partake in the Lord's Supper?

Like so many issues that have been thrown up by the pandemic we need to re-examine how we are doing things. What is the essence of worship? How can we still have fellowship when meeting in the same room as you might make my health vulnerable? How do we do evangelism? Pastoral care? Even finances? So here is another question, can we do the Lord's Supper when we can't share the same elements, when we can't even be in the same room together?

Well the Presbyterian Church has always recognised that there are some unusual circumstances where we will celebrate the Lord's Supper away from the rest of the body of the church. Shut ins and nursing homes are a key one. They can't come to us, so the minister has traditionally gone to them. Prisons is another one. Hospitals. This symbol of the Lord's Supper is a powerful one. And people on their own might even need the connection of the body even more that we who are able to come to Church on a regular basis.

But as I was pondering this question, I was led I am sure to a part of the Lord's Supper story that I have never really considered before. For Jesus begins the Last Supper with these words *"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."* (Repeat)

This sacrament is not just a way we remember Jesus. Not just a time to reflect on our relationship with God but in the beginning, Jesus eagerly looked forward to its celebration. And the celebration of the Last Supper (which the Lord's Supper is based on) is done with others, with his fellow disciples, with the members of his Church, you might say.

A vital element of whether we can take this bread and wine this morning is us answering the question, do I eagerly desire to meet with Jesus and his people today? Am I doing all that I can to join with them? Yes, I know there are physical considerations with COVID-19 but what about the spiritual considerations. Not going to Church is costing me something. And so, the physical considerations in not coming to Church must be more important than the spiritual considerations of not coming to Church, for me not to meet together.

And that is a decision that each of us have to make. We have to weigh that up. The physical and the spiritual. The dangers of COVID and the dangers of not coming to Church. And if you have weighed those things up and decided that in this season it is better not to come to Church, you may take the bread and the wine **if you eagerly desire to eat this bread and wine with your fellow believers**. If you desperately want to come back and just can't. If you have already decided I want to have fellowship with others and I am planning to do that as soon as a possible can but it won't happen until X or Y takes place.

If that is what you have settled prayerfully before the Lord then in meantime you can say 'I am going to participate in this Lords Supper as my desire and prayer that I am so committed to both the Lord and his

people that even when I can't make it to church I will show that commitment by prioritising Christian fellowship. By prioritising my relationship with the Lord. By prioritising the work of the Church.'

And if you come to Church this morning you also should be aching to take the bread and the wine with those who are not here this morning. You are missing them so much that you will prioritise fellowship with them. That you will pray specifically for them because you don't want your brothers and sisters in Christ to put the physical before the spiritual. You want them to be growing in their faith and you know that it will be harder for them to do that without regular Christian fellowship.

So that is our challenge from the word of God this morning. Do we eagerly desire to eat this bread and drink this wine with each other today? Do we desire to have fellowship with the Lord and with his people today? And if we do please take the bread and the wine in remembrance of Jesus. And if we don't, please let the bread and wine pass by you today so that you can get your heart right for the next time we celebrate the Lords death and resurrection in this way. Let's Pray...

What we do today is for all those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what age, denomination or maturity. So, we now set aside these elements of bread and juice so that they may act as a reminder to us of what Jesus did for us. For on the night that Jesus was betrayed he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said *"Take eat this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me"*. So please pick up your piece of bread and consider how Jesus drew us near to the Father through dying on the cross to forgive us our sins. *"Take eat in remembrance that Christ died for you and be thankful"*.

And in the same way, Jesus took the cup and said, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins, do this as often as you drink in remembrance of me."* So, take the cup and think about that covenant, that new covenant God makes with us. That he will be our God and we will be his people. One day soon, he will send his son Jesus to gather up the elect and there will be no physical distancing between us and him at all! *"Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful"*

Please spend a few moments in quiet reflection and prayer...

Song – Behold the Lamb https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlgd_uT3mmM

Pastoral Prayer (Jon B)

Heavenly Father, we thank you that all promises are true and you've revealed them to us through your word and in your Son. We thank you for the gift of faith that helps us rest in the truth and leads to godliness. Fill us with the hope of eternal life that comes from knowing you, and Jesus Christ your Son.

