

Church Camp 2009 Session 2 Titus 1:5-16

This morning we will look at Titus 1:5-16. We will look at the qualifications of an elder and the immediate application of an elder's duty.

By the time I am done I hope you will understand more about the qualifications of an elder and how an elder should carry out his position when the sheep are in danger.

⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

The first thing we need to note is that this letter was written to Titus from Paul. So the most direct application was by Titus. It was not written to us, but it was **given** to us. We know for sure that Titus was to do exactly as he was told. When I started studying this I assumed that these instructions apply to all churches everywhere. But in reality that is not a safe assumption to make. It is possible that Crete may have needed different specific requirements than the rest of the Roman world. That is worth considering when viewing differences between Timothy and Titus. Most scholars treat the passages like they are universal and interchangeable. But the question has to be asked, "If Titus were to have taken Timothy's instructions and Timothy were to have taken Titus's instructions, would Paul have been happy with that. I think that gets to the heart of the matter. If they are different instructions given to different people in different circumstances, we should compare those things that are similar and those are the things we can be surest about in our application. Where they differ we must be a little more cautious.

Titus was left in Crete to set things in order, the same way a broken bone is set in order when it is set. Titus was to do this in the church. So we can see right off the bat that leadership by

qualified men and a structure of authority is a necessary thing that God sets in place. We may sometimes think that everyone should be able to function without positions of authority and without shepherds and leaders. But we live in a fallen world and authority is a service **to us** to help us live our lives in an orderly fashion. When leaders are lacking, things need to be set in order. Flocks need shepherds and must have them. So Titus was to appoint elders in every city, just like Paul had already told him to do. Was Titus being negligent in his duty up to this point? That is possible. Whatever the case Paul felt the need to tell him to get back to work and get his job done.

Now **Timothy** is told by Paul to, essentially, accept applications and receive those who are qualified. **Titus'** command was more forceful than this. He was told flat out to appoint elders. Why is that? There are many theories but I think it is likely that the culture that Titus was sent to wasn't exactly full of over achievers. These folks, according to their poets, didn't seem to want to do a thing more than they were forced to do. So Titus had to appoint them. He had to let them know that Christ wanted them to serve the congregation as Elders and they had better get about doing it.

Titus was to appoint these elders in every city. This is a little unusual. We have no way of knowing if there was a church in every city. It is possible that the elders of the church were needed wherever church members were. So whether or not there was a church gathering at each city, each city needed shepherds for the believers that lived there. This is interesting in that it lets us know that shepherds must be in proximity of the sheep. They cannot do their job from a distance.

Now, what kind of person should he appoint as an elder?

Keep in mind that these are not requirements for a person being a saint, or for exercising a ministry gift, even of preaching or teaching. These are qualifications for a specific office, the office of elder or bishop.

⁶if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

Notice this description starts with the word "if". Evidently an elder has to first qualify according to this first section before moving on to the next section.

The word blameless is used twice in this short section. I think this word is central to understanding what Paul was after. Blameless means a person that cannot be called into to account, unprovable, unaccused. Basically, this is a person that **may be unfairly accused** of something from the following list, but the **charge would not stick**. The list to follow gives the specific things that a man must be blameless about. He may be a person who has other flaws that do not exhibit rebellion. But he could not be a thief or a drunk. It isn't that this man is expected to be perfect. But he is to meet a standard of behavior that is fit for the position. He must display certain competences and he must **not** display certain weaknesses. The position of elder has some work to do and the person has to be suited for the task.

We cannot understand this list to be a list that an elder would meet perfectly. When we get to the quality of holiness, there would be no candidate left standing if what we are talking about is absolute holiness. But we can find men who are generally holy. They are living a consecrated life for Christ. I think that is how this list is meant to be applied.

This next passage gives us excellent practice at Biblical interpretation. Scripture means what it means. And we need to do the best we can at interpreting it and applying it to our situations.

The first blameless condition a man must meet is to be the husband of one wife, or literally, a one woman man. There are as many opinions about how to apply this as there are commentaries. Those who interpret this passage from a Hebrew perspective tend to think it means that a man must be married. A single man, in their opinion, would not be fit for the position. Many of the situations an elder will deal with will have to do with families. A man with no family has no demonstrated competence to handle family situations. He also has no record of how he

handles a family, which Timothy says is a criterion that qualifies him for leading a church.

