

MAINTAINING GOOD CHURCH ORDER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

Titus was a young convert to Christianity early in Paul's ministry. He was a talented young man of Gentile origin with whom Paul had entrusted the responsibility of organizing and instructing local churches in Crete (1:5). Crete was an island southeast of Greece, noted for its lack of moral standards. Paul wrote this letter to Titus to give him God's methods of church organization and administration.

Titus' purpose in Crete was to find pastors for the churches which met the proper qualifications (1:6-9). Note how Paul emphasized the importance of local churches which operate according to Biblical standards (1:5). Although these standards are directed to pastors, it must be remembered that laymen are to follow their example (1 Peter 5:3). In addition to knowing the Scriptural doctrines, the pastor must be faithful in upholding these doctrines. This enables him to have a two-fold ministry: first, to minister to the true believers, and secondly, to refute false teachers (1:9).

Heresy, a constant threat to Christianity, is always fomented by false teachers. Paul characterized false teachers as having uncontrolled tongues and being motivated by fleshly desires (1:11). He did not suggest peaceful co-existence because these men would turn others from the truth (1:14). Rather, they were to be rebuked sharply (1:11, 13). The real failure of these men was a profession of Christianity without possession of Christ (1:16; 2 Cor 5:17).

I. Greeting to Titus — 1:1-5**A. Concerning Paul's Ministry — 1: 1-3****1. His calling — 1:1a**

1:1a — "A servant of God" - Paul was called to be a slave, but a willing slave, surrendered to God, his Master (cf. Rom 12:1-7).

"An apostle of Jesus Christ" — He was divinely called by Jesus Christ at Damascus; thus his call was authoritative (cf. Acts 9:15-16; 22:14-15).

2. His criteria — 1:1b

1:1b — "According to the faith" - Paul's apostleship was based on the same faith that is the Gospel, as that of the elect. Therefore, the elect would readily recognize the validity of his apostleship.

"Acknowledging of the truth" — Paul's apostleship was in accord with the truth that produces godliness.

3. His confidence — 1:2

1:2 — His service rested on God's promise of eternal life, which gave him confidence. The purpose of Paul's ministry was to bring this hope and confidence to others (cf. 1 Cor 15:12-19).

God "cannot lie" — God is truth as His Son is truth (Jn 14:6). His promises are truth. His promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ was made before the world began (cf. 2 Tim 1:9). Since He kept that promise, His people can be confident that He will also keep the rest of them.

4. His commission — 1:3

1:3 — Paul was commissioned and commanded to preach the Word of God (cf. 1 Tim 1:1). God's method of making known His Word is through preaching (cf. 1 Cor 1:21).

B. Concerning Titus' Ministry — 1:4-5**1. His conversion — 1:4**

1:4 — Titus was led to the Lord by Paul according to the "common faith". There is one message for salvation that is common to all. There is only one way to be saved and that is by Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12). This message is entrusted to all believers, who are to give it to unbelievers so they can be saved.

2. His commission — 1:5

1:5 — "Set in order the things that are wanting" - Paul left Titus in Crete to finish the things that had not been done when the initial evangelistic work was finished.

"Ordain elders" — Titus was told to see that the local churches in every city ordained proper elders or pastors to feed and lead them.

"Appointed" — This is a different word than "ordain" and it means "directed".

II. Qualifications for Pastors — 1:6-9**A. In Relation to Man — 1:6-8****1. Within his family — 1:6**

1:6 — "Blameless" - He was to live in his home and everywhere he went what he preached in the church. This does not mean he was sinless, because no one is without sin. It means that he repented of his sin, when he committed one, and made amends if he wronged anyone.

"Husband of one wife" — The husband of only one living woman since he was saved and cleansed from all his former sins when he was converted.

"Having faithful children" — His children must be under his authority, not causing riots or being unruly. If a man cannot rule his own house, how can he take care of the house of God (cf. 1 Tim 3:5)?

2. Outside his family — 1:7-8

1:7 — "A bishop" - The "bishop" refers to the same pastoral office as "elder." Titus was giving the requirements for an elder that would be appointed over a church (1:5-9). "Bishop" means "overseer" and it refers to his management responsibility and "elder" means "older" and refers to his spiritual maturity.

"Blameless" — Bishops must be faithful stewards of God in caring for His churches (1 Cor 4:1-2; Heb 13:17). In Revelation 2-3, Jesus returns to judge the work of the elders (angel means messenger) of the seven churches of Asia. Two received a good report, three received a fair report and two received a bad report.

"Not self-willed" — They are not to be presumptuous or arrogant in overseeing their work in the churches (cf. 2 Pet 2:10).