- Father we pray for our church leaders. Help them to be watch their lives and their doctrine. Cause them to walk worthy of the gospel, in their homes and in the church, which is the household of God. Keep your church from false teaching and instead help us to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching.

- We praise you because your grace has appeared in Christ, bringing salvation for all people. People of every tribe and tongue, class and gender. We pray for the country of Qatar and ask that salvation would come to many there. Turn many from believing the lies of Islam to know the truth in Christ Jesus.

- Lord thanks for our brothers and sisters in Wee Waa church. Thanks for giving them good rain over the last few months. We thank you that Steve Bignall has been asked to stay until the end of 2023. Pour out your Spirit on him and the church and help them to give themselves to loving one another and their community. Help their live-streaming to be effective in building each other up and reaching the lost.

- Father we pray for our Home groups and ask that sound teaching would happen and this would cause us to live godly lives. Help us to devote ourselves to good works and serving one another.

Raise up new leaders and new groups so that more people can be grounded in Christ. Help our groups to have an outward focus on mission as well and be seeking how to reach the lost in Newcastle.

- Lord God, we commit all our plans you. We ask that you would supply all our needs according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Build your church and save the lost. Help us to place all of our confidence in you, believing that in Jesus Christ we shall be more than conquerors through him who loves us. In his name we pray Amen.

Bible Reading – Titus 1:10-16 (NIV)

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Sermon – Straddling two worlds! <https://youtu.be/KVf8fg-Wm9s>

I was on the plane a while back when I ran out of things to do and so out of desperation I reached for the inflight magazine. An in it was an interesting article on Alice Springs & the Aboriginal Desert Tour that the writer went on. For on this tour a young Aboriginal lady was telling the tourists all about her culture, the spirituality of the Dreamtime, the joys of eating witchetty grubs, the value of their ancient beliefs when suddenly her mobile phone rang.

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She listened for a couple of moments, and then hung up. "It was just my horoscopes", she explained, "I get it every day. I don't know why; I don't even believe in it." In the article, the travel writer continued "*the irony was not lost on the group of international visitors, keen to get up close and personal with a real native Australian on the Aboriginal Discover Tour. It illustrated the dilemma faced by young Australian Aboriginals caught between the two worlds of ancient spirituality & modern materialism*"

That young lady was caught between two worlds, wasn't she? That of Aboriginal faith and modern horoscopes. But when you think about it, no more so than us Christians. For we believe in the truth of the Bible. That it is the only guide to faith and wisdom and holiness. And yet we live in a modern world, a world full of materialism and greed. A world that doesn't even believe in truth. And Christians must straddle these two worlds.

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In a nutshell that is what the book of Titus is all about. How do we live in two worlds? How, in Jesus words, do we live in the world but not be of the world? Well the experienced missionary the apostle Paul is nearing the end of his life. He has travelled near & far across the Mediterranean, including recently to Crete, where he had helped establish a Church.

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But Crete was a tough place to be a Christian. In this letter Paul quotes a Cretan writer who says "*Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.*" Ouch. Actually, this same writer Epimedes went further and joked that the absence of wild beasts on the island was because of the wildness of its human inhabitants. So, Paul leaves Titus in Crete to help these new believers straddle their two worlds. So how should they do that? Firstly, it is all about...

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1. Grace (verses 1-4)

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Paul introduces himself as a servant of God. God’s slave. In the OT there were two types of slaves. The first one was a temporary slave that after the slave’s debt was paid back or after the year of Jubilee this slave was set free. But there was a second kind of slave, one who permanently committed themselves to their master. Who could become free, but said to their Master “I want to serve you forever”.

Paul was this kind of slave to God. God had saved him by grace, had met this murderer on the road to Damascus and had thrown him off his high horse & had made him an apostle. He was someone sent by Jesus himself to preach the same message of grace that he had just experienced. So, in response to this grace, Paul committed himself to become God’s slave. That God would use someone like Paul is a measure of his amazing grace.

