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## Restored Leadership Part 1

March 11, 2018 - Titus 1:5-9

### Qualifications for Elders

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— 6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife,[a] and his children are believers[b] and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an overseer,[c] 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, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound[d] doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

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### 1:5-9 The appointment of church officers

The instructions given to Titus run parallel to those given to Timothy in 1 Tim. 3, but there are some significant variations, which arose from the different situation in which Titus was placed in Crete. His task was twofold—to *straighten out what was left unfinished* and to *appoint elders* (5). It is not clear what Paul had left incomplete, unless he means the appointment of elders. Paul gives no indication how many were to be appointed, but he had evidently already instructed Titus on this matter. He is more concerned about the qualifications required (6). What stands out is the need not only for moral blamelessness (mentioned twice) but for a stable home-life. Presumably if a person could not keep his own children in order, he would be regarded as inadequate for the leadership of the church. The word translated *believe* may carry the meaning of 'faithful' (av). It is surely unlikely that Paul meant to disqualify church leaders whose children have yet to profess faith.

The switch from *elders* in v 5 to *an overseer* in v 7 is important since there seems to be no essential difference between the two offices. The elder exercises the function of oversight. There is a mixture of wrong attitudes and wrong actions which would make a person ineligible for office (8-9). It is noticeable that Titus is not advised against the appointment of new converts as Timothy is at Ephesus, possibly because the community in Crete was established more recently. If v 7 gives the negative side, the positive is found in vs 8 and 9. The qualities mentioned are those which should be evident in a committed Christian. The emphasis on hospitality is worth noting since so much depended on it in the early church. V 9 makes clear how important a grasp of *sound doctrine* is for those who exercise leadership

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over others in the church. It is only possible to refute false teachers if the true doctrine has been well understood. In Paul's view there should be no blurring of the issues.<sup>1</sup>

## 1:5-9

### Appointing Sound Elders

**1:5.** In the Old Testament, cities were ruled and judged by their "elders," those with the greatest wisdom and experience in the community. By the New Testament period, prominent older men in the synagogues were called "elders." Paul followed the convenient, conventional forms of synagogue leadership in his culture rather than instituting entirely foreign leadership structures. "In every city" meant that the different house churches in each city would each have their own leaders. Like much of old Greece, Crete had long been known for intercity rivalry.

**1:6.** The requirement for being "above reproach" (NASB) was vital for leaders in antiquity (see comment on 1 Tim 3:2). "Husband of one wife" probably meant "a faithful husband"; like the requirement about the children, this one suggests that he be a family man and a leader in his household. These were necessary aspects of being respectable in antiquity and were qualities often examined with regard to suitability for public office. (The Old Testament also emphasized filial obedience under normal conditions; cf. Deut 21:20.) Because they are "elders," and "dissipation" (NASB; the term means wasting money, often on selfish pleasures like drunkenness) was a vice stereotypically attributed to young men, not children, these elders are apparently held responsible for the behavior of their adult children. In the Roman world, sons were to respect their fathers, who had legal authority to rule their sons as long as they lived.

**1:7.** "Stewards" were household managers, often slaves or freedmen, accountable to the master for how they handled his property; this term fits particularly well the image of leaders of household churches. The drunken worship of Dionysus was known on Crete, and the Christian leaders' behavior must not be confused with it in any way (some people ignorantly confused Judaism with the cult of Dionysus, and Christians were generally viewed as part of Judaism). Those "given to wine" (KJV, NASB) were also often recognized as abusive and given to fighting as well.

**1:8.** "Hospitality" meant housing, feeding and treating graciously travelers needing a place to stay. (Christian travelers, like Jewish ones, normally carried letters of recommendation attesting that they could be trusted.)

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, D. (1994). Titus. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1312). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

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**1:9.** Elders had to be trained to refute current false teachings before they were appointed; for the false teachings in view here, see comment on 1:10–16. The “word” in Judaism would be the law, but Paul means the apostolic message (see comment on 2 Tim 4:2).<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Profile of a Christian leader

(1:5–9)

A well-written job advert gives you a clear idea of the kind of person who is needed for a particular position. Paul here, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gives us something similar. Men are needed for leadership in the church. Here is God’s profile of what they are to be.

