

Titus Chapter One (vv. 1-9)

The Advent of Eternal Life [vv.1-4]

- In this paragraph, Paul is emphasising the authority and unique nature of his ministry which was integral to a new dispensation. This was the beginning of a new era characterised by faith rather than the works of the law.
- In these verses, Paul is presented as a servant (v.1), apostle (v.1), herald (v.3), steward (v.3) and father (v.4).
- Only Romans and Galatians have a lengthier prescript than Titus. Between the first word of this epistle (Paul) and the name of the recipient (Titus), Paul sandwiches a wealth of historical and doctrinal information.

v.1. Paul is his Roman name – the Hellenised form of his Jewish name, Saul. Given his Benjaminite heritage (Philippians 3.5), it would be no surprise if his parents named him after Saul, the first king of Israel. In the early chapters of Acts, Paul is referred to as Saul until a transition in Acts 13.9. From this point, as in all his letters, the apostle is known as “Paul”. This is probably to stress his unique ministry and calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul refers to himself as a **servant [doulos] of God**, specifically, an **apostle of Jesus Christ**. The word *doulos* refers to a person born into slavery – one whose will is given up to the will of another. Paul served God to the disregard of his own interests. But as this is the only time Paul uses the phrase “servant of God” he is likely using it here not as a title of humility but as a title of honour. In the old dispensation, Moses alone was called the “servant of God” (1 Chronicles 6.49; Daniel 9.11). Now Paul is the servant of God in the new dispensation – he was one to whom divine revelation had been given. As a servant **of God**, he identifies with the God who cannot lie and His message of eternal life (v.2). As the servant of God, he is *under* authority, but as an **apostle [apostolos] of Jesus Christ** he is *in* authority. The word “apostle” simply means ‘one who is sent’ and denoted an authorised ambassador – one commissioned to represent and speak for another, as if standing in the place of the sender himself – Jesus Christ. Paul was not an apostle of the Lamb (which only included the twelve, cf. Acts 1.21; Revelation 21.14), but an apostle of Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4.11) with a special commission from the risen Lord. This gift of apostleship would cease as the apostles would only form the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2.20), but there would continue to be the guidance of local elders who would teach and perpetuate apostolic truth (Titus 1.5-9). The apostolic generation “downloaded from a risen Christ all the doctrine that was necessary for this dispensation.”

Paul’s service and apostleship was **according to [kata] the faith of God’s elect**. The preposition *kata* appears four times in the opening four verses, each time being suitably translated as ‘in keeping with’ or ‘in harmony with’. Thus, Paul’s ministry is in harmony with faith – the false teachers preached according to the law, advocating salvation by works which was contrary to faith. But Paul preached salvation by faith, not works. In the OT, there was a national election (Deuteronomy 7.6-7) according to the *flesh* (individuals descended from Abraham). Sadly, very few of these individuals had personal faith in God. In this dispensation, **all of God’s elect** – every individual believer – is characterised by subjective faith in Christ. Paul’s ministry was also in keeping with **the acknowledging of the truth** – the gospel is the full revelation of divine truth in Christ. The truth is **after godliness** because those who believe the gospel visibly manifest the truth through godly behaviour. Truth never deviates from the path of piety (cp. Titus 1.16). Godliness is the righteous character and conduct of a believer which flows from a close personal relationship with God, and reverence for God.

v.2. If Paul has already spoken of the *honour* of his service (as a servant and apostle) and the *harmony* of his service (in keeping with faith and truth), now he speaks of the *hope* of his service. The gospel is connected with a promise – **in [epi] hope of eternal life**. This promise was made by God before time began and will reach beyond time as the environment in which eternal life will fully blossom is eternity. This is therefore the longest promise in the Bible. The preposition *epi* (upon) signifies that this hope is the basis upon which the superstructure of our service and conduct is built – the hope of an eternal future with God. The word **hope** does not imply uncertainty – it is a settled assurance and confident expectation. Believers already possess eternal life (1 John 5.11-12), but we look forward to the full enjoyment of eternal life in heaven. This was wholly different to the expectation of a pious Jew in the OT. Any mention of everlasting life (cf. Psalm 133.3; Daniel 12.2) referred to the blessing of the coming Messianic kingdom and longevity of life on an earth free from the curse of creation – where death will be the exception rather than the rule. The Author of this promise is a **God that cannot lie**, literally the ‘un-lie-able’ God. In a culture where truth meant nothing, and falsehood was the norm (v.12), Paul marks his ministry as from a God who *cannot* lie. God made this **promise** within the confines and counsels of deity **before the world began**. The middle voice demonstrates that God was moved by no one and nothing other than His own gracious nature. Before creation, God was *loving* (John 17.24), *planning* (1 Peter 1.20) and *promising* (Titus 1.2).

