



The
**PILLAR OF
TRUTH**
SERIES

Titus and James

A STUDY WORKBOOK

Chad Sychtysz

Titus and James

Study Workbook

“Pillar of Truth” Series

© 2017 by Chad Sychtysz

© 2017, 2021 Chad Sychtysz

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by
Spiritbuilding Publishers
9700 Ferry Rd.
Waynesville, OH 45068

Spiritbuilding
P U B L I S H E R S

Printed in the United States of America
Titus and James
By Chad Sychtysz

Cover design by Jamie Baldwin

Table of Contents

The Epistle to Titus

Introduction to the Epistle to Titus	1
Salutation (1:1-4)	6
Lesson One: Candidates for the Eldership (1:5-9)	8
Lesson Two: The Need for Elders (1:10-16)	14
Lesson Three: Responsible Christian Living (2:1-14)	19
Expectations of Various Groups (2:1-10)	19
The Effect of Grace on All Christians (2:11-14)	25
Lesson Four: Paul’s Charges to Titus (2:15 — 3:11)	28
Speak with All Authority (2:15)	28
Remind Christians to Obey Authorities (3:1-3)	29
Remind Christians of What God Did for Them (3:4-8a)	33
Speak Confidently about This Grace (3:8b)	38
Avoid Engaging in Useless Discussions (3:9)	38
Avoid Fictious Men (3:10-11)	39
Final Remarks and Farewell (3:12-15)	41
Appendix I: The “Believing Children” Phrase in Titus 1:6	43
Sources Used for the Epistle to Titus	52

The Epistle of James

Introduction to the Epistle of James	54
Salutation (1:1)	62
Lesson One: The Christian’s Attitude toward Trials and Persecutions (1:2-11)	64
The Need for Endurance through Trials (1:2-4)	64
Praying to God for Help (1:5-8)	66
Endurance in Humble Circumstances (1:9-11)	67
Lesson Two: The Christian Attitude toward Temptation (1:12-18)	69
Lesson Three: Pure and undefiled Religion (1:19-27)	75
Lesson Four: Mercy versus Judgment (2:1-13)	81
Lesson Five: Faith and Works (2:14-26)	87
Lesson Six: Resisting the Influence of the World (3:1-18)	92
Sins of the Tongue (3:1-12)	92
Two Kinds of Wisdom (3:13-18)	95
Lesson Seven: Things to Avoid (4:1-12)	100
Friendship with the World (4:1-6)	100
The Resistance of Human Pride (4:7-12)	103
Lesson Eight: More Things to Avoid (4:13 — 5:6)	108
Being Presumptuous about the Future (4:13-17)	108
Trusting in One’s Riches (5:1-6)	110
Lesson Nine: Final Exhortations (5:7-20)	113
Sources Used for the Epistle of James	120

Introduction to the Epistle to Titus

The Epistle to Titus is one of three New Testament (NT) books often collectively referred to as the “pastoral epistles.” (The other two are 1 and 2 Timothy.) This implies that Timothy and Titus are “pastors” in the early church. Pastoral, in this sense, comes to us from a denominational usage of “pastor” (dating back to the 18th century) rather than a biblical one. “Pastor” actually means “shepherd,” and is nearly always translated as such in the NT; a rare exception is in Ephesians 4:11. Modern denominationalism (from 19th century forward) uses “pastor” as a kind of minister/elder/primary overseer of the church. Denominational commentators look upon Timothy and Titus in this role and call Paul’s epistles to these men as “pastoral.”

There is no need for such a thing as a “pastor” in the sense just described, unless we are talking about Christ, the Chief Pastor/Shepherd over *all* of the brotherhood (1 Peter 5:4). Even so, there is a “pastoral” sense to these three epistles. First, Paul serves as a kind of “shepherd” to Timothy and Titus. He is their teacher; they are his students. He directs, instructs, encourages, and reminds them of their responsibilities as ministers of the gospel, albeit in different ways to each man. Paul handles Timothy’s younger age and relative inexperience differently than he does Titus’ apparently older and more cosmopolitan perspective. Second, 1 Timothy and Titus provide information about elders (pastors) of churches. Timothy and Titus are commissioned with appointing men as elders in the congregations where they are working according to the guidelines put forth by Paul. These “pastoral” epistles, then, are of critical importance for ministers of the gospel seeking to model themselves after Timothy and Titus, and for elders (and men seeking to become elders) who must desire to serve in a manner consistent with the terms of their appointment. They have what Barclay calls “ecclesiastical significance.”¹

