

## 04. Titus 1:6 – 2:5





## Titus 1:6

A presbyter is to be someone who is blameless, married only once

Documents like this letter which aim to lay down policy tend to state the minimum requirements. The presbyters are to be ‘**blameless**’. Since they are responsible for teaching and since they represent the community to outsiders, it is clearly important that their public behaviour be such as not to cause scandal. They must be seen to practise what they preach.

An insight into why the community expected its leaders to be ‘**married only once**’ is perhaps provided by Paul when he writes to the Corinthians: ‘I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to the Messiah’ (2Corinthians 11:2). The Christian communities saw marriage as a visible witness of the faithful love of Christ for the church. It was important that their leaders exemplify this.



## Titus 1:6

A presbyter is to be someone whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery, and nor rebellious

The Christian community saw itself as a family, and could hardly be expected to accept teaching and leadership from a leader who could not even manage his own family according to the principles of Christ. The logic seems to be that if he has failed to attract his own children to Christian faith, he can hardly be expected to attract others. Likewise, if his children's public behaviour is so bad that they have been 'accused of debauchery', or are 'rebellious'. We are reminded of Paul's advice in his Letter to the Ephesians: 'Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18).



## Titus 1:7

**An overseer/bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless**

Since a presbyter exercise a supervisory role in organising the affairs of God's household he can be called a bishop (ἐπίσκοπος). Since he is responsible for managing the household of the faith he can be called a steward (οἰκονόμος). Speaking of himself and Apollos in their relationship with the Christian community at Corinth, Paul asked them: 'Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy' (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

The 'steward', usually a slave, was responsible for the management of the house. This brings to mind God's providential plan (οἰκονομία) for the world, and the role played by the overseer in bringing about this plan by his unifying ministry in the community. Paul is a 'slave of God' and a trustworthy 'steward'. The Christian community has a right to find the same qualities in its leaders.



## Titus 1:7

An overseer must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain

There are some vices which obviously disqualify a person from this ministry of leadership. He must not be ‘**arrogant**’ (αὐθάδης), that is to say, he must not be so satisfied with his own opinion that he is stubborn and unwilling to take suggestions from others or to cooperate with them.

Nor is he to be ‘**quick-tempered**’. Furthermore, because the overseer/presbyter (bishop/priest) was responsible for hospitality, there would be a special danger if he were ‘**addicted to wine**’ or ‘**violent**’. Because he is also responsible for the community’s finances, it is important that he not be ‘**greedy for gain**’.



## Titus 1:8

A presbyter/overseer must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled.

The constant movement of Christian missionaries added an extra reason for considering hospitality important. It sounds basic, but Paul considers it important to mention that the presbyter is to be a person who has a feel for what is good and the ability to discern it. He is to be ‘prudent’ (σώφρων), for which the Greek world had the highest respect. Literally, it refers to having good judgment – a wholesome mind. It involves avoidance of all excess, and a balance that preserves harmony and proportion: ‘By the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment (σωφρονέω), each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned’ (Romans 12:3).



## Titus 1:8

He must be upright, devout, and self-controlled.

He is to be ‘upright’ (δίκαιος). He is to do the will of God according to the grace that is given to him to carry out his responsibilities in the community.

He is to be ‘devout’ (ὅσιος); that is to say, he is to be a person who respects the sacred. Paul could say of himself to the Thessalonians: ‘You are witnesses, and God also, how pure (ὅσιος), upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers’ (1 Thessalonians 2:10). He reminds the Ephesians: ‘you were taught to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (ὁσιότης)’ (Ephesians 4:24).



## Titus 1:8

**He must be self-controlled.**

Because of the power that goes with leadership, Paul insists on another virtue that was highly regarded among Greek moralists. The presbyter is to be ‘self-controlled’ (ἐγκρατής). This virtue, too, has been ‘baptised’, for Paul is not speaking of control of one’s behaviour based on a determination coming from one’s own will. He lists this virtue among the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:23), for he is speaking of a strength that comes through reliance on the power of the Spirit of Christ.



## Titus 1:9

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 appeal with sound instruction and to refute those who contradict it.

