

# TITUS

**An Explanation  
with Notes and Quotes,  
Illustrations and Applications**

*G. Michael Cocoris*



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# PREFACE

The purpose of this commentary is to provide a practical explanation of Titus. The objective is a balanced exposition—explaining the passage in context and applying its truths to life with illustrations. Some commentaries are, by design, of a technical nature, delving into the meanings of words and phrases even outside their use in the book under consideration. Those commentaries tend to ignore the context of the book and its application. Other commentaries go to the other extreme and concentrate on the application, often not fully expounding the passage. Commentaries should do both. They should offer a contextual exposition of the book and apply the truths of that book to life. Adding illustrations facilitates clarity.

First and foremost, this is a contextual exposition. The context is not just the paragraph or the chapter but the whole book. In studying any book of the Bible, the first question that should be asked is: “What is the subject of this book?” Each natural literary unit, whether a paragraph or a narrative, develops a subject. A legitimate exposition will show how the author develops his subject. That, and only that, is contextual Bible study. All details in a book must be explained in light of the message and structure of the entire book. Words only have meaning in a context. A detailed explanation of words and phrases ripped from their sentence and the broader context is not exposition. The flow of the thought of the passage in the context of the book is the message the author intends to convey.

The Bible was written for living (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Even the most brilliant explanation that stops short of the applications is an abortion of what God intended. Thus, the practical ramifications of every passage must always be considered.

The procedure of study I use is to first divide the biblical book into its natural literary units (narratives or paragraphs). Then, I analyze each unit. The analysis includes an outline of the development of thought in that unit (major points and sub-points), an explanation of each sentence, and a summary statement. After I have personally analyzed each unit, I read commentaries, deliberately reading commentaries from different theological perspectives. I credit commentators’ comments by putting their names in parenthesis, even if I had seen that point in the text during my study before I read their comments. Thus, each chapter of this material expounds a natural literary unit of the book of Titus.

In the process of study, I also wrote a tentative title, introduction, and conclusion as if what I was working on was a sermon. If I stumble across an illustration, I include it, but, at this point, I do not search for illustrations. I write all of this for each literary unit in the book before preaching the first sermon in the book. As a result, when I begin speaking through the book, I have the whole book in mind.

As I prepare to preach each literary unit, I may change the tentative title, introduction, and/or conclusion. I rarely change the explanation of the text. It is as I preach each unit that I search for illustrations. Again, having studied the whole book first is helpful here. I sometimes found an illustration I knew would fit better later in the book.

The introduction of each chapter briefly relates that section to life and/or the context. The captions throughout the chapters are divisions of that portion of Scripture and correspond to the main points of a sermon. The italicized headings correspond to the sub-points of a sermon. Rather than footnotes, the author’s name is in parenthesis in the text. While applications are made throughout the exposition, the passage as a whole is summarized and applied at the end.

I would like to thank Ashley Zych for proofreading this material.

May the Lord be pleased to use this approach to the Scripture to enlighten, encourage, and edify believers, thus glorifying His Son.

G. Michael Cocoris  
Santa Monica, CA

# INTRODUCTION

Titus has been called “a priceless and unrivaled manual of pastoral advice” (Farrar). Luther said, “This is a short epistle, but yet such a quintessence of Christian doctrine and composed in such a masterly manner, that it contains all that is needful for Christian knowledge and life.”

## Author

The author of Titus was the apostle Paul (1:1). God had revealed the “mystery,” that is, the sacred secret of the church, to Paul as well as to others (Eph. 3:1-13). Paul had dealt in detail with various church disorders (Gal.; 2 Thess.; 1 Cor.; Col.). Who, then, was more qualified to teach concerning church order? The critics, however, do not believe that Paul wrote Titus or, for that matter, any of the Pastoral Epistles. They say that all three of the Pastoral Epistles were written by a forger, a pious forger, but a forger.

Without rehearsing the technical data in support of the Pauline authorship, it suffices to say that Christians who accept the doctrine of inspiration have no difficulty believing the plain statement of Titus 1:1 that Paul is the author. Besides, a forger would have avoided the many personal facts and names appearing in the pastorals, especially Titus. Also, the early church believed that Paul wrote the pastorals. By the way, how could a “pious” forger write anything and claim someone else was the author? He would not have forged someone else’s name if he were pious! If he forged anything, he was not pious. After all, a forgery is a deliberate deception. The high morals of this and the other two Pastoral epistles contradict such notions (2:12).

## Recipients

First, 2 Timothy and Titus form a group of epistles called the “Pastoral Epistles.” They were written during the same period in Paul’s life. All three deal with the same error. It is equally clear that they were written after the book of Acts closes. After Acts 28, Paul went to Ephesus and Macedonia (probably Philippi). After that, he journeyed to Crete, where he left Titus to continue the work there (1:5). Apparently, he next traveled to Corinth, where he wrote the book of Titus. From there, he went to Spain and on a return trip, he was arrested. If that scenario is correct (and frankly, other itineraries are possible; for example, he left Rome and went to Spain and then went to Crete), the date of Titus is the same as 1 Timothy, 62 AD. Many have pointed out similarities between 1 Timothy and Titus, indicating that they were written about the same time, like Ephesians and Colossians.

Paul wrote the book of Titus to Titus, but who was Titus? The book of Acts never mentions him. The thirteen references to him in the epistles reveal, however, a number of things about him. Paul led Titus to Christ (1:4), who was probably from Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:26). This uncircumcised Greek believer accompanied Paul to Jerusalem, where he became a test case concerning liberty from the Law (Gal. 2:3). Years later, he joined Paul on his third missionary journey. During that time, Paul sent Titus to Corinth on three occasions (2 Cor. 2:12, 13; 7:5-7, 7:13-15; 8:6, 8:16-24). Titus is not mentioned again until after Paul’s first Roman imprisonment



when Paul left him on Crete to set things in order in the churches there (1:5). He was with Paul during his second Roman imprisonment but left to go to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10). Paul calls Titus his son (1:4), his brother (2 Cor. 2:13), his partner, and fellow worker (2 Cor. 8:23).

When Paul wrote the letter, Titus was on the Island of Crete. Crete is a large island south of the Aegean Sea in the Mediterranean, 270 miles long and 50 miles wide. The churches there needed to have things “set in order” (1:5). They needed organization (1:5), instruction in godliness (2:1), and good works (3:1). Jewish teachers needed to be rebuked (1:10, 13). These teachers were going to the genealogies of the Old Testament (3:9) and using them to construct fables (1:14). From these myths, they drew commandments, which turned people from the truth of God to the commandments of men (1:14). Furthermore, their motives were wrong (1:11) and the results were not God-honoring. Their “ministry” produced disputes, contentions, and strivings about the Law (3:9), as well as subverting whole households (1:11).

So, Paul wrote to Titus to tell him how to put the churches in order. He was to ordain elders (1:5), sharply rebuke the Jewish teachers (1:13), speak about godliness to each age group (2:1ff.), and remind all to maintain good works (3:1ff.). From his past experience with Paul, Titus no doubt knew all this and even how to carry it out, but by putting these instructions on paper, it gave Titus apostolic authority to put things in order and organize the churches.

The epistle also served to impart personal information to Titus. It served as Paul’s message of commendation and instruction to him concerning Zenas and Apollos (3:13). It further informed Titus of Paul’s decision to spend the winter at Nicopolis (3:12). Zahn lists nine cities by the name of Nicopolis in various parts of the Roman world. The Nicopolis Paul had reference to was located on the western shores of Greece. Augustus founded the city to memorialize the victory over Mark Anthony at Actium. The letter also served to notify Titus that Paul was planning on sending either Artemas or Tychicus to replace him and that he wished for Titus to join him at Nicopolis.

Thus, Paul, the apostle to the church, wrote to Titus, his experienced trouble-shooter, giving him apostolic authorization to set things in order in the churches on the Island of Crete. The epistle does the same for us today. Because it was written, we have apostolic authority to ordain elders, rebuke out-of-line teachers, and exhort believers to godliness and good works. When Paul’s instructions are followed, sick churches become healthy and fruitless churches become productive. God’s Word must be applied to churches so that they can be healthy and godly, producing good works.

## **Message**

The subject of Titus is church order. That is clear from Titus 1:5. Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order and this book tells him how to do just that. The message is that putting things in order is ordaining elders, who see that the Word is taught, producing godliness and good works.

## **Structure**

Titus follows the form and format of an ancient letter, except there is no thanksgiving or prayer. In the body of the book, Paul gives three commands, each followed by a reason for it (see 1:5 *for* in 1:10, 2:1, *for* in 2:11, 3:1, and *for* in 3:3).

I. Salutation	1:1-4
II. The Body of the Letter	1:5-3:11
A. Ordain Elders	1:5-16
1. Qualifications for Elders	1:5-9
2. Reasons for Elders	1:10-12
3. Response to Errorists	1:13-16
B. Speak about Godliness	2:1-15
1. To the Older	2:2-5
2. To the Younger	2:6
3. To Yourself	2:7-8
4. To Slaves	2:9-10
5. Reason for Speaking	2:11-15
C. Remind about Good Works	3:1-7
1. Tell all to do Good Works	3:1, 2
2. Reason for Reminder	3:3-7
D. Conclusion	3:8-11
III. Personal Greetings and Benediction	:12-15

## Purpose

*To Instruct Titus* The church on the isle of Crete was in a mess. Jewish teachers were teaching things they ought not and their mouths needed to be shut (1:11). Consequently, the people needed instruction in truth to produce godliness and good works. Paul wrote Titus to tell him how to put the church in order. He was to ordain elders, rebuke the Jewish teachers sharply, speak about godliness to each age group, and remind all to maintain good works.

*To Inform Titus* The epistle was also written to impart personal information to Titus concerning Zenas and Apollos (3:13) and to inform Titus of Paul's decision to spend the winter at Nicopolis (3:12). The letter notified Titus that Paul was planning on sending either Artemas or Tychicus to replace him and that he wished for Titus to join him at Nicopolis.

**Summary:** Paul wrote to Titus to instruct him to set things in order in the church and to inform him about a few personal matters.

Elders are to see that the word is taught, which produces godliness and good works.

# WHAT'S YOUR LIFE'S GOAL?

What's the goal for the rest of your life? An energetic young man once told me his goal was to make a million dollars. I've had enthusiastic young girls confess their goal was to get married. I've met people whose ambition was to make it to the top, and I've met people whose desire was to make it through the rest of the day. What's the aim of your heart? Maybe I should ask, "What should your goal be?" Frankly, I'm not sure I can tell you about all the goals you should have, but I can suggest something that should be included on your list. To do that, let's consider the personal goal of the apostle Paul, for his life is the pattern for all believers (1 Tim. 1:16). Titus 1:1-4 is the salutation of the book of Titus. It reveals Paul's personal goals.

An ancient letter consisted of five parts: salutation, thanksgiving, prayer, body, personal greetings, and benediction. Like other salutations of letters in and out of the New Testament, the book of Titus contains three elements: the author, recipients, and greeting (Hiebert). Ancient authors sometimes expanded on any one of these elements to fit the situation. Here, Paul expands on the first part, the author. His expansion is unusually long for such a short letter, which makes this all the more significant. Often, these elaborations are clues as to what is coming. In identifying himself as an author, Paul speaks about his person, purpose, and philosophy.

## Paul's Person

*Slave* As was the ancient custom, Paul begins his epistle to Titus by identifying himself. He says, "Paul, a bondservant of God" (1:1a). The Greek word translated "bondservant" means "slave." Paul was not just a worker; he was a slave. Furthermore, he claimed to be the slave of God. This is the only place in the New Testament where Paul calls himself a slave of God (Hiebert). Elsewhere he employs the expression "slave of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; etc.). James and Jude used this expression of themselves. It is also used of Moses in Revelation 15:3.

When we hear the word "slave," we think of "involuntary service and harsh treatment" (Hendrickson). Hence, some prefer the translation "servant." Perhaps the concept of a slave as applied to believers needs to be clarified. Slaves do not own themselves; they are owned by another (Hiebert). Believers in Jesus Christ are bought by the blood of God's Son (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19) and, thus, belong to God. He owns them. Slaves do not regulate their life according to their own will but according to the will of their owners. To become a successful slave of God, believers must choose to make God's will their own will (Hiebert). Slaves do not work for themselves; they work to further the business of the one who bought them. Slaves are not self-employed. They are not employed at all. They are bought to engage in their master's work. Paul was God's slave. Whose slave are you? Have you "sold your soul to the company store" so that they regulate your life and you work only for them with no time to work for the One who paid the price for you?

*Apostle* Paul also identifies himself as an apostle. He adds, "and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1b). Paul was God's slave and Christ's apostle. The Greek word rendered "apostle" means "a messenger, one sent on a mission." This messenger is more than a Western Union boy (someone who delivered telegrams). He's more like an envoy or ambassador. He is entrusted with a

mission and has authority conferred upon him (Lightfoot, pp. 92-101). In the New Testament, this term is used, of course, of the twelve apostles, but it is also used of others as well (Acts 14:14). The original apostles were those who saw the Lord (1 Cor. 9:1) and who were sent (Acts 9:15).

Paul's view of himself, then, was that he was a slave and a sent one (Mk. 3:14). He belonged to God and was sent by Jesus Christ. There is a balance here. He was not just a slave with all duty and no dignity. On the other hand, he was not just an apostle with all authority and no accountability. Slaves should remember that they are apostles and apostles should never forget that they are slaves.

In a sense, all believers have been sent (Jn. 20:21). In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said that He would be with those carrying out this Great Commission until the end of the age, implying that the commission is binding on all those who know Him until He comes. Not all believers are sent in the same sense that the apostles were sent, that is, with special authority, but all believers are sent to tell the world about the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ

## Paul's Purpose

*Evangelism* Paul not only speaks of his person; he also talks about his purpose. He states that he is an apostle, "according to the faith of God's elect" (1:1c). The phrase "according to" is a problem that has been interpreted in several different ways. "According to" usually indicates a norm or standard. For example, if someone said, "I am a minister "according to" such and such church," the meaning would be, "I am a minister according to the standard set by that church." If that is the meaning here, Paul is saying that he is the apostle by the standard of the faith of God's elect (Hiebert; see also Humphreys; Kent says "in harmony with"), but that is not true (Gal 1:1, 15-17). "According to" can also mean "for." Thus, Paul says, "I am an apostle to bringing about faith in God's elect." (Alford; A. T. Robinson; Bernard; Hendriksen; Guthrie).

The expression "according to the faith of God's elect" has been taken as a reference to evangelism (MacDonald; etc.), but it probably means to bring about faith in God's elect, that is, Christians. Technically, both are true (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:16; Rom. 1:15-17, esp. verse 17). Later in this passage, he speaks about the fact that he manifested God's Word through preaching (1:3), a reference to the gospel. There is a lesson here. Faith is produced by proclamation. We who know Christ are to communicate the gospel to non-Christians and the Holy Spirit convicts. Our part is preaching, proclaiming, and communicating. His job is to convict. Christians are witnesses, not District Attorneys. A witness tells what he knows. A District Attorney tries to convict.

*Edification* There is a second part to Paul's purpose. He adds, "and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness" (1:1d). Paul's purpose was not only evangelism but also edification, that is, not only to get the people to believe but, after that, to get them to acknowledge the truth that is according to godliness. The Greek word translated "acknowledge" means "discern, recognize." Paul aimed to educate and enlighten so that believers could discern godly truth. The key here (and one of the issues in the book of Titus) is truth, according to godliness. Some truths are true but have nothing to do with godliness. Paul is saying that his purpose in life was not just to fill folks with facts but to edify them so they could recognize godly truth and become godly.

Bible students, and even Bible teachers, sometimes become obsessed with truth that is true but which does not produce godliness. For example, they concentrate on questions such as "Who

are the two witnesses in Revelation? Did Lazarus die after Christ raised him from the dead?” There is “truth” somewhere concerning these questions, but frankly, it doesn’t make a great deal of difference. So, focus on truth, which is according to godliness.

Paul’s purpose was evangelism and edification, to bring people to Christ and build them up in Christ. In short, his goal was to make disciples. That should be the purpose and goal of us all. A disciple abides in the Word of God (Jn. 8:31). Husbands are to see to it that their wives are instructed in the Word (Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Cor. 14:35). Parents are to teach their children the Word of God every day in every context of life (Deut. 6:7-9). Believers are to be involved in making disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19-20).

## Paul’s Philosophy

*The Future* Why was that Paul’s purpose and not ours? The answer concerns Paul’s understanding of life, his worldview. In Titus 1:2-3, he discusses his philosophy. Paul says, “in hope of eternal life” (1:2a). The Greek word translated “in” means “upon” or “on the ground of.” It suggests the basis, the foundation (Guthrie). Paul’s purpose rests on the foundation of his hope of eternal life. What does that mean? Our English word “hope” contains an element of uncertainty that is not present in the Greek word. The Greek word “expectation” means “the odds are on my side; I expect to win.” Vine says it means “favorable and confident expectation.”

The greater puzzle is that he is saying he *expects* to have eternal life! Does the New Testament not teach that the moment people trust Christ, they, at that moment, possess eternal life (Jn. 3:36)? There is a sense in which those who have trusted Christ have eternal life now. Yet, there is another sense in which they will not fully have it until eternity future. Paul is simply saying that his life now is built on his expectation of eternity.

Shortly before my brother’s 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was taking me to the airport when he began philosophizing about life. He said, “You know, I’ll be 35 shortly. Life is half over. I thought about that the other day—it’s half over!” Then,” he continued, “I thought, wow! The first 35 sure went by fast. As I continued to muse, I thought the next 35 would probably go by fast, too. Then I’ll die and go to heaven.” My brother, who was driving, turned to me and said, “My heart leaped! I’m looking forward to that!” That’s what Paul was saying. I’m expecting, anticipating, and looking forward to eternity.

*The Past* There is more to Paul’s worldview. He goes on to say that this eternal life “which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (1:2b). In other words, Paul was looking forward to his future in eternity based on something that God did in eternity past. Eternal life was not just promised, as some say, “from ancient times” (Calvin; Fairbairn), but was promised in eternity past (Hendriksen). It was “settled before creation” (Kent). It was not God’s afterthought; it was His forethought. He planned it all along. The point is Paul’s purpose was built on *God’s eternal program*, which extends from eternity past to eternity future. The certainty of eternal life is based on God’s character. God cannot lie. He is “absolutely faithful” (Hiebert). The fact that God cannot lie brings out “the absolute trustworthiness of the hope” (Guthrie).

*The Present* Paul continues, “but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior” (1:3). Paul says he was made part of God’s eternal program. God committed His message to Paul and commanded him to communicate it. God the Father is identified as “our Savior” (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10). God alone can save the world, but God has chosen not to save the world alone. You are the link between God’s eternal program and people in time.

**Summary:** Paul's goal, as a sent slave, was to make disciples according to God's eternal program.

In the context of Titus, Paul says this in preparation for discussing putting things in order in churches. Paul's personal goal should be the goal of churches, namely, to make disciples (Mt. 28:16-20).

Viewed chronologically, this passage is saying that Paul was chosen (1:2), he was commissioned (1:3), and he was committed (1:4). Or, to say the same thing another way, with his eye on eternity, Paul became a slave of God to make disciples for Jesus Christ among men and women. Maybe that's why Paul's goal was to make disciples, and it is not ours. If your eye is on this year and that's all, your goal will be for your vacation this summer. If your vision reaches beyond this year to when you're 65, your goal will be retirement, but if your worldview extends into eternity, your goal will be to make disciples. The problem is, some believers are too near-sighted!

Some may object, "I have a job, and I must produce." Granted. Paul had a job and probably had goals in his work. He was a tentmaker. Paul would, no doubt, say, "The goal of my job is to make so many tents in so many days, but the goal of my life is to make disciples."

# HOW IS PERSONAL PEACE POSSIBLE?

Mandy Kloppers, a psychologist, wrote an article entitled “40 Ways to Find Peace of Mind and Inner Calm” (<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/40-ways-achieve-peace-mind-and-inner-calm.html>). She wrote, “Do you have racing thoughts and find yourself constantly worrying? An anxious mind is truly distressing. The good news is there are simple things you can do to calm your thoughts. If you want to achieve peace of mind and inner calm, try these 40 simple and powerful ways.” She lists 1. Listen to Music. 2. Deep Breathing. 3. Go for a Walk. 4. Enjoy Nature. 5. Play with a Pet. 6. Declutter. 7. Acceptance (learning to tolerate uncertainty). 8. Mindfulness. 9. Self Love. 10. Be True to You. 11. Sense of Humor. 18. Worry Less. 24. Resist Guilt. 25. Adopt an Attitude of Gratitude. 27. Connect with Others. 40. Get Enough Sleep. She concludes, “The most important ways to achieve peace of mind involve being true to yourself, accepting that life is uncertain, and watching your thinking.”

No doubt some of those things help temporarily, but how is permanent personal peace possible? Is personal peace possible? I’m not sure I can tell you how to prevent distractions, disruptions, and disturbances, but I believe I can tell you how to experience personal peace and at the deepest level of your being. One must consider several biblical concepts to understand how personal peace is possible. These biblical precepts are contained in the greeting portion of the salutation in the book of Titus.

Titus 1:1-4 is the salutation of the book of Titus, which consists of a word about the author, the recipient, and the greeting. After Paul identifies himself as the author, he specifies that this letter is going to Titus. He writes, “To Titus, a true son in our common faith” (1:4a). This indicates that Paul led Titus to Christ (Hiebert; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). Frankly, very little is known about Titus. He is not mentioned in the book of Acts and only a few times in Paul’s epistles (see Introduction). The designation “son” contains two ideas: “I have begotten you” and “You are very dear to me” (Hendrickson).

This letter is addressed to Titus, but Titus does not need to be told about the things Paul says in this letter. He had known these things for years. Therefore, Paul’s primary purpose is not just to inform Titus; instead, he aims to give Titus written authorization for the work Paul gave him to do on the island of Crete (Hiebert). In other words, this letter is addressed to Titus, not as a private individual, but as a representative of the apostle Paul (Plummer).

The greeting given in this salutation is “Grace, mercy, and peace” (1:4a). Some translations leave out “mercy.” In most of Paul’s epistles, the greeting is just “grace and peace,” but in the other Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, the greeting is threefold: grace, mercy, and peace. The majority of Greek manuscripts have the three-fold greeting here. The three words of this greeting explain how personal peace is possible.

## Grace

*Definition* Grace is one of the jewels of the Bible. It shines like a diamond. To really appreciate the brilliance of a diamond, you need to look at it against a black backdrop. Jewelers show diamonds on black felt so that the black background will bring out the brightness of the stones. Likewise, to fully appreciate the glory of grace, one must see it against its biblical

backdrop. The Greek word translated “favor” means “favor.” It is often said that the way it is used in the New Testament means “unmerited favor,” God grants people favors they do not earn. It is more than that. It is undeserved favor.

