



Titus - Chapter One

Summary of Chapter One

Paul opens the letter with a long flowing sentence, identifying his life's calling by God and acknowledging that this flows on into the recipient, Paul's co-worker and child in the faith, Titus. As is customary for Paul, he calls for God's grace and peace in his friend's life.

Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete in order that he should complete unfinished work that Paul had not been able to do in person. The primary duty for Titus was to establish a team of elders for each church that exists. To help him in this task, Paul provides a list of required personal characteristics and others that are not to be evident. Above all, leaders need to be beyond reproach in order to protect the churches' and God's reputation at all times.

As was the case in Ephesus, Crete was dogged by false teaching. Although Paul does not specify the exact nature of the heresy, he uses terms that indicate that the false teachers were either of Jewish origin, or perhaps he was alluding to the teaching reflecting some of the dogmatic elements that had so troubled the Jewish faith itself.

I. Titus 1:1-4 - Salutation

Among the Pauline letters, only Romans and Galatians have longer openings, here given in a single sentence in the Greek. The theological emphases of this section are picked up again in the two other doctrinal sections of the letter: Titus 2:11-14 and Titus 3:3-7.

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness,

Titus 1:1

Servant of God. Paul often uses servant or slave, Greek *doulos* that can also be used for a bondservant, as a designation for himself: <<Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God>> (Romans 1:1), <<Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to

please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ>> (Galatians 1:10), and: <<Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons>> (Philippians 1:1), and other Christians: <<For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ>> (1 Corinthians 7:22), <<Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart>> (Ephesians 6:5-6), and: <<Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills>> (Colossians 4:12). This is also seen with other NT authors: <<Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ>> (2 Peter 1:1), <<Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ>> (Jude 1), and in the words of the Lord himself referring to the church: <<But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practise fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols>> (Revelation 2:20).

Typically, though, Paul refers to himself as ‘servant of Christ’, and this is the only place he uses servant of God. While the meaning is not greatly different, this wording would suggest a direct connection to Moses, David, and others in the OT, who were described as servants of God, e.g. Moses: <<I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him an honest report>> (Joshua 14:7), and: <<He sent his servant Moses, and Aaron whom he had chosen>> (Psalm 105:26), David: <<But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel>> (2 Samuel 7:4-8), and the prophets: <<The people of Israel continued in all the sins that Jeroboam committed; they did not depart from them until the Lord removed Israel from his sight, as he had foretold through all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day>> (2 Kings 17:22-23), <<From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day>> (Jeremiah 7:25), <<And though the Lord persistently sent you all his servants the prophets, you have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear>> (Jeremiah 25:4), <<Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets>> (Amos 3:7), and: <<On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts>> (Haggai 2:23). The effect is to place Paul in the long line of those who

have been God's spokesmen from the beginning. It also indicates a sense of compulsion in Paul's life, a total commitment to the service and calling that was made upon his life, first as a Pharisaic Jew and subsequently in the call of service to his Lord Jesus Christ, which he undertook in full submission.

Furthermore, a servant in the 1st Century did not act on his own authority but on the authority of his master. This concept of received authority is furthered by the phrase apostle of Jesus Christ. At the outset of the letter the divine source of Paul's authority is made very clear.

The Roman institution of being a bondservant or slave was different from the institution of slavery in Europe and North America during the 17th-19th Centuries. Slaves, bondservants, and servants generally were permitted to work for pay and to save enough to buy their freedom and were, on occasions, entrusted with immense amounts of money and responsibility, as seen in: <<*For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away*>> (Matthew 25:14-15). However, the idea of free men and women coming to Christ as slaves would have caused many in that era to reject the message and those already serving as slaves would not want to exchange one form of servitude for another. However, Paul and other NT writers are called to tell the truth of the Gospel message; the same is a requirement for the modern church. Discipleship is as much about servanthood in the 21st Century as it was 2,000 years ago.

An apostle of Jesus Christ is the technical use of the word and indicates that men like Paul were acting under the full delegated authority of Christ.

