

Faithful Teachers

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Date: 27 May 2018

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[0 : 01] We just finished 1 Corinthians, as you all know, and we are now starting a new short book called Titus. We will wrap this up probably in two or three weeks.

And the reason why we're taking a short hiatus with this book before we go into a longer Old Testament book is because it teaches us helpful things that we think we need to address at this point of our church's life.

So, for example, it talks about church leaders in the first chapter. Even though it mentions elders, which I'm talking about today, it doesn't mention deacons, but I'm going to do another message, more topical message on deacons as well.

Next week, Titus 2 addresses various ministries of the church, how our good works should accord with the sound doctrine that we have. And in that passage, it also speaks of women's ministry as well, and we'll be launching that as well.

So that's where I went for that. So that's why we're here. Titus was written around 60, in the 60s AD by Paul, and he wrote it to Titus, but with the intention to be read by the whole church in Crete, because Titus was ministering there.

[1 : 10] He was facing a lot of opposition from false teachers in Crete. And so Paul teaches through this letter that Christians should be characterized by good works that accord with sound doctrine.

That's really the main point of this whole book, that Christians' lives should be characterized by good works that accord with sound doctrine. And the first chapter, like I said, is about church leaders.

The second and third chapter is about good works that accord with sound doctrine. And let's dive into Titus 1. In this first chapter, the main point is really that the elders of the church must be above reproach so that they can teach sound doctrine and promote sound faith.

That's the main point of this first chapter. The elders of the church must be above reproach so that they can teach sound doctrine and promote sound faith. And we see three different profiles here in this chapter. First is the profile of Paul and Titus in verses 1 to 4.

And then we see the profile of the elders, the qualifications for elders in verses 5 to 9. And then third, we find the profile of the false teachers that are wreaking havoc in the church in Crete, verses 10 to 16.

[2 : 20] In verses 1 to 4, that's Paul's opening greeting where he introduces himself and Titus. And first, Paul talks about who he is. He says, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Christ Jesus.

And then second, he describes why he was called to be a servant and apostle. He says, For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. And then third, he describes what he does toward that end.

He says, The preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God and Savior. So we see who he is first. That's what he addresses. The word servant literally means slave.

Slave. Obviously, that's not a complementary word. It's not a complementary word in our context. It wasn't a complementary word in their context as well either. Yet Christians enthusiastically embraced that term, just as they embraced the word humility, which was thought to be only to be associated with the lowly and the servants.

And that's because they believe that everyone is a slave in one sense or another. They're either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness, slave to God.

[3 : 29] And then those who have come to faith in Jesus have been liberated from their slavery to sin. And so now they are slaves of God. And so that's what the reality that Paul's speaking of here that addresses in Romans 6.

He also describes himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, meaning that he is an authorized messenger of Jesus Christ, someone who was sent out by Christ himself to bear witness to his saving message.

That's who Paul is. And then he explains why he was called to be a servant of God and apostle of Christ Jesus. Look with me at the end of verse 1 and down to verse 3.

For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. So this is Paul's purpose in ministry, right? His purpose in ministry is to bring God's chosen people, the elect, to faith. And this faith is not merely subjective, right?

[4 : 28] But it's rooted in the objective truth content that he tells us, the knowledge of the truth, right? So it's not some anything that you believe, whatever you want to believe. No, it's based on the knowledge of the truth, and his goal is to bring them to the faith in that.

And the word truth is a key word throughout the pastoral epistles, which include 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. And the truth refers to the truth of the gospel.

And Paul says, For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness. So not only is it a subjective faith based on an objective truth, the knowledge of the truth, it is evidenced in good works.

It's not just a theoretical. It's not abstract, but it's a truth. It's a faith that leads to godliness. It accords with godliness. It produces godliness. And so that's really the main difference between Paul and the false teachers who are in Crete.

Paul doesn't separate the good works from faith. He believes that godliness is a necessary implication of a true faith. And he says this godliness is cultivated in the hope of eternal life.

[5 : 37] We see again the two of the three famous Pauline triads, right? The faith, hope, and love. We see faith and hope here. The goal of Paul's ministry to bring God's elect to faith in hope of eternal life, right?