*Illustration* The word “grace” in this passage does not refer to salvation, but verse 4 does mention God being our Savior. Salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8). The backdrop of grace is guilt. The Bible teaches that all are sinners before God (Rom. 3:19). As Romans 3 explains, we’ve all sinned; we’ve all broken God’s law. Therefore, we stand guilty before Him. That doesn’t mean we’ve all committed the same sins or sinned as many times as someone else, but it does mean that all have broken God’s Law in their own way and are guilty before Him. In your heart, you know I’m right: All have sinned; we’re all guilty.

The penalty of sin is death—eternal separation from God, but God did us a favor in that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place to pay for our sins (Heb. 2:9). That is undeserved favor. We did not earn it. We did not deserve it. We deserved the opposite, but God granted us the favor by paying for our sins.

A highway patrolman in Iowa saw a car speeding and pulled it over. As he was making out the ticket, he discovered, to the embarrassment of the driver, that the speedster was a pastor of a nearby church. He gave him the ticket and said he might visit his church sometime. The pastor, whom I preached for later, told me that, sure enough, the following Sunday, the policeman showed up for the service. After the service, the officer chatted with the pastor at the door, slipped an envelope in his hand, and departed. To the pastor’s amazement, when he opened the envelope, he discovered a fifty-dollar bill, the exact amount of his fine. He was guilty, and the policeman did him a favor (grace) by paying his fine. Likewise, we are guilty of having broken God’s Law, but He did us the favor of paying the penalty by having His Son, Jesus Christ, die in our place to pay for our sins.

*Application* In Titus 1:4, Paul does not wish grace on Titus as a sinner who needs salvation; he desires grace on Titus as his son, a saint. Sinners are saved by grace; saints are sustained by grace (Heb. 4:16), which means that God grants believers power even when they don’t deserve it (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Paul greets Titus with grace, reminding him that he was saved by grace and is sustained by grace (2:11-12). To do what Paul is about to tell Titus to do, he’s going to need grace. Titus faces difficult situations with difficult people (more about that later). He will need the grace of God to have the courage to do it.

## Mercy

*Definition* Mercy is another of the jewels of the Bible. Remember, jewels shine best when they are seen against a dark backdrop. So, let’s begin by looking at the backdrop of mercy. The Greek word for mercy means “pity, compassion.” In the Bible, it is God’s compassion toward the miserable.

*Illustration* According to the Bible, people are sinners and, thus, guilty, and they are also sinners and, therefore, miserable (Rom. 7:24). Someone might object, “I am a sinner and I’m enjoying it. How can you say sinning makes you miserable?” I’m not saying it’s not fun to sin. Of course it is! Do you think Satan would make it painful to sin? He’s not that stupid! I’m saying that it may be fun initially, but it’s no laughing matter later. Someone has suggested that there are three levels of sin: 1) “This is great; I like it,” 2) “This is grating; I don’t like it,” 3) “This is gross; I hate it.” Millions will tell you they’ve sinned and they’re miserable. There is the drug



addict who has lost his self-control and self-respect, or the drunk who has lost his fun, his friends, and his family. Then there is the Satan worshiper who has discovered that Satan is a liar and has failure and fear instead of freedom.

With that in mind, consider the concept of mercy. God looked down from heaven, so to speak, and saw peoples' misery, which moved Him to mercy. Motivated by compassion, He commissioned Jesus Christ to come to earth to die in people's place to pay for their sins so that He could save them from their sins and misery. Frankly, people do not deserve God's mercy. They deserve the miserable mess they made for themselves, but God was moved by pity toward the miserable and saved them from their sin and themselves.

*Application* In Titus 1:4, Paul does not wish mercy on Titus as a sinner who needs salvation; he desires mercy on Titus as his son, a saint. Sinners are saved by mercy; saints are sustained by mercy (Heb. 4:16), which means that we should be merciful to others as God has been merciful to us when we did not deserve it. Titus will need to practice mercy with some of the people he will have to deal with in this book.

Several years ago, I was driving to a church in Minnesota where I was to speak for a week. It was late one Saturday night in the dead of winter with a temperature below zero. I was driving down a not-so-often-traveled highway when all of a sudden, a car of drunken teenagers came toward me at 90 to 100 mph. They were swerving from side to side, and I had to drive on the shoulder of the road to prevent a head-on collision. Shortly after they passed by me, they ran into the ditch. Frankly, the temptation was to say, "It serves them right," and leave them there, but moved by compassion, I and several others stopped to help them, which saved their lives. In their condition, in that weather, they would have frozen to death. Likewise, sinners have not only broken God's Law and made a mess of their lives, they are miserable, but God was moved by compassion to send His Son to die so the miserable might be saved.

## Peace

*Definition* Peace is the third and final jewel in this collection. Like the others, it, too, needs to be seen against a backdrop. The background of peace is conflict. People are not only in sin and misery, they are also in sin and conflict. Psychologists say people are in conflict with themselves. Sociologists study people's conflicts with others. Theologians talk about people's conflicts with God. People have conflicts at all of these levels, but at the deepest level of their being, they are in conflict with God. In describing our relationship with the God of heaven, Paul uses such earthy words as "alienated" and "enemies" (Col. 1:21). This war between God and us is often passive. We keep our distance, but it periodically erupts into active warfare. In our innermost being, we cry, "Why did You make me like this? I'm ugly!" Or, "Why did You let this happen to me? I'm miserable!" From a theological point of view, this conflict is basic to all others. Because we are in a conflict with God, we are at war within ourselves and with others.

*Illustration* *God* The Greek word translated "peace" means "peace, freedom from war, concord, agreement." One Greek professor says it indicates they have been bound together after separation (Wuest). That's an interesting observation because we were described as "alienated." Peace, then, is the harmony that results from the removal of the discord that sin has produced. It is a feeling of well-being and tranquility (Hiebert). We were at war and now there is peace, agreement, concord, and harmony.

This peace comes from God. Paul says, "peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior" (1:4b). In the Greek text, there is only one preposition binding the two names

of God and Jesus Christ together, indicating the one source of peace (and also indicating the deity of Christ). Moreover, God is called Savior in verse 3 and Jesus is called Savior in this verse. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all involved in saving people. When people trust Christ, they experience peace in the depths of their souls, peace with God, and a peace that the disturbances of the world cannot disturb (Jn. 16:33).

*Application* In Titus 1:4, Paul does not wish peace on Titus as a sinner who needs salvation; he desires peace on Titus as his son, a saint. When sinners trust Christ, they have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). When saints trust Christ, they have the peace of God (Phil. 4:6-7). Titus is going to need that inner peace when he deals with the conflicts in the churches.

There is that which is called the “cushion of the sea.” Beneath the surface of the sea, which is agitated by storms and driven about with high winds, there is part of the sea that is never disturbed. When the bottom is dredged and remains of animal and vegetable life brought up, there is evidence that they have not been disturbed for hundreds of years. The peace of God is that eternal calm that lies far too deep in the soul to be reached by external disturbances.

**Summary:** God’s grace and mercy make personal peace possible.

Perhaps one of the most important observations that can be made here is the order of the words. It answers how personal peace is possible. Notice carefully Paul says, “Grace ... mercy ... peace.” In the Bible, grace always precedes peace. Grace and mercy make peace possible. Without grace, there would be no peace. God has paid for people’s sin, guilt, and misery by His grace and mercy. So, now, people, by trusting Christ, can have peace in the depths of their souls! Think of it. You can have peace with God. You don’t have to make peace with God. God has made peace possible. The only question is, have you trusted Christ so that you can enjoy this peace that God has made possible through the cross of His Son?

A pastor was asked to inform an older woman that she was about to die. His concern was for her eternal destiny, so he gently said during his conversation with her, “I believe your time is short.” She calmly replied, “Yes, I know it is.” Feeling free to ask such a question, the pastor asked, “Have you made your peace with God?” “No,” replied the lady, “I have not.” “Then you must be afraid to die,” he said. “No,” was her response. “But,” the pastor objected, “You realize you haven’t had very long and you haven’t made your peace with Him yet?” “No, and I’m not going to,” she answered. Seeing the twinkle in her eye, he inquired, “What do you mean?” She said to the pastor, “I know I’m dying, yet I have no fear of meeting God. I’m resting in the peace that Jesus Christ made in His atoning death upon the cross, and I don’t have to make my peace with God, for I am resting in the peace that Jesus Christ has already made.”

Grace, mercy, and peace explain how peace *with* God is possible. They also explain how the peace *of* God is possible. After trusting Christ, we need God’s grace and mercy because we are sometimes guilty, and sometimes we find ourselves in a miscible mess. As we depend on God’s grace and mercy, we experience God’s peace.

Horatio Gates Spafford(1828-1888) was an attorney and an elder in his Presbyterian Church when tragedy after tragedy struck his life. The first was the death of his four-year-old son in the great Chicago fire of 1871. The Chicago fire ruined him financially because he had invested significantly in Chicago property. In the economic downturn of 1873, he was further damaged financially. That same year, he planned a trip to England with his family to help D. L. Moody in his evangelistic campaign. At the last minute, he had to change his plans, meaning he sent his family while he stayed behind to deal with some zoning problems following the great Chicago fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship on which his family was traveling collided. All four of

his daughters died. His wife survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone..." He then boarded a boat to travel to England to meet his grieving wife. As the boat passed near the spot where his daughters died, he wrote a hymn. That hymn describes the peace the apostle Paul says "passes understanding" (Phil. 4:6). It is a peace that is indescribable. To try to explain to somebody what it's like is like a woman trying to explain to a man what it's like to have a baby. The name of the hymn is "It is well with my soul."

When peace like a river attendeth my way  
When sorrows like sea billows roll  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say  
It is well, it is well with my soul

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come  
Let this blest assurance control  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate  
And has shed His own blood for my soul

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought  
My sin, not in part, but the whole  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend  
Even so, it is well with my soul!

# THE SOLUTION TO THE CHURCH MESS

The church is in a mess, not only in America but worldwide. In too many churches, and any is too many, the ideologies of men are taught instead of the ideas of God. The commands of men have replaced the commandments of God. Morally, the church is often bankrupt. Millions claim to be born again and millions claim they tune in to religious TV. Where is the godliness that goes with spiritual growth? And where, oh where, are the workers and the works of Christianity? Churches are filled with spectators. Where are the participators? Then, there are the tales of splits and splinters, dissensions and divisions. The church is in a mess! What is the solution?

The solution is complex and, candidly, no single, simple solution will solve all the problems. The book of Titus, however, was written to speak to this issue. The whole book needs to be considered in approaching all the difficulties, but Titus 1:5 tells us where to begin.

## The Situation

Addressing Titus, Paul says, “For this reason, I left you in Crete” (1:5a). Paul left Titus on the island of Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean. Hiebert says that the Greek word translated “left” implies that being left behind was temporary, which is confirmed by Paul’s statement that he wanted Titus to meet him in Nicopolis (3:12). Titus was “a temporary apostolic legate” (White, cited by Hiebert). This statement raises a number of questions. When did Paul leave Titus on the Island of Crete? Who was Titus? Why did Paul leave Titus at Crete?

*Paul* When did Paul leave Titus in Crete? The book of Acts closes with Paul in prison in Rome. From references in the New Testament, as well as tradition outside the Bible, we can reconstruct what happened to Paul after Acts 28. He probably went to Ephesus and Macedonia, then journeyed to Crete, where he left Titus. He next traveled to Corinth, where he wrote the book of Titus in AD 63.

*Titus* Who was Titus? The book of Acts never mentions Titus, but from the thirteen references to him in the epistles, it is evident that Paul led him to Christ (1:4), and he became the traveling companion and assistant to his spiritual father. Titus became a kind of “troubleshooter.” Paul sent him to Corinth several times to help solve some of the difficulties there (see Introduction for more details).

Titus was not a novice but an experienced, seasoned servant. If that is the case, why did Paul have to write to him about how to straighten out a church mess? The answer is that Titus was written not only for the sake of Titus but also for the benefit of the churches. It “formally invested him with the authority to act as Paul’s agent in the work” (Hiebert).

*The Situation* Why did Paul leave Titus at Crete? Paul says he left Titus in Crete, “that you should set in order the things that are lacking” (1:5b). The Greek word translated “set in order” means “to set in order further.” Medical writers used it for setting broken bones or straightening out crooked ones (Hiebert). The churches on Crete were crooked, broken; they needed straightening and healing. The situation in these churches can be pieced together from this epistle and the two other Pastoral epistles, which were written about this same time. There were Jewish (1:10) teachers (1:11), teaching things they ought not (1:11). These teachers were going to the genealogies of the Old Testament (3:9) and constructing fables (1:14). From these myths, they

drew commandments which turned people from the truth of God to the mandates of men (1:14). This activity, in turn, produced disputes, contentions, strivings about the law (3:9), as well as subverting whole households (1:11).

Let me illustrate the kind of thing they were doing. Suppose, from the study of the Old Testament story of the Garden of Eden, someone determined that God hated snow. Arguments to support such a contention might include: 1) He didn't put Eden in Alaska; it was in Iraq! 2) The Promised Land wasn't Iceland; it was Canaan! 3) Consider the New Jerusalem. God will wipe away all tears, so naturally, He will wipe away rain. There will be no snow in heaven. 4) Snow is a result of sin. Therefore, all Christians should move to the Sun Belt—in New Mexico!

That kind of misuse of the Scripture was taking place on the Isle of Crete. Beginning with the genealogies of the Old Testament (3:9), Jewish teachers developed concepts (“fables” 1:14) from which they drew the manmade commandments (1:14). The result was not godly living (1:11) but disputes, contentions, and strivings about the Law (3:9). What a mess!

## The Solution

What is the solution to the mess on Crete? Paul tells Titus to do two things. He is to set things in order “and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (1:5). How was Titus to set things in order? The whole book of Titus is about the answer to that question. The subject of the book is church order. What follows Titus 1:5 is a series of instructions to Titus on how to do that. Paul tells Titus to:

Ordain Elders Sound in Doctrine (1:5-16)  
Speak to Each Group about Godliness (2:1-15)  
Remind Everyone about Good Works (3:1-8)

Each of these commands is followed by a reason for it. Notice the word “for” in Titus 1:10, Titus 2:11, and Titus 3:3. (see the Introduction for an outline of the book; it is a more complete outline of how to set things in order.) From this, it is clear that the first thing Titus was to do to set things in order in the churches was to appoint a group of qualified elders. It would not be too much to say that appointing qualified elders is the first step toward solving the church mess. Does that mean that Titus was to exercise sole discretion in selecting elders? Some argue that the selection of elders is not fixed by the word “appoint.” It is argued that the whole assembly made the selection (see Hendriksen; Kent) under Titus's guidance, and those selected were formally appointed by Titus (Hiebert).

On the other hand, others insist Titus himself is to appoint elders. “It is not the congregations that are to elect the overseers, subject to the approval of the Apostle's delegate; still less that he is to ordain anyone whom they may elect. The full responsibility of each appointment rest with him. Anything like the popular election of the ministers is not only not suggested; it is by implication entirely excluded” (Plummer).

Before looking at the qualifications for elders (in the next chapter), let us ask and answer several preliminary questions about elders.

*Their Name* The New Testament uses four different names or titles to refer to leaders in the church: bishops, elders, pastors, and deacons. There is no doubt that in the New Testament, bishops and elders refer to the same office. In Titus 1:5, Paul instructs Timothy to appoint elders and calls those elders bishops (1:7). Something similar occurs in Acts 20, where Luke says Paul

called for the elders of the church (Acts 20:17). He calls them “overseers,” which is another translation for the Greek word “bishop” (Acts 20:28). Peter also uses the two words interchangeably (1 Pet. 5:1-2). Another line of evidence demonstrates that these two names refer to the same office. First Timothy 3:1-7 gives the qualifications for a bishop and for a deacon without using the word “elder.” When Titus 1:5-9 lists the qualifications for an elder, it is evident that they are the same qualifications as for a bishop in 1 Timothy 3.

If bishop and elder are the same office, is there any difference between these designations? Many have pointed out that elder was the title used among the Jews, while bishop was an official title among the Greeks (Hiebert). The words indicate that elder refers to the person, while bishop refers to the function. The word *elder* expresses the dignity, maturity, and character of the individual holding the office. The word *bishop* describes the duties; he is an overseer (Hiebert).

After the close of the New Testament, that is, in the second century, as the church grew, bishops began to rule over elders and, eventually, one bishop began to claim universal rule over all bishops. Thus, the papacy was formed, but in the New Testament, there is no such governmental structure. Each local church had bishops, who were also called elders. “All official designations between bishop and elder, evaluating the one above the other, are a post-apostolic origin and foreign to the Scriptures” (Hiebert).

“Pastor” is a term that refers to a spiritual gift (Eph. 4:11). It is the gift of shepherding people. A man could have the gift of pastor and not necessarily be in the “office” of elder. On the other hand, an elder might not have the gift of pastor, or, for that matter, even the gift of teacher. He could have only the gift of administration. Deacons simply serve, which is what the word *deacon* means.

Therefore, there are only two offices in the New Testament: elders (also called bishops) and deacons (1 Tim. 3; Phil. 1:1). In the New Testament, “pastor” is not an office; it is a gift.

*Their Number* How many elders should each church have? Many consider the word *elder* in the New Testament a synonym for *pastor*. Hence, according to that view, there is only one elder per church. Others contend that congregations must have a group of elders.

I was saved and I served in a church that taught that the pastor was the elder. So, naturally, I accepted that as biblical. Then, one day, I encountered a fellow who believed strongly that every assembly must have a plurality of elders. After our “theological discussion” (“debate” would be a better designation), I got so angry at him that I marched home and looked up every reference to elder, bishop, pastor, and deacon in the New Testament. I decided that I could answer every verse, that is, make every verse fit my theory, except two. Later, I had to admit that I was simply wrong. The New Testament teaches that every church should have a plurality of elders. Acts 14:23 says they appointed elders (notice the plural) in every church (notice that “church” is in the singular). The same kind of statement is made in Acts 20:17 and James 5:14.

*Their Nature* What is the nature of an elder’s duties? What do elders do? The name “bishop” designates the nature of the office. Bishop comes from the Greek word “watcher,” meaning “superintendent, guardian, overseer.” They oversee the congregation (see also Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2).

In Titus 1:7, elders are called “stewards” (Greek: “manager of a household”). A steward was usually a slave who was put over the direction of the house. He controlled the staff and issued supplies. He had a responsible position but was not closely supervised. Thus, he had to be trustworthy. Paul says an elder is “God’s steward” and, therefore, accountable to Him. “They are not merely delegates, either of Titus or the congregation. The essence of their authority is not that they are the representatives of the body of Christian men and women over whom they are

placed. It has a far higher origin. They are ‘God’s stewards?’ It is His household that they direct and administer, and it is from Him that their powers are derived” (Plummer).

The New Testament indicates that elders are responsible for seeing to it that the flock is fed (see “shepherding” Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2), exhorted (1:9), and, if necessary, reprovved (1:9). They are also in charge of finances (Acts 11:30). In short, they rule (1 Tim. 5:18). Thus, members are exhorted to obey those who have the rule over them (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12). That does not mean that elders are dictators; they are not. Peter warns them not to lord it over the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). Elders are to be examples, not executives, but the fact remains that they are given the responsibility to rule. They must make decisions, and the church members must obey them.

A pastor friend put it like this: “God’s message to leaders is, don’t become dictators. God’s message to members is, don’t demand pure democracy. Many church problems develop because leaders become dictators. Dictatorship crushes creativity, stifles the human spirit, and produces puppets, not people. That is true in a country or in a church, or in a home. Many church problems develop because some church members demand a pure democracy so that everyone can have his say on every decision. A pure democracy usually crushes any chance for needed change, ‘We never dun’ it that way before!’ A pure democracy creates a lame leadership who dare not take one step out of the majority vote. Progress is slowed down and stopped. In a completely democratic setup, we usually find that those who want to work are stifled by those who have only words to offer. ‘The movers’ vs. the ‘murmurers.’ How, then, should a church be governed? By a biblical balance between sensitive shepherd-like leadership and a sensitive submissive flock” (from a church newsletter by Dean Nale).

Someone has said:

A boss drives people; the leader coaches them.  
A boss depends upon authority; the leader upon goodwill.  
A boss says, “I”; the leader says, “we.”  
A boss assigns the task; the leader suggests and sets the pace.  
A boss says, ‘Be there’; the leader is there.  
A boss fixes the blame for the breakdown; the leader fixes the breakdown.  
A boss knows how it’s done; the leader shows others how it’s done.  
A boss makes work a drudgery; the leader makes it a challenge.  
A boss says, “Go;” the leader says, “Let’s go.”  
Nobody wants a boss; everybody needs a leader. (quoted by Dean Nale)

**Summary:** The first step to begin to set things in order in a church is to appoint qualified elders.

Every church should have a group of leaders called elders who will see to it that things are done according to the Word of God (1:5, 9). Every church member should pray for God to raise up godly men to lead (Acts 20:28). Every church member should also know and esteem those who are over them (1 Thess. 5:12-13), and every church member should obey those who rule over them (Heb. 13:17).

Liberalism is one of the many forces that has made havoc of the church of Jesus Christ. Until about 100 years ago, if people called themselves Christians, that automatically meant that they believed the Bible was the Word of God and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Then, American seminaries started sending their professors to Europe to get “respectable” degrees.

Instead, they lost their fire. Those professors were taught German rationalism, which denied the supernatural in the Bible. They, in turn, came back and introduced this new theory of rationalism and theology to seminary students, who, in turn, became pastors and taught it to the people in the pew. Thus, over the years, German rationalism gradually became American liberalism and infiltrated many denominational churches. What a mess! What is the solution to the mess in the church?

I remember sitting in a seminary class many years ago and hearing Dr. S. Lewis Johnson expound on the Scriptures. He brought up the subject of the inroads of liberalism in the American church and, to my surprise, said, "If the American church had had biblical elders, that would never have happened because those kinds of elders would have had the oversight of the flock and would never have allowed that kind of doctrine to infiltrate the church."

My wife Patricia's grandson, Joshua, broke both bones in his forearm in an accident. The x-ray I saw revealed that the two bones were completely separated. They were not lined up. It was a mess. They had to be reset. A surgeon operated on the arms, placing two plates and 12 screws in the two bones. It took a surgeon to put those bones in order. The solution to the church mess begins with qualified and spiritually-minded elders in every local church doing their job.



# QUALIFICATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

What kind of person should you look for to be a spiritual leader? Who should be chosen to serve on a church board? In my experience with churches in America, leaders are chosen based on things like personality. The likable, gregarious, and verbal fellow makes it to the front. Or leaders are selected because of their wealth. The man with money is the man elected to manage the church. Most para-church organizations have men on their boards who either have money or can raise it. The most common criterion is probably faithfulness. The individual who has been around the longest and is willing to work gets the job. In fact, a proverb floats around in Christian circles that says: you put a man on the board because of either work, wealth, or wisdom.