For the sake of points to the purpose or goal of Paul's apostleship, for he lived to serve God and he wanted to see his own life duplicated in the lives of others. He labours to see people saved, coming to faith and the knowledge of the truth, showing a requirement for a rational decision to be made by those who hear the Gospel message: <<*This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*>> (1 Timothy 2:3-4), <<*And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth*>> (2 Timothy 2:25), and: <<*For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth*>> (2 Timothy 3:6-7), i.e. the entire Gospel proclamation, including in a broad sense all of Paul's apostolic teaching.

Of God's elect shows that Paul's sole concern is the delivery of the Gospel message to the people. The language of election indicates that there will be some who will accept it and some who will not, something that appears to be ordained by God and not the will or choice of mankind: <<*But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*>> (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). Paul's role is to preach the whole

Gospel: <<*If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!*>> (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Proclaiming the Gospel refers to all Scripture in a broad, biblically anchored sense. Gospel for Paul is not only an evangelistic presentation; the Gospel is the core message, which can be applied to unbelievers as a call to faith, or to believers as a call to continue to believe in and live out the implications of this message. Thus the way to preach the Gospel is by expounding the Scriptures.

In accordance with godliness. The true Gospel always produces godliness in its adherents, godliness being the hallmark of the true Gospel. This sets up the primary problem with the false teachers that Paul will discuss in the letter. Godliness throughout the Pastoral Epistles defines the Christian experience as a balanced and holistic lifestyle, in which correct knowledge of God affects every aspect of life.

² in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began — ³ in due time he revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour,

Titus 1:2-3

Paul's mission is rooted in the certainty of God's promise of eternal life. Hope is not wishful thinking but certainty. Furthermore, God has promised eternal life, the reason for the hope that Paul has in God, and God never lies. It is contrary to God's character and thus impossible for God to lie: <<*God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?*>> (Numbers 23:19), and: <<*In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us*>> (Hebrews 6:17-18).

God's truthfulness is a common biblical assertion, but it would be particularly meaningful in the Cretan context, refer to vv.12-13.

In due time is the way that God makes all his revelations to his people, for he alone knows when and how it should be done, linking it back to the plan that was established before creation, as shown in: <<*This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*>> (2 Timothy 1:9b-10). Paul's letters often reflect this theme: <<*Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith*>> (Romans 16:25-26), <<*Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who*

are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory>> (1 Corinthians 2:6-7), and perhaps most extensively in: <<This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understandings of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This is in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord>> (Ephesians 3:1-11). The phrase is also used in relation to the expectation of Christ's Second Coming, when he will claim his inheritance.

Time is also divided into the 'before' and the 'now', and God fulfils his promise firstly in Christ's death and resurrection, then secondly through the church's preaching of that event. Thus in God's plan the church has become not only the proof and recipient of hope's promise but also the channel through which the hope of eternal life is offered to the rest of the world.

Christian hope is built on the promise of God. That promise is good because:

1. God does not lie.
2. He sent his Son to keep his promise.

The Gospel ministry, which exists to communicate this hope, extends the redemptive work of Christ's Cross and resurrection into the 'present' of the church. For by this means and this means alone God has chosen to execute salvation. The rest of Paul's instructions to Titus draw their meaning from this point, because only a healthy church will be able to carry out this plan of God the Saviour.

Revealed his word through the proclamation. The initial revelation was the coming of God's Son: <<*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*>> (John 1:1-5). This confirms that the promise was given before the ages began.

This promise of proclamation has been fulfilled specifically in Paul's ministry, a ministry that he did not choose for himself but received by the command of God our Saviour. On God as Saviour refer to comments made on 2 Timothy 1:8-10.

⁴ To Titus, my loyal child in the faith we share:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Titus 1:4

Relatively little is known of Paul's faithful co-worker Titus, other than a few brief mentions made in Paul's letters. He was a Gentile, probably a convert through Paul's ministry and appears to have come into service with Paul before Timothy: *<<Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, nor had not run, in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek>>* (Galatians 2:1-3), which relates to a period in the late 40's AD. He was clearly a very able man, experienced and one that Paul trusted to deal with difficult situations, such as those that existed in Corinth and are well documented throughout Paul's letters to them. This was something that Titus felt able to deal with in person: *<<But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord>>* (2 Corinthians 8:16-18), and he was clearly an excellent choice for the difficult work that lay ahead in Crete.

