**FAKE NEWS vs FAITHFUL NEWS (#2)**

***The Position Of A Bishop Is A Good Work***

In our world of around-the-clock 24-7 news cycles it is very possible to become consumed (can I say “addicted”?) with checking our phone, tablet, computer, television, radio or even to ask Alexus or Siri. We are enquiring minds and we want to know. But the sad reality is that we too often get stuck seeking earthly news, which changes with the wind (if you doubt that, click on any newscast or article from January 1, 2020 and see how behind-the-times and out-of-touch you are). My “addiction” to news (if I must be addicted) should not be down here, but up there. ​*“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col. 3:1-2).

God doesn’t need to write editorials or broadcast news stories to bring us up to date with what is true news. He has revealed final truth to the world and then closed the Book on all op-eds (opinion editorials) and letters-to-the-editor that desire to clarify or correct the Author*.* As Jude, who was Jesus’ brother, put it so perfectly, *“… I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). Unlike our modern news that changes by the day, and often by the hour, God has “*once for all delivered*” His truth to the world. As David said, “*Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven*” (Psa 119:89).

We are studying this week five of those “settled in heaven” truths. Yesterday we learned the first one: **“*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*”** (1 Timothy 1:15).

Today we examine the second truth: *“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work”* (I Timothy 3:1).

Other translations clarify that for us: “*This saying is trustworthy: ‘If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work*” (CSB). “… *it is a fine work he desires to do*” (NASB). “… *he desires an honorable position*” (NLT). I think you get the picture.

The news of the world is telling young men and women to get a *great education* with an *advanced degree* to ensure an *honorable position* that gives him a *secure income* that guarantees an *upper-class* status in life. That’s the American dream, right? To be a success one must heed the non-stop drumbeat of upward mobility and financial security. Young people feel pressured to conform to the world’s definition of success.

But Paul gives them a spiritual compass that points to a “*faithful (trustworthy) saying*” that will transform their thinking beyond this world. As we read the Bible we are reminded that Boaz was a farmer, Amos an arborist, Paul a tent-maker, Peter a fisherman, and Jesus a carpenter. Those are jobs you learn in trade school, not grad school. But this “*faithful saying*” focuses a youth’s attention on life’s vocation, not occupation. In other words, what do you really want to do with your life that guarantees you will have lived without regret?

Let Paul be your life-coach and mentor. He gives you sound advice for your future as he encourages every Christian man to seriously aspire (desire) the honorable position (noble work) of becoming an elder in the Lord’s church. He says, “*it is a good work*!” He would tell you to find a “*worthy woman*” (Prov. 31:10) to marry who will make an excellent wife who is “*reverent, temperate, and faithful in all things*” (I Tim. 3:11). Without that good woman by your side you can never attain to this noble work of leadership in the church. In other words, girls, he needs you!

I’ll never forget this one day as long as I live. I had just graduated from high school. I was stewing over what to do with my life. I was considering a career in either the NBA or MLB (for the sports challenged those are acronyms for **N**ational **B**asketball **A**ssoc. and **M**ajor **L**eague **B**aseball). Considering I didn’t even get one offer in Division 3 for either sport my chances didn’t look good. My backup was to become a dentist or a history professor. Since both required high academic GPA’s, and graduate degrees, that prospect was not promising either. I was stewing and my dad saw that.

In his bedroom one Saturday morning he talked to me about his life, and then my life. He told me about the time brother Eugene Clevenger pulled him aside after he returned from WW2 and was trying to figure out his future. This old preacher said, “Earl, give prayerful thought to making your life’s goal to be an elder in the church.” He encouraged him to memorize the qualifications of an elder in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. He said, “If you set your focus on becoming THAT MAN – you will be a success in life, no matter what else you do or become!” Beginning that day he focused on that worthy goal. He did indeed become an elder and remained one for half a century.

Dad then looked straight at me and asked if I had ever read I Timothy 3:1-7 and 4:12-16 and considered becoming a gospel preacher, and later a shepherd of God’s flock. I said, “No!” And meant it too. But he had put a pebble in my shoe and I couldn’t shake it out. I opened my Bible and began thinking about those noble works that will “*save both yourself and those who hear you*” (4:16). I prayed about an elder’s work as those “*who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct*” (Heb. 13:7). And then I thought to myself, by becoming a preacher, and later by God’s grace an elder, I might be able to make an eternal difference in the life of some soul(s)! I vowed to set my hand to that plow and not look back. I never have.

So, with God’s help, my dad and mom’s support, my wife’s daily love, and with many long-suffering and patient brethren encouraging me along the way, I’ve tried to serve God in both noble works. I only say that to repeat to young men today this faithful saying*:* “*If a man desires the office of an elder, he desires an honorable position.”*

I write in hopes that there might be some man (and future wife) who will prayerfully consider this worthy goal. Trust me, it might not make you rich and famous, but you will one day be able to look back on your life and know you had stored up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20). Those treasures are called souls, and they have names.

Until tomorrow… to save a soul from death is not fake news, but great news. Do it!

I love you.

Rick