"Not soon angry" — They are not to be quick-tempered persons.

"Not given to wine" — Literally it means he is "not one who sits alongside of wine." The Greek word for wine (*oinos*) can refer to unfermented or fermented juice from grapes. Here it refers to drinking fermented grape juice, maybe to the excess. However, drinking wine was and still is an evil influence in all cultures (Prov 20:1; 23:29-35). The Hebrews were told that their kings and princes were not to drink wine lest they forget the law and pervert good judgment (Prov 31:4-5). Since these things are true about alcoholic wine, bishops should not drink any alcoholic beverage lest it pervert their judgment about spiritual matters of right and wrong. Moreover, they should be an example to all believers, who

also are priests of God (1 Pet 2:5, 9) and ambassadors of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:20). All believers must live holy lives (1 Pet 1:15-16), able to think clearly in representing Jesus Christ to new believers and to lost sinners. Bishops and mature believers must not become a stumbling block to the young believers, who see their examples and drink wine in excess (Rom 14:21). Since these things are true, it was best for an elder/bishop and his people to avoid drinking all alcoholic beverages.

"No striker" — A bishop should not be a bully, striking with his fists.

"Not given to filthy lucre" — He should not be a lover of money instead of a lover of God. He cannot love both (Mt 6:24).

1:8 — "Lover of hospitality" - He needs to be a loving host to traveling evangelists and strangers in need of help (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2).

"Lover of good men" — The text does not limit it to "men," but should include all good things.

"Sober" — A bishop needs to be sober-minded, not frivolous; serious in his business, but can have a good laugh.

"Just" — He must be fair in his judgments.

B. In Relation to God — 1:8-9

"Holy" — He needs to keep himself "unspotted from the world" (Jam 1:27; 1 Pet 1:15-16).

"Temperate" — An elder/bishop controls himself when tempted so that he brings glory to God.

1:9 — "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught" - An elder/bishop must know the Word of God and be consistent with it by maintaining sound doctrine (1 Tim 4:16).

He must be able to exhort or build up the saints who love the Word of God.

He must be able to convict or refute the sinners who oppose the Word of God.

III. Warning about the False Teachers — 1:10-16

A. Their Character — 1:10-11a

1:10 — "Unruly" - The false teachers are willful in their unbelief; they openly reject the truth.

"Vain talkers and deceivers" — They were empty talkers that led their followers astray. This was especially true of the unbelieving Jews, the "circumcision."

1:11a — They needed to have their mouths silenced (cf. James 3:5-8).

B. Their Conduct — 1:11b-12

1:11b — "Subvert whole houses" - These false teachers undermined and turned whole families from the truth. They taught false doctrine for the sake of money.

1:12 — "Prophet" - One of their own poets told the truth about the Cretans. This included the Jews who were false teachers that lived on Crete (cf. 1:14).

"Liars" — They were "teaching things which they ought not" (cf. 1:11), because it was not the truth.

"Evil beasts" — They were brutal, cruel. Probably refers to their business of subverting "whole houses."

"Slow bellies" — This says they were idle gluttons. They preyed upon these people for easy money ("filthy lucre").

C. Their Correction — 1:13-14

1:13 — "Rebuke them sharply" - Titus was to rebuke the believers sharply so that they would leave these false teachers. A sharp rebuke would bring them around and make them "sound in the faith." A

sharp rebuke was an act of love, because it would deliver them from the snare of the devil.

1:14 — "Jewish fables and commandments of men" - The false doctrines of Jews told their followers that they must keep the law of Moses to be saved. Two main laws for salvation were circumcision and keeping the Sabbath Day; they denied that faith in Jesus Christ alone could not save anyone. The false doctrine of men in general probably taught that they could take part in the sensual worship of their gods and keep their religion as well. Being rich like the false prophets was another temptation taking them away from Christ. These were the issues that defiled some of the churches in Asia (Rev 2-3).

D. Their Condemnation — 1:15-16

1:15 — "Defiled and unbelieving" - The false teachers taught doctrines that turned some people away from Christ and made them disbelieve the truth. There are two ways to look at these people. Either they were true believers that were being deceived by the false teachers, but they returned to Christ when Titus rebuked them sharply for their unfaithfulness to Christ. Or, they were not true believers, but only professed to be believers and their consciences and minds were defiled through their unbelief. As a result they regarded the pure Gospel to be impure.

1:16 — "in works they deny Him" - They claimed to know God, but they showed by their works that they did not know Him. Their works showed that they were detestable, disobedient and disqualified from every good work.