

Qualifications for Ministers

An exposition of Titus 1:5-9

Anyone who is to be a minister in a local church, whether pastor, elder, Bible teacher, deacon, or in some other leadership position, must possess the highest personal integrity, exemplary character, and considerable spiritual skills both for communicating Bible truth and managing the affairs of a local body.

Titus 1:5

For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you.

“for this cause”: (**toutou charin**), “because of this grace”, the grace mentioned in verse 4. Titus is to operate on grace principles in dealing with the most ungracious mob of Christians in the known world. (The Greek has the word “grace”, while the KJV leaves it out, probably because the translator thought the reference to v. 4 was obvious. I think it should have been re-emphasized in English. wd]

“left I thee”: “I left you behind”

Paul was Titus's last link to the rational society of grace believers, and now this link was being cut. He was a missionary in the truest sense of the word.

“in Crete”:

TOPIC: CRETE

“that you should set in order”:
(**epidiorthonomai**), “to set right; to correct; to mend a situation”

This is a situation requiring the exercise of authority. Paul has delegated apostolic authority (authority over more than one local church) to Titus to deal with people who acknowledge no authority. And Titus is to get things started in the right direction.

“the things that are wanting”: (**leipw**), “the things that are deficient, lacking, that fall short”.

NOTE WELL:

The discussion in this Epistle, of the methods that Titus is to use to correct the problems among the believers in local churches on Crete, is one of the most important in the New Testament with regard to solving problems among believers.

There were many problems on Crete requiring authoritative action: false teaching, maligning and gossip, cultural clashes, Judaism, etc. The first chapter uses some extreme language to describe troublemakers and those whose “mouths must be stopped”. As we will see, stopping the mouths of those who were against sound teaching was equivalent to putting a bit in a horse's mouth and hauling back!

What is “wanting” on Crete? Everything! And how is Titus going to go about putting things in order? By Bible teaching -- every day in the towns and villages of Crete. And he is going to find men of godly character who would “hold fast the faithful word as they have been taught”.

The people lack knowledge and application of Bible principles. Therefore, there is no faith-rest (trust leading to peace), no orientation to grace, no knowledge of how to use armor of God, and so forth.

Added to this were the cultural problems peculiar to Cretans, along with religious problems associated with both false teachers and Judaism.

“and ordain”: (**kathisteimi**), “to appoint, to put in charge, to set, to approve”

“elders”: (**presbuteroi**), literally, “old men”; however, here referring to maturity from the standpoint of both experience and wisdom. The next few verses of Titus make plain what type of person is meant.

(**presbuteros**) is used in general language to refer to “the older of the two”, or the older of two generations.

Used with definite article (**presbuteros**) refers to “the ancestors”. However, this group

of words did not carry any negative implications such as loss of powers, etc.

Officials at local city or village councils were called (**presbuteroi**). They had administrative and judicial functions. The members were not necessarily older men. Various texts refer to (**presbuteroi**) of 45, 35, and even 30 years of age.

Officers of Jewish synagogues before 70 A.D. were known as (**presbuteroi**).

Certain members of the Sanhedrin were called (**presbuteroi**).

The English words “presbyter”, “Presbyterian”, and “priest” derive from (**presbuteros**).

(When I was in my early forties, I had to get new eyeglasses. The doctor said I had “presbyopia”, old man's eyes! Tsk.)

Comment: Christian leadership emerges from the ranks. Most churches in the New Testament times found their pastors within their own ranks; and the gift was recognizable by the people in the congregation. This can be compared with the manner in which deacons were chosen at first. Seven men were chosen who were obviously controlled by the Holy Spirit; by their fruit they were known.

“in every city”: (**kata polis**), “according to each city”

Titus's job was to go from town to town, appointing pastors to take care of the need for “feeding” in each city. He had to identify those who had the communication gifts and enough doctrinal background to be ready for training. Then, he had to train them and assign them to their posts.

Note that Titus is not commanded to import pastors. He must find the best man in each locality, train him, and appoint him.

“as I have appointed thee”: (**diatassw**), “to arrange; to prescribe; to direct; to command”.

Paul had given Titus detailed orders concerning church policy and organization - a precise and

detailed set of plans which took into account the character of the people. Titus was directed to carry out the plans for organizing the churches on Crete.

Titus 1:6

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

Titus 1:6-16 contain Paul's directions to Titus regarding basic church order and discipline. Note the need for firm and authoritative management of the affairs of the church in Crete.