You need to consider this question because 1) In many churches, the congregation votes on the pastor and board members. 2) You may aspire to spiritual leadership and need to know when you're qualified. Besides, the qualifications spelled out in Scripture are what elders must be and what all Christians should be. After all, elders are an example. So, what are the qualifications for spiritual leadership, or, to be more specific, elders?

The answer is simple and single. In delineating the qualifications of an elder, Paul says, "If a man is blameless" (1:6). That does not mean he is to be perfect. If that were the case, no one would qualify. The Greek word translated "blameless" means "not called in," that is, not called to an account, unreprouvable, unaccused. The idea, of course, is that he cannot be successfully accused (Kent). It refers to "one against whom it is impossible to bring any charge of wrongdoing such as could stand impartial examination" (White on 1 Tim. 3:1).

The question is, accused of what? That question is answered in Titus 1:6-9 (Hendricksen). A careful examination of Titus 1:5-9 indicates three areas in which an elder must be unaccused: his family, personal, and doctrinal life.

## Blameless in Family Life

*Devoted Husband* Paul says an elder must be "the husband of one wife" (1:6a). All kinds of interpretations have been given to this qualification.

The Roman Catholic Church says the "one wife" is the church and, therefore, a Priest must be married to the church, which is hardly likely for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that everything else in the passage is literal. So, the word "wife" is not to be taken figuratively of the church but literally of a woman.

The Greek Orthodox Church claims that it means that priests must be married. They go so far as to require that if the wife of a Priest dies, he must cease to function as a priest. For that interpretation to be correct, the text would have to say "a" instead of "one," but it says "one." Marriage is not required for service. In fact, being single is an advantage (1 Cor. 7:8, 25-35). Also, Paul would allow for remarriage after the death of a spouse (Rom. 7:1-3).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons) translated this requirement, "husband of one wife, if not more," but that explanation is adding to the Scripture (see also the discussion on polygamy below).

The no-polygamy position says “husband of one wife” means not having more than one wife at a time (some Church Fathers; Humphrey; Hiebert). This position claims that polygamy was practiced among the Jews and might have found its way into the church, but polygamy was outlawed in the Roman Empire and, thus, was extremely rare. In fact, “it is possible that when this was written, there was not a single polygamist yet converted to Christianity” (Plummer). Furthermore, “the wife of one man,” used of widows in 1 Timothy 5:9, is the same Greek construction as “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). Therefore, if “the husband of one wife” is about more than one wife at a time, “the wife of one man” is about more than one husband at a time (polyandry), but since that can’t be true, “the husband of one wife” is not referring to polygamy.

The no second wife view says “husband of one wife” means one wife per lifetime. If an elder’s wife dies, he cannot be married again (some Church Fathers, including Origen and Tertullian; Alford; Ellicott; Plummer; Lange). The proof often given for this position is “the wife of one man” in 1 Timothy 5:9, but 1 Timothy 5:9 does not forbid a second marriage. Paul advises younger widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14). If “wife of one man” means that a widow over sixty cannot be supported if she has been married twice, then a woman who followed Paul’s advice when she was young would be disqualified because she did what Paul said she should have done! Moreover, Paul teaches that the death of a partner dissolves marriage (Rom. 7:1-3) and the remaining partner is free to marry in the Lord (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39).

The no-divorce explanation says “husband of one wife” means only one living wife (Kent; see also Hiebert), but the Scripture allows divorce for fornication (Mt. 5:31-32; 19:9) and the desertion of an unsaved mate (1 Cor. 7:12-16) and divorce breaks the marriage bond (Deut. 24:1-4; Jn. 4:17-18).

The devoted-husband interpretation says that “husband of one wife” means loyal and faithful husband (Hendriksen; Earle; Getz in *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, p. 105). An elder must give all his affection and attention to his wife and not have emotional or physical affairs with other women. In the first place, the three previous interpretations are negative, but the qualification is positive. If Paul meant to prohibit something, he would have said “no whatever,” as he repeatedly does in the rest of the list of qualifications. Moreover, a literal translation would be “one-womaned man.” In other words, this is not describing the man’s marital status but his character. He is a one-woman type of man who is devoted to his wife. He has nothing to do with other women. (for a more detailed discussion of this position, see Robert L. Saucy, “The Husband of One Wife,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July-September, 1974, pp. 229-240 and Ed Glasscock, “The Husband of One Wife Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July-September, 1983, pp. 244-258).

A youth organization board member once told me, “Several years ago, we had a youth director who had personality plus and platform presence. He was suave, smooth, sophisticated, and sharp. The teenagers loved him. The youth work flourished. Then he moved to another job, and we got another man. The second man had a social I.Q. of about 15. He was awkward, clumsy, and stuttered when he spoke. However, this fellow had two qualifications that made him outstanding. He had an unquestioning faith and simple, but deep, devotion to his wife.”

The board member said, “I watched both men lead this youth organization and if I had to choose between the two, I’m not sure which one I would choose. The second fellow was not the greatest speaker we’ve ever had, but he exhibited such devotion to his wife that his example of what a married man ought to be greatly impacted our kids. His way with his wife gave him a greater ministry with the teens than the fellow who had a way with words.”

*Disciplined Children* Paul also says of an elder, “having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination” (1:6b). The Greek word translated “faithful” is a problem. It can mean either “believing” (White; A. T. Robinson; Hiebert; Guthrie; Kent) or “faithful” (for a discussion of the difficulty between choosing “believing” and “faithful,” see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatian*, p. 157). If faithful is correct, it would include believing. So, an elder’s children must, at least, be believing, that is, Christians. A man with non-Christian children is either a recent convert or a careless Christian. What follows in this passage indicates that the children must also be faithful, at least to some degree (Kent).

Elder’s children must not be accused of dissipation. The Greek word rendered “dissipation” means “unable to save,” hence, “wasting one’s money on pleasure, wasteful.” This word was used for reckless and selfish extravagance. For example, it is found in Luke 15:13 as a description of the prodigal son and translated “riotous living.” One Greek professor paraphrased it with the English word “bums” (S. Lewis Johnson, one of my Greek professors).

Nor can an elder’s children be charged with insubordination, that is, ones not subject to rules or unruly. This word implies that Paul refers to children still at home and not grown, but it refers to married children who have departed. The point of this is stated in 1 Timothy 3:4, 5. If a man does not rule his house well, people will not respect him and he will not be able to lead them at church.

During an evangelistic crusade where I was speaking, the music minister and I stayed in the same motel. Every morning, we ate breakfast together and chatted about the night before and spiritual things in general. I noticed that during the week, he was reading a book by a pastor of a bygone generation who is now with the Lord. At one point, he asked me what I thought of that author and his books, and I told him one of the problems I had with that fellow’s works was that he wrote in such glowing terms about the spiritual life, but none of his children followed the Lord. Several days later, my friend said he could no longer enjoy reading that particular author. It’s hard to follow a fellow whose own children didn’t follow in his steps spiritually.

It was said of Sir Thomas Moore, “He controls his family with the same easy hand: no tragedies, no quarrels. If a dispute begins, it is properly settled. His whole house breathes happiness and no one who is not better for the visit enters it.”

## **Blameless in Personal Life**

The second area in which an elder must be blameless is in his personal life. Paul describes this area of an elder’s life first negatively and then positively.

*Negatively* “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money” (1:7). An elder must not be self-willed. The Greek term translated “self-willed” means “self-pleasing, self-willed, self-assertive, arrogant, and stubborn.” One ancient author describes it as “a certain roughness that shows itself in a man’s whole conversation and behavior. If you desire to know the price of anything he has to sell, he grows surly and asks what fault you find with it” (Humphreys). This type of person is a headstrong, stubborn individual who demands his own way without regard for others (Kent). He has a self-loving spirit, seeking to gratify himself in arrogant disregard for others (Hiebert). I know of a pastor who signed a contract with his son to get a paper route. The contract called for a 30-day notice if the boy quit. The father gave a two-week notice and insisted that it be taken.

An elder must not be quick-tempered. This Greek term means “not inclined to anger, passionate.” He is not inclined to or prone to get angry (Kent; Prov. 14:17), “not given to

outburst of wrath” (Hendriksen). He is “not quick-tempered, easily flaring up in anger;” he has his temper under control” (Hiebert). A hotheaded man will not have the respect of those he is to lead, nor will he be able to calmly discuss issues with other elders so that they can reach a mature decision.

An elder must not be given to wine. The Greek text reads, “Not beside the wine.” It was used of one addicted to wine, hence, under the influence of wine (Hiebert). This phrase means not given to wine (drunk) but was also used for all outrageous conduct (see Alford). Barclay says the word describes the character of a man who, even in his sober moments, acts with a lack of self-control and the outrageousness of a drunk man. A man who loses control and “flies off the handle” cannot control himself, much less his family and the family of God.

An elder must not be violent. The Greek word translated “violent” means “to strike or smite.” Many commentators translate it “no striker” (Ellicott; Guthrie; Humphreys; Hiebert). The intent of this is that he is “not eager to use his fist” (Hendriksen). The Greek word, however, was widened to include violence in action and speech. The brow beater is not fit to be a bishop (Barclay). When a converted bouncer witnessed to a fellow who didn’t respond, the ex-bouncer grabbed him by the lapels and, shaking him, exhorted him to trust Christ before he went to hell. Needless to say, such a fellow is not ready to be an elder.

An elder must not be greedy for money (1:7). The phrase, which is one word in Greek, means “greedy of base, shameful gain.” It describes a man who does not care how he makes his money as long as he makes it (Barclay). Cretans were notorious for this. Plutarch says, “They stuck to money like bees to honey, counting material gain above honor and honesty.” Elders are not to use their office to accumulate unjust gain; the ministry is not to be considered a moneymaking business (Hiebert).

An elder must not be a selfish, headstrong, hotheaded, violent man greedy for money. These vices were probably more applicable to ancient Crete than modern America. Yet, there are cases in the United States where these admonitions have been violated to the detriment of the church.

These prohibitions are not absolutes. Two different Greek words are translated “no” or “not” in the New Testament. One means a clear-cut, point-blank negative, objective, and final. The other, which is used throughout verse 7, is milder and subjective; it is negation with hesitation. The first word closes the door abruptly, whereas the second implies non-existence when existence is probable or possible. A. T. Robertson, the famous Greek scholar, put it like this: “If a young man proposed to his girl and she used the first of these two words, he might as well get his hat and leave. On the other hand, if she used the second of these two words, she would be saying no, but it may only mean that she wanted to be coached a little longer or was still uncertain.” Therefore, these prohibitions do not say that this man has never done these things but that his character is such that he is not like that now.

*Positively* “but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled” (1:8). An elder must be hospitable. The Greek word “hospitable” means “loving strangers.” An elder is a man who would gladly open his home to entertain strangers or the needy (Hiebert). The conditions of the day made this vital. There were few suitable accommodations for traveling Christians and ministers (Kent). Inns were “notoriously expensive, dirty, and immoral” (Barclay). They were “fleabags.” Thus, Christians needed to be hospitable, perhaps even more so than today. This quality implies a devotion to the welfare of others (Guthrie), a “devotion to all that is good and beneficial (Kent).

An elder must also be a lover of what is good. The Greek word translated “lover of what is good” means “loving that which is good, loving goodness.” It can refer to either “good things” or

“good persons” (Hiebert; Guthrie). An elder should be an “ally and an advocate of everything worthwhile” (Kent). He is to be ready to do whatever benefits others (Hendriksen). Paul says, “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially those of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). This kind of man loves to do that.

An elder must be sober-minded. This word describes a sane, sensible, sober-minded, self-controlled man. It is the opposite of the passionateness in verse 7 (Lange). It describes a man with “a well-balanced mind arising from habitual self-restraint” (Ellicott). Consequently, this person has balanced judgment. He is “balanced in his opinions and actions” (Hiebert).

An elder must be just. The Greek word is “righteous.” The idea of righteousness is that something corresponds to the divine standard of right. In the narrow sense, it means “just,” rendering to each his due. The Greeks define the just man as the one who gives both to man and to the gods what is due to them. An elder, then, must be a man who gives people the respect due them and to God the reverence due Him (Barclay).

An elder must be holy. The Greek word rendered “holy” means “religiously right, pious, holy.” It is not the ordinary word translated “holy” (Hiebert). It goes beyond any human-made law or regulation and expresses the everlasting ordinance of right (Trench). It “describes one who reverences the fundamental decencies of life which go beyond any man-made laws” (Barclay).

Finally, an elder must be self-controlled. The concept of this Greek word is to hold in check, restraint. It is self-control of one’s drives and impulses (Kent). The word translated “sober-minded” earlier in this verse contains elements of self-control, but there is a difference between that word and this one. The sober-minded man is moderate in the enjoyment of what is lawful. The self-controlled man restrains from all that is unlawful and harmful (Hiebert).

The last three words are a person’s duty toward oneself, one’s neighbor, and toward God (Hiebert).

An elder must be sensible, self-controlled, one who has a sense of what is right, just, and holy and loves what benefits others, especially hospitality.

## **Blameless in Doctrinal Life**

The third area in which an elder must be blameless is in doctrine. “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (1:9).

*Taught* In this area, an elder is a person who has first been taught. Paul warns believers not to “lay hands on anyone hastily” (1 Tim. 5:22) and that an elder must not be a novice. (1 Tim. 3:6).

*Hold Fast* Having been taught the reliable, trustworthy Word, he must “hold it fast.” In the Greek text, the verb translated “holding fast” means “to hold firmly, to cleave.” It also contains the idea of “to hold against, withstand.” It is more than just “holding onto.” It suggests the notion of withholding opposition (White). An elder must be in agreement with the teachings of the apostles (Kent), which presupposes an “authoritative system of doctrine” (Guthrie), a body of Christian teaching that has already been fixed (Hiebert).

This man has a firm grip on the Word of God. I once heard a preacher illustrate this word by describing a child holding onto the crossbar of a roller coaster. He said, “The young child was holding on for dear life to the point that his knuckles were turning white.” Likewise, the elder has a solid grasp and grip on the Word of God.

*Able* Holding on is not enough. He must be able to use the Word. Paul states that the purpose of his holding the Word is that (the word “that” in the Greek text introduces a purpose clause) he may be able, by sound doctrine, to exhort, and convince.

The Greek phrase translated “sound doctrine” means “healthy teaching.” The healthy teaching of the Word of God is in “direct contrast to the sickly, morbid and unpractical teaching of the faulty teachers” (Hiebert). As physical health is free from disease, so healthy teaching is free from error (Lange). With this healthy teaching, based on the reliable Word he has been taught and which is free from error, the elder can do two things: exhort and convince those who contradict.

The Greek word translated “exhort” means “to admonish, or exhort.” An elder should be able to take the Word of God and exhort a believer to do the will of God. He must also be able to convince those who contradict. The Greek word rendered “convince” means “to convict, reprove, rebuke, expose,” but it is such that it is effective. It is to rebuke people, not to humiliate them, but in such a way that they are compelled to see and to admit the error of their way (Barclay). The presentation of evidence proves that the opponents’ arguments are baseless (Hiebert).

This is to be done to those who contradict, oppose, or resist (Greek: “speak against”). Not all elders are called upon to do this (1 Tim. 5:17), but all must be able to do it. Paul discusses this in-depth in the next paragraph, which will be covered in the next chapter.

An elder, then, must not only hold to the Word but also be able to use the Word.

**Summary:** An elder must be blameless in his family, personal, and doctrinal life. He must be a devoted husband and have disciplined children. He must not be a selfish, headstrong, hotheaded, violent man. He must know what is right, just, and holy and have a love that benefits others. He must be able to use the Word of God. What an elder must be, all Christians should be.

This passage spells out three areas of an elder’s life: family, personal, and doctrinal. Family is first, suggesting perhaps it is the most important, but if the various elements of the passage are arranged chronologically, it will look like this: 1) a man is taught the Word of God, 2) the Word affects him personally, 3) the Word then affects his relationships to his family, 4) he is then able to use the Word with others as he has experienced it in his own life and family relationships. Thus, the point of this passage is to lead others in the Word, you must first experience the Word in your personal life and family life. If you don’t, you will not likely be able to teach others.

When I first graduated from seminary, I was the water-skiing instructor and speaker at a youth camp in Canada. I spoke in chapel twice daily and taught a beginning water skiing class in the mornings. One year, so many teenagers signed up for the skiing class that we had to divide the one class into two. The problem was finding another ski instructor. A young married fellow who had accompanied the teenagers from his church to camp for the week with little to do volunteered to teach the second class. Toward the end of the week, I asked him how the class was progressing and he said, “Not too well.” Only one of the teenagers in his class had made it up on skis. Still later that week, I felt we should reward this young man for helping us. So, I said to him, “This afternoon, I’ll take you out in the boat and give you a chance to ski.” I then discovered that this young man didn’t know how to ski! No wonder he wasn’t able to teach someone else how to ski! I asked him if he would like to learn and he said, “Yes.” So, I took him out on the boat, far enough away from camp that nobody could see us. I put a life jacket on him and threw him overboard. It was then that I discovered that he couldn’t swim!

If you can’t do it, it’s hard to teach it.

# THE PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH

Churches can have problems. Some churches preach false doctrine. Some churches are constantly pleading for money. Some churches practice rituals that are not in the Bible. Are these issues the problem, or are they symptoms of a more fundamental problem?

Married couples can have problems. The five most common problems are money, sex, children, in-laws, and religion. Are these issues the problem, or are they symptoms of the more elementary problem?

People can have problems. People's problems include health, money, relationships, anxiety, etc. Are these issues the problem, or are they symptoms of a more fundamental problem?

All of these problems are not the problem. All these problems are the symptoms. The root disease is something else beneath all of that. What, then, is the root problem? In Titus 1:10-13, Paul describes the root problem in the churches on the Island of Crete. What was true of those churches then is true of churches now, as well as couples and people.

## The Problem People

Paul describes the people causing problems in the churches on the island of Crete. He says, "For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision" (1:10). The word "for" indicates this statement is an explanation or a reason for what has been said. In this case, what follows is the explanation for "those who contradict" (1:9; Guthrie). It is also the reason for having elders.

Who were the people causing problems? For one thing, they were Christians. They are described as being "insubordinate" (this word is used for children in 1:6). People cannot be called insubordinate "on whose obedience we have no claim" (White; see also Kent). Most were Jewish Christians, for Paul says, "especially those of the circumcision," an expression used elsewhere of Jewish teachers (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Gal. 2:12; Col. 4:11). Verse 11 adds that they were "teaching things they ought not." Thus, they were Jewish Christian teachers. They were not just "professing" Christians (Fairbairn; Kent; Hiebert) but actual believers (Alford; White; Hendriksen; A. T. Robinson; Humphreys). There were "many," that is, an "alarming number" (Hendriksen; see "some" in 1 Tim. 1:3). The fact that there were many made them all the more dangerous (Hiebert). Paul lists a number of characteristics of these people, which can be summarized into three categories.

*Deceptive* These teachers were "idle talkers and deceivers." In Greek, the phrase "idle talkers" is one word that means "to say what is vain or useless." Their talk achieved no useful purpose; it was ineffective (Barclay) and worthless (Guthrie). They were also "deceivers," indicating that what they were saying and teaching was worse than worthless. It led the hearers away from the truth instead of to the truth (Barclay).

What were they teaching that deceived people so they were led away from the truth? These teachers concocted fables (1:14) based on the genealogies of the Old Testament (3:9). From these myths, they devised "commandments" (1:14). Paul refers to the same kind of teaching in 1 Timothy 1:3-4 (Guthrie). To my knowledge, there is no record of the specifics of their teaching, but something similar, at least in part, happened with the New Testament and there is a record of

it. Matthew 13:55 lists the names of the four half-brothers of Christ. One ancient tradition makes them the elder brothers of Jesus, the sons of Joseph by a previous marriage. Another folklore (fable would be more appropriate) attempts to identify two or three of these with the apostles by the same name. In this view, these four were cousins of Jesus, sons of a brother of Joseph named Alpheus. After his death, as the story goes, Joseph and Mary took them into their house, leading them to be called the brothers of Jesus. (This assumption is wholly false. Jn. 7:5 proves that Christ's brothers were not Christ's apostles.) Now, add to these myths of men, commandments and you have an illustration of what these false teachers were doing with the Scripture.

In principle, This kind of practice exists today. Their error was a wrong method of interpreting the Scriptures. For example, some would point to Romans 8:26, which says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses, for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with us with groanings which cannot be uttered," and conclude that this verse is saying we should speak in tongues, which is the exact opposite of what the text says (see "groanings which cannot be *uttered*").

Their error was more than mishandling the Scripture. It resulted in the commandments of men. Paul never gives an illustration of one of these man-made mandates, but several have pointed out that he refers to the same type of teaching in 1 Timothy and goes on later in that epistle to warn them that "in the latter times" some will forbid to marry and command to abstain from foods (1 Tim. 4:1-3). While technically, this is a prediction of what will come; it is undoubtedly an illustration of what Paul was battling in his day. These commandments were speculative, irrelevant, and probably arbitrary ascetic prohibitions.

*Destructive* Paul says, "Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households" (1:11a). The Greek word rendered "subvert" means "to overturn, to destroy." These Jewish Christian teachers were destructive.

I did not grow up in the country. So, I've never lived in a house that had a trail out back to an "outhouse," but I've heard stories. Imagine mischievous boys overturning an outhouse and you have the image of the word "subvert." It means to overturn. The net result of such a prank is to destroy the outhouse, at least prevent it from temporarily serving its primary purpose. A.T. Robertson, a well-known Greek scholar, says that in the papyri, "subvert" means to upset a family by the perversion of one member. Undoubtedly, it began by overturning one family member, but ultimately, it destroyed the whole family.

Furthermore, Titus 1:10 says there were "many" doing this. So, surely, many individuals and families were affected, which, in turn, affected the whole church. I once spoke in a church where a lady perverted several passages of Scripture and concluded that some of the music in her church was sinful. She convinced another lady who marched home and hounded her husband until he got upset. He began making waves at the church. In this case, the church survived, but that issue destroyed a whole family.

Some years ago, two passenger trains collided head-on in New York State. Fifty people perished. An engineer was pinned under the engine. With tears running down his cheeks in his dying moments, he held a piece of yellow paper crushed in his hand. His last words were, "Take this. It will show you that somebody gave me the wrong orders." These misguided teachers gave man-made orders that destroyed whole families.