Some say that husband of one wife means that the man has no more than one wife. This is a more common view with the scholars from 200 years ago or more. Calvin viewed it this way. He says that polygamy was common when the book was written and that this statement by Paul is to limit the position to men who only have one wife. Some say that if a man has more than one wife it displays a lack of restraint. Others say that if a man has more than one wife he is not likely to have the time to serve the church because he will be occupied governing his own household.

Recent scholars have a tendency to interpret this verse as forbidding a man who is improperly divorced, or divorced at all, from being an elder. There is much variance in how modern authors apply this concept.

The words literally mean a one woman man. McAurther interprets this as a man who is thoroughly committed to one woman and one who does not have a wandering eye or unchecked desire, a man that is not a womanizer. He believes it to be a qualification of sexual morality. And he believes it to be necessary since sexual sin is so often the thing that destroys an elder's ministry.

In my studies I have not found anyone who would apply what Titus says **absolutely**. All believe that Paul did not cover all eventualities, all situations that could happen. For instance, no one I read says that an elder should be removed if his wife were to die. So in order to apply this properly we need to know what Paul is shooting at. What does he mean by a one woman man?

When we read this text, do we think it should be applied dogmatically as stated? If so the man must currently be married to one wife with children who are believers. If his wife or children were to die he would no longer qualify as an elder. This would be the most literal interpretation, yet as I said, most believe Paul

was not trying to create all the limitations the statement logically includes.

If we say, no, Paul did not cover every situation when he spoke these words, then we must discern the principle that he is getting at with these qualifications.

It is interesting that many of the writers are very dogmatic in applying their opinion about what this principle is. And they would tend to violently disagree with those who would be dogmatic with other interpretations.

For instance, suppose when Paul says the man should be married to one wife that he meant by this saying that the man **must be married**. An unmarried man would not be qualified. Suppose that is the emphasis of the text. And since two wives would be a major distraction, he must only have one. But he absolutely **must be** married.

Those who believe this Hebrew view would **require** an elder candidate to be currently married to one wife. But suppose the elder candidate was previously divorced yet has been remarried for a long enough time to have believing children. He would **still be** a candidate to the Hebrew view, but he **would not be** a candidate to those who believe the verse is simply prohibiting divorce. And if the man is single he **may be** a candidate to those who think this text is a restriction on divorce, but he **would not be** a candidate to the Hebrew view.

The most conservative application of this passage is to select a man who is currently married to one wife. But personally I don't think the most literal approach represents what Paul had in mind. I believe he gave the instruction to the folks in Crete and the folks in Crete probably knew much better what he meant.

My thoughts are that the prohibition of divorce is probably not his intention here. It would be very easy to simply prohibit a divorced man from being an elder if that was his intention. And if his intention was to have single men hold this position, why did

he immediately make his first requirement based on the man's relationship to a woman?

It looks to me like a requirement for the position of an elder is that he at least for some period of time has had a faithful wife and a family, stable enough and for enough time to demonstrate his leadership ability. Unmarried men would simply not know as well how to help those they oversee in all areas of life. And this view would mesh very well with Timothy's statements.

So in application of this text, this first requirement, if I were interviewing an elder candidate, I would ask (at least as I see it today) is the man married to one wife and restricting himself to that one wife sexually? Along with this, if the man is a widower, did the man qualify as an elder while he was married. Was he a man that could manage his household.

having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

The word for faithful in this text is a word that, when applied to humans in the New Testament always addresses believers. In the Titus context it is possible that the word can be used in its broader sense. Some would say there is grounds for this interpretation because the following statements of "not accused of dissipation or insubordination" may be further defining what faithful means. Dissipation or insubordination would be proof that the person is not faithful.

But it would seem at first glance to mean that an elder's children must be believers who are submissive to the elder's authority.

dissipation – 1.completely given up to dissipation and licentiousness **2** : wildly extravagant

insubordination- 1) not made subject, unsubjected
2) that cannot be subjected to control, disobedient, unruly, refractory

They certainly cannot be unruly rebels. The word for children is Teknon and it means daughter or son and does not give an indication of age. But given the sins that they cannot be accused of, we could safely assume the children must be of the age that such a thing could be possible. Dissipation is not a sin that a very young child could be guilty of if I understand it properly. This would be a word used for drunken orgies. So from the context it looks like the children being spoken of must be at least teen agers. This would also give them time from birth to an age of accountability to believe in Christ.

This instruction was not given to Timothy. We should at least consider that the start up elders may have had an additional requirement in Crete. It is possible that their job would be so difficult anyway that Paul did not want unbelieving family members distracting from the ministry the elders had to do. Maybe it would affect their credibility. Maybe it would distract their attention. We don't know. But we have to at least consider this possibility.