Greetings over, Paul gets straight down to business. Titus has been left behind on Crete because certain things need to be put in order. The first of these is the appointment of leaders in the churches. Referring to these leaders as *elders*, Paul says, ‘the reason that I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you’ (v. 5). It would seem that each centre of population had its church. These churches needed leaders. And in verses 6–9, in considerable detail, Paul tells us what kind of men these leaders were to be.

### A word about words

Before we examine the profile, we need to glance at Paul’s vocabulary. He uses three words to describe these prospective leaders—elder, overseer, and steward.

The *elder* was a very familiar figure among the Jews. There were elders in the synagogue, elders in the Sanhedrin, elders in each town or village. Their role was to preside, to direct, and to govern, and they were appointed on the basis of their wisdom and maturity. The teaching of the New Testament is that *churches* are to have elders as well.

Then there is the word *overseer*, which Paul uses in verse 7. The overseer and the elder are not two distinct persons occupying two distinct offices. They are one and the same. The titles are used interchangeably in the New Testament. An elder is an overseer. And as the title suggests, the overseer has the oversight of a congregation. His duty is to watch over it and take care of it; to protect it and promote its spiritual well-being.

The third title, *steward*, is hidden by the NIV translation of verse 7. A more literal rendering would be, ‘an overseer must be blameless as a steward of God’. The steward was the man whom a wealthy master would put in charge of his household or business. It was a

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<sup>2</sup> Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Tt 1:5–9). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

position of considerable trust. It required someone who was wise and faithful and trustworthy. And here Paul says that an elder is a steward. He is to manage the affairs of God's house, ensuring that the work of his divine Master gets properly done and caring for his Master's servants.

Elder, overseer, steward—these are the words Paul uses for the leaders who are to be appointed in our churches. Singly and together they mark the position out as one of considerable responsibility. Evidently a Christian of high calibre is required. That brings us to verses 6–9 and to Paul's Spirit-directed description of the Christian elder.

Clearly, Paul's description is of considerable use to those who already *are* elders. It calls us to self-examination and to seek by the grace of God to be far more the Christian leaders that God intends us to be. The primary concern of these verses, however, is not with *being* the right kind of elders, but with *appointing* them. What kind of men should your church be setting apart for eldership? What kind of men does *God* want in that office? Here in Titus 1 we have a very clear answer!

### **Summing it all up at the start**

The apostle begins with a summary word and later on, in verse 7, repeats it. It is the word *blameless*, and it gathers into one the various elements of the apostle's description.

We do have to be careful here not to impose on this word a meaning that it is not intended to bear. 'This does not of course mean,' writes John Stott, 'that candidates must be flawless or faultless, or we would all be disqualified.' The idea is rather that of being 'above reproach'. Morally and spiritually, the elder is to be exemplary. No one should be able to accuse him of either serious misconduct or a general pattern of inappropriate behaviour. He should have a good reputation among outsiders and within the church as well. And as far as doctrine is concerned, he should be sound.

### **The elder as a husband**

When Paul descends to specifics he begins at home: 'An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife'. The basic idea is that of faithfulness. No one is to be made an elder unless he has been faithful to his wife. If he has taken additional wives or has been guilty of adultery, he is disqualified. You can appreciate the importance of this in view of the practices of Paul's day. Immorality was rife. It was common for husbands to sleep with other women. In the community of Jesus Christ, however, a very different standard is to prevail. There is not even to be a hint of sexual immorality (Eph. 5:3). Christian husbands are to be faithful to their wives. And in this, the elders are to take the lead. They are to be patterns of marital purity. Isn't this very much a word for today?

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## The elder as a father

Paul has more to say about the elder's home life. Not only must he be a faithful husband; he must be a good father, one 'whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient'. Something needs to be said here before we come to the details. It has to do with the previous point as well. Paul is not saying that a single man, or a widower, or a man who has been divorced on biblical grounds, or a man who has no children, or a man who has only one child cannot be an elder; that in order to be an elder a man must be married with children. What Paul is doing here is focussing on the norm. For the most part, the men in the church who would be eligible for eldership would be married men with children. It is this general situation that he has in mind.

As far as the elder's children are concerned, Paul insists that they 'believe' (NIV). In other translations these children are described, not as *believing*, but as *faithful*—faithful in the sense of submissive or obedient to their father's will. This is a preferable understanding. What is in Paul's mind is not belief but behaviour. He is not saying that an elder's children have to be Christians. But he is insisting that they be under their father's control and 'not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient'. In his first letter to Timothy the apostle makes the same point: 'The overseer ... must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect' (3:4). Then follows the reason: 'If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?' (3:5). If a man cannot look after his own household it cannot be expected that he will be able to take care of God's church. Failure in the one area will lead to failure in the other.

