

# **STUDIES IN TITUS**

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- 1. TITUS THE TROUBLE SHOOTER Based on Titus 1:1f**

**Somebody has to do the dirty work in life, and so all leaders need men who are trouble shooters. George Washington needed one when Benedict Arnold betrayed the colonies and escaped to the British forces. Washington was angry and was determined to get him back. He choose Sargent Major John Champe for the secret and sensitive mission of deserting to the British and kidnaping Arnold. Only Washington and Colonel Lighthouse Harry knew of the plot. On Oct. 19, 1780 Champe deserted his company and fled.**

**It was very risky in that he could have been shot by his own men.**

**The British accepted him and put him in the Loyalist Legion made up of other Americans who chose to be loyal to England in the war. Benedict Arnold was its leader. Everything seemed to be going smooth until the Loyalist Legion was ordered into battle in Virginia. Champe was from Virginia and he refused to fight his own people, and so he deserted again. Now he was a hunted man by both sides. He eventually got back to Washington's headquarters and explained the whole mess. Washington had no choice but to send him, his wife, and his four children to a hideout in the wilderness. When the war ended it was still not safe for him to return, for he was considered a traitor by both sides, and could easily have been murdered. He was moved to Kentucky, and it was not until long after his death that congress in 1847 voted Champe a promotion for, "One of the most courageous acts of the American Revolution."**

**As Champe was a champion who got little credit, so Titus was a Titan, that is a giant of the faith, in the revolutionary march of Christianity in the first century. Titus was a trouble shooter in the war to prevent traitors from dividing the forces of the church, and weakening their ability to win the world out of darkness into light. Like Champe, he does not get much recognition because his courageous acts of service are somewhat suppressed in the New Testament record. In spite of the fact that he was one of Paul's greatest friends and travelling companions, and in spite of the fact that he is the most successful trouble shooter in the New Testament, he is not even once referred to in the book of Acts. Some are convinced that Titus was Luke's brother, and family modesty kept Luke from recording the acts of his own brother. This, of course, is merely a theory.**

**Had he not played a major role in solving the problems of the church of Corinth we would hardly know who he was at all. The**

**church at Corinth was in great distress. There was strong division and harsh criticism against Paul. The situation called for a trouble shooter with gifts of wisdom and tact. It was a delicate mission and Paul chose his friend Titus to tackle the job. He had earlier sent Timothy, but he was young and lacked experience, so he next chose Titus. He sent him with his first letter to the Corinthians, and he was able to calm the troubled waters and bring back to Paul a good report. Paul wrote II Cor. and sent Titus back with it. In that letter we learn most everything we know about Titus. Paul refers to him 8 times in that letter. Here is an example from II Cor. 2:12-13.**

**"When I came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ a door was opened for me in the Lord; but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia."**

**No where do we find the Apostle Paul so troubled and restless that he cannot stand still and preach the Gospel. He had to hear from Titus, and until he did he could not concentrate on his ministry. This is the only record we have of Paul failing to go through an open door. When he got to Macedonia he received one of the greatest blessings he ever recorded, for Titus was there, and he had good news that was desperately needed. We read in II Cor. 4:5-6, "For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn-fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast comforted us by the coming of Titus."**

**His coming was a great comfort because he had succeeded in getting the Corinthians to repent and change their attitudes, and become friendly with Paul again. Titus had been a successful trouble shooter, for that was his gift to be a peacemaker. The Speaker's Bible says of him, "He was much more a man of affairs than Timothy was. He settled many a quarrel, allayed many a trouble, averted many a split. He was the conciliator and peacemaker of the**

early church." He was able to do what others could not because it was his gift to be a trouble shooter. If everyone could do it there would be no need for those who are gifted trouble shooter. Paul wrote II Cor. in response to this good report, and it is as positive as I Cor. is negative.

Paul was so comforted by the coming of Titus that it has become a part of the language of comfort. James Smetham wrote to a friend to thank him for the letter he received which came at a time when he was depressed and in it he wrote, "Glad to get your friendly letter. It was like the coming of Titus. I think providence in these days often sends Titus by mail." George Ensor, the first English missionary to Japan said he baptized his first convert and gave him the name Titus. He said, "For God who comforts the downcast comforted me by the coming of Titus." It was discouraging work, and, like Paul, he was down, but then all was changed by the coming of this friend.

Oh, gift of God, my friend!  
Who face has brought the Eternal nigh.  
No sermon like thy life doth tend  
To turn my gaze toward the sky.

All of us need the ministry and comfort of Titus. We need that friend who will come into our darkness with light. We need good news when all we hear is bad news, and that things seem to be getting worse. What a blessing to have the downward trend reversed, and hear that God is at work, and the good does triumph over the evil. May God grant us all the comfort of the coming of Titus, and may we all strive to be a Titus in bringing to others the good news of life's joyful realities.

Being a trouble shooter is not one of the gifts listed in the New Testament, but it is nevertheless a gift, and a needed one, for trouble

is inevitable in a fallen world, and there is no such thing as working with people without trouble. Since the church is people oriented, there can be escape from trouble, and so the trouble shooter is a vital person in the army of the Lord. No where was this true than on the island of Crete. It was the largest island in the Mediterranean. It was 250 miles long and 50 miles wide. It was a big place to work, but it was as bad as it was big. It was not the kind of place a seminary student would want to take for his first church. Most veterans would even do anything to avoid getting assigned to such a place.

Paul had a lot of confidence in Titus to leave him there. He was the only one who could handle the job like this. There were Jews from Crete at Pentecost and they carried the Gospel back home, and that is likely how the church got started on this great island. The seed was sown and it was growing, but the weeds were thick. Paul visited the island and was impressed with the depravity of the people. In verse 12 he quotes one of their own poets named Epimenides who lived in 600B.C. He said of the Cretans that they are, "Always liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons." They were obviously something less than the creme of the crop. That was 600 years back from Paul's time and you would think there would be some progress, but in the next verse Paul says this testimony is true. Things have not changed at all, for they are a crude crowd held in contempt by all people.

Imagine going to a people with such a rotten reputation. Nobody but a tough-minded trouble shooter would have any business trying to organize a church in such a place. Titus did it, and the churches there to this day honor the name of Titus by naming their churches after him. He was buried in Crete for centuries before the Venetians carried his body away. The life and labors of Titus make it clear that the road may be rough, and the circumstances intolerable, and the odds overwhelmingly against you. But it is still possible to plant and

**grow the church of Christ in the worse possible settings. No place is hopeless if you have the right personal.**

**In 1850 as many as 30 thousand children were abandoned in New York City. Their immigrant parents died on the trip to America, or shortly after arriving. These children had no family or relatives, and nowhere to go. They lived in the streets and ate out of the garbage cans. It was a terrible problem and all people could do is say that it was a shame. But then Charles L. Brace a 26 year old pastor with the gift for trouble shooting got concerned. He started what came to be known as the orphan train. He rounded up hundreds of these stray orphans and put them on a train headed West. He announced in every town along the way that if anyone wanted a son or daughter they could have one. The response was overwhelming. People were grateful for the chance to have a child in their life. Pastor Brace kept this train rolling until 1929, and over 100 thousand children were given away. Two became governors; one a U. S. Congressman, and one a Supreme Court Justice. Over 50 became doctors and lawyers.**

**A hopeless situation was turned into a treasure of blessings for tens of thousands of families because of one gifted trouble shooter. Thank God for the trouble shooters who have turned burdens into blessings all through history. Not everyone can be like Titus, but the good news is, all of us can be trouble shooters in some ways. The book of Titus not only reveals to us the key trouble shooter of the New Testament, but it also reveals to us the key tool of the trouble shooter. The tool that can prevent most of the troubles that Christians can get into, and that tool is the virtue of self-control.**

**You will not find another part of the Bible where this virtue is emphasized like it is here in Titus. The two key Greek words for self-control are the dominant words in the council Paul gives to Titus. The elders are to be men who are self-controlled. All the**

people who are trouble makers in the first chapter are problems because of their lack of self-control. In chapter 2 self-control is repeated over and over. It is characterize the older men, the older women, the younger women, and the younger men. In other words, everybody in the church who is going to be part of the answer rather than part of the problem is going to have to develop the virtue of self-control.

It is a word with many synonyms and can be translated temperate, sober, or discreet. The word refers to the inner strength one has over ones self to not be at the mercy of what happens externally, but to be in control. The emotions and desires of life do not lead this person around by the nose as a slave. He or she is disciplined, and they have their life under control. The undisciplined life where a person is manipulated and controlled by his emotions and desires is the cause for the troubles of the world and of the church.

This virtue so pushed by Paul was recognized by great minds all through history to be the key to a civilized society. It was a classical virtue of the Greeks. Socrates and Aristotle stressed it, and so did the Greek Stoics and the Jewish Essenes. Everyone with intelligence knows that if man does not develop control of his appetites for sex and food and every other desire he will lose his superiority over the animal and descend to their level. Even non-Christians have recognized that self-control is vital to society to maintain morality and order.

In Greek mythology Phaethon was the son of Helios, the sun god. Every morning Helios emerged from the East in a golden chariot to ride across the skies and light up the world. The chariot itself was drawn by 8 dazzling white winged horses whose nostrils breathed forth flame. One day some of Phaethon's companions challenged his claim to divine parentage, and he came to Helios to seek proof.

