

## Avoiding Bad Teachers

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3, 2 Timothy chapter 3, that's right, 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 4-9. There's a lot going on here, I'm not going to go over every sin either though. I highlighted those as you know, the lack of love in particular.

Here I want to focus upon where he directs this list to, it seems to me, false teachers or bad teachers. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power, and from such people turn away.

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captive of gullible women, loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as James and Jambres resisted Moses, so do those also resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds disapproved concerning the faith, but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Let us pray. And these words of encouragement, God, at the end especially, we see Paul reminding Timothy, yes, not only are perilous days coming, but we are in the midst of them now, as the list moves to the present tense, and we have such leaders that have caused problems in the churches of Timothy, and Lord, we've seen it today, but they and their folly will be manifest, God, if not now, certainly when Christ Jesus returns a second time. Meanwhile, Lord, we are called by your spirit, here in the words and the pens of Paul, to avoid and stay away from such men, and even women, who claim a form of godliness, pretending to be Christians, but deny its power, and the power of godliness is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, Lord God, preserve us from our foolishness, and give us illumination and wisdom, so that we can avoid false and bad teachers. In your name alone we pray. Amen.

Paul offers some helpful details here about the perilous times, right, that's the topic in these verses, that he was concerned about, and even witnessed in his own time. The perilous times, or the dangerous times, he warns of includes any number of serious sins, it's a list here, about 18, which I covered some of them, particularly, as we saw, almost one in five are about love, or the wrong kind of love, love of pleasure, love of self, love of money. And then last week I talked about the lack of love, of natural affection that we ought to have for one another, even if we're not friends towards one another.

And here, I want to go into the details, because I think the list is presented here in the prior verses, all of it, or most of it, is applying in varying degrees to the false teachers he wants to hone in on, in the latter verses here, verses five through nine. In other words, the dangerous times, Paul warns, Timothy finds their apex, it seems to me, in false teachers. This is why he spends more detail on them, describing their sins, and problems, and their characteristics and traits, evil effects they have upon the gullible, or the weak within the church.

I will cover what false ministers look like, but I also want to end on a positive note, about good pastors, and good teachers, and how we ought to support them. So let's dive in here. Avoiding bad teachers.

## Avoiding Bad Teachers

What I want to say first is, what a bad teacher is not. It's good to have a contrast at times, because there may be questions. It's not just because, of course, I don't think anybody here has this problem, we don't like them, as the old saying goes.

Oh, whatever, he's obviously a bad teacher. Some people use that word in the sense of, I just don't like them, just a bad teacher. Not someone we necessarily disagree with either, if the differences, of course, are not serious enough.

We're going to have differences over eschatology, for example. On the way over here, I'm going through Samuel Francis' book, *The Keys of the Bible*, which is a Puritan approach to survey of the Bible. If you've heard of a survey of the Bible, it's a summary of the 66 books, and it gives you the author of the book, it gives you an outline of the book, it gives you the topic of the book.

He does the same thing, except he's much more in detail, because he's a Puritan. My daughter's reading the one on Revelation, going over the summary there, and I was explaining to them while we were driving, thankfully I can do that still, that there's different approaches to eschatology, and of the book of Revelation in particular. Is it about the fall of Jerusalem, is it about the future, is it about everything in between here and the second coming? Things like that.

Just because we have differences there doesn't make them a bad teacher as such, although some people go that way. Or what we talk about, post-millennial versus all-millennial and the like. It's not either a disagreement over matters of emphasis either.

Matters of emphasis doesn't make someone a bad teacher. Pastors and church leaders can agree on the Bible, but differ in how often they preach on a particular topic or passage, for example, than another church. Because they have to deal with their church.

The dangers we have with this almost omnipresence approach online, where we can see all kinds of things, wacky stuff, or good things happening in the world, is that it can influence the pastor to emphasize his preaching to fit that audience instead of his own audience. Or how much they highlight a certain truth. One church may need to hear more about God's law, given their background, another church may need to hear more about Christ and what he's done on the cross, etc., etc., a combination and variety of all that.