1:6-9, character and qualifications of elders and bishops

1:10,11, the duty of suppressing those who would teach for money

1:12-14, the evil character of the Cretans which demands stern treatment and steadfast adherence to the truth

1:15,16, the condemnation of inward defilement and hypocrisy

“if any”: In the Greek, a first-class conditional statement, meaning that the conditional statement is assumed to be true.

Paul assumes that Titus will be able to find those who qualify as elders. Paul may already have been somewhat acquainted with the people during his own stay on Crete and noticed that there were some emerging leaders.

The churches on Crete were not necessarily new ones. There had been Christians on Crete since the Day of Pentecost, some 35 or so years previous.

“blameless”: (**anegkleitos**), the negative prefix with the adjective meaning “chargeable; open to accusation in court”. Hence, this means, “not chargeable with offense”, or, simply, “irreproachable”.

Col. 1:21,22, “and you...now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh

through death, to present you holy and *blameless* in his sight."

1 Tim. 3:10 -- deacons are also to be blameless.

"the husband of one wife": (**mias gunaikos aneir**), "a one-woman man"

The pastor must be monogamous. The pastor, if he is married, needs a godly woman at his side.

"having faithful children": or, "having children who are believers", children of Christian faith, rather than, simply, loyal or respectful children.

Unbelieving children, in their older childhood and teenage years, can be a source of pressure and great suffering in a pastor's life. They can even force him out of the ministry; or, as here, keep him from starting it.

Well-behaved, godly children are a great example of the power of the Word of God. They are evidence that the pastor and his wife have taught the word in the home consistently and have lived for the Lord before their children.

"not accused of riot": (**kateigoria**), "accusation" "categorization", plus (**asoteis**), "dissipation, excess, reckless living". Hence, "not accused of reckless living; not profligate, dissolute, disorderly".

Eph. 5:18, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is *excess* ..."

READ 1 Peter 4:3-5

"or unruly": (**anupotaktos**), "insubordinate".

There are quite a number of warnings to children to "honor" their parents, from the ten commandments to Ephesians 6. The commands to children are accompanied by a promise "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth".

This sound rather benign, but it carries some very serious overtones. You may recall that in Old Testament times among the Jews, older children who "cursed" their parents or were otherwise implacable were liable to death by stoning!

And notice in Romans 1, right in the middle of that long list of terrible sins of those who reject God, is "disobedient to parents".

In the Bible, proper response to parental authority is extremely important. Keep in mind that the transmission of Bible doctrine and the Christian way of life from one generation to the next is possible only in stable families.

If parents go astray, they will fail to communicate the Word of God to their offspring, and there will be serious reverberations in their progeny, the "sins of the fathers being visited upon the third and fourth generation."

Likewise, if children are negative, disobedient, implacable, they will fail to receive good teaching and will interrupt the process of the communication of divine truth to future generations.

Both negative parents and negative children are the worst kind of stumbling blocks. And there are plenty of examples in Scripture of the Lord taking swift and severe action against those who hinder the gospel or who cause unbelievers or weaker brethren to be offended.

Examples are Ananias and Sapphira and Herod, among others. And remember Christ's admonition not to prevent the little children from coming to him, and warning that "it would be better that a millstone be hanged around his neck ... than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble."

All of this emphasizes how important it is in a pastor's family that both the father (the pastor) and the children be yielded to God's authority.

Titus 1:7

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, not a striker, not given to filthy lucre.

"for a bishop": (**episkopos**), "overseer".

This is a word denoting authority; used for someone who is functioning as a leader; used of persons who have a definite office within a group. This word was quite commonly used in Greek to refer to temple officials, for example

Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you *overseers*, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch..."

Therefore, in the local church, the bishop was a man with official duties including teaching and shepherding; in our own parlance, the pastor.

TOPIC: SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK OF GOD

READ 1 Tim. 3:1-7

"must be": "it is necessary". Therefore, "It is necessary for a bishop to be...". All of the characteristics below are necessary qualifications for the overseer.

"blameless": (**anegkleitos**), [see above in verse 6]

"as the steward": (**oikonomos**), "an administrator with authority; the manager of an estate"

"of God": the possessive case, "a steward belonging to God"

"not self-willed": (**authadeis**), "stubborn, arrogant". See 2 Pet. 2:10.

The pastor cannot allow self will, stubbornness, or antagonism toward people to move him to the place where he is unfair. He is to express grace, even to those who deserve condemnation. He must be oriented to grace.

