

PRACTICAL INTEGRITY

**FOUR
CHALLENGES
FOR CHURCH
LEADERS**

BY TIMOTHY ROSE

PRACTICAL INTEGRITY

**FOUR
CHALLENGES
FOR CHURCH
LEADERS**

BY TIMOTHY ROSE



Shoshana Publications

Published by Shoshana Publications
Winter Haven, Florida

Practical Integrity: Four Challenges for Church Leaders

Copyright © 2023 by Timothy Rose

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are taken from the *King James Version*.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Timothy Rose
editor@readyopen.page
www.readyopen.page

***Dedicated to the numerous leaders within the Church
whose service often goes unnoticed and unappreciated.
Thank you for your dedication to our Lord Jesus Christ.
Your labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).***

CONTENTS

Background	9
Be Perfect	11
Be Hopeful	25
Be Ready	37
Be Holy	51
Summary	58

BACKGROUND

India Every Home Crusade sponsored a retreat for its leadership in October 2023. The encouragement was to *Renew Your Mind*.

The retreat conducted daily praise and worship sessions. Each session included instruction from God's word. This book is a transcript of 7 talks given by the keynote speaker. The assigned theme was *Integrity in Leadership*.

At the end of this book is a summary of the talks. However, an outline is provided at the beginning to guide your reading.

Challenge 1: The desired result: responding when opposed.

Challenge 2: The right thinking: recognizing bigger picture.

Challenge 3: The proper motivation: receiving accountability.

Challenge 4: The required actions: reconciling peacefully.

May the Lord bless your prayerful consideration of the material.

Timothy Rose
October 2023

1.

BE PERFECT

God's word, the Holy Bible, is why I am here. It has given me the Gospel of my salvation when I was only 5 years old. It has given me my call to preach when I was but 12 years old. It has been my guide through ministry that has taken me from Scotland to India and down to Australia and New Zealand. God's Holy Book is why I stand before you right here; right now.

Do you believe the Bible is God's word? [Amen!]

Do you believe God's word is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice? [Amen]

That is wonderful! Then I am in good company.

Now let me ask you another question. Do you believe we ought to obey God's word? Of course you do! You are leaders in God's work. You are servants who belong to God's Church. Of course you know that every command to Christians from Scripture must be observed.

So we will begin this morning with just one commandment. It is from 2 Corinthians 13:11.

“FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL. BE PERFECT, BE OF GOOD COMFORT, BE OF ONE MIND, LIVE IN PEACE; AND THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU.” 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11

There are four commandments in this passage: be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; and live in peace.

Although there are four, yet in essence they are one. You cannot have one without the other. And all four are based upon the first one: be perfect.

Now as soon as I read that, I heard you saying, “Yes but we are sinners and cannot be perfect.”

I heard you! You think that surely this means something other than what I read.

“God would not command us to do something that is impossible.”

And you are right: God would not command you to do something that is impossible.

I find it interesting how new English bibles retranslated the word. It is as if they are uncomfortable with the teaching and want to divert our attention elsewhere.

- ESV: *Aim for restoration.*
- NIV: *Strive for full restoration.*
- NASB: *Mend your ways.*

That must not have been what they meant so they tried it again in 1995 and changed it:

- NASB1995: *Be made complete.*

My favorite one is the Living Bible which simply says, *Be happy.*

I say favorite not because I think that is a better translation but because I find it humorous. *Be happy* appears to be so far removed from *Be perfect*. Being happy is not one in the same as being perfect.

Each version I quoted describes a different aspect of what happens when you are being “perfect.” Restoration takes place when you mend your ways. Happiness is then found. But the commandment still remains: *be perfect*.

This morning, I do not want you to lose focus on the fact that as a Christian—let alone a Christian leader—you are commanded to be perfect.

I do not want you to think I am making too much out of just one text. Let me remind you that Jesus endorsed this teaching. In Matthew 19:21 He said, *If thou wilt be perfect*, implying it is possible. Paul also instructed in Philippians 3:15:

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Again, in 2 Timothy 3:17 Paul wrote to Timothy, another Church leader:

...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Now you told me that you believe the Bible to be God's word.

You told me you believe God's word to be true.

You told me God would not give you a command impossible to follow.

By your own words, I implore you to be perfect.

DEFINING PERFECTION

I remember the first time I was introduced to this teaching. I was confused. The Bible indicates sinless perfection is not possible until we are in our glorified bodies. So what does this mean? What is being taught?

There is an answer. But before I define what perfection is, let me first tell The Perfect Story (sermonillustrations.com).

There was a perfect man who met a perfect woman. After a perfect courtship, they had a perfect wedding. Their life together was, of course, perfect.

One snowy, stormy Christmas Eve this perfect couple was driving along a winding road when they noticed someone at the roadside in distress. Being the perfect couple, they stopped to help. There stood Santa Claus with a huge bundle of toys. Not wanting to disappoint any children on the eve of Christmas, the perfect couple loaded Santa and his toys into their vehicle. Soon they were driving along delivering the toys. Unfortunately, the driving conditions deteriorated and the perfect couple and Santa Claus had an accident. Only one of them survived the accident. Who was the survivor

Answer: The perfect woman. She is the only one that really existed in the first place. Everyone knows there is no Santa Claus and there is no such thing as a perfect man.

A Male's Response: So, if there is no perfect man and no Santa Claus, the perfect woman must have been driving. This explains why there was a car accident.

But seriously, there is an explanation as to how you can be perfect while serving God. The answer is in James 3:2.

INDEED, WE ALL MAKE MANY MISTAKES. FOR IF WE COULD CONTROL OUR TONGUES, WE WOULD BE PERFECT AND COULD ALSO CONTROL OURSELVES IN EVERY OTHER WAY (NLT)

James 3:2 states that if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect. You do have the ability to control your tongue. Perfection is nothing more and nothing less than controlling what you say.