The Epistle to Titus is a personal letter from the apostle Paul to his protégé Titus, who has already been very useful to him in earlier work, particularly during Paul’s second and third missionary journeys. Titus is one of Paul’s most trusted companions. He is a Greek convert, likely one of Paul’s own, whom Paul calls “my brother” (2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my true child” (Titus 1:4)—a man who conducts himself “in the same spirit” and walks “in the same steps” as Paul himself (2 Corinthians 12:18).

Titus clearly had the strength of mind and character which enabled him to face and to handle a difficult situation. There are two kinds of people. There are the people who can make a bad situation worse, and there are the people who can bring order out of chaos and peace out of strife. Titus was the man to send to the place where there was trouble. He had a gift for practical administration.²

¹ William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003 [2nd revision]), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 261.

Titus appears to be the deliverer of the letter(s) to the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:6, 13-14, and 8:6). Paul considers him honorable, “very earnest,” and a “partner” and “fellow worker” in the gospel (2 Corinthians 8:16-24). He is also an unnamed member of Paul’s entourage on his journey to Jerusalem for the so-called council there (compare Acts 15:2 and Galatians 2:3). Some commentators believe Titus and Luke are brothers, and the reason for Titus not being named in Acts is because Luke did not want to give special treatment to him—or himself.³ He is last mentioned (chronologically) in 2 Timothy 4:10 as having been dispatched by Paul to Dalmatia (Illyricum) while Paul awaited his final sentencing before Nero.

Titus was indirectly involved in the controversy over circumcision that Paul faced in the Jerusalem council. Paul circumcised Timothy, whose father was a Greek (thus, a Gentile) but whose mother was a Jew, because Jews determined the ethnicity of their sons through the mother (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy’s presence as an uncircumcised “Jew” in Jewish synagogues while trying to preach the gospel of Christ would have been offensive to them. Titus’ case, however, was different: by implication, both his father *and* mother were Gentiles, and there was thus no reason to circumcise him simply to placate the imposition of Pharisaic Christians and/or “false brethren” who infiltrated early congregations (Galatians 2:1-5).

Purpose and Characteristics: Crete is an island that lies between the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas; it is nearly equidistant from Europe (Achaia), Asia (i.e., the Anatolian Peninsula), and the coast of North Africa. It is a sizable island, over 150 miles long and anywhere from 7 to 30 miles wide. In the center of the island is a mountain chain that (in Mt. Ida) rises to an elevation of over 8,000 feet. (Mt. Ida is the alleged birthplace of Zeus; the legendary King Minos, said to be Zeus’ son, began a race of people—the Minoans—that dominated the Mediterranean Sea from ca. 2500 to 1400 BC.)⁴

Crete was the cradle of the ancient Minoan civilization, and there were said to have been a hundred cities on the island. The population was of mixed races, noted for their trickery, drunkenness and licentiousness. A temple of Bacchus was there, and the island was famed for its wines.⁵

3 William Ramsey has suggested that Titus was actually Luke’s close relative, possibly even his blood brother, and that the “we” section in Acts 20:5 actually includes Luke *and* Titus (*St. Paul the Traveller* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965], 59, 390).

4 W. M. Calder, “Crete,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, electronic edition, James Orr, gen. ed. (database © 2004 WORDsearch Corp.); Marshall Patton, “Introduction,” *Truth Commentaries: The Books of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Mike Willis, ed. (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 2001), xxix.

5 James B. Coffman, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus & Philemon* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1978), 320.

Paul's first encounter with Crete was likely while he was a prisoner on board a ship during his ill-fated voyage to Rome as described in Acts 27. The captain of that ship had hoped to winter in a port town called Phoenix in Crete, having spent only a short time in Fair Havens, but was blown into the Mediterranean Sea by a hurricane-force storm (Acts 27:7-17). The only other mention of Crete in the NT (beyond the above-mentioned voyage to Rome) is in Acts 2:11 and Paul's letter to Titus.