The pastor must maintain objectivity. A stubborn, implacable man cannot do so. The pastor will be criticized, sometimes justly,

sometimes not. The criticism does not necessarily constitute judging or maligning. But criticism cannot be allowed to cause antagonism on his part, so he must have grace orientation. Personal feelings or prejudice must never destroy his fairness in dealing with a situation.

"not soon angry": (**orgilos**), "not quick tempered" Anger from a quick temper is mental attitude sin. The pastor must have a relaxed mental attitude which leads to a quick recovery from anger.

Prov. 14:17, "He that is soon angry deals foolishly..."

Prov. 15:18, "A wrathful man stirs up strife; but he that is slow to anger appeases strife."

TOPIC: ANGER

The elder who is to be appointed to a church on Crete must turn matters over to the Lord and maintain a non-judgmental, objective outlook.

"not given to wine": (**paroinos**), "not addicted to drunkenness". This refers to using alcohol as a form of sublimation. The edified man, mature in Christ, has such happiness (+H) and peace every day that he doesn't need to sublimate or forget it all.

There are several reasons given in the Bible not to drink wine. First, one is not to drink in order to get drunk, Eph. 5:18. A person's mind must be unclouded and always open to the controlling and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Then, a person is not to drink if it would be offensive to others, 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 14:21. This is the Law of Love superseding the Law of Liberty; the outworking of impersonal love and burden for the lost and untaught.

Prov. 31:4,5 "It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted."

It is apparent that any person in a position of social or spiritual responsibility is not to be given to wine or strong drink, including elders, deacons, and mature women (Titus 2:3)

“not a striker”: (**pleikteis**), “bully, pugnacious man, brawler”

This is not a reference to self defense. A bully is a man who seeks out fighting and brawling. But an elder can ruin his ministry by starting a fight.

“not given to filthy lucre”: (**aiscrokerdeis**), “not eager for dishonorable profit; not greedy for material gain.”

This is a reference to Mastery of the Details of Life by the mature believer who is no longer part of the “Rat Race” for this world’s goods. When a Christian is a master of the details of life (rather than a slave to them), he can enjoy the things in his life when he has them, but when they are taken away, his happiness (joy) is not disturbed, because his joy depends on God’s faithfulness, not on personal possessions, social life, or status.

The pastorate is not a career. It is not a salaried position (although he might receive a salary). It is not a job for yuppies, those who are upwardly mobile, status conscious, world-changers. It is not a track to national prominence or even local prominence. It is not a position from which a man can satisfy his ambition, or stroke his lust for approbation, or solidify his power base.

Titus 1:8

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.

“but”: a conjunction of contrast: there is a change here, from dealing with negative characteristics to be avoided, to the positive aspects that are characteristics of the edified believer, and that must be found in church leadership.

“a lover of hospitality”: (**philozenos**), literally, “having a love for strangers”

This word carries the connotation of hospitality, of doing something for someone who does not earn or deserve the good treatment, because there has been no previous acquaintance. This word reflects a Grace attitude toward people who have not yet earned your consideration.

This is a word of impersonal love - the type of attitude that is free of arrogance, envy, hatred, or even disdain for other people, even if there is sharp disagreement about doctrine or practice. This is the type of love that permits a Christian to love even his enemies or people that he doesn't like.

This is the type of love that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It does not come from emotion, although it may cause emotion. This is the “professional” love of the mature Christian believer, analogous to the Love of God, the quality of which does not depend on the behavior or character of the one being loved, but on the character of the one who loves.

“a lover of good men”: (**philagothos**), “one who loves good”.

The idea of “good men” probably derives from the fact that sometimes adjectives are used by themselves to indicate a class of people. We say “the rich” when we mean “the rich people”, or “the infirm” when we mean “the infirm people”. Here, the adjective is “good”, which could mean “good people”, hence, “one who loves good people”.

But the meaning could well be limited to only the adjective itself, without regard to a class of people. In that case, the meaning would change quite a bit. “Good” then would refer to that which has intrinsic good, good in itself, and in this context it would refer to “divine good”, and the translation would be “one who loves good”.

I've read various discussion on this, and I choose the latter meaning, probably because the idea of love towards mankind (stranger~) is already paramount in the previous word.

[If you are aware of studies that shed more light on this point, I would appreciate hearing from you about it. wd]

“sober”: (**sofron**), “prudent, thoughtful, discrete, self-controlled”.

When used of women in Titus 2:5, (**sofron**) is translated “discrete” or “modest”.

This is a mental attitude of care for one's reputation, one's character, a consideration of appearances. The verb form, (**sofroneo**), means “to be of a sound mind”, so there is the connotation of mental stability.