The most important part of that definition is what perfection is not: it is not sinlessness. Perfection and sinlessness are two different characteristics. Perfection is a virtue. Sinlessness is a standing.

In Christ, we stand sinless. However, only our inner being is one with Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells within every believer. That means though we walk in the flesh, we have access to that divine nature within us.

Perfection is part of walking with the Holy Spirit. Sinlessness is part of belonging to the Body of Christ made possible by the Holy Spirit.

However, the doctrinal differences between those two characteristics is not what where our focus needs to be this morning. Let us spend the rest of this hour unpacking the message in a nutshell: to be perfect is to control what you say when you are hurt.

BEING A LEADER

James chapter 3 begins with a strong message to Church leaders. The apostle teaches not everyone who is a leader should be a leader. His reasoning is very practical. Being a leader puts you in a position where you are judged for your actions. You will be held accountable at a much higher standard.

There are strict expectations for Christian leaders. James explains that we all make mistakes. It is human nature that we will offend people even if we do not intend to do so. Intentions are not always calculated when people judge your actions. It is unfair, I know, but that is the way it works. And for that reason, James encourages you to quit.

If you wanted to become a cook but could not stand the heat that is created while cooking, you need to change your desire. That is where the common expression came from: “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

So I tell you, dear fellow leaders, if you cannot stand the criticisms, get out of the ministry. Hold yourself to a higher standard. If you cannot cope with the stressful situations

associated with ministry, leave the work to someone else who can.

CONTROLLING YOUR REACTIONS

Perfection is about controlling your reactions. You cannot always control your circumstances. You cannot control events and situations that rise up during the day. But you can control whether or not you react to them. And more importantly, you can control yourself.

You have the power to make a choice. When bad things happen, you can react or you can respond. They are two different options.

When you react, you are giving immediate, unfiltered, feedback. It is usually not pretty. It is much like an animal the it is wounded. It bleats. Reactions are much like that.

When you respond to a situation, you take time to contemplate. You consider the circumstances and attempt to understand their context. When you finally speak out, it is deliberate, measured, and wise.

James illustrates a perfect person controlling their speech is like riding a horse with a bit between its teeth. You are bridling the beast. In so doing, you can control the direction and speed for you to move forward.

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. (Job 1:1)

STAY TRUE TO GOD

Job is described as being blameless. He was “a man of complete integrity” (NLT). His perfection was connected with how he responded to evil. When his wife begged him to just curse God and end the tragic circumstances through which they were suffering, he instead blessed God. Scripture notes:

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (Job 1:22)

Job did not blame God. He bowed down to God as Sovereign Lord of Life. He refused to charge God with any wrong-doing. And so the Apostle James references “the patience of Job” (James 5:11).

Be a Christian leader of integrity. That means when Hell breaks loose upon you, you do not blame God. You do not curse those who harm you. You find happiness by enduring the hardship and knowing “that the Lord is very pitiful” (KJV) and “full of tenderness and mercy” (NLT).

SPEAK TRUTH TO OTHERS

Your words are very important. How you express yourself effects your staff, membership, and organization. Integrity is not only speaking truth to God, it is speaking truth to others. Perfection does not deny God or His word. Neither also does it deny God’s ways. And the way of God is to speak truth.

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but

let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. (James 5:12)

Say what you mean and mean what you say! You are a Christian leader. Your “Yes” should mean “Yes” and your “No” mean “No.”

Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned. (NLT)

Your words are so important because they manifest your faithfulness to God and His ways. Fidelity is the term used to describe that characteristic. It is a demonstration of one’s loyalty and devotion to another. Your words spoken in truth demonstrate your loyalty and devotion to God.

Did you ever ask yourself, “Why do people lie?” Some people seem to find it so difficult to tell the truth! There is a saying that has been traced back to the fourth century Church Father, Jerome. Let me paraphrase it a bit to illustrate my point.

Lying is truly a cursed vice. We are humans, and we have relations with one another only by speech. If we recognized the horror and gravity of a lie, we would rightly punish it with severity more than any other crime. Lying is a lesser degree of obstinacy, in my opinion. Once the tongue has got the knack of lying, it is difficult to imagine how impossible it is to correct it.

As a pastor, I have learned people lie for various reasons. Usually it is related to some form of fear. Fear of being

caught; fear of hurting someone's feelings; fear of looking bad. But one day a prayer from the Book of Proverbs struck me with another reason: greed.

***O God, I beg two favors from you;
let me have them before I die.***

***First, help me never to tell a lie.
Second, give me neither poverty nor riches!
Give me just enough to satisfy my needs.***

***For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?"
And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name. (30:7-9)***

You are a Christian leader. Do you tell the truth? When you say you will do something, do people believe you will? Or do they think you are just trying to please them words you think they want to hear?

You are a Christian leader. Do you lie to better yourself financially? Or perhaps materially? Or even to try and make yourself look better? Such actions takes God's name in vain! You wear the name, "Christian". That designates you are like Christ. Are you?

Let us conclude this morning's message with James 1:4.

BUT LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK, THAT YE MAY BE PERFECT AND ENTIRE, WANTING NOTHING.

Patience is the key word if you are to be perfect in your response. Patience is often used in Scripture in the context of persecution. When you are opposed, respond with truthful allegiance to your Savior.

Perfection is nothing more and nothing less than controlling what you say. Your words are important. They show what is in your heart. The apostle James encourages you to:

Be patient and not reacting hastily with words you would regret. (James 1:4, NLT)

PRAYER OF APPLICATION

O Father in Heaven above, create in us clean hearts. Fill us with pure thoughts and holy desires, ready to please You.