v.3. Even though this promise was made before the world began, it has now been announced by Paul through the preaching of the gospel. In **due times [kairos]** refers to the unique era of grace in which we live – eternal life was a promise to be preached in this dispensation following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (2 Timothy 1.10). The Judaisers were

locked into the old dispensation, but Paul was preaching a message in keeping with God's new programme. The word *kairos* views time as a season marked by distinct character or events. This dispensation is the 'favourable moment' – the period appointed by God in His wisdom as appropriate for the **manifestation** of the promise **through** the **preaching** of the gospel. Hiebert says, "The historical appropriateness of the time is evident from the existence of the Roman peace that gave a favorable setting for the preaching of the gospel and the development of Greek as the linguistic medium of its worldwide proclamation." The word **preaching** [*kērygma*] describes the public proclamation of a herald – one who made an official and authoritative proclamation on behalf of Caesar. This is *still* God's chosen means for the communication of truth in this dispensation, and it remains so, "even as our society turns from the verbal to the visual" (Sweetnam). As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was **committed** (entrusted) with a great responsibility to preach the gospel, "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1.11; cf. 1 Corinthians 9.17). This was no man-made commission but a divinely given responsibility **according to the commandment of God our Saviour** – a commandment received on the Damascus Road (cf. Acts 9.15; 26.16-18). "God our Saviour" underlines the content of the message he would preach – forgiveness of sins through faith in a risen Christ. The phrase is literally, 'our Saviour, God' and occurs five times in the Pastoral Epistles. In Titus, the title "Saviour" is equally applied to both the Father (1.3; 2.10; 3.4) and the Son (1.4; 2.13; 3.6).

v.4. Paul makes his salutation – **to Titus** (which may mean 'honourable'). Titus is mentioned *thirteen* times in the NT. He was a Gentile, taken by Paul to Jerusalem as a sample case of Gentile salvation (Galatians 2.1). Paul describes Titus as **mine own son after the common faith**, or "my genuine son in a common faith" [NET]. The word "son" [*teknon*] is 'child' which expresses endearment and suggests Titus may have been converted under Paul's preaching. The adjective "genuine" means 'legitimately born' which may be a comment contrasting the Judaisers who were false. Titus had a true spiritual parentage and, as such, was a fitting representative of Paul. How could Titus, being a Gentile, be the son of Paul, a Jew? They belonged to the same family – the family of faith, a faith common to believing Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul adds his familiar greeting – **grace, mercy and peace**. "Grace", the common Greek greeting, describes the ongoing daily grace for life, i.e. God's provision for our every need when we need it. "Mercy" is the active compassion and help of God for those in need, and "peace", the common Jewish greeting, signifies comfort, tranquillity and well-being. Note. It is only when Paul writes to individuals (rather than churches) that he adds 'mercy' to his common greeting (1 Timothy 1.2). Individuals are often acutely conscious of their own shortcomings and failure. These blessings are conferred upon Titus **from [apo] God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour**. A single preposition governs *both* Father and Son, suggesting their co-equality as the single source of such blessing. After all, God is a God of grace, mercy and peace.

