

Titus: Becoming a Sound Church

02 Structure Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself

May 7, 2017

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order; and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers⁴ and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He 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.

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.⁷ ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹²One of the Cretans,⁸ a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

I. INTRODUCTION

Has something you've been in charge of every gotten out of hand. I mean really out of your control. If you are a parent this probably happens daily. Things can escalate quickly!

But really, have you ever been a part of something that got out of hand. You were not necessarily in charge but you were there and over time things got chaotic. What did you feel during that time, or what is your tendency when chaos hits.

When I worked for a company during seminary, as leadership we took personality assessments. But the assessment we took

was unique in that it had a way of determining your personality when chaos hits. This is significant information to know how your co-worker responds when the ship is going down.

So for me, I have a tendency to think about people and making sure they are comforted and cared for...pastoring perhaps is a good place for me. Which is invaluable because chaos is stressful so to ensure everyone was cared for help everyone work smoothly even during chaos...but the downside is not solving the immediate problem, the ship is still sinking!! Others on our team had a tendency to go straight to policy, straight to pre-determined systems to get through the chaos.

Which is extremely invaluable because in calmer times we had determined how to handle something so in chaos you did not really need to think but go to the system, the policy to make it through. The only downside is you can destroy people in the process of doing the process. Neither of these is really wrong. Come to find out we needed both.

Now imagine you are tasked with the job of correcting chaos in a church. How might you go about helping the church move forward? What would be a good approach? Well that is exactly what Paul is tasking Titus with... and it seems that Paul cares deeply about two things, the heart of the individual and protecting the body of believers by protecting doctrine, God's Word, truth, the gospel.

Lets start by **READING** Titus 1:5-9...

II. ELDERS | 1:5-9

- A. We saw the who of Titus last week now this morning we see the what. Titus on sound authority is to put into order what was lacking.

There apparently had been a good work started by Paul and Titus and Titus was tasked with putting into order what remained, what was lacking.

With the very next reason Titus was left in Crete perhaps we learn one of the things lacking is elders/overseers, so Titus is to appoint, to put into charge/give authors to them based on certain qualifications.

- B. Why Elders/Overseers—Why give any thinking to the structure of the church, to church govt.? Should not bigger more important theological truths be focused on such as justification by faith only, authority of scripture, trinity, the divinity of Jesus, well sure they should and that is the main objective of elders/overseers...

but Paul is making a strong case here that we should give some thought to structure, to how church should be organized.

One must understand Paul is not making up a brand new idea here with Titus, we see over and over again that elders were appointed in various places as local churches began to be established.

Matter of fact this was Paul's pattern (**READ Acts 14:21-23**). *When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.* ²³ *And when they had appointed elders for*

them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- C. Notice the plural of Elders, there seems to be a consistent understanding that as many qualified men a church has should be elders, overseers.

It is clear the common practice of the early church was to appoint elders...now we do know from scripture in Acts 6 and 1 Tim 3 that deacons were appoint as well but Titus is only tasked with appointing elders.

You see, structure is only studied in order to do ministry consistently and protect the gospel—and by gospel I mean *that Christ died for our sins...that he was buried, and that he raised on the third day according to the scriptures* (1 Cor 15:3-4)—not to set up an elite group in the church.

The aim of church structure is to guide people towards effective ministry that honors the Lord in practice and thinking. “The fact is, no society—religious or secular—can ever afford to be careless about the structure of its government. This is especially true of the Christian community because great and precious principles are at stake.”¹

- D. While in seminary I can count at least two situations where a church fell apart because a lack of healthy leadership. One of which was a major debacle hurting many in the wake of its implosion.

¹ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishing, 1995), 102.

But there are many churches who save themselves and the gospel from humiliation because of good godly leadership. And this is exactly what Titus is to do, protect the church and the gospel! Mark Dever and Johnathan Leeman in a book about Baptist Foundations says, “Right polity, church govt./structure, protects the gospel for one generation to the next.”²

So how is Titus to determine elders...