So the Christian life is characterized by faith and hope, believing in what we do not see and hoping in what we do not yet have. But Paul, lest we think that this hope is something in vain or something that's just in our imagination, he tells us that we should have confidence in this hope because he says this, God who never lies promised before the ages began.

So not only was this promised by God, it was promised by a God who never lies. And not only was it promised by a God who never lies, it has now been revealed to us as well.

He follows it up by saying this in verse 3, And at the proper time, this was manifested in his word. It was revealed in his word. God's salvation plan, which was from before the ages began, in eternity past, has now in the proper time, in the time of Jesus, has been revealed to us.

So because of that, we could have assurance in our faith and assurance in our hope because this was given, promised by a God who never lies, but also revealed in our day, in the days of Christ to us.

[7 : 01] And then, having told us about who he is and why he was called, he tells us what it is that he does. He says in verse 3, He says that God's word now goes forth through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior.

So Christian preaching involves the proclamation of the word, which, again, is the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ, his saving message that he died for our sins and rose again. And the word preach comes from a Greek word that means herald, right?

So herald is a messenger, right, who relays someone else's message faithfully, right? He serves as an ambassador of sorts and represents the person he sent, the message that he bears.

And as such, the herald has no right to speak on his own authority or to say whatever he wants. He must preach. He must herald. He must announce what his sender, what his source authorized him to say.

And so that's the role of preaching. Paul says, I preach what I've been told to preach. I relay what I've been given, entrusted by God. So that's why it's called an entrustment.

[8 : 13] He was entrusted by the command of God. And then Paul addresses Titus, who is a recipient of this letter. Titus, this is an interesting tidbit that connects us to 1 Corinthians, which we just finished.

But you know how Paul was sending Timothy to Corinthians to address all their problems, right? So it turns out that that trip didn't go that well. And so Paul has to do an emergency visit to Corinth

because of it.

And that trip doesn't go well either. And as a last resort, what he does, and we know this from piecing together the information we have in Acts and other places. And so the last resort, what he does, he sends Titus.

And so Titus seems to have been a man of extraordinary character and grace, just able to work in situations like this. And so that's the Titus we're talking about. And he's facing a lot of opposition in Crete.

And he describes him this way. Verse 4, To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. So Paul is ministering faithfully for the sake of the faith of God's elect in their knowledge of the truth.

[9 : 17] And Titus stands squarely in line with that heritage. He's of the common faith. And he is a true child. And because of that, he says, Grace be with you.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. Even though this is directly addressed to Titus, it's a letter that was intended to be read by the whole church.

And we know that because at the end of the letter, in the closing greeting, Paul says, Grace be with you all. Chapter 3, verse 15. So Paul's writing this to Titus, but as a way of kind of authorizing him and making his ministry legitimate among the churches in Crete.

So he wants this to be read. And other people to see that Paul is entrusting this task to Titus. And that Titus has been charged by the Apostle Paul to appoint leaders in these churches. And that's why Paul greets him in a way.

So that's the profile of Paul and Titus. And he says, Grace and peace. I mean, this comes up quite a bit, doesn't it, as we've been going through the New Testament epistles.

[10 : 24] But once again, grace, if grace is God's favor toward us, his love, the mercy from which all his goodness toward us is expressed, it's his unmerited favor, with which God saves us from sin and death.

But if grace is the reason why God saves us, peace is the result of that saving work, right? It's to be a peace with God. We have harmony with him. We're reconciled to him. And through that, we have peace with one another.

So he greets them with that grace and peace. That's the profile of Paul and Titus. Next, we see the profile of the elders that Titus is supposed to appoint in the church. Paul writes in verse 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.

On one of his missionary journeys, Paul had left Titus as his representative with the church in Crete. And the goal of this was to ensure doctrinal fidelity, so that to sound doctrine.

But the means of ensuring sound doctrine was appointing faithful leaders. So that's what he was appointed to. He was called to appoint elders in every town.

[11 : 37] And we see that throughout Acts, Acts 14, 23, it was Paul's custom to appoint elders in every church that he planted. And the fact that Titus is appointing elders for the first time shows that this is a relatively young church.