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Saved by grace & what was the means of this grace? *“Paul, a servant of God & an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.”* Saved by grace through faith. That was how God’s grace had come to Paul. He had been chosen by God, elected to be a believer and he had heard preached to him the knowledge of the truth. And Paul had responded to that grace, to that mercy in faith. He had opened his hand out to God and received this wonderful free gift of mercy from God.

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But for how long had that grace been made available? *“In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, & which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.”* This grace goes on into eternity. For it is all about the hope of eternal life. Grace available not just for a few years’ here on earth but grace that goes on forever.

That same grace was promised from the beginning of time. It is not a recent phenomenon. But began in eternity past and extends through to eternity future. We don’t have to worry about exhausting the supply of God’s grace because there is enough to last forever!

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And that grace is so powerful it will have an effect on everyone that receives it by faith. ⁴ *To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.”* This grace unites the Gentile Silas with the Jew Paul. It brings them into the same family. It showers upon them the peace that passes all understanding. It gives them a common spiritual father, God Himself, and a common saviour, Jesus Christ because the source of this grace, is God Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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As Titus straddles his two worlds and as we live in our two worlds Paul says lay your foundations on God’s grace. If God can save someone like Paul, he can save someone like you and me. If he did that through faith in Jesus then that is where our faith needs to rest, even if our world’s faith is somewhere else. God’s grace cannot be exhausted by our sin. God’s grace will never run out and that grace draws us closer to people who have that same faith as we do. To the people in the Church. To the other followers & slaves of Jesus Christ.

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Every year I have to have an eye test. I go to the optometrist and they put me through a series of tests where they put lenses in from of my eyes until I can see the reading chart before me clearly. Well the more we know about grace the more we will be able to read what is going on inside of us and what is going on in our world. Grace helps us to look at life through God’s eyes not just our own eyes. Grace enables us to see how great our God really is.

To live in this world, we need to firstly embrace grace. We need to put our trust in right teaching. In Gospel Truth. That will help us when someone sends us our horoscope or gives us worldly advice or when

situations tempt us to do the wrong thing. Those who embrace grace find out that grace leads to godly lives. Or in Paul's words the truth that leads to

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2. Godliness (verses 5-9)

⁵*"The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."* What is the church in Crete going to need to straddle two different world's – God's world and the world all around them? They are going to need build a church building? No. They are going to have set up a Christian school for their kids? No! They are going to have listen to more Christian music? No, no, no!

They need right teaching and right leadership. They need to hear the gospel truth and they need to see the gospel truth in action in their leaders. They are going to need discipling by those who have already been disciplined and by those where the fruits of the gospel of God's grace has become evident to all by the way that they live.

So, appoint elders. Not appoint one elder, no churches need more than a one-man band. But elders who can finish the unfinished job. Notice it is not about buildings or structures or committees or even Church government, it's all about people. Who understand that grace leads to godliness so much so that all can see these leaders are growing in godliness.

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When Thomas Monaghan, the founder and president of Domino's Pizza, was asked to explain the company's phenomenal growth, he replied *"the key to growth is developing people - every day we plan to develop people."* For him it wasn't about extra cheese, a special sauce, or a time tracker; it was all about people. And if that is true of making pizzas it is doubly true about making disciples.

Paul could have given us a church manual, a rule book, a layout on how to build Church buildings but instead he says appoint elders, where the truth of God's word is translated into the proof of a changed life. He says appoint people who are blameless. Not perfect but no obvious blemishes. And the place to start with choosing the right people is to look at their home life.

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⁶*An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, (literally a one-woman man) a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild & disobedient."* A man, Paul says has to get things RIGHT AT HOME in his own family before you can expect him to get things right in the church family. He needs to be seen to be faithful his wife. He needs to be seen to be discipling his kids. So have a good look at a potential leader's home first.