My loyal child in the faith reflects the nature of the relationship between the two men, which distinguishes Paul as his spiritual father in the faith we share, just as he was to Timothy: *<<To Timothy, my loyal child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord>>* (1 Timothy 1:2), and: *<<To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord>>* (2 Timothy 1:2). It also provided Titus with a legitimate connection with the apostle's ministry that should give him all the authority needed for his work on the island.

Grace and peace formed part of a the salutation in all of Paul's letters: *<<To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (Romans 1:7), *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (1 Corinthians 1:3), *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (2 Corinthians 1:2), *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (Galatians 1:3), *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (Ephesians 1:2), *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (Philippians 1:2), *<<To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossæ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father>>* (Colossians 1:2), *<<Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace>>* (1 Thessalonians 1:1), *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (2 Thessalonians 1:2), and: *<<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>>* (Philemon 3). This is a feature also of the letters to Timothy as noted earlier.

Peter and John also offer such a blessing in their writings: *<<Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,*

Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance>> (1 Peter 1:1-2), <<May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord>> (2 Peter 1:2), and: <<John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood>> (Revelation 1:4-5).

Grace is defined as divine blessing and unmerited favour from God, a truly unbelievable gift. Although God has always bestowed his grace upon the world since before creation, it was given to the world ultimately through the coming of Jesus as the Christ: <<*The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*>> (John 1:17).

The expression peace comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*, which has a much richer connotation than the English word does, since it conveys, not merely the absence of conflict and turmoil, but also the notion of positive blessing, especially in terms of a right relationship with God, and, as a result, the idea that ‘all is well’ in one’s life. This may be manifested most clearly amid persecution and tribulation.

For Titus and those who serve God, they are promises of divine provision and inner stability regardless of external circumstances. Paul’s blessing also reminds the readers that the ministry initiated by God and Christ can be accomplished only by reliance upon them. Human means and strength are insufficient for the task.

II. Titus 1:5-16 - Titus in Crete

Although there is no historical record of Paul ministering on the island of Crete, he did come to the island as a prisoner on his journey to Rome, refer to Acts Chapter 27. However, it is clear from this letter that Paul did spend some time there with Titus and other evangelists, spreading the Word of God and planting churches.

When Paul returned to the mainland, he left Titus on Crete with a small team and charged him to cement these new church plants with appropriate leadership teams so that they would develop, teaching the people to live appropriately according to the Gospel and the will of God.

II.a. Titus 1:5-9 - The Occasion: The Need for Proper Leadership

Paul begins the body of the letter with a reminder to Titus of the directions for ministry that he had left with him. Unlike most of Paul’s letters, there is no thanksgiving section. While this is unusual for Paul, it is not unique as he did not include it to the Galatians either, and it is not unusual in 1st Century letters.

Parenting a church has many similarities to that of parenting a child whose needs change dramatically as the child grows and matures. When Titus received Paul’s letter, the churches of Crete were still quite young, but quickly growing out of infancy. They had reached the stage where more structure was required, where church members needed to ascend to roles of leadership and where they could

begin to carry on ministry independent of their spiritual parents. Preparing them for this was a task that fell to Titus. At the same time an element within the churches was introducing false doctrine that threatened the development of these Christians. Thus Titus' instructions include correction.

A 'virtue list' provides the portrait of the sort of leadership needed for the new churches in Crete. The emphasis is on appropriate behaviour, seen especially in the home, and the ability to teach. Thus these leaders embody the fact that the Gospel, i.e. the truth, results in 'godliness' (v.1).

⁵ I left you behind in Crete for this reason, that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you:

Titus 1:5

I left you behind implies that Paul had been with Titus on the island during the phase of establishing the new churches.