It is possible that Paul later returned to Crete, and may have established several churches there (see below). It is difficult to know what Paul means by "I left you in Crete" (1:5): it can mean that Paul was with Titus in Crete, then left him behind; or it "may mean nothing more than that Paul 'assigned' Titus to the Cretan duties and location,"⁶ as he has dispatched other men in this same way. (The internal evidence seems weighted toward Paul having been in Crete, but we will never know for certain.) Paul's letter to Titus is to "set in order what remains" to be done (1:5), the appointment of elders in those churches being among the foremost of these tasks. Crete is not a very easy place to minister; the people there are given over to gross immorality and base desires, and are generally gullible, unstable, and undisciplined (see notes on 1:12). Nonetheless, the gospel had taken root there, and it was Titus' job to see that respect and order were established within the churches. A large part of Paul's encouragement to Titus is that he would not be intimidated by the coarse and unruly nature of the Cretans, but that he would rely upon the power of the gospel and his faith in God ("These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you"—2:15). At the same time, he warned Titus to be on guard against the negative influences of paganism, hedonism, and especially Judaism. "The instructions, warnings, duties, exhortations, and words of motivation are needed among God's people now as much as then. Indeed, the whole book is pertinent in its application to the present time."⁷

Authorship and Date of Writing: Bible scholars and historians almost universally conclude that Paul is the genuine author of the Epistle to Titus. "The external evidence for the Pauline authorship is strong and conclusive," being supported by early church writers such as Clement, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Theophilus.⁸ Some have objected in the past to Paul's authorship because the language used in the pastoral epistles contains Greek words and phrases not found in any other epistles known to be written by Paul. Close analysis of this, however, reveals that Greek words and phrases even within the three pastoral letters themselves are not consistent.⁹ Several factors can account for such changes in all of Paul's epistles: the age and

⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 13.

⁷ Patton, "Introduction," *Truth Commentaries*, xxxi.

⁸ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, no date), 555.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 556-557. Despite spending fourteen pages of detailed and scholarly analysis of this problem, William

experience of the author (from one writing to the other); those to whom he writes; the nature or topic of the letter itself; whether a letter is personal or to be read by a general audience; etc. Even the person to whom Paul dictated his letters will have an effect on the wordage of a letter or treatise.¹⁰ It seems an unnecessary and even presumptuous measure to decide for ancient authors which words or phrases they are allowed to use, and to discount them when they choose others. That having been said, the canonicity of the Epistle to Titus—i.e., its rightful place in the NT—has been accepted since the earliest compilations of apostolic literature. “Although they were addressed to Timothy and Titus, these [so-called “pastoral”] letters were of utmost value also to the churches, both because they came from the apostle’s own hand and because they dealt with the work to be done for them at that time and in later years. No wonder they were [originally] placed into the canon without question.”¹¹

There is no mention of a Cretan ministry in Acts. Thus, either Luke skipped over this altogether—an extremely unlikely and unfounded prospect—or this ministry took place after Paul was released from Roman imprisonment (which is where Luke’s record left him in Acts 28:30-31). This latter proposition makes sense, given Paul’s remarks to Titus. Titus may have come to Crete with Paul and the two men founded the church work there (since Paul chose to go where others had not; Romans 15:20-21), or Titus came afterward, or he was sent there simply to better organize existing churches.¹² In any case, the Cretan ministry must have taken place after Paul’s release from prison (ca. AD 62) and his subsequent arrest (no earlier than 64, and no later than 68). A conservative date for this epistle, then, is ca. AD 63.

Hendriksen finally says, “The argument based on vocabulary and grammar leads nowhere” (*The New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1955], 13).

10 This is an argument J. N. D. Kelly brings up (*Black’s New Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles*, Henry Chadwick, gen. ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009], 25-26). Many people think that dictation was a word-by-word transference from the author to the page through the use of a secretary (*amanuensis*); “Modern research, however, has rendered this extremely doubtful. There is reason to suppose that...dictation was a much slower, more laborious process than it is nowadays, and that it was customary, instead of dictating word by word, to allow a trusted amanuensis a much freer hand in the composition of a letter” (ibid., 26). Regardless, this does not change the apostolic *authority* behind such writings, as well as the *divine inspiration* that ensures the content of what is said will be exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted recorded.