We know you hate lying lips. We know you delight in your children being trustworthy.

Lord, we want to be trustworthy. We want to speak the truth in all we do. We want to be faithful in every part of our life. We want to be leaders of integrity. We want to be trusted by others.

You have commanded us not to lie. Help us to obey. Help us not to lie.

When we are tempted to lie, help us to rely on your strength to tell the truth. May we trust your Holy Spirit within us to give us the power to speak truth. May your Spirit empower us to conquer this besetting sin.

Lord, we claim the promise that we can do all things through Christ, Your Son, and our Savior. Thank you for the victory promised in your word.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

2.

BE HOPEFUL

This morning we learned as God's leaders we must expect criticism. We learned that *how* we confront them is valuable. We discovered our words are important when we respond.

As a minister, I have faced repeated temptations to compromise my integrity. One of the most recent ones involved my time working within a local church where I was General Manager of their Community Centre.

As the General Manager, I was overseeing 3 different ministries divided into multiple units. The position was established so that Minister of the Church could concentrate on the ministry of word and prayer. However, there were known issues.

I was hired by the Elders of that Church but at the recommendation of the minister. It was a precarious position. The Elders wanted to ensure the church's monies were being appropriated correctly. That ministry was valued at 10 million dollars. The Minister wanted to ensure control of the monies even though that was not the Minister's role.

When I took over the role, I was immediately confronted by several key employees. It became obvious that the Minister had interfered in their salaries. The Minister was using information gained through pastoral care and using it to manipulate the employees. They felt threatened and were afraid of a social media fallout if they did not follow the Minister's directions when they crossed ethical boundaries.

I was faced with a decision. I was an ordained minister myself. I understood where the Minister was coming from but recognized boundaries were being crossed. Yet I was the General Manager and had a responsibility to protect the employees.

The decision I made was to file a formal complaint against the Minister on behalf of the employees. Thankfully, a separate complaint was also filed around the same time by the church's Session Clerk. The complaints were considered simultaneously.

The two of us bore the brunt of the Minister's wrath. We upheld the rules of confidentiality. That meant we kept our word. We did not condemn the Minister or the church in public. For that matter, we did not even privately speak against the Minister to those outside the complaint. Sadly, the Minister did not.

The Minister did launch a campaign in an attempt to make us withdraw our complaints. The Minister used knowledge gained from her pastoral care. Breaching confidentiality, the Minister broadcasted slander. Social media was used and friends were lost. Many misunderstood my position and I

never attempted to defend it outside the formal process. The Minister even gave an interview in a nationally published newspaper attacking us and those we were protecting

The process was very formal. There were lawyers and members of the New Zealand judicial system. During the process, both the Session Clerk and myself lost our positions. When the process was completed, the Minister was found guilty and lost the role.

An apology was issued to both the Session Clerk and myself from those within the system. However, we never breached the confidentiality. Even as I give you this story, I am protecting the Minister as well as those the Minister hurt.

While going through that entire process I never publicly responded to the false allegations made about me. I could only do that by putting my faith and trust in God. It was a choice I had to make. I hung onto the faith of Psalm 46:1-3.

[Passage quoted here.]

What I am illustrating is not only are God's Leaders to *be perfect*, they are to *be hopeful*. My hope in God and God's word is what sustained me through the ugly process. God and God's word empowered me to remain silent. God and God's word gave me hope. That hope enabled me to continue living and serving even though evil was doing all it could to stop me.

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE. PSALM 46:1

My second challenge to you as Christian leaders is: *Be Hopeful*. And that challenge is based on a great truth: the coming judgment of God.

Judgment does not sound like it should be associated with hope! It is a matter of perspective. When you are the victim, you hope in the coming judgment of your antagonist.

HOSEA'S DECISION

In Hosea chapter 3, God's leader was given what seems like an impossible command. He was told to reconcile with his wife who was openly committing adultery. In some ways, the command seem to go against the letter of the Law. However, God wanted to illustrate through Hosea's obedience the Spirit of the Law.

The Spirit of God's word is love for His people. No matter what they are guilty of, God's leaders are to love God's people. In a nutshell, Hosea was told to act on God's love and not react to his wife's behavior. Hosea was to love Homer rather than take revenge.

Hosea's story reminds us that God calls His leaders to live on a higher level than God's followers. In many ways it may not seem fair. With the wrong attitude, you may feel there are two sets of standards. However, it is the same standard for all God's people, leaders and followers alike. It is just that God expects His leaders to live at the higher level of those standards.

How was Hosea able to endure such pain? How could he love his wife who obviously loved other man more than him? I cannot image the personal pain Hosea endured. But I can be appreciative for his example. He was a living illustration of just how much God loves His people.

Hosea's prophecy highlighted the sin of God's people. Among those sins were falsehood (4:1), harlotry (4:11), murder (5:2), robbery (7:1), and oppression (12:7). All of that was committed over and above their spiritual adultery. While belonging to God, God's people would openly worship false gods and devote themselves to heathen practices.

In the final chapter of Hosea, the Law of Empowerment becomes apparent. The reader realizes at the story's end how Hosea loved the sinners and rebels by choice. He learned to love who God loved. Like Job from our first talk, Hosea learned to love and not react.

Hosea pleaded to Israel for their returning to God (14:1). He desired their good. He recognized God would graciously receive them. He knew God would forgive and restore them to fellowship. Hosea knew God would heal their spiritual disease.

The ministry of Hosea was one of Hope. He hoped in God. He hoped in God's word. He hoped in God's people to respond to God's word. Even if judgment came, Hosea knew that judgment would ultimately result in peace. His own peace would be discovered. Psalm 46:4-7 describes our hope.