The fact that the churches in Crete do not yet have elders, and that there are things that need to be put in order, suggests that these churches are still fairly young and that a number of tasks remained to be done or completed, particularly the need to establish leadership in each of them. Titus is there as Paul's delegate to get these churches properly established.

For this reason introduces the purpose of leaving Titus behind and a reminder of what Paul had written previously: <<*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth*>> (1 Corinthians 3:6), a reminder that it does not matter who performs what role in the church, for it is God who will determine the outcome of all situations. It was not for the apostles to stay beyond their calling but to hand on the work to others to complete as indicated in: <<*If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord just as I am*>> (1 Corinthians 16:10).

In every town is the consistent pattern of government in all NT churches and elders govern the churches. As is typical in the NT, elders is plural. Here it is used interchangeably with overseers or bishop as in v.7. The rest of the NT shows that these terms, as well as 'pastor', refers to the same office. Refer to comments made on 1 Timothy 3:1.

As I directed you indicates that Paul had given verbal instructions to Titus before leaving Crete and wanted to follow up with clarification on some points. Having written instructions is no bad thing, but the letter will also provide Titus with delegated apostolic authority that would stand him in good stead with the churches he was ministering to.

The situation for Titus was different to that of Timothy for in Ephesus the church was well established and had leadership, although it was some of the leaders who apparently had become the false teachers there. Here it seems that Titus had to start from scratch, therefore he would need the gift of discernment to apply the requirements of Paul's list. He may well have ordained them too by the laying on of his hands. Paul had also instructed Timothy: <<*He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil*>> (1 Timothy 3:6). Paul

does not say that to Titus as it may be that many, if not all of them, would fall into that category. Titus would no doubt have been aware that such men were actually called to serve and he would no doubt have some Spirit-led prompting in his selection: <<*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ*>> (Ephesians 4:11-13).

⁶ someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious.

Titus 1:6

Someone who is blameless or above reproach, repeated in v.7, summarises the main point, which the rest of the list (vv.6-9) fills out. There should be no legitimate accusation that could be brought against the elder that would bring disrepute on the Gospel or the church; his life should be seen as worthy of imitation. Those who are called to office are not just to be good leaders or managers, they are above all else to exhibit a lifestyle befitting the office. This statement does not of course mean they are without sin as that would leave the church with no one to appoint! Although for those who are true it should be remembered: <<*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*>> (Romans 8:1).

Married only once, sometimes translated as husband of one wife, translates the Greek phrase *mias gynaikos andra*, and its meaning is widely debated. The Greek phrase is not common, and there are few other instances for comparison. The phrase literally states: ‘of one woman wife man husband’. The options for consideration include:

1. Many commentators understand the phrase to mean having the character of a one-woman man; that is, faithful to his wife. In support of this view is the fact that a similar phrase is used: <<*Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once*>> (1 Timothy 5:9), as a qualification for widows, Greek *henos andros gynē*; one-man woman, i.e. wife of one husband, and in that verse it seems to refer to the trait of faithfulness, for a prohibition of remarriage after the death of a spouse would be in contradiction to Paul’s advice to young widows: <<*So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us*>> (1 Timothy 5:14). Interpreters who hold to this first view conclude that the wording is too specific to be simply a requirement of marriage and not specific enough to be simply a reference to divorce or remarriage after divorce. In the context of this passage, the phrase therefore prohibits any kind of marital unfaithfulness.
2. Another view is that married only once means polygamists cannot be church leaders. Interpreters who hold this view note that there is evidence of polygamy being practiced in some Jewish circles at the time, although monogamy was the norm in the culture and polygamy was often regarded as abhorrent. On this view, the phrase means at the present time the husband of one wife, in line with other qualifications, which refer to the present

character. On either of these views, Paul was not prohibiting all second marriages: <<*A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my judgement she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God*>> (1 Corinthians 7:39-40); that is, he was not prohibiting from the leadership a man whose wife had died and had remarried, or a man who had been divorced and had remarried; for these cases should be evaluated on an individual basis.