The Appointment of Elders [vv.5-9]

- Paul now turns to the purpose for which Titus was left in Crete. He was to *set things straight* by ordaining elders. These men would, by the grace of God, *keep them straight*.
- These men, and their work, are described in different ways. 1. **Elders** – spiritual *maturity*. 2. **Overseers** (Bishops) – spiritual *responsibility*. 3. **Shepherds** – spiritual *ministry*. 4. **Stewards** – solemn *accountability* (Godward).
- Unlike 1 Timothy 3, there is no mention of deacons in Titus. This may be because the assemblies were too young to see the development of gift. Leadership is established first (by Apostolic authority), the gift would soon develop.
- In this section, Paul speaks of the *distribution* of elders (in every city), their *designation* (elders, bishop, steward), the singular *demand* of their character (blameless), their *description* (vv.6b-8) and their *duty* (v.9).

v.5. Titus was **left** in Crete, the verb meaning to leave behind temporarily. In fact, Paul speaks of his intention to send either Artemas or Tychicus to replace him (3.12). Clearly, Titus was therefore not the permanent Pastor or Bishop of Crete as some would espouse. It is likely Paul left Titus in Crete following a visit to the island after his first Roman imprisonment. But the word "left" can also mean 'dispatch' or 'assign' so does not necessitate Paul's presence. The **cause** for which Titus was left in Crete was to **set in order the things that were wanting** – things lacking, or in need of reform. The word can refer to *completing* what remains unfinished or *correcting* what had already begun but was veering off course. Both were the responsibility of Titus. To "set in order" [*epidiorthoō*] translates a Greek word used by medical writers of setting broken bones or straightening crooked limbs. The word contains the Greek *orthos* from which we derive orthopaedics and orthodontist. There were obviously several serious defects that needed attention, not least, unchecked false teachers (cf. 1.10-11; 3.10-11) and the need for instruction in doctrine and conduct (2.1-10; 3.1-2).

One way in which Titus could begin to set things straight was by doing what Paul had instructed him to do, namely, **ordain elders** in every city. Elders were to be appointed in each community where there was an assembly. David West says, "We must not read this verse as if Paul was authorising elders to have responsibility in several churches in one particular city." The scriptural pattern is rather a plurality of elders in each assembly – and having jurisdiction in that assembly alone. The word "ordain" means to 'point out' or 'name' – Titus identified elders in each assembly as an apostolic delegate.

Excursus: How are elders recognised in assemblies today?

There are three scriptures that bear upon the appointment of elders in assemblies today:

- **First**, the appointment of elders is the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20.28). He marks out those He has enabled.
- **Second**, the man should have a strong burden to shepherd (and care for) the Lord's people. This is not a self-centred desire for position, but a Holy Spirit implanted compulsion (1 Timothy 3.1).
- **Third**, Titus was to identify those who were fitted for the work. There are no apostles or apostolic delegates today, but those who are *already* elders are well-placed to encourage and identify such individuals in their own assembly.
- Two things are to be guarded against. Some men jump at oversight but are not fitted – either doctrinally or morally. Some men *are* fitted but refuse to do the work. We must be careful not to grieve the Lord by seeking to do what we are *not* fitted to do or refusing to do what we *are* fitted to do (which is often for selfish reasons).

v.6. Here begins a list of *fifteen* spiritual qualities that Titus would use to 'point out' elders. Nine are identical to those used in 1 Timothy 3, six are different. It should be noticed that nothing is said about physical appearance, educational achievements or social status – the standards are spiritual and moral, and far above that of Cretan society.

Though the verse begins **if any**, the gender of the terms is masculine showing that elders must be male. The word **blameless** [*aneklētos*] is used twice, once in relation to home and family life (v.6), once in relation to his character (v.7). The word "blameless" is an embracive, umbrella term – the overall requirement which is further unpacked by the fourteen terms which follow. *aneklētos* means one who 'cannot be called to account' – he is without charge, or accusation and irreproachable, a man of unquestioned integrity. Think of the great examples of Daniel (Daniel 6.4) and the Lord Jesus – the devil could make no justifiable charge against Him (John 14.30).

- 1. The **husband of one wife** – does not mean an elder must be married. The phrase is literally, 'a one-woman man' with emphasis on the 'one'. If he is married, he is a loyal husband and faithful to his one wife. He maintained sexual purity in a culture where marital infidelity was common. A man who is careless in his relationships with the opposite sex is not suitable to be an overseer. It is a not a good sign if sensitive sisters are uncomfortable in his presence.
- 2. Having **faithful children** – which *could* mean 'having children that believe' (Vine) but nothing is said of the spiritual condition of his children in the parallel verse in 1 Timothy (3.4). The remainder of this verse suggests the conduct of his children is in view. "Faithful", then, probably refers to children who are respectful and obedient to parents being worthy of responsibility and trust (cf. Luke 16.10). As such they are not **accused** (charged) of **riot** (wild living, reckless abandon – like the prodigal son) or **unruly** (rebellion, unwilling to be subject to authority or control).

Circumstantially, it is a man's family that will test his fitness for responsibility in God's assembly. If the man cannot effectively lead his own house, he cannot possibly 'take care' of the local assembly (1 Timothy 3.5). Towner says, "Households that had collectively turned away from the attraction of Cretan culture and embraced the value system of the gospel would present an opposing picture in society and counteract the effects of rebellious Christian teachers who were reluctant to separate from Cretan values."

v.7. Following an explanatory statement, Paul gives five *negative* terms (vices, v.7) followed by seven *positive* terms (virtues, vv.8-9). The word **for** explains *why* the **bishop** [*episkopos*] must be blameless (in the sense of v.6), namely, because he is the **steward** [*oikonomos*] **of God**. The word "bishop" is translated 'overseer' in Acts 20.28 and describes the spiritual responsibility of the elders – they keep a watchful eye on the activities of the assembly, and the behaviour of the saints. They are not looking for faults but fitting quality and behaviour. Indeed, the word *episkopos* is used in 2 Chronicles 34.17 [LXX] to describe men responsible for inspecting public building schemes.

Elders are solemnly accountable to God as **stewards**. The assembly, therefore, does not belong to the elders – they are merely managers of a household that belongs to God. MacArthur says, "In ancient Greek and Roman societies, a steward managed a household on behalf of the owner. In addition to caring for all the needs of family members, they could be responsible and accountable for household finances and for making sure, for example, that crops were properly planted, cultivated, and harvested. They often had oversight of all other household servants, to provide for them and to assign and supervise their work. They would make sure that those who were sick or wounded were cared for and even dispensed discipline when necessary." So, the saints should obey their leaders and submit to them as those who keep watch over their souls. Then they will give account for their work with joy and not with groaning (Hebrews 13.17).

- 3. not **self-willed** – dominated by self-interest and inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will (Vine). Such an individual will also often fiercely defend and promote members of his own family as a matter of pride.
- 4. not **soon angry** – readily yielding to anger, prone to a volatile temperament (Proverbs 22.24). Barclay speaks of an "ingrained anger" which is continually fed to keep it alive. A long-lived, purposely maintained irritability.

- 5. not **given to wine** – lit. ‘alongside of wine’ to describe the abuse or incessant use of alcohol. The word picture is that of an individual who always has a bottle (or wineskin) on the table and so signifies addiction. Timothy obviously sought to set an example to the believers by being ‘wineless’ even though it was of medicinal benefit (1 Timothy 5.23).
- Barclay says “the word widened its meaning until it came to describe all conduct which is outrageous. It describes the character of someone who, even in sober moments, acts with the outrageousness of a drunk.”
- 6. no **striker** – one who is quick to threaten or use physical aggression or violence. The Greeks widened the meaning of the word to include violence in speech as well as in action.
- 7. not **given to filthy lucre** [*aischrokerdēs*] – being so desirous of acquiring wealth that it brings disgrace and shame on a person. This was particularly significant in the context of Crete. The Greek historian Plutarch said that Cretans “stick to money like bees to honey”. They counted material gain far above honesty and honour.

v.8. If the previous verse shows that, negatively, a man who cannot control his temper is not fit for oversight, this verse shows, positively (using the word **but** as a contrast), that an elder must be level-headed and clear minded. He is balanced in his thinking, sane and sensible not rash and erratic.

