

Titus
Chapter 1:5-16
“Order and Maintenance”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Paul’s in between arrests and imprisonments ... he’s somewhere in Greece and he’s writing to Pastor Titus ... the man he left in charge of the work on the Island of Crete about a year earlier.

We talked a bit last week about this man, Titus, but we also need to know a little about the people native to Crete. And we can pretty well sum it up with the Greek word, “cretia”. It was how the Greeks referred to those natives, but it means, greed accompanied by dishonesty. It was a cultural thing.

And that’s where Titus was left to minister. In an agricultural community, known for its dishonesty and greed. Which added a degree of difficulty as we’ll see.

So, this letter is one of instruction to Titus. Paul’s instructing him on the specifics of putting the ministry there in order ... starting with, who should be entrusted with ministry responsibilities.

So, let’s tune in to what Paul shares ...

Verses 5: Two missions:

- 1.** Set things in order. And ...
- 2.** Appoint elders who would then maintain that order.

One of the early church fathers, a man by the name of, Tertullian ... tells us that the church of Crete had somehow gotten the mistaken notion that elders were to be elected rather than appointed and that Titus was left there to straighten that out.

Q. So how exactly is this supposed to work then? What’s the mechanism of leadership appointment? – Simple ...

- 1.** **Acts 20:28** tells us that Elders are called by the Holy Spirit.
- 2.** **Ephesians chapter 4** tells us that they are then equipped by God to fulfill that calling.
- 3.** And finally, those called and equipped men are to be recognized by other

spiritual leaders based on the criteria set forth here in **Titus** as well as in **1st Timothy chapter 3**.

Now, at first glance, this passage might appear somewhat denominational. I mean, it might look like Paul's taking on the role of some sort of pontiff over the Christian faith. Even appointing Titus, or men like him, as if he were some sort of denominational guru deciding who will minister where.

But let's not forget the historical context; in 63 AD it was Titus who was to set things in order ... and it was the spoken word of the Apostle Paul that established the standard. In 2019 it is the written and canonized Word of God ... the Scripture that is the standard ... not some person!

And when Paul says, "**appoint elders in every city as I directed you**", he's not telling Titus who to appoint, he's only reminding him of the manner in which he was to do it.

So, Titus was to set things in order ... declare the standard and then appoint overseers to maintain that standard.

Not an easy or enviable task, because this would mean that some "elected elders" in the Cretan church would have to be relieved of their duties and replaced with those appointed by Titus. Never fun!

But Paul now goes on to give us the qualifications for these elders ...

Verses 6-9: In many ways ... this is a repeat of **1st Timothy chapter 3** so if you have a particular interest in these qualifications ... you can go to our website and get a refresher, but this morning we'll limit our discussion to a brief review except for the qualifications that are unique to **this passage**.

There's a total of 18 prerequisites listed here, (Ten of them mentioned elsewhere and eight of them unique to this epistle).

So, let's first look briefly at the ones that are not unique ...

1. Above reproach means to have nothing in your life on which an adversary would be able to hang a legal charge (verse 6).

2. Husband of one wife. Again, if you want to know all the reasons behind this ... I'd refer you back to our study of **1st Timothy chapter 3**. But the bottom line is that an overseer can only have one wife (**verse 6**).

3. Children who believe. In other places it says, "children who are in submission to your parental authority", so both are true. And as I've told you before ... this doesn't mean that your kids always do what's right ... it means that you do what's right with regard to your children (**verse 6**).

There's a true story that aptly illustrates the necessity of this principle; It's about a man by the name of Reinhold Messner ... arguably the most accomplished mountain climber in history. He was the first man to scale the 8,000-meter face of the wall known as the Rupal Face on Mount Everest.

He was also the first man to climb Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen and the first man to conquer every mountain in the world over 26,000 feet.

Q. But you know what put him in the hospital? – He fell off of a wall in Italy while trying to climb through a window because he'd locked himself out of his own house.

And that's Paul's point.

Q. Here's a guy who literally, conquers mountains ... but what brings him down and lays him up? Where does he fall? – At home!