## The elder as a Christian man

The matter of home life having been addressed, the apostle turns to the area of personal qualities. Viewing him simply as a Christian man, what is an elder to be like? What follows (vv. 7, 8) are five negatives and six positives.

He must not be 'overbearing'. A church ought never to appoint a self-willed or arrogant man—a man who always wants his own way, who is autocratic and domineering, who likes to lord it over people. What is needed are men after the pattern of Jesus—humble, gracious, kind, and ready to serve, men who are prepared to spend and be spent for the sake of God's people.

He must not be 'quick-tempered'. A prospective elder must be able to handle difficult situations and awkward, irritating people without exploding. Eldership requires patience and the ability to give the 'gentle answer' that 'turns away wrath' (Prov. 15:1). A man who is quick-tempered is not to be appointed.

He must not be 'given to drunkenness'. Literally, he must not be 'given to wine'. Paul was a very balanced man. On the one hand, he could say to Timothy, 'stop drinking only water,

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and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses' (1 Tim. 5:23). He does not demand that church leaders practise total abstinence. At the same time he insists on the strictest self-control. An overseer must not be given to wine. If a man, therefore, doesn't know when to stop, if he is in the habit of drinking too much, if this is an area where he lacks self-control, he is not to be given the oversight of a Christian assembly.

He must not be 'violent', a man who is ready to have recourse to his fists when he encounters difficulties and conflicts. Tensions do arise in congregational meetings! So too in pastoral counselling sessions and elders' meetings! A man who would be an elder must be able to handle these tensions without becoming violent. He needs to have a peaceable and gentle disposition.

He must not be a man who pursues 'dishonest gain'. There were false teachers in Crete and in verse 11 we learn that one of their characteristics was a pursuit of dishonest gain. They were greedy for money and didn't hesitate to stoop to dishonesty in order to get it. Paul is quite dogmatic on the point: no one who behaves like that is fit for the eldership. An elder must be a man of the strictest integrity as far as money is concerned.

Moving now to the positive, an elder 'must be hospitable'. The word 'hospitable' comes from one which means 'love of strangers'. It is primarily about caring for and welcoming into our homes those who need hospitality or would greatly benefit from it. Examples in our day would be visitors to our congregation, believers who have recently joined us, the lonely, the needy, the singles who are away from their families, etc. Hospitality is a duty that devolves upon us *all*. Paul makes that clear in Romans 12. And in Titus 1 he tells us that it is one of the qualifications for eldership.

He must be a man who 'loves what is good'. There are so many people who love what is bad. An elder, by contrast, must love both things and people deemed by God to be good. Again, he must be 'self-controlled'. A better translation would be 'sober-minded'. The elder is to be a sensible man; a prudent man; not 'given to wild, foolish ideas'. He needs to have sound judgement and be able to exercise wise leadership. He must be 'upright'—living carefully by the standards of God's word in every area of life; 'holy'—seeking day by day to walk closely with God and to please him in everything; and, finally, he must be 'disciplined'. This is the word that is translated 'self-controlled' in Paul's list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. In regard to sleeping, eating, the use of time and money, the elder must have mastery of himself. He must not be a slave to his appetites, drives, and desires.

Isn't it striking, as we glance back over these points, how firmly the emphasis falls on qualities rather than gifts; character rather than abilities? Paul really wants us to focus on what a man *is*: 'Be sure of his fidelity to his wife; take note of how he manages his children; examine his personal qualities as a Christian man; be persuaded that in all these things he

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is blameless. Only then should you make him an elder!' Wouldn't our churches be better cared for if we were at pains to follow these directives?

### **Last—but definitely not least**

In verse 9, Paul brings his list of qualifications to a close by insisting that an elder must be sound in the faith: 'He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.' Candidates for the eldership, then, must be examined as to their beliefs. Do they have a good grasp of Christian doctrine? Do they understand the fundamentals of the faith? Are they thoroughly committed to them? In an age like ours where the inspiration of Scripture, justification by faith, penal substitution, God's knowledge of the future, and even the second coming of Christ, are all under attack within evangelicalism, we need to ask—as we value the health of the church—'Do these candidates know and believe the truth?' It is the job of the elders, says Paul, (whether they are full-time in the work or not) to encourage believers with sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Unreserved commitment to foundational doctrine is the non-negotiable prerequisite for such a vital ministry.