- 8. a **lover of hospitality** [*philoxenos*] – lit. ‘a lover of strangers’ (cf. 1 Peter 4.9). The overseer is disposed to treat guests and strangers with cordiality and generosity. He will be accessible and approachable – always ready to listen.
- 9. a **lover of good men** [*philagathos*] – a lover of things that are good in character and beneficial in their effect on others. Barclay says, “either someone who loves good things or who loves good people, and which Aristotle uses in the sense of *unselfish*; that is, someone who loves good actions.”
- 10. **sober** [*sōphrōn*] – one who has a disciplined, healthy mind and is characterised by self-control. He is balanced in his judgments (rational) and not prone to sudden unpredictable impulses.
- 11. **just** [*dikaios*] – the character of God (2 Timothy 4.8). One who is honest, fair and just in his dealings with fellow men. Free from favouritism and bias.
- 12. **holy** [*hosios*] – personal piety, an inner attitude of conforming to what is pleasing to God and the requirements of His word. Outward behaviour that manifests divine life (and purity) within.
- 13. **temperate** [*enkratēs*] – lit. ‘in power’, one who possesses complete power over self. *sōphrōn* is more closely related to the mind (thought life) whereas *enkratēs* is the resolute control of the body, especially sensual desires. The noun is used of an athlete’s disciplined training regime (1 Corinthians 9.25).

v.9. The final and *fourteenth* quality of the elder encapsulates his primary duty of teaching the word of God – a duty that was especially important in the context of the “gainsayers” and Cretan society. **Holding fast the faithful word** describes clinging devotedly to the word of God despite strong opposition and false teaching. The word of God is **faithful** in the sense of reliable and trustworthy – because its source is a God who is true and cannot lie. The faithful word is further defined as what has **been taught** [*tēn didachēn*] – namely apostolic teaching (including the gospel) that was already an identifiable body of doctrine (Romans 6.17). With such truth in his armoury, the elder was well-equipped with **sound** [*hygiainō*] **doctrine** to both **exhort** (encourage) the saints (cf. 2.6, 15) and **convict** (reprove or expose) the **gainsayers**, those who contradict and speak against apostolic truth. They were to be rebuked in such a way that their error was exposed by the word of God, and they were compelled to confess it. It is therefore essential that an elder can effectively present and clearly expound divine truth as a powerful antidote to false doctrine.

A Comparison of Qualities Required in Elders [1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1]

Quality (AV)	Greek	Lexical meaning (BDAG)	1 Tim. 3	Titus 1
1. Blameless	ἀνεπίληπτον	Irreproachable	3.2	1.6, 1.7
2. Husband of one wife		A one-woman man	3.2	1.6
3. Vigilant	νηφάλιον	Being very moderate in the drinking of an alcoholic beverage, alert or watchful	3.2	
4. Sober	σώφρονα	In control of oneself, prudent, thoughtful	3.2	1.8
5. Good behaviour	κόσμιον	Having characteristics or qualities that evoke admiration or delight	3.2	
6. Given to hospitality	φιλόξενον	Hospitable, or ‘lover’ of hospitality (Titus)	3.2	1.8
7. Apt to teach	διδακτικόν	Skilful. Holding fast the faithful word (Titus)	3.2	1.9
8. Not given to wine	πάρουινον	Not addicted to wine	3.3	1.7
9. No striker	πλήκτην	Not a bully	3.3	1.7
10. Not greedy of filthy lucre	αἰσχροκερδῆ	Not fond of dishonest gain, greedy for money	3.3 (MSS)	1.7

11. Patient	ἐπιεικῆ	Not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom, yielding, gentle, kind	3.3	
12. Not a brawler	ἄμαχον	Peaceable	3.3	
13. Not covetous	ἀφιλάργυρον	Not loving money or greedy	3.3	
14. Ruleth well his house	προϊστάμενον	Exercises a position of leadership, headship	3.4	
15. Children	τέκνα	In subjection. Faithful, no riot or unruly	3.4	1.6
16. Gravity	σεμνότητος	Manner of behaviour that is worthy of respect	3.4	
17. Not a novice	νεόφυτον	Not newly converted (or planted)	3.6	
18. Of good report	μαρτυρίαν	Good reputation	3.7	
19. Not self-willed	αὐθάδη	Stubborn or arrogant		1.7
20. Not soon angry	ὀργίλον	Short-tempered, inclined to anger		1.7
21. Lover of good men	φιλάγαθον	Loving what is good		1.8
22. Just	δίκαιον	Upright and fair		1.8
23. Holy	ὅσιον	Personal piety, pleasing to God		1.8
24. Temperate	ἐγκρατῆ	Self-controlled and disciplined		1.8