11 R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 482.

12 We will never know for certain who was responsible for establishing churches in Crete. Paul (along with Titus) is the best candidate, but there is no compelling argument to support this. Others see it entirely differently: “It can scarcely be supposed that the Christian Churches of Crete were first founded during this visit of St. Paul; on the contrary, many indications in the Epistle to Titus show that they had already lasted for a considerable time” (W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964], 758). Yet, even this position lacks convincing support. The fact that the churches in Crete do not yet have elders actually indicates *new* groups, not well-established ones. In the end, this subject will have to be left to the reader to decide.

It cannot be known for certain where Paul penned this epistle. He wrote Titus that he will spend the winter “there” in Nicopolis (3:12), but we do not know where he was at the time. The best guess—the most logical, and the most familiar to both Paul and Titus from earlier accounts—is Corinth, which is on the other side of the Grecian Peninsula from Nicopolis.

General Outline:

- ❑ Salutation (1:1-4)
- ❑ The Appointment of Elders (1:5-16)
 - Candidates for the Eldership (1:5-9)
 - The Need for Elders in the Churches (1:10-16)
- ❑ Responsible Christian Living (2:1-14)
 - Expectations of Various Groups (2:1-10)
 - The Effect of Grace on All Christians (2:11-14)
- ❑ Paul’s Charges to Titus (2:15 – 3:11)
 - Speak with All Authority (2:15)
 - Remind Christians to Obey Authorities (3:1-3)
 - Remind Christians of What God Did for Them (3:4-8a)
- ❑ Paul’s Charges to Titus (continued)
 - Speak Confidently about This Grace (3:8b)
 - Avoid Engaging in Useless Discussions (3:9)
 - Avoid Factious Men (3:10-11)
- ❑ Final Remarks and Farewell (3:12-15)

Abbreviations Used:

ASV: American Standard Version Bible

BNTC: *Black’s New Testament Commentary* (J. N. D. Kelly)

ESV: English Standard Version Bible

ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

JFB: Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Testament Volume*

KJV: King James Version Bible

NAS or NASB: New American Standard Bible

NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Philip Towner)

NIV: New International Version Bible

NKJV: New King James Version Bible

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

TNDSB: *The New Daily Study Bible* (William Barclay)

Salutation (1:1-4)

Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ ...” (1:1a)—Paul’s signature opening to nearly all of his letters. Titus already knows Paul is an apostle of Christ; this is not written solely for his benefit. It is likely to remind him of the level of authority with which Paul speaks, especially in refutation of those (Judaists) that question his apostleship and thus his authority. It is also possible that this letter is meant to be used to support Titus’ direct connection to the apostle Paul, to silence men who may be resisting his efforts in Crete. “One suspects that much of the teaching [in this epistle] was intended for the church, not Titus, who already knew it, and as validation of Titus’s authority (although this is not as pronounced as in 1 Timothy).”¹³

Paul’s servitude and apostleship serve specific purposes (1:1b). They are for “the faith of those chosen of God”—i.e., those who belong to the predestined group of believers, which is Christ’s church (Ephesians 1:3-5). Paul’s role is to nurture, reinforce, and support the faith of those who belong to Christ—a role he takes very seriously. The phrase “chosen of God” indicates an elect or special group of people who are separated from the unconverted world. God has called these people into His fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9), and they have also called upon God for salvation (Acts 2:21). Paul always uses “chosen” or “called” in this context to denote a *group* of people—i.e., *Christ’s church*—rather than individual souls.

A second and related reason for Paul’s servitude and apostleship is for “the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness” (1:1b). No person can be saved without knowledge concerning salvation (and his need for it); no one can obtain this knowledge apart from the revealed word of Christ (Romans 10:17, Ephesians 1:13, Colossians 1:5-6, et al). No person is saved by knowledge alone, but neither can he be saved without it. God’s truth is essential for learning what “godliness” is, just as the Law of Moses was essential for defining holy living for the ancient Israelites. “Godliness means the condition of one who lives a sanctified life in the presence of God so as to express God in his or her living.”¹⁴

This *faith* (an act of human will) and *knowledge of the truth* (a revelation of divine will) both seek the same end: “the hope of eternal life” (1:2a). Thus, human faith and divine truth are purpose-driven and goal-oriented; they are not merely religious beliefs or terminology that have no bearing on the hereafter. God *promised* this “eternal life” to those who do become the “chosen of God.” This promise was made “long ages ago” [lit., before the world began; or, in the eternal past]: before God made men, He promised to Himself—and then revealed this

¹³ William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), lxi; bracketed words are mine.