[Passage quoted here]

JEREMIAH'S CHALLENGE

Jeremiah is another great example of a leader who endured negative changes. He did his part to create positive changes. Even though he endured severe criticism, he never lost his compassion. He embraced hope from the prophecies of coming judgment. Where others saw cursing, he saw opportunities for Israel's blessings.

There are many examples of Jeremiah's hope throughout his writings. One of the favorite passages used for leadership training is 48:26-30. Jeremiah announced a very severe judgement on Moab. The reasons were associated with Moab's leaders.

As leaders gathered together in this retreat, we would do well to consider the failings of Moab's leaders. The leaders were so caught up in their own power that they defied God. Now you may say that as Christian leaders, we would never be as guilty as heathen leaders. But is not that what Israel's leaders in Christ's day thought?

To illustrate the danger that we as Christian leaders are in, I want to share a list prepared by John Maxwell in his study bible. The list outlines how leadership brings temptations. Whether you are a pagan leader or Christian leader, you are a leader. As a leader, you will be tempted to follow a well know path.

It begins at the crossroad of **Pride**. We begin to entertain the idea that our success was created on our own. That is when we start down the road toward **Possessions**. We begin to pursue “the perks of the job.” We begin to look for the benefits that accompany our position.

Now we are entering the highway of **Popularity**. We actually start believing all of those nice things people say about us. We look for our dedication and position to be publicized. We want everyone to know who we are and what we have accomplished.

Now our path grows broad. It widens to become **Popularity**. We recognize we have a level of influence. Worse than that, we begin to use that influence to advance ourselves. The broad way’s lights begin to shine on our **Prestige**. We fall in love with the feeling of being somebody. We like feeling important. We even believe we are irreplaceable.

What began at crossroad on a narrow path now has a leader seeking **Pleasure**. Forgetting that leadership is about others, the leaders demands special treatment. They feel entitled to privileges not given to others. And so that final line is crossed over **People**. The leader stops serving others and

begins pleasing people for the leader's sake to retain the position.

Make no mistake, dear Christian leader: the same dangers faced by Moab are faced by leaders today. The temptations of Moab's leaders have led to the destruction of contemporary leaders. And they will lead to your ruin and shame if you are not careful.

What separated Jeremiah from evil leadership was the hope he saw in all those passages of judgment. He saw God's enemies being destroyed. He saw evil being balanced. He saw God's good triumphing in the End. Jeremiah saw hope where others saw condemnation. It reminds me of Psalm 46:8-11.

[Passage quoted here.]

Find hope in the coming judgment of God!

DAVID'S INTEGRITY

Before I close this talk tonight, please bear with me to look at one more leader from the Bible. I want to encourage you to *Be Hopeful*. Let us think quickly about the example of David. David is a contrast to Hosea and Jeremiah. Together, these three Bible characters teach us that leaders can be both watchmen and shepherds.

[Read Psalm 78:70-72]

The shepherd king lead his flock by integrity. King David was a man after God's own heart. Yet we are familiar with his faults. Committing adultery and murder, he lost many rights to rule. If it were not for genuine repentance expressed in Psalm 51, David would have gone the way of King Saul.

David's leadership failures is a lesson to us Christian leaders today. If you thought yourself above the sins of Moab's leaders, please consider the sins of David. John Maxwell's study bible provides another dangerous path.

There is another crossroad Christian leaders face:

Satisfaction. We fight hard and when victory is achieved we celebrate. The line is crossed, however, when we bring to enjoy those victories for the sake of victory. Instead of giving God glory for those victories, we enter the path of **Indulgence.** We unconsciously feel we deserve rewards that are pleasurable. We no longer are content to enjoy the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

Now we enter the highway of **Compromise.** We quickly travel through rationalizing our actions. We justify our behavior instead of modifying it with God's word. The broad way's lights shine on our **Denial.** We continue to lead God's people not realizing that our motives have become impure.

What began at crossroad on a narrow path now has a leader seeking **Adultery.** We give ourselves to another. That may be sexually, like David, but can equally be giving ourselves over to another emotionally, or even financially. The leader then falls into that road's pothole: **Obsession.** We get trapped in a pattern that consumes us.

What made David's repentance possible? Yes, repentance is a gift from God, but what moved God to grant that gift to a leader who abused his position? The answer lies within Psalm 78:70-72. Note that David was chosen to lead God's people for one reason and one reason only: integrity of heart. Yes, he possessed skills. He guided the nation with talent and wisdom. But it was backed by a heart full of integrity.

David's hope in God and in God's word empowered his leadership.

Lal Bahadur Shastri, who served as India's prime minister from 1964 to 1966, was a leader whose simplicity and integrity made him stand out as a statesman. I read a story from his life that, even if it is not true, definitely illustrates integrity.

Shastri was born on the same day as Mahatma Gandhi. He grew to come a devoted disciple of India's post-colonial father. As we well know, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested several times by the British during India's struggle for freedom. So for sure, Shastri was also arrested.

One time when Shastri was arrested, his daughter became very sick. He was granted a permission to spend 15 days with his sick daughter and took leave from his prison. Sadly, she died the very day he reached home. Now he was given a 15 day parole. But what did he do? He paid his final respects and returned to prison the following day.

What an example of integrity in a nation's leader!

PRAYER OF APPLICATION

God, we bow before you as leaders of your people. We confess our sinful nature that is opposite of your Spirit's desire.

Fill us with the hope of Hosea, Jeremiah, and David.

Fill us with an attitude of humble servitude.

You desire that we be followers of you. Help us to keep our eyes focused on you while others follow us.

When we are tempted to be proud, protect us from ourselves. May we find contentment in You and Your Word.

When we are tempted to be satisfied with earthly victories, protect us from our own blindness. May we find light in Hope.