**Helios assured his son he would grant him any wish. Phaethon requested that he be allowed to drive the sun chariot. Horrified by this request he begged his son to choose another way, for he knew he could not control the powerful horses. Phaethon was stubborn and held his father to his promise, and so with heavy heart he let his son take the reins the next morning.**

**Once under way the horses quickly sensed Phaethon's light and inexperienced hand on the reins, and they began to run amok across the skies. Sometimes going too low and scorching the earth, and sometimes too high leaving whole regions frozen. Finally in desperation Zeus was forced to hurl a thunder bolt at the chariot and Phaethon was destroyed.**

**The Greeks were saying by this story that control is essential to order in the universe and in life. When things get out of control there is security for anyone. You don't have to be a Christian to know this, but all Christians are called to practice control of their lives like no other people. It is not just for monks, nuns, and specialists in self-denial. It is for all Christians at all age levels. It is the very essence of Christian living, and it is that virtue that makes all of us trouble shooters in our own lives.**

**When something is universally valued then the Christian is all the more obligated to live for that value that all men will recognize and honor. Aristotle the Greek said, "I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is victory over self." Seneca the Roman said, "To master one's self is the greatest mastery." Long before them Prov. 16:42 said, "A patient man is better than a warrior, and he who rules his temper, than he who takes a city." Heavenly and earthly wisdom agree that the real heroes of history, and the people most to be admired, are those who have lived lives which were governed by the virtue of self-control.**



**A man was walking through a super market with a screaming baby in the shopping cart. A woman near by noted that the man kept saying, "Keep calm Albert. Keep calm Albert." Finally in admiration for the man's patience she said to him, "Sir I must commend you for your patience with baby Albert." To which the man replied, "Madam, I am Albert." If you can't control the baby, then next best thing is to control yourself, and that was what he was working at, and that is what we are all to work at. If you can't control life and circumstances, you can still be victorious if you can control yourself and your reactions to the circumstances.**

**Paul stressed this in his letter to the Corinthians also. Christians need to approach life like a runner, or any other athlete, with a commitment to discipline their lives to bring them under control. In I Cor. 9:25-27 we read, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air." Paul brings his body under control so he is not a slave to it. Self-control puts you in charge of your body, and it serves you rather than you serving it.**

**In 1962 Jim Beatty became the first man to break the four minute mile indoors. He had to go through enormous sacrifice to get such control of his body. His, and the experience of others, is described like this: "Back of the feat of every man who has run the grueling sub-four-minute mile is the story of endless hours of Spartan training and of punishing discipline. With every agonized nerve in his body screaming for rest, the runner drives himself on. Like a jockey whipping his steed to close the gap as he nears the tape, the miler lashes his body to eke out its last ounce of energy and gain the coveted prize. He is discipline incarnate: The triumph of the spirit over the flesh."**

**This is what the Christian life is all about. It is about the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, and the issue of self-control. For Titus to be a successful trouble shooter on Crete he had to get Christians of all ages to develop this virtue. This is the challenge for every believer. In his letter to Timothy Paul describes the opposite of self-control. In II Tim. 3:1-4 he writes, "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."**

**In Gal. 5 Paul describes the opposite of the Fruit of the Spirit, one of which is self-control. He writes, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like." The point is, the essence of the sinful nature is lack of self-control. The essence of the righteous nature is in the presence of self-control.**

**The difference between the trouble maker and the trouble shooter in this world is not that one has evil thoughts and sinful desires and the other does not. They are equal on that score. Christian people have every thought and every desire that enters the minds of non-Christians. There is no folly or fantasy that Satan uses to entice men that does not affect the believer in some way. The difference between the two is that one has the power to control his mind, body, and desires, while the other is under the control of them all.**

**Self-control is a fruit of the spirit and so it is from God, but the book of Titus clearly stresses that it has to be learned. Paul, over and over again, tells Titus you must teach the people to be**

**self-controlled. It does not just happen because you become a Christian. Many Christians are poor Christians because they have not learned to be trained and disciplined just like an athlete. Paul was so into the importance of teaching this that when he got his chance to come before the governor Felix and defend the Christian faith we read what he spoke on in Acts 24:25: "As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come." Felix was impressed with Paul, and talked with him after, but he wanted to favor the Jews so he left Paul in prison.**

**Self-control was a part of Paul's fundamental teaching. The reason is obvious, for there can be no distinctive Christian life without it. The goals of the Christian life cannot be achieved without self-control. Titus could not get to first base in organizing the church on Crete unless he could develop a group of Christians with self-control. But with self-control the church can thrive in any environment, no matter how corrupt. They do not escape exposure to the corruption, nor do they escape temptation, but they are not victims, for by the power of self-control they can even use their temptation for the life that pleases God.**

**In verse 15 Paul says, "To the pure all things are pure but to those who are corrupted and do not believe nothing is pure." This is a paradox. A story about the great inventor Thomas Edison illustrates the point. The entrance to his property was a heavy clumsy gate and one of his friends wondered why a man of his standing would put up with this heavy thing, and suggested something more modern and easy to use. Edison looked at him with a twinkle in his eye and said, "Come with me. Let me show you something." He took him to the gate and showed him how it was geared into a pump and he said, "You see, every man who comes to see me and opens or shuts this gate automatically pumps a gallon of water into a tank on my roof." The visitor could be friend or foe, but all of them were expending energy that Edison had under his**

**control for his purpose.**

**So it is in the life of a believer who has developed self-control. He can use all things for good. To the person without self-control lust is destructive of marriage, morality, family, and society. But to the pure even lust can be pure, for by self-control it is energy channeled into that which is God's will, and it enriches marriage and all of life. By the power of self-control all energy, even that which may be stimulated by lust, can be channeled into doing good.**

**The difference between a river and a flood is not just the amount of water and the energy. The difference is that the flood is out of control, but the river is channeled and can be used to produce power for a purpose. The flood is destructive because it cannot be controlled. Get all that same energy under control and it can be used for good. So the Christian in a very non-Christian environment can be successfully righteous by the power of self-control.**

## **2. HOPE Based on Titus 1:1f**

**Billy Graham in his book Hope For The Troubled Heart tells the story of the lone survivor of a shipwreck who was marooned on an uninhabited island. He managed to build a hut in which he put everything he had saved from the wreck. He prayed to God for rescue as he daily scanned the horizon for a passing ship. One day he returned to his hut and to his horror he found it in flames. All he possessed was going up in smoke. It was the ultimate tragedy, and he sat in despair. Shortly after that a ship arrived. The captain said, "We saw your smoke signal and hurried here." The ship wrecked man fell to his knees and thanked God for the fire**

**he had just been cursing as a tragedy.**

**The point of Graham in telling this story is that he recognizes the great need for people to have hope. When bad things happen it is important that we have hope that God can work in all things for good. The world is full of bad things, and today we do not have to wait for weeks and months to hear about them. We get the bad news the very moment terrible events are happening. This much bad news is affecting people around the world and producing a lot of the sense of hopelessness.**

**Graham writes, "Perhaps the greatest psychological, spiritual, and medical need that all people have is the need for hope. Dr. McNair Wilson, the famous cardiologist, remarked in his autobiography, Doctor's Progress, 'Hope is the medicine I use more than any other-hope can cure nearly anything.' I remember years ago that Dr. Harold Wolff, professor of medicine at Cornell University Medical College and associate professor of psychiatry, said, 'Hope, like faith and a purpose in life is medicinal. This is not exactly a statement of belief, but a conclusion proved by meticulously controlled scientific experiment.'"**

**This is confirmed over and over again by Dr. Robert Veninga, professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota. He has written a book called A Gift of Hope. In it he gives dozens of illustrations of how hope is the key ingredient for facing the trials and tragedies of a fallen world. I can share only a few examples. He says that when children are diagnosed as diabetic they are overwhelmed. Disease is supposed to be for old people and not kids. They get depressed at the cruel injustice of it all. The treatment is not just diet and insulin, but hope. They teach the children that they can back pack, play football, and be fully involved in social activities. They learn that prominent personalities like Mary Tyler Moore, and former New York Yankee star Jim (Catfish)**

**Hunter are diabetics, and they live full and exciting lives.**

**When hope crowds out their fears these children adjust rapidly and begin to enjoy life again. He goes through a whole series of family problems and tragic situations, and he shows that families that survive any crisis do so because they give each other the gift of hope. Jerry Lebenow was locked up for three and a half years for a crime he did not commit. A woman was brutally killed and he was charged and found guilty, he was sent to Stillwater prison. Three years later the Supreme Court reviewed his case and found that he had not received a fair trial, and that the evidence did not support his guilt. He was released to return to his family. How could he suffer such an injustice and not be bitter and hateful? He had family and friends who kept encouraging him and giving him hope.**

**Survivors in concentration camps did so because they never lost hope. Those who did lose hope died. Hope is a vital ingredient to life. Dr. Veninga says there is nothing in the world of medicine or psychology that can help people survive and be healed that can match the power of religious hope. And this brings us to our text, for long before all of the scientific and psychological research the Apostle Paul told the people of God that hope is the foundation of even faith and the knowledge of the truth. These are the two vital goals the church is to achieve in the lives of the believers. It is to build up their faith and their knowledge of the truth, and he says these both rest on the hope of eternal life.**

**Hope is used about 180 times in the Bible, and so it is a major topic of the Word of God, but I never saw it before that Paul is telling us here that hope is foundational, and that even faith rests on hope. That means when he said these three remain, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love, that the second greatest is hope, and so he has these three basic virtues in reverse order of their importance. Faith rests on hope. Let's focus on this.**

## **I. THE FOUNDATION OF HOPE.**

**Paul is famous for saying that we are saved by faith, but in Rom. 8:24 he says, "For we are saved by hope." Faith and hope are like two strands wound together to make a rope. We are saved by both together, for they both link us to Christ who alone can save. They just look in two different directions. Faith looks back to the past, and at what Jesus did for us on the cross in dying for our sins, and also at the resurrection where He conquered death and all the consequences of sin. Hope, on the other hand, looks ahead to what Jesus has promised to do for us because of the cross and the resurrection. He has promised to come again and to raise us up, or to change us in a twinkling of an eye, and take us to the place He has prepared where we will enjoy eternal life in His presence.**

**Paul is saying that this hope we have of eternal life is the foundation even of our faith. The point being, if we do not have the hope of eternal life, what good is it that Jesus died and rose again? Paul says in I Cor. 15:19, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to pitied more than all men." The hope of eternal life is so foundational that without it there is no meaning to our faith and knowledge, for it is all worthless without this hope.**

**God recognized the necessity of this hope and so Paul says that He promised eternal life before the beginning of time. Here we see the ultimate goal of God before He started the creation of the universe, and the whole creation of reality and time as we know it. Here we see the purpose of God which gives meaning to all of life. God promised eternal life before He even made a living soul who could enjoy it. Before time God said that this hope will be the key to meaning through all of time. It will be the hope of eternal life beyond time.**

**Who in the world did God promise this too if it was before time,**

**and the creation of Adam and Eve? It was a promise for us, but the one who got the promise first had to be Jesus who would become a man and make it possible for the rest of mankind to enter into this foundational promise of hope. The hope of eternal life was the motive that brought Jesus to earth to die for lost mankind. Do you think Jesus would have come to die if the end result was that man would just be restored to live 200 or 500, or even a 1000 years? It is not very likely. It was the hope of eternal life that made His sacrifice worthwhile.**

**Eternal life is a value beyond our grasp. We cannot conceive of its worth. But it is the best God can give to a creature made in His image, and He promised this would be the gift He would give to those who receive His Son. Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The end result of sin is death, and the end result of salvation is eternal life. The focus of God from before time began was this hope of eternal life. It was the focus of Jesus coming to earth. Paul now says it is the foundation for our faith as Christians.**

**The one thing God wants for His people to have all through history is the hope of eternal life. What does it mean to be saved? It means that one has the hope of eternal life. What is the practical effect of Christ's coming into history? How does His coming, His death, and His resurrection effect us in our everyday lives? The answer is right here in the hope of eternal life. That is the bottom line that God was aiming for before time began, and it is the goal of His whole plan that His people would have the hope of eternal life. To be without God and without hope in this world is to have life with no meaning. To have God as your heavenly Father, and to have Jesus as your Savior, and to have this hope of eternal life is to have the meaning you need to cope with and to conquer, and to be victorious in a fallen world.**