3. A third view is that Paul was absolutely requiring that a leader be someone who had never had more than one wife. But that does not fit the context well, with its emphasis on present character.

On any of these views, Paul was speaking of the ordinary cases and was not absolutely requiring marriage or children; he was giving a picture of the typical approved bishop or pastor as a faithful husband and father.

The leaders of RC churches are not permitted to marry although Paul, himself single, saw it as the right for a leader to be married: <<*Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?*>> (1 Corinthians 9:5). However, he would not have the woman teach in a congregation containing men: <<*I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent*>> (1 Timothy 2:12). Forbidding people to marry was seen as part of the heresy that plagued Ephesus: <<*They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth*>> (1 Timothy 4:3).

Whose children are believers can also be rendered 'his children are faithful', Greek *pistos* or *pista*. The primary argument for rendering it as believers is that in the letters to Timothy and Titus, this word almost always refers to saving faith. Those who believe it should be rendered 'faithful' would argue that no father can guarantee the conversion of his own children, but he can ordinarily ensure that they act in a faithful way. Also, the parallel passage in 1 Timothy Chapter 3 says only that the children must be well-behaved, not that their conversion is a requirement for their father to be an overseer. The concern in the passage is that the children behave appropriately and are not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination, i.e. are not rebellious toward their parents or indeed others in the community, church or otherwise.

The word children, the plural of Greek *teknon*, would apply only to children living at home and still under their father's authority.

⁷ For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸ but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled.

Titus 1:7-8

The terms bishop, overseer, elder, pastor or shepherd are all used in the NT to refer to the same office. Paul summoned the Ephesian elders, Greek *presbyteros*, to a meeting: <<*From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders*

of the church to meet him>> (Acts 20:17). Paul then told them: <<*Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son*>> (Acts 20:28), using Greek *episkopos* for overseers and Greek *poimainō*, i.e. to pastor or serve as shepherd of the church of God.

Peter also wrote: <<*Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly*>> (1 Peter 5:1-2), using Greek *presbyteros* to describe his fellow elders and Greek *poimainō* to tend, act as shepherd or be the bishop or pastor the flock. Thus the terms were more fluid than they are in the modern church age.

Paul highlights that church leaders are God's stewards first and foremost: <<*And the Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time?'*>> (Luke 12:42), and: <<*Moreover, it is required of stewards that they should be found trustworthy*>> (1 Corinthians 4:2). It is *His* church and not theirs. The key characteristic in the list is that they must be blameless. When serving God and his church reputation is everything. The remaining characteristics are self-explanatory, and there is a fuller discussion of a similar list given in 1 Timothy Chapter 3.

One quality worth explicit mention is being hospitable. Although this is something familiar to the modern church, such as opening up one's home to invite friends in for a meal, the NT church was in a much different situation. Hospitality was a virtue in the 1st Century Roman world, but for Christians the practice of hospitality was often urgent, sacrificial and risky: urgent because Christians might be forced from homes or jobs with no one to turn to but fellow believers; sacrificial because material goods were often in short supply; risky because to associate oneself with those who had been forced out meant to identify with their cause. Thus hospitality required sacrificial sharing and stretching of supplies. It was a very practical demonstration of sincere love for a fellow disciple and not a means of entertainment.

⁹ He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

Titus 1:9

A firm grasp of the word. Although all disciples should be well grounded in Scripture, those who are called to teach and preach must be able to interpret the Word of God and then be able to apply what it says to the situations being faced either by individuals or the church in general. They must not rely solely on the interpretations of others, for that could lead to compounding errors in teaching.

Able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. It was common in the ancient world to emphasise one item in a list by placing it at the beginning or end and giving it more attention than the other items. The ability to teach is the distinguishing mark of a pastor or elder. This includes both teaching

what is right and refuting error. The reason for this emphasis is clear from what follows (vv.10-16).