There's no set list per se. It's the application of God's word to the people before him, and what they need or hear to the best of his ability and knowledge, of course. One church may instruct more on Bible history or New Testament books in Sunday School class, for example, than another.

It's not disagreement over matters of application in the domain of questionableness. There are certain situations we find ourselves in, often very detailed, as it were, depending on who you are, where you are, and what time, of how to apply some of God's law. How much do we avoid danger, for example? Is it okay to go skiing? Because the Sixth Commandment tells

us not to what? Use the means, causes, occasions, or provocations thereunto that would undermine life.

If you're klutzy, and I can say this because I grew up klutzy, you want to avoid certain things other non-klutzy people don't have to avoid. So that's very personal in terms of application. That's not what I mean by a bad teacher or a pastor or a leader in the church.

You can have those kind of disagreements. Of course, it shouldn't be over something like murder. That should be kind of obvious.

Applying that commandment should be kind of obvious. So a bad teacher or a false teacher or a dangerous instructor or pastor is especially those who deny the truth and teach lies. That's what Paul often emphasizes in his letters.

But not only, as we'll see here, in fact. So bad teachers defined in general, and then I'll go into the particulars of this text. Bad teachers defined in general.

Two-fold ways. This is my language, my way of describing it. One is objective, and as it were, clear and outward in the formal actions and the words of the person in question, of the teacher in question.

The other is subjective. That is that part that we can't read the heart. That's all I mean.

Not that they're not real or something. Objectively bad. That is dealing with the qualifications and the outward actions and words of the pastor or the teacher or the minister.

Well, if the man has a fear of public speaking and is too timid, that's objectively a problem and he shouldn't be a minister. There you go. You could say he's a bad teacher that way.

That's clearly not what Paul means here. He doesn't mention, well, they don't follow the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3, for example. But that's certainly a case of someone being a bad teacher, but not the kind of bad teacher he's referring to, which is especially bad, we would say.

More of a heretical troublemaker. Lack of secular or scriptural instruction is another way to describe, in general, bad teachers. That is, they don't know their Bible well.

They simply don't know their Bible well. We have that example in the book of Acts where Paulus is brought aside, as you recall. He was preaching the good news but didn't know of Jesus.

So he only knew as much as John the Baptist, which was a lot up to that point. And they took him aside and they explained to him, look, it's Jesus. We saw his resurrection and the like and gave some details here and instructed him in a better way.

So he's a bad teacher in the sense of lack of knowledge and instruction and he just needs more. He needs better instruction in the Word of God and the doctrines. In that case, it's easily amended and helpful and we can fix his problem.

What I mean by secular instruction as well, of course, is does he have, you know, basic skills of reading and writing and the like that you need as a minister, of course. Schooling is how we fix this problem in Presbyterian circles, typically. We have seminary and the like, although there can be exceptions.

Languages, of course, and technical classes need more instruction and the person may need that. Our book of order, in fact, allows exceptions if someone comes from that kind of a background, which is, unfortunately, much of the evangelical world where instruction and proper schooling, seminary or whatever, looks like in practice. I didn't go to a brick-and-mortar seminary, for example.

I had a lot of tutoring instruction from my pastor before and they won't make exceptions. That's fine, so he's bad in that objective sense of he doesn't know enough. He needs more.

Okay, good. You can say bad. That's not what he means here.

And, of course, poor personal characteristics or traits. What kind of a man is he that you can know and see in his actions and his words? So it's not just a lack of instruction or basic teaching skills here, but good personality traits, fruit of the spirit, patience, love, humility, and the like. Again, that's objective.

You can see it by his actions. Is he always biting someone's head off? That's a problem. Subjectively, it's more about their heart.

Are they corrupt? Is there a problem here? What's going on? Paul moves between the objective and the subjective here with respect to personal traits and characteristics. As you read here, he describes them as corrupt minds. Minds, verse 8, and the like.