*Defective Motives* Paul continues, "teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain" (1:11b). In the Greek text, this is a purpose clause. The third characteristic of these teachers is that they had defective motives. The Bible teaches that teachers of spiritual things should be paid (Gal. 6:6), but they should not be teachers for money (1:7). These teachers,



however, were doing it for what they could get out of it. Their motives were wrong. Their purpose was to make money, which for a teacher is “shameful,” which is the meaning of the Greek word “dishonest gain.” They were more concerned with what they could get from the people than what they could put into them. Several ancient writers refer to itinerant prophets for profit on Crete (A. T. Robinson).

This same thing happens today. There are prophets for profit who travel the country and teach on TV. Rather than condemn them, let me ask you, “Why do you serve?” Your motive may not be money. You may not even be paid, but you can have the same defective motives. Do you attend church because your family or friends expect it of you? Do you work in the church because of the recognition that you get?

## The Proof

Paul supports his contention by quoting one of their own. He says, “One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true” (1:12-13a). Paul calls the author of this statement a prophet, not because he was a prophet in the biblical sense of the term, but because the Cretans considered him such (Hendriksen). His name was Epimenides. He lived around 600 BC and is said to have foretold the Persian War ten years before it happened. Cicero reckoned him a prophet (Hiebert). Epimenides suggested that Athens erect an “anonymous altar” (Acts 17:23) during the purification of the city from the pollution caused by a cyclone in 596 BC. Paul refers to this altar in his speech on Mars Hill (Hiebert).

*Liars* Epimenides called the Cretans liars because they claimed the tomb of Zeus was on their island. The greatest of the gods could not die and be buried in a tomb. Beyond that, the Cretans were notorious liars. The expression “to Cretanize” meant to lie. “To play the Cretan with a Cretan” meant to out-trick a trickster (Barclay).

*Evil Beast* The expression “evil beasts” describes the savage, cruel character of the Cretans. A Cretan pushed anyone or everyone out of the way to gain an advantage for himself (Hendriksen).

*Lazy Gluttons* “Evil gluttons” pictures their idle, ineffective lifestyle and their “uncontrolled greed” (Guthrie).

Paul concludes that this testimony is true (1:13a), meaning it is still true (Hiebert). The three things Epimenides said about the Cretans, in general, correspond to Paul’s assessment of the Jewish Christian teachers in particular. They were liars (“evil talkers and deceivers”). They perverted whole houses (“evil beasts”). They were in it for dishonest gain (“lazy gluttons;” see Hiebert).

## The Problem

*What it is Not* These Jewish Christian teachers were deceptive, destructive, and had defective motives, but what is the problem in the church? The presence of false teachers? Idle talk? Deception? Misinterpreting the Scriptures? Subverting families? Wrong motives? The answer is “None of the above.” The presence of a false teacher misinterpreting the Scripture is no doubt a problem, a major problem, but it is not *the* problem in the church. Idle talk is a concern, but it is not *the* problem. Deception is a big problem, but it, too, is more of a symptom than the root disease.

If there is anything I get upset about, it is the misinterpreting of the Scriptures. That is a problem that causes other problems. It is a practice that produces deception, but candidly, that is not the root problem in the church. “Ah,” someone will suggest, “but wrong motives. That’s a basic issue. Surely, that is the problem in the church.” Granted, that is a serious difficulty, but it is not the problem in the local church. Well, if none of these things discussed thus far could not be called *the* problem, what is? The answer is that one word in the list has not been discussed.

*What it is* Verse 10 says, “For there are many insubordinate.” The Greek word rendered insubordinate means “not subject to rule, unruly.” It was used in verse 6 of children. The problem in the church is disobedience! To be more specific, it is disobedience to the Word of God (Hendriksen). Verse 9 says that elders “hold fast the Word ... that they may be able ... to convince those who contradict.” Then he says, “for there are many insubordinate” (1:10; see Guthrie). In this context, these people were not subject to the Word and must be convinced of their opposition to it by someone who holds steadfastly to it. Disobedience is the problem because it is listed first, and all other problems arise from it. If these people had been in the Word and rightly handling it, these other problems would not have existed. Instead, they were disobedient to it and, thus, mishandled it.

Remember the lady who got upset over the music in her church and who got another lady upset who, in turn, upset her whole family? The problem in that entire mess was that the first lady was insubordinate, which was obvious because she was not submissive to her husband.

**Summary:** The root problem in the church is disobedience to the Word of God. The problem in the church today is not that the Word of God is unavailable; it is that the Word of God is not obeyed.

Some diseases are incurable, not because there is no known medical cure, but because the patient refuses the treatment. Hypochondriacs seem to be forever popping pills or getting shots, but they do not want to get rid of their ulcer or palpitations. These symptoms establish that their health is not good, and poor health is an approved explanation for failure in their work or their family relations. A big group of individuals come under the category of “uncooperative patients.” Painstakingly, the physician outlines in detail a program of treatment. A list of permitted foods, graduated exercise, and the kind of bath that might be taken is prescribed, but all that is wasted for the patients on eating what they please and taking medicine when and if they remember.

At the other end of the scale is another set of extraordinary individuals who improve on the doctor’s advice. If the doctor tells them to take one capsule of their medicine daily, they take three because “if one capsule is good for me, three capsules should be three times as good, and I shall get well three times as fast.” Next to the people who do not pay their bills, the doctor’s most annoying patients are the ones who refuse to follow orders. Between 16-90% of all patients leave half-empty pill bottles, cheat on diets, continue to smoke, and never return for a checkup.

Likewise, the root problem in the church is disobedience to the Word of God. Believers either do not believe the Word, do not obey the Word, or try to improve on the Word by adding their own commands.

Likewise, disobedience to the Word of God is the root problem in people’s lives. They do not obey the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31).

Believers do not obey the command concerning their thought life. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things

*are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Believers do not obey the Scripture concerning what they say. “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh” (Jas. 3:10-12).

Believers do not obey the Lord in being thankful. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

You call Me Master and obey Me not.  
You call Me Light and see Me not.  
You call Me Way and walk not.  
You call Me Life and desire Me not.  
You call Me Wise and follow Me not.  
You call Me Fair and love Me not.  
You call Me Rich and ask Me not.  
You call Me Eternal and seek Me not.  
You call Me Gracious and trust Me not.  
You call Me Noble and serve Me not.  
You call Me Mighty and honor Me not.  
You call Me Just and fear Me not.  
If I condemn you, blame Me not.

# HOW TO SOLVE CHURCH PROBLEMS

We all know Christians who are disobedient. The truth is all believers are disobedient *to some degree*. Nobody is perfectly obedient. Perhaps disobedience could be put on a sliding scale. At one end is what might be called a minor disobedience; at the other, it is a major disobedience. Some disobedience is slight, and some is severe. What is severe disobedience, and how should we deal with it?

In New Testament times, the churches on the Isle of Crete were in a mess. Paul left Titus there to set things in order and wrote him a letter explaining how to do that. During that, Paul targeted what I believe could be called *the* problem in the church. In Titus 1:10, he says, “For there are many insubordinate.” The problem in a local church is disobedience to the Word of God. This problem manifests in different forms, resulting in dissension, disputes, and divisions, but disobedience is the root difficulty. In this case, the disobedience was severe. Teachers were subverting whole households (1:1).

The title of this message is “How to solve church problems!” That needs clarification. I certainly don’t mean all church problems. There is probably no one who knows how to solve all church problems. A leader within a large denomination once told me about a particular type of problem they faced, “If you could solve that church problem, they would make you president of the denomination.” Not even God can solve some problems. In the book of Revelation, He told one church He would take away their candlestick. Sometimes, the only solution is to close a church. On the other hand, many church problems can be solved. How?

He begins by saying, “Therefore rebuke them sharply” (1:13b). Who is to do that? How is it to be done, and why?

## The People

The admonition to rebuke them sharply is not given to everyone. A jingle says, “Every promise in the Book is mine.” That’s not true. Neither every promise nor every command in the Bible is for everyone. So, who is to do this? There are several answers to that.

*Titus* In the first place, Titus 1:13 is directed specifically to Titus. In the Greek text, the word “rebuke” is “you rebuke” and “you” is in the singular, not the plural. The book is addressed to Titus (1:4). He was to set things in order (1:5), appoint elders (1:5), speak things fitting sound doctrine (2:1), be an example to the congregation (2:7), not to let anyone despise him (2:15), to remind them all to perform good works (3:1), to avoid foolish questions (3:9), to reject divisive people (3:10), to visit Paul (3:12), to send Zenas and Apollos on their journey (3:13), and to greet those who loved Paul (3:15). Thus, the command to rebuke is one of several commands Paul gives to his spiritual son, Titus, in this letter.

*Elders* The context indicates that this is also the job of the elders (Hendriksen). The previous paragraph said that elders must be able to exhort and convict (1:9). The Greek word translated “convict” in verse 9 is the same one translated “rebuke” in verse 13. Furthermore, the paragraph begins with the word “for” (1:10), indicating that the reason for appointing elders is that there were insubordinate teachers teaching things they ought not and that they needed to be rebuked.

*The Mature* There are, however, other passages outside of Titus that instruct people to rebuke (Mt. 18:15; Eph. 5:11). A study of those indicates that only mature believers are to do that. For example, in Galatians 6:1, Paul says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Those who are spiritual, that is, those who are mature, are the ones who are to rebuke and restore.

## Procedure

*Rebuke Sharply* The procedure is to “rebuke them sharply” (1:13b). The Greek word translated “rebuke” means “to expose, reprove, rebuke, convict.” There is another Greek word sometimes translated “rebuke,” but that type of rebuke may be ineffectual. The word used here describes a rebuke that is unanswerable. Aristotle said this word means to prove that things cannot be otherwise than they have been stated. When this is done, the guilty person is not always brought to confession but is at least convicted of his sin.

This effectual rebuke is to be done “sharply.” The Greek word translated “sharply” means “abruptly, curtly,” hence, “sharply, severely.” It is a compound word made up of the two words, “cut” as with a knife, and “off” (Kent). One commentator renders it “decisively” (Hendricksen). That may sound harsh and hard to Americans who believe in freedom of speech, but Paul says these teachers have mouths, which must be stopped (1:11). They were hurting and harming others—whole families—and they must be silenced before they did more damage.

The phrase “whose mouths must be stopped” (1:11) is one word in Greek. It means “to bridle, to silence.” It is a rare word whose primary meaning is “to stop the mouth by means of a bridle, muzzle or gag” (Hendricksen). The noun form of this word was used for stopping up a water pipe (Wuest). These teachers are to be silenced as effectively as putting a gag in their mouths and, thus, preventing speech. These teachers must not be tolerated; they must be silenced (Hiebert). In the church, there is no “freedom of misleading speech” (Hendricksen).

Hendricksen says that first, they must be “tenderly admonished.” If they do not respond, they must be “sharply reprimanded and told to desist.” The church must discipline those who persist.

*By Sound Doctrine* How is this to be done? Does this imply violence or persecution? In church history, that has been done. No less than John Calvin tried to silence the Anabaptists by having one of them drowned! That’s not what Paul had in mind.

In verse 9, he says this was to be done by sound doctrine, that is, healthy teaching. The way to combat false teaching is with true teaching. Paul told Timothy that all Scripture is profitable for reproof (2 Tim. 3:16), and he charged Timothy to rebuke with teaching (2 Tim. 4:2). By use of the truth, Jesus silenced the Sadducees (Mt. 22:34).

When people are disobedient to the Word of God, they must be rebuked with the Word. It is imperative that the Word be used. The reproof will probably not be effective without it. Besides, the one wandering away from the Word has to know this is not just the opinion of a man or a group of men like elders; it is the opinion of God.

*With Wisdom and Gentleness* Other things could be added. For example, in 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul says this is to be done “with all longsuffering.” In Colossians 1:28, Paul says, “warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom.” And, of course, it should be done with gentleness (Gal. 6:1).

William Penn reportedly said, “They have a right to censure, who have a heart to help.”

## Purpose

*To Make Sound* Why should this be done? Paul says, “that they may be sound in the faith” (1:13c). In the Greek text, the word “that” introduces a purpose clause. The purpose of the sharp rebuke is that they be sound in the faith.

The Greek word rendered “sound,” which means “healthy,” is the word Paul used in Titus 1:9. These teachers were sick and needed to be rebuked so they could be healthy in the faith. The phrase “in the faith” could either refer to 1) their acceptance of correct doctrine, the faith referring to the accepted body of doctrine, or 2) their personal life of faith. In light of verses 9 and 14, the former view is preferred (Guthrie).

Clearly, being “sound in the faith” is at least in part, “not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth” (1:14). Jewish fables or myths were fictional and fanciful stories concerning Old Testament characters named in the genealogies. From this arbitrary and probably allegorical treatment of Old Testament ancestors, these teachers drew commandments of men, which turned believers away from the truth.

The true ministry is to get believers to acknowledge the truth that produces godliness (1:1). These useless speculations based on the Old Testament so occupied people’s attention that they were turning away from the truth of the Scripture, which would promote godliness in their lives.

So, the purpose of rebuke is, first and foremost, to make disobedient believers sound in doctrine. There is a difference between sound doctrine, sick doctrine, and deformed doctrine. Sound doctrine has all of the parts of proper doctrine and power in the life of the individual holding it. Sick doctrine has all of the parts, but it occurs in the life of a person without strength or power. In deformed doctrine, not all of the major doctrinal truths are there, or some are perverted.

*To Make Pure* There is a second purpose. It is implied in verse 14 and stated more specifically in verse 15. The implication of verse 14 is that they should give heed to sound doctrine, which turns to the truth and, according to Titus 1:1, results of godliness. So, a second purpose is to make them godly, or, as Paul says in verse 15, to make them pure: “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled” (1:15). Actually, verse 15 is a description of these teachers; they were defiled, they needed to be rebuked so that they could be sound and so they would be pure.

Purity is internal; it is an attitude of mind and conscience (Hendriksen). The Pharisees taught that some external things were impure and that contact with those things made a person impure (Mt. 15:10-20). By the phrase “all things,” Paul means things that have no moral character, such as food, marriage, recreation, and music (Humphreys; Kent; Hiebert). Paul says, “To those who are pure in mind and conscience, these things are pure” (1 Tim. 4:1-5, esp. 4:4-5). “A pure mind cannot be contaminated by physical contact” (Guthrie).

However, to the defiled and unbelieving, none of their external impure things are pure. For example, in the case of the teachers in the churches on Crete, they taught that certain foods were unclean. Their minds and consciences were defiled. Their inner being was polluted. Their minds and moral senses had lost their sense of discernment between innocent and criminal (Kent).

A man with a dirty mind makes all things dirty. He will see uncleanness where there was no uncleanness (Barclay). Hiebert says, “Their whole inner being is polluted and perverted. Their inner defilement perverts their rational nature and intellectual apprehension, and their conscience has lost its sense of discrimination between what is innocent and what is sinful. By the test of their inner nature, they stand condemned.”

Let me illustrate. A pastor once told me he believed it was a sin for a man to mow his lawn without a shirt. I was a bit taken aback. So, I asked him how he arrived at such a conclusion. He replied, "If it is a sin for a woman to wear shorts, it is a sin for a man to have his shirt off in public." I laughed out loud and told him he didn't need to read the Bible; he needed to read a good book on the subject of sex. That pastor's mind and conscience were so defiled by asceticism that it was no longer an accurate guide.

*To Make Profitable* There is a third purpose that again is not stated as a purpose as such. Verse 16, like verse 15, is strictly a description of these teachers, but coming, as it does, after the purpose statement in verses 13 and 14, it is indirectly a part of the purpose of the rebuke. Paul says, "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (1:16). Titus 1:16 is generally misunderstood and misapplied. Many say that the individuals referred to in verse 16 are not Christians (for example, Hendriksen), but the context indicates that these teachers were believers. Verse 10 says they were "insubordinate." As one commentator says, it would be unlikely to call unbelievers uncontrolled since the church has no claim on their obedience (Kent). Moreover, verse 13 says, "Rebuke them that they may be sound (healthy) in the faith." Paul does not say they are not "in the faith;" he indicates that they are spiritually sick and need to be rebuked to be in good spiritual health.

The issue, then, in verse 16, is not that they professed and didn't possess. It is that they professed and didn't practice. The issue is their works, which, in this context, are teaching things they ought not (1:11) and, consequently, they were subverting whole houses (1:11).

Thus, their works deny God. Peter denied the Lord verbally; these teachers denied the Lord volitionally. Their actions were detestable. The Greek word translated "abominable" means "detestable." It indicates disgust at their hypocrisy (Guthrie). No wonder their labors are classified as disobedient. They were disqualified from every good work because what they were doing was basically disobedience.

The Greek word translated "disqualified" means "not standing the test, rejected." Instead of being men of God for every good work, thoroughly equipped (2 Tim. 3:16-17), they were the very opposite. They were unfit for every good work (Hendriksen; Kent). Paul feared that even his service would fail the test (see 2 Cor. 9:27, where the same Greek word for "disqualified" occurs).

The point of verse 16 is that their works denied the Lord and were dishonorable, disobedient, and disapproved. In the context of Titus 1, the point is that these teachers should be rebuked so that they would be profitable.

In the course of spelling out the purpose for this sharp rebuke, Paul mentions the way they think (sound doctrine, 1:13-14), what they were (impure, 1:15), and what they did (works, 1:16).

Are you profitable for the Lord? Is what you are doing furthering His Word and work, or are you involved in religious activity that is spiritually unprofitable?

**Summary:** The way to solve the problem of disobedience to the Word of God in a church is to rebuke the disobedient ones sharply so they may be sound in the faith.

There are several spiritual lessons involved in this principle. For one thing, there is a general truth here that if there is a problem, deal with it. The human tendency is to sweep problems under the proverbial rug or lock them in an out-of-the-way room to forget them. The biblical way to deal with problems is to put them on the table and deal with them forthrightly.

Another pertinent principle in this passage is that all believers need to obey the Word of God to be sound in their faith and profitable to the Lord. If people are not productive in their jobs, their boss would not pay them, at least not for long. Likewise, God wants believers to be fruitful and if they aren't, they will be disqualified for reward.

The point of the passage is that when the problem is disobedience, rebuke, or biblical rebuke, it is in order. An American pastor, John Poole, once reported that Christians in East Africa had a "self-imposed ruthlessness with any attitudes, habits, and actions that were not thoroughly Christian" and a "tremendous honesty linked with love between each person and his neighbor." Based on the East African and Biblical model of reproof, he offered six suggestions to American Christians: 1) You must not give until you are willing to receive. 2) Before taking the speck out of your brother's eye, ensure you have dealt with the log in your own eye. 3) Only deal in reproof with people to whom God has related you. 4) All reproof must be done in love. 5) The goal of a wise reprover should be to counsel in a way which brings strength and health. 6) Be patient.

Poole contends that the biblical practice of reproof was the cornerstone of a tremendous revival that lasted in East Africa for at least 37 years. If American Christians followed the biblical principle for solving church problems, the church would not only solve its problems but might also see a revival.



# GOD'S MESSAGE TO THOSE GROWING OLD

Childhood is the time to grow and learn. The teenage years are a period of fun. Adult life is for working and rearing a family. Old age is when one retires, relaxes, and reminisces. That's the American dream. The goal is retirement. When applying for a job, young people inquire about the retirement plan. Adults dream about it, especially when they begin to grow weary of work and rearing a family. Then, when some start approaching those golden years, the children leave home, and the grandkids come over—all kinds of changes begin to take place. Someone has described the experience as follows:

## How You Know You're Growing Old

Everything hurts and what doesn't hurt doesn't work.  
The gleam in your eyes is from the sun hitting your bifocals.  
You feel like the night before and you haven't been anywhere.  
Your little black book contains names that only end in M.D.  
You get winded playing chess.  
Your children begin to look middle-aged.  
Your mind makes contracts your body can't keep.  
You look forward to a dull evening.  
Your favorite part of the newspaper is "25 Years Ago Today."  
You turn out the lights for economic rather than romantic reasons.  
You sit in a rocking chair and can't get it going.  
Your knees buckle and your belt won't.  
You're seventeen around the neck,  
Forty-two around the waist and ninety-six around the golf course.  
After painting the town red, you have to take a long rest before applying a second coat.  
Dialing long distance wears you out.  
You can't stand intolerant people.  
The best part of your day is over when the alarm clock goes off.  
You burn the midnight oil after 9:00 p.m.  
Your back goes out more than you do.  
A fortuneteller offers to read your face.  
Your pacemaker makes the garage door go up when you watch a pretty girl go by.  
The little gray-haired lady you helped across the street is your wife.  
You get your exercise acting as a pallbearer for your friends who exercise.  
You've got too much room in the house and not enough in the medicine cabinet.  
You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there!

Let's face it. If you're growing older, it's time to slow down, relax, and retire. Your body tells you that; your mind and society tell you that. It's the American dream!

If you're growing older, God has a word for you. It's one of the things He tells pastors to preach (2:1-3).

## Pastors are to speak to various Groups

*Speak* The situation in the churches on the Isle of Crete was a mess. Jewish Christian teachers were teaching things they shouldn't. They were fabricating fables from the genealogies in the Old Testament and producing commandments of men. With their teaching, they were subverting whole houses (1:10-11). Paul left Titus on the island to set things in order (1:5). The book of Titus spells out how to do that. First, elders must be appointed who hold to sound doctrine (1:9). The elders, in general, and in Titus, in particular, were to rebuke the troublemakers so that they would be sound in the faith (1:13).

Now, Paul gives the second step: "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine" (2:1a). Thus, in the overall scheme of things in the book of Titus, Titus was first to appoint elders and, then, he was to speak to others in the congregation. In the Greek text, "you" is emphatic. Titus is in contrast to the faulty teachers (Hiebert). He belongs to a different category from the troublemakers (Guthrie). The Greek word translated "speak" means "to talk, to say something." This word stresses articulate words as contrasted with silence (Trench). The mouths of these teachers and troublemakers must be stopped (1:11), but Titus was to continue (present tense) to speak. Titus was not to remain silent; he was to say something. Paul tells Titus what to say (2:2-15), and he repeats that Titus is to "speak" (same Greek word as in 2:10) these things and adds that Titus is also to exhort and rebuke with all authority. Perhaps there is a progression here. First, Titus is to speak. Then, he is to press these obligations on them. If that does not work, he will rebuke those needing reproof. All of this is to be done with the assurance that it is God's command.

Furthermore, he is not to let anyone despise him (2:15), which means, "Don't let anyone think around you, or out-think you." The best way for him to command respect for his authority was to do thinking that would deserve respect. He was not to allow anyone to rationalize what he said and, thus, justify invalidating his responsibility by setting it aside.

*To Various Groups* Paul instructs him to speak to various groups in the church, including older men (2:2), older women (2:3), young men (2:6), and servants (2:9). There are also instructions for young women (2:4) and even Titus (2:7).