We know you want us to be pastors who speak truth and practice what we preach. We know you delight in leaders who find hope in judgment; hope when evil comes.

Lord, we want to be leaders of integrity. We want to understand the importance of our thoughts.

You have commanded us to be faithful. Help us to stay true to the Faith. Help us to work Love. Help us to inspire with Hope.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

3.

BE READY

What makes leaders unique is their vision. Great leaders create a following behind a vision. When people follow your message, you have provided a picture bigger than yourself.

This evening, my goal is to give you a vision beyond our earthly goal. It is a vision that will effect your eternity. It is a look into what will happen beyond the blessed hope of Christ's return. I want you to see tonight The Judgement Seat of Christ. The reason I want to give you a glimpse of that other-worldly event is for you to *Be Ready*.

“Judgement Seat” only occurs 10 times in the Bible. It is used to describe a ruler's position when they sit to hear a case. Jesus stood before the judgement seat of Pilot. Paul stood before the judgement seat of Festus. Both Pilot and Festus were representing the judgement seat of Caesar to which Paul made a final appeal. That is what makes it so interesting when Paul refers to the “Judgement Seat of Christ” twice in his writings. The most well known text reads:

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST; THAT EVERY ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS DONE IN HIS BODY, ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR BAD. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

Tonight, I would like us to look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We will start at verse 1 and work our way down all the way to the chapter's end. My message is tonight is simply, *Be Ready*. As a leader in God's Church, you need to be ready to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

There are several things I will point out to you as we travel down through the verses; however, we need to begin with The **fact** of Christ's judgment on saints.

DIFFERENT JUDGEMENTS

One of the basic teachings about Christ is eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1, 2). We often do not consider what that means beyond the time of our own conversion.

There was a time in your life when you openly declared that Jesus is Lord. There was a specific time in your life when

you believed in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. If there has never been a time in your life when you came to that faith, you are not saved. You are in danger of eternal damnation. You will face God in judgement.

When we are first saved, we do not think much about the specifics. We accept that we will die and after that there will be a judgment (Hebrews 9:27). So when we first read Scriptures, we expect to see that there is one big judgement day for everyone.

As we grow in knowledge and understanding of our faith, we see how the Bible teaches there are different judgements. The Judgement of the Nations is different from the Great White Throne Judgement.

- One takes place to start the Millennial reign of Christ on earth. The other takes place after God melts Earth's elements and creates new heavens, new earth, and new Jerusalem.
- The former is a judgment on peoples who refused to help God's people during the upcoming Tribulation. The latter is a judgment on all humans who have rejected God since creation as well as angels who rebelled with Satan.

The Judgement Seat of Christ is a different judgment altogether. It is a judgment of only followers of Jesus Christ. And more specifically, it is a judgement of those saints who belong to the Body of Christ. It is divine judgment on Christians. When is the **time** of Christ's judgment on saints?

JUDGEMENT DAY

The Judgement Seat of Christ is a unique event. It is for a special people in human history. It is for members of the Body of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 lays the foundation for this future monumental moment.

[Passage quoted here.]

The chapter begins by explaining how humans were created as spiritual beings inside physical bodies. Death is merely a separation of one's spirit from the its body. When God formed man from the dust of the ground, he did not become a living soul until God's Spirit breathed life into that body.

So the description Paul gives us is our earthly existence is just temporary. He uses imagery of tents and tabernacles. Those are temporary shelters we can call home but they are always ready to be taken down. And like the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, it exists to house our spirit. Our person is not our body. Our person is part of an eternal body. It is connected to our soul.

Please allow me to side-track one moment here. I have been emphasizing that Judgement Seat of Christ is unique. I have stated it is only for members of the Church. What makes them so special? Colossians 2: 11 gives us the answer!

WHEN YOU CAME TO CHRIST, YOU WERE “CIRCUMCISED,” BUT NOT BY A PHYSICAL PROCEDURE. CHRIST PERFORMED A SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION—THE CUTTING AWAY OF YOUR SINFUL NATURE. (NLT)

In the Old Testament, you will note souls are connected to the physical body. So you read accounts of souls slain in battle. In the New Testament, something changed. When you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you were spiritually circumcised.

Circumcision is a cutting away of flesh. When God’s Spirit baptized you into Christ’s body, your soul had to be cut away from its body of sin. Your spirit was born again and tied together with Christ’s Spirit. That is why Paul listed the Church as a people unique from both Jews and Gentiles. We are a new race of human beings.

So our eternal body groans for its heavenly home. When we die, we will be separated from that body and immediately placed in the presence of our Lord. The Holy Spirit seals every believer to guarantee eternal life after the physical

body expires. It is at that point in time you will face the Judgement Seat of Christ.

JUDGING SAINTHOOD

Now we are coming to the heart of the matter: the **type** of Christ's judgement on saints. And maybe I just need to pause and talk about that word, *saints*. When we talk about someone being a "saint" we imagine some who is selfless, loving, and serving their fellow humans.

Many believe the term expresses a sinless state and should be reserved for those Christians already dead. However, Paul applied the term to living Christians. Obviously, it is a term describing how the believer should be living: sanctified, holy, and godly.

There is an old Jewish folk tale told where a young man, aspiring to be holy, approached his rabbi and said, "Rabbi, I think I have achieved sanctity. I fast from sunrise to sundown, work hard all day without expecting thanks, roll in the snow or thorn bushes when I have temptations of the flesh, and whip myself before going to bed." The rabbi paused and then led the young man to the window and pointed to an old horse.

"That horse," he said, "doesn't eat or drink during the day, works hard all day and never gets thanked, rolls in snow or bushes as it sees fit, and frequently gets whipped." He eyed the young man, "But that is a horse, not a saint."