That's probably also why, if you look at the parallel passage in 1 Timothy 3, which gives qualifications for elders, like here in Titus 1, there's one notable difference. In Timothy 3, Paul tells them that an elder must not be a recent convert lest he become puffed up with pride and fall to the judgment of the devil.

But that qualification is not given here in Titus, interestingly enough. And it may be because there was no one who had been Christian for a very long time because it's a young church that Paul just planted.

We don't know that for sure, but that may explain that discrepancy. And so what is an elder? Who is an elder? Right? It's not a reference to the elderly, even though sometimes the same word is used in that way in the Bible, because what's the qualification being an elderly?

You just have to be old, right? So, I mean, so if that's the case, then that would be the only qualification he gives. But he lists other qualifications. That's how we know that by an elder, he doesn't mean elderly, right? So he lists qualifications.

[12 : 54] So an elder is a man who occupies the office of elder in the church, in a leadership position in the church. And in the Old Testament, towns were ruled and judged by their elders, who were heads of their own respective households that gathered at city centers and city gates to deliberate issues that faced the entire community.

And they led in that capacity. By the New Testament period, men who were leaders in the local synagogues were called elders. And Paul seems to be adopting that terminology and appointing and using elders in the context of the local church.

And elders are also referred to as overseers. If you look at verse 7, that term is used, those two terms are used interchangeably. I'll just mention this.

It's because you've probably heard of it. So the term presbyter, it's the same word as elder. Term bishop or the episcopate, those are all the same word as overseer.

So some of these come from, and you've probably heard it in different church contexts. But these are not different roles within a church hierarchy. They're all interchangeable terms.

[14:02] For example, the overseer, pastor, elder. Pastor is really not a title that's given in the Bible. It's really a function of an elder. And I can show you, give you an example from Acts 20, 17 to 28.

I skipped a whole bunch in the middle. But it says, Now from Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them, Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

So you see all three terminologies used there. He's addressing the elders of the church in Ephesus. He calls them overseers. And he tells them to care for the flock, which is pastoring language, shepherding language.

So it's all the same office. It's one office that has many people in it. And note also that the word elder is in the plural form. Whenever the Bible speaks of instituting leadership structure in the church, it speaks of appointing elders in the plural.

Except when it's talking about a singular office of elder. So office of overseer, right? And so the plurality of elders provides an important check to a single elder's power or dominance.

[15:23] It provides accountability. And it creates a ruling body that is wiser than its constituent parts. And that's why from the beginning of our church, we've had a plurality of elders.

Even though as a church plant, we don't have our own elders, all of them. But we have two other elders, Dan Rocha and Paul Buckley, whom we're borrowing from a sister church in Massachusetts.

I've been with them on a regular basis at least once a month to deliberate different things about the church. And then, of course, for this reason, we also have our own leadership team, which includes me and three pastoral, four pastoral interns who we are working through training so that we can be equipped and assessed for eldership.

And so that's the goal. That's the reason for this. The reason why these teams are important is because of the plurality of elders that's taught in scripture. So that's who the elders are. Now let's look at the qualifications for elders that Paul delineates in verses six to nine.

The first requirement is that they be above reproach, right? So right away, there you go. Okay, Sean cannot be a pastor anymore, right? So what does it mean that he has to be above reproach?

[16:37] And this doesn't mean that an elder has to be above criticism. In that case, no one would be qualified to be an elder, not even Jesus. And in fact, Apostle Paul himself had many critics and naysayers.

We saw that in 1 Corinthians 8 to 11. Paul was accused of being inconsistent in his stance regarding food sacrificed to idols. In 2 Corinthians 10.10, Paul specifically quotes someone who says of him, his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech is of no account.

This is what someone else said about Paul. So I mean, he's got a pretty vocal critic there. And in Acts 21, 27 to 36, some of the Jews accused Paul of breaking God's law and leading people away from God.

So certainly he was not without his critics. And not only him, Jesus himself had many critics, right? In Luke 7.34, Jesus is accused of being a glutton and a drunkard, which specifically would disqualify him from being an elder and consorting with sinners.