E. Qualifications

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Above Reproach | 11. Lover of good |
| 2. One woman man | 12. Self-control |
| 3. Children are faithful to
parents authority-
reflective in behavior | 13. Upright |
| 4. Good Steward | 14. Holy |
| 5. Not arrogant | 15. Discipline |
| 6. Not quick tempered | 16. Hold firm to the
trustworthy word as
taught |
| 7. Not a drunkard | a) to give instructions
in sound doctrine |
| 8. Not violent | b) to rebuke those who
contradict... |
| 9. Not Greedy | |
| 10. Hospitable | |

- F. Well character is of top priority for the elder/overseer. “he must be above reproach, his family demonstrates [that he has] fidelity and leadership ability, he must not be controlled by any besetting sins of self, must love people and what is good, obedient to God, seeking to please God, be thoughtful, prudent, self-controlled because he is controlled by God, and lastly and most importantly committed to the apostles teachings, to the Scriptures”³

² Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Baptist Foundations, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), xxi.

³ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 294.

...most importantly Paul tells them to hold firm, be devoted to the trustworthy word *as taught*—as taught by the apostles primarily about Jesus, sound doctrine is that truth that flows from their teaching that was about Jesus.

Paul went to great lengths to establish his authority on Jesus so naturally his teaching is about him, what makes teaching distinctly Christian—Christ!!

Apparently by this time there was orthodoxy, a set of beliefs firm and fixed and the elder/overseer/any christian for that matter must hold firm to it as to guard against the very next group of people.

We do not need to go very far to see what it looks like when a group of people drop the truth, drop sound doctrine, beliefs faithful to the word, the apostles teaching and useful for life—which we will see their usefulness clearly next week!

Lets **READ** the next section to see those who contradict 1:10-14

III. FALSE TEACHERS / CIRCUMCISION PARTY | 1:10-14

- A. Well there is another group in their midst that could not be farther from what we just discussed. Their Description is..
1. insubordinate
 2. empty talkers
 3. deceptive (especially the CP)
 4. teaching for shameful gain (upsetting families). Their teaching is fixated on self and looking to make a buck, this is devastating to the the believer and ultimately the church.

5. Example from their own literature to say they are liars, “Cretans are always liars” (contrast 1:1 - God never lies). History affirms Paul’s assessment that Cretans were indeed liars and now that deceptive tendency is finding its way into the christian community, the church.

They are placing God’s supposed truth over a lie. They are using God as a facade, maybe unknowingly, to cover a lie. But brothers and sisters, as with all cultures those on Crete have their difficulties, this is no different than you and me.

No different than us in this room and outside those doors. Lets not throw stones but acknowledge we are only one decision away from throwing away sound doctrine and losing control of our lives.

- B. Response of Titus / Elders he appoints...Take strong action!
 1. silence them (back in description)
 2. rebuke them sharply
 - a) so they will be sound in faith (what they believe) correct their beliefs because belief/ideas have consequences!
 - b) not devoting themselves to false teaching and myths that turn away from truth
 - c) Notice all the sharpe rebuke is only to lead towards correction that will be sound/stable/able to withstand. If You/We protect sound doctrine, we will protect the church...How? Through qualified men leading the Church
- C. Quite a contrast from an elder/overseer...see the value of having leaders among us who reflect the gospel with their

life so when a fake comes before us we are not deceived.
To discover a counterfeit you must become familiar with
the real thing!

So what are we to make of all this? Paul provides a wonderful summary. After all the talk of structure he sort of hits the nail on the head.

IV. SUMMARY STATEMENT / CONCLUSION / APPLICATION | 1:15-16

- A. Why does the above happen? because to the pure...
 - 1. all things are pure
- B. defiled / unbelieving (contrast 1:1 - elect? / the overarching issue is that they are not true believers, especially considering *profess Christ but deny by actions*)
 - 1. nothing is pure
 - 2. minds and consciences are defiled
 - 3. ****profess Christ but deny by actions**** it is a heart issue, always a heart issue!! You can profess Christ all you want but if your heart is not changed by the work of God through the son of God, your actions have a tendency to be...well as the scripture say...
 - 4. detestable / disobedient / unfit for any good work
- C. *We all need to notice something of major significance, this entire list that describe elders/overseers and really any Christian is impossible without a heart that has been radically changed by the gospel.*

To the pure all things are pure and putting regulations, myths, and extra commands to be right with God do not make you pure! Only Christ!

Character is best formulated at the foot of the cross!

V. THEREFORE...

- A. How is your heart, are you more reflective of godly character or ungodly behavior, but please understand me... it is a heart issue! This ending screams to avoid behavior modification but ask us to run to Christ to become pure. It also encourages us to fight for those who will and are saved.
- B. Is our structure sound to protect the gospel and see hearts turn towards Jesus?
- C. Pray for leaders!