All believers do not live like saints. The eternal judgement of saints will correct that. Saints are those who escape eternal

judgment on sin. When you accept Christ as your Savior, your sin was transferred to His account. He paid the price for sin. But that does not mean you will escape for sins committed as a Christian.

What you do as a Christian—and especially as a leader of God’s people—will be judged by fire. Fire is the description God gives us to understand the purification process.

All the times you lied, stole something, gossiped about someone; all of those works will be consumed by fire. They are equivalent to wood, hay, and straw. They help fires burn.

The good works you have done; walking in the Spirit, obeying the will of God; confessing your faith to others; your good deeds are like gold, silver, and precious stones. The fire purifies these types of elements.

This is where the unsaved get confused. Nominal Christians are not much different. They think that if they live a good enough life, they can earn their way into heaven. They are mixing up the judgements.

Judgement on sin has already taken place. You are born under sin. You inherited a sinful nature. You were birthed with rebellion. There are not enough good deeds to destroy that nature. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse sin. And if you reject Him, you will burn in a fire. That is the difference. Those who reject salvation burn. Those who accept salvation have their works burn.

JUDGMENT PREPARATION

In preparation for the Judgement Seat of Christ, the Christian is encouraged to judge themselves (Romans 14:10). Your actions, relationships with other believers, and especially your relationship with God are all dependent on self-examination.

- The New Testament saint cannot stay in fellowship with God if they harbor sin (1 John 1:7-9).
- It is a condition of participation in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28-31).
- Judgement is a necessary part of Church life (1 Corinthians 5:12; 6:1-5).
- Judgement is necessary to discern the content of preacher's sermons (1 Corinthians 10:15; 11:13; 14:29).

Self-judgement and the Lord's Supper's self-examination are keys to obtaining rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ. What are those rewards? Go to 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

[Passage is read.]

JUDGEMENT REWARDS

The type of judgement at the Judgement Seat of Christ is fire. It burns off the sinful nature and clothes us with glory. It is also the place where rewards are recognized.

Our spiritual body will be rewarded with glorification. But more than that, it will be clothed. I truly believe that what we do on earth as Christians will determine our appearance for eternity.

The book of Revelation talks much about the righteousness of saints being their clothing. That means today you are weaving your clothes to wear in Heaven. While on earth, you are preparing your wardrobe for eternity.

Your spiritual body when naked is golden. Gold is the base element for your new body. I say base element because, in Heaven, gold is dirt. The streets are paved with gold!

The more good you do as a believer, the more your clothing will shine in eternity. Did you ever notice how the angels are described in the Gospels as wearing shiny clothing? That would explain why 1 Corinthians 15 40-42 tells us we will be resurrected with glorified bodies that shine differently from each other.

Scripture further indicates there are crowns to be won. We will wear them when we reign and rule with Christ.

The first crown mentioned in Scripture is the **Incorruptible** Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25). It is earned by the saint subjecting their body to the will of God (9:27). It is mastering the body with discipline to do what is right. It is fighting your sinful nature to focus on eternal things so that the future is not sacrificed on the altar of the immediate.

The second crown Christians can earn is the Crown of **Rejoicing** (1 Thessalonians 2:19). This is defined as “children in the faith” (Philippians 4:1 cp. 1 Timothy 1:2). Evidently, when Jesus Christ presents Himself to the Church, saints will be resurrected with their “spiritual parents”—those that led them to the Lord. For that reason, it is often referred to as the Soul Winner’s Crown.

The third crown for Christ’s followers to earn is the Crown of **Righteousness** (2 Timothy 4:8). This crown is reserved for those who finish their course in life, fighting to keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). It is often referred to as the Soldier’s Crown. It will be award to everyone that loves the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Let me just pause once again. You do realize not every saint will be happy to see their Lord. Just like our children in real life, some of Christ’s brothers and sisters will have departed from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-3). They will be ashamed at the Judgement Seat of Christ. If Jesus came back right now as I preach, would you be excited? Or is there something you are doing that needs to be confessed?

There is a fourth crown that can be earned. It is called the Crown of **Life** (Revelation 2:10). Its name explains how it is earned: you literally give up your life for God. That is why it is often called the Martyr’s Crown. But James teaches the Crown of Life is reserved also for any person who endures temptation (1:12).

Perhaps it would be better to rename it the Sufferer’s Crown. Scripture equates a life of trials, temptations, and

testings to the main who dies a martyr's death. They BOTH receive a crown life. This crown recognizes a life given to God whether it is lived out fully or taken prematurely. All who suffer for the Lord will be reward.

There is a fifth crown mentioned in Scripture. It cannot be earned by any saint. It is the Crown of Rejoicing reserved for church leaders (1 Peter 5:4). It is usually referred to as the Shepherd's Crown. It is reserved only for "some" of the saints. It is reserved for those called of God to be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

In the context of this Retreat, this crown is for you to earn and for you to lose. Your duty is to build up Christ's body until He returns (Ephesians 4:12, 13). To earn the crown you must:

- "feed the flock" of God (1 Peter 5:2).
- You are to over see God's people, "NOT by constraint" nor as "lords over God's heritage" (1 Peter 5:2, 3)
- As a leader, you must be an example to God's people (1 Timothy 3:1-6).
- Your life must manifest a mind ready to please God and not one greedy to promote yourself (Titus 1:7-9)

JUDGMENT WARNING

In closing this talk, I want to make sure you see there is a **warning** associated with Christ's judgment on saints.

KNOWING THEREFORE THE TERROR OF THE LORD, WE PERSUADE MEN; BUT WE ARE MADE MANIFEST UNTO GOD; AND I TRUST ALSO ARE MADE MANIFEST IN YOUR CONSCIENCES. 2 COR 5:11

Our first talk emphasized the importance of your words. Our last talk emphasized the importance of your thoughts. May this message help you understand the importance of your motivation. Why are you a leader? What are you trying to get out of the position?