**The second coming and the rapture of the church is called the blessed hope, for by these events Jesus will usher us into that fulfillment of this fundamental hope of eternal life. It is the foundation of our faith. Let's look next at-**

## **II. THE FUNCTION OF HOPE.**

**Since God made the hope of eternal life a promise before the beginning of time, He expects this hope to be a foundation on which His people build their faith. So the function of hope is to reach out into the future and lay hold on it as a means of changing the present. The function of hope is to participate in the future now. It is to taste of the things to come and let the future have an impact on the present.**

**Henry Ward Beecher describes how so many falsely think of hope as having no function in the present, but only in the future. He writes, "A hope is to some like a passport, which one keeps quietly in his pocket till the time for the journey, and then produces it. Or like life-preservers, which hang useless around the vessel until the hour of danger comes, when the captain calls on every passenger to save himself; and then they are taken down and blown up, and each man, with his hope under his arm, strikes out for the land: And so such men would keep their religious hope hanging until death comes; and then take it down and inflate it, that it may buoy them up, and float them over the dark river to the heavenly shore. Or as the inhabitants of Block Island keep their boats hauled high upon the beach, and only use them now and then, when they would cross to the mainland; so such men keep their hopes high and dry upon the shore of life, only to be used when they have to cross the flood that divides this island of time from the mainland of eternity."**

**He is saying that hope is not something we die with, but it is something we are to live with, which makes life more enjoyable even**

**with all its limitations. Hope is faith looking into the future and being filled with confident expectation that the final goal of God will be worth whatever trials we must endure. And so it sustains us and motivates us to press on in faithfulness to Christ no matter what the cost. The function of hope is to keep us facing in the right direction and pressing on. If we are always facing the sun, the shadows will always be behind us.**

**Hope is the key to progress in all of life. It is hope for the harvest that keeps the farmer plowing and cultivating. It is the hope of improvement that makes every creative person striving to invent better ways of doing things. Rob men of hope and you do not just take away their future, you take away their now. Their present is directly affected by their hope of the future. So the Christian life in the present is directly affected by the hope of eternal life. Paul in Rom. 15:13 writes, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." God is the God of hope, and the Holy Spirit has as one of His tasks to fill us with hope so that the present life can be one of joy and peace.**

**We usually connect the Holy Spirit with power, but hope is power, and if we are filled with hope, we can have joy and peace even when bad things happen, and we have to cope with the crisis of this fallen world. Hope functions in our daily life by doing at least these two things I have discovered.**

## **1. IT PREVENTS DESPAIR.**

**This is major issue, and there is no solution except in hope. Suicide is a major public health problem, and the government cannot solve it. Tens of thousands of Americans kill themselves each year, and a growing segment of that figure are teenagers. They are not a bunch of drug addicts, or drop outs either. They are often**

**bright and high achievers loaded with talent. They are often from good homes, and sometimes even from Christian homes. How can they sink into such despair as to take their life at such an early age? The answer is that they do not grasp the Christian hope, which is the foundation for victory over all the power of sin.**

**They are like 14 year old Melissa Putney who became pregnant and solved her problem by kneeling between the tracks with her hands grasped in prayer. The engineer of the Amtrak saw her, but at 100 miles an hour it was too late, and her life was ended. Dr. Veninga in A Gift Of Hope published her suicide note that went like this:**

**"You always ask me if there is anything wrong. I said, 'No, I'm O. K.' Mom, I wasn't telling the truth. I was never O. K. I was very depressed. I ran away from all my problems. I am taking the easy way out. I am admitting to myself that I am a weak person not able to handle the weight of life. I'm very sorry to put you all through the troubles. I think everything I have to do is done. I drank some wine and took some pills. But before I did all that I prayed to my Father God in heaven. I asked Him to forgive me but He won't. I don't blame Him for that. Please pray that I won't be sent to hell, because then I won't be able to come back and watch over you and help you. I want to do that. Mom, please don't have a nervous breakdown and be crying all the time. I don't want you to. I want you to live forever and ever, the way you want to, and I will always love you very much. Please try and forgive me. I love you always and always, love, Melissa."**

**If this was an isolated case, we would not need to be overly concerned, but it is going on everyday because youth lack the hope they need to escape despair. The girl had some degree of faith and knowledge, but it was not enough, and it had no foundation in the hope of eternal life. Jesus knew life in a fallen world would lead**

people to despair, and even His own disciples would feel it. That is why in the last two of His beatitudes He made hope of heaven the foundation for surviving the negatives of life.

Read again these familiar words, but note how hope is the key. Matt. 5:10-12 says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven." When people treat you like dirt and life is so unfair, it leads to despair unless you have a hope that is permanent. When hope is strong Christians can take the worst that life can throw at them and overcome despair.

It is quite shocking to read about the comets plowing into Jupiter and causing explosions that would end life on our planet if they happened here. All God would have to do to bring about the end of the world is to have a good size comet make earth its target. When I read such things there is a moment of fear, but then my faith kicks in and overcomes the fear, for my faith is based on the hope that even the end of life on earth does not change the promise of God that there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which we will dwell forever with our Redeemer. Fear not those who can kill the body said Jesus. He might have added that we need not fear what can destroy the whole world, for if your hope is in God, you can be assured of eternal life.

We need not despair at bad news, but can have the confidence of the poet who wrote,

What can we not endure  
When pains are lessen'd by the hope of cure?  
Eternal hope! When yonder spheres sublime  
Peal'd their first notes to sound the march of time.

**Thy joyous youth began-but not to fade,  
When all the sister planets have decay'd:  
Who wrapt in fire the realms of ether glow,  
And heaven's last thunder shakes the world below.  
Thou, undismay'd shalt o'er the ruins smile,  
And light thy touch at nature's funeral pile.**

**Hope says let the comets come, or whatever else of destructive power, for I will not despair, or live in fear, for my Lord is coming too, and will fulfill God's promise of eternal life. Such a hope prevents despair. And secondly,**

## **2. IT PROMOTES EXPECTANCY.**

**Joseph Fort Newton said, "It is almost a definition of greatness to say that is greatly hopes; that it does not surrender to the weakness of despair but lives expectantly." The best is always yet to be in the minds of the great. Beethoven said after producing one of his compositions, "My ninth symphony is but a empty echo of the heavenly music I heard in my dream." Raphael said after painting the Sistine Madonna that he could not put on canvas the vision which his soul saw. Isaac Newton after his great scientific discoveries said, "I seem to have been like a boy playing the seashore while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."**

**It is this hope of eternal and infinite possibilities that motives people to ever strive to be creative, for they know they can never exhaust the potential of the infinite. This hope gives them the faith to believe that they can make progress and keep on improving. Because they can keep growing they are never content to stay where they are, but are ever seeking more knowledge to improve. Faith and knowledge rests on the hope that is ever promoting expectancy.**

**Hope is the motivating factor in Christian growth, and really in**

**all growth in every area of life. All people can grow and make progress in coping with their problems, but they are often not motivated to do so. One psychiatrist made this confession:**

**"Psychiatry has learned to make an accurate diagnosis and to recommend a useful plan, but psychiatry cannot furnish the motive which will make the patient want to follow the plan." Christian hope provides that motivation.**

**Nothing is more practical than the hope of eternal life. Find any book quoting the great minds of history on hope and this is the sort of thing you will find:**

**"Religion is the mother of dreams. Over the gray world, ruined by deluge and death, it has sought ever, and found the arching rainbow of hope." A. E. Haydon**

**"Eternity is the divine treasure house and hope is the window, by means of which mortals are permitted to see, as through a glass darkly, the things which God is preparing." Mountford.**

**"For present grief there is always a remedy; however much you suffer, hope is the greatest happiness of man." Schefer.**

**"Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that, and manage it against despairing thoughts." Shakespeare.**

**"Hope is the best part of our riches. What sufficeth it that we have the wealth of the Indies in our pockets, if we have not the hope of heaven in our souls?" Bovee.**

**Finally, let me share one of the greatest statements ever on the practicality of the hope of eternal life. This is from C. S. Lewis in his book Christian Behavior.**

**"Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual**

**looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth "thrown in." Aim at earth and you get neither."**

**Lewis had a great impact on the 20th century because he was a man who had a hope in eternity. His expectation of what was to come made him work at changing the now. Hope is practical. That is why Jesus taught us to pray daily, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are to let the expectancy of heaven's perfection motivate us to strive for that perfection in time. Hope is the basis for goal setting, and for persistence in running the race. Take away hope and you cut out that which gives meaning to all of life, and all of our efforts to live the Christian life.**

**Paul had a life filled with negatives that he had to endure, but he could cope because of hope which made him live always in expectancy. Here is the way Paul comforted Christians in their trials, and notice how hope is the key ingredient in being victorious. "But we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved." (Rom. 8:23-24). "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who sleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and we believe that God will**

**bring with Jesus those who sleep in Him." (I Thess. 4:13-14). Peter was no less enthusiastic about the power of hope to keep Christians afloat in a world trying always to sink them. He writes, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you." (I Peter 1:3-4).**

**How can you tell if a Christian is exercising this living hope? They will be expecting good to come out of all circumstances. They will focusing on the best and not the worst. They will seeking for ways to do instead of grumbling about what can't be done. They will be lighting candles instead of cursing the darkness. They will regard problems as opportunities. They will never let failure stop them from setting goals. This is why we are urged to set our affections on things above. It is not to escape reality, but to add to the reality of this fallen world the practical values of hope. Ask yourself more often in your daily life-what is my hope, and how should it affect my attitudes an actions today? Build your life on the foundation of hope.**

### **3. FAITH BUILDERS Based on Titus 1:1-16**

**Jerold Kennedy, the great Methodist preacher, was surprised to learn of the new business called Proxy Pickets. If you want to protest and picket a place, but it would not be convenient for you, and would break into your routine, for a price they will do it for you. They will send pickets to march and protest and do whatever you are willing to pay for. It is a crazy world we live in where you can get somebody to do almost anything for you. If you want to**



**fight a war, but don't like the mess of it, and you can't get the time off, you can hire mercenaries who will fight your war for you. If you would like a baby, but you can't have one yourself, or would prefer not to put on the weight, you can hire a surrogate mother to have your baby for you.**

**Right along with a do it yourself craze is the don't do it yourself trend. 450 years ago King Louis XII of France had a prime minister who was capable, and so he let him take over more and more of his responsibilities. His name was George, and that is where the saying got started, "Let George do it." If you have got the money, there is some George today who will do for you whatever you want done but don't want to do yourself. There seems to be no limit to how far man is willing to carry this thing, but there is a limitation set by God in that no man can pay another to have faith for him. Believing in and trusting in Jesus Christ is so personal that nobody can do it for another. In the realm of faith it is a matter of doing your own thing, or it just will not get done.**

**I cannot believe for you, nor can you believe for me. This does not mean we cannot be helped by others to have faith, but they can't have it for us. Paul begins this letter to Titus by making it clear that he is a servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ for the purpose of increasing the faith of God's people. Paul could not have faith for them, but he could aid them in growing in faith. He could be a faith builder. Some other versions differ. The RSV says, "To further the faith of God's elect." Today's English Version has it, "To help the faith of God's chosen." The Living Bible says, "I have been sent to bring faith to those God has chosen." Williams has, "To stimulate faith in God's chosen people." Goodspeed has, "To arouse faith in those whom God has chosen."**

**Paul can't have it for us, but he can help us have it for ourselves. This means that if we are to benefit from Paul's being selected by**

**God to be an Apostle, we must by his influence become people of increased faith. That is what God selected Paul for. If you want to know what an Apostle is for, it is simple. He is for motivating and stimulating faith in the people of God. This letter, and all of Paul's letters, are faith builders, for they give us a basis for our beliefs, and what we believe determines the degree of our faith. Faith comes in all sizes. You can have little faith, medium faith, or big faith, and what you believe makes the difference.**

**A number of tests have shown that if a man is hypnotized and told that he is weak he will only be able to squeeze a gripping device with one third the pressure he usually does. On the other hand, if he is told he is strong his grip will go up in strength by 40%. In other words, they have demonstrated scientifically the biblical truth that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. The strength of your faith can vary tremendously depending on what you believe, and on the intensity of that belief. Paul believed this or he would not have spent so much of his life writing letters like this one to Timothy, and urging him to teach the true doctrines of Christianity, and to refute heresy and rebuke those going after Jewish myths, that they might be sound in the faith.**

**He could not have faith for them, nor could Titus, but both of them, and other godly leaders, could do and teach and live so as to increase the faith of weak Christians. Paul was a faith builder, and Titus was a faith builder, and all the leaders were to be faith builders. Every Christian was to be this, for being a faith builder and being a good Christian are, for all practical purposes, synonymous.**

**Even the slaves are to so live that their masters will find the message about Jesus attractive. A slave can be a faith builder in his master. Every Christian is by the very nature of the Christian faith in the business of being a faith builder. If our lives do not lift and**

increase and strengthen faith, then we are part of the problem instead of part of the answer. Some of the Christians in Crete were part of the problem, but the goal of the faith builder is to help all Christians get out of that category and into the category of being faith builders themselves. We want to look at two aspects of faith that will help us see the importance of this task.

## **I. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH.**

If the purpose of Paul, the purpose of his letters, and the purpose of leaders and God's Word are all for the producing of faith in God's people, then we are dealing with a rock bottom necessity. This is confirmed by Heb. 11:6 which says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It does not say it is highly unlikely or improbable, but impossible, and so faith is a necessity not only for salvation, but for sanctification, and for all that is pleasing to God.

No wonder the disciples said to the Lord in Luke 17:5, "Increase our faith." That is what Christian growth is all about-the increasing in one's faith. Paul wrote in II Cor. 10:15, "Our hope is that as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand." Paul is saying that a growing faith is the key to a growing ministry. You can't get anywhere with a static faith. A faith that stops growing and increasing is like a bike that stops moving. It will soon stop and fall.

There can be no doubt about it, every time we slip backwards in our Christian walk there has been a lack of faith, or a ceasing to grow in faith. When we cease to expand we begin to shrink. The greatest frustration Jesus had with His disciples was their lack of faith. He became weary over their weakness due to lack of faith. When Peter's faith gave way and he sank into the sea Jesus said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt." When the disciples were unable to cast the evil spirit out of the little boy he said, "O

**unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I endure you?" To the two on the road to Emmaus who did not believe the report of his resurrection he said, "O dull witted men with minds so slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" What a perpetual pain it was to Jesus to be constantly dealing with men of such little faith.**

**Jesus was impressed with people like the Centurion and the Syrophonessian woman, for they had such great faith. Faith is where its at. It pleases God, it delights Jesus, and it opens the door for the Holy Spirit. It is the key to every door of advancement in the kingdom of God. It is not a luxury. It is a necessity. That is why God made Paul an Apostle, that is why his letters became a part of God's Word to man. It is all a part of God's effort to help believers increase their faith. Why do we worship God? It is to increase our faith. Why do we read the Bible? It is to increase our faith. Why do we pray for God's help and guidance? It is to increase our faith. Why do we want Christian fellowship? It is to increase our faith. The goal of almost everything we do as Christians is to increase our faith.**

**Because weakness of faith is the number one cause of missing God's best in life, we must do all we can to strengthen our faith. The people of Israel could not enter the promised land because of their unbelief. Their faithlessness caused them to miss their goal in life. So the people of Nazareth missed the power of Jesus in their lives and He could do no mighty work their because of their lack of faith. Lack of faith is the basis for all the sin and folly of man. If Adam and Eve would have believed and trusted God, they would never have fallen. All of the folly of man since has been for just this same doubt and disbelief in the Word of God. On the other hand, the big blessings and the great successes of life all revolve around the presence of, and the increase of, faith. Heb. 11 takes us through the great people of the Old Testament and links them all to faith.**

**Spurgeon said, "Faith is the mother of virtue...Faith is the water which nurtures the root of piety. If you have not faith, all your graces must die. And in proportion as your faith increases so will all your virtues be strengthened." The clever sign outside of church spoke profound truths when it said, "Come to church and have your faith lifted." That is why we come to church, for we all need a faith lift, and we need it perpetually to be pleasing to God and to be growing Christians.**

**Someone said, "Always be content with what you have, but never with what you are." We always have the capacity for greater faith, and this is the challenge of the Christian life, to be ever adding to and increasing our faith. Peter said in II Pet. 1:5-7 that we are to make every effort to add to our faith a whole series of virtues that lifts our faith higher and higher. He said to add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. This is the same thing Paul is helping Titus achieve in Crete. Faith is a necessity for salvation and for sanctification, and for becoming all that a Christian is meant to be. Paul was God's instrument for building up the faith of His people, because faith is a necessity. If something is a necessity, it is important for us to have a better understanding of its nature, and so we look next at-**

## **II. THE NATURE OF FAITH.**

**We have already seen that faith is more like a liquid or gas than a solid. It is fluid and elastic. It can increase or decrease, and it can expand or contract. It is not a solid and stable thing, but very variable. It is a force in our soul like fluids in our body. You cannot just take it for granted and assume that once you have faith all is well, and so you can neglect and ignore it. It needs constant monitoring and attention for balance and growth in your Christian life.**

**As you study this letter to Titus you discover that faith is not some part of your being, but it is that which pervades your whole being. Paul links faith to the intellect, the emotions, and the will. The reason you can't please God without faith is because you cannot think, feel, or choose anything pleasing to God without faith. A deep study of faith shatters a lot of myths and misconceptions about this vital virtue. Faith does not mean to be gullible and to swallow everything that comes along that sounds good and religious. Paul is telling Titus to silence false teachers who are into religion just for the money. There were deceivers in Crete who were conning people out of their money with religion. Having faith does not mean you should not be skeptical and critical. The world has always been full of false prophets, and you have to be a skeptic as a person of faith or you will be deceived at some point.**

**Paul links faith and reason here in Titus. So many people think you have to check in your brains to be a person of faith. This is nonsense. Faith and the intellect are partners. In the first verse of this letter Paul links faith and the knowledge of the truth. In verse 2 he says this partnership of faith and knowledge is based on the hope of eternal life which God, who does not lie, promise before the beginning of time. So now we have 3 vital parts of the Christian life tied together. We need to see that the biblical view of man has always been what is now becoming a popular concept in the world of medicine and psychology.**

**Holistic medicine is popular today. It is an awareness that you cannot treat a part of the body as if it existed by itself. It is a part of a whole system, and the whole system is a unity and not just a pile of parts. This is true even for a machine. You cannot just deal with a carburetor or fuel pump or spark plug in isolation. You have to deal with the whole car and the function of all of its parts together. In the parts department they deal with each part separately, but on the whole car you have to deal with all the parts in their**

**togetherness and cooperation with all other parts.**

**In theology we sometimes tend to deal with the issues of life like a parts department. We look at faith as an isolated reality and virtue, and try to figure it out, and then go on to look at hope and love. This has its value, but the Bible does not deal with them that way. It deals with them holistically. They are all tied in together and are dependant one upon the other just as parts of an engine, or parts of a body.**

**Faith is first here in Titus, but you cannot separate it from knowledge or hope. You cannot have faith in what God has promised if you do not know what He has promised, and so the knowledge of the truth is vital to the existence of faith. To try and keep these two separated would be like trying to keep a car going by separating the carburetor and fuel pump, or keeping your body going by separating your heart and your lungs. The point is, faith is never separated from anything in the Christian life. It is a part of the whole, and part of every other part of the whole. Faith is a part of all we think, feel, and will. If you don't think right, feel right, or choose right, the problem is with your faith.**

**The nonsense about Paul being the promoter of faith and James being the promoter of good works is shattered by this letter also. You will not find anywhere in the New Testament a greater emphasis on good works than right here by the Apostle of faith. He never for one moment saw these as opponents, but always as two parts of the Christian life operating in harmony with the whole.**

**Titus was left in Crete to do good works in getting the church organized. The elders were to love good and do good works. The trouble makers in Crete were those who were not doing good, but who were hurting people, and they were unfit for doing good works. The whole second chapter is about getting the Christians of all ages**

doing what is good, and even the slaves. Paul says in 2:14 that the whole point of Christ redeeming us was to have a people eager to do what is good. The third chapter begins with the Christian responsibility as a citizen of the secular state to do what is good. In verse 8 he stresses it again that Titus is to get the Christians devoted to doing what is good. In verse 14 he says again, "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good."

Thinking right and doing good are both vital parts of faith living. Faith does not relieve the Christians of any intellectual, moral, or social obligations. Faith is not some spark plug that goes off and operates on its own apart from the rest of the car. It is a part that ties into an functions in harmony with the whole. So when we talk about increasing faith, that involves the total man in increasing knowledge of the truth, increase of hope, love, joy, and actions to do what is good in all areas of life.

Nobody can have faith for us, but they can help us have faith and an increase in faith, and that is what Paul was called for, and what all of us are called for. We are called to grow in faith and so live that we will be faith stimulators and promoters in others. The question we need to ask is this: Is it easier for others to have faith because of me, or am I a hindrance to the faith of others? Increasing in faith is caring to the point where you can more and more say with confidence, I am a faith builder.