The passage in Timothy adds something that I think helps clarify things some here. I Tim 3:4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); Timothy gives us a principle and a reason where Titus is only given instructions. It is much easier to apply this passage from Timothy.

An elder must show competence in leadership. And if he does it well in the smaller thing- his household- he is likely to serve the church competently as well. If a man does things to drive his family away from him and Christ, he really is not fit to be an elder. If he shows the ability to nurture his family in Christ and protect them from evil, he should be able to do the same thing for the church as well.

I think the safest question that could be asked of an elder candidate based on these verses is- "Does this person demonstrate the competence to serve the church by the way he has overseen his own household?" "Does his life situation allow

him to serve the church without much distraction?" I think it would also be appropriate to ask "Is he married to one wife with a family that is well maintained?" And if one believes that the application of Titus is universal they would have to ask if the older children of the elder candidate are believers.

Next we will look at a list of things an elder should not be.

⁷For 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,

Here we see blameless further defined as it applies to an elder. First, the general framework of an elder is that he is a steward of God. He is dealing with valuable things that are not his own. And as such, he should deal with them as the owner would have them dealt with. Everything he does falls under this stewardship principle. The question could be asked, "Does he live his life as if he is owned by Christ?"

Not Self Willed- not self pleasing, self willed or arrogant. An elder should be a person that is willing to look after the needs of others at his own expense. He isn't in it for what he can get for himself. His flesh isn't telling him what to do. He must show fleshly restraint and submission to the authority of God's Word. The question could be asked, "Does this man display a will that is submitted to the Word of God?"

Not Quick Tempered- prone to anger irascible Prone to outbursts of temper; easily angered An elder cannot be a person that is easily out of control due to his anger. He must be able to face situations with people in a patient manner, putting the other person's best interest above his own emotional outburst or reaction. The question could be asked, "Is this person's anger commonly out of control?"

Not Given to Wine- An elder should not be a person who is commonly drunk or dependant upon alcohol. The question could be asked, "Is this person often drunk?"

Not violent- The word for violent means a bruiser, one ready for a blow, contentious. Essentially this word means a person

ready for a fight. And elder cannot be such a person. The question could be asked "Does this person seem to be often picking fights?"

Not greedy for money- The word here means eager for base gain, greedy for money. An elder cannot be a person that is obsessed with making money, whether legitimately or illegitimately. If a person never seems to be content with what they have, they should not be an elder. The question could be asked, "Does this person seem to never have enough money?" "Judging by his life, is money what he loves?"

Next is the list of qualities that an elder **should** exhibit.

⁸but hospitable, - generous to guests. An elder should be a person who is open to inviting guests to his home and when he does so, he is generous in meeting their needs. An elder should not exclude people from involvement in his life and should not be stingy about those things that God has provided to him. The question could be asked, "Does this person welcome people to his home and treat them generously when he does?"

a lover of what is good, - This is the only place in scripture this word is used. This word means a strong affection for those things that are intrinsically good. They should love things that are good, traits that are good, and those characteristics that God has placed in people that are good. The question could be asked, "Is this person drawn to and do they find pleasure in things that are good?"

sober-minded, - this word means sound in one's senses, curbing one's desires and impulses. This person is a person who uses his mind to direct his life. He can think and decide and he is not led around by emotional impulses. The question could be asked, "Does this person exhibit a life that is thoughtfully lived?"

just, - The word means righteous, observing divine laws, rendering to each his due in a judicial sense. I think in context this word may well be used in the later sense. This may be referring to the ability of a person to discern proper judgment in the day to day running of a church. They show competence to

decide right and wrong in interactions between people. They in essence, know how to judge justly. It would seem to me that this is vital in those who will shepherd the church. The question could be asked, "Does this person have wisdom to discern right and wrong in life situations?"

holy, - undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing moral obligations. It is very clear here that we must be talking about degrees. If the qualification for eldership was perfect holiness, Titus would have no candidates at all. But generally a person can be chosen who is living for Christ in such a way that he is not enslaved by any particular sins, not living in an intentional pattern of sin, and is in general obeying Christ in his day to day life. I think that is more in line with what is meant here. So the question could be asked, "Is this person living an obedient life?"

self-controlled, - Mastering, controlling, curbing and restraining one's self. Obviously, again, this must be measured in degrees. No one is perfectly self controlled. But a person who qualifies for being an elder must display a mastery of his behavior. He has to show the ability to say "no" to his flesh on a regular basis. His behavior is predictable and dependable because he can be relied upon to do what God says as opposed to what he might feel like doing on any given day. The question could be asked, "Does he control his life or do his strong desires control him?"

