

Titus 1: 1-16 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour;⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.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, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,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 doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Effective leaders have people who follow them, so where the leaders go, the people go. When we select leaders, this means we need to be very careful who we choose if we are going to live godly lives in our godless culture. If our church leaders are godless or teach what isn't true, then the church will be led into godlessness and lies, because

where the elders/pastors go, the church goes.

Titus had to sort out this problem on Crete (**v5**). The people were living as if God didn't exist, or didn't care how they lived. In the church, teachers were teaching what wasn't true and the home lives of Cretans were disordered:

- Children did as they pleased
- Wives and mothers failed to care for the home and their family
- Husbands and fathers did nothing about it

As a result, people in the church weren't living in the right way, and those who did not go to church couldn't see any difference from their own lives. Paul wanted Titus to silence the false teachers, and teach families how to live lives centred on Jesus. In that way, the message about Jesus would be seen to be true. One man could not do it all, so Titus was to appoint elders who would teach the church the truth given by Jesus about living godly lives.

The church needed leaders they could follow, so Titus needed to appoint men with

characters worth copying.

In our culture, we tend to define people by what they do, rather than by what they are. We will ask what they do for work. However, Paul is more concerned to show Titus the kind of men leaders are to **be**, before he shows him what they are to **do**. There is an important principle here:

character comes before gifting.

What we do is determined by how gifted we are. A man cannot preach if he is not gifted in preaching, but some very gifted people have a poor character, and end up destroying ministries and churches, though they may start well.

When gifted leaders fail to grow in the kind of character that will humbly and effectively lead a church, the church will also fail to be a humble and effective church. It will take on the character of its leader.

What kind of character do we need to see in our leaders so that we will follow them into godliness and ensure the

godless culture we live in will see that trusting Jesus really does make a difference?

In **vv6-8**, Paul shows us a **character worth copying**. The elder must be:

Above reproach – there must be no grounds for accusation against him, and no one should need to reprimand him in various areas of his life, though he won't be perfect and will still do wrong things.

However, he will have a good reputation as a husband and father, as a church member, and as a citizen.

- **His family life will be ordered (v6)** - he will model what a faithful husband is like and what it means to be a good father, thus teaching the church to order their homes around Christ as he is doing.
- **His life in church will be ordered (v7-8)** – he is described as a steward, one who had responsibility for managing his master's household, looking after children, servants, finances and business interests of his master. In the same way, an elder serves as a steward in God's household, following what God wants him to do and using his authority from Christ to care for God's people, to ensure they are serving, and that the finances are being rightly managed. Above all, he is to see that what Christ wants, actually happens.

There are three particular areas of life where elders were tempted in Crete, which are still a problem for leaders in 21st century Britain.

1. The abuse of money (v11)

- They had hearts that were set on riches, and they saw ministry in the church as the source of those riches.

The heart of a church leader is to be a heart that is free from material riches (**v7**). Elsewhere in scripture we see that elders want to serve, not for what they can get, but for what they can offer. (**1 Peter 5:1-2** see p4). Elders/pastors have a sense of God's call upon their lives, and that is what drives them, rather than being paid to do a job for the church. The motivation for this comes from what they know Jesus has called them to do, and they are eager to please Jesus and to obey him.

- Pastors still have a need for food, somewhere to live and other necessities and that is why they are given a stipend (an allowance) rather than a salary.

Our leaders must ensure that their hearts aren't greedy for gain. If they are motivated by money, then there is a danger that they will teach and do what pleases the church, rather than what God commands, because the church 'pays the wages'.

What our heart craves is what controls us. The love of money is the root of all evil and through the love of money, many ministers have ruined their ministries and the churches they served.

2. The abuse of sex (v6)

- Many pastors fall into sexual sin – both high profile Christian leaders and pastors of local churches.

God gave us sex to be enjoyed within the covenant of heterosexual marriage, where husband and wife have committed themselves to remain faithful to one another. Because of the sin in our hearts, we have abused this good gift of God and used it in ways he never intended.

- Cretan culture was much like ours in terms of sexual ethics.

The elders would have to teach the people that what Christ expected was very different to how the culture was behaving, calling them to repentance and find forgiveness through Jesus. If the elder, himself, was engaged in extra-marital affairs, then his life would have undermined the message he was to speak. He wouldn't be a role model to follow.

- Paul says the elder is to be a man who is faithful to his wife (**vv6**)

When a man has eyes only for his wife, not only does he not commit the physical act of adultery, but he keeps his heart free from lust, and his hands free from clicking on internet pornography. He loves his wife with a pure love.

3. The abuse of power (**vv7-8**)

- The role of leadership is an authority role.

Elders/pastors have authority under Jesus Christ to lead the church as Jesus Christ wants it led. It is an office that the church should respect and submit to. (**Hebrews 13:17** see p4). There is a risk of being open to false accusation, because of the public nature of the office of elder. To guard against this, and reinforce the authority of an elder, Paul gives advice about how to deal with accusations. (**1Timothy 5:19** see p4).

- Elders may abuse the authority they have to get their own way, to cover up their mistakes or to get status, money and fame.

Paul paints a picture of the sort of man Titus needs to appoint (**vv7-8**):

- He is a man who isn't thinking about himself, but wants to serve.
- He pursues the things that have virtue and acts with justice and integrity.
- He keeps his emotions, desires and passions under control, living his life in line with what God wants.

Who can live up to these standards? Do they only apply to leaders? We need to apply this in three directions.

- i. **Outwards** - This describes what the whole church is to be like, but to be like this, we need leaders we can follow into this kind of godly lifestyle because **where the pastor/elders go, the church goes**. It is true for leaders in any sphere, who are to model how to live to their followers, so they need to have **characters worthy of copying**. You might not think you are a leader but your life is still on show and you are able to influence others. Older people are on show to younger people, parents or grandparents are on show to children and grandchildren.
 - All of us are on show to the world, so we all need to ensure that we have **characters worthy of copying**.

- ii. **Inwards**- We need to examine our hearts to measure how we are doing.

If you are married, how are you doing in serving your spouse and in leading your family? How are you doing with regard to the attitudes of your heart? Are you arrogant or humble, quick-tempered or patient? Are you addicted to drink, shopping, porn, TV or anything else or are you self-controlled? Do you love the things God says are good and hate what he says is evil? The Bible exposes our hearts and reveals the evil that is there.

- When we look at what God requires for leaders and for the church (and our culture) as a whole, we see how far we have fallen short of the standard. Hence we need to look in another direction.

- iii. **Upwards** – Only Jesus truly met the character requirements that Paul applies to leaders.

As a leader, when I see my failure to be what God wants me to be and confess my failures to God then Jesus offers hope. That hope of forgiveness and change is offered to all of us through the gospel.

- Jesus offers the hope of forgiveness that though my character may not fully measure up, my acceptance with God doesn't change. I am as welcome to come before God as anyone else because Jesus is the perfect leader, who leads me right into the presence of God.
- Jesus offers the hope of a changed life, so that the qualities I need will be seen more and more in my life. We all have that hope of changed lives as we will see further on in **Titus 2:12-14**.

A life lived with Jesus at the centre is the only way we will measure up to this character worth copying.

1 Peter 5:1-2 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,^[a] not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;^[b] not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1 Timothy 5:19 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Titus 2:12-14 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.