Stop evaluating yourself from a human perspective. Stop comparing yourself with others. You will stand before your Savior and give account for your actions as His appointed leader. You are a new person in Christ—act like it!

As a Christian leader, you are Christ's ambassador to a lost and dying world. You are Heaven's representative right here in India. You are God's envoy carrying the message of hope for your fellow citizens. Your actions need to be consistent with your profession of faith. Your behavior needs to be consistent with a leader called by God to serve others.

Are you ready for the Judgement Seat of Christ?

PRAYER OF APPLICATION

Lord Jesus, we come before you as your leaders. You chose us to serve your people. We confess our need to be ready.

Help us prepare for our coming judgment.

Help us be ready to give account for our actions.

Help us love your appearance when you return.

When we are tempted to unholy behavior, rebuke us.

When we are tempted to lord over your people instead of serving them, chastise us.

We know you want us to be pastors who lead with integrity. We know you delight in leaders who are faithful.

Lord, we want to be leaders of integrity. We want to understand the importance of our motivation.

You have commanded us to be ready. Help us to stay true to our calling.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

4.

BE HOLY

The last day of our time together has come. After all has been said and done, I have one final message for you: *Be Holy*. As Christian leaders, you have an obligation to fulfill this command for all believers. Just as the priests were expected to keep the Law even though it was given to all of Israel, so you, Christian leader, are expected to set an example of holiness. My challenge this morning is 3-fold:

- Have a clean heart
- Have a clean mind
- Have clean actions.

CLEAN HEART

C.S. Lewis wrote in his *Letters to an American Lady*, “How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing, it is irresistible.”

The first step to holiness is to have a clean heart. It begins deep down within your very being. You must walk in God’s Holy Spirit who unites the believer’s spirit with Christ’s.

THIS I SAY THEN, WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE LUST OF THE FLESH. GAL 5:16

Living by the Spirit's power is how you will keep a clean heart. Let the Holy Spirit guide your life, thoughts, and actions. Only by God's Spirit will you find the power to not do what your sinful nature craves.

Whether or not you are a leader, you are still human. A saved sinner, yes, but a sinner nonetheless. Your sin may be paid for at Calvary, but you will still be judged for your sins. And you must not give into your flesh if you are to be clean.

Your sinful nature wants to do evil—plain and simple. That desire goes opposite to what God's Spirit wants for your life. Within you are two powerful forces constantly fighting each other. You simply do not have the strength to carry out your good intentions. You need the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There is a story attributed to Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman about a minister from Australia, Dr. Howard. Howard was known for preaching very strongly against sin. After one of his sermons, an elder from his church visited his study and said, "Dr. Howard, we do not want you to talk as openly as you do about man's guilt and corruption, because if our boys and girls hear you discussing that subject they will more easily

become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin.”

The minister took down a small bottle and showed it to the elder. "You see that label? It says strychnine -- and underneath in bold, red letters the word 'Poison!' Do you know, man, what you are asking me to do? You are suggesting that I change the label. Suppose I do, and paste over it the words, 'Essence of Peppermint'; don't you see what might happen? Someone would use it, not knowing the danger involved, and would certainly die. So it is, too, with the matter of sin. The milder you make your label, the more dangerous you make your poison!"

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT)

O dear Christian leader, be clean! Walk in the Holy Spirit. He will bless you with a fruitful life. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; you can be holy as you walk through this life.

Fight your flesh. Fight your sinful nature. Fight your temptations. God has empowered you with victory. Your success as a leader is strongly connected to being holy.

CLEAN MIND

My second challenge for you this morning is to have a clean mind. Very closely connected with the first challenge but separate in its application. You will not have a clean mind if your heart is dirty. And being holy involves both heart and mind.

To paraphrase John Brown, a 19th century Scottish theologian wrote *The Pursuit of Holiness*, “Holiness is not made up of mystic speculations, enthusiastic passions, or severe standards not even commanded; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills.”

To have a clean mind, you must let the Holy Spirit guide your thinking. This why the Bible is so important in the life of God’s leader. God’s word was written by God’s Spirit. By bathing in scripture each day, you are reading the mind of the Lord. You are learning to think like God thinks. You are connecting with godly understanding.

BUT NOW YOU MUST BE HOLY IN EVERYTHING YOU DO, JUST AS GOD WHO CHOSE YOU IS HOLY. FOR THE SCRIPTURES SAY, “YOU MUST BE HOLY BECAUSE I AM HOLY.” 1 PET 1:15, 16 (NLT)

In 1848, while America was driven mad with gold discovered in California and Britain emerged itself into a war with Sikhs that led to their takeover of Punjab, there was a scientist physician unraveling a great mystery.

At that time, 1 of 6 women that gave birth to children in a European hospital died. The Hungarian doctor was bothered by the statistics. And he figured out the solution even though no one listened to him until many years later had past.

The usual practice of a doctor in that day was to start their routine with autopsies. After working on dead bodies, they would proceed to the maternity wards. They never washed their hands in between. Today that is an expectation. We are shocked to consider anything different. In that day, people were shocked Dr. Semmelweis could propose something so silly.

He is often quoted as begging his colleagues to wash their hands. In his short lifetime, for he died in his late 40's, he had delivered nearly 9,000 babies. Only 1 in 50 mothers died during childbirth under his care. His solution was so simple but widely rejected: wash your hands.

Christian leaders, I have a simple solution for you to get a clean mind: wash them in Scripture. According to Ephesians 5:26, you are made holy and clean by washing in the word of God. That is how you stay pure! You wash your mind with God's word and then hide those words deep down into your heart.