⁹holding 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.

The English Standard Version translates it this way- He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. I think this is the better translation. And as such it flows right into the next text as Paul gives Titus instructions on how to do both things

⁹holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught- The word for faithful is the same word used for faithful children. The elder must cling for life to the Word of God that he was taught. There isn't a call for creativity or anything fancy here. He simply has to display a dependence upon the word of God that he knows. And there is a reason. He must be able, due to the clinging, to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who stand against that sound doctrine.

The word for sound here is healthy. This is used in Titus 1:9 referring to healthy doctrine , 1:13 referring to being sound or healthy in the faith and 2:1,2 combines these references: But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound (or healthy) doctrine: 2that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound (or healthy) in faith.

We can see here that any doctrine that is tampered with or watered down, changed in any way is no longer healthy doctrine and it will not be used to build healthy faith. But an elder should be skillful in applying that healthy doctrine to two uses. First, an elder should be able to exhort those who are true to the faith. He should be able to address God's word to the need of the believer. He should let the folks that he is serving know what God has to say about any matter at hand. So he uses healthy doctrine to build healthy faith. This does not say he needs to know how to formally teach or preach, but he does know how to give personal instruction in the word.

The second thing he must be able to do with the Word he has been taught is to rebuke those who contradict. Ministers frequently meet objections that they are too harsh or too confrontational with the Word. That is often akin to saying that the shepherd is too mean to the wolves. There is much on the

line when an elder is responsible for tending a flock. There are dangerous ideas that must be confronted. And when those who hold those contradicting views will not relent, rebuke is appropriate and necessary. As much as the elder is commanded to be gentle with the sheep, he is commanded to be harsh to those who appear to be siding with the wolves. And one way an elder discerns if a person is siding with the wolves is his contradiction to healthy doctrine.

The word for rebuke means to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove, show one his fault, demand an explanation. This is a strong word. An elder, just like a shepherd, must have two sides. He must be self sacrificing in his nurture of the sheep and he must be a force to be reckoned with in his protection of the sheep. If a man cannot do both with the word he is not fit to serve as an elder.

So the question could be asked, "Is this man able to use the word accurately to both strengthen the flock and protect from them danger?"

So this ends the list of qualifications for an elder in Titus. There is also more of the same in I Tim 3. This is very helpful in comparing texts.

Note what was not in this list. There is no ability to administrate required. There is no ability to do marketing and advertising required. The person does not need to have business skills. It is interesting that so many things that are in the books on how to grow church attendance are not in the requirements God has placed on church leaders. I guess God is just not up on the times.....

After laying out the qualifications for an elder, Paul launches right into the job assignment of the elder. We see quickly why churches need elders by what the elder is assigned to do.

¹⁰For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

In our meetings to prepare for this camp we spent a lot of time on this passage. We are in general agreement that verses 10-16 are speaking about 2 groups of people. The first group are those that in verse 9 are those who contradict who need to be rebuked. Those who contradict in verse 9 are those who are insubordinate, idle talkers, and/or deceivers. These folks cannot be subjected to control. You can try, but they will not submit themselves. They will utter empty senseless things and no matter how much you refute them, they will stick to their positions. And worse, they will seduce others over to their positions. The most prominent of these groups was the circumcision group. And it is easy to understand what a threat they were. As Romans tells us, these people were the stewards of the oracles of God. They were the people who the Messiah was born from. They knew Gods word and they had thousands of years of tradition and history. They could also quote God's word in such a way that would be very convincing. It was very very wrong, but it would take great discernment to know that. So the circumcision group would be a formidable threat to the health of believers and the true faith.

Paul laid out the goal for the elder. Their job was to get these deceivers to shut up. This is not an easy thing. He is probably going to have to deal forcefully to get this job done. He will have to refute what they are saying publicly in the presence of his fold. They cannot be allowed to have free reign in the households of church members. The elders may appear to be heavy handed at this point, but they must be. They cannot allow the wolves any opportunity to feed on their sheep. These deceivers are teaching content, but it is not true content. It is not healthy content. And

it is not content that they should be allowed to teach. Remember, they are contradicters.