He's accused of being a false prophet in Luke 7.39, of being a Sabbath breaker in Luke 6, of being insane in Mark 3.21, of being demon possessed in John 10.

[17:48] So, and of blaspheming in Matthew 26. I don't know how you blaspheme yourself, right? He's a son of God. But that's, he's accused of all kinds of things. And so his life was full of controversy and scandal, but yet he was blameless and sinless.

Therefore, he was eminently above reproach. So what does it mean then to be above reproach, right? So the qualification above reproach cannot mean above criticism. What it means is, because if people want to find dirt on you, they will.

They can. And, but it doesn't mean that, because we're all imperfect and sinful. What it means is that an elder must possess a general high character so that he is not accused of hypocrisy and bringing shame to the gospel.

Paul actually goes on to unpack what this means. So above reproach is really less one of the qualifications in the list. It's more of a summary of all the qualifications in the list. And we know that because he repeats that exact phrase again at a critical juncture in this passage.

So in verse 6 and verse 7. So in verse 6, Paul says that elders must be above reproach. And then he explains what this means with regard to his family life in verse 6. And then in verse 7, he repeats that an overseer must be above reproach.

[19:06] And then he proceeds to explain what this means with regard to his personal life, his personal character. So above reproach is really a summary of all of that. So let's look at the qualifications in verse 6. In order for an elder to be considered above reproach regarding his family life, he must be the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

First, he must be the husband of one wife. So this verse is so difficult. I spent hours and hours just contemplating this verse, thinking about the implications and figuring it out.

So I'm going to tell you what I arrived at, but just so you know, this is, I'm not sure. I'm going to teach you what I think it means. Verse 6.

So the husband of one wife, literally the phrase in the Greek is one woman man. An elder must be a one woman man. The phrase assumes that an elder would be a man that's consistent with the teaching of 1 Timothy 2, 11 to 15, 1 Corinthians 14, which we talked about, which calls mature Christian men to the office of elder and to lead the family of God in the same way God calls other men to be heads of households within their respective families.

But this does not mean, I don't think, that an elder has to be a married man in the same way the mention of children doesn't mean that an elder has to have children, right? So Paul himself, like Jesus, was single, and Paul clearly teaches that being single so that we can be singularly devoted to God is better than being married in 1 Corinthians 7.

[20:42] So it doesn't make sense for Paul to then contradict himself and say that an elder of the church must be married. Rather, Paul is giving these qualifications in the case that a man in question is married.

And if the elder canon is married, it is necessary that he be a one woman man. Several different interpretations have been proposed for this phrase throughout church history.

And throughout church history, there have been proponents for all three of these views, which is why the interpretation is so difficult. But one possibility is that the one man, the one woman man, it refers to the fact that the man must be monogamous rather than polygamous, right?

There are examples, historically, of Jews being polygamous, right? And so this may be to ensure that that doesn't happen. An elder has to be married to only one woman at the time.

And the second possibility is that the man had to have been married only once. So some churches today interpret it this way. So he could not have married a second time.

[21:49] So he could not have divorced and remarried. And he could not have been widowed and remarried. Some people think it only applies to divorce, but not necessarily to widowhood.

Third possibility is that the man must be faithful to his one wife, to have eyes for one woman only. So this is really hard.

But I think one really helpful clue is in 1 Timothy 5.9. It says, it's speaking, Paul's speaking of the role of widows.

So there are widows who in the church who give themselves completely, fully to the service of the church and remain widows. And those widows were eligible to receive full, basically, life support from the church.

And so Paul's talking about those widows and he says that these widows must be qualified. And one of the qualifications is this. Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband.

[22:54] The phrase is literally one man woman. It's the mirror opposite of the phrase that was given to man. So I think this is helpful for a couple of reasons.

First, while it is known for men in the ancient world to have been polygamists, to have multiple wives, it is not known for women to have had multiple husbands.

So polyandry is not attested in the Roman world. So for that reason, I don't think it's likely that one man woman, a widow had to be had been a one man woman.

I don't think that means she had to have had only one husband at a time because there's no context for a woman having more than one husband. So I don't think that phrase refers to polygamy. So second, in 1 Timothy 3, 2, 12, 3, 2 and 12, and Titus 1, 6, the qualifications for elders, the one woman man requirement is given in the present tense.

