

Selected for Overseer
Psalm 71:1-14
January 26, 2025

Today is the recognition of Titus as the one Paul put in charge to oversee the work on Crete. The Lutheran Study Bible provides some notes on the work of elders and overseers. It is normally thought that elders and overseers in the times of the writing of the New Testament would be equivalent to pastors and elders today. As in the days of Titus, elders and overseers were picked as those who were upright and could withstand attacks on the truth of God's Word, living by it and showing their trust in it

This is the day, January 26th that we look at the service of Titus but today we are in Psalm 71, the first 14 verses, where it is thought that David, in his old age wrote this Psalm. The previous Psalm, Psalm 70 was written by David and Psalm 72 is attributed to Solomon. Psalm 71 may be the transition Psalm between one King and the one to succeed him.

We are looking at elders and overseers or pastors and elders today, so what does this Psalm of David, written, more than likely in his later years have to say about pastors and elders? Could David have something to say about the times we are living in today?

What kind of pressure are pastors under today? David understands that he wasn't the man he once was. He is getting older, he isn't as strong as he once was and now he understands his enemies are just waiting to do him in as one who should not be able to stand up to their attacks. They think that they will be able to do him in but David doesn't depend on his own strength, his own might. No, David looks to the Lord to deliver him, to take care of those who would do him in and put them to shame who would seek his harm.

Why did they seek his harm? David's God was the real God and theirs were gods made up by men's hands and minds. We may not have those who bring that kind of attack on our faith from those of other faiths like David but what other attack might we get in old age, when life is short and we aren't able to do what we once were able to do?

My Dad in his last years was talking with me over the phone and evidently was looking over his life and for some reason he had looked over his life and was being

tempted to think that he hadn't done all he could to be a "good" dad. He asked if he had been OK. I had never thought that he wasn't. He was the dad the Lord had given me. Was he a dad that was at every basketball game I played in High School, no. Was he a dad that praised me in front of others, no. Was he a dad that wrestled with me like so many other dads did as they were growing up, no. I didn't see that in my dad and I never longed for it but one thing that I did see in my dad was a dad who would sacrifice all for me and his family. He was the one who looked to God to take care of him and his family even though there was a time when the church, the place where God was supposed to dwell was turning its back on Him and turning to the ways and thoughts of the world.

There never was a thought of turning against God no matter what we went through on the farm. Yes, times were hard but God always provided and we would get excited when Dad would make a good deal or Mom would find a bargain even if it was bringing home seconds from the cookie store in Sioux City, Iowa. I know Mom would make many homemade cookies but once in awhile she would stop off at the cookie factory for store bought, factory bought cookies. Most were graham cracker cookies coated with chocolate or with chocolate stripes or maybe marshmallow topped grahams coated with chocolate, it think, it has been more than a half a century ago.

We didn't have a regular time in the Bible like some but each and every day, there was a trust in God and many times things from the Bible came to the forefront as a trust was always there.

We have the Bible and we should be in it daily for it fleshes out who the triune God is and what He does for those who love Him. It seems that His Word is gaining a greater following as it is said to be increasing in sales, not so much among the aged but among younger people as it seems the Holy Spirit is doing His work as Peter professes in Acts as he repeats what the prophet Joel wrote by the power of the Holy Spirit: *Acts 2:16-18 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

We are in the last days. Yes, as a person gets older he begins to look back over life and see, maybe where they haven't done some things as well as others or they think

they haven't done all they could and yet what does Paul write to the *Ephesians 6:11-13* *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

What was David going through? What thoughts did the world around him and even the devil cause him to think of? He thought He was under attack. He had those thoughts and in spite of them, what one thing could he count on, no matter what? He could count on the Lord, the Lord who as He said: *Psalms 71:5-6 For You, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. Upon You I have leaned from before my birth; You are He who took me for my mother's womb. My praise is continually of You.*

The devil is out to get believers. He wants to pain God. He knows as we grow older, his time is short as the time grows closer and closer to the time when the Lord will take His kids home. As time grows short, overseers and pastors should become even more important as they will bring the focus on the Lord and the sure hope we have in the author and perfecter of our faith, of the one who continually watches over us to as Jesus said: *Hebrews 13:5b "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Jesus, asking that God the Father would grant Him His request, made His desire known to God the Father with these words from *John 17:24, Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

Jesus wants all to be with Him, especially those the Lord has given faith to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. He knows trials and tribulations of His elect. He knows as the time grows near to his bringing His baptized into heaven with Him, the devil, the world and the Old Adam nature of man will seek to tear them away from their Lord and Savior, Jesus.

We normally think of Titus not being very old and yet what is he doing? He is choosing elders and overseers for the churches in the towns on the Island of Crete. He is wanting men who exhibit certain traits that we would consider in picking a practicing Christian, to be a pastor or elder. Why pick someone that others may have problems with, who they couldn't look up to. We can see how much discussion is going on with

the president's picks for his cabinet. Will the person be able to fulfill what they are required to do. Too bad so much of this selection process gets into the weeds of unproven claims.

Titus is picking the pastors and elders of the church. We this morning will be installing elected elders and other church officers to serve the church, this church for the next year or two. You have decided who will serve you and Christ's church as we seek to keep things running smoothly.

I imagine David would wonder how his son would deal with the world he was leaving. He had dealt with so much, not only from his own failings but from the failings of the Israelites and the world. He knew as Paul talked of in the first lesson for today that there were fierce wolves that would come in among them or as in the Gospel for the day where Jesus sent out the 72 telling them He was sending them out as lambs among wolves. We don't see a whole lot of persecution around us here in Alamogordo but there are brothers and sisters throughout the world who do have to deal with persecution because of their witness. Some will even have to deal with the very strong possibility that their witness may even end in their torture and deaths.

Jesus and Paul wanted them to be aware that there would be challenges to their witness of the faith. There would be those opposed to them and their work as they tried to do what they thought the Lord wanted them to do. It is no different today as we see a president who is trying to make things better for the people of this nation as he looks to the constitution of the United States as the foundation for this nation, as it is with pastors who seek to remain true to the Word of God and to His Son, our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

David may have been near to the end of his life. He had a chance to look over his life and to distill it down into what he would cling to as his time on this earth grew to a close. He concludes this Psalm with the last couple of verses: *Psalms 71:13-14 May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.*

Yes, he was feeling attacked and yet, he puts the punishment of his attackers in the Lord's hands as he looks with the sure hope of faith. He will hope continually and will praise Him more and more.

In our dealing with the world may we as pastors and overseers continue as those Titus chose, continue bringing the truth of the Word to our world and the people in it.