¹⁴ Robert Jamieson, Andrew Fausset and David Brown. *New Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Testament Volume*, electronic edition, D. Douglas, gen. ed. (© 2009 QuickVerse for Windows), on 1:1.

promise to His prophets—that He would be the Giver of eternal life (1 John 2:25). His promise is secured through not only the ministerial work of His Son upon the cross (Romans 5:9-10), but also the work of His Spirit in Christ’s church (Ephesians 1:13-14). This hope is also secured by the certainty and constancy of God’s divine nature: it is a promise made by a Divine Being who cannot break promises. Because God cannot be any more or less than what He is now (for otherwise He would not be perfect), He “cannot lie” or fail to perform that which He has promised (2 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 6:18), inasmuch as lying or failing would be less than perfect.¹⁵ God revealed this promise to select men like Paul (1:3), who became the proclaimers or evangelists of His gospel (Colossians 1:25-27). And all this happened “at the proper time”—i.e., when all sequences of events *and* conditions for its being revealed to the world had been met (as in Romans 5:6, Galatians 4:4, and 1 Timothy 2:6). “The commandment of God our Savior” gives context to the proclamation: what God *commanded* is what Paul *proclaimed*. There is no problem or contradiction with referring to God (the Father) as our “Savior” and Jesus Christ as our Savior (see the next verse), since all salvation comes *from* the Father *through* His Son.

“To Titus, my true child in a common faith” (1:4)—see comments on Titus in the “Introduction.” Paul calls both Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:2) and Titus his “true child” [lit., my genuine child]. Likely this has a two-fold meaning: first, Paul probably taught both men the gospel, and thus is their “father” in that sense (as in 1 Corinthians 4:15); second, Paul is older than both men, and thus serves as a father figure to them, especially in regard to his mentoring as an evangelist. In any case, Paul’s having addressed Titus in this way reveals his high personal regard for him. “Grace and peace ...”—words which have no meaning for and cannot be applied to those outside of Christ. Grace is God’s divine favor toward those who are being saved; peace is the resulting state of fellowship that exists between God and the believer once this grace has been extended to him on the basis of his genuine faith in Him (Romans 5:1). In these two verses (1:3-4), Paul uses the expression “God our Savior”¹⁶ and “Jesus Christ our Savior,” indicating that both God the Father *and* Christ the Son are directly involved in our salvation.

15 The Cretans were famous for their lies, deceptions, and fables (see 1:12-13); thus, Paul’s statement that “God ... cannot lie” is an intentional contrast (and denunciation) of such character (Towner, *NICNT*, 74).

16 “God our Savior” [in the Greek, lit., “our Savior God”] is used several times in the pastoral epistles: 1 Timothy 1:1, 2:3, 4:10, Titus 1:3, 2:10, and 3:4. Christ is also called “Savior” in 2 Timothy 1:10, Titus 1:4, 2:13, and 3:6.

Lesson One: Candidates for the Eldership (1:5-9)

As stated in the “Introduction,” a major purpose of Paul’s epistle to Titus is to finish those “things that remain” (or, are wanting) that did not get done while he was still there (1:5a). The disorganized churches in Crete make them ripe for infiltration and takeover by ambitious opportunists. “Vigorous action is called for at once, for the Cretan congregations have not had time to establish themselves and they are already being undermined.”¹⁷ As a first order of business, Paul entrusts Titus with the responsibility of making sure that elders are appointed “in every city” in Crete (1:5b; see also Acts 14:23). “Appoint” (or, ordain) means, in this context, to put or place a person in a certain official position. “As I directed you” alludes to an earlier conversation otherwise unknown to us; Paul’s direction here is a reminder, not new information.

To clarify this objective, however, Paul goes on to detail the *kind* of men to be considered for this appointment. “Elders” [Greek, *presbuteros*; lit., old men]¹⁸ in this context refers to an office within the church (“the office of an overseer”—1 Timothy 3:1), and specifically within the congregation that appoints such men. Outside of the office of the apostles, it is the only office permitted within the churches; no such office exists for either deacons or preachers. Each church (congregation) is autonomous or self-governed, but to function properly it requires leadership. Such leadership or oversight must be conducted by men who are properly prepared, fit, and qualified to serve in this capacity. Good leadership will feed and direct the congregation toward success; poor leadership (and the *absence* of leadership) will directly contribute to its failure. The Christians in Crete are defaulting to their own traditional (and pagan) methods of thinking and behaving. Paul is critical of this default (see comments on 1:10-16), but provides a solution through the appointment of capable men as elders. This is the simplest and most personal form of church government, and provides a pattern for all other churches to follow.