So he must be now, presently, a one woman man. But then if you look at 1 Timothy 5, 9, when it's speaking of widows, the requirement is given in the perfect tense, having been a one man woman.

[24 : 08] Right? And so the reason for the change in the tense, I think it's because we're talking about widows who are, by definition, no longer married. Right? And so I think because of that, that description, being a one man woman or a one woman man, most likely refers to the present state of things.

How, when you are married and not to, perhaps, not to the person's past, for example, of having never, having never married twice or having never married, having never divorced or remarried.

So I don't think it's referring to someone's past. I think it's referring to someone's present marriage. I don't think that's in view. So I don't think it means one woman, man means only once married, never having married twice.

I think, I don't think that's because of this context in 1 Timothy 5, 9. I think that's still possible, but I don't think currently as of now, I don't think that's what it means. And there's multiple reasons for that.

I think that this expression is really rare, but it's mentioned three times in scripture. And every time it's mentioned, Paul seems to assume that everybody will know what he's talking about.

[25 : 13] So it seems to be a pretty simple and intuitive thing. But if he were trying to say that an elder candidate should have been only married once, that opens up a whole can of worms.

So it raises a lot of questions. So what does that mean? So what if his wife died and then he remarried? Is he still a one-woman man? What if he divorced and then remarried?

Is he a one-woman man? And what if he divorced and remarried and then his ex-wife died? Then is he now a one-woman man? Right? So I mean, all kinds of questions he raises, and I don't think that kind of nuance or complexity is in Paul's view because he seems to assume that everybody will know what he's talking about.

So he just says one-woman man, and I think it's, and so I think, I don't think that's likely, even though a lot of people have held that view. So I think what it's most likely to mean, I'm not dogmatic about this, but I think it's most likely to mean that he must be faithful to his own spouse, one spouse.

I think that's the most likely meaning. It describes a man whose family life is characterized by one woman only. Just as the qualification of having obedient children applies to the man's present family life, I think the issue of being a one-woman man applies to the man's present marriage and not to his past, whether he had been widowed or divorced in the past.

[26 : 32] So while marital history is of course relevant for determining the man's character, that's not what is primarily in view here. That's not, doesn't automatically bar someone from the eldership.

But of course, if the one-woman man means that person must be faithful to his one spouse, of course that excludes polygamy as well. So I think that's assumed.

And in addition to being faithful to his wife, Paul continues in verse 6, his children must be believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

This is another difficulty about this verse. What's difficult is that the parents really don't have control over whether their children are going to be saved or not, right?

I mean, we can do all that we can to raise them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, but ultimately salvation comes from the Lord. So how can the father be held accountable for this and punished for this for not being able to?

[27 : 30] So that's the reason why it's difficult. But the word believers can also be translated as faithful. And actually, the same word in the exact same form is often translated as faithful throughout the Bible.

So those are the two main options. I think it's possible either one is right. If it's referring to them having to be believers, even if they have no control of it, the scripture could be teaching us that, well, even if you're not ultimately responsible for it, if your children are not believers, then it brings reproach to the gospel.

Like, hey, here's a man who preaches the gospel, here's a pastor, his children don't even believe what he teaches, right? So that could be what that means. Or it could mean that the children have to be faithful.

My personal preference is that that's, my best interpretation, it means that they should be faithful or trustworthy. And the reason why I think that is because the same word is used two more times in Titus, and in both times it refers to being trustworthy, not being believers.

It refers to a trustworthy word in chapter 1, verse 9. It refers to a trustworthy saying in chapter 3, verse 8. And then secondly, if you look at the parallel in 1 Timothy 3, 4, it says this, he must manage his own household well with all dignity keeping his children submissive, right?

[28 : 48] So again, in that parallel context in 1 Timothy 3, it doesn't mention anything about them having to be believers, having to have been saved and being Christians. It only talks about them being submissive.

So if that's the case and that's an accurate parallel, then I think here it's referring to the fact that your children should be reliable. They should be of trustworthy character. And what that looks like is this, they should not be open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

I think that's most likely what this passage is referring to. Debauchery refers to drunkenness, of course, and wild living. Insubordination refers to persistent rebellion and disobedience.

Whether the word should be translated faith for all or believers, this passage shows clearly that it's important to assess the man's family life, that he has to have been proven faithful in his family life for him to become an elder.

And this is referring to children who are still under the father's authority, so it wouldn't apply to grown children who are out of the house because they're called children and they're called to be subordinate.

[29 : 58] And the rationale behind the qualification is this. In 1 Timothy 3, 4 to 5, it says, he must manage his own household well with all dignity, keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

That's the rationale, right? It's the, a married elder is called to lead two families, his family and God's family, and the former functions as the testing ground for the latter, whether he can serve in the latter ground or not.

4th century pastor John Chrysostom puts it this way, I don't have the quote for you, sorry, we should observe what care he bestows upon children. For he who cannot be the instructor of his own children, how should he be the teacher of others?

If he cannot keep in order those whom he has had with, if he cannot keep in order those whom he has had with him from the beginning, whom he has brought up, and over whom he had power, both by the laws and by nature, how will he be able to benefit those without?

For if he was unable to restrain them, it is a great proof of his weakness. And if he was unconcerned, his want of affection is much to be blamed. He then that neglects his own children, how shall he take care of other men?

[31 : 18] That's the rationale. So having addressed the elder's family life, then Paul now turns to the qualifications regarding the elder's personal life in verse 7. Read with me.

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. Once again, the elder's qualification can be summarized by the phrase above reproach.

And being above reproach entails, in terms of personal character, not being arrogant or quick-tempered or drunkard or violent or greedy for gain. These are pretty self-explanatory, so I'll go through them pretty quickly.

But an elder must not be arrogant, meaning overbearing, seeking his own will, seeking his own interest and pridefully. He must not be quick-tempered.

He shouldn't be hot-headed or angry. He must not be a drunkard. The Greek word literally means alongside wine or beside wine.

[32 : 19] So it refers to someone who spends too much time next to alcohol. And he must not be violent, a bully, or a brawler. So he must not be greedy for gain.

Elders who try to get rich off of their ministry bring shame and disrepute to the gospel of Jesus Christ. So they must not be greedy for gain. Having described what elders should not be in verse 8, Paul describes what elders should be in verse 8.

They should be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. This is a great list, right? An elder must be hospitable. Isn't that crazy that that's a requirement for an elder? Doesn't that sound kind of wild, right? They have to be hospitable. That's a real requirement. I mean, I don't know. I've never heard of a church that refused to ordain an elder because he failed to be hospitable.

But we need to be ready to do that if it's really obvious that they're not hospitable, right? And they must not be reclusive or withdrawn, right? They must not be too busy to prioritize people in their lives.

[33 : 27] They must be welcoming and inviting. Their dinner table should be open to feeding others. Their guest rooms and beds should be open for hosting others. They should be willing to inconvenience themselves for the convenience of others.

Of course, this involves being hospitable to fellow believers. 1 Peter 4.9 says, show hospitality to one another without grumbling. Romans 12.13 says, contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

So hospitality is a significant aspect of our love for one another. And in particular, I think when it says that an elder has to be hospitable, it probably is assuming that an elder is responsible for basically housing, traveling missionaries that come through to minister to them and to the church as well.

But it's not just for one another. Hospitality goes beyond our care for one another. The Greek word for hospitable literally means loving the stranger.

It has a missional orientation, our orientation toward outsiders, even unbelievers. It should not be, our posture should not be one of fear and antagonism but of love, inviting warmth.

[34 : 41] So Hebrews 13.2 says, do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. An elder's home should be, it should be a hopping place to use our terms.

It should be a place for drawing people in and not for retreating from people, withdrawing from people. Elders should also be a lover of good, not evil and self-controlled.

The word self-controlled here has a sense of being prudent and thoughtful rather than rash and careless. So he should be a lover of good and he should be self-controlled.

He must be upright and holy. The two words are frequently paired together in scripture. Being upright refers to one's posture toward other people, being just in your dealings with other people and being holy refers to one's orientation toward God, being set apart for him and living for him as someone who has been consecrated to God.