And in the church ... that's not an uncommon scenario. Conquering spiritual mountains is of little value if the man or the woman doesn't keep their balance in their home.

4. Not addicted to wine. Literally ... not someone who will sit long at the wine barrel (**verse 7**).

5. Not pugnacious. Not quarrelsome or abusive. Not one who provokes fights for fun (**verse 7**).

6. Not fond of sordid gain. An overseer cannot be a greedy man ... one who would do or condone anything underhanded for monetary gain (**verse 7**).

7. Hospitable. meaning that he must be fond of guests (**verse 8**). Remember, there were no Holiday Inns ... so it was a very important thing for there to be a network of hospitality. And elders were expected to lead by example.

8. A lover of what is good. One who promotes virtues and supports the virtuous (**verse 8**).

9. Sensible. Or as it's translated in other places ... "prudent" ... relating to decision-making and specifically ... decisions of opinion. It means to make them in moderation. Don't be too passionate on matters of opinion. Be sober enough to realize that you're just as likely to be wrong as the other guy (**verse 8**).

10. Solid enough in the scripture to encourage the down-hearted and

confused. Capable of teaching ... of rightly dividing the Word of God (**verse 9**).

So, those are all the repeats ... now for the leadership prerequisites that are unique to **this passage** ...

1. Not accused of dissipation. Meaning that an overseer cannot be one who's prone to being wasteful or extravagant in the consumption of pleasure, amusement or diversion (**verse 6**). In part, this speaks to his work ethic.

2. Not accused of rebellion. An overseer must not be insubordinate ... he must be in control of his own temper (**verse 6**). Before he's given authority ... an elder must prove that he knows how to submit to authority ... both divine and earthly.

3. Not self-willed. An elder must not be self-pleasing or arrogant in their decision-making. The idea is that leaders can't make decisions based on their own needs or wants. It's about God's agenda not the agenda of some self-willed, human leader (**verse 7**).

4. Not quick-tempered. So, not just in control of his temper, but not prone to outbursts of temper either. The idea is that you can't have an elder making decisions or taking action based on, or resulting from, anger (**verse 7**).

5. Just. A leader must be equitable. They can't show partiality (**verse 8**).

6. Devout. The word used here means to have an intrinsic and recognizable presence of God. It's not merely having God within you ... every believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God ... it's a question of unashamedly allowing God to show Himself through you (**verse 8**).

7. Self-controlled. A leader must be in control of their fleshly appetites. We all have fleshly appetites ... but to be qualified as a leader those appetites must be wrestled into submission.

Q. And how's that done? – As always ... by feeding the spiritual dog more than you feed the carnal one. By nourishing your spirit more than you nourish your flesh so that when they go to battle with one another ... and they will ... the spirit will come out on top because of its superior strength (**verse 8**).

8. Solid enough in the scripture to rebuke, convince and correct those in error (**verse 9**).

The word means to hold onto something so tightly and for so long that your hand conforms to its shape. Until it's basically stuck in your hand.

It's like the story in **2nd Samuel chapter 23**. The story of Eleazar ... one of

David's Mighty Men. In that scene, the Philistines had encamped against the children of Israel and the Israelites were fleeing, but Eleazar, it says ... stood his ground. And it says in **verse 10** ...

He arose and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword, and the LORD brought about a great victory that day ...

The "sword", of course ... speaks of the Word of God (**Ephesians 6:17**).

And Eleazar held his sword so long and so tightly that his hand molded around it. And Paul says that's the way it ought to be for Spiritual Leaders ... and through that ... **the LORD br[ings] about ... great victor[ies]**.

So, those are the prerequisites. And what I hope you're seeing within this is that when you're looking for a leader within the church ... you don't look for credentials or diplomas or even experience ... you look for practical godliness.

Find someone who doesn't have accusations sticking to them ... someone who understands that righteousness matters more than being right.

If you can't see the things that are being taught and preached ... lived out in the life of the teacher ... then it's all for nothing.

And I realize that I'm putting myself under a very hot magnifying glass, but that's the way it's supposed to be.