We can't really know people's hearts. But you can get a glimpse from their actions, the outward part, and their words, and what they do or don't do, as the case may be. And if that's clear, then they need to be removed.

If we're aware of their malicious intent, it may come out in email sometimes. Typically, it's not the case. In my experience, what I've seen of scandals and whatnot in the church, of false teachers and the like, they're not usually going to say, let me tell you what I really think.

But it happens. And if that happens, then you know. You take it at face value, and you kick them out.

They're done. That's the end. But some people may seem sincere.

And is it enough to stop them, although you may have suspicions otherwise? And that, of course, depends on the circumstances at hand. Being sincere is insufficient to keep someone behind the pulpit and the like. Bad teachers defined in particular.

In general, having a form of godliness, but denying its power. So Paul gets more particular here of what he means by bad teacher, which I think includes part of that subjective part, as well as the personality traits that we can see and understand. Verse 5 says, having a form of godliness.

He just moves from that list. Talks about these people, probably all of them collectively. A form of godliness, but denying its power.

Implies Paul, of course, is warning about Christians. And, of course, Christian leaders in particular, because his illustration is about two Christian leaders of the Old Testament, the Moses era, Janus and Jambredes, at least as the Jews understood it. You won't find an actual Old Testament text using that name.

That's men they named themselves. So outwardly, that's the language here, a form that looks godly, looks holy, they look Christian. I presume they got baptized.

That's very Christian activity. They have a form of godliness. They talk, they sound that way.

They say, I am a Christian. They make some of the confessions, perhaps, and quote Bible verses, whatever that looks like. So outwardly, they sound like believers, at least enough that you can have this description.

But inwardly, they deny the power of the gospel. Or maybe outwardly, they have this, you find out later in their life, oh, they're denying key doctrines like, I don't know, the resurrection, as you saw in 1 Timothy, or, excuse me, 2 Timothy, prior chapter. Deny the resurrection.

So everything looked good up to that point. No one knew about this other denial. This happens historically as well, as you can imagine.

People keep it on the down low and quiet and whatnot. And then it pops out one day. What? What's this about the resurrection? You don't believe in what? That has happened today as well in some reformed circles, where one man in one branch of Christianity near ours was saying, well, it already happened at the fall of Jerusalem.

Like, what? Yeah, there has already been a resurrection. That's the second resurrection. What? We're in heaven now? What are you talking about? It was a big scandal last year.

So these things go on. Unfortunately, he had been around for 25, 30 years. And this comes up.

So something happened. He tried to hide it and whatnot. So these things are still going on, unfortunately.

Inwardly or eventually outwardly, they deny the power of godliness, which although Paul doesn't expressly explain to us what that power is, but clearly it must be the gospel. It must be Jesus Christ. He is the source by the power of the spirit within our lives for godliness or holiness.

Another word for that is sanctification, being set apart from the world in accordance to his holy will, the law of God. But, of course, also the gospel of God, which is also holy and unique and set apart from the world. So they were false teachers.

He doesn't get specific about what they taught was false, but they were false, false leaders, and dangerous leaders. It's a big concern of Paul, what they taught but also what they do. Today we can think of many pastoral scandals, or at least enough of recent memory, I think, because often they're highlighted in the news.

You'll find it maybe on Facebook. If you follow some Christian news sources, Aquila Report, perhaps, and the like. And they're typically known for what? What's the typical scandal you know of pastors? Yeah, breaking marriage vows.

That's the first thing you think of. That's bad. You know what else is bad? Not just preying on women or young boys, as recently happened in SBC, but preying on souls.

And that's Paul's special concern here. Preying on souls with lies that send people to hell. Why doesn't that make the news? That's a violation of the first table of the law of God.

The first commandment, teaching false gods, lies about God and His truth. The third commandment, perhaps, and violating things that He has His word and His worship and the like attached to. Murdering the souls of men should be front page news.

But we've kind of normalized, unfortunately, in Christian circles, to just, well, if they break a marriage vow, that's terrible. Everything else, you know, whatever. They're both bad.