There is nothing secret about holiness. It is a choice.

CLEAN ACTIONS

And that brings us to the third challenge I offer you this morning: have clean actions. Live right. Do what is pure. Be holy.

That great revivalist, D.L. Moody, once said, “A holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine.”

I like that quote. As Christian leaders, we shine the Light of God’s word to His people. We shine the Gospel Light to a dark and dying world. We shine the Light of Jesus Christ as the hope for Christians and non-Christians alike. Yet “lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine.”

Do not be a leader like that Pharisee of old who blew his own horn bragging about his giving, his praying, his fasting, his good deeds. That Pharisee’s actions were not holy. His good deeds were corrupted by a sinful heart. Do not worry if others do not know about your spiritual practices. Just shine the Light of God.

A clean heart leads to a clean mind which leads onto clean actions. And that is how David’s actions could be forgiven by God. He cleansed them in God’s word and pursued God with holiness.

Would it be okay if we revisited Psalm 78:70-72?

[Passage read here from NLT.]

David had a true heart. He had integrity. He was called a Shepherd of God's people. The New Testament carries this thought across from the Old Testament. Peter was told by Jesus if he loved Jesus, he was to feed Christ's sheep. Peter would later write his epistle with this reference. He refers to Church leaders as Shepherds. He tells us to feed God's flock. He warns us not to lord over the sheep. The flock belongs to God, not you. The Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, is coming back. Will He find you faithful in your duties? Will He discover clean actions?

Your duty as a Church leader is not only to feed the sheep but to skillfully guide them. The only way you will be able to do that with God's blessing is to have a heart full of integrity. You feed the sheep with a clean heart. You guide the sheep with clean hands. The heart is about being holy. The hands are used to do holy things. Do not make the mistake of assuming your position of responsibility to do the work of God exempts you from being holy.

Before you can DO, you must BE. Before you do shepherding, you must be a shepherd. A shepherd is more than a position; it is a person. A good shepherd does more than just the agreed upon duties; a good shepherd CARES because of WHO he/she is before God.

Scripture declares, "Holy, holy, holy!" Is our God. When the Bible attempts to explain God's holiness, it describes Him as a consuming fire. It burns away the dross. It refines the precious stones. Holiness empowers our leadership.

Be holy!

SUMMARY

And so now we come to close these talks. I have given 4 talks on practical integrity. I have issued you 4 challenges as Christian leaders:

1. Be Perfect!
2. Be Hopeful!
3. Be Ready! And
4. Be Holy!

Being perfect as a leader emphasizes the importance of your words. What you say when under stress, especially, will determine your leadership and following. When Job was persecuted by none other than God Himself, Job would not say anything negative about his Lord.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:4

The desired result of being perfect is responding instead of reacting when opposed.

Being hopeful as a leader emphasizes the importance of your thoughts. What you think and how you think will determine your leadership and following. When Nathaniel was thinking under a tree assuming no one could see him, Jesus declared he was a man “without guile.” He had integrity.

As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.” John 1:47 (NLT)

The desired result of being hopeful is right thinking by recognizing your situation is only a small scene within a much bigger picture.

Being ready as a leader emphasizes the importance of your motivation. Why you do what you do will determine your leadership and following. When Peter was offered money from someone outside the church to obtain the secret of his power, Peter rejected it. When lost people began to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods, they rejected the worship. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas were not motivated by fortune or fame.

But Peter replied, “May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God’s gift can be bought! You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.” Acts 8:20-23 (NLT)

The desired result of being hopeful is to have proper motivation that receives accountability for your actions.

Being holy as a leader emphasizes the importance of God’s words, the Holy Bible. How you treat God’s word will determine your leadership and following. Timothy, an early church leader, connects his salvation with Scripture. Leaders are given God’s word to for personal application not just to preach. Scripture teaches us what is true. It helps us discern

what is wrong in our lives. Scripture corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:17

The desired result of being holy is understanding what actions are required that lead to reconciliation and peace with God, yourself, and others.

INTEGRITY

Let me close with a quick overview of the word *integrity* in the Bible. It is used only 16 times in the Bible and all in the Old Testament.

The first mention of the *integrity* is connected to Abimelech. Abraham and Sarah lied to that ancient king. They led Abimelech to believe they were only brother and sister. God came to Abimelech in a dream to warn him about the deception. Abimelech was told God withheld him from sinning because of his heart's integrity.

The next mention in scripture of *integrity* is connected to Solomon. In His second appearance to that wise king, God promised blessings for Solomon. The blessings were conditional. Solomon was to follow David's example with right actions and a heart of integrity.

All the remaining mentions of *integrity* are in the Books of Wisdom: Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. That is no surprise.

However, there was a delightful nugget of mental gold I discovered from Psalm 101:2 which reads:

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

The same word translated as *perfect* is the same word translated as *integrity* in the other occurrences! And that brings us full circle to our first talk.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL. BE PERFECT, BE OF GOOD COMFORT, BE OF ONE MIND, LIVE IN PEACE; AND THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU. 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11

Go in peace.

PRAYER OF APPLICATION

O God, we thank you for this retreat. We thank you for those who organized this meeting. Please bless them for their vision. May the outcome of this meeting be an answer to their prayers.

May we go forth determined to be perfect leaders, guarding our words when under stress.

May we go forth excited as hopeful leaders, knowing you will have the final say to all who hinder our work.

May we go forth motivated as ready leaders to persuade others to the faith of our heavenly home.

May we go forth humbled as holy leaders guarding our hearts, minds, and actions against our own sinful nature.

Lord, we want to be leaders of integrity. We want to be faithful to you, the Church, and ourselves.

You have commanded us. Help us to stay true to our calling.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen