

Set Things in Order Titus 1

Titus 1: Introduction

- **“Organized religion 'will be driven toward extinction' in 9 countries, experts predict”**
- So read the headline of CNN’s Belief Blog earlier this year. (March 23, 2011)
- *“Organized religion will all but vanish eventually from nine Western-style democracies, a team of mathematicians predict in a new paper based on census data stretching back 100 years.*
- *“It won't die out completely, but 'religion will be driven toward extinction' in countries including Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands, they say.*
- *“It will also wither away in Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland and Switzerland, they anticipate.*
- *“They can't make a prediction about the United States because the U.S. census doesn't ask about religion, lead author Daniel Abrams told CNN.”*

- People today are feeling less and less comfortable with “Organized Religion.”
- The Apostle Paul, if he were here, would not be one of them.
- In fact, for him, the churches on the island of Crete were not yet organized enough.
- The reason he left his assistant Titus there was to set things in order.

Titus 1: Outline

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Understanding Our Message 1:1-4

- 1:2 **God, who cannot lie** *apseudēs*
- Literally, “The unlying God,” “the God without falsehood”
- **Before time began**
- Literally, “before times eternal”
- Prior to the 20th Century it was widely thought that the universe simply always existed.
- Then came **Albert Einstein** and **Edwin Hubble**.

- Their conclusions brought us to the idea of an expanding universe – which points back to a beginning of everything.
- Later came **Stephen Hawking** and **Roger Penrose** and their paper, *The Singularities of Gravitational Collapse and Cosmology* (1970).
Stephen Hawking was able to announce, *“We’ve proved that time has a beginning.”*

- The promises of God were already in existence – His plans were settled – before the world or the universe came into being – even before **Genesis 1:1**.
- 1:3 God ... has ... **manifested His word through preaching.**
- See also **1 Corinthians 1:20-21**

Identifying Potential Elders 1:5-9

- The qualifications listed here are not meant to sound excessively spiritual.
- The standard is not absolute perfection – that comes in heaven for all of us.
- But these are qualities which all Christians should set up as goals.
- Assuming the church has men in it that are living up to these standards, some of them should be appointed to lead the church.

- Identifying Potential Elders 1:5-9
- John Calvin put it this way:
- It is not that Christians are “*wholly free from vice*”, but that they “*heartily strive to form their lives in obedience to God.*”
- Or David Smith:
- “*The believer may fall into sin, but he will not walk in it.*”

- “*Too often in the Christian Church the great word Holiness has been practically banished to a supposed almost inaccessible background ... to a region where a few might with difficulty climb in the quest, men and women who had ‘leisure to be good’, or had exceptional instincts for piety.*” – H.C.G. Moule (1903)

- 1:6-7 **Blameless** = above reproach or living a blameless life, “free from any legal charge.”
- **Husband of one wife** = literally “man of one woman”.
- This at least rules out polygamy, but that was not the norm in the Greco-Roman world. Roman society was officially monogamous, but marital faithfulness was not expected.

- 1:6-7 **not violent** = not somebody who gets into fights or hits people.
- It also can refer to someone who is commonly causing quarrels or is verbally abusive of others.
- (By all the “nots” in this section we get the impression that the standards for behavior among Cretans were not especially high.)

- 1:8 **hospitable** = *philoxenos*
- fond of guests; a lover of strangers or foreigners.
- As *Xenophobia* is a fear of strangers or foreigners, someone who is *philoxenos* would have the exact opposite quality.
- BTW, the prospective elder’s wife needs to share this characteristic with her husband.

- 1:9 What this verse show us is that character, while essential, is not quite enough.
- The potential elder must be well acquainted with the Scriptures and able to teach them to others.
- He has to to teach sound (healthy) doctrine, be able to encourage others in it, and be able to oppose those who try to teach what is false.

Dealing with Cretans 1:10-16

- The “circumcision” would have been certain Jewish believers who constantly opposed Paul.
- In **Acts 15**, you can read about the Jerusalem Council with Paul and Barnabas, James, Peter and the rest of the apostles.
- At that point they came to the agreement that the non-Jews who were coming to faith in Christ did not have to hold to Jewish customs if they became Christians.

- Cretans, by the looks of it, didn’t really know how to take a hint.
- Paul must have thought Titus would be up to this task.
- He would have to reprimand some of them sharply, with a goal of keeping the church balanced and maintaining order in the church.

Titus 1: Conclusions

Understanding the Message:

- The message we have for the world is not an optional message and not a recent message.
- It is a message of eternal life which God promised before time began.
- The church's duty is to proclaim these promises of God.
- His chosen means of doing that is through the preaching of His word.

Identifying Potential Elders:

- While we can't expect people to be perfect, we should expect that the gospel will make an observable impact on a Christian's life.
- To be an elder, man needs to have:
 - a stable Christian life
 - a stable Christian home and family,
 - A good understanding of Scripture and Christian doctrine, with an ability to teach and correct.
- The Puritan William Gurnall made this point:
- *"Say not thou hast royal blood in thy veins, and art born of God, except that thou canst prove thy pedigree by daring to be holy."*
- Church, let's dare to be holy – and finding qualified leadership will never be a problem.

Dealing with Cretans:

- False teaching was a problem in the early church; it is still a problem today.
- A good elder (overseer or pastor) needs to be able to oppose it.
- Unruly people still try to disrupt or take advantage of the church.
- An elder needs to be as confrontational as is necessary to keep good order in the church.
- As a shepherd, one of his jobs is to adequately protect the flock.

One of the key roles of church leadership is to:

"Set in order the things that are lacking."

Evidently, even God has a preference for "Organized Religion."

We can safely predict it's not going to go extinct, but is likely to stick around for a long time.