READ Rom. 12:1-3 The transformation leading to mental stability.

“just”: (**dikaios**), “righteous; fair; equitable”

The pastor must be fair, even-handed in all his actions. He must exhibit the righteousness of God in the human life. He knows that the source of righteousness is the Lord and is imputed without merit. Therefore he is relaxed, not judgmental.

TOPIC: JUDGMENT, JUSTICE, JUDGING

“holy”: (**hosios**), “kind, gracious, holy”.

This is NOT (**hagios**), “set apart, or sanctified”, which is a result of our union with Christ.

This word for holiness has to do with an experiential inner result of the work of the Lord in the life.

The candidate for Christian leadership must have an observable holiness. He must be known for the fruit of the Spirit, just as the original seven deacons were chosen for their obvious spiritual qualities and fruits.

These qualities are difficult to fake. Many people can put on a facade of “holiness” or morality; but Titus is a discerning Christian, and he has the responsibility to judge men in these matters.

He could tell whether a man loved the Word of God and was occupied with Christ (viewing everything in life with Jesus Christ in mind). He

could observe a man who was going through some testing (minor or major) and determine whether he knew how to trust God in situations and maintain peace and joy in the midst of trials. He knew what to look for, and could size someone up very quickly.

“temperate”: (**egkrateis**), “self-restrained”; a master of the details of life.

You either have control over the details of life, or they control you.

Examples: Jer. 35:6; Dan. 1:8

Titus 1:9

Holding fast the faith word, as he has been taught, that he might be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

In this verse there are some operational standards for the man appointed to the office of pastor (elder, bishop), the new recruit that Titus will ordain. This verse shows how rebellious and unruly Christians are to be handled.

Note that it is not Titus's job to come into town with a big stick to personally chastise the lying, rioting, deceiving, subversive believers. In fact, he's not going to do the job at all, because he will not stay on the island long enough.

The new recruit is to be the teacher. Month after month, year after year, the man who has emerged as a community spiritual leader will patiently instruct, encourage, exhort, convince - by using the Word of God either to convince those with positive volition or to close the mouths of the implacable. The principle is that Bible teaching is the instrument of bringing change into people's lives. The opposition will either capitulate to doctrine, or they will be forced to leave.

“holding fast”: (**antecomai**), “to cling to something; to hold fast to; to be devoted to”

That which is “held fast” is sound doctrine. The verb is in the Greek middle voice, which is

reflexive, that is, the subject acts upon itself. Thus, the believer is holding something fast for himself.

Heb. 4:14 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast (*antecomai*) our profession.”

Heb. 10:23 “Let us hold fast (*antecomai*) the profession of our faith without wavering.”

“the faithful word”: (***pistos + logos***), “the trustworthy word; the dependable word”, that which inspires trust, The Word of God.

“as he hath been taught”: (*kata tein didascei*), “according to the instruction; teaching; doctrine”.

“that he might be able”: (***eimi + dunatos***), “might be capable”.

Strength after the flesh, that is, human strength, is not enough. The teacher's ability is the result of clinging to doctrine.

1 Cor. 1:26 “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:”

“by sound doctrine”: (***didaskalia + hugiaino***), “by means of uncorrupted doctrine” .

(***hugiaino***) “uncorrupted” is repeated in 1:13; 2:1; 2:2; with (***hugiaino***) in 2:8. It is used in the physical sense for good health; in the Gospels and in 3 John v.2.

The doctrine the new pastor is to teach is uncorrupted, sharply contrasted with other comments in this chapter about false teaching, myths, commandments of men.

“both to exhort”: (***parakaleo***), “to exhort, to push, to stimulate”.

The Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete, and the Greek verb here has several meanings in the Bible, including “to exhort” and “to comfort”.

Exhortation requires authority; Titus 2:15 “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

Exhortation requires great patience. 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Exhortation requires persistence. Heb. 3:12,13 “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Exhortation takes place in the local church environment. Heb. 10:23-25

“and to convince”: (***elegko***), “to bring to light; to expose; to demonstrate; to convince; to reprove; to rebuke. Translated “rebuke” in 1:13 and 2:15; but even rebuking is by means of convincing argument from the Scripture.

“the gainsayers”: (***antilego***), literally, “those who speak against; those who contradict”; therefore, “those who are in opposition”.

Note the use in 2:9, servants are not to contradict or speak against their masters.

READ Luke 2:34; 20:27

READ Romans 10:21 !!