*Concerning Godliness* Titus is to tell these various groups "things which are proper for sound doctrine" (2:1b). The Greek word translated "proper" means "fitting, becoming, to suit." The idea is not that he should speak sound doctrine but that he should tell them about things that are appropriate to sound doctrine, which is fitting with healthy teaching. What, then, is that which is becoming or fitting to healthy doctrine? The answer is all the character traits listed in Titus 2:1-10. These characteristics can be summarized by the word "godliness" (2:11-12). Titus was to tell each group to be godly, for that only fits healthy teaching. The first group Paul mentions is the elderly. God commands a pastor to tell older men and older women this.

## Older Men are to be Godly

The message is simple—aged men are to be godly. The specifics are listed, "that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience" (2:2). The phrases "in

faith, in love, in patience” define the areas in which the man is to be “sound,” that is, healthy. Therefore, there are only four basic things Paul says Titus is to speak to the older men. Before these characteristics are considered individually, perhaps it should be asked who an older man is. The Greek word translated “older” is “elder,” the same one used for the church office in Titus 1:5, but here it refers to age, not office. The word itself does not designate a particular age. A few years before this, Paul called himself “the aged” and used this same word (Phlm. 9). A. T. Robertson, a Greek scholar, says Hippocrates called a man by this word when he was from forty-nine to fifty-six years of age. Perhaps, then, Paul had in mind someone fifty or older. Since men live longer today, maybe sixty or sixty-five is analogous to Paul’s situation.

*Sober* The older men are to be sober (2:2). The Greek word translated “sober” means “sober,” that is, not given to overindulgence in wine. It is used figuratively of being morally alert, sober, calm, circumspect, and temperate. It occurs three times in the New Testament: 1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 3:11, and Titus 2:2. After saying that a bishop must be “sober-minded (1 Tim. 3:2), Paul says that they are not to be given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:3). Since it is highly unlikely that it would mention wine twice in the list of qualifications, sober-minded in 1 Timothy 3:2 must be metaphorical. It is restraint in using wine and “general moderation” (Guthrie).

A sober-minded person is not given to excess, as in the use of wine. His pleasures are not those primarily of the senses, like the pleasures of the drunkard, for instance, but those of the soul and the spirit. He is characterized by moral and spiritual alertness. He is moderate, calm, careful, sane, and steady (Barclay; see Prov. 23:29, 30).

*Reverent* The next virtue older men are to possess is expressed in one of those Greek words for which no English equivalent can be found. It is translated “reverent” but means much more. The word includes the idea of being serious, grave, august, reverent, dignified, and even inspiring, not only respect but even worship (Trench). Dignified is the best English translation (Kent; Hendriksen). Yet, that falls short. The man with this attribute is not only dignified, he invites reverence. In secular Greek, this word was the constant epithet of the gods (Barclay).

Barclay says this word describes the man who is stately and dignified in conduct and speech and carries himself with the perfect blend of dignity, courtesy, independence, and humility. The combination of dignified, independence, and kindly consideration begins to capture the spirit of this word. This kind of person would not allow pettiness to disturb his own serenity or the peace of the brethren (Barclay, *More Word Studies*, p. 144).

On several occasions, I was invited to speak at a Pennsylvania church where the pastor’s father was a member. The pastor, a middle-aged man, was an excellent Bible teacher and a visionary. Consequently, the church was growing rapidly. The father was an older man who served as an usher. He was a striking figure who stood tall and erect. His rose-colored face, topped with snow-white hair and a white mustache, made him stand out, but his spirit made him. He was firm yet gentle. He was serious, yet warm and friendly. Everyone looked up to him and admired him. He exhibited the virtue of “reverent.”

*Temperate* The older men are also to be temperate. The word used here occurred before in Titus and will appear again. It was one of the qualifications of an elder (1:8), and it is the *one* thing Paul says in the entire book to young men (2:6). This word describes a sane, sensible, sober-minded, self-controlled man. Because he has sound and sane senses, he curbs his desires and impulses (Kent). This kind of man would not lose control of his temper and “fly off the handle.” When he gets angry, he controls it instead of it controlling him (Hendriksen). “The old man should be the balance wheel in the congregation, keeping its course steady” (Hiebert).

*Spiritual* This sober, serious, sensible, and self-controlled man is also spiritual. Paul says he is to be sound in faith, love, and patience. The word “sound” has been used several times before in this epistle and means “healthy.”

Older men are to be robust in faith like Caleb, who, as an old man, said, “Give me the mountain, and I’ll trust God for the wisdom and the strength to conquer it.” They are to be wholesome in love, not letting it wax cold or deteriorate into sentimentality. Don’t grow in anger, bitterness, and criticism as you grow in years. Instead, increase in affection, blessing, and concern. The older men are also to be healthy in patience, which is more accurately translated “endurance.” Endurance replaces “hope” in this trilogy. It pictures a man steadily bearing up in trials and tribulations without losing heart or courage. Senior citizens need to endure physical infirmities, disappointments, and loneliness. These three areas cover every relationship: God (faith), others (love), and one’s self (endurance). Older men are to be sober, serious, sensible, self-controlled, and sound spiritually.

Approaching age seventy-five, Paul Tournier, the noted Swiss medical doctor and psychologist, wrote a book entitled *Learn to Grow Old*. In it, he divided old people into two well-defined categories, which, in his opinion, had a few intermediate shades between them. According to Tournier, some are lovely old people who are kind, sociable, and peaceful. Troubles only seem to make them grow in serenity. The other group, he says, are awful old people, selfish, demanding, domineering, and bitter. They’re always grumbling and criticizing everybody. Godly-aged men are like the former.

## Older Women are to be Godly

Paul turns to older women, saying, “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given too much wine, teachers of good things, that they admonish the young women” (2:3-4). At this point, there is a problem, a huge practical problem. Older means “aged,” which is the problem. Who can find an old woman, that is, one who will admit it? Someone has said there are seven ages or stages of a woman: infancy, little girl, miss, young woman, young woman, young woman, young woman. Perhaps the solution is to suggest that if you are married to an older man, you are more than likely an older woman. At any rate, Hypocrites divided people into seven age groups and used this Greek word to describe group six. It has been suggested that this probably refers to those over fifty. Like older men, older women are to be godly. Paul delineates four specifics.

*Sacred Behavior* Older women are to be “reverent in behavior.” The Greek word translated “reverent” in this verse differs from the one employed in verse 2. This one is a Greek compound word made up of one word meaning “suited to” and another Greek word meaning “divine, sacred,” which was used of the Temple at Jerusalem. This compound word means “suited to sacred character.” Older women are to conduct themselves as servants in God’s Temple (Hendriksen). Priest-like gives the thought (Hiebert). Though this word is allied in meaning to “reverent” in verse 2, the difference is that though it may be expected that such behavior would breed reverence and awe, that’s not implied in this word as it is in the previous one.

*Not Slanderers* Older women are not to be slanderers (2:3). The word “slanderer” in the singular is “devil” and means “to falsely accuse.” In fact, this word occurs thirty-seven times in the New Testament, thirty-four times of the devil, and three times of people. Accusation, especially false accusations, is the devil’s work. Calvin said, “Talkativeness is the disease of women, and it increases with old age.” God warns older women not to slander.

Jokes about women and their tongues abound. The story is told of a fellow whose wife was divorcing him. She was seeking a divorce on the grounds of mental cruelty, claiming he had not spoken to her in ten years. “Is that true?” inquired the judge. “Yes, your honor,” the man admitted. “Well, what do you have to say for yourself?” the judge asked. The man responded, “Your honor, I didn’t want to interrupt her.” Yet, when people joke about something, it is because there is often some truth there.

*Sober* Olderwomen are “not to be given to much wine” (Greek: “not enslaved to much wine”). The Greek verb is in the perfect tense, denoting the state of being enslaved; it was a common vice among oriental women” (Hiebert). The same kind of thing was a qualification for being an elder (1:7) and a deacon (1 Tim. 3:3, 8). The expression here, however, is stronger than the one in 1 Timothy, leading some to conclude that the excess in Crete was more severe than in Ephesus (Guthrie). The two negative things Paul says to an older woman go together. Wine drinking and malicious gossip are birds of a feather.

*Servants* Fourth and finally, they are to be teachers of good things. Since this is given to older women in general, it cannot refer to public teaching but must refer to private and personal instruction (Fairbairn; Kent; Hiebert). An older woman should teach a younger woman good things, that is, that which is excellent. The curriculum is given in verses 4 and 5, which will be considered in detail in the next chapter.

**Summary:** Paul tells Titus to tell the older men and women to be godly. Godliness sums the essence of what is in this passage. Yet, there are two distinct elements or emphases in it.

Older people are to be personally holy. Neither men nor women are to be drunkards; they are to be sober. Both are to be reverent in the sense of having godly character and conduct, even to the point of inspiring awe. They, especially the men, are to be sensible, self-controlled, and strong in faith, in love, and in endurance.

Older people are also to help others. This holiness includes service as well as sanctification. The older men are to inspire, respect, and reverence. Their strong faith and love are to be an example to young men. The older women are to teach the younger women.

The American ideal is that old age is the time to retire, relax, and reminisce. So, Americans grow old and decide to let the young people do it. That’s not God’s idea. God’s Word to those growing old is that they should continue to grow in godliness. In other words, they should not retire but retread, put on new treads, and keep trucking.

In the context of the book of Titus, these instructions are given so that the church may be put in order. In short, to be what God intends for it to be, the church must have older people living godly lives as an example and inspiration to the younger people.

In his commentary on Titus, Barclay tells of a missionary to India named E. F. Brown, who knew much about Anglo-Indian society in the old days. A friend of his who was on furlough in England was asked, “What is it you most want in India?” The surprising answer was “Grandmothers.” In the old days in India, there were few older women in the Anglo-Indian society because those who were engaged in the government almost inevitably came to the end of their service and returned to England while they were still fairly young. The result was that there were very few older people in that society. E. F. Brown said, “Older women play a very important part in society—how large a part one does not realize until one witnesses a social life from which they are almost absent. Kindly grandmothers and sweet, charitable old maids are the natural advisers of the young of both sexes.”

Older people need a church and churches need older people.

# A WOMAN PREACHER'S MESSAGE

I believe in women preachers! Some ladies reading this should be preaching! There was a day that if a man like me made a statement like that, it would have shocked everyone, but there are so many female preachers and even female pastors today that such a pronouncement surprises no one. Nonetheless, I need to clarify. In light of what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:12, a woman is not to hold the office of an elder. However, nothing in the Scripture indicates that she could not have the gift of a pastor or teacher.

Furthermore, there are indications in the Scripture that every woman at least has the responsibility to teach. That helps, but it doesn't answer all the questions. Who is she to teach? What is she to teach? Why is she to teach it?

To answer these questions, consider Titus 2:4-5. Paul instructs Titus to speak to various groups in the church, including older men and older women, younger men, etc. His message is that each group is to have a godly character. In the process of doing that, he says the older women are to admonish the younger women (2:3-4). He talks about the who, what, and why of a woman preacher's message.

## The Preacher

*Older Women* Paul told Titus to tell older women “that they admonish the young women” (2:4a). As was stated previously, “older” refers to a person fifty years old or older. Therefore, “younger” must include fifty years of age and younger. From what follows, it is evident that the younger women have children (plural). So, younger encompasses young women who are married to approximately fifty. The word translated “admonish” was used in the book of Titus. The noun form occurred in Titus 1:8 and was translated “sober-minded.” It also occurred in Titus 2:1, translated as “temperate.” The noun means “to be sane, sensible, sober-minded, and self-controlled.” The verb, which is the form here, means “To call one to his senses, to admonish.” The idea is to “make sober-minded (Hiebert), to encourage or advise (A. T. Robinson), and “train” (Hendriksen; Guthrie; Kent). Admonish is a good translation. The older women are to assist the younger women (Guthrie).

*Pastors* Does this passage imply that young pastors should not counsel young women? Notice carefully that Paul instructs Titus to speak to the older men, older women, young men, and even slaves, but the older women are to admonish the younger women. Does that not imply that Titus was not to do that? When that observation first occurred to me, I said to myself, “that would solve the problem of pastors getting involved with young women. What a great rule!” Then, I discovered that Paul told Timothy to exhort younger women as sisters with all purity (1 Tim. 5:2). Some have tried to get around that by insisting that 1 Timothy 5 is referring to public teaching. In contrast, Titus 2 talks about private training, but that view does not fit the facts of 1 Timothy 5, which says that he is to do it “with all purity,” a phrase that hardly refers to public instruction. The fact that Paul here tells Titus to tell the older women to admonish the younger women does not mean that Titus, Timothy, or some male today could not do the same thing. It does mean that the older women are to do it. What are they to teach?

## The Proclamation

The point Paul seems to be making throughout this chapter is that believers are to be denying ungodliness and live godly (2:12). The specifics of what is meant are given for various groups. For younger women, it means “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands” (1:4b-5a).

*Love Your Husband* Imagine! A woman has to be admonished to love her husband! Doesn't that just come naturally? One would certainly think so, but as one author suggests, while this is a natural emotion, depraved human nature often succeeds in perverting such normal love (Kent). Maybe Paul means that older women are to teach younger women *how* to love their husbands.

There are four Greek words for love, two of which occur in the New Testament. “Agape” is an act of the will whereby one chooses to do what is best for the one loved. It is the love of duty and respect. “Phileo,” used here, is love with emotion and friendship. Lenski says that “phileo” denotes mere affection, romantic attachment, or passion (see his comment on Eph. 5:25). It is not going too far to say that young women need to be admonished to be affectionate. In fact, men need affection more than sex. A man can live without sex; it is more challenging to live without warmth and affection. A word to the wives is hopefully sufficient.

*Love Your Children* If telling a woman to love her husband isn't shocking enough, that is followed by the fact that she is to be said to love her children! That certainly seems unnecessary, but again, remember the depravity of human nature. Battered children today are as common as badly disciplined children used to be. Some women prefer poodles to children. To love a child takes time and touch. Susanna Wesley had seventeen children, yet it is reported that she spent some time with each individual child every week. No wonder she produced the likes of John and Charles Wesley, but loving a child is more than time. It includes touch. The Greek word for love here is the same as the one used in the phrase “to love their husbands;” it means to be affectionate. Children need to be hugged and handled (so do adults!).

*Be Discreet* The next virtue in Paul's list is translated in the New King James Version by the English word “discreet.” This is the same word in Titus 1:8, 2:2, and 2:5, which means to be sane, sensible, sober-minded, and self-controlled. Paul admonishes the older women to teach the younger women to be sensible.

I once told a lady she needed to lose weight. She responded to me by saying, “I'm not 200 pounds yet!” To that, I replied, “That's like catching someone stealing an apple and him saying, ‘I haven't robbed a bank.’” She came back at me with, “I don't eat as much as I used to.” I said, “That's like saying, ‘I don't steal as much as I used to.’” “But,” she objected, “What do you want me to do, stop eating?” To which I replied, “That's like the one caught stealing apples who said, ‘What do you want me to do, stop eating apples?’”

*Be Chaste* Young women should be admonished to be chaste. The Greek word translated “chaste” means “free from defilement.” Pure is the idea (Guthrie). Young women should scrupulously avoid immorality in action, word, or thought (Hendriksen; Hiebert). Some would not think of doing anything immoral, but they daydream about it.

*Be Homemakers* The next quality is that young women should be homemakers. There is a textual problem with this word. A few Greek manuscripts, on which many modern English translations are based, have a slightly different word here, a rare word whose exact meaning is uncertain (Guthrie) but is variously translated “workers at home” (NASB), “busy at home” (NIV), and “home lovers” (Phillips). The majority of Greek manuscripts, however, contain a common word in secular Greek, though it is only used here in the New Testament, which means

“keeping the house.” Paul is teaching that married women are to watch over the house; they are to keep it clean and neat.

Some married women don’t know how to keep the house because their mothers didn’t know, and they grew up in a mess. Or, their mothers did know how themselves but didn’t teach them how or wouldn’t let them. These women need to be taught by older women how to make a bed, cook a meal, or vacuum the drapes.

Does this mean the wife must personally do the work? Could she hire a maid? Can she work outside the home? I do not believe that Paul is saying she has to do it but that she is responsible for seeing that it is done. Married women in the Bible had maids. Besides, just because the passage says she is responsible does not mean someone else can’t do it.

Some conclude that this means that a woman should not work outside the home. The passage does not say that, nor does anything in this passage demand that. To draw that conclusion, it is like saying that since this passage says older women are to teach younger women, Titus was not to counsel young women. That may be a good idea, but that notion is not in Titus and 1 Timothy 5:2 demonstrates that it is incorrect.

*Be Good* Young women are to be taught to be good. The Greek word translated “good” means “good, to produce pleasure and satisfaction and be an advantage to others.” There are other Greek words for “good” that do not imply the kindness and attractiveness that are in this one. Some translate this word “kind.” The constant strain of domestic duties should make them irritable or cruel. They should pray for the grace to remain kind (Hendricksen).

*Be Obedient* Finally, Paul says younger women are to be obedient to their own husbands. This Greek word was a military term, which meant “to rank or place under, to subject, to obey.” It is in the middle voice here, meaning she should subject herself (Hiebert). This is not forced submission; it is voluntary obedience. When the husband is a balanced believer, this is not a burden. When he is not, the Lord and His grace make the burden bearable (Hendricksen).

Notice that Paul begins the list with “love your husbands” and ends it with “obey your husbands” and, in the middle, says, “be homemakers.” While this does not mean that a woman can’t work outside the home, at the same time, it highlights the high calling of being a wife, mother, and homemaker.

Mrs. Jack Mayhall was asked in a telephone survey, “What do you do?” After hanging up, she was struck with the what and why of her answer. She had just published her book, but as she mused on her situation, she concluded that being a writer was her avocation, not her vocation. She later said, “I do a lot of things—speaking, driving a car, cooking, leading Bible studies, cleaning house, counseling people, but my vocation is to be a wife—Jack’s wife. This is my call from God. It is my primary ministry. I work at my vocation, primarily in the house. That makes me a housewife. Why have I let myself be threatened into being ashamed of God’s primary calling as though it were insignificant and not worthy of my life?”

## The Purpose

*What it is not* Why should an older woman teach all of this to a younger woman? To make her husband happy? To be fulfilled as a woman? If she does that, those kinds of things will happen, but that is not the purpose Paul states here.

*What it is* Paul concludes this discussion with “that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (2:5). In Greek, this is a purpose clause, which refers to the entire preceding exhortation (Hiebert). A woman is to live a godly life, especially in relationship to her home life, so that the



Word of God may not be blasphemed. The phrase “the Word of God” probably refers to the gospel, not the Scripture. That is the way it is used in other passages, even in this book (1:3). The word “blaspheme” means “to speak lightly or profanely of sacred things.” An unbelieving husband might blame the Gospel because he has an unruly wife. An unbelieving neighbor might laugh at the Good News if a Christian woman were bad news. The world does not judge Christianity by its doctrine but by its deportment. The purpose is stated negatively but positively Paul is saying a woman ought to live a godly life so that the Word of God will be respected, honored, and listened to by unbelievers (Hendriksen).

**Summary:** Older women are to admonish younger women to be godly so that the gospel will not be blasphemed but will be blessed.

This passage is pregnant with pertinent truth. Consider several of the more salient points. Older women are to teach younger women. Do you have a student? Do you need a teacher? If not, ask the Lord for one and tell others you are interested.

The point of Titus 2 is that each age group is to be godly. This passage relates that overall message to young married women. They are to be chaste (pure) and good (kind). Godliness includes loving your husband and children and keeping your house in order.

In seminary, I pastored a small rural Baptist church in east Texas. An older lady in the congregation was very faithful, but for a few weeks, she missed several Sundays in a row. So, I paid her a pastoral visit. She was a bit embarrassed that she had missed church and quickly gave me the reasons for her absence. She explained she had not been in church because of people, peas, and pain. Others from out of town had come to visit her, hindering her from coming. Being in a rural area, she had to pick peas, and she had had some bodily pain. This elderly, godly, faithful lady had been hearing me teach the book of Titus, so she knew that Paul said real godliness was in things like keeping your house in order. So, she quickly added, “But I’m okay spiritually. My beds are made.”

## GOD'S ONE WORD TO MEN

What would you say if you had to speak to an assembly of Christian men from about twenty to fifty and only had time for one short message? What one thing do men need to hear? I asked four individuals that question and received four different answers. An older lady said, "I'd tell them to determine their goals." A single man suggested they be told to arrange and order their lives according to proper priorities. "Trust a sovereign God no matter what" was the response of a married man. Finally, a middle-aged housewife replied, "I'd give them Ecclesiastes 12:13: 'Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man.'" If someone had asked me that question, I probably would have said, "Bring the Word of God to bear on every area of your life." What would you say?

In Titus 2, Paul speaks to various groups within a church: older men, older women, young women, young men, servants, etc. In a sense, the message is the same—be godly. That general theme is amplified and applied to those various groups differently. He speaks with specifics and in some detail to the older men, older women, and younger women, but he has one short message when he comes to younger men. Paul says, **"Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded" (2:6)**. The Greek word "sober-minded" contains several ideas. The word conveys the idea of a sane, sensible, sober-minded, self-controlled man. Let's muse, then, on God's message to men.

### Who

*Everyone* Technically, this message is not just for young men. Titus 1:8 lists this virtue as one an elder must possess. Furthermore, others, including women, should also develop sober-mindedness (2:1, 5). Paul leaves no doubt that he means for this to be everyone's lifestyle. While it is clear that everyone should be sober-minded, at the same time, by being the only thing said to young men, it is especially emphasized that it applies to them.

*Young Men* What does Paul mean by "young men"? When modern Americans hear the term "young men," they imagine a fellow in his teens or twenties. The middle-aged would include a man in his thirties and even one in his forties. What exactly did Paul have in mind by young men? In the context of Titus 2, this classification includes all those younger than the older men. The older are those fifty years of age and older. Therefore, "young men" here are all those fifty years of age and younger. Our designations, teenagers, young men, and middle-aged men, are all included.

In our society, teenagers immediately recognize who they are. Young men are willing to admit that they fit that classification if they're in their twenties, but it is harder for us to find a middle-aged man. What is middle-aged? Is middle age prime time, over time, borrowed time, the time of our lives, or time out?

Someone has suggested that middle-aged is that difficult period between adolescence and retirement:

## Middle Age is

When you have to take care of yourself.  
When you want to see how long your car will last, not how fast it will go.  
When you're sitting home alone on Saturday night, the phone rings,  
and you hope it isn't for you.  
When your narrow waist and your broad mind change places.  
When your wife tells you to pull in your stomach and you already have.  
When your weight lifting consists of standing up.  
When your memory is shorter, experience longer,  
your stamina lower, your forehead higher  
and your chest has taken up residence in your midsection.

Regardless of your age or gender, you, as a Christian, should strive to be sober-minded. What exactly is involved in being sober-minded?