Sound doctrine or teaching. The participle of the Greek verb *hygiainō*, found in all three Pastoral Epistles, here translated sound, includes the idea of health, in the sense of healthy or health giving doctrine, and in 2 Timothy it contributes to an extended metaphor in which false teaching spreads poison insidiously throughout the body like gangrene: **<<Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenæus and Philetus>>** (2 Timothy 2:16-17), while true doctrine makes the body healthy. Sound doctrine, by definition, is that which flows out of the Gospel.

II.b. Titus 1:10-16 - The Problem: False Teachers

The description of the false teachers contrasts directly, and probably intentionally, with the descriptions of what the elders should be (vv.5-9). Whereas the elders are to live out and teach the truth, these false teachers belie their profession of faith by their conduct (v.16). Christian standards must be established at the outset for the new churches.

Heresy involves more than simply teaching an unorthodox doctrine. Just as the Christian message affects the whole life, heresy left unchecked penetrates deep into the community's and the individual's life and thought, leaving nothing undisturbed. But its subtle beginnings and secretive motives often make it undetectable until it has surfaced as a movement with increasing momentum. For this reason Paul identifies and unequivocally denounces the false teachers and their doctrine.

¹⁰ There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision;

Titus 1:10

Rebellious people were not new to God and would not have surprised Paul either, for the Scriptures describe the people of God in this way: **<<You have been rebellious against the Lord as long as he has known you>>** (Deuteronomy 9:24), **<<Now because we share the salt of the palace and it is not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonour, therefore we send and inform the king, so that a search may be made in the annals of your ancestors. You will discover in the annals that this is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from long ago. On that account this city was laid waste>>** (Ezra 4:14-15), **<<Go now, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, so that it may be for the time to come as a witness for ever. For they are a rebellious people, faithless children, children who will not hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see'; and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel'>>** (Isaiah 30:8-11), **<<I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices>>** (Isaiah 65:2), **<<But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away>>** (Jeremiah 5:23), **<<But the house of Israel will not listen to you, for they are not willing to**

listen to me; because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. See, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. Like the hardest stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not fear them or be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God'; whether they hear or refuse to hear>> (Ezekiel 3:7-11), and: <<Now who were they who heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?>> (Hebrews 3:16). It indicates a wilful opposition to the teachings of God, for a variety of purposes; none of them good and all of them harmful to the individual and the community.

Epecially those of the circumcision. The false teachers seem to have emerged particularly from among Jewish Christians. **Epecially**, Greek *malista*, could also be translated 'that is', thus making it difficult to determine if those from a Jewish background were the entirety or the majority of the false teachers. Since there seems to be no established churches on Crete and it is known that Cretans were present when the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost (Acts 2:11), it may be these were early converts who then had no apostolic instruction to help them grow in the truth of the Gospel, although there is no evidence to support this theory.

Earlier, Paul opposed Jewish believers in Galatia who were teaching the need to return to the ceremonies of the law to achieve righteousness. While this is not the same group, nor precisely the same teaching, it can at least be seen that the influences of Judaism on the church had not yet ceased: <<Then certain individuals came down from Judæa and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'>> (Acts 15:1).

¹¹ they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach.

Titus 1:11

They must be silenced. This is an imperative indicating that one responsibility of church leaders is to prevent false teaching from having a platform in the church.

Upsetting whole families. The faith of some has already been overturned by these false teachers, impacting not just on individuals but their spouses and children too. Some translations have this as **whole households** and it may be a reference to an entire house church that was the standard model of church in that era. Whichever is intended, the false teachers disrupted the unity of the church and endangered the church's reputation with those outside, who valued highly the traditional social structure.

Sordid gain. These teachers are motivated by personal greed or status in the eyes of the church: <<*Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means*

of gain. Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains>> (1 Timothy 6:3-10).

¹² It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said,

‘Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons.’

¹³ That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith,

Titus 1:12-13

Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons. Crete was proverbial in the ancient world for its moral decadence. The ancient historian Polybius wrote that it was ‘almost impossible to find personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than in Crete’ (Histories 6.47). Cicero also stated, ‘Moral principles are so divergent that Cretans consider highway robbery honourable’ (Republic 3.9.15). Cretans had become known as liars because of their claim that the tomb of the God Zeus was on the island. Thus a reference to religious deceit is at the heart of the saying.