In particular, he describes them as what? I'm going to use a little bit of my language here. In verse 4. For of this sort are those who creep into households. That's another way of describing that.

They're sneaky, right? Sneaky as serpents. Sneaky or subtle as snakes. Now, it may describe someone with respect to the house, that is, the actual building, and getting into their homes like a con artist and deceiving people and trying to literally get into their house and sell them something or give them lies or get money out of them somehow.

Because sometimes money is tied to some of these issues we found out earlier. To get them to trust them. That's what a con artist does.

And Paul describes here those who are, to use a slang, an easy mark. Right? That's what the scam artists would call someone an easy mark. They're easy to pull the wool over their eyes because they're what? Too trusting.

Or too gullible. And that's how he describes them here. Making captive of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts or credulity.

They're too quick to believe in such things. On Facebook I've had people who immediately defend a gay minister who was deposed for, well, being gay. They knew he was gay but they caught him in an inappropriate relationship.

What they described as an emotional attachment. We don't know how far that went. It was bad enough they deposed him from the ministry.

So it wasn't just hanging out with the guy. Something else was going on. People were quick to defend him.

One of the reasons why was this. He was sincere. This is somebody in the states, in Colorado, in the western plains or something.

Other somebodies, plural. Talking about another man on the other side of the country. They've never met.

And their answer was, he was sincere in his repentance. Although no one read the repentance because we don't actually have his words on the matter. We just have a summary of what he did or said or didn't say.

You know where I'm going with this. They were credulous. They were too easily deceived.

They just simply believed. We should not follow down that path. Especially with strangers we don't know anything about.

I mean, it's not like they're best buddies or something. We don't know this guy. My answer is, I don't know if it's sincere or not.

I pray it is. Why can't we do that? That's not complicated. But it is if you have often an emotional attachment or investment to the person.

Although they're what? Someone halfway across the country. You've never met in person. You don't know what his life is like at all.

You have to be very careful about these things. In his case, he was already caught two years ago. They came out with more data that it was worse than they thought.

And then they fired him. So that tells you how sincere his repentance was. Resisting the truth.

They resist the truth. They want nothing to do with it. These, verse 8, Now Janice and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth of Timothy, of Paul.

But it's not, of course, their truth. They're expressing, as Moses does, the truth of God Almighty through their words. So they resist it.

When you try to change the mind of somebody, I know you've all done this at least once in your life, it's easy to spend much time and effort, especially if it's a family member. You could spend years and decades trying to convince them of a serious error or problem in their life, both in practice and in doctrine. But eventually you have to what? Stop.

Usually it's when they say stop. And you're just done. You can't do anything more.

You have to draw the line somewhere. This is doubly so for church officers. We should not be having five or ten-year conversations with somebody who denies a resurrection, for example.

Why? He's just not well instructed. And he goes back and forth for five or six or seven years. No.

Okay, we're done. We had our talk. In that case, you don't have a talk.

You're like, okay, you just lied because the resurrection's in the Bible, it's in our confessions, and you swore to uphold our confessions. We're done with the discussion here. So it's not just you.

I'm applying this clearly to you all, and giving you some, I hope, examples here that you can see in your own lives. But he's writing to pastors. Timothy's a pastor.

One pastor to another. And he's telling the pastor, look, these are kind of men who resist the truth. How does Paul know they resist the truth? Does he read their hearts, or does he read their words and their actions? So someone can be sincere in their belief, in the sense of they're not trying to be sneaky, they're not trying to pull a fast one on you, they're not malicious in their heart, but if they are simply wrong, as a leader in the church, in this case, the resurrection, prior chapter, it doesn't matter how sincere they are, they should not be a pastor.

You're done. It's over. And this is important, because like I gave that illustration on Facebook, people are like, but he seems sincere.

Maybe he is. I don't know. But what I know is the words coming out of his mouth are so dangerous, it does not matter anymore, does it? And that's how we have to approach the word of God in preaching.