## What

*Sensible* The Greek word “sober-minded” is rich in meaning. The difficulty is that there are several shades of meaning in the Greek term for which there is no one precise English equivalent. One scholar has stated that a translation is almost impossible. All attempts prove too narrow. He concludes that one can only hope to describe its meaning by certain catchwords (*Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, pp. 1,097-99).

Perhaps the primary ingredient of sober-mindedness is soundness of mind, good sense, and sanity. Such a person has balanced judgment. This Greek word also contains the nuance of self-control, self-restraint, and self-discipline. This kind of person is temperate and discreet, or, as has been said, he has a “measured and orderly life.” Being sane, sensible, sober-minded, and self-controlled seems to say it all. However, the concept's essence consists of two elements: sensibility and self-control.

Let me illustrate sensibility. Years ago, I was in charge of a youth camp's athletic program and spiritual life. One summer, the General Director hired a young couple, who had just graduated from college and had just been married a month, to be in charge of the property staff. The newly wedded young man was to direct the young men and the new bride was in charge of the ladies. The minute I heard that, I thought, “That isn't very sensible. That is filled with problems for the simple reason that their jobs were very demanding. They would have to work as much as twelve to eighteen hours a day, which, in my opinion, was not suited for a couple on their honeymoon. To complicate matters, they had a problem in their background, which had not been repaired. It seems that he broke the engagement at one point because he met a little blond in whom he was interested. After a short time, he decided the blond was not for him. He returned to his old girlfriend. They re-established their engagement and eventually married. When they arrived at the campsite, they discovered that the receptionist looked just like the blond he had jilted his wife for before they were married. Those factors alone might not have caused any great problem, except this young man found it necessary to hang around the receptionist's office in general and her in particular. It didn't take long for his wife to object, and eventually, the three of us ended up in a counseling session.

In light of what had happened in their past, I suggested that the only sensible thing for him to do was not to be around the receptionist very much. He didn't have to be around her or her office at all to fulfill his duties. For some reason, he didn't find it within himself to follow those kinds of instructions. He kept hanging around the blond in the office. His wife, of course, kept objecting as each round got more and more intense. The climax came when she found him in the blond's cabin. Now, in the first place, that was against the rules. Fellows weren't supposed to be in the girls' cabins, but more importantly, in his case, given the history and recent record of this issue, he shouldn't have been anywhere near her, much less in her cabin—alone! When the young man, his wife, and I sat down to talk, he said, "I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't hug her. I didn't kiss her. I have not been involved physically with her; we were just talking."

My response to him was, "Let's assume that you're telling the truth and we believe you. Given your wife's wound, it isn't smart for you to aggravate her by being so insensitive." He didn't get it! The more we talked, the more he insisted, "But I didn't do anything wrong!" At that point, I felt like screaming, "Be sensible!" I got so frustrated I finally said to him, "Look. If my wife said, 'I don't want you eating hot dogs. If you eat hot dogs one more time, I'm going to leave you' (which is exactly what his wife was saying to him), I think I could manage somehow to lay off of hot dogs, at least until she got over her phobia of the dogs kids love to bite. In short, be sensible."

He never did get it—at least not that summer. In fact, the situation worsened, and they left several weeks before the camping season ended to preserve their marriage. That was many years ago, and I had no idea what had happened to them after they had left the camp. I do know that many young married men are not very sensible, and consequently, their marriage is radically affected.

*Self-controlled* Sober-mindedness is more than being sensible. It is also being self-controlled. No doubt, these two elements are related. Out of a sound mind comes self-restraint. In the list of qualifications for an elder, Paul used this word and he added another word, which means self-control (1:8). The difference between the element of self-control in sober-mindedness and the word, which means self-control, is that the sober-minded man is moderate in the engagement of what is lawful. In comparison, the self-controlled man refrains from all that is unlawful. The sober-minded man would exercise self-control in the sense that he would regulate his intake of food; the self-controlled man would refrain from gluttony.

Years ago, I knew a man about thirty years of age who was experiencing some difficulty in his marriage. He and I chatted about it several times and finally, he, his wife, and I sat down together to discuss their marriage. I learned again there are two sides to every story. He had some complaints concerning his wife, namely their sex life. She had some objections of her own. Her grievance and gripe was his handling of money. He readily admitted they had a tight budget and always seemed behind in their bills.

I thought to myself, "Now we're getting somewhere. Those are the kinds of problems that are easy to solve. To balance the budget, there must either be more income or less outgo." It was then that I discovered the real problem. She informed me that he was a compulsive buyer. They had a garage full of tools. Every time he went to a store like Sears, he frequently bought and charged for another tool or gadget. According to her, and confessed to by him, that had been going on for years.

I remember sitting in their living room, listening to them talk, and thinking to myself, "This doesn't make sense. Why should a man in his right mind buy tools that he didn't need to add to an already crushing debt he couldn't pay?" Psychologists might try to analyze and explain the

whys and wherefores of the situation I have just described, but simply put, God wants us to be sober-minded, that is, to be sensible and exercise self-control.

## Why

*Spiritually* Why is it so important for everyone in general, especially men, to develop sober-mindedness? Paul does not answer that in Titus 2:6, or does he? There is no purpose clause in verse 6, as elsewhere in this chapter, but Paul said this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). This is the Word of God. So, men should be sober-minded because God says so. That alone should be sufficient.

*Socially*, other than Titus 2:6, which is God's Word to young men, there is no stated reason for men to be sober-minded. A moment's reflection, however, reveals that those who practice this virtue will have the respect of others, and those who don't—won't. The men I know who possess this characteristic have the respect of their families and friends. Those that don't are less respected, obeyed, and followed. The compulsive buyer, mentioned earlier, didn't have the respect of his wife, which, in turn, affected their physical relationship. He came to me saying that he and his wife (actually, what he meant was his wife) had a sex problem. She said the problem was money. The truth is that she didn't respect him because he was not a sensible, self-disciplined man.

*Personally* There is a personal reason why every individual should make it his or her aim to be sober-minded. Such people are more likely to respect themselves. When a man is not sober-minded, he doesn't like it, meaning he doesn't like himself (see Prov. 16:32).

**Summary:** God's one-word message to men is to be sober-minded, that is, be sensible and self-controlled.

Be sober-minded. Be sensible. Be self-controlled. It all sounds so simple, yet sound judgment and the ability to do justly ripens slowly and is difficult to come by. In *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin said, "At twenty years of age, the will reigns; at thirty, the wit; at forty, the judgment." God says that all men at every age level should be sober-minded.

Sober-minded may not be a bad translation after all. The opposite of "sober" is "drunk," which is not smart or sensible at all; it's stupid. Once a man takes leave of his senses and gets drunk, he loses control of himself. No one respects a drunk, not even the drunk himself.

The godliest men I've ever known have been the most down-to-earth, practical, and sensible men I've known. The men that I have respected the most in my life have been cut from that pattern.

As a young single man, I met a man in his thirties whom I greatly admired. As I watched what he did, I thought, "That makes sense. He is a levelheaded, thoughtful, common-sense kind of guy. His other outstanding characteristic is that he is disciplined, which manifests in everything he does, from jogging to church work." I've known him now for years. Everyone who knows him respects him. As a young man, I looked at him and said, "Lord, that's what I want to be like as I grow older." I'm not sure I have arrived, but it is one of the major virtues I've always wanted to own. Men, may we make God's one word for us as one of our major goals.

## WHEN PEOPLE OPPOSE YOU

Have you ever had anyone oppose you? If you haven't, you probably have never attempted to do much, but if you have ever set out to do anything, you no doubt have met opposition. For example, have you ever endeavored to do something for the Lord only to discover that people resist you? It is expected not just from non-Christians but also from church members. That's the position in which pastors often find themselves. They believe they are doing God's will but discover they get tomatoes thrown at them instead of applause or a pat on the back.

That's what happened to Titus. Paul left him on the island of Crete to set things in order (1:5). Jewish Christian teachers opposed the sound, healthy teaching of the Scripture. Paul told Titus to ordain elders and rebuke those misguided guides sharply so that they may be healthy and things, in general, might be set in order. Not all were undoubtedly thrilled with that prospect. If they had opposed the Scripture, they wouldn't hesitate to oppose Titus personally. No doubt, when Titus began to implement Paul's plan, these opposers began to attack him. They probably picked him apart personally and professionally. They could stop him if they could embarrass him or put him to shame. What does a pastor do when he's under attack? Paul anticipated this possibility and gave Titus some helpful advice. It is recorded in Titus 2:7-8. In Titus 2, Paul tells Titus to speak to older men, older women, and young men. Then, Paul speaks directly to Titus. By addressing Titus at this point in the passage, Paul means to classify him with the younger men, meaning he was less than fifty years old.

### Be an Example of Good Works

*In Preaching* Continuing the sentence begun in verse 6, Paul says, “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works” (2:7). The first thing Paul says to Titus personally is to be an example of good works. Technically, this exhortation is grammatically linked to the previous verse. In verse 6, Paul instructs Titus to exhort young men to be sober-minded. In verse 7, he adds, “showing yourself to be a pattern of good works.” The word translated “showing” is a Greek present participle meaning “to furnish, provide, supply, display.” In other words, as Titus instructed young men, he was to display good works as an example.

*In Practice* Titus is to perform good works, but what are good works? Two different Greek words are translated “good” in the New Testament. One means “intrinsic goodness” that is not necessarily seen” (*agathis*). The other word (*kalos*) means “good,” but it also means “fair, beautiful.” To the ancient Greeks, the union between goodness and beauty was almost inseparable. Unfortunately, no single English word can reproduce this thought (Bernard). The concept behind the phrase “good works” is something done which can be seen of men and which illustrates the beauty of the Christian life (Bernard on 1 Tim. 2:10; Paul discusses good works in more detail in Titus 3:1-10.) These good, beautiful activities are to be “in all things” in every area of one's life. Later in the book, Paul urges Titus and others to practice hospitality (3:13). While those who oppose were subverting whole houses (1:11), Titus was to practice hospitality (1:8) by using his home to help others.

*In Pattern* Titus is to preach and perform good works. He is to practice good works to be a pattern to others. Indeed, all teachers are to preach and perform good works as a pattern for

others to follow. Part of learning is having a pattern to emulate. As a seamstress needs a pattern to make a dress, believers need a model to mold their lives. Teachers are to preach and provide a pattern.

When under attack, the temptation is to quit. I remember being attacked by a woman once who said, “You’re not a man, you’re not a pastor, you’re not a good husband, you’re not a good father” (she was angry!). I calmly answered her but felt like saying, “What am I doing all this for? To have my very dignity and integrity attacked? Why don’t I go do something else?” Under similar circumstances, Paul’s advice was to exemplify good, beautiful works. In the face of ugly opposition, do that which is lovely.

## Be Faultless in Speech

Paul continues, “in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech” (2:7b-8a). The Greek word translated “doctrine” means “teaching,” which is the way it should be translated here (Bernard). Paul is not talking about the *content* of Titus’ teaching but the *act* of teaching (Guthrie).

*Integrity* When Titus spoke, he was to have integrity. This Greek term translated “integrity” means “uprightness.” A teacher representing the One who is the truth and teaching the Word of truth should speak the truth. There must be strict adherence to truth, righteousness, and honesty with no exaggeration or embellishment. When Titus spoke, such integrity was to be apparent.

*Reverence* Titus was to be pure in motive and reverent in manner. The Greek word translated “reverence” in verse 7 comes from the word translated “reverent” in verse 2. This word is so full of meaning; no one English word does it justice. Close English equivalents are “dignified” (Hendriksen) or “serious” (Hendriksen; Guthrie). There is more in this word. Such a man is serious, grave, and august; he invites reverence. The twin characteristics of dignified independence and kindly consideration begin to capture the essence of this word.

A teacher of the Word is to be serious, not silly. When I was in college, Fred Brown, a man who had been an itinerant evangelist for better than a quarter of a century, told a group of aspiring evangelists, of whom I was one, “Don’t get a reputation for being funny, because you will have to live up to it. Don’t get a name for doing the unusual because you will have to keep doing more and more unusual things.” He told of a young evangelist who got such a reputation and was finding it difficult to outdo himself. This fellow went to a church that had chairs instead of pews. The chairs were arranged so that there were several aisles. The guest preacher, trying to live up to his reputation of doing something unusual, insisted that they rearrange the seats to make one aisle because, as he said, “There is only one way to be saved.” He killed the meeting.

*Incorruptibility* The next word, in verse 7, is not in some manuscripts and, thus, does not appear in most Modern English translations. It is in the majority of manuscripts. The Greek word means “uncorrupted.” Titus’s speech was not to be corrupted in any way, not with lies, deception, false doctrine, or impure motives. His opponents were teaching for the sake of dishonest gain, which, no doubt, influenced what they said when they taught (1:11). Titus was to teach with integrity and sincerity, not for what he could get, but for what he could give, not for his honor, but for God’s glory.

*Healthy Speech* The fourth and final characteristic of his teaching ministry is that it is to be “sound in speech.” Paul has used the Greek word “sound,” which means “healthy,” before in this epistle (1:9, 13). He uses it in this book, as well as in the other Pastoral Epistles, to refer to

healthy doctrine (1:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3). He also uses it to describe a person's spiritual condition (2:2). Here it refers to a teacher's speaking.

Those who opposed Titus and sound doctrine had unhealthy speech. They were idle talkers and deceivers, teaching things that they shouldn't and subverting whole houses in the process (1:10-11). Such unhealthy speech must be stopped (1:11). Titus was to have healthy speech that built believers up in the faith, not tear them down.

Paul adds, "that cannot be condemned" (2:8b). The Greek word translated "cannot be condemned" means "not to open to just rebuke." It is not that his speech has never been criticized or condemned, but rather that after a fair trial, he is acquitted because the plaintiff had no case (Kent; Hiebert).

I know of a well-known Bible teacher who announced that four languages would be spoken from his pulpit: Greek, Hebrew, English, and profanity. Then he added, "If you don't like it, get the Hades (only he used a stronger version) out of here."

## So Opponents will be Ashamed

*Ashamed* After his instructions to Titus, Paul gave the purpose for his exhortations. He says, "that one who is an opponent may be ashamed having nothing evil to say of you" (2:8c). This Greek construction introduces a purpose clause. The purpose of this conduct is that Titus' opponent may be ashamed. Notice Paul does not say, "So you will not have opponents;" he says, "So they will be ashamed." He assumes Titus will have antagonists. If anyone does anything, he will face opponents. Jesus experienced them. Paul encountered them. You will not be exempt. They will pick you apart pebble-by-pebble and feather-by-feather.

An opponent attempts to pin, defeat, or embarrass you. He is not necessarily fair or honest. A pastor's wife, reporting what a board member said about her husband, exclaimed, "It was not at all true; the man lied!" Paul's advice is that Titus should conduct himself so that not only will he not be ashamed, but his opponents will be. The way to handle an opponent is to embarrass him.

*No Evil to Say* Paul adds, "having nothing evil to say of you." The Greek word translated "evil" is not the normal word for evil. This word means "worthless, of no account" and always refers to people's actions, not their words. The opponents will have no worthless thing to report. The point is that Titus should not let an opponent legitimately use an evil report against him.

**Summary:** By an exemplary life of good works and faultless speech put opponents to shame when it is seen that they have no case against you.

Several spiritual lessons in this passage apply to all believers. If the teacher is to show good works to be an example, all should produce good works. What in the world are you doing for heaven's sake? Also, when you minister, whether one-on-one, in a small group, before a Sunday School class, or before a church, your speech should be with pure motives and dignity and contain nothing that could come open to rebuke. Paul is making the point that when you are opposed, you should embarrass your opponent with exemplary works and faultless words.

A pastor was opposed and even attacked by a board member who, among other things, accused him of lying. He went to the man privately to resolve the problem and accomplished nothing. At that point, the pastor felt like leaving the church and even the ministry. As he and I talked, I made several scriptural suggestions and said, "If I were in your shoes, I would take this issue to the whole board. Let them examine the facts. Then either you should resign, or your opponent will be embarrassed."



## WORK CLOTHES

When you hear the phrase “work clothes,” what garments come to mind? Many, like nurses, imagine a uniform. Most people probably think of casuals. Some, no doubt, envision a suit with an appropriate tie. A few might see sports clothes, like a lifeguard in a swimming suit. God is deeply concerned about your work clothes. He doesn’t want a mechanic to wear a coat and tie or a banker to wear a swimsuit, but He is interested in what a believer wears to work.

In Titus 2, Paul addresses various groups, beginning with the older men. The last group He speaks to is the slaves (2:9-10). In ancient times, slaves outnumbered free men, at least in the Roman Empire. Consequently, a large number of Christians were from that class. The New Testament does not directly demand the abolition of slavery. If it had, Christianity would have been reduced to a social revolution. The modern counterpart (no innuendo intended) is the employee, which includes most Christians today. At any rate, when God addresses the workers of the day, He tells them what to wear to work.

### The Worker’s Attitude

*Submissive Spirit* Paul says, “Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters” (2:9a). The Greek word translated “bondservants” means “slaves.” The word “master” is a Greek word that denotes absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. It is the word from which we get our word “despot.” Imagine telling a slave who had no choice to obey his master, who had absolute authority. Why would Paul do that? That’s almost like telling a man in handcuffs to obey the man who is giving him orders and who has a gun in his hand.

Paul is not talking about mere mechanical or external obedience. First, this Greek word is not the usual word for obey; it’s stronger! (Guthrie). It includes obedience, but more than that, it means “to be in subjection.” In Ephesians and Colossians, Paul urges a slave to obey. Here alone, he uses the word, which means “submission.” This is the same word Paul uses when he tells wives to submit to their husbands.

Furthermore, the word “submission” is in the middle voice, indicating that it is something that you do, not something done to you or forced upon you. In other words, Paul is saying, “Subject yourselves, voluntarily submit to your master.” What he is demanding is, first and foremost, an attitude of a submissive spirit. This is the attitude one adopts concerning himself.

To be submissive does not mean one is weak or inferior. As pastor of the Church of the Open Door, I have worked closely with my Associate Pastor for years. We were a team with a great deal of give and take. There was nothing weak about him. He told me his opinion, whether it agrees with mine or not. He told me when he thought I was wrong, but technically, I was the Senior Pastor. So many times, after a hearty exchange, I heard him say, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do.” I know he meant that and would do what I asked and do it with a good attitude. That is a submissive spirit.

*Pleasing Spirit* The next phrase also describes an attitude; only this is an attitude not toward oneself but toward one’s master or boss. Paul says, “to be well pleasing in all things” (2:9b). Again, the issue is not external. Mere external compliance to the will of the master is not enough. Grumbling is forbidden (Hendriksen). There must be an internal attitude of wanting to please

him. The problem is that Paul says, “in all things.” Is this to be taken absolutely? Suppose the master demanded that the slave lie, steal, or murder? Must he obey? The answer, of course, is “No.” The purpose clause at the end of verse 10 implies a limitation. By sinning, the slave would not be adorning the doctrine of God (Hendriksen).

I have had people “under” me who “worked” for me for years. Some have had a pleasing spirit and some have not. One way that sometimes manifests itself is how many times I’ve had to ask for something. There are, on occasions, circumstances beyond a person’s control, or he or she could even occasionally forget, but as a rule, the person with a pleasing spirit does what I ask the first time I ask or before I ask. He has a servant’s heart, not just a servant’s job.

Paul states their attitude negatively. He says, “not answering back” (2:9c). “Answering back” is a weak translation. Paul says, “Don’t contradict, oppose, resist.” Paul is not talking about talking, which is contrary; he refers to setting oneself against another’s plans, wishes, and orders (Ellicott). This word has overtones of resistance and rebellion (Hendriksen; Rom. 10:21; Heb. 12:3; Jude 11).

## The Worker’s Action

God not only wants Christian workers to put on a proper attitude, but He also desires that they wear the appropriate attire in their actions. More specifically, He tells them what not to do and what to do. Paul writes, “not pilfering” (2:10a). The Greek word translated “pilfering,” which means “to set apart for oneself,” was the usual Greek word for petty theft. Pilfering was a common vice of slaves and they had abundant opportunities (Kent). Almost all the trades, professions, and arts were in the hands of the slaves. Paul urges Christian laborers and professionals not to practice pilfering and embezzlement (Humphreys). Christian slaves, like non-Christian slaves, were no doubt tempted to rationalize, “The master owes me this and more. He has taken away my freedom and robbed me of my strength and talent without adequate compensation” (Hendriksen).

Pilfering is a major social problem today. Employees pilfer time, materials, and money. Crime committed by the workforce has been called the biggest business in America today. It costs United States companies billions of dollars a year, more than street robberies and burglary losses combined. According to security experts, as high as 70% of employees occasionally steal, about half of which is petty pilfering; the garage mechanic pockets a sparkplug, the typist who lifts a box of paperclips, the mailroom clerk who slips some personal letters through the meter machine, the executive pads his expense account, and the meatpacker goes home with a steak tucked in a folded newspaper. This type of mini-sniper might seem like nothing more than a worker who sneaks a fistful of toothpicks out of a lumber mill, but it packs a big wallop because the practice is so widespread. In the retail industry, internal thievery outstrips shoplifting.

When I was in seminary, I had a job at a factory. One morning, I arrived at work and discovered that the men in my department were working on a project I didn’t recognize. When I asked the foreman about the new job, he told me it was government work. That surprised me because that factory didn’t have any government contracts. When I asked him what he meant, he informed me that it was the work of the people, by the people, for the people. In other words, it was personal projects using company tools and time. In short—stealing.

*Fidelity* The positive side is “but showing all good fidelity” (2:10b). A laborer is to be faithful and trustworthy (Hiebert). You owe your boss your loyalty. If you have to choose between your boss and your buddies, you should be loyal to your boss. Suppose your boss asks

you to do something wrong, illegal, or immoral. Is there a limit to loyalty? The answer is “Yes,” for Paul says, “all *good* fidelity.” This loyalty does not extend to crime and wrongdoing. It is to be exercised in everything good and beneficial (Hiebert).

## The Worker’s Aim

Paul concludes the counsel to the slaves of his day by stating the purpose of it: “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (2:10c). The Greek word for “adorn” was used of wearing clothes. It was also used of the “setting” of a jewel. The idea is to show off the doctrine of God our Savior. The doctrine of God refers to the teaching or instruction of God. How you work and relate to your boss can demonstrate what God, your Savior, has taught you. People can see attitudes and actions at work as they relate to work and know God has taught you and you are obeying Him. When people see you at work, what do they see? Do they see a selfish person or the Savior? Does your work manifest your greed or reveal your God?

Paul adds, “in all things.” Technically, this could be translated “among all men,” but “in all things” is preferable. Paul is saying you should exhibit the teaching of God in every area of life, so you should be doing those things at work to manifest His Word in every area of life. God is interested in your work clothes, dress clothes, casual clothes, sports clothes, and pajamas.

