

TOUGH GRACE IN DIFFICULT PLACES A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

STUDY TEN

When Doing What's Hard Is Best

1 Timothy 5:20–21; Titus 3:8–11

God's work is sacred work. We must carry it out His way, which means we must heed His warnings, obey His commands, and walk in the fear of His holiness.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN ancient Israel, priests mediated between sinful people and their holy God. It was sacred work. The priests wore sacred garments, worked with sacred implements in a sacred place, and followed the sacred Scriptures as they carried out their sacred duties in the temple.

Despite their holy function, Israel's priests "were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship" (Hebrews 10:1). It took Christ, as our High Priest, offering Himself as the once-for-all, sufficient sacrifice to atone for sin and put an end to the temple sacrifices.

The Holy Spirit now resides in us, "for we are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16). As members of Christ's body, we are being "joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21).

Those ordained for ministry in the church are not priests, but their work in the church is no less sacred . . . because God remains no less holy. His standards haven't changed. Those who minister in His name do sacred work, and they must do so with clean hands, pure hearts, and sincere motives.

What happens when a minister falls into sin? In his letters to Titus and Timothy, Paul outlined the steps to handle the matter. The darkest days in church ministry are those times in which leaders must deal with a fallen pastor. But deal with sin they must, for the good of the pastor and the church.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you step into this sensitive subject, pray for the Lord to give you wisdom and compassion. A minister's fall affects everyone in the church, and if you've suffered the aftershocks, invite the Lord to minister to your heart and help you heal.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the churches on Crete under Titus' care, false teachers were stirring up trouble and needed to be confronted. Paul told Titus to appoint qualified elders in all the churches to help muzzle these predators and protect the flocks.

But what if one of the elders or pastors fell into sin? Paul addressed this possibility in his letter to Timothy. Read [1 Timothy 5:19–22](#) and notice Paul's series of rapid-fire commands.



Observation: Investigate, Rebuke, Keep Pure

Take a closer look at [1 Timothy 5:19](#). Why do you think Paul advised against acting on one person's accusation? Why is seeking two or three witnesses a good policy, based on [Deuteronomy 19:15–19](#)?

Paul told Timothy to rebuke those who continue in sin “in front of the whole church” ([1 Timothy 5:20](#)). Does this action seem harsh to you? Why do you think Paul would give this command regarding sinning elders or pastors?

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What solemn charge did Paul give Timothy in *1 Timothy 5:21*? What does this communicate about the sacredness of an elder's or pastor's role?

Why should churches and ordination councils take care in appointing elders and pastors, according to *5:22*?

The offense must not be ignored. The offender is to be rebuked “before all.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Turning back to Titus, let's examine Paul's reason people continue in sin while doing God's sacred work—even when they *know* they are doing wrong. What happens in a person's soul, according to *Titus 3:10–11*? What insight does the NET Bible's translation give?

What makes this sin so bad is the fact that he knows that he is sinning. Willful, deliberate, repeated sinfulness hurts the sacred work of God, not to mention violates people within the body. There must be severe consequences.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Twisted Thinking

Let's look deeper into the meaning of Paul's words to describe the person who continues sinning even after being warned. The Greek term in *Titus 3:11* is *ekstrepho*, which is translated differently in various Bible versions. Here are a few examples:

“Such a person has *deviated* from what is right” (3:11 NASB).

“Such a person is *warped* and is sinning” (3:11 NKJV).

“Such a person is *twisted* by sin” (3:11 NET).

“You can be sure that he has a *moral twist*, and he knows it” (3:11 PHILLIPS).

From these translations and by looking up *ekstrepho* at billmounce.com or in your Bible-study resources, how would you define the word?

What twisted mentality causes people to keep doing the same behavior even though they know it's wrong, harmful, and will lead to their own downfall?

Sometimes, elders or pastors lead double lives, simultaneously doing sacred work while secretly sinning. Overconfidence, unaccountability, and pride rule their hearts and drive their actions. They have a numb conscience, twisted and warped by conflicting thoughts. What do you think must happen for them to straighten out their lives?

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Consequences must be given in love, with a view to restoration, not condemnation. It takes quite a while for the restoration process to work as the sinning person changes from “perversion” to authenticity. It doesn’t happen quickly. Repentance may be quick but proving its genuineness takes time. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Pride Leads to a Fall

Many factors may cause a person in spiritual leadership to stumble. But, before a small sin becomes a downward slide, what stops him or her from getting help? Before a tempting thought becomes a sinful action and, eventually, a secret lifestyle, why doesn't a person admit his or her need? Look up the following verses and write down the root reasons people resist getting help for their sin problems.

Proverbs 1:20–25: _____

Proverbs 16:18: _____

1 Corinthians 10:12: _____

What path to restoration does God offer, according to *Matthew 18:15–17; Galatians 6:1–2; James 5:16*?

*God's great arms are still open to prodigals who find their way back home.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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Application: Restoration Process

If the day comes when you must deal with a fallen spiritual leader, here are five practical principles to follow.

First, *gather accurate information based on facts*. Hearsay, rumors, and gossip are not reliable reasons for an accusation. Go to the sources to find out what really is happening.

Second, *undertake discipline only when it would be for the overall good of the ministry and for the benefit of the individual*. Beware of attacking another person out of anger or self-preservation. Always put God's greater good ahead of any steps you take.

Third, *discipline with a heart of love and care for the person and the victims*. Show grace to those who offend but show even more compassion and understanding toward those whose lives have been upended by the leader's fall.

Fourth, *carry out the action only after much prayer*. Approach the situation in a spirit of dependence upon the Lord, inviting the Holy Spirit to convict, guide, and heal.

Fifth, *have as your goal restoration of all those involved*. Reprimand and remove the offender while offering a pathway to restoration through qualified Christian counseling. Remorseful repentance is only the first step in a long process of healing and rebuilding the lives of those who have been devastated by sin.

What further insights would you add to these principles?

If you've ever been in a church that has had to apply discipline to a wayward leader, you know the sadness and pain associated with "rebuking" and "rejecting" a beloved minister. On the other hand, you also may know the frustration and anger of seeing God's work stained when a sinning leader should have been disciplined but wasn't.

God's work is sacred. We must never avoid doing the hard thing when it really is the best thing for the church, the sinning leader, and those he or she has harmed.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, give me courage to ask for help before temptation turns to sin and one sin leads to a lifestyle. Help me to swallow my pride and confess my failure to someone who can share my burden and lead me to forgiveness, healing, and restoration. May I heed the warning that comes from seeing others fall. Keep me pure for Your sake and for the sake of those I love. In Jesus' name, amen.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2006, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