Gathering it all together, we see how concerned the *Lord* is for his church—for it is he who stands behind the apostle. He knows that his church needs leaders and in the church's highest interests he has told us what kind she needs. The responsibility now is one of implementation. Are you a member of a search committee looking for a full-time elder? Or an eldership that wants to add another man? Or a church member who at the next AGM must vote either yes or no for a particular candidate? Study the profile carefully and resolve, as you do so, that you will settle for nothing less.<sup>3</sup>

### *I. 1:5–9. The appointment and the qualifications of elders in Crete*

**5. I left thee in Crete.** This shews that Paul had been in Crete himself during that busy and eventful time between the two Roman imprisonments. For the origin of Cretan Christianity see Acts 2:11.

**elders.** Cf. Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19.

**as I gave thee charge** invests Titus with the authority that Paul himself had.

**6.** The qualifications are the same as those in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 for bishops (overseers), which shews that 'presbyter' and 'overseer' are two terms for one office.

**blameless:** 1 Tim. 3:10.

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<sup>3</sup> Campbell, D. (2007). *Opening up Titus* (pp. 24–32). Leominster: Day One Publications.

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**having children that believe:** a new requirement.

**who are not accused of riot or unruly.** The word 'riot' is found in the story of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:13.

**7. For the bishop.** This again shews that 'presbyter' is identical with 'bishop' (overseer). The only other places where *episcopus* occurs are 1 Tim. 3:2; Phil. 1:1; Acts 20:28.

**as God's steward:** viz. the manager of God's house (1 Tim. 3:15).

**not self-willed.** In Aristotle the 'gravity' of 1 Tim. 3:4 is a mean between self-will on the one side and complacency on the other. The content of 'not self-willed' is deployed in the following words.

**not soon angry.** In Aristotle this 'anger' is an extreme, and 'inability to be angry' is the opposite. The mean in which he saw virtue is 'gentleness.'

**greedy of filthy lucre.** In 1 Tim. 3:8 this is used of deacons.

**8. just, holy:** additions to the other list. The former applies to duties to men, the latter to duties to God.

**temperate:** rather, 'continent.'

**9. holding to the faithful word.** 'The whole clause,' writes Dr. Bernard, 'indicates the function of the *episcopus* as the guardian of the deposit of faith' (1 Tim. 6:20). Commentators like Dr. Bernard are determined to find here authority for a creed, and for a bishop as the guardian of the apostolic doctrine. As to the latter, we have seen that there can be no thought here of a bishop in the Ignatian sense: the 'bishop' is simply the elder, one of a group appointed in each church. As to the former, it is well to note what Schmidt and Holzendorff say: 'Faithful ... the word which corresponds with the doctrine of the church. Hence we have here already an ecclesiastical doctrinal canon, a rule of faith. This supposes the circumstances of the second century.' If *episcopus* here meant a 'bishop' as distinct from an 'elder,' or if the faithful word' meant a doctrinal symbol, we should have to give up all idea of Pauline authorship. But as 'bishop' is identical with 'presbyter,' so 'the faithful word according to the doctrine' simply means the faithful proclamation of the truth which Paul had taught.

**the healthful teaching** (marg.). See on 1 Tim. 1:10.

**gainsayers:** 2 Tim. 2:25.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Horton, R. F. (Ed.). (1901). *The Pastoral Epistles: Timothy and Titus* (pp. 176–177). Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack.

5. *For this reason I left thee in Crete.* This preface clearly proves, that Titus is not so much admonished on his own account as recommended to others, that no one may hinder him. Paul testifies that he has appointed him in his own room; and on that account all should acknowledge and receive him with reverence as the Apostle's deputy. The apostles had no fixed place assigned to them, but were charged to spread the gospel through the whole world; and for this reason, when they left one city or district to go to another, they were wont to place fit men as their substitutes, to complete the work which they had begun. Thus Paul affirms that he founded the church of the Corinthians, but that there were other workmen, who must build on his foundation, that is, carry forward the building.

