

Message #3

Titus 1:5-6

The island of Crete was a wild, party island. It was an island filled with immoral behavior, deceit and crime. In fact, one of the statements made by one of Crete's own citizens said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12).

Now what do you do when you are Titus living in a world like that? Where to you start and how do you tackle this? Paul says the answer is we **establish churches in every city**.

Now one of the major doctrines of the church, which is being taught right now in our adult Sunday School Class with Mr. Kelly, is Ecclesiology, which is the doctrine of the church. One of the questions that is addressed is what is it that makes a church a church in God's mind? When you go through that study you realize a church is not a church because of a building or even by a bunch of people gathering together, but one thing that is necessary to have a church is leadership.

Now to have a church, by God's classification, there must be appointed leadership. This is one of the things that separate a church from a Bible study. In a true church there must be leadership and that is what Paul wanted Titus to do, go from place to place and appoint leadership. In a wild party world, what the world needs are leaders who believe right and act right.

What we see here is this:

PAUL LEFT TITUS ON THE ISLAND OF CRETE TO APPOINT STABLE, SPIRITUAL, QUALIFIED LEADERS FOR EACH CHURCH IN EVERY CITY ON THE ISLAND.

Crete was a beautiful tropical island. The interior of the island has hills and mountains and trees and it has beautiful fertile valleys. It had 57 beautiful beaches and the climate was an excellent climate to grow fruit. One of the favorite fruits was grapes, which meant there was a good supply of wine. This became a known party island. There was plenty of money, plenty of wine and plenty of parties all over the island. This was a true tropical paradise.

Religiously, Crete was a wild place too. The Cretans claimed their island was the birthplace of Zeus, the mythological Greek deity. They also said Zeus was buried on the island. Not only was there Greek mythology, but also Jewish legalism (Titus 1:14). Also there is evidence that several of the Roman deities were worshipped on the island. So this was a wild religious place to be. There is sun, sand, sin and sex.

Apparently there were some real believers in Christ on the island. We know that some of them had been in Jerusalem and were at Pentecost (Acts 2:11). They had gone back to their homes and by the time Paul or Titus got to the island, about 30 years had gone by.

There are some great principles to learn from this book:

Principle #1 - God can do and does do His great work in heathenistic places.

Principle #2 - One can live in a very godless place and be a very godly person.

Principle #3 - God does not demand relocation of His people but transformation of His people.

Paul says in **verse 5**, Titus, I left you on the island of Crete to “set in order what remains.” This is a very rare Greek word, only used here. **The Greek word would indicate that what Paul wanted Titus to do was to put in order the things that are lacking or wanting.** In other words, Paul wanted Timothy to straighten things out that had not been finished.

Now the word “set in order” would indicate that there was some basic formation of a church. In fact, the word means to **set in order further**, so apparently there was some resemblance of Christianity on the island, but it wasn’t what God or Paul wanted (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 169).

It is significant that the verb “set in order” is middle voice, which means Titus was to tackle this in and of himself. God would help him, but it was his job to do this. It was a big job, but it was his job to do. He did not need to wait on God; he needed to get to work. His job was to fix things for God.

Now the specific things that Titus was to set in order are not named here. However, as we examine the book of Titus we certainly can conclude that he was to straighten out church order; faulty theology; faulty attitudes concerning work; respect and submission. He was to teach “sound doctrine” to the church.

As we may expect, the church was a free-for-all and it was in a much disorganized condition. Even though some people had been believers for 30 years and some of the churches had been around for 30 years, they needed to be straightened out. The church was not reverent and it was not solid and it needed fixing. It needed a lot of fixing.

The easy thing for Titus to have done would be get on a boat and get out of there. But Paul says what I want you to do is to go from city to city (presently 146 cities and villages) and straighten things out with the Word of God. That is the reason I have left you on the island.

The church of God is to be a place that offers people truth and reverence. No matter how wild the world, this is what the church is to do and this is the way the church is to be.

Now Paul says the first thing you are to do is to “appoint elders in every city.” This is a reference to the Elders of a church. So Titus was to go from city to city and from church to church and appoint Elders. That word “appoint” is one that means that Titus has the responsibility to make appointments or to put in place certain men (*Ibid.*, p. 224).