Stanley did not find faith in Christ until he found Livingston in Africa. He lived with Livingston for four months, and he saw his love for people, his gentleness and hopefulness, and faith. That example of the Christian faith in flesh conquered him, and he too came to faith. It is the story of Naomi's influence on Ruth repeated, and so it is all through history. You cannot have faith for another, but you can be the key to their having their own faith.



**E. Stanley Jones tells of the amazing experience of one of the poor Christian women of India. An epidemic took many lives and the bodies were laid in piles. A poor sweeper woman, who was an untouchable, saw one of the bodies move. She went to a doctor and told him, and he took the body of a woman off the pile. She needed a blood transfusion, and the sweeper woman volunteered to give her blood. The woman lived and though she was a Brahmin, who would have nothing to do with an untouchable, she found this sweeper woman who saved her life, and in finding her she also found eternal life, for the sweeper woman was a Christian. The impact of her love and faith led this Brahmin woman to trust Christ as her Savior. This sweeper woman's faith, which led her to the good work of giving her blood, led to the faith of another. She was a faith builder.**

**This is what Paul was, and this is what he expected Titus to be, and this is what all Christians are to be-faith builders.**

#### **4. FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE Based on Titus 1:1-16**

**Over the years I have read the mail of many people. It is because it is because I buy a lot of old books and people leave letters and postcards in these old books. Seldom have I found anything worth reading, but the fact is, much of the best reading in history is found in reading other people's mail. The joy of reading other people's letters is that you do not have to answer them.**

**In the book, A Treasury Of The World's Great Letters, you can find letters from Alexander the Great, Christopher Columbus, Leonardo DaVinci, Michelangelo, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and just a host of famous people all through history. Only one Bible author made it into this book and**

**that was the Apostle Paul. He wrote more of the world's most famous letters than any human being who has ever lived. Nearly half of the New Testament is composed of his letters. When you read the New Testament you are reading a lot of other people's mail. Most of it was written to the church however, and was intended to be read in public. But 4 of Paul's letter were written to individuals as private mail. But they were so instructive and valuable for the whole church that God guided the church to include them in the New Testament.**

**We want to begin the study of the letter to Titus. He was one of Paul's key troubleshooters. He sent Titus into the church at Corinth where it was going through great turmoil and strong criticism of Paul. It was a delicate mission calling for tact and wisdom. Titus was able to calm the waters and return to Paul with a good report. Paul considered Titus a good friend, but he gave him the dirtiest jobs because he was gifted to handle them. He left Titus in Crete because it was a hard place to grow a church. The people were a bunch of lying, lazy gluttonous brutes. I am not making this up. Paul says so in verse 12 and 13. They had a bad reputation and they deserved it says Paul. This was not the place for his most tender son in the faith-Timothy. This was a job for tough Titus. Paul left him there on the island of Crete and took off. This letter is one he sent back to Ttius to instruct him in the management of this difficult local church.**

**In the very first paragraph of this letter Paul makes it clear that there are 2 key ingredients in a body of believers becoming a church that brings honor to Christ, and those are faith and knowledge. Paul says that is why he was chosen to be a servant of God and a Apostle of Jesus Christ. It was to impart faith and knowledge to God's elect. These 2 paths lead even the toughest of people to a life of godliness. Without faith and knowledge people live in fear and ignorance, and that is why they are so ungodly. Show me crude and**

**rude ungodliness, and I'll show you people who live in fear and ignorance. Show me poor or rich Christians who live a life pleasing to God and I will show you people who walk in the light because of faith and knowledge. The individual and the church that pleases God and fulfills His purpose in history is one where these two pillars are conspicuous.**

**How do you get the church in Crete to be a better church? You increase faith and knowledge. Both of these are expandable and capable of growing from lesser to greater. Faith comes in all sizes. Just as you can get a small, medium, or large cone, so you can get a great variety of sizes of faith. In Mark 4:40 Jesus said to His disciples who feared the storm was going to sink them, and they would drown, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" That is the least amount of faith you can have, which is none. The mustard seed size looks pretty good compared to this. So what we see is that a Christian can have anywhere from no faith, to little faith, to great faith. Jesus said to them on another occasion, "Oh you of little faith." It was so little that it did little to overcome their doubts.**

**Then you have the account of the Centurion who had a severely ill servant, and he told Jesus he did not have to come to his house, but just say the word and he would be healed. Jesus was astonished and said in Matt. 8:10, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." Here was a man with a ton of faith. The Bible gives balance and tells of the Canaanite woman with the demon possessed daughter. She came to Jesus and was so assured that He could heal her daughter that she refused to take no for an answer. Jesus said to her in Matt. 15:28, "Woman, you have great faith," and He healed the daughter.**

**The point is, faith can be small and weak, or big and strong in either sex, and in every degree in between. The goal of the church is**

**to help Christians move from a mini-faith to a mega-faith. If faith is not growing, the church is failing, for this is a primary purpose of the church. This was Paul's job and the job of Titus, and it is the job of every church leader to help Christians grow in faith. the RSV puts it, "To further the faith of God's elect." Goodspeed has it, "To arouse faith in God's chosen." The Amplified has it, "To stimulate and promote the faith of God's chosen."**

**The reason the Bible teaches that faith without works is dead is because all works grow out of a living faith. Faith is the foundation for all action. Have you ever had a salesman tell you that his is a great investment, and that you can't go wrong. And yet you could not bring yourself to buy, and the reason is you just did not have an adequate faith. There was too much doubt and fear to overcome, and the result was you took no action. Fear paralyzes and prevents action. You can only take action when there is some degree of faith that motivates you. Without faith you cannot make a commitment. The goal of all sales pitches is to increase your faith, for without faith there will no sale. If you have no faith in the product, or the salesperson, you will not respond, for the will cannot go where faith has not prepared the way.**

**Faith is the pioneer that blazes new trails, and if faith has not done its job the will cannot stick its neck out into that uncharted territory. Every action we take is based on faith. When faith says jump, and only then, will we take the leap of faith. Faith gives the green light and says go for it. Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Faith forms the axles of the universe. We do nothing apart from some faith. We can't even walk unless we have faith our legs will hold us up. Faith is the working principle of daily life."**

**Lack of faith is the cause for all of the insecurity and uncertainty of life. Adam and Eve fell because they lacked the faith to believe that God's way was best. Every sin we commit is because**

**we do not have the faith to believe that God's way is better. We worry because we don't have the faith to believe that God will work in all things for our good. We let anxiety rob us of our peace because we do not have the faith to believe that God will give us the strength to handle whatever comes. Every weakness and defect in the Christian life can be traced to a lack of faith, and every strength and virtue can be seen as a product of faith.**

**Faith and knowledge go together, for you have to have some basis for faith. Faith is trust in somebody or something, and you have to have knowledge to person or truth in order to trust them. If you ask me if I want to ride on a thig-a-magig, I will not be able to respond until you give me some knowledge of what it is. Only when I have enough knowledge to overcome the doubts and fears of ignorance will I have faith to take action. Now I might just have faith in you, and trust that you would not lead me into danger, and so in blind faith follow you to ride on this unknown thing. But it is my knowledge of you that leads me to that step of faith. There has to be some basis in knowledge for faith to be born, and the greater the knowledge, the greater the faith.**

**But keep in mind that knowledge is not faith. They are two distinct realities. Faith needs knowledge to motivate trust and action, but it does not necessarily lead to that response. What if you inform me that a thig-a-magig is a very high ride where at the peak they let you float to the earth on a parachute. You can explain the whole process so I understand its safety completely. I can be thoroughly convinced, but still not have the faith to act and take a ride. Knowledge can just take you so far. I can believe in the parachute and know beyond a doubt that it is safe, but still not have the faith to take the ride because my faith is not great enough to overcome my fears. I have a fear of heights and this fear makes it impossible for faith to get beyond the level of weak faith. The result is I cannot act on my belief. My knowledge is sufficient, but my faith**

**is not.**

**If you stay lower to the ground, I have a faith that will take me there, for it is stronger than my fear on that level. The point of all this is to make it clear why faith is so vital to all that we do. If my fear of sharing my faith is stronger than my faith, I will not be a witness for my Lord. My fear of ridicule or rejection will keep me from telling others about the love of Christ. I will be a silent Christian in a world that desperately needs to hear good news. I will know it is a shame, but I won't be able to change unless my faith grows to a point where it is stronger than my fears. This is true in every area of the Christian life. I will not be the Christian I ought to be in any area of life until my faith is stronger than the fears that reign in that sphere of life.**

**The kind of Christian you are is in direct proportion to your growth in faith. If you remain with weak faith in any area of your Christian life, you are a weak Christian in that area. You are only as strong as your faith, and that is why growth in faith is the very essence of what the Christian life is all about. The strong mature Christian is one who, like a child, leaps off the table, or some other high place, into the arms of the father. It has always amazed me that children can have such trust, for failure on the part of the parent or grandparent could lead to death or serious injury. Yet, they take the leap of faith and do so in full confidence which it makes it fun and not fearful.**

**If we do take risks for our heavenly Father, it is often with fear and trembling rather than with a sense of joyful adventure. Fear hold us back and robs us of much of the joy of being a child of God.**

**O for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though pressed by every foe;  
That will not tremble on the brink**

**Of any earthly woe!**

**This was the kind of faith that Paul and Titus had. That is why Titus took the chance of staying in Crete. Fear would have compelled most to move on to safer territory, but Titus took the risk of working with the worst, for he had the faith to believe that God would bless his labors. Without faith it is impossible to please God says the author of Hebrews, and it makes sense why, for without faith you will never be motivated to take a risk for God. Faith is what makes you act and do the things that make you grow and learn, and to become more of what God wants you to be. Faith is the fuel that gets you where you ought to be. Without faith you are stranded and remained locked in at your present level. Only a growing faith can produce a growing Christian.**

**On the other hand, is the sad state of a Christian who is losing faith. You can lose things and even loved ones and be growing in faith, but when you begin to lose faith you are suffering the greatest loss possible. Someone wrote, "Sad losses have you met, but mine is heavier yet, for a believing heart has gone from me." Those who are not advancing in faith are usually regressing, and this is the key sign of a failing Christian. Their faith is weaker and the result is that they do less and less for the kingdom of God, and they become less and less of a witness, and care less and less about God's Word. The mass of weak Christians is the result of the church not making growth and faith a priority, as it was for Paul.**

**You only produce a Titus by strong faith. People only take risks and become missionaries, or enter some other life of service because of strong faith. Lay people only become strong leaders in the local church and develop their skills in Christian leadership if their faith is strong. Growing faith is behind every Christian who becomes a leader and a doer. Receding faith is behind every Christian who becomes a dropout and who withdraws from service. You are what**

