

December 10, 2017

“Qualifications of Elders”

Focal Passage: Titus 1:1-9 (NASB)

Cross References: 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 1:19; 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:13; Hebrews 6:18

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Dec 3 1 Cor 15-16	Dec 4 2 Cor 1-4
Dec 5 2 Cor 5-9	+Dec 6 2 Cor 10-13
Dec 7 Galatians 1-3	Dec 8 Galatians 4-6
Dec 9 Ephesians 1-3	Dec 10 Ephesians 4-6

Background:

As we begin Paul’s letter to Titus, we know from verse 5 that Paul and Titus had ministered together in Crete. Paul left Titus there to appoint elders for the Churches in each of the cities on the Island of Crete, so that the believers would have faithful men to help guide them in the Word of God. There is some introductory material for this letter at the end of this lesson.

Foundational Truths from this passage:

- **God cannot lie and will always keep His promises.**
- **God desires that churches be set in order and have elders/overseers to minister in them.**
- **Elders/overseers must be godly men who exhibit Christlike character in all the areas of their lives.**
- **A primary task for elders/overseers is the guarding of sound doctrine in the church.**

Lesson Idea: We need to seek godly men to oversee the ministry of the church. We also need to seek to be godly people in all the areas of our own lives.

Titus 1:1-9

1Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, 3but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, 4To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. Qualifications of Elders

5For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

DISCUSSION:

- V 1. Why does Paul call himself a bond servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ? What did Paul see as his responsibilities?
- V 2. What does Paul say about the hope of eternal life? What assurance does that bring to you? (see 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 6:18)
- V 3. What did God do at the proper time, and how did He do it? What is the proclamation to which Paul was entrusted? How are you also entrusted with that proclamation?
- V 4. How did Paul describe Titus, and why? “Grace and Peace” are part of Paul’s usual greetings—what do they mean for us?
- V 5. What was one of Titus’ primary responsibilities in Crete? Why was this important? What is an “elder” (or “overseer” in v 7)? What are their roles in the church?
- V 6-8. Explain the following qualifications for elders. Why are all of these important?
 - **above reproach**
 - **the husband of one wife**
 - **having children who believe**
 - **not accused of dissipation or rebellion.**
 - **above reproach as God’s steward**
 - **not self-willed**
 - **not quick-tempered**
 - **not addicted to wine**

- *not pugnacious*
 - *not fond of sordid gain*
 - *hospitable*
 - *loving what is good*
 - *sensible*
 - *just*
 - *devout*
 - *self-controlled*
- V 9. How do you “hold fast the faithful word?” What “teaching” do we need to be “in accordance with?” Why does an elder need to be sound in his doctrine? (see 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 1:19; 2 Timothy 1:13)

APPLICATION:

- ✓ How should you respond to the elders/overseers in the church?
- ✓ The qualifications for elders are really character traits that should be true of all believers. How do you match up to those traits?
- ✓ What are you doing to ensure that you are holding fast to the faithful word?

Lesson by Stan Fike

NOTES: David Guzik, *Titus (Enduring Word Commentary)*

V 2. *In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,*

Which God, who cannot lie, promised: This eternal life is not a wish, but a hope. In this sense, hope is an anticipation founded not on wishful thinking, but on a promise from the God who cannot lie.

V 4. Though we read nothing about Titus in Acts, we still know something of his character and personality.

- Titus was a true son in our common faith (Titus 1:4).
- Titus was a genuine brother to the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 2:13).
- Titus was a partner and a fellow worker with Paul (2 Corinthians 8:23).

· Titus walked in the same spirit as Paul (2 Corinthians 12:18).

· Titus walked in the same steps as Paul, in the same manner of life (2 Corinthians 12:18).

· Therefore, Titus could be a pattern to other believers (Titus 2:7).