This, indeed, belongs to all pastors; for the churches will always stand in need of increase and progress, as long as the world shall endure. But in addition to the ordinary office of pastors, the care of organizing the church was committed to Titus. Till the churches have been already organized, and reduced to some order, pastors were not usually appointed over them. But Titus held some additional charge, which consisted in giving a form to churches that had not yet been properly arranged, and in appointing a fixed kind of government accompanied by discipline. Having laid the foundation, Paul departed; and then it became the duty of Titus to carry the work higher, that the building might have fair proportions.

This is what he calls *correcting those things which are still wanting*. The building of the Church is not a work so easy that it can be brought all at once to perfection. How long Paul was in Crete—is uncertain; but he had spent some time there, and had faithfully devoted his labours to erect the kingdom of Christ. He did not lack the most consummate skill that can be found in man; he was unwearied in toil; and yet he acknowledged that he left the work rough and incomplete. Hence we see the difficulty; and, indeed, we find, by experience, in the present day, that it is not the labour of one or two years to restore fallen churches to a tolerable condition. Accordingly, those who have made diligent progress for many years—must still be attentive to correct many things.

Here it is highly proper to observe the modesty of Paul who willingly permits another person to complete the work which he had begun. And, indeed, although Titus is greatly inferior to him, he does not refuse to have him for (ἐπιτροχων) a “corrector,” to give the finishing hand to his work. Such ought to be the dispositions of godly teachers; not that every one should labour to make everything bend to his own ambitious views, but that they should strive to assist each other, and that, when any one has laboured more successfully, he should be congratulated and not envied by all the rest.

And yet we must not imagine that Paul intended that Titus should correct those things which he had left undone, either through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or carelessness, but those things which he could not finish on account of the shortness of the time. In short, he

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enjoined Titus to make that correction which he would himself have made, if he had remained longer in Crete; not by varying—not by changing anything, but by adding what was wanting; because the difficulty of such a work does not allow every part of it to be done in a single day.

*And appoint presbyters in each city.* In the spiritual building this nearly comes next to doctrine, that pastors be ordained, to take charge of governing the Church; and therefore Paul mentions it here in preference to everything else. It is a point which ought to be carefully observed, that churches cannot safely remain without the ministry of pastors, and that consequently, wherever there is a considerable body of people, a pastor should be appointed over it. And yet he does not say that each town shall have a pastor, so that no place shall have more than one; but he means that no towns shall be destitute of pastors.

*Presbyters* or elders. It is well known, that it was not on account of age, that they received this appellation; for sometimes those who were still young—such as Timothy—were admitted to this rank. But in all languages it has been customary to apply this honourable designation to all rulers. Although we may conclude, from 1 Tim. 5:17, that there were two classes of presbyters, the context will immediately show, that here none other than teachers are meant, that is, those who were ordained to teach; for immediately afterwards, he will call the same persons “bishops.”

But it may be thought that he gives too much power to Titus, when he bids him appoint ministers for all the churches. That would be almost royal power. Besides, this method takes away from each church the right of choosing, and from the College of Pastors the power of judging; and thus the sacred administration of the Church would be almost wholly profaned. The answer is easy. He does not give permission to Titus, that he alone may do everything in this matter, and may place over the churches those whom he thinks fit to appoint to be bishops; but only bids him preside, as moderator, at the elections, which is quite necessary. This mode of expression is very common. In the same manner, a consul, or regent, or dictator is said to have created consuls, on account of having presided over the public assembly in electing them. Thus also Luke relates that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church. (Acts 14:23.) Not that they alone, in an authoritative manner, appointed pastors which the churches had neither approved nor known; but that they ordained fit men, who had been chosen or desired by the people. From this passage we do indeed learn, that there was not at that time such equality among the ministers of Christ but that some one had authority and deliberative voice above others; but this has nothing to do with the tyrannical and profane custom which prevails in Popery as to Collations. The apostles had a widely different mode of procedure.

6. *If any one is blameless.* In order that no one may be angry with Titus, as if he were too rigorous or severe in rejecting any, Paul takes the whole blame to himself; for he declares that he has expressly commanded, that no one may be admitted, unless he be such a person as is here described. Accordingly, as he testified, a little before, that he had invested Titus

with authority to preside in the appointment of pastors, that others might allow to him that right; so he now relates the injunction which he had given, lest the severity of Titus should be exposed to the ill-will of the ignorant, or the slanders of wicked men.