Elders (also known as overseers [1:7], bishops, presbyters, or pastors) are to shepherd only the congregation which has appointed them. This oversight is to be voluntary (non-compulsory), eagerly carried out (not for illicit gain), and in an exemplary manner (not “lording it over” the flock; cf. 1 Peter 5:1-3). Traditionally, Paul’s criteria for such men is referred to as the “qualifications for elders,” which can be misleading. “Qualification” focuses on what a man has done to “qualify” himself for the job; character issues focus on what *kind* of man he is. Both here and in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul says, in essence, “This is the *kind* of man you need to oversee your congregation” rather than “Here are the clinical qualifications required by your candidate.” The man who desires the office of an overseer must not be submitting a job résumé, neither must his entire past be meticulously scrutinized in pursuit of any defect or poor decision that might “disqualify” him. Rather, he must be a man who is not *becoming* but has already *become* a

¹⁷ Kelly, *BNTC*, 234.

¹⁸ Dr. James Strong, *Strong’s Greek & Hebrew Dictionary*, electronic edition (© 2009 QuickVerse), #G4245.

seasoned soldier for the Lord—honorable, approachable, managerial, wise, fueled with a strong love for Christ, and a having a healthy grasp of His gospel.

To remove all question as to the *kind* of man he needs Titus to have appointed in the churches in Crete, Paul provides the following criteria (1:6-9):

- ❑ He (the candidate) must be a *he*—i.e., a man, not a woman, and certainly not a so-called transgendered person. He must also be a *grown* and *established* man—not a child, not a novice (or “new convert”—1 Timothy 3:6), and not a stranger to the church that is considering him for appointment. He needs to be married (see comments below), have an established household, and have had sufficient time to prove himself capable for the responsibility of being an elder. By all accounts, this man must *already* be doing the work of an elder; he has only to be recognized and accepted by the entire congregation as one.
- ❑ He must be “above reproach”—i.e., of good (or godly) reputation (1:6). Literally, he must be blameless and without accusation of sin. This does not mean he has never sinned, cannot sin, or will not sin in the future; it means that he is not *prone* to sin, has shown mastery *over* sin (Genesis 4:7), and does not *practice* sin (Romans 6:11-14, 1 John 3:4).
- ❑ He must be a husband, and specifically the “husband of one wife”—lit., a one-woman man, or one wife’s husband (1:6).¹⁹ Two things are for certain in this phrase: this man must be an established (versus newly-married) husband and not a single (or unmarried) man; and this man cannot be a polygamist. Robertson’s full comments on this: “One [wife] at a time, clearly.”²⁰ The “be” indicates present tense: “The necessary conclusion is, then, that a man who is appointed to the office of bishop must be a married man at the time of his appointment.”²¹ Many Christians seem to make this phrase far more complicated than this, or than it was ever meant to be. Thus, some add a third imposition: this man cannot have been previously married (a divorcé). The argument often supporting this is twofold: first, the English translation “husband of *one wife*” seems to allow for no other conclusion; second, the stigma of divorce robs a man of his credibility and personal judgment as a church leader. Yet, both of these arguments are subjective in nature: they do not say what *Paul* said, but what a person *wants* Paul to have said (or thinks he said). Thus, they are opinions, not objective analyses; they assume conclusions rather than prove them. A “husband of one wife”—more exactly, a “one-woman man”—does not *have* to be a man who has never been married before; it *does* have to be a man who *is now* married, and (given all the other criteria here and in 1 Timothy 3:1-7) *has been* married long enough to establish himself as a reliable, faithful, and honorable husband to his wife. Whether a man’s prior divorce undermines

¹⁹ This is stated in the opposite for a widow in 1 Timothy 5:9: she must be “the wife of one man” or (so the Greek) a “one-man woman” or “one man’s wife.”

²⁰ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 572.