**you believe. That is why G. A. Studdert-Kennedy became a great servant of Christ during the great war. It was hell on earth on the battlefield with many questions without answers, but he served unwaveringly, and the reason he could do was because of his faith. Here is his famous poem that has been quoted millions of times in sermons around the world.**

**"I know not why the evil,  
I know not why the Good, both mysteries  
Remained unsolved, and both insoluble.  
I know that both are there, the battle set,  
And I must fight on this side or that.  
I can't stand shiv'ring on the bank, I plunge,  
Head first. I bet my life on Beauty, Truth,  
And Love, not abstract but incarnate Truth,  
Not Beauty's passing shadow but its Self.  
It's very self made flesh, Love realized.  
I bet my life on Christ-Christ crucified.  
You want to argue? Well,  
I can't. It is a choice. I choose the Christ."**

**He was a Titus who served in a tough situation because he had the faith to take risks for his Lord. Men and women of faith produce fruit no matter how tough the situation. Titus built people up in Crete even, and it is people of faith who go on producing fruit in places where others see no value. Tennyson in "The Ancient Saga" wrote of faith.**

**"She sees the best that glimmers through the worst;  
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night.  
She spies the summer through the winter bud.  
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls;  
She finds the fountain where they wail'd mirage!"**



**So what if Cretans are creeps. A man of faith can see them become mature children of God by increasing their faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world and all of the obstacles in the way of sinners becoming saints pleasing to God. Most Christians know they have little faith. They spell their faith with a small f, and they feel very inferior about it. God knew this would be the case, and that is why He chose men like Paul and Titus to be faith builders in the early church. The church never could have survived without these kinds of men to cultivate faith.**

**J. N. D. Kelly, the great scholar, says of these opening verse of Titus, "Defines more completely than any other New Testament passage the scope and function of apostleship." If the goal is the growth in faith of God's people, then the purpose of the Bible is the same, and that is to help Christians grow in faith. It provides the knowledge they need to grow in faith. Bible study is not just a past time, but it is a striving to increase our faith by gaining the knowledge we need to exercise faith. You cannot have faith in what God has promised if you do not know what He has promised. You cannot claim what you do not know.**

**Paul says the faith and knowledge he aims for is that which is based on the hope of eternal life, which God promised before the beginning of time. We see some complexity here, for now hope is thrown in as the basis for faith and knowledge. We can easily get confused here, and so what we tend to do is just skip over this introduction like we often do to that of other books, and not even try to figure it out. To simplify matters let me use the engine in your car as analogy. It has spark plugs and a fuel pump and wires of all kinds. It looks quite complicated. If you take each part out and lay it by itself it does not do anything. It is just a part. But together they become a machine, and they work in harmony to give power to get you to your destination. That is the way it is with the parts of the Christian life. Each by itself is just a part. It is only as they are**

**put together that they work in harmony to get you where God wants you to be.**

**When we study the Bible we are often like someone browsing in a parts department. We study faith, and then knowledge, and then hope, and we tend to forget they all work together as a total package. It is conceivable that you could become an expert in the parts department and never drive a car. The goal of Bible study is not just to learn to identify the parts of the Christian life, but to get them in working order together so they propel you on to Christian growth. The study of Titus is not so any of us can be ready for a quiz, or be better prepared for Bible trivia, but that we each become more effective and fruitful Christians of faith.**

**Knowledge of the truth leads to godliness says Paul. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Jesus is the truth and the author of all truths. He had a love for people, plants, animals, and all of creation. He makes this clear in His use of knowledge from every aspect of creation in His parables. Christians are expected to be students, for knowing is the companion of faith, and of all doing. This is true in the secular realm of life as well. Admiral Peary, the Artic explorer reported that men with more knowledge withstood the rigors of the North better than those who had less knowledge. Months of nothing but endless ice impoverished the souls of those who depended upon their environment for life's interests. Those who had rich resources within because of their greater knowledge could draw upon that when cut off from the world outside.**

**The Christian who knows more of the Word of God can be content and even delighted in a waste land of boredom. They have inner resources that others do not possess. Take a boring sermon for example. The Christian with little knowledge is forced to wander and find water in some oasis in the desert of their own**

**imagination. But the knowledgeable Christian can be thinking of truths that are being missed or poorly communicated, and they can use even the badly lighted path to take them into the deeper riches of God's Word. The point is, knowledge will help you redeem the time that otherwise would be wasted.**

**Knowledgeable Christians will always be more enthusiastic where those who don't know will tend to be bored. The more you know of the Bible, the more you can appreciate how all knowledge and all truth relate to God's Word. Ignorance cuts you off from so many of the wonders of the world, for you cannot see how everything it is fits into a part of God's plan. Science and history, and art, and everything you can imagine are all a part of the fascinating work of God. Those who do not know of the vast variety in God's revelation do not see how all of life and knowledge fit into God's plan. The more you know of the Bible, the more you know that all truth is God's truth. There may be some exceptions, however, like the epitaph I read,**

**Here lies poor Johnnie,  
Late husband of Ruth.  
She asked how her hair looked,  
He told her the truth.**

**The letter of Titus stresses the importance of not lying like the Cretans, but of telling the truth. But even Paul might have made an exception for poor Johnnie. Something that is true is not necessarily the truth. When Paul writes of knowledge of the truth he is referring to knowledge of what God has revealed. That is what leads to godliness. The less we know of God's revealed word, the less we can live a godly life because we would just not know what godliness is in many situations.**

**The Bible deals with more of life than anyone can imagine. I**

**have studied the Bible for over 40 years and I have not begun to cover all that it reveals. There is no end to growing in the knowledge of the truth. But that is what makes it exciting, for there is endless new ideas and insights which make Christian growth and adventure for all of life. The bottom line is, knowledge and faith and hope work together to give the Christian the motivation to obey God whatever the cost, for he is assured that even if he dies by his obedience he has eternal life, and so he cannot lose.**

**Knowledge is basic, but we need to keep in mind that the Christian life does not consist in accepting a creed. It is more a matter of trusting God. It is of little value to believe all that is true, but not do what God wills. You have to trust God and act to be a growing Christian. Adding information to your head is not enough. Hoping, knowing, and trusting all lead to living the Christian life more effectively. You can ask which is most important, but it is like asking which is the most important part of a hammer. Is it the head or the handle? One without the other is not a hammer. It takes both together to be the tool it is meant to be. So it is with these Christian virtues. They all work together to make us what we ought to be.**

**Knowledge helps us gain from the past; hope helps us gain from the future, and faith brings them together to motivate us to act in the present. I believe the sun is 93 million miles away, but I do not act any special way because of that knowledge. It is true, but it has no impact on my life. Truth is knowledge that does effect our life, behavior, and attitudes. Every time we come to church, read the Bible, our prayer should be, "Lord help me to see truth that will increase my faith so I, like Paul and Titus, can be willing to take chances for your kingdom.**

## **5. THE BEAUTY OF ORDER Based on Titus 1:5**

**Paul Aurandt tells of how even the disorders of life can sometimes be a blessing. Only hours after Pearl Harbor the Japanese went after the Philippine Islands. American and Philippine troops were taken by surprise and had to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula. These brave troops became famous for their delay of the Japanese. For 98 days they fought against the impossible odds before they surrendered. But this delay gave America the time it needed to organize the defense of Australia and other vital areas.**

**The paradox of it all is that it was all made possible by a mistake. General Mac Arthur's quartermaster ordered 18 thousand empty oil drums, but someone fouled up the order and sent them filled with gasoline. This was a million gallons of unwanted fuel sent to the Peninsula of Bataan. It was this fuel that made it possible for them to hold out for 98 days, and thereby change the course of history for freedom.**

**God is not limited to working only with order. He can bring light out of darkness and harmony out of discord. He can bring order out of chaos. This is, in fact, one of God's specialties, but there is no escaping the truth that God's preference is for order. You can't count on disorder. There is no disorder in God's being, nor is there any in His revealed description of the ideal destiny of the universe, or the eternal home of the redeemed. Perfect order and beauty with complete symmetry and harmony is what will be everlasting. Order means beauty, and order means health, happiness, holiness, and all that is good has a direct connection with order.**

**This becomes the ideal we are to work for in all that we do for the glory of God. This was Paul's purpose for the church in Crete,**

**and this was the task of Titus to organize the church and bring order where there was chaos and discord. According to this letter all Christians have an obligation to get their lives in order. This would lead to order in the church, in the home, and in the state as well. It all begins with Titus who had a unique gift for organization. Some people just have it and others do not. Paul says in verse 5 that he left Titus in Crete for the purpose of straightening out what was left unfinished. Paul is saying that he left the work there incomplete. Even under the Apostle Paul a church did not spring quickly to a state of perfection. Paul left a lot of loose ends and he needed the help of a gifted man like Titus to complete the work.**

**The Cretans were a messed up people, but the Gospel is that any mess can be straightened out by the grace of God, and order can be brought out of chaos. That is why Paul did not give up on these who were, humanly speaking, hopeless people. He knew it was the sick who needed the physician, and the messed up who needed the organizer. It is superficial to think that because people are saved that the battle is over, and that there is nothing much left to do. The fact is, the biggest battle may come after conversion. People may gladly accept the Gospel as the good news, and rejoice in having a Savior, but the hard part is in getting their lives organized so as to conform to Christ.**

**Calvin said, "The building of the church is not a work so easy that it can be brought all at once to perfection." Even where Paul spent several years the work was not completed, so how much more so here in Crete? The goal however is to get to that point where order dominates the church. Paul had a great deal of optimism about the power of order to make Christian lives and churches the witness for Christ they were meant to be. Only once in this letter does Paul refer to the work of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3 verse 5 he refers to the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. But all**

through the rest of this letter he dwells on the human responsibility to bring order into their lives and the church. This leads us to the first point about order that we want to focus on.

## **I. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORDER.**

This letter of Paul makes it clear that the church is a human organization, and men are responsible for working out the bugs and bringing it to a place where all is done decently and in order. The reason Paul left Titus in Crete was because without a human agent the job of straitening out what was unfinished would not get done. Maybe some told Paul to just pray about it, which we know he did. But Paul knew he had to have someone there through whom God would answer the prayer.

Very little to nothing gets done in the church without a human agent. God's primary tool is people. The Holy Spirit works through people. Christ the head of the church works through His body-the people. The church is God's bridge over the troubled waters of the world. Offering a way back to God through Jesus. God designed the church, and Jesus builds the church, but His crew is made of men and women. He started with the 12 and then chose Paul. They in turn chose men like Titus, who in turn appointed elders in all the churches. They in turn taught every believer how to establish order in the church, and make it an appealing bridge which would attract the world to cross over to Christ.