And why are they contradictors? They are doing it for selfish gain. Sometimes it is for money. That is the most direct application. Some translations say filthy lucre. Others say shameful gain. So it could be for other selfish gain as well. It may be for moral support so they feel justified in their position. Maybe it is spite to try to legitimize their rebellion. There could be a thousand selfish motives.

So the elders must move against these people very aggressively. And that aggression is appropriate and provoked. Only a shepherd who doesn't care about his sheep would show a casual attitude toward this type of assault.

¹²One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true.

Epimenides, a poet of the Cretans said this. Poets were often called prophets in this culture due to the idea that they sung under divine influence.

Now isn't this a nice quote? Citizens of Crete are always liars, evil brute animals and lazy gluttons or slow bellies. The bellies word refers to a man who is, as it were, all stomach. In our world we couldn't begin to get away with agreeing with such a statement about anybody. But Paul says, yeah, that about captures them. That stereotype is mostly true of these people. They are lazy brutes and gluttons. This makes me pity Titus just a little bit more. How would you like this job. Paul is saying I want you to appoint virtuous men to this position. But mostly the culture is made up of lazy gluttons.

Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

At this point we believe that the "them" that the elders are to rebuke are the Cretan Christians, not the contradicters. The elders are to silence the contradicters, but they are to rebuke the

Christians. And again, notice the severity. They are to rebuke these believers sharply. This is similar to when we catch our child lying to us. We deal with it harshly to show that this cannot continue to exist. Sharply is a severe word.

Now why does the elder rebuke them sharply? Is it so he can vent his own frustration? No. He does it so that those rebuked may be sound or healthy in their faith. He does it because he loves his sheep, like we rebuke our children when they do something wrong. We want our children to learn the lesson at our hand rather than suffer worse consequences from not learning the lesson.

An elder's church family must learn that they cannot continue to give false doctrine a hearing. They cannot be sympathetic to it. They cannot heed it. They need to create a division at this point. The teachers of these lies would call the lies doctrines and teaching and wisdom. Paul calls them what they are. They are fables, made up stories. They are nothing more than someone's imaginations. Yet they are couched in an assumed authority. These men present their fables in a way as if they should carry authority. They are commandments that are made to appear as if they come from God to those who are gullible and don't know God's word. But these men aren't faithful men. These men aren't obeying the truth. They have turned from the truth for their selfish advantage. Remember, they are deceivers.

¹⁵To 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.

Now remember who they are that are trying to deceive these true believers. They are Judiazers. They are going to talk about acts and works that purify ones self, that serve to make one right with God. But there is a problem here. Colossians 2: 20-23 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These

things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

This stuff does not make you pure. The truth is, if you are a believer, if what you are from the inside out is a law lover, everything you are told to do will be congruent with that. You will be pure and what you are and do will be pure. You won't do something to make it that way. God will make it that way and you will respond accordingly, congruently. But to those who don't have pure hearts, believing hearts, it doesn't matter what they do. They can do the acts of great supposed devotion and they will be no purer for the doing of that act than they were before they did it. The problem is in what they are on the inside. Their minds and consciences are already defiled.

¹⁶They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

These deceivers will never call themselves deceivers. They will always portray themselves in a cloak of sincerity, in a cloak of insiders knowledge. They will often portray themselves as misunderstood. And they are very very convincing. Often they even believe themselves.

These people will talk and testify to their relationship with Christ. They can put tears in your eyes. And they will be completely convincing if you chose to ignore just one thing. Their works. Their lives. They lack the power to stop offending Christ. They keep doing the things that Christ said not to do. Or they will not do those things that Christ said to do. Oh they will describe it in terms that would have them appear to be utter victims of sin. They will have you believe that they hate their sin, they abhor their sin. The only problem is they keep doing it. Do not be fooled. If we love Christ, we obey Christ. Those are Christ's words.

These deceivers are abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. It is an elder's job to discern this. He cannot believe the stories. He must believe the actions. He must

believe what God says above how a man explains his own actions. While the person will say that they are wise, loving, gentle, compassionate, but weak and on and on, Paul says they are abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. And we are given everything we need to discern this. They contradict good healthy doctrine, and their life displays actions that are in rebellion and disobedience against God.

I hope that you can see by this what a big job it is that an elder has and why it is so important that he be qualified for the position. I believe there is some room for interpretive disagreement regarding the statements "one woman man" and also "believing children". We welcome any discussion on it because in the end we want to foster healthy faith by healthy doctrine. And we sure don't claim we have a corner on the market on that commodity. So if you have questions or comments you can ask them at any time or we can discuss them on Sunday Morning during discussion time at Sunday School.