“He seems to have been a man of great common sense; so that, when Paul had anything difficult to be done, he sent Titus. When the collection was to be made at Corinth on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus to stir the members up, and with him another brother to take charge of the contributions.” (Spurgeon)

Grace, mercy, and peace: In his greeting Paul used words typical for a greeting in the ancient world. But when Paul used these words, they were not used just as a formality because Paul knew the source of all grace, mercy, and peace. They come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

V 5. ***For this reason I left you in Crete:*** After a successful evangelistic campaign on the island of Crete, there were a lot of young Christians to take care of. Paul left Titus behind to build stable churches with mature, qualified pastors for the people. This was especially needed in Crete, because the people of Crete were a wild bunch, well known as liars and lazy people. Titus had to find and train capable leaders for the Christians of the island of Crete.

Set in order the things that are lacking: This was the job Titus was given. The church needed order and leadership. Titus was commanded to set in order the churches, and to do it by appointing godly leaders.

“That phrase is a medical term; it was applied to the setting of a crooked limb.” (Wiersbe) There were crooked things that had to be set straight among the congregations of Crete. If we compare the work of Titus in Crete to the work of Timothy in Ephesus (as shown by 1 and 2 Timothy), it shows there was much more lacking among the congregations of Crete. Paul specifically told Titus to set in order the things that are lacking, and gave no such command to Timothy.

And appoint elders in every city: Paul told Titus to appoint elders, who are also called bishops in Titus 1:7. The word elder is used broadly in the New Testament, mainly describing the maturity necessary in leaders. Elders and bishops describe pastors over congregations in different cities on Crete.

The list in the following passage means that God has specific qualifications for leaders in the church. Leaders

should not to be chosen at random, or just because they volunteer, or because they aspire to the position, or even because they are “natural leaders.” Leaders should be chosen because they match the qualifications listed here. It is fine if a man thinks he is “called.” Yet he must also be qualified.

The qualifications for leadership in the following passage have nothing to do with giftedness. Paul didn’t say to Titus “Find the most gifted guys.” We might say that it is easy for the Lord to grant gifts by the Holy Spirit as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), but developing character takes time and a real relationship with Jesus Christ.

V 6-8. If a man is blameless: This word literally means “nothing to take hold upon.” There must be nothing in the life of the leader that others can take hold of and attack his life or the church. This is a broad term for a man who lives a righteous life that can be seen as righteous. No one could stand up and rightfully accuse the man of grievous sin.

Husband of one wife: The idea is of “a one-woman man.” It does not mean that a leader must be married. If that were the case, then both Jesus and Paul would be disqualified from leadership. Nor is it the idea that a leader could never remarry if his wife had passed away or if he were Biblically divorced. The idea is that the leader has his focus upon one woman – that being his wife.

Having faithful children: The leader must have raised his children well. His ability to lead the family of God must be first demonstrated by his ability to lead his own children. Here the emphasis is on the idea that his children are believers also...

cannot be accused of [dissipation]. The Greek word is *asotia*. It is the word used in Luke 15:13 for the riotous living of the prodigal son...

Not self-willed: Basically selfish people are disqualified from leadership. They show their self-willed nature in arrogance, stubbornness, and a proud self-focus. “Not one who is determined to have his own way in every thing; setting up his own judgment to that of all others; expecting all to pay homage to his understanding.” (Clarke)

Not quick-tempered: The quick-tempered are also disqualified from leadership, as are those who drink

more than is proper (not given to wine), the violent, and those greedy for money... The ancient Greek word used here (*orgilos*) actually refers more to a settled state of anger than the flash of an occasional bad temper. It speaks of a man who has a constant simmering anger and who nourishes his anger against others – close to the idea of a bitter man.

Soberminded: This describes the person who is able to think clearly and with clarity. They are not constant joke-makers, but know how to deal with serious subjects in a serious way... “This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and somber. Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior.” (From Wiersbe’s commentary on 1 Timothy) In the mind of the Apostle Paul, this was an important quality in a leader. He used this word ten times in his short letters to Timothy and Titus.