**Summary:** Slaves who are saints should be submissive, pleasing, not rebelling, not pilfering, but loyal so that they may adorn the instruction of their Savior.

The believer should manifest God’s Word at work in attitude and action. Wear godliness to work. God wants you to wear godly attitudes and actions to work so you will show His instruction in every area of your life.

Let me put it like this. Whether you wear a suit, uniform, or casual clothes to work, you should not think of going to work in the wrong clothes or dirty clothes. Even if you get dirty during the day, you should start with the right clothes and keep them clean. God is concerned about what you wear to work—on the inside. Some believers are not wearing the proper spiritual garments or wearing those garments, but they are dirty. Clean up your attitude at work and thereby glorify God and His Word. You can work better and enjoy your job more in the right clothes.

# THE MOTIVE FOR GODLY LIVING

It's no secret. The Bible teaches us to live righteous, holy, godly lives. That's clear and plain. The question is, why? What should motivate or compel us to live godly? Are we to live godly to get to heaven? That's what multiplied millions of Americans believe. Is that true? Is getting to glory like a bank ledger with credits and debits, and if you have more credits than debits, you get in, and if you have red ink, you will go to hell? Or do we live godly to get God's favor? Is a person's relationship to God like the little boy's relationship with Santa Claus? You must be nice, not naughty because you know who's coming to town. Or do you behave because you don't want to get into trouble? A friend once told me, "Most people don't sin, not because they are godly, but because they are cowards; they are afraid they will get caught!" Why do you do what is right and godly?

There are several reasons given for righteous living in the New Testament. Paul gives one of the major ones in Titus 2:11-14. In Titus 2:1-10, Paul told Titus to tell various groups to live godly lives. In verses 11-14, he explains why they should do that (see "for" in verse 11). The subject of these verses is grace. Paul tells us two things about grace.

## Grace brings Salvation

*Grace* "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (2:11). The Greek word translated "grace" means "favor." In defining the word, Aristotle emphasized that the favor was conferred freely with no expectation of return and finding its only motive in the goodheartedness of the giver (Trench). In secular Greek, this free favor was always bestowed on a friend, not upon an enemy. In the New Testament, however, the word acquires an additional meaning in that God did a favor for His enemies. So, "grace" in the New Testament is "unmerited favor."

*Salvation* The undeserved favor of God brings salvation. Verse 14 contains phrases that explain how grace brought salvation. It says to "every lawless deed." That describes all humans. God gave the Law, summarized in the Ten Commandments. Everyone breaks that law one way or another. We're all rebels, lawbreakers. For example, Paul quoted a secular poet/prophet in this book who claimed, "Cretans are always liars" (1:12). Although this passage doesn't mention it, the penalty of sin is death. Rebels and lawbreakers deserve to be punished for their crimes.

God, however, did rebels a favor. Verse 14 proclaims that Christ gave Himself for us, meaning He died as our substitute. He died to redeem us from every lawless deed. "Redeemed" means "to pay the ransom, to release." Christ paid the penalty of sin so sinners could be released from sin. Keep in mind that those for whom He died were sinners, lawless rebels against Him. Now, that's undeserved favor, an undeserved favor that brings salvation.

Grace has been popularly defined as *unmerited* favor, meaning God saves those who do not earn it. While that's true, it is more accurate to say it is *undeserved* favor. Suppose a beggar knocked on your door asking for food. You gave him something to eat without him doing any work for you. That would be an unearned, unmerited favor. Suppose that a beggar broke into your house, robbed you, and beat up your family. Then, you fed him. That would be an undeserved favor. If you also paid his fine and took his punishment, that would be an unearned,

unmerited, undeserved favor that saved him from the penalty of breaking the law. That's what God's grace is like.

*Appeared* The grace, which brings salvation, "has appeared to all men." "Has appeared," meaning "has been manifest," obviously refers to Christ's coming in general and His death and resurrection in particular (Hiebert). What does "to all men" mean? "All men" here refers to all classes of men (Guthrie; Hendriksen).

Paul has just spoken to older men, older women, young men, and even slaves (2:2, 3, 6, 9). The grace-bringing salvation has been manifest to all classes: old and young, men and women, the free and the enslaved, the rich and the poor. Grace does not bypass the older because they are old, nor women because they are women, nor slaves because they are slaves. It is freely available to all, regardless of age, gender, or social standing.

Grace will bring salvation to you if you will only trust Christ.

## Grace Trains Saints

Paul continues, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" (2:12a). The word translated "teach" is not the usual word for teaching in the New Testament. The one used here has no exact equivalent in English. Its basic meaning is "to child train" and includes instruction, rebuke, and chastening (Hiebert). To the Greeks, it was simply education (Trench). The New Testament uses it for "discipline" or "chasten." The same grace that brought salvation educates saints. What is the curriculum? What follows in Titus 2:12-14 is a complex sentence, which can be simplified by saying, "Grace teaches saints four major truths."

*Leave Sin* Grace teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The Greek word translated "denying" means "to say no to, to refuse, to acknowledge," simply put—leave. Saints are to wave bye and leave ungodliness, which is vividly described in Romans 1:18-32 (Hendriksen; the word "ungodly" is used in Rom. 1:18) and includes everything and anything dishonoring to God (Kent). They're also to leave, depart from "worldly lusts." By "worldly," Paul means the world apart from God (Alford), and the word "lusts" refers to a passionate longing and a "strong yearning" (Hendriksen). Worldly lust is "all desirous entirely centered in the present world system." It is the excessive longing for pleasure, possessions, and power.

Though other teaching tools may be involved (the word teach is more than instruction), one way God teaches us to deny sin is to remind us of His grace that brought salvation, which manifests itself in Jesus Christ on the cross.

Come with me back in time to the cross. Look at the sinless Son of God. There is no beauty that we should desire to look at Him. It's an ugly scene. Remember. Sin did that! The conclusion is that we should run from sin. When you see what sin did to Christ, you learn that sin is serious, damaging, and demeaning, and you will deny it.

Let me illustrate the principle. How does one teach teenagers not to drink and drive? The police have shown pictures and even movies of deadly accidents that drunk drivers caused. Come, look at the broken glass, the twisted metal that was once a car, and the blood-drenched dead bodies. See what drinking and driving will do and learn to leave that activity alone.

*Live Godly* Grace teaches, "We should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age" (2:12b). Paul has used the word "soberly" several times in the book of Titus to describe what an elder must be and everyone else should be (1:8; 2:2, 2:5, 2:6). The Greek word translated "soberly" means "to be sane, sensible, sober-minded, and self-controlled." "Righteously" is "doing what is right, just, fair, and honest." It is integrity in dealing with others.

“Godly” is a Greek word that means “reverently or right” and primarily means reverence toward God, although it can mean reverence toward others, for example, parents. Trench says that it implies “worship” (that is, worth-ship). This reverence is to be maintained in the present age with all of its depraved, degrading, deplorable influences. Saints are to live godly in this present age, which includes living soberly, which refers to themselves, righteously to others, and reverently, which refers to God. Grace teaches us to do that.

Again, while a gracious God may employ other teaching methods to train believers to live godly lives, one method He utilizes is to teach us about the cross. For believers to live godly lives, Christ had to die on the cross (1 Cor. 6:20). So, again, come with me back in time to the cross. Look at the suffering Savior dying so that you might be cleansed and consecrated. See what it took to produce godliness in people, and you will learn a lesson about godly living.

Let me illustrate the principle. More than one mother has worked to earn extra money to send her son to college. Many have slaved at jobs, even scrubbing floors, so their sons might have an advantage that they didn’t get. Being aware of the price paid to give the possibility of a college education should surely motivate such a son to study. Likewise, see the price paid for you by Jesus Christ and live a life honoring to Him.

*Look for Christ* Paul adds, “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2:13). The Greek word translated “look” is no mere glance. It implies an attitude of eager expectation, a readiness to welcome the one being who is coming. Paul does not just say, “Looking for the coming of Christ.” He piles word upon word to describe what is expectantly awaited. What he says and the way he says it is enlightening. For example, he describes looking for “the blessed hope and glorious appearing.” An interpretive translation would be: “What happy expectation, even the appearing of glory.” Verse 11 uses the word “appearing” to refer to the first coming of Christ. Now, verse 13 uses the same word about His Second Coming. The first was a manifestation of grace, which produced in us an expectation of a manifestation of glory. What a delight that will be!

Who exactly will appear? That is a problem. Verse 13 says, “Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” It sounds as if the two different ones will appear, God (the Father) and Jesus Christ, but in the Greek text, there is only one article linking the two descriptive phrases inseparably together (this is called the Granville Sharp Rule; see Wuest; Kent; Hiebert; see also Hendriksen; Guthrie). That means Jesus Christ is the one and only one who will appear. It also means Paul is clearly calling Jesus Christ God (Kent).

The point is that the salvation-bringing grace teaches us to look expectantly for the blessed hope, even the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Come with me, back in time to the cross. Look at the sovereign of the universe sacrificing Himself for you. Doesn’t that make you want to see Him?

One of the generals of Cyrus the Great, King of ancient Persia, came home from a campaign to discover that in his absence, his wife had been arrested and was languishing in prison, charged with treason against her country. At the trial, his wife, pale and anxious, tried to answer the charges against her, but to no avail. Her husband, standing nearby, heard the stern voice of the Persian ruler pronounce the death sentence. As the guards grabbed her to drag her away to behead her, he ran forward and threw himself down at the feet of the emperor. “Oh, sire!” he cried. “Not her, but me. Let me give my life for her. Put me to death, but spare my wife!” It touched him as Cyrus looked down at this man’s deep devotion and love for his wife. He also remembered how faithful this servant had been and he gave the command that the wife should be set free. She was fully pardoned. As her husband led her out of the room, he asked her, “Did you

notice the kind look in the eye of the emperor as he pronounced the word of pardon?" She replied, "I didn't see the face of the emperor. The only face that I could see was that of the man who was willing to die for me."

*Labor for Christ* Grace teaches saints to labor for Christ. Paul says, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (2:14). The Greek word translated "purity" means "cleanse." He cleansed us for Himself so that we could be His own special people, an expression taken from Exodus 19:5, etc. Furthermore, the One who gave Himself for His own to redeem them wanted them, in turn, to be zealous, that is, eagerly desirous of good works. As Brown has said, "Every Christian should not merely be good, but be full of burning zeal in doing good works" (Brown, cited by Hiebert).

While God no doubt uses many means to teach His children to perform good works, one basic motive is to point them to the cross. Come with me, back in time, to the cross. Look at your substitute being slain for you so that He might purchase, purify, and possess you. Since He laid down His life for you, should you not labor for Him?

In modern as well as in ancient times, men have been bought and sold as slaves. There are cases on record of a kindhearted, benevolent man buying a slave and immediately setting him free. There are also cases where a set-free slave volunteered to serve the one who purchased him out of gratitude for what he did. Likewise, Christ has redeemed us, purchased us, and released us. The least we can do is work for Him.

**Summary:** In one sense, this passage could be summed up with this statement: Grace saves sinners and trains saints, yet the point is that the same grace that brings salvation teaches us to live godly lives and labor for the Lord while we eagerly wait for His return. The motive for godly living is the grace of God.

Paul tells Titus, "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you" (2:15). Titus is to speak and not be silent. He is to "clearly" set forth in these things (Hiebert). He is to exhort (2:6). The Greek word translated "exhort" means "beseech, entreat, admonish, and exhort and encourage." He is to rebuke with all authority. The Greek word translated "rebuke" means "convict, reprove, rebuke." The message to be delivered is a message from God (Hiebert). The Greek word translated "despise" means "to have thoughts beyond." Hiebert says it means to "disregard by setting oneself in thought beyond." He adds, "It is the picture of a man attempting to rationalize himself into a position where he can evade these responsibilities and so continue on in his old sins."

When you consider what He has done for you, what He asks you to do for Him is the least you can do. Suppose a wealthy man you never met, for some unexplained reason, gave you an all-expense-paid vacation to Europe. His limousine picked up you and your luggage at your house and transported you to the airport. Once aboard the plane, you discovered that this loving gentleman had done the same thing for so many people it took a 747 jet to fly them all to Europe. You thought to yourself, "This man must have a big heart."

They gave you a booklet to read and an assigned seat. As you sank into your seat and opened the book, you discovered that it told you about this benevolent new friend and asked some of you. For example, it asked you not to listen to a portable radio, explaining that it could interfere with some of the plane's equipment and could even cause serious problems. Your first reaction to that might be disappointment and even disagreement. You had your radio in your carry-on luggage and were looking forward to enjoying it on the plane, but after a moment's reflection,

you decided that if this man could go to all the trouble to give you an all-expense-paid trip to Europe, the least you could do was not listen to your radio.

A few minutes later, a stewardess comes over the intercom requesting that you fasten your seat belt. Now, again, seat belts may be one of those things that irritate you, so you don't take too kindly to that announcement. After all, you don't even wear a seat belt in your car. Why should you wear one on the plane? Again, the thought occurs to you that since someone was so kind as to give you this trip, perhaps the least you could do is buckle a seat belt for a short time.

As the flight smoothes out and you sit back in your seat, you wonder what this generous man must be like, how he got all of his money, and how he chose you. As you pondered him, you longed just to see him, meet him, and at least thank him for this trip.

Shortly after, they begin to serve a meal, and that's when you discover they're shorthanded. There are not enough stewardesses to hand out the trays of food. Then is when it occurs to you, well, that's the least you could do. After all, that is something you've done before and you at least know how to do it. And, besides, if this man could give you a free trip to Europe, you'd just like to do something. Of course, there's no way passing out a few trays of food would pay for the trip, but you would surely like to do it out of gratitude.

You know, when you stop and think about it, considering what he had done for you, the few things you did in return were the least you could do. Your motive for obeying the few reasonable requests and even serving was not to gain anything; it was out of gratitude for what had been given to you.



# WHY DO GOOD WORKS?

The Bible teaches that you should do good works. Jesus Himself said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). James insisted, “Faith without works is dead” (Jas. 2:20). Even Paul, who is the apostle of faith, contended that Christians were “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). All agree. Every theologian believes that. All denominations concur. No pastor or church would say that you should not do any good works or that you should do bad works.

Yet significant questions plague the subject of good works. What are good works? Why do them? Should a person perform good works to go to heaven? The sign outside of one church said, “To get to heaven, turn right and keep straight.” Of course, keeping straight means, among other things, doing good deeds. If that is not the reason, what is? While many passages of Scripture mention good works in passing, few discuss them in detail. Titus 3:1-7 is one passage that does. In this passage, Paul informs believers about the nature and the purpose of good works. He explains what they are and why they should be done.

## Believers are to do Good Works

Paul says, “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work” (3:1). Paul tells Titus to remind believers to do a number of things, which could be classified as good works. In Titus 2:14, Paul pointed out that Christ died to purify Himself for His own special people, zealous for good works. Now, he gives a specific list. In the middle of the list, he indicates that these items are good works by adding, “to be ready for every good work” (3:1). Furthermore, after the paragraph ending in verse 7, Paul makes a statement that echoes verse 1. It says that Titus constantly affirms that believers are to be careful to maintain good works (3:8). So, Titus 3:1, 2 gives a list of good works.

*Be Subject to Government* Good works include being “subject to rulers and authorities, to obey.” The word “subject” in Greek was a military term meaning “to place or rank under.” The middle voice indicates the individuals are to subject themselves; this is to be done voluntarily and willingly. Believers are to subject themselves to rulers and authorities. Rulers and authorities are perhaps different levels of government, with rulers being the highest. In the New King James Version, verse 1 reads “to obey.” The Greek word translated “obey” means “obey one in authority.” Some say this is best taken absolutely (White) rather than to the government in particular. In that case, Paul is admonishing obedience to all authority, not just governmental authority, but in this context, Paul seems to have government in mind (Kent). Thus, believers are to subject themselves and obey all levels of government.

“A Christian cannot be an anarchist” (Hiebert).” At the same time, the principle is not absolute. We are not to obey the government in morally wrong cases (Acts 5:29). “In such instances, Christians should quietly disobey and be obedient to the consequences (Kent).

For Americans, this includes national, state, and local governments. So, when you pay your national, state, and local taxes, when you vote in national, state, and local elections, when you obey the speed limit and stop at red lights and octagon-shaped signs, you are doing a good work.

*Be Ready for Every Good Work* Paul adds, “Be ready for every good work.” The problem with this statement is its general nature. What is meant by “good work”? There are two different Greek words translated “good” in the New Testament and both appear in the phrase “good works” in English versions. The one used here means “good in essence, good in the sense that it produces pleasure and satisfaction.” It denotes that which is an advantage of him who comes in contact with it. The other Greek word, which is used in Titus 2:7 of good works, also means good, but it means good in the sense of fairness and beauty. It is probably unwise to press the distinction between these words too far because the two phrases seem to be used interchangeably in 1 Timothy 5:9-10, but from these words, it is evident that anything that benefits another is a good work. First Timothy 5:10 illustrates that.

*Maintain Unity* Paul continues the list of things Titus is to remind Christians to do. “To speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men” (3:2). These four items could be classified as personal virtues rather than good works, but in this context, they seem to be, at least to some degree, part of good deeds. Perhaps the unifying factor is keeping unity in a group of people.

Believers are to speak evil of no one. The Greek is much stronger than the English translation. This does not mean that they were never to talk about or expose the evils of men. Jesus Christ Himself did that. The Greek word translated “speak evil” means “to revile, rail at, slander” (Hiebert). It includes speaking reproachfully and heaping curses upon another (Kent). It always has “a very bitter and malignant spirit” (Fairbairn). This behavior may sound strange in our society, but it happens daily and even among believers. This occurs when one gets bitter toward another for a long period and erupts. It can and does happen within a marriage. Brown says, “Verbal abuse is practiced as a fine art in the East” (Brown, cited by Hiebert) and in a lot of places in America!

Believers are “to be peaceable.” The New King James Version translates this as if it were a positive action. The Greek word, however, is a negative word meaning “abstaining from fighting, non-combatant, not contentious.” One Greek professor explains it as “not offensively aggressive,” not insisting on his rights (see Kent on 1 Tim. 3:3). “People who are ever fighting are wretched citizens and neighbors” (Lenski). A person who does this is quarrelsome; one who does not is maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Believers are to be gentle. Believers are to be gentle rather than demanding one’s rights and picking fights. The Greek word translated “gentle” is so full no one English word does it justice. It means to be equitable, fair, and moderate. My favorite translation is “sweet reasonableness” (Matthew Arnold). It also includes not insisting on one’s rights, yielding them, and being actively considerate. It is the opposite of “contentious” (Hiebert).

Believers are to show all humility to all men. “Humility” is the Greek word “meek.” This word was used of a horse that had been brought under the control of a bit and bridle. Hence, “strength under control” is the idea. This word describes the “unassuming inner peace of mildness and gentleness, which is the opposite of haughtiness, harshness, and self-assertiveness” (Hiebert). Gentleness and meekness are similar, but there is a difference. Gentleness is more the outward conduct that yields rights, while meekness is the inner virtue that produces such conduct (Lenski).

Believers are to show all meekness to all men. It is easy to show some meekness to some men or even all meekness to some men, but all meekness to all men is the goal toward which the believer must work.

These four virtues—no slander, contention, gentleness, and meekness—are good works in the sense that they would maintain peace, unity, and harmony in a family or church. Good works are a broad category, from paying taxes to meekness. Believers need to be reminded to do good works. Jesus went about doing good; we run around doing wrong.

## Because God has Saved Us

Why should believers do good works? Paul gives the reason for doing good works in Titus 3:3-7. In verses 1 and 2, he says, “Do good works.” Then, in verse 3, he says, “For,” that is, “because.” What follows in verses 3-7 is the reason for good works. In these verses, Paul heaps one word and phrase on top of another and uses a complex sentence to do it, but this thought can briefly sum up the whole: we were sinners when God saved us.

*Sin* Paul uses seven words or phrases to describe what sinners are like. “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (3:3). This is what believers were like before God saved them. Believers were once foolish, which, in Greek, means “no understanding.” Paul does not mention what they did not understand, but there is no doubt he is referring to the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14; so, Hendriksen; Hiebert). Believers were once disobedient. Again, there is no object. Does he mean disobedient to divine authority, human authority, or both (Hendriksen)? Although more may be included, he primarily means disobedient to God’s will (Alford). Someone will object, “We did not understand. How can we be responsible for not obeying?” The answer is: ignorance of the law excuses none. “I was not aware I was speeding, but I got a ticket and I had to pay.” Believers were once deceived. The Greek word translated “deceived” means “to go astray, to wander.” It can mean to be deceived. Since Paul begins with “not understanding,” he probably has “going astray” in mind here (Fairbairn). We wandered away from God’s way. These first three words describe sinners’ relationship to God or, more correctly, their lack of relationship. He doesn’t understand God’s Word, is disobedient to God’s will, and wanders from God’s way.

There is more. Before coming to Christ, believers served various lusts and pleasures. They were not serving God; they were serving themselves. The word “serving” is the Greek word for “slave.” “Lusts” here are not necessarily sexual lusts; they are strong yearnings and passionate longings. These inordinate cravings are for pleasure, possessions, or power (Hendriksen). Jesus said, “He who sins is a slave to sin” (Jn. 8:34). Non-Christians are not free; they are slaves—slaves to themselves and sin.

Believers were at one time living in malice and envy. Serving one’s desires makes one selfish, which begins to affect one’s relationship with others. Then, such a person lives in malice and envy. Malice is an attitude of spite, of wanting to get even. It is ill will that desires to injure (Hiebert). Envy is an attitude that intensely dislikes what another is or has. It is ill will because someone has something. Jealousy fears losing what it has; envy hates what another has (Hendriksen). It is no wonder that the sinner ends up hating and being hated. Out of envy and malice comes hate. Hating others results in being hated.

There are several ways to look at this list. For one thing, sin affects all of a person. It blinds the mind (foolish), bends the will (disobedient, wandering away), and blunts the emotions (serving desires, living in envy, malice, and hate). It also affects one’s relationship with God (foolish, disobedient, deceived), oneself (serving various lusts), and others (living in malice, envy, and hate). Sin kills! It destroys the relationship with God and others, and kills something

inside of you. Sin deadens until you cannot taste life. Habitual smokers who have been hooked for years testified that when they quit, they could taste food again. Cigarettes kill the taste buds. Likewise, sin deadens the sensitivity to life and love. Remembering what we were helps us to be gentle and meek (3:2; see Hendriksen).

*Salvation* Now, Paul turns from what we were to what happened to us. Verses 4 through 7 are one long, complicated sentence. The main thought of the sentence is stated in verse 5: He saved us. Everything else modifies that idea.