²¹ E. M. Zerr, *Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Marion, IN: Cogdill Foundation Publications, 1954), 172.

his credibility and judgment is not made conclusive by what Paul said, but may be a factor in what his congregation thinks about divorced men. These are two very different lines of thought, yet sadly often get blurred together as one and the same.

- ❑ He must have “children who believe” (1:6) [KJV, “faithful children”]. This phrase is traditionally rendered, “children who have *become Christians*.” Yet, Paul’s emphasis is *not* on the children’s faithfulness to the *Lord* (which is assumed, but is not present in the text), but their faithfulness to their *father* (which is necessarily implied in the text), as determined by their willingness to obey his leadership in the home. The context for this man’s managerial ability is his home life, indicating that “children” here are old enough to voluntarily respect his leadership but still live under his roof. (Please see “Appendix I” at the end of this study workbook for a detailed response.) “Not accused of dissipation or rebellion” (1:6) further modifies the “children who believe,” not the man being considered for the eldership. His children’s behavior is a reflection of his willingness and ability to control them; if they are kept “under control with all dignity” (cf. 1 Timothy 3:4), then this indicates his capable oversight of his own household, which would include his wife, his children, and possibly others. Obviously, this cannot be talking about young children (especially pre-teens), but children old enough to be *capable* of dissipation [lit., wasteful or riotous living] or open rebellion to the law of the house as laid down by their father. “... [I]f a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Timothy 3:5).

He (“the overseer”²²) “must be above reproach as God’s steward” (1:7). Paul now emphasizes the man’s *stewardship*, which refers to any God-given responsibility entrusted to him for which he is to be held accountable (as used in 1 Corinthians 4:1-5). “Steward” is from a Greek word (*oikonomos*) which literally means “law of (the) house,” but can more generally mean (as it does here) “the manager of a household.”²³ One’s stewardship can refer to people (wife, children, and any other members of his household), wealth, property, vocation, any charge or commission, and especially his own soul. Being a good steward is further defined by what it is *not*:

- ❑ Self-willed [lit., self-pleasing]—i.e., seeking his own will rather than that of God (Matthew 7:21, 16:23) or the interests of others (Romans 15:2, Philippians 2:3-4). Such a man has a corrupted view of why God called him in the first place, and will be a very poor choice for a church leader. “This has to be one of the most important qualities enumerated, despite the fact of so little attention being paid to it; once a self-willed, opinionated elder is appointed,

²² “Elders” is from *presbuteros*, meaning, “old men”; “overseer” comes from a different Greek work, *episkopos*, “superintendent; overseer” (*Strong’s* [electronic edition], #G1985). The two words, in the context of Titus 1:5-9, are used interchangeably. “Elder” refers to one’s status; “overseer” refers to his responsibility.

²³ Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*, electronic edition (Database © 2005 by WORDsearch Corp.), #G3623.

then his prejudices, his opinions, his judgments and his vision become the automatic boundaries of the church's progress."²⁴

- ❑ Quick-tempered—i.e., belligerent, inclined to anger, or controlled by anger (or exhibiting “outbursts of anger”; cf. Galatians 5:19-21). “...But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20). An elder who has a short fuse and resorts to anger to control people will be a poor leader indeed, and his church will suffer greatly under his leadership.
- ❑ Addicted to wine—lit., intemperate, given to wine.²⁵ A man whose judgment and emotions are compromised by alcohol (or any other substance or addiction) is unqualified to serve as a leader of his congregation (1 Timothy 3:3). Christian men are supposed to be filled with the Spirit, not intoxicated with wine or other impairments (Ephesians 5:18).
- ❑ Pugnacious—lit., a striker, bruiser, or fighter²⁶; prone to settle matters with fisticuffs or physical intimidation. One who resorts to physical violence or intimidation in order to “manage” people is entirely unfit for the role of an elder of a church. Such a display of selfish anger contradicts the nature of the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:9) and the Lord Jesus Himself (Matthew 11:29). Such negative traits are “among the signs that a person lacks the discipline and composure necessary to lead others.”²⁷
- ❑ “Fond of sordid gain”—i.e., influenced by bribes, financial gain, or any form of greed (1 Peter 5:1-2). A bribe “blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just” (Exodus 23:8); greed compromises one's judgment and undermines his pursuit of righteousness. This does not mean elders cannot be compensated financially (1 Timothy 5:17-18). “Sordid gain” [KJV, “filthy lucre”; in essence, “dirty money”] indicates a “gain” obtained through unscrupulous, illicit, or base means. Elders—and candidates for elders—must have nothing to do with such practices.