Now that was easier in the past than today. People lived in family units where three of four generations were all under the same roof. And right next to them were other members of the family - cousins, uncles, aunts and as well as other members in the community. The walls were thin. Sound carried far, you knew what was happening in your whole community and especially knew what was happening next door. It's harder now, we have our double brick walls, our picket fences, & family units are scattered throughout the country and the world. But the proof of the pudding is still in the eating. The proof of the elders' fitness for service is how he treats his wife and kids.

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In the words of preacher Tim Chester, *"We need to understand that this is what it means to be a man. It is not about macho posturing. It is about taking responsibility so that others flourish."* That is what leadership in the family is all about, helping others to flourish. That is what leadership in the Church is all about helping others to grow in godliness. And as the potential elder handles the difficulties that come in looking after his own family, he develops the skills to handle the family of God's problems, the church's many faceted issues.

He must have the right home life and secondly the right character. If he can't control his own family, how will he help control God's family? If he can't control himself, how can he control 20, 50, 100, 1000 others? So, in particular he needs to avoid five vices. ⁷*"Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless— not **overbearing**, not **quick-tempered**, not **given to drunkenness**, not **violent**, not **pursuing dishonest gain**".*

Notice these exhortations are related to five areas of strong temptation - that is pride, temper, drink, power and money. An elder needs to be able to master these temptations in his life. The truth of God's grace needs to have done its work in these five areas of his life. For he is called to be a servant of Christ. So, he is not leading his people from a position of force but of service. He is humbly practising what he preaches.

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But as well as these negative requirements, there are positive virtues that our leaders, our elders must possess. He must be hospitable - one who shares the good things that God has given him with others. He needs to love good, be a person of charity and a supporter of good causes; self-controlled, upright with all his dealings with people, holy & disciplined.

Notice these are not skills that can be taught, they are character traits that need to be lived out. For the truth of the gospel is shown up in the proof of a changed life. And it these sorts of qualities that are impressive in people and will help impress others of the truth of the Christian faith. So, a leader's life must be right and then his belief must be right also. Right home life, right character and lastly right doctrine.

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⁹*"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."* You see there is a relationship between moral failure & truth failure. They can't be gospel people without gospel truth. They can't be God's people without a foundation in God's truth. So, they must know the truth, actually they must have a passion for the truth. It is true for the leader that he doesn't just know the truth, his heart has been shaped by the truth.

And that truth will come out as he encourages others in sound doctrine. Paul knows that if godliness is going to be established in any local congregation, it is going to require elders –biblical elders who will carefully shepherd the people of God with gospel truth. Paul knows that it is going to take sound teaching to bring about a godly life, because you can tell the quality of the tree by its fruits. And false teaching is never going to produce godliness.

So not only does the elder need to encourage others by sound doctrine but they need to refute those who oppose sound doctrine. Godliness depends upon the Word of God. Holiness depends upon God's Holy Spirit. All real change in our lives is God's work through God's grace. It changed Paul, and it can change us. It was how God did his work at the beginning of time and it will be how he does his work until the end of time. Gospel Truth leads to Real Change. Right Teaching leads to Right Living.

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So, Paul is showing us how discipleship works. He was a father to Titus, he poured his time and effort and energy and passion into people like Titus and he sent Titus to Crete to do the same thing with any potential elders. And once Titus sees the grace of God producing godlikeness in his people, godliness in these potential elders he then appoints them as leaders and they then disciple not just their own families but the family of God.

You see spiritual maturity in the final analysis is not just how spiritually mature you are. That is such an individualist, modern thing to think about. It is how you help others to mature in their faith. It is about how

your godliness has rubbed off on your family & your church family. And in my experience, I often see people plateau in their godliness after many years.

They get to this point where they have grown a fair way, their knowledge of the bible has grown substantially and then it just stops. Because they fail to remember that many of the lessons of faith are found when we disciple others, when we evangelise to others, when we teach others. You see when the focus is not just about me and my faith but you and our faith then we have to know enough to teach, speak it, enough to defend it, care enough to back it up with words and actions.