The point is, the primary responsibility for the orderly effectiveness of any church lies in the leadership and members of that church. It is human responsibility to develop the order that makes a church pleasing to God and attractive to the world. The bridges don't just happen, and neither do churches. They are planned, organized, and built by people who want to make a way over the troubled waters of life a reality. The church, like all else

**that is human, and which is for the benefit of humans, depends upon order for its success.**

**Blackie wrote, "In human doings and human productions, we see everywhere manifestations of order. Well-ordered stones make architecture; well-ordered social regulations make a constitution and a police; well-ordered ideas make good logic; well-ordered words make good writing; well-ordered imaginations and emotions make good poetry; well-ordered facts make science. Disorder, on the other hand, makes nothing at all, but unmakes everything. Stones and disorder produce ruins; and ill-ordered social condition is declined, revolution, or anarchy; ill-ordered ideas are absurdity; ill-ordered words are neither sense nor grammar; ill-ordered imaginations and emotions are madness; ill-ordered facts are chaos."**

**Because it is so, nobody has a greater responsibility than Christians to be people of order. Being Christ-like means to add order to everything of which we are a part. Christians are to admired because they add order, and in so doing add beauty and harmony to the church and the state, and every other group they belong to. God gives us illustrations, examples, and guides, but we are responsible for order in our own lives and in our own church.**

**When Paul says in I Cor. 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order," he was writing to a church that was promoting chaos and disorder. It was a church that was so permissive of individual liberty that everyone did that which was right in their own eyes. The gifts of the Spirit were used indiscriminately and haphazardly so as to make the worship service a mad house. It was a church where disorder reigned, and where division was dominant over unity. Paul makes it clear that it is the responsibility of Christians themselves to make order an idea they aim for, and then labor to maintain it in the church.**



**God did not do it for them, nor did He do it for the church in Crete. It was man's responsibility to add order to his life and church. Joubert said, "All are born to observe order, but few are born to establish it." Men like Paul and Titus have established patterns of order for the church. It is our responsibility to observe these patterns. This concept of every person being responsible for order has some very practical implications for the family as well as the church.**

**Dr. Frank Main in his book Perfect Parenting And Other Myths says that one of the major problems in families today is that children do not feel they add to the order of the household. In the old days when a child did not milk a cow the family went without milk. If he did not chop wood the family was cold. It really mattered if he did his chores and played his role. Today if a child fails to do his job it can be counteracted by a microwave, or going out for fast food. If a child does not feel his contribution really counts, he will not feel responsible, and this will lead to the loss of one of the key ingredients that will make him or her a force for order.**

**Every child in the home, and every child of God in the church, needs, for their own sake as well as the kingdom's sake, to recognize their personal responsibility for order. Failure here is the cause for the disorder of families, church, and state. If the world is a mess there is no one to blame but men, for men are responsible for order. We cannot straighten out the messes of the world, and neither could Paul or Titus, but they could bring order to their own lives and the church that they served. You and I can do it too, and doing it is God's will for each of us.**

**We do not want to be idolaters of order, and so we need to see that it is not always the first priority. Paul did not finish the job and so we can assume it took more time for Titus to get it all together. The first task in contact with the world is to rescue them from the**

**river, and not to be busy building a bridge. If people are drowning in the river and you stand on shore discussing the pros and cons of where a bridge could be built, or what it should be made of, or what color it should be painted, you would be guilty of putting order before people, and this is not consistent with the priorities of Christ. Your first priority is to get people out of the water. Save them first, and then teach and train them so they can become the bridge that brings others to Christ.**

**Order is the goal, but not necessarily your first priority. You may have to kick off your shoes, rip off your shirt, and participate in very disorderly rescue operations before you get organized, and this is obviously what happened in Crete. But now we have a body of rescued people, and the task now is to get them organized. Paul makes it clear there is a reason for order, and this is our second point.**

## **II. THE REASON FOR ORDER.**

**There are many, but the primary reason for order is that which makes order universally valued, and that is that it is aesthetic. That means it is attractive. Order has beauty, and beauty appeals to people and attracts them like the flower attracts the bee, and the female attracts the male. Order power is beauty power. The drug store and the dump may have a lot of the same chemicals around, but you go to the drug store because all is in order, and it is appealing. It gives you a sense of security and assurance. That which is messy and disorderly does not entice you to its presence.**

**I cleaned out our medicine drawer a couple of weeks ago and I found all kinds of stuff outdated. When I threw all that away the drawer looked so clean and orderly. I wondered why I tolerated the mess for so long. The reason is really quite simple. We get use to less than the best, and so we stop striving for the attractive ideal.**

**Harry Gale, a metallurgist in London, once offered to cure Big Ben of its stutter. The famous clock bell had a strange sound. The reason was a crack that showed up back in 1859 just two months after it went into the Tower of Parliament. Mr. Gale said he could mend the crack with a nickel alloy. His offer was refused, however, because the Minister of Works said the world has gotten use to the crack sound. We can get so use to the defective real that we lose interest in pursuing the perfected ideal. It is the task of leadership to prevent this and be constantly presenting the ideal which is appealing and attractive to all men.**

**The Christian obligation is not just to develop a life that he or she is content with, but one that has order and beauty that appeals to all people. All of the virtues that this letter deals with are virtues that are ideals of every religion and every culture. Christians who become what this letter urges them to become are Christians that will be beautiful people anywhere and anytime, and this order power will make them effective witnesses for Christ, who is the author of all order and beauty.**

**You don't even find atheists who complain about the order of the universe and the beauty of flowers. All people are positively impressed with order and beauty. So Paul says in this letter that an orderly Christian life is the key to impress the world. In 2:5 he says an orderly relationship of love in marriage and family will be so beautiful that the world will have n criticism of the Word of God. In 2:8 he says that sound logic and beauty, and just all around orderliness in teaching will make opponents ashamed to attack the Christian. If what a Christian teaches is open to the charge of being ugly and inconsistent with even pagan morality, then you can count on it that the world will rip it apart.**

**Paul says that Christian teaching is to be so beautiful and orderly that even the non-Christian world would be embarrassed to**

**attack it. That is the power of order. It shuts the mouth of even that roaring lion that goes about seeking whom he may devour. Even Satan cannot attack universal beauty and get by with it. What mob has ever chanted, "Down with honesty, truth, beauty, and love?" Nobody can object to what is universally attractive. That is the reason the individual Christian, and the church as a whole, is obligated to be committed to the life of order. In a very literal way the Christian is called to be an artist, and his or her life is to be a work of art. The church is to be so ordered also as to be a work of art and a thing of beauty that is attractive to all intelligent minds.**

**"Order in the court," the judge demands, because where chaos reigns nothing good can result, and justice will not be served by disorder. All that is good, true, and beautiful depends upon order. Order in the church is the key to convincing the world that something beautiful has happened, and that it can happen to them as well. In chapter 3 Paul says that before Christ came into their lives they were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions. They lived in malice, envy, and hate. Their lives were a chaotic mess, but now in Christ they were to be so living that beauty and excellence characterized them, and their lives are profitable to everyone. That is a big order, and the only way to fill it is by the power of an orderly life. That is why Paul rejects all that is disorderly.**

**In 3:9-10 he says that foolish controversies have no place in the church, for they are unprofitable and useless. They add no beauty or benefit, and so they are enemies of order. The divisive person is also a detriment to order. They are not compatible with the goal of unity and the beauty of harmony. If such a person cannot be persuaded to conform to the goal of orderliness, they must be rejected, for the ideal of order in the body is more important than the satisfying of the idiosyncrasies of the individual. Here is the basis for excommunication of any member of the church who**

**threatens the ideal of order.**

**This does not mean there is no place for disagreement, but it must be dealt with decently and in order, and not so as to be divisive. Many godly people have been tools of Satan because they did not follow the order laid down by Jesus in dealing with conflict and resentment. Live spelled backward is evil. The content of the two words is identical, but the meaning is radically different because of the order of the same 4 letter. Right and wrong are often determined by order. 123 is right, but 132 is wrong, and all that is different is the order. A number is never wrong in itself. All numbers are right and valid. The only way a number can be wrong is by being out of order. You can play all the right notes of a song and still make a mess of it if they are not played in the right order. Misspelled words often have all the right letters, but they are just out of the right order. Excellence, beauty and harmony in all areas of life depend upon order. The key to the good life is having all things in the proper order.**

**Zig Zigler tells of how he invested in a computer back in 1979. It was supposed to do everything he needed to get done for his business. But the programmer he hired made a mess of it and it would not do anything right. The man could foul us a two car parade. But when he hired a man who knew what he was doing the computer did all he expected it to do. Things have to be in order to work right and be the blessing they were meant to be. Get anything out of order and it will not be beautiful. Sex is a marvelous gift of God to bless human love, but get it out of order and use it to hurt and harm others, and use it contrary to the purpose of God, and this blessing becomes a burden and a pain. So it is with all of the good things of life.**

**In 2:11-12 Paul says, "The grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright**

**and godly lives in this present age." Is the world programming you to conform to its standards, or are you being programmed by the Word of God? Geese are programmed by God and that is why they fly in the order they do. There is not only aesthetic beauty in their flight, but intellectual beauty as you learn the value of that order. They geese fly in a V shape, and they regularly change leadership so a different goose is at the head of the V. Scientists have done tests in a wind tunnel and discovered that this allows them to fly 72% further than if they had no such pattern, but flew like a flock of sparrows where it is every bird for himself. By instinct they cooperate in this order which is beautiful and beneficial to all.**

**Paul's goal is to get the church devoted to doing what is good, for this makes the Christian life beautiful and profitable for all. The church does not reach its ideal until everybody is benefited. The problem is that we are not like geese. We are not programmed to operate so beautifully by instinct. We need to make choices to be taught, trained and disciplined until we function in order and harmony. We need to be convinced that order is vital to our lives.**

**Order can make the difference between life and death. Back in 1880 to 1882, when the French were building the Panama Canal, they also constructed several large hospitals. Patients were assigned to wards, not based on their disease, but their nationality, so all spoke the same language in that ward. That was thought to be a good plan for order. But the problem was that those with yellow fever and those with malaria were put together and three quarters of them died. If they had been kept separate the death rate could have been sharply reduced. Man has learned by his mistakes, and the whole idea of progress is simply man's discovery of better and wiser order. Order is life, and all that makes life more beautiful.**

**Many worthy businessmen, causes, and organizations have died because of neglect of the importance of order. Sometimes Christians**

**think this is not necessary for us, for we are in the Lord's work. This is a cop out and a rejection of our first point-that man is responsible for the order of the church and state, and any other human organization. A contemporary writer on church organization writes, "Unfortunately, many discerning observers of Christian organizations are concluding that they are particularly afflicted with critical deficiencies in this very area. It may be that every reader will know of one-a friend or acquaintance-who has gone to work for a Christian organization only to be surprised, amazed, or permanently disillusioned by the treatment of people in the organization. As one who has served on several of their boards puts it, 'The paths of Christian organizations are strewn with the corpses of their friends.'"**

**There are endless applications to this truth about order. This is not a once for all commitment, but one we need to make constantly. We need to strive daily to so live that our lives will witness to the world to the beauty of order, and be a benefit to all of those in the body of Christ. All of us are responsible to add to this world more of the beauty of order.**

## **6. SELF-CONTROL IS THE KEY Based on Titus 1:5-9**

**Gigi is Billy Graham's daughter, and she writes about one of those days she wishes she could wiped off the calendar. It all started with an experience some of you have had. It was flood damage to their house. The carpet men were there replacing the water ruined carpet. She was trying to do some cleaning up of the mess and overdid it. By suppertime she was totally exhausted. She got the kids into the car and headed for McDonald's. She stopped at the bank while her husband ran in. She was doubled parked. She**

glanced in her rearview mirror and saw a large older model car pull up behind her. It was driven by an older woman with flaming red hair. She started to blast her horn, and now we read Gigi tell what happened.