Just, holy, self-controlled: A pastor or leader in the church must be just (right toward men), holy (right towards God), self-controlled (right towards himself). “How unfit are those to govern a church who cannot govern themselves!” (Matthew Henry)

V 9. What leaders in the church are supposed to do.
1. (9a) Titus must appoint elders who will hold fast to the word of God.

Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught,

Holding fast the faithful word: This means first that the leader must be sure of the faithful word for himself. When he brings the word of God to people he must bring it with confidence and authority, not mixed with theological speculation and academic doubts. “There is no need of fancy words, but of strong minds, of skill in the scriptures, and of powerful thoughts.” (Chrysostom)

2. (9b) Titus must appoint leaders who will also use the word properly.

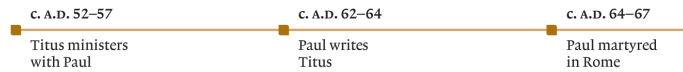
That he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

That he may be able . . . both to exhort and convict those who contradict: A godly leader will use his solid foundation in God’s word to exhort (encourage) those who are on the right track. He will also use it to convict (discourage) those who are on the wrong track, those who contradict.

Introduction to Titus

From: <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-titus/>

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipient

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to his coworker Titus. The letter was probably written in the mid-60s A.D. between Paul's first imprisonment (Acts 28) and his second imprisonment, which is not mentioned in Acts.

Theme

The letter's theme is the unbreakable link between faith and practice, belief and behavior. This truth is the basis for Paul's criticism of false teaching, his instruction in Christian living, and standards he sets for church leaders.

Purpose

Paul had recently completed a journey to Crete. He had left Titus there to teach the new church (see Acts 14:21-23).

False teachers were already a problem in the church (Titus 1:10-16), and the letter focuses primarily on that issue. The description of elders (1:5-9) and of proper Christian living (2:1-10; 3:1-3) appear to be worded for intentional contrast with these false teachers. The content of the false teaching is not fully explained (as in 1 Timothy). There appears to be a significant Jewish element to the teaching. The opponents come from "the circumcision party" (Titus 1:10). They are interested in "Jewish myths" (1:14) and perhaps ritual purity (1:15). Paul's primary concern, however, is with the practical effect of the false teaching. They taught ritual purity, but they lived in a way that proved they did not know God (1:16).

This false teaching would have been welcome in Crete, which was known in the ancient world for immorality. But Paul expected the gospel to produce real godliness in everyday life, even in Crete.

In dealing with the false teaching, Paul also provides Titus with a portrait of a healthy church. He describes proper leadership (1:5-9), proper handling of error (1:10-16; 3:9-11), proper Christian living (especially important for new believers in an immoral setting; 2:1-10; 3:1-2), and the gospel as the source of godliness (2:11-14; 3:3-7).

Key Themes

The gospel produces godliness in the lives of believers. There is no legitimate separation between belief and behavior (1:1; 2:1, 11-14; 3:4-7).

One's deeds will either prove or disprove one's claim to know God (1:16).

It is vitally important to have godly men serving as elders/pastors (1:5-9).

True Christian living will draw others to the gospel (2:5, 8, 10).

Good works have an important place in the lives of believers (2:1-10, 14; 3:1-2, 8, 14).

It is important to deal clearly and firmly with doctrinal and moral error in the church (1:10-16; 3:9-11).

The gospel is the basis for Christian ethics (2:11-14; 3:3-7).

Outline

Opening (1:1-4)

The Occasion: The Need for Proper Leadership (1:5-9)

The Problem: False Teachers (1:10-16)

Christian Living in Contrast to the False Teachers (2:1-3:8)

The Problem Restated: False Teachers (3:9-11)

Closing Encouragement (3:12-15)

The Setting of Titus

A.D. 62-64

Paul likely wrote Titus during a fourth missionary journey not recorded in the book of Acts. Writing from an unknown location, he instructed Titus in how to lead the churches on the island of Crete. The churches there had apparently been founded by Paul.