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You see none of the qualities that Paul talks about here concerning elders are just for elders. Each of the characteristic of a potential elder should be found in all Christian men and women. We should all be faithful in our home life, all of us self-controlled, holy and disciplined. None of us should be overbearing, drunkards or pursuing dishonest gain. All of us should be like this. But an elder has to be like this.

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It is a bit like registering your car. Every year after your car is a few years old, it needs to be checked by a competent mechanic, and it must reach certain standards. The brakes must be able to stop within a certain distance, the lights and the blinkers must work, the exhaust should not give out too much pollution. If it reaches the prescribed standard, it may be registered, if not, more work has to be done on it.

I remember a few years ago a particularly poor friend of mine at College told me that he had got his car through registration by cutting out the rust himself, patching it up with some chicken wire & bog and then painting it with house paint and a house brush. My friend thought he was really clever but a funny thing happened. No-one ever wanted to travel in his car for they didn't think it was safe enough. For when the standards of motor registration are ignored, danger is present. And it is the same for eldership. For if the standards are reduced to guidelines, it's dangerous for not just our Church but for all of us.

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So, can I call on all of us to step up? Accept the gospel truth, embrace grace. Allow the work of God to change you and make you more and more godly. Do it for your own sake, your family's sake, for our church's sake. Step up. Don't just grow in head knowledge, grow in godliness. Too many of us are becoming slack. Too many are becoming comfortable. Too many are leaving the work of leadership to a faithful few. If you and I are going to straddle God's world and the world around us we need both God's Grace and Godliness. We need to learn from God's word and follow the role models that God has placed around us. And we need to do that because also around us there is lots of

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3. Godlessness (verses 10-16)

"For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk & deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced because they are disrupting whole houses by teaching things they ought not to teach & that for the sake of dishonest gain."

In every country, in every community, in every Church there will be those who will oppose gospel truth.

There will be, not terrorists but 'errorists',

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who will blow up churches with their wrong teaching. Who will talk the talk but not walk the walk. And in Crete there is special mention of the circumcision group. Jewish teachers who had come along to this fledging Church and said, you believe in Jesus, that's great. Now your next step of faith is to be circumcised. It's the 'Christ Plus' brigade.

They say Christ is not enough - instead you need Christ + Circumcision. Or Christ plus our church. Or Christ plus this course, this diet, this spiritual experience. But as someone once said to me anything you add to the gospel actually subtracts from the gospel. It isn't Grace plus following these rules. Grace plus being a part of this denomination. Grace plus anything.

It's just grace. But around us are people who have the wrong teaching & the wrong motives. They are doing this not for others sake but for their own sake. For gain. For money. They are greedy, selfish. Inside of them there is corruption instead of purity. Now it is hard to tell a person's motives for doing anything, we can all keep them well hidden but if there is wrong teaching and wrong motives it will come out in wrong actions.

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¹² "One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith... ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient & unfit for doing anything good."

Do you get it? Godliness comes from grace but godlessness comes from grace plus. It comes from wrong teaching, wrong motives and will manifest itself in wrong actions. And that is the sort of world you and I live in. A life where many of our role models, our heroes, maybe our family members are eating too much, drinking too much, gambling too much, spending too much time on the computer or on shopping or on social media or on watching sport.

Slide 24

And so, you need the Church. But not just any old church; we all need a Church where you are going to hear about grace and where you are going to see godliness. Where the gospel is being preached and the gospel is being lived. Actually, where you can see the gospel is changing people, bringing them to faith, bringing them to maturity, bringing them into leadership who in turn will bring others to Jesus.

Slide 25

In short you and I need Truth and Proof. Gospel Truth and Real Change. For all of us are attempting to straddle two worlds, the world of school and church, the world of Australia and Christianity, the world of learning and wisdom, the world giving people what they deserve and sharing God's grace. How are we going to cope? All of us, all of us must see what our leaders are doing and follow them. *We must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that we can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

Song – Live for the Kingdom https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89_LvReFill

Song – Take my Life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11rReeWIs>

Benediction

⁹ 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.

Morning Tea Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church; we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not give one or two people a call. Who might your ring now?