The last word, disciplined, it means being disciplined but it also has likely a sexual nuance because the verbal form of the same word is used in 1 Corinthians 7, 8-9 when Paul addresses widows and widowers.

[36 : 00] He says this, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am but if they cannot exercise self-control, that's the same word, they should marry for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

So to be disciplined, I think it involves being self-controlled in one's desires and passions. And finally, Paul says in verse 9, 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.

So up to this point, Paul's list all had to do with character requirements for the elders. Now he addresses a related issue of theological competence. The final aspect of being above reproach involves holding firm to the trustworthy word as taught.

Elders must be people who hold firmly to the word, not loosely or lackadaisically to the trustworthy word as taught, right? This, again, the word, he said a similar thing earlier in 1 Corinthians 15, 1-2 which we saw.

He said, hold fast to the word I preach to you. And he explained that this word is the gospel that he preached to them. Because this gospel is trustworthy, the saving use of Jesus, because this gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, that has to be what the elders are about and they have to hold firmly to it.

[37 : 23] Because if you're not convicted of it, if that's not what you're staking your life on, you will not be, you will not have a sense of urgency when that is contradicted, when it is challenged, when it is lost and taken for granted.

It's so easy to become kind of pragmatic as an elder, as a pastor, and to neglect the gospel in favor of some particular pet project or hobby horse, you know, or some kind of doctrinal distinctive, right? Elders can get carried away by a particular view of the second coming, right? The millennium, right? What's the view? Rapture, right? I mean, an elder can get carried away with, and obsessed with giving.

Like, you have to give more every week, right? It's like a, you could get, they could get obsessed with, you know, self-help practices. If you do this, you could have your best life now, right?

You could get fixated on spiritual gifts, apologetics, social justice. Not all of these are bad, they're really good things, but none of these things must rival the centrality of the gospel.

[38 : 29] Elders must hold firmly to the gospel. This is necessary, why? So that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

And if an elder does not personally hold firmly to the truth, trustworthy word as taught, he will neither be able to instruct others nor be able to rebuke those who contradict it. And I love how the word that is used, is sound, right?

It means healthy, right? It's a medical metaphor, right? There is doctrine that is sound, that is healthy. And there is doctrine that is diseased, that will lead to spiritual ailments.

An elder must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine because the elders of the church must be above reproach so that they can teach sound doctrine and promote sound faith. So that's the profile of the elders.

And the reason why Paul is so urgent about Titus appointing these qualified elders is because of the presence of the false teachers in Crete. So that leads us to our final point, the profile of the false teachers.

[39 : 33] Paul writes in verses 10 to 11, for there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. It's imperative that Titus appoints elders in Crete who are above reproach and able to teach sound doctrine because there are many who are promulgating false doctrine.

And the description of these Cretan false teachers are intentionally contrasted with the description of the elders. So if you put them side by side and compare them, it's like the exact opposite. So the Cretan false teachers are described as insubordinate and that's how but the elders on the other hand are supposed to have subordinate children.

Unlike the elders who give instruction in sound doctrine in verse 9, the false teachers are empty talkers. Unlike the elders who are supposed to hold firmly to the trustworthy word, the false teachers are deceivers.

Paul is specifically concerned about those of the circumcision party, he says. This is a reference to legalistic Jewish Christians who insisted that all Christians, even Gentile ones, had to follow all the ceremonial laws, the Jewish laws and be circumcised to become a Jew in order to be saved.

[40 : 53] And the apostles and the elders had already decided this issue in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 saying that it's not necessary for Gentiles to become a Jew, to be saved. But these Jewish converts were nevertheless teaching this.

And Paul writes that in verse 11, they must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for a shameful gain what they ought not to teach. Once again, the contrast between the elders who are not greedy for gain and these false teachers who are teaching for shameful gain. And so how are these false teachers to be silenced? It's not by, you know, hiring some muscles to escort them out of the church service, right? The way Paul calls these elders to silence the false teachers is already, he already told us in verse 9, by instructing with sound doctrine and rebuking those who contradicted.