Now in this context there are two different words that refer to the same office: In **verse 5** there is the word “elder” (presbuteros) and in **verse 7** there is the word “overseer” (episkopos).

The word “elder” is used in two ways: It is used in reference to physical age and it is used in reference to an office in the church held by one who is spiritually mature. Titus didn't have much to work with here, but he was to find some who had some resemblance of maturity.

The word “overseer” refers to one who is a superintendent, guardian and manager.

The word Elder has to do with a man's spiritual condition and the word Overseer has to do with his spiritual responsibility. An overseer is to manage or superintend the people of God. He is to be a spiritually-minded man whose job it is to manage the church and the people for God.

Now in order to help Titus pick men who could help straighten out the church on this wild dog party island, Paul gave Titus a series of qualifications for him to look for in the men to select.

Now before we tackle these qualifications, we want to make the following five observations:

Observation #1 - These qualifications have nothing to do with a man's pre-conversion character.

Paul said concerning his own life that prior to him believing on Christ he had formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and mind and were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Paul said that some of the Corinthians prior to their salvation had been involved in some of the worst sins imaginable (I Cor. 6:9-11).

Observation #2 - These qualifications have to do with a man's post-conversion faithfulness.

The critical point of a leader is that he may be found trustworthy and faithful as a leader. He must be one who has proven himself to be a reliable and faithful man of God.

Observation #3 - These qualifications are qualitative, not quantitative.

There is no article “the” before any of the qualifications listed in Timothy or Titus. What this means is Paul is emphasizing the character and quality of a man's life. He is not speaking of isolated moments when one has perhaps violated one of the qualifications. Numerical restriction is not the intent. Quality of life is the intent. So the question to ask for each of these qualifications is do you see the character and quality of faithfulness in this man in view of these qualifications? The question is not did he ever blow it in life?

Now a good example is Peter. Peter publicly denied the Lord and cursed Him three times. This would seem to be a clear violation of the first qualification “above reproach.” Yet we know from I Peter 5:1 that not only was Peter an Apostle, but he was also an Elder.

How do we explain this? The list for leaders is qualitative, not quantitative. In the big picture of Peter's life, he was a very faithful man of God. That was his character.

Observation #4 - These qualifications are necessary for leadership of a church blessed by God.

If a church is to be blessed of God and if a church is to make an impact for God in the wild godless world, it must be a place that recognizes the importance of having leaders who strive after these qualities.

Observation #5 - These qualifications are determined before God by the individual and by observation of other leaders and people.

Frankly, how do we know if one is qualified? All good leaders I have known don't think they are qualified to lead. They never see themselves as good enough. Who determines this? Well first and foremost it is God. God will ultimately surface faithful men in His sovereignty. He will use His Holy Spirit to surface qualified men (Acts 20:28).

Also God will use a spiritually-minded, established leader to spot those who are faithful. That is exactly what Titus was to do (Titus 1:5). In fact, Paul told Timothy to be very careful in selection of leaders because it was being done in the presence of God, Jesus Christ and the holy angels (I Tim. 5:21-22).

Also we know from Paul's own experience in life in the church of Antioch that various leaders sensed that Paul and Barnabas had been selected for sacred service (Acts 13:1-2).

When God wants a man in leadership, he may overrule the man's opinion of himself. Moses did not think he was a fit leader over Israel and he actually argued with God about that (Ex. 4:1-12). In all reality, God said to Moses your opinion doesn't matter, you are My leader, like it or not.

Also we may observe that the congregation of God's people may collectively be led by the Holy Spirit to select men of leadership. The Apostles asked the congregation to spot faithful men and bring their names to them (Acts 6:1-6).

QUALIFICATION #1 – To straighten out a church, appoint men who have the character and quality of being above reproach. **1:6a, 7**

Now let's first observe that Paul does not say appoint men who are sinless. Truth is there are none. What Paul says is appoint men who are "above reproach." What that means is that Titus was to look for men who did not have to be continually called to accountability by some reproof or reproach issue (*Ibid.*, p. 35).

In other words, Titus was to find men who did not always have to be rebuked for something. A man who is disqualified is one who must be continually reproved by others. This could be some doctrinal belief or some bad behavior.