Their very own prophet. Wisely, Paul does not criticise the decadence of Cretan society directly but quotes a Cretan author instead and then quickly agrees with him, that testimony is true. Of course Paul means this as a generalisation, not necessarily true of every single inhabitant of Crete. The quotation seems to be from Epimenides of Crete, although some have questioned this since his writings are known only through other authors’ quotations of him. Paul also quoted from him as he stood before the Areopagus in Athens speaking to them of the one true creator God: <<*For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring”*>> (Acts 17:28). The first quotation, ‘in him we live’, appears to be from a hymn to Zeus by Epimenides, circa 600BC; the words are found just two lines later than the quotation Paul takes from the same poem and written here.

Rebuke them sharply. Whereas Timothy was instructed to treat the false teachers with kindness: <<*And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will*>> (2 Timothy 2:24-26), Titus has different instructions, again showing there was a different situation in view on Crete. Alternatively, it may be a reflection of different temperaments of the two men, with Paul exhorting them to act oppositely to their nature. This could account for Paul’s comments about Timothy’s youthful passions: <<*Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*>> (2 Timothy 2:22).

Different situation and different people require different approaches and solutions: <<And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies>> (Jude 22-23).

¹⁴ not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth.

Titus 1:14

Jewish myths, Greek *mythos*, in the NT is a negative term characterising beliefs as fanciful, untrue and even deceptive. Such myths were often used to excuse immoral behaviour on the basis of a divine or traditional pattern. It was soundly rejected in apostolic teaching: <<For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty>> (2 Peter 1:16). The specific content of these myths is unknown, but the false teaching in Titus is more explicitly tied to a Jewish background (v.10) than the false teaching in 1 and 2 Timothy. However, Paul's language is too general to allow a precise interpretation of his meaning, and it is better to understand the statement in Jewish terms as a claim to be zealous and exacting in their approach to the faith.

Commandments of those who reject the truth is clearly human and not divine in origin, with its resultant problems and insincerity: <<The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote>> (Isaiah 29:13), and: <<in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines>> (Matthew 15:9). Paul describes the ascetic practices in Colossæ with this term: <<All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings>> (Colossians 2:22).

¹⁵ To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted.

Titus 1:15

To the pure, all things are pure echoes Jesus' teaching: <<He said to them, 'Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?' (Thus he declared all foods clean)>> (Mark 7:18-19), <<So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you>> (Luke 11:41), and Paul's earlier writing: <<I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean>> (Romans 14:14), and: <<Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat>> (Romans 14:20).

In light of the Jewishness of the false teaching and the contexts of the earlier similar teaching by Jesus and Paul, the issue here seems to concern Jewish food laws. The false teachers seem in some way to be concerned with this ritual purity, although they are themselves defiled by their unbelief and sin; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. King Solomon wrote: <<The sacrifice of the

wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight>> (Proverbs 15:8).

¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Titus 1:16

The works of the false teachers prove that they are unbelievers, despite their claim to know God: <<*They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain*>> (Ezekiel 33:31). Paul is not the least bit hesitant to make such a judgment.

Unfit for any good work most likely refers to church ministry. Such people should not only be stopped from teaching in the church, they are to be withdrawn from participating in the work of the church. However, this does not mean necessarily that they should be excluded from the fellowship, providing they can be reconciled to the truth of the Gospel first.

The critical description that closes the passage heightens this paradox:

1. They are detestable, though they strive to avoid detestable things.
2. They are disobedient, although they strive to be exactly obedient. This cannot be the case for the Greek word *apeitheis* also means not persuadable and unbelieving.
3. They are unable to bear any spiritual fruit, i.e. unfit for any good works, although they claim to know God.

One thing is clear from Paul's denunciation of the false teachers: they present a danger to the church and to themselves, a danger that cannot be ignored but must be confronted and dealt with appropriately.