Not just everyday life, of course, you know, adultery and the like. He seems so sincere, they just, they're weak. What? What he did was destroy that family.

I don't care how sincere he is, he's just playing games. Typically people are just making excuses for a friend close to them. Lots of illustrations of that.

Maybe you've struggled with that. I know I have at times. Whatever the case is, Paul recognizes these men.

Maybe he dealt with some of them. And you can, as I said, if they're not well instructed, you spend some time instructing them, if they change over time, great! Put them back in the pulpit maybe, depending on how serious the problem was. But Paul is telling us there's a time in which you have to stop, we have to use common sense and say, they are resisting the truth.

We're getting nowhere with this man, or woman in the case if it's a private Christian. And we're done. You just can't spend all your time with people.

You got a life, you got a church to run, etc. So we have to learn to draw the line. I know it's hard at times, especially with family members and close friends, and just say, well, I have to leave it to the Lord, because I can't have a fight with them, an argument every time I talk.

I don't mean you starting the argument, but you bring it up and they get all agitated about it, right? It's like, okay, well, as much as is within you, Paul says in Romans 12, as much as is within you, live at peace with all men. And then lastly, he describes them of corrupt minds, of corrupt minds. They do resist the truth.

Men of corrupt minds disapprove concerning the faith. Paul often gives straight analysis of troublemakers. As you know, he's done this before.

He doesn't hold back punches. And those who resist the truth, the truth of Christ, of his resurrection, that he is the God man, things like that. When you're a church leader, the stakes are much higher.

And we have to call a spade a spade sometimes. Because clearly, these people are pushing hard against the truth, teaching lies such that Paul says very clearly and publicly, they are of corrupt minds. Of course, you know someone's mind when they speak it with their mouth, typically.

To one degree or another, of course, we give, like, we say a little fudge factor and compassion, like, I just kind of misspoke. Church leaders, not when it comes to speaking the truth. Paul is very serious about this.

Another reason to be doubly cautious is not just the resistance, but the evidence they gave of a corrupt mind teaching false truths, pretending they're truths when they're not. Lastly, he describes them as disapproved concerning the faith, summarizing their status before the gospel, the faith, or the truth of the word of God. And Paul, as I've gone through this list in particular here of how he describes them, what does he say about such people? We have a form of godliness who seems so holy and so Christian.

He says, avoid them. From such people, turn away. Don't be hanging out with them.

Don't make excuses for them. How do we avoid bad teachers and ministers and the like? Here's some ways and descriptions. It's not exhaustive, of course, in this regard.

First, stick with known pastors. Stick with known pastors. We have a track record is another way, perhaps, of knowing it.

Usually, it's your own pastor or a pastor you used to have or something like that. In the day of mass communication, the internet, of course, it's easy to find somebody who sounds good. I mean, that's how advertisement works.

That's how little snippets work on social media or in books. And you have endorsements in the back of books that sound really great. You don't really often know that pastor other than by secondhand reputation.

And you can't do much about that. I'm not going to say don't ever use secondhand reputation. There's not much of a way around that sometimes.

I understand that. But we still need to be aware of the dangers here. I think, especially in our day and age, it's easy to find all kinds of people who sound really good, but you only hear one or two sermons at the most, I think, in many places, maybe more, or at least a snippet.

He has a really cool thing to say here, and that may be the case. He may be really good otherwise. I don't know.

What I do know is many big names have collapsed over time, many big names. Now, this gentleman I mentioned, the gay pastor, wasn't a big name per se, but he had big names in our circles, our particular circles, Reformed Confessional circles, endorse his book and his ministry implicitly through that book. One radio preacher I grew up listening to, not often, I usually listened, I think, to MacArthur at noon in junior high and high school.

I would come home from school from Arvada West. But not this guy. I don't remember all the particulars.

I know I used to listen to him at time. He ended up divorced with his wife back in the 2000s. Big radio name, probably not big and well-known today, but that showed clearly a scandal in his case.