Having listed the vices that preclude a person from exercising leadership and the basic virtues required for such an important role in the community, Paul comes to the point which he wishes to stress in this letter. The members of the community will need to be taught ‘sound instruction’ by leaders who are able to ‘refute those who contradict it’. In his address, Paul has already said that God has chosen to ‘reveal his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour’ (1:3). A presbyter must be attached to this same ‘word’ so that their ‘appeal’ (παρκαλέω) and their ‘teaching’ (διδασκαλία) nourishes faith, and their ‘instruction’ (διδασκαλία) is healthy and life-giving.



The community needs such teachers if they are to ‘become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted’ (Romans 6:17). Those who are appointed as leaders in the local communities are to be able to ‘keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offences, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned’ (Romans 16:17). Otherwise there is a danger that we will be like ‘children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming’ (Ephesians 4:14).



## Titus 1:10-13

There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach. It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons.” That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith

Paul's blunt words are the measure of the harm being caused in Crete. According to Clement of Alexandria (Stromata 1.59.1-2), Paul is quoting Epimenides, a Cretan 'prophet' from the sixth century BC. Presumably the Cretans took Paul's words in good part, since it is clear that he is pointing the finger at a particular group and saying that in their case the proverb is correct. Epimenides was known as a prophet. Paul may be underlining this because of the claims to prophecy made by the troublemakers.



## Titus 1:13-14

Rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth.

In the Jewish tradition, God's word as found in their sacred writings was a living word through which a living God continued to speak to his people. The interpreters of the Torah expressed their attempts to explore this ongoing revelation in developing the narrative sections of the sacred writings in what they called the haggadah. They sought to apply the legal sections through what they called the halakah. Paul was trained in this practice and is not objecting to it in principle. He refers to the more fantastic stories as 'myths', using this term in the narrow sense which it had taken on among the philosophers of his day. Many of the commands, too, that had been developed, had no connection with revealed truth.



We are reminded of Jesus' own critique when he quotes Isaiah 29:13: 'in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines', and adds: 'You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition' (Mark 7:7-8). Paul has already referred to this in his Letter to the Colossians where he writes: 'All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings' (Colossians 2:22).

Paul's objection is simple and direct: all these stories and all these injunctions '**reject the truth**'. For Paul this means that they contradict what God has revealed in the mystery of Jesus' self-giving love as demonstrated on the cross. Paul is saying that teaching that claims to be Christian must be checked against the 'proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour' (1:3).



## Titus 1:15

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

A powerful clique of Jewish Christians in Crete is insisting that people must obey God's will and refrain from eating food that has been declared unclean. Paul insists, as he stated in his Letter to the Romans, that 'everything is clean' (Romans 14:20; compare Luke 11:41; Acts 10:14-16). He says that it is they who are not only unclean, but 'corrupt'. They may eat all the 'right' foods, but they are 'unbelieving'. It is unbelief that corrupts the mind and it is wrong thinking that leads to immoral behaviour and a corruption of conscience. Paul is reinforcing the connection which he made in his opening address between faith, knowledge of the truth, and godliness.



## Titus 1:16

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

The Jewish Christians who are insisting on the necessity of following various Jewish practices are claiming that it is they who ‘**know God**’. For Paul, knowing God is something that can happen only ‘in the Messiah’. These people are failing to welcome the freedom given them by Jesus. We recall Paul’s words: ‘For freedom the Messiah has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery’ (Galatians 5:10). Furthermore, they are denying the value of the Gentile Christians living their Christian life as Gentiles. They do not know the living God. Paul’s conclusion is devastating. They who ‘detest’ idols (see Romans 2:22) are themselves ‘**detestable**’. They who claim to be doing God’s will are ‘**disobedient**’. They who claim to be teachers of what is good are themselves ‘**unfit for any good work**’.



## Titus 2:1

**As for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine.**

To this point Paul has been focusing on those whose teaching is undermining the faith, and on the need for good leaders to counter their influence. He now instructs Titus on the kind of teaching that **‘is consistent with sound doctrine’** (see 1:9).

The false teaching is ‘upsetting whole families’ (1:11). The consequent disorder that is spreading within the Christian communities is undermining faith and jeopardising the church’s mission. Paul’s aim is to support Titus by putting his apostolic authority behind some basic principles of order within the community. The basic list of virtues that help sustain good order in a Christian household is an expression of faith in Jesus as proclaimed in the gospel.



## Titus 2:1

Teach what is consistent with sound doctrine.