The elders are to silence false teaching by teaching the truth. And then, in verse 12, Paul condemns these Cretans with their own mouth by quoting a Cretan seer.

His name is Epimenides. Epimenides, I don't know how to say it. Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. And then he affirms that this testimony is true.

[42 : 07] Of course, Paul is generalizing here. Not every single one of the Cretans are like this. If that were the case, every single one of the Cretan Christians would be like that too. That's not what Paul is saying. But this portrayal of them is actually quite consistent.

There's a lot of history written by non-Christians attests to this reality as well. So, Paulinus was a Greek historian from the 2nd century BC.

He writes in his histories this, so much, in fact, disordered love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them that the Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful. That's a pretty harsh accusation, right? And then Cicero, the 1st century BC Roman politician and lawyer, he said this, the Cretans consider piracy and brigandage honorable.

So, Cretans did not have a good reputation and this is not just from the Christians, from this, from pagan authors as well. So, Cretans had such a reputation for lying that the Greek word for lying actually is taken from the word Crete.

[43 : 18] And Paul points this out not because he wants to mock the Cretan Christians but because he wants to exhort them to dissociate themselves from the ungodly bunch and to distinguish themselves from that past and from that history.

Therefore, Paul continues in verse 13, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. So, Paul's used the word rebuke already in verse 9 so he's rightly referring to rebuking the false teachers.

He wants even them to return to true faith, to be sound in the faith again. And then in verse 15, Paul does himself what he tells the elders to do.

He silences the false teachers by teaching the truth. He says, to the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

So, Paul's here contrasting moral purity, which is necessary, from ritual purity, which is unnecessary. This exposes the heart of the false teaching of the Cretan circumcision party, because to the pure, all things are pure.

[44 : 32] To those who are morally pure, those who are pure from within, to those who have been cleansed by Christ, all things are ritually pure. In Mark 7, 7, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they in vain worshipped God, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, and then Jesus went on to teach that it's the internal moral purity that matters to God, not external ritual purity.

So, Paul is following Jesus' teaching here. And so, conversely then, the defiled and unbelieving, for them, nothing is pure. To those who are morally impure, to those who have not been cleansed by Christ from within, because they are unbelieving, nothing is pure for them.

All things are ritually impure for them. No amount of ceremonial cleanness can purify their hearts because they are defiled from within. Both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

Because of this, Paul continues in verse 16, they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Paul repeats the key word work twice in this verse. And professing a mere knowledge of God is insufficient if it does not produce good works, because faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

[45 : 48] Their profession of faith, the Cretan false teachers' profession of faith, was nullified by their evil deeds. And that's why Paul said earlier in verse 1 that his goal in ministry was to secure the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness.

The elders of the church must be above reproach so that they can teach sound doctrine and promote sound faith. And why devote an entire chapter just to qualification of elders? elders. It's because Paul is concerned about the gospel of Jesus Christ. I cannot be an elder apart from the grace of God.

It's because I'm a sinner through and through and it's him that saved us, saved me from myself.

And Jesus died for our sins, paid the penalty that we could not pay so that we can be recipients of his grace, so that we can become holy, and so that we can be saints living for him and no longer for ourselves.

That's the gospel. And that is so precious to Paul. That is so essential for the health of the church that he devotes an entire chapter to talking about the leaders whose only job, really, everything is subsumed under this one job, is to protect the gospel.

[47 : 10] It's a high calling. And he doesn't call just the elders for that. the elders are called to ensure sound doctrine, ensure that the gospel is held.

But as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, every believer is called to hold fast to the gospel that was preached to us. So are you holding fast to that truth? That's the power of God unto salvation. There is salvation in no other name except in the name of Jesus Christ. My prayer is that we would have elders who are characterized by this and we have a whole church that is on board and characterize that passion for the gospel.

And so to that end, please pray with me for our church. Pray for our elders. Pray that our pastor interns will all be equipped and qualified and that we be able to affirm them, appoint them as elders in our church.

Pray for our deacons as well, which I will address in the future. Let's take a moment to reflect on this and then we'll pray together for our church. Let's take aorrho Macko receivers.

[48 : 22] Please pong a restaurant with a flock of families to families to Kã producción of us to Elaine and