So don't be too quick to accept someone because of clever quips and advertisement, because a lot of this is promotional. And it's not necessarily wrong, of course. That's kind of where we are.

People aren't going to know about me unless someone promotes it or something. That's just the nature of the case. And, of course, you compare teaching, their teaching, any pastor's teaching, my teaching, with the word of God.

You're called to be Bereans and acts. Confession catechisms are a good shorthand for biblical truth. You get to them really quick, and they give you lots of proof text you can go through if you need to use it.

In fact, our edition, the black book, the hardback, has cross-references of the Bible verses in the back to the relevant section of the catechisms and the confessions, so you can see how our forefathers interpreted that verse. That's a reverse way of looking at their exegesis of

the text, or their understanding of the text, more precisely. Of course, ask a reliable source, your pastor, a ruling elder, a close Christian friend with maturity that you've seen, perhaps your spouse.

Now, when looking for a church, this will probably happen at least once in your life as a Christian, you end up moving, the church closes, or something like that. Spend time with the pastor and other leaders in the church. They'll be quick just because they seem very friendly and nice.

That's one of the weaknesses we have in our circles, I think. We can be too quick to give people the benefit of the doubt when we have very little evidence at times. There's a good thing for that.

You can be very friendly, that's good. But friendliness doesn't have to mean you have to put your blinders on and not realize, well, maybe something else is going on here until I find out more. Gotta find out more.

There should be no rush to join a new church. I used to think, well, what are you waiting for? Join the church. Of course, that makes sense when it's your church.

I don't see any problems here. I mean, what are you worried about? But as I've grown in my maturity as a Christian leader, I realize, you know, I tell people there's no rush. I want you comfortable with us.

And of course, we should be comfortable with you in the sense of, I don't want surprises and you don't want surprises. And we shouldn't. It's best to our ability, of course.

There's a reasonableness behind this. You have to learn what they teach or don't teach. What they expect, that's the harder thing if they don't articulate it.

That's the problem with churches without confessions. You're like, what are you thinking about X, Y, Z? I don't know. Kind of important.

We have 32 chapters. That's how much stuff you can get out of the Bible. And of course, the fruit of the spirit should be manifested in various and sundry ways.

At the end of the day, however, we do the best we can to avoid bad actors. The way this is described in secular circles is there are bad actors in the church of God, both in the pew and behind the pulpit. That's just the nature of what it means to live in a fallen world.

We should not be blind to that fact. We will fall short at times in catching them. But that shouldn't shatter our world.

I want the young kids to understand this. You will be disappointed in the church or a church member or a church leader at least once in your life. I can pretty much guarantee it.

Don't let that mean you throw up your arms and say, whatever for the church, and you're out of here. That has happened, and it's sad, and you should not. Because it's not about our perfection.

It's about Christ and what he's done for you and how he protects you and watches over you. He has given us the church, yes, but the church still has sinners who still struggle. Keep your eyes on Jesus and all this.

## **Assisting Good Teachers**

Lastly, assisting good teachers, that's the flip side. So whatever is forbidden, the opposite is implied to be commanded. And whatever is commanded, the opposite is implied to be forbidden.

That's one of the principles applying to the law of God, the moral law of God. And the same principle applies here because he's obviously describing them in the context of the law of God as bad pastors and leaders with these particular characteristics. So the flip side should be not just flee or from such bad and false teachers turn away, but rather embrace the good teachers.

That's the flip side of that, isn't it? And assist them, therefore. And so I described the second point, assisting good teachers and ministers and pastors. Again, what they are not.

They're not the perfect minister. We all have feet of clay. Not all who are qualified for the ministry are necessarily a good fit for every church.

That's an interesting dynamic we have, especially in the American scene because we don't have an established church as such. And so there you have it. One qualified pastor may fit one in another church.

Then another qualified pastor may fit another church. And this is just where we are. Similarly, we don't have cookie-cut pastors.

As long as the ministers are on the same page theologically, we make a confession. And the Orthodox Presbyterian Church doesn't have exceptions per se written in our book. And their practices are faithful and the like.