We must avoid the temptation to absolutise what Paul has to say here. He is writing within a specific social context. Another context may well require a letter with different nuances, since order is necessarily linked not only to gospel values but also to the cultural situation within which these values are to be realised.

For the Stoics ‘**sound doctrine**’, wholesome, life-giving, teaching, is based primarily on an intelligent understanding of nature. Paul’s basic criterion is different. It is not human nature but the gospel. Reason has its place as a supplementary guide, but it cannot replace the gospel, and Paul reminds Titus to ensure that it is the gospel that is being taught. We must connect what Paul has to say here with what we know of the attachment to Christ which fires all his writing.



## Titus 2:2

**Tell the older men to be temperate and serious**

Paul begins by laying down basic principles that are to govern the behaviour of the grandfathers who are responsible for order in the extended family of a Christian household. They are to be 'temperate'. Over indulgence in strong drink was obviously a social issue in Crete, as Paul has already included among the qualities required for the person responsible for supervising the life of the Christian community that he not be '**addicted to wine**' (1:7).

The older men are to be 'serious' (σεμνός). Paul listed this quality in his letter to the Philippians' (Philippians 4:8). It speaks of reverence and respect and is related to the virtue of religion (εὐσέβεια, 'godliness', 1:1).



## Titus 2:2

Tell the older men to exercise good judgment, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

Management of a household requires the exercise of ‘**good judgment**’ (σωφρονέω, Romans 12:3). Paul has already called for this quality in those to be appointed as elders (1:8).). This is in keeping with the accent in this letter on the importance of wholesome thinking that is based upon sound teaching. In effect they are to have ‘the same mind that was in the Messiah Jesus’ (Philippians 2:5).

In typically Pauline perspective he speaks here of the basic Christian virtues of ‘**faith**’, ‘**love**’ and ‘**endurance**’. The ‘love’ of which he speaks is that which ‘bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things’ (1 Corinthians 13:7), the love which is Jesus’ gift to us of a sharing in his communion with his Father. Endurance refers to what Paul calls the ‘steadfastness of hope’ (1 Thessalonians 1:3), the ‘steadfastness of Christ’ (2 Thessalonians 3:5).



## Titus 2:3

Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour

Christian grandmothers, too, have a special authority in the home. The first quality asked of them is striking and is found nowhere else in the New Testament. **‘Reverent’** (ἱεροπρεπής) refers to behaviour that is expected of a priest (ἱερεύς) in the carrying out of his sacred functions in the temple. Paul refers to the Christian community as a temple and obviously looks especially to the older women to nurture the home as a sacred place, so that ‘the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord’ (Ephesians 2:21).



## Titus 2:3-4

Tell the older women not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may train the young women

They are not to be ‘slanderers’ (διάβολος). Like Paul, they are to be slaves of God (see 1:1), not of drink (compare 1:7; 2:2).

Paul then speaks of the role which the older women have in the household of training the younger women. Since they cannot teach what they have not learned, the qualities which he goes on to list as appropriate for younger women obviously also apply to the grandmothers. The word translated here as ‘**train**’ is the Greek σωφρονίζω. They are to inculcate in their daughters and daughters-in-law and generally among the younger women ways of thinking that are consistent with sound teaching which is based on the gospel.



## Titus 2:4-5

Tell the older women to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to show affection to their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.

Seven qualities are mentioned as important to inculcate in the young women. It is assumed that they are married. The first and last of these qualities refer to their relationship to their husbands. Paul begins with showing affection (φίλανδρος) and ends by reminding them of the proper order of authority which is to prevail in the home. As in all his letters, Paul assumes that authority in the making of decisions lies with the husband.



## Titus 2:4-5

Teach the young women to love their children, to exercise good judgment, to be chaste, good managers of the household, and kind, so that the word of God may not be discredited.

They are to love their children (φιλότεκνος). They are to show good judgment (σώφρων, see 1:8; 2:2,4). They are to be 'chaste' (ἀγνός). Paul speaks of this virtue in his Letter to the Philippians 4:8, where it refers to whatever evokes in others a sense of the holy. He speaks of it also in his letter to the Corinthians: 'I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to the Messiah' (2 Corinthians 11:2).



The younger women are to be trained by the older women to be devoted to their duties in the home and to be kind. Paul's eye is on the mission entrusted to the church. Good order in a loving home is the best argument against those who are 'upsetting families' (1:11) and are speaking ill of the word which is revealed by God 'through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour' (1:3).