Paul begins with the *basis* of salvation. He says, “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared” (3:4). God was kind, benevolent; He had a disposition to benefit (Kent). He was loving. This is not the word “agape,” which means to do what is best. This is a compound word made up of *phileo*, which means to be fond of, to show affection, plus the word for man. Our word *philanthropy* comes from this Greek compound word. God was the first great philanthropist (Hiebert). These two attributes are in striking contrast to man’s attitude of malice, envy, and hate. God’s kindness and love should lead us to show benevolence and gentleness toward others as He has toward us (Wuest).

Furthermore, the basis of our salvation was according to God’s mercy (3:5). In the Greek text, “according to” indicates the standard. Mercy, a Greek word meaning “compassion,” was the “yardstick” (Hendriksen), which determined our salvation. Thus, the basis of salvation is God’s kindness, love, and mercy. God was moved and motivated to save us by His kindness, fondness, and compassion.

To underscore that the basis of our salvation was God’s grace, Paul adds, “not by works of righteousness which we have done” (3:5a). In the Greek text, the word “by” is “out of.” We were not saved based on our righteous living or works. Paul uses the same word for “works” here as he has used several times before in the phrase “good works.” He means that salvation does not come from our righteous acts or good works. The basis of our salvation is God’s goodness, not ours. The sign in front of the church, “To get to heaven, turn right and go straight,” gives the wrong direction. These directions don’t just lead to a dead-end street; they lead to disaster. The bridge is out and if you’re going that way, you will plunge to your death.

Well, then, how do sinners get saved? Paul elaborates in detail the *means* of salvation: “but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (3:5b). God saves through the washing of regeneration. This phrase has been greatly debated. The word “washing” has been rendered “laver” and understood of as a baptismal pool (Fairbairn; Alford). In this view, washing (that is, laver) is not the act of washing, but the place of washing and, thus, this verse is said to support baptismal regeneration. In the first place, the word “washing” is in classical Greek (Hiebert) and in the singular in the New Testament (Humphreys), as here, it means “washing.” Moreover, another Greek word would have been expected if Paul had intended to say “laver” (Kent).

“Regeneration” is a Greek compound word made up of “new” and “birth.” Thus, the “washing of regeneration” is cleansing sin at the new birth. In other words, God saves by the Holy Spirit cleansing at regeneration. This is done through the Word (Hiebert), not through water (Eph. 5:26; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). As people hear the word of truth, the gospel, and believe, the Holy Spirit cleanses them from sin and imparts new life.

God also saves by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks of “the washing of regeneration *and* renewing of the Holy Spirit.” The nature of the Greek construction makes two different renderings possible. Either regeneration is further defined as renewing the Holy Spirit (Hendriksen; Kent), or two operations are described: regeneration and renewal (Trench; Alford;

Fairbairn; Hiebert; Guthrie). In support of the second alternative is the fact that the word “renew” only occurs twice in the New Testament, here and in Romans 12:2, where it refers to what takes place after regeneration and not at regeneration.

Paul adds, “whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (3:6). In other words, God has made abundant provision for the Holy Spirit to renew us (Hiebert). An inadequate experience of the renewal is not because believers do not have an adequate supply of the Holy Spirit. It is because believers do not walk in the Spirit.

Thus, in this passage, when Paul says God “saves us” (3:5), he is not just referring to our initial salvation (regeneration) but also to our progressive salvation (renewal). Believers today think that being saved refers to what happens when people first trust Christ, but the New Testament uses the terms “saved” and “salvation” for several different experiences of the Christian life. The biblical concept of spiritual salvation can be divided into three parts. For believers, salvation is past, present, and future. They have been saved (Eph. 2:8), they are being saved (1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Tim. 4:16; Jas. 1:21), and they will be saved (Rom. 13:11; 1 Pet. 1:5; Heb. 9:27-28).

Paul not only delineates the basis of salvation and the means of salvation, he also defines the *purpose* of it. He says, “that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (3:7). In the Greek text, the word “that” introduces a purpose clause. The Greek word translated “justified” means “to declare righteous.” When people trust Christ, they are regenerated and declared righteous. Having been declared righteous by His grace, believers should become “heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” The purpose of the work of God in saving people in general and pouring out the Holy Spirit, in particular, is that they might become heirs (Hendriksen).

Thus, God saved believers based on His grace through His work, primarily through the Holy Spirit, so that they could make us heirs. God saved us: God the Father (3:5), God the Son (3:6), and God the Holy Spirit (3:5). The love of God, the grace of Christ, and the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit save us to make us heirs.

**Summary:** Believers should do good works, not to get saved, but because they are saved.

The general population has the subject of good works backward. They think they must perform good works to get to heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you have more good works to your credit than anyone who has ever lived, you would not necessarily get to glory. Good works cannot do it. Titus 3:5 says that as clearly as any verse in the New Testament; it is not by works of righteousness that we have done. Instead, we are sinners. God, by His grace, saves us and now we work because we are saved, not to get saved.

Suppose you had an incurable disease and went to doctor after doctor, but no one could do anything for you. Then, just when you decided it was hopeless, you found another doctor who had developed a new operation that could cure your problem. Imagine that he performed that operation on you and saved your life. After recovering, he came to see you while you were still in the hospital. With a clipboard in his hand, he is standing by the opposite side of your bed from the nightstand when he asks for a pencil. Would you give him the pencil? Would that be good? Why would you do it? To save your life? No. You would gladly hand the doctor a pen or a pencil. You would give him a box of them because he had just saved your life. Likewise, we do things for God, not to get something (not even heaven), but because He has already saved us.

# KEEPING IN SHAPE

As a young man, I was, among other things, a youth speaker. During those days, I spoke at one youth camp for six summers. Every year at that camp, I got the same question. Usually, a teenager who had been to camp the summer before and who had gotten charged up to return home to walk with the Lord would say, “I got right with the Lord last year at camp. I went home to live for Him, and I did—for a while, but then I got away from Him. Now I want to know how I can stay on track.” Good question! It is one thing to get things straightened out; it is another thing to keep them that way. It’s one thing to lose weight; it’s another thing to keep it off. It’s one thing to get in shape; it’s another to stay in shape. Frankly, many don’t make it.

In the first century, on the island of Crete, things needed to be set in order. Paul left Titus there and later wrote him a letter telling him how to do that. Titus is a book of instructions to Titus on how to set things in order in the Cretan churches (1:5). Paul tells Titus to appoint elders who hold to sound doctrine. Then, he speaks about things that fit sound doctrine, namely godliness, and reminds them to do good works. Thus, to set things in order in a church, or, for that matter, in a person’s life, one needs sound doctrine, godliness, and good works. Before Paul closes the discussion, he has one other thing to say. In Titus 3:8-11, he concludes the discussion on how to put things in order and, in a sense, informs Titus on how to keep them in order. In these verses, he gives three commands.

## Maintain Good Works

*A Faithful Saying* Paul states, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works” (3:8a). Five times in the Pastoral Epistles, and only in the Pastorals, the statement is made in the New Testament, “This is a faithful saying” (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). The Greek word translated “faithful” means “trustworthy, reliable, sure.” Apparently, preverbal statements drifted around the ancient church, and Paul calls one of them trustworthy and quotes it. The question is, what is a reliable statement?

Many commentators say that the faithful saying in this passage is Titus 3:4-7, that is, the love of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of Jesus Christ saves us to make us heirs (A. T. Robinson; Hendriksen; Kent; Hiebert; Guthrie). Others, however, correctly insist that the sure saying is what follows, beginning with “that” (Humphreys). The statement in verses 4 through 7 is too complicated and cumbersome to be a pithy saying. Furthermore, the nature of this statement, namely the “and” argues that the reliable proverb is what follows. Also, in the other four cases, this formula *introduces* the saying.

*Do Good Works* Paul urges Titus to affirm constantly this faithful saying: believers are to be workers. The Greek word translated “affirm constantly” implies persistence and thoroughness (Alford). Many preach that works are automatic. If you are saved, they say, you will spontaneously, so to speak, go to work because of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. That was not Paul’s point of view. He taught that believers needed to be constantly and continuously told to work.

Furthermore, believers who are to perform these good works will have to put forth thought and effort. Verse 8 says believers should be “careful.” The word “careful” means “to take thought to” and denotes earnest and careful thought, yea, even a straining in that direction (Fairbairn). They should be concerned and careful to “maintain” good works. The Greek word rendered “maintain” means “to stand before, preside over, rule, govern,” but here probably means “direct, maintain, practice.” They were to have a thoughtful approach to maintaining good works (Guthrie).

The point is that those who trust in God need to be constantly told they should be continually practicing good works. They should give thought and effort to doing so. In short, plan and perform good works. Do you have any plans? Do your plans include good works? If you don’t plan them, you probably will not do many, if any.

*Good and Profitable* Paul adds, “These things are good and profitable to men” (3:8b). Good works are excellent in themselves and are beneficial to others (Hendriksen; Hiebert). There were Christians on Crete whose works were not good and even denied God (1:16). Paul desires that they be sound in doctrine (1:13), sound in deportment (2:2), and sound in deeds (3:8). Do that which is good and useful to others, not that which is worthless and even damaging.

## Avoid Useless Disputes

*Avoid Disputes* The second command is “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless” (3:9). The Greek word translated “avoid” means “turn about, to avoid, to shun.” Titus is to shun “genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the Law. The Greek word translated “contentions” means “strife, wrangling, contention,” and the word rendered “striving” means “fight, strife, quarrel.” To understand what to avoid or shun, one must know something about the activity of the Jewish Christian teachers mentioned in chapter 1. Picking a name from a genealogical list in the Old Testament, they invented fables (1:14; Kent). From these man-made tales, they invented commandments. It was these myths and man-made mandates that caused the disputes (1 Tim. 1:4; Alford). There is a “marked similarity” between the situation described in 1 Timothy and the one mentioned here (Guthrie, who says *cf.* “genealogies” in 1 Tim. 1:4, “contentious” in 1 Tim. 6:4, “foolish disputes” and “strife” in 2 Tim. 2:23).

Paul tells Titus to avoid these disputes; they’re foolish. The Greek word translated “foolish” means “dull, stupid.” He describes these disputes as contentious and striving. These disputes degenerated into wrangling and fighting. To make matters more deplorable, these are quarrels concerning Scripture! Such activity is to be avoided.

*Unprofitable and Useless* The Greek word “for” (3:9) introduces why stupid strivings and foolish fights should be avoided. They’re unprofitable and useless. In verse 8, Paul says good works are profitable, but here, he says that a dispute and debate about Scripture is unprofitable and useless, that is, vain, empty, and utterly lacking in practical value (Fairbairn).

This has always been a problem for me. I love debate. So, when I became a Christian, I simply changed the subject of my informal debates to theology. Instead of debating secular subjects like politics, I now debated sacred subjects, such as election. Unfortunately, these so-called “discussions” degenerated into debates and even contentions. I remember getting together with my buddies on Saturday nights when I was in college. We met in the apartment of the student who was married. The rest of us had girlfriends with us. One night, one of the guys suggested that we have a theological discussion and threw out a suggested topic. He wanted us to

debate the terms of salvation, which he said was love instead of faith. We got into it like a back alley fight. Before the evening was over, the girls were in tears. The whole discussion was totally worthless. It kept us from doing good works.

If believers are to get in shape and stay that way, they must maintain good works and not get sidetracked by useless disputes.

## Deal with Divisive Individuals

What if people in the church want to debate and dispute and are getting others to follow their lead? Paul deals with that next. He says, **“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition” (3:10).** Notice that verse 9 concerns disputes, while verse 10 discusses a divisive man.

*The Action* The divisive man is just that. He is the one causing divisions and factions. The Greek noun translated “divisive” only occurs here in the New Testament and means “causing division, heretical, factious” (A-S). The adjective appears twice in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20). Ryrie says, “The word means a willful choosing for oneself which results in a party division. Heresy belongs to the works of the flesh, which can and often are performed by carnal Christians (Gal 5:20). Sometimes this may be used for good so that those who are not involved in heresy will stand out in the churches (1 Cor 11:19). Toward a heretic, the Scriptures really command a surprisingly lenient attitude—admonish twice, then ignore (Titus 3:11). Apparently, in New Testament times, the heretic was a carnal Christian who espoused error which brought factions into the church” (Ryrie, p. 47).

The first action to be taken is that such a person is to be admonished, a Greek word which means “to put in mind.” It assumes someone has stepped out of formation and is told to return to the line. This refers to Titus 1:13, where Paul told Titus to rebuke those teachers sharply (Humphrey). They certainly caused divisions (1:11). The rebuke was to be done to reclaim them to the faith (Hiebert).

The second action to be taken is to admonish the divisive person again. What if the person does not respond?

The third action to be taken is to reject the divisive person. The Greek word “reject” means “to beg off, ask to be excused, decline, refuse.” Some say this is merely a refusal to argue with the person (Humphrey). On the other hand, others interpret this to mean official exclusion or even excommunication (Fairbairn; Hendriksen), which seems to fit what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:14.

*The Reason* Paul adds, **“knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (3:11).** In other words, when a person has been divisive, refuses to listen to two admonitions, and persists in his practice, that indicates the kind of person he is (Hendriksen; Hiebert). This kind of disobedience warrants church discipline. Such a person is warped. The Greek word translated “warped” means “turned inside out, perverted.” Inside, he is turned, twisted, and distorted. He is not thinking straight. He is mentally and morally twisted: he is a “screwball” (Hendriksen). “The stubbornness of the man is evidence of a perverted mind” (Guthrie). He is sinning in that he is not endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit but is being divisive.

On top of that, he refuses to submit to godly advice from godly leaders (Hiebert). He is not responding to the admonitions given to him. He has sinned against God’s Word (Kent). He is self-condemned because he has chosen for himself that in which he is condemned (Plummer).



His sin is even worse because he knows he is sinning (Hendriksen). He knows he should yield, but he refuses to obey. So, he is to be refused.

**Summary:** To keep things in shape in a church, maintain good works, avoid useless disputes, and deal with divisive people.

In the book of Titus, Paul progresses to the point of getting the church to perform good works. Then, he concludes with an admonition to maintain them and not let any activity or person hinder that. What is true of a church is true of you as an individual. What activity or person prevents you from thoroughly serving the Lord? Maybe you need to avoid some activities and even refuse some people to be more profitable and productive for the Lord. Keep working and refuse anything or anyone who would hinder you.

Nehemiah was busy building a wall around Jerusalem when several divisive men requested that he come to have a conference with them in the Valley of Ono. His answer is classic (Neh. 6:3). He said, "I am doing a great work. I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I come to talk to you." In other words, they invited him to come to the Valley of Ono, and he said, "Oh, no!"

In short, go to work and refuse to stop.

## GETTING IN SHAPE

If you are a parent, it has happened to you. You walk into your ten-year-old's bedroom and can't believe your eyes. The room looks like a tornado just passed through. The drawers on the dresser are open. Clothes are hanging out. Speaking of clothes, they're everywhere: on the unmade bed, floor, and doorknobs. The place is a mess! It's not as dirty as it is, just messy. There is no order or organization.

That scene reminds me of some churches I've seen and some Christians I know. Things are in a mess. The issue is not so much sin, though that is probably there, too, as it is just a lack of order. That was Paul's opinion of the churches on the island of Crete. Things were indeed out of line. Jewish Christian teachers were teaching things that they should not be teaching. They picked names from the genealogical lists in the Old Testament and fabricated fables, which they concluded with man-made mandates. The results were disastrous. There were factious fights, which destroyed individuals and even whole houses. To compound the problem, these teachers were liars and deceivers. Those churches were not productive.

How does one go about straightening out a mess like that? How do you get a church in shape? To do that, you obviously must deal with individuals. Where do you start? What do you do? That's what Titus is about (1:5). Let's look at the book as a whole to learn about getting in shape.

### Appoint Elders Sound in Doctrine

*Appoint Elders* After the customary salutation in which the author identifies himself and the recipients and sends greetings, Paul states the point and purpose of the whole letter, namely to set things in order (1:5). The first thing Paul tells Titus to do is appoint elders. He then lists the qualifications of an elder (1:5-9). An elder must be blameless in his family, personal, and doctrinal life. He must be a devoted husband and have disciplined children. He must not be a selfish, hot-headed, headstrong, violent man greedy for money, but rather a sensible, self-controlled man who has a sense of what is right, just, and holy and loves what benefits others. He must also be able to use the Word of God. Having first experienced the Word in his personal and family life, he is able and qualified to teach others.

The place, then, to begin setting things in order in a church is with elders. The president of the college I attended used to say, "Everything rises or falls on leadership." Although that may not be universally true in every case, good generals can lose battles for reasons beyond their control; in the case of a church mess, things will not likely get straightened out without proper leadership.

*Reason* The reason for and responsibility of elders is given in Titus 1:10-16. Verse 10 begins with "for," indicating that the following verses give the reason for appointing elders. As verse 10 goes on to say, there are many insubordinate idle talkers whose mouths are to be stopped. One of the reasons for elders is the presence of Errorists. Elders are to see to it that the flock is fed (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2) and protected (Acts 20:28-31). How can they handle such a serious problem as teachers teaching things they ought not? The answer is in Titus 1:13-16. Paul instructs Titus, in particular, and the elders, in general, to rebuke them sharply. The purpose of the rebuke is not to

punish but to restore. The first major movement of the book tells us where to start and what to do to clean up a church mess. In other words, start at the top with qualified elders who are to correct any teaching that is not in line with the Word of God.

When I became the pastor of the Church of the Open Door, everyone said it was in a mess. One of the first things we did was reorganize the board structure so that there was one board of elders instead of four boards. The elders, not just me, worked on doing whatever was necessary to put things in order.

Ultimately, the issue is not the Errorists or the elders; it is sound doctrine. The Errorists were a problem in the first place because they were not sound in the faith. Elders must hold to and use sound doctrine so that sound doctrine will reign in the church. To get things in shape in your life or in a church, there must be sound doctrine, that is, healthy teaching.

## **Speak to Each Group about Godliness**

*Groups* After appointing elders sound in doctrine, the next thing Paul tells Titus to do is speak to various groups in the church concerning personal godliness. Titus is to talk specifically to the older men and women (2:2-5), to the younger men (2:6), and to slaves (2:9-10). In the midst of this, Paul speaks specifically to Titus (2:7-8). Thus, in getting things in shape, after appointing elders and having them do their jobs, the next important thing is to get the older people to do what they're supposed to do. A church needs older people as examples and teachers (2:2-5, esp. vs. 4).

Older people in our society often feel like they are not valuable or needed. That's not true in the church of God. Older people are needed and are valuable to a church provided, of course, they are examples of godliness. Someone has pointed out that people are like furniture, which goes through three stages: the excitement of being new, it gets old and is put in the attic, and, finally, it becomes a valuable antique.

*Godliness* All the various groups are to be godly. In Titus 2:1, Paul tells Titus to speak to various groups of things which are proper for sound doctrine. The word "proper" means "fitting." This is obvious from the content of chapter 2. It is plainly stated in Titus 2:12 that what fits or is suited to sound doctrine is godliness. Throughout chapter 2, Paul lists various virtues, all of which are a part of godliness, but there is one quality he seems to mention more than any other in the book, namely sober-mindedness (1:8; 2:1, 2:4, 5, 6, 12). The Greek word translated "sober-mindedness" means "to be sane, sensible, sober-minded, and self-controlled." Part and parcel of godliness is being sensible. Someone has suggested that if you lack knowledge, men can help you. If you lack wisdom, God can help you. If you lack horse sense, no one can help you.

*Reason* Why should a believer in any age group be godly? What is the motive for godliness? Frankly, several "purposes" for godly behavior are sprinkled throughout this chapter. Notice the purpose clauses: 1) that the Word of God be not blasphemed—2:5, 2) that the opposers be ashamed having nothing evil to say—2:8, 3) that you adorn the doctrine of God—2:10. Beyond those motives, the ultimate motive for godliness is given in verses 11-14. Verse 11 begins with "for" indicating the reason for what has been said in verses 1-10. The reason, the motive, for godliness is the grace of God. Since Christ died for us, we can only live for Him.

So, to get things in shape, a church needs sound doctrine and healthy teaching that will result in godliness. What's next?

## Remind Everyone about Good Works

*Good Works* Next, Paul instructs Titus to remind everyone to perform good works (3:1). Good works is a broad category, which seems to include everything that benefits someone else. Paul lists several specifics, including submission to civil authorities and maintaining unity, but he also adds, “Be ready for every good work.”

*Reason* Again, Paul gives the reason or motive for what is to be done. Verse 3 begins with “for.” Although stated differently, the reason for good works in chapter 3 is the same as the reason for godliness in chapter 2: God has graciously saved you who were sinners filled with hate (3:3-7).

The body of the book concludes with Titus 3:7. What follows is a conclusion and the customary personal greetings and benediction. In the conclusion, he urges Titus to affirm the need for good works constantly and not to be sidetracked by disputes or divisive men (3:8-11). In the personal greetings, Paul tells Titus several things to do, all of which are good works.

For example, Paul says, “When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there” (3:12). “Diligent” means “make haste, speed.” The idea is to be zealous or eager to come to Paul. No doubt to serve Paul and be with Paul in the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). Serving others is a good work.

Paul also tells Titus, “Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing” (3:13). Titus was also eager to help others on their way, that is, enable them to proceed by furnishing them with the necessities for their journey, including supplies and funds, or whatever they needed. It implies escorting them part of the way. Aid to the point that they lack nothing for their journey. Hospitality and missionary support are good works.

Further, Titus was to get others involved. “And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful” (3:14). “Learn,” in verse 14, means to learn by use and practice. They are to acquire the habit by practicing good works. It was imperative that others get involved because Titus personally would not have sufficient financial resources to do all that needed to be done. The real point of verse 14 is that they needed to learn to develop the habit of meeting needs as they came up. If they did not step forward with active good works when such occasions arise, they would scarcely learn how to do good works, but by doing good works, they would be fruitful and not barren.

Paul concludes, “All who *are* with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace *be* with you all. Amen” (3:15). Ancient letters ended with personal greetings and a benediction.

**Summary:** To set things in order in a church, elders sound in doctrine must be appointed, and godliness and good works must be taught.

There are several ways to summarize the content of this book. In one sense, Paul is simply telling Titus to appoint elders (1:5-16), speak to each group (2:1-16), and remind everyone to do good works (3:1-11). Yet there is more here than that. Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders sound in doctrine, speak to each group about godliness, and remind everyone about good works. So, to get in shape as an individual or a church, one needs healthy teaching, producing godliness and good works. With that as the standard, ask yourself, “Am I in shape?”

What would it take for you to get in shape physically? Basically, two things: 1) to eat properly; 2) exercise—all of which takes a plan and a great deal of effort. Likewise, to get in shape spiritually, you need to eat properly and work, which demands a plan and discipline. Why don’t you get started today?

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