Such are the negative characteristics that an elder candidate must *not* have. He must have positive characteristics, however, that are not new to his behavior but have been established over a reasonable period of time. These include (1:8-9):

²⁴ Coffman, *Commentary*, 322.

²⁵ *Strong's* (electronic edition), #G3943. This phrase does not prohibit the use of alcohol as much as it does the abuse of it, and the inappropriate conduct that so often accompanies such abuse. On the other hand, this verse cannot be used to *support* a Christian's consumption of alcohol, either (so-called “moderate” or “social” drinking). “Alcoholism must have been a severe problem since it is a [*sic*] issue in the appointment of church leaders in every list (1 Tim 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 5:23). While this is true in almost every culture..., it is especially true in Crete; [French commentator Ceslas] Spicq (2:618-19) lists epitaphs that view heavy drinking as a virtue” (Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 410; bracketed words are mine).

²⁶ *Strong's* (electronic edition), #G4131.

²⁷ Towner, *NICNT*, 688.

- ❑ Hospitable (1:8)—from Greek, *philoxenos*, lit., a “lover of strangers.”²⁸ (From this same Greek construct we get “hospitality” and “hospital.”) This describes a man who willingly takes care of fellow believers whom he does not know personally (Romans 12:13, 3 John 5-8). The principle certainly extends to taking care of *un*-believers as well. Even so, fellow Christians must be given priority (Matthew 25:34-40, Galatians 6:10); and one may be more limited in his ability to help non-believers than he is fellow believers.
- ❑ “Loving what is good” (1:8)—i.e., dwelling upon honorable thoughts and holding fast to what is good (Philippians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). This describes a man who is not only *doing* good things, but *loves* goodness (righteousness) as an extension of his love for God, the “only One who is good” (cf. Matthew 19:17). Thus, he seeks after what is best for fellow Christians, and seeks to find good in all people. This also shows a proper attitude toward, and preference for, God and His word.
- ❑ “Sensible, just, devout” (1:8)—these are characteristics of a man who is wise, fair, and discerning (Hebrews 5:14), who honors the dignity of others as a result of his reverence for God Himself. “Sensible” describes one who is prudent and of sound mind.²⁹ “Just” means (morally) right, righteous, and (thus) innocent in one’s dealings with others. “Devout” indicates holiness or personal piety, implying a healthy fear (reverence) for God.
- ❑ “Self-controlled” (1:8)—lit., temperate in all things, such as speech, behavior, and lifestyle.³⁰ This indicates a self-mastery or self-restraint that has been developed and practiced over time (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). It is a “fruit of the Spirit” (cf. Galatians 5:23) and a virtue of Christian faith (2 Peter 1:6). It also defines a man who has been faced with various trials of faith and has endured and overcome them (James 1:2-4).
- ❑ “Holding fast the faithful word...” (1:9)—i.e., a man who knows for certain *what* he believes, *why* he believes it, and that such belief is approved by God. “The faithful word” is not something he came up with on his own, but refers to the divinely-revealed word of God, as delivered to the church through the apostles (1 Corinthians 11:2, Colossians 2:6-7, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Timothy 4:6, 2 Timothy 3:14, et al). “Sound doctrine” [lit., healthy or whole teaching]³¹ refers to the teaching of God, which is not only correct (true), but also beneficial (profitable; 2 Timothy 3:16). The purpose for this requirement is so that this man will be able both to *defend* the gospel truth and *resist* whatever opposes it. A man cannot properly defend what he does not know, and he cannot refute error if he does not know truth (1 John 4:1-6). This defense (or rebuttal) will be exhortative to believers, but will defeat the arguments of those who resist the gospel. “All this sound, healthy teaching is to be the spiritual food of the people; and at the same time it is to be the pattern, type, and illustration of how they are to teach, from their elders on downward.”³²

28 *Strong’s* (electronic edition), #G5382.

29 *Ibid.*, #G4998.

30 *Ibid.*, #G1468.

31 *Ibid.*, #G5189 and #G1319.

32 Lenski, *Interpretation*, 916.