And we conclude that all pastors are, therefore, qualified, but they don't all think alike. It's similar to the prior point I pointed out, that we have sometimes different approaches to applying the law of God in particular situations that aren't scandalous like, I don't know, murder. That's a clear place that we should all agree upon application.

But some of the details may differ. What kind of law should you pass and under what conditions, et cetera? You can have disagreements on those things. So we're not going to have cookie-cutter pastors.

And they can all be equally qualified. What they are is they, of course, ought to be objectively qualified, that they're not afraid to be in front of people, that they know the truth. They've been instructed in the truth.

They've been well-educated. These are things that you can observe yourself. It's the opposite of the list before.

1 Timothy 3 gives us part of that. Personality traits, spiritual maturity, orthodoxy and teaching, or straight teaching is what that word for orthodox means. These are things that we can all evaluate in varying degrees, of course, depending on your experience and understanding as a believer.

Subjectively, again, it's the heart. Evidence of a sincere heart would be in their words and their actions, the consistency they're in over time. That's why it's important to know them.

You shouldn't just put anybody behind the pulpit just because he sounds good. The ruling elders, of course, who are already here before the pastor gets here, typically must know and pay attention and examine all that they can about the man and his history and his past. The advantage we have here, by God's grace, is I grew up in this church, spiritually speaking, from the 90s onward already.

I was already here as one of your own. I wish we could do more of that for the churches of America, but it's just not possible. It is often the unknown pastors, brothers and sisters, that are qualified.

I'm saying this is the flip side of the big pastor syndrome, I guess, we have today in America, where we have these names brought before us and edified. And some of them are very good names, and I know some of them in terms of I've listened to them for many, many years. So I can say, yeah, this is a pretty good guy.

As a pastor, the big name pastors, we'd say, I don't say that derisively at all. But let us not forget the average pastor in the pew doesn't have a big name, but he strives faithfully. He needs support and help as well.

And because the way our media and public attention are set up, of course, they tend to attract more bad actors, however, in the public limelight. If you have a public limelight, a bad actor typically, what they call dark triad personality traits, wants that limelight. And that's one reason why you find some of these scandals, both in politics as well.

We mirror the world that way in that sense. So we have to be aware of this. But assisting godly members in particular, the obvious answer every pastor will tell you is pray.

Pray for your pastor. That he would stay bold and firm in the truth. That he would grow in knowledge and wisdom over time.

And that he would manifest a spirit of love and grace. He needs your prayers. Encourage the pastor.

This is not the same as giving a monthly thank you card or something, though something's wrong with it. It differs per pastor, of course. Some pastors need more encouragement than others.

Sometimes you know, of course, if you go through a big scandal, if a pastor goes through a church split, you think, yeah, I think he kind of needs some encouragement right now. If he wasn't, obviously, the cause of the split. And various ways in which he could be promoted or encouraged and the like, verbally or through email, whatever the case may be.

Doesn't take much. The man of God is called by him. He want to do the right thing, even if no one will say and encourage him otherwise.

But still. At the end of the day, the Lord is in charge, brothers and sisters. And grant us good leaders, I pray.

And he allows, God allows bad teachers. But he does it for his own inscrutable will, for his own purposes. Ours is simply called to do what is revealed to us, which is avoid the bad and false teachers and embrace and assist the good.

May the spirit grant us the continued ability to be faithful in this way, I pray. Amen. Let us pray.

Our God above, we do pray for your church that you would raise up, continue to sustain godly shepherds, under-shepherds, who feed the flock, protect and guide and encourage the sheep of Jesus Christ. And Lord, may you expose by your spirit and in our ways as best we are able the folly, as we read in verse 9 here, that it would indeed be manifest to the wolves among us, that is, of the wolves among us, and so that we can expel them out from our midst. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, help us, encourage us, and strengthen us that we would continue to support the good and flee from the evil teachers.

In your name alone we pray. Amen.