Those are the prerequisites set forth by Paul to govern Titus' appointment of elders ... he was to look for these minimum requirements and then appoint elders in each city from among the qualified.

Now he turns his attention to instruct Titus on the other point of his commission ... setting things in order ...

Verses 10-11: Paul's talking about saved Jews ... those who'd converted from Judaism to Christianity. And some of them, he says, were perverting the scripture to gain money dishonestly.

Q. Aren't you glad that doesn't happen anymore in the name of religion?

But specific to Crete ... this was a legalistic group ... insisting that the Law of Moses be kept ... especially the requirement of circumcision. And they'd turned it into a source of personal income.

And of them, Paul says ... "**they must be silenced!**" ... which kinda sounds like a line out of The Godfather.

But Paul's not advocating violence ... just silencing them. He's calling on Titus to exercise the spiritual authority he'd been given. As the spiritual authority on the Island, he had the power to make sure they weren't given a voice within the fellowship.

I've said "no" far more times than I could count when people ask to speak from this pulpit ... simply because their doctrine is goofy and I'm not going to allow them to sew seeds of confusion and dissension.

So, the first group that Paul gives Titus a special warning about ... is the Christian Jews, but they're not the last group ...

Verses 12-14: The second group is ... the Cretans. Paul's so politically incorrect!

He's not agreeing that all Cretans were dishonest and evil. But he is agreeing that those things were common problems within the community as well as the church. And he encourages Titus to minister strongly to those weaknesses.

Q. Interesting isn't it that the two groups Paul's primarily concerned about here ... are still major concerns today? The group that stick to traditions ... whether or not they run contrary to scripture? And the group that walks outside of scripture for personal gain?

And Paul says to Pastor Titus ... "Rebuke them sharply!"

Q. But why? – So that they may be sound in faith. And keeping that firmly in mind will help guide your rebuke and protect the rebuked from your angry flesh.

Never rebuke a brother or sister to prove how smart and powerful you are. Don't do it to hone your debate skills, but for the singular purpose of helping to solidify their faith.

Verses 15-16: I like the way Matthew Henry explains this ...

To good Christians that are sound in the faith and thereby purified ... all things are pure. Meats and drinks, and such things as were forbidden under the law ... in these there is now no such distinction, all are pure (lawful and free in their use), but to those that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; things lawful and good they abuse and turn to sin; they suck poison out of that from which others draw sweetness ...

And of **verse 16** he says ...

There are many who in word and tongue profess to know God, and yet in their lives and conversations deny and reject him; their practice is a contradiction to their profession.

Or as Joe Focht more concisely puts it, "God has no use for talkie-talkies, but He'll take all the walkie-talkies He can get".

Q. Is their behavior consistent with their confession? Is yours? Is mine?

Listen to what God said to the prophet Ezekiel after he'd been prophesying to the people for 33 chapters ...

Ezekiel 33:31 "They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. 32 "Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.

The Sunday morning hearer ... but never the effectual doer (**James 1:22**)! That's the third group Titus is warned about!

Conclusion: You know ... we throw around the phrase, New Testament Church. And there are several churches that have dedicated themselves to becoming a church that emulates the New Testament church. Trying to mimic the Church of **Acts**. Trying to reproduce the church as it was when it began.

But I am convinced that they're not really trying to become the church of **Acts** ... they're trying to become an imaginary ideal. An ideal that they've superimposed on the early church, but that never really existed.

Because the book says the early church was a mess!

The churches of Crete were already in need of strong rebuke and correction. And similar problems existed in Ephesus. And don't even think about Corinth. The church in Jerusalem as recorded in the **book of Acts** was full of problems ...

Q. And do you know why? – People! And not just any people ... but problem people!

If they weren't problem people, they wouldn't have been a part of a group whose creed requires an admission that they've got problems.

Q. How could any of us imagine that we could be a part of that same group and that that group somehow wouldn't have problems? –

Q. Isn't it great to read accounts like this and to realize how messed up they were? – Not because we're glad they were messed up, but because we know we are!

And through this book ... we can read just how faithfully God loved them anyway.

It assures us that despite our messes ... He loves us just as faithfully.