Now when Paul wrote to Timothy and said men were to be “above reproach” (I Tim. 3:2), he used a different word. This particular word had to do with one who had earned a good reputation as a man of God (*Ibid.*, p. 24). In Timothy, the word is the idea of “deserved reputation.”

So if we combine the two words Paul uses in Timothy and Titus, we conclude that the one who is above reproach is one who has earned a reputation as one you do not always have to be challenging via some reproof. The man is viewed as a solid, stable man of God.

Now we may clearly demonstrate that this qualification “beyond reproach” may be earned after having sinned before salvation and even after salvation:

King David used this word “above reproach” in II Samuel 22:24-26. In the Septuagint the Greek word that is used is the one used in Timothy. This word was used of David long after his sin with Bathsheba (II Sam. 22:19, 20). What this tells us is that even if a believer has failed, over a period of time he may develop a testimony that is above reproach.

In Colossians 1:21-22 Paul uses both words of Titus and Timothy to teach the Colossians of their new status with God. In this very context, Paul says that these Colossians were “formerly alienated from God and were hostile in their minds and engaged in evil deeds.”

So Paul was not telling Titus look for perfect men; he was telling him to look for men who had earned a reputation of being a faithful man of God.

QUALIFICATION #2 – To straighten out a church, appoint men who have the character and quality of being a one woman man. **1:6b**

To this day it is not uncommon on the island of Crete for married men to have a mistress. In fact, it is almost considered to be some badge of honor if an older man with a wife has younger women as his mistresses. This is the world today on the island and this was the world on Crete when Titus was there. So Paul says you need men who are one woman men. The words do not read “husband of one wife.” The words literally read “one woman man” (mias gunaikos aner).

Here is a qualification that has been the subject of many opinions and interpretations most of which are not based on what the Greek text actually says. In fact, most opinions are based on views men have but cannot grammatically prove:

- 1) A man who is a leader must not be a polygamist.
- 2) A man who is a leader must be married.
- 3) A man who is a leader must not be married but celibate.
- 4) A man who is a leader must be married to the church.
- 5) A man who is a leader must not remarry after his first wife dies.
- 6) A man who is a leader must never have been in any immoral behavior.
- 7) A man who is a leader must never have been divorced at any time.
- 8) A man who is a leader must never have been divorced after he was saved.
- 9) A man who is a leader must not be remarried after a divorce has occurred.
- 10) A man who is a leader must be a one woman man and not a womanizer.

Now when it comes to polygamy, it is uncertain if it were even an issue on the island of Crete. Certainly the words “one woman man” would negate polygamy, so we will admit that.

As far as a leader having to be married, there is no evidence that either Timothy or Titus were married. Furthermore, Paul does not say the man must be married. He doesn’t even use those words. The word for marriage is “gameo” and it is nowhere to be seen.

As far as a leader being married to the church and remaining celibate, again Paul does not say he must be married to the church. The word for church, ecclesia is nowhere to be seen.

As far as not remarrying after a man’s first wife dies, there is no hint anywhere that Paul meant that. The word death “thanatos” is nowhere to be seen.

As far as a man never having been involved in any immoral behavior ever in his life, some of the Corinthians certainly had been prior to their conversion and even Paul and Peter alluded to the fact that they sowed some “wild oats” (Ephesians 2:3; I Peter 4:3). Again the words that refer to immoral behavior are nowhere to be seen.

All of the no divorce interpretations may be refuted by one simple question–If Paul meant that a leader should not be divorced, why didn’t he say that and use the word divorce since he knew the word because he used it in I Corinthians 7:12? The word for divorce “aphiami” is nowhere to be seen.

Not long ago I was in a discussion with a minister who said that he had his own view on this about divorce. He told me that his mentor, Dr. Howard Sugden, did not agree with him, but that was his view. He said, “I have my own view.” I said to him, “Do you know what is wrong with your view?” He said, “No.” I said, “You cannot support it from the words written in the Bible. Your opinion does not square with what Paul actually wrote because he did not use the word ‘divorce.’” He sat there in total silence. I said, “Do you think Paul was the kind of man who if he meant not divorced would not have said that? Don’t you think he would have specifically stated that?”