As this passage presents to us a lively portrait of a lawful bishop, we ought to observe it carefully; but, on the other hand, as almost everything that is here contained has been explained by me in the Commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy, it will be enough at present to touch on it slightly. When he says, that a bishop must be ἀνέγκλητος, *blameless*, he does not mean one who is exempt from every vice, (for no such person could at any time be found,) but one who is marked by no disgrace that would lessen his authority. He means, therefore, that he shall be a man of unblemished reputation.

*The husband of one wife.* The reason why this rule is laid down—has been explained by us in the Commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy. Polygamy was so common among the Jews, that the wicked custom had nearly passed into a law. If any man had married two wives before he made a profession of Christianity, it would have been cruel to compel him to divorce one of them; and therefore the apostles endured what was in itself faulty, because they could not correct it. Besides, they who had involved themselves by marrying more than one wife at a time, even though they had been prepared to testify their repentance by retaining but one wife, had, nevertheless, given a sign of their incontinence, which might have been a brand on their good name. The meaning is the same as if Paul had enjoined them to elect those who had lived chastely in marriage—had been satisfied with having a single wife, and had forbidden those who had manifested the power of lust by marrying many wives. At the same time, he who, having become an unmarried man by the death of his wife, marries another, ought, nevertheless, to be accounted “the husband of one wife;” for the apostle does not say, that they shall choose him who has been, but him who is, “the husband of one wife.”

*Having believing children.* Seeing that it is required that a pastor shall have prudence and gravity, it is proper that those qualities should be exhibited in his family; for how shall that man who cannot rule his own house—be able to govern the church! Besides, not only must the bishop himself be free from reproach, but his whole family ought to be a sort of mirror of chaste and honourable discipline; and, therefore, in the First Epistle to Timothy, he not less strictly enjoins their wives what they ought to be.

First, he demands that the children shall be “believers;” whence it is obvious that they have been educated in the sound doctrine of godliness, and in the fear of the Lord. Secondly, that they shall not be devoted to luxury, that they may be known to have been educated to temperance and frugality. Thirdly, that they shall *not be disobedient*; for he who cannot obtain from his children any reverence or subjection—will hardly be able to restrain the people by the bridle of discipline.

<p><sup>7</sup> For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;</p>	<p><sup>7</sup> Oportet enim episcopum esse a crimine immunem, tanquam Dei œconomum, non præfractum, non iracundum, non vinosum, non percussorem, non turpiter lucro deditum;</p>
<p><sup>8</sup> But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;</p>	<p><sup>8</sup> Sed hospitem, studiosum benignitatis, temperantem, justum, sanctum, moderatum,</p>
<p><sup>9</sup> Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.</p>	<p><sup>9</sup> Tenacem fidelis sermonis, qui secundum doctrinam est, ut potens sit et exhortari per doctrinam sanam, et contradicentes convincere.</p>

7. *For a bishop ought to be blameless, as a governor of the house of God.* He again repeats, that they who aspire to the office of a bishop ought to retain an unspotted reputation; and he confirms it by this argument, that, because the Church is the house of God, every person who is appointed to govern it—is constituted, as it were, governor of the house of God. Now, he would be ill spoken of among men, who should take a scandalous and infamous person, and make him his steward; and therefore it would be far more base and intolerable to appoint such persons to be rulers of the household of God. The Latin word *dispensator* (steward or manager)—employed in the old translation, and retained by Erasmus—does not at all express Paul’s meaning; for, in order that greater care may be exercised in the election, he adorns the office of a bishop with this honourable eulogy, that it is a government of the house of God, as he says to Timothy, “That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to conduct thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15.)

This passage plainly shows that there is no distinction between a presbyter and a bishop; for he now calls indiscriminately, by the latter name, those whom he formerly called presbyters; and farther, in conducting this very argument, he employs both names in the same sense, without any distinction; as Jerome has remarked, both in his Commentary on this passage, and in his Epistle to Evagrius. And hence we may perceive how much greater deference has been paid to the opinions of men than ought to have been paid to them; for the language of the Holy Spirit has been set aside, and the custom introduced by the arbitrary will of man has prevailed. For my own part, I do not find fault with the custom which has existed from the very beginning of the Church, that each assembly of bishops shall have one moderator; but that the name of office which God has given to all, shall be conveyed to one alone, and that all the rest shall be deprived of it, is both unreasonable and absurd. Besides, to pervert the language of the Holy Spirit—in such a manner that the same words shall have a different meaning from what he intended—is excessive and profane hardihood.<sup>2</sup>