"I don't know what possessed me, but after my whirlwind day, this was the last straw! I decided not to move. She gave another long, loud blast which just reinforced my stubborn refusal to budge, and I motioned for her to pass me. As angry as she was, she managed to maneuver the big car around and pulled up beside me. Then she lowered her window and began to yell. I blew her a kiss. That did it! She screamed, then stuck out her tongue.

By this time she was out of her car, threatening me and calling me names, attracting the attention of people passing by. Suddenly I wanted to crawl into a hole. The red-headed grandmother returned to her car, and Stephan appeared, wandering what the commotion was all about. We continued on to McDonald's, but I was too distraught to eat."

She could not sleep well for several nights, for she felt she had been so unChristlike, and she wished she could apologized to the woman. She had let her tiredness and anxiety drown out the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit, and let her stubborn human nature take control. The point is, it happens to the best of Christians at times. We lose a sense of awareness that we are Christians, and that we are to be different from the world by demonstrating a power of self-control that is superior to what is natural to man. The Christian is under constant attack and without self-control is always at risk of blowing it, and demonstrating to the world that they are far from a finished product.

The point that Paul stresses is that a Christian leader is to be one who has a great deal of self-control so that he does not let his actions or emotions go to extremes. He does not dominate, lose his



**temper, or go off on a binge of drinking to escape the pressures of life. He is one who has other ways than the world has of dealing with the stress of life. He is not controlled by the circumstances, but is self-controlled. Food, sex, and money are all important elements in his life, but he is not controlled by them, for if he is he will lose his credibility as a leader. Again, we need to see that people who are excessive, domineering, and obsessed may be very successful people, but Paul says they do not qualify to be leaders in the church.**

**A well known pastor was counseling the son of one of America's great industrialists and he concluded that his drinking problem was due to the domineering actions of his father. He confronted the father and almost got kicked out of his office because the father went into such a rage. But later the man called and said he reflected on what had been said and it was true. He ran an empire all day and it was hard to shift gears when he came home to his family. He began to cry and admitted that unless God helped him he could not change. God did help him, and in time he learned to be different with his son. Here was a man greatly qualified to lead a major industry, but Paul says he was not qualified to lead even the little church of Crete. The church has higher standards than government or industry.**

**In these secular realms there is a demand for leaders who will do almost anything to succeed. Violence in behavior and the pursuit of dishonest gain are not vices in the dog eat dog world of competition. Human nature has not changed. These things were popular in Paul's day as well, but a Christian is to be different. A Christian leader is not to be violent Paul says. He writes the same thing to Timothy, and adds a word to clarify what he means. I Tim. 3:3 says the church leader is to be, "not violent but gentle." No man or woman is fit to be a leader who treats people in an ungentle manner. The Christian who is abusive to their mate and children, or to anyone is not a good reflection of the spirit of Christ.**

**A Christian leader is one who is always sensitive to other people's feelings and does not trample on them. You can see that this would take considerable self-control when working with people who are lazy, lying gluttons like they were in Crete. The impulse to treat them like the evil brutes they are would be always tugging at your emotions. It would take great self-control to resist. The immature Christian will surrender to this impulse and lost their temper. They may even try to compel people to be better by force. This will not work, for people must be led and taught and persuaded. Only the self-controlled mature Christian has the patience to put up with this slow process without exploding in frustration.**

**The mature Christian feels the same frustration and negative emotions as anyone else. The difference is that they do not let their behavior be controlled by their emotions. They are self-controlled. They choose how they will respond rather than being dragged along by their feelings to do what they don't want to do. Self-control is their major virtue, for it is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It enables them to choose the will of God rather than the desires of their human nature. Without self-control the Christian will not be a whole lot different from the non-Christian. They will be at the mercy of circumstances. A Christian leader is one who can demonstrate they are not slaves of circumstance. They can choose to act or react to life in a way consistent with their knowledge of God's will.**

**They are not people who are controlled by whims and desires. Such people tend to be impulsive, and so they overeat, overspend, and just lean toward excessiveness in all they do. They do not react gently, but violently to those who block the way of self-indulgence. They may be great people in many ways, but Paul says do not choose them as church leaders. Self-control is the key to defeating Satan. It was the key Jesus used to remain perfect in a fallen world. Imagine**

**having a billion dollars but not buying a hamburger when you are famished and as hungry as you have ever been. Even this illustration does not match what Jesus did. He was starving, and yet with the power to turn stones into bread He did not do so. That was self-control, and by it He defeated the temptation of Satan.**

**The whole point of the temptation of Jesus was to make Him loose self-control and do something out of God's will. That is the point of all temptation. It is to get you to surrender your control to another force. Once you loose self-control you are under the control of some other force, and it is usually an evil force. Self-control is essential to be a good Christian, and especially to be a leader of Christians. What is not under control is out of control, and this leads to extremes. Any Christian who tends to be an extremist is not a good leader, for leaders need to examples of balance.**

**It is pretty much a universal belief among all people's of the world that the person who has learned self-mastering is the wisest of leaders. Cato the pagan could say, "He approaches nearest to the gods who knows how to be silent even though he knows he is right." Jesus had this kind of control before his accusers. This is hard to do, but it is what Jesus expects leaders in the church to do. Why is this so important? It is because the world in which the church is to serve is one of two major extremes. There is the pagan life-style of eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. The excessive lust for pleasure at any cost.**

**On the other hand, there is the ascetic life-style of the Gnostics and other cults that snared many Christians by their self-denial philosophy. They refused to enjoy the pleasures of life that God gave to man. Both extremes make a Christian unfit for leadership, for they both reject the balance life that the Bible reveals to be God's will for man. The self-controlled leader is to set the example of being an abstainer from lawless pleasures and moderate and**

**legitimate pleasures.**

**The reason Paul made so much of this is because even the pagan world recognized that a life of balance, moderation, and self-control was the highest level that man could achieve. They called it temperance. Plutarch said, "Temperance is the greatest of the virtues. Euripides said, "Temperance is the noblest gift of the gods." Christians were to reach this highest level in the eyes of the pagan world as examples of what surrender to Christ could enable even the common man to achieve. Pagans would be impressed by a Christian who could be provoked and be insulted, and not respond with violence. The code of honor among men in many cultures, and for many years in our own, was to use violence to preserve your self respect and reputation.**

**The decades of dueling were due to this code in our culture. Many of the heroes of the screen still follow this code and pulverize anyone who dares to offend them. They are usually scum bags and notoriously evil, and so we cheer them on in their violence right along with the world. The paradox is that even though we love these heroes of violence they do not qualify to be our leaders in the realm of spiritual growth. If a man is quick to strike out and hurt another person, they are disqualified as a church leader. There is a great deal of difference between being a hero and being a Christian leader.**

**This paradox is even more radical as we look at the final negative in Paul's list of what a Christian leader is not to be. "He must not be pursuing dishonest gain." It is clear in the Bible that economic status has no bearing on Christian leadership. You can be very poor, or very rich, and be a truly godly leader. But the way you get your little or your great wealth makes a big difference. The thing that amazes me is how little commentators say about this particular negative. In our culture it is a very touchy subject**

**because there is so much deception in this business of acquiring money.**

**Christians are involved in all kinds of businesses that make excessive profit from their products. Where do you draw the line between greed and an honest profit? If I can sell you for 5 dollars what cost me a quarter to make, is that greed or merely taking advantage of the system? It is extremely hard to define what a Christian would have to do to be labeled with this disqualification. The result is that it is just ignored, and today you could probably be a slum lord and still be an elder in the church. The culture rather than the Scripture sets the standard.**

**It is very hard to avoid being guilty here. If you have money invested in bonds or mutual funds, or if you have insurance, or just about any investment you can think of, you could very well be getting interest and making money off some company that provides and evil product or service, and which rips people off with cold and calculated greed. No doubt all of us have made money from investing in someone else's evil. There are many investment strategies today to help Christians be socially and spiritually responsible, but lets face it, to be an American in the kind of economy we have it is near impossible to avoid some level of greed.**

**But there is a counter-movement today that says Christians are not to conform to this materialistic economy that says that the one who dies with the most toys wins. Pastor David Sorensen and his Barbara wrote the book Tis A Gift To Be Simple. The sub title is Embracing The Freedom Of Living With Less. This is just one of many examples of couples who decided the cost of ever moving up and getting more and more was too great. Their marriage and their family suffered for the sake of requiring more stuff. They were always busy and had no time for love, fun, and enjoying the gifts of God. They were trapped in a life-style that did not mirror their true**

values. They had everything but the time to enjoy what they valued most. So they decided to do the unthinkable and deliberately move down and live on less.

They decided to cease their over consumption which our culture promotes, and aim for simplicity. As I read the book I could see the biblical basis for their choice, but I also recognized how hard it would be to persuade many to follow. Tony Compalo in his book *Carpe Diem*, which means seize the day, goes on and on about the American Christian is trapped in an absurd situation. He writes,

"Just think about last Christmas season. Your biggest problem was probably not figuring out where you would get enough money to buy presents for family members and friends. Instead, it was trying to figure out what to buy for people who had everything. The answer to that problem should have been self-evident. What you should buy for those who have everything, is nothing. But you didn't have the guts to pull it off, did you? No! Instead you went up and down the aisles of department stores having anxiety attacks. Panic-stricken, you searched yea, even prayed, that somebody somewhere had invented some new things that nobody needs so you could buy them for people who have everything. This