In fact, a great Greek scholar, H. A. W. Meyer, made an interesting historical observation and said of all interpretations that forbade a second marriage after death or divorce that “The undecided opposition to second marriages appeared among Christians only in the post apostolic age, when asceticism was already taking a non-Pauline direction” (*Meyers Commentary on the New Testament*, Vol. 9, p. 118).

Actually there is only one interpretation of the Greek words that fits the words and the historical context. The Greek words translated “husband of one wife” literally reads “one woman man” or “a man of one woman.” It is legitimate to view this as meaning a “one woman man.”

It is interesting that the noun “man” is not the one most often used of man (anthropos). This word (aner) emphasizes the fact that this is a male as opposed to a female.

This is a male gender emphasizing noun. This is important. Crete was a wild party island and there were many girls on that island and as one person said, when you get a bunch of males and females together in this kind of beach environment with a bunch of drinking, “boys will be boys.”

Well Paul knew that to be a leader for God you cannot live by a “boys will be boys” code. If one were to be a leader in the church he cannot be out chasing women. He cannot be one who is sexually promiscuous. He cannot, as Meyer said, be living an “immoral life” (*Ibid.*, p. 118). If one is married, he needs to be faithful to his wife. If one is not married, he cannot be a “Don Juan” womanizer.

One minister said he knew of a man who had been married to one woman and was a leader in the church and it was discovered that he was prowling around with an addiction to pornography. He claimed he met the criteria of being a leader because he was married to his wife. It was pointed out that that is not what the words mean and when this was discovered, he was immediately removed from the board because he was not really a one woman man.

Perhaps the most famous minister story of a man who should have never been a leader of the church was Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887). In Brooklyn, New York, there is a statue of him because people considered him to be a great minister. Beecher was married to one woman his entire life, but he was not known to be a one woman man. In fact, an article was written about him called “Preacher Beecher, a Sex-Crazed Creature.” He had several extra-marital affairs. According to historian Barry Werth, “it was standard gossip that Beecher preaches to seven or eight of his mistresses every Sunday evening.” This is a man who is honored as a great minister to this day and Paul says you don’t let a man like that lead any church, not even on the island of Crete.

On an island like Crete, a man who was not a womanizer would make a wonderful statement for the grace of God. That is what Paul was after. So he told Titus you appoint men to be leaders who are one woman men.

We live in a sex-crazed world and a man who is faithful to his wife does stand out. Titus was to find men like that and see to it that they were leaders in the church. Men who are leaders cannot be sexually promiscuous whether married or not.

QUALIFICATION #3 – To straighten out a church, appoint men who have faithful children.
1:6c

Now this qualification is one that assumed that the children were still on the island of Crete and living at home. In fact, the word “children” (tekna) refers to children who are younger as opposed to older. This could be a reference to children in their teens. This is a different word than that which is translated “young men” (2:6) or “young women” (v. 4). So as near as I can determine, if a man has young children in his home, to be an elder those children in the home must have three attributes:

Attribute #1 - The children must be children who have continual faith.

Now the participle “having” is present tense and the noun “faith” is anarthrous (no article). So what this means is that the children are to be those who are continually brought up in the faith. They are being admonished to have the character and quality of faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the true God and His Word. They could not be worshipping Zeus or any other false deity. An elder could not have children who are out worshipping false deities and going to places of false religion.

Attribute #2 - The children must not be accused of dissipation.

The word means wasteful and riotous living (*Ibid.*, p. 66). The children cannot be those who are continually accused of being involved in riotous living. An elder cannot be one who tolerates his children living a godless and wild life while supporting it in his home.

Attribute #3 - The children must not be accused of continual rebellion.

The children must not be continually accused of not submitting to law and authority (*Ibid.*, p. 43). An elder must demand that his children respect authority and submit to authority. He cannot be one who promotes or tolerates disobeying the law.

As I understand this, as long as the children are in the home, it is the responsibility of the leader to see to it that his children do not run wild. They are to be brought up in the faith and they are not to be permitted to run wild.

In other words, a man is to be an example that his own home is in order and well-conducted in the promotion of God and His Word and the promotion of what is right.

This was where Titus was to begin. He was to go from city to city and appoint stable leaders for the church.

When you have that you have the beginning of a church that God will bless and use even in a wild world like Crete.