*Not self-willed.* With good reason does he condemn this vice in a bishop, whose duty it is not only to receive kindly those who come to him of their own accord, but also to allure those who withdraw themselves, that he may conduct all in like manner to Christ. Now, αὐθάρδεια (as Plato says in one of his Epistles to Dion) τῆς ἐρημίας ἐστὶ ξύνοικος, that is, “self-will is closely allied to solitude;” for society and friendship cannot be cherished, when every man pleases himself to such an extent as to refuse to yield and accommodate himself to others. And, indeed, every (αὐθάρδης) “self-willed” person, as soon as an occasion presents itself, will instantly become a fanatic.

8. *But hospitable, devoted to kindness.* Hence it is evident how destructive is that plague which tears the Church by quarrels. With this vice he contrasts, first, docility, and next, gentleness and modesty towards all; for a bishop will never teach well, who is not also ready to learn. Augustine praises highly a saying of Cyprian: “Let him be as patient to learn as skilful to teach.” Besides, bishops often need advice and warnings. If they refuse to be admonished, if they reject good advices, they will immediately fall headlong to the grievous injury of the Church. The remedy against these evils, therefore, is, that they be not wise to themselves.

I have chosen to translate φιλία θοῦ devoted to kindness, rather than with Erasmus, “a lover of good things;” for this virtue, accompanied by hospitality, appears to be contrasted by Paul with covetousness and niggardliness. He calls that man *just*, who lives among men without doing harm to any one. *Holiness* has reference to God; for even Plato draws this distinction between the two words.

9. *Holding fast the faithful word.* This is the chief gift in a bishop, who is elected principally for the sake of teaching; for the Church cannot be governed in any other way than by the word. “The faithful word” is the appellation which he gives to that doctrine which is pure, and which has proceeded from the mouth of God. He wishes that a bishop should hold it fast, so as not only to be well instructed in it, but to be constant in maintaining it. There are some fickle persons who easily suffer themselves to be carried away to various kinds of doctrine; while others are cast down by fear, or moved by any occurrence to forsake the defence of the truth. Paul therefore enjoins that those persons shall be chosen who, having cordially embraced the truth of God, and holding it firmly, never allow it to be wrested from them, or can be torn from it. And, indeed, nothing is more dangerous than that fickleness of which I have spoken, when a pastor does not stedfastly adhere to that doctrine of which he ought to be the unshaken defender. In short, in a pastor there is demanded not only learning, but such zeal for pure doctrine as never to depart from it.

But what is meant by *according to instruction or doctrine*? The meaning is, that it is useful for the edification of the Church; for Paul is not wont to give the name of “doctrine” to anything that is learned and known without promoting any advancement of godliness; but, on the contrary, he condemns as vain and unprofitable all the speculations which yield

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no advantage, however ingenious they may be in other respects. Thus, “He that teacheth, let him do it in doctrine;” that is, let him labour to do good to the hearers. (Rom. 12:7.) In short, the first thing required in a pastor is, that he be well instructed in the knowledge of sound doctrine; the second is, that, with unwavering firmness of courage, he hold by the confession of it to the last; and the third is, that he make his manner of teaching tend to edification, and do not, through motives of ambition, fly about through the subtleties of frivolous curiosity, but seek only the solid advantage of the Church.

*That he may be able.* The pastor ought to have two voices: one, for gathering the sheep; and another, for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means of doing both; for he who is deeply skilled in it will be able both to govern those who are teachable, and to refute the enemies of the truth. This twofold use of Scripture Paul describes when he says, *That he may be able to exhort and to convince adversaries.* And hence let us learn, first, what is the true knowledge of a bishop, and, next, to what purpose it ought to be applied. That bishop is truly wise, who holds the right faith; and he makes a proper use of his knowledge, when he applies it to the edification of the people.

This is remarkable applause bestowed on the word of God, when it is pronounced to be sufficient, not only for governing the teachable, but for subduing the obstinacy of enemies. And, indeed, the power of truth revealed by the Lord is such that it easily vanquishes all falsehoods. Let the Popish bishops now go and boast of being the successors of the apostles, seeing that the greater part of them<sup>5</sup> are so ignorant of all doctrine, as to reckon ignorance to be no small part of their dignity.

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<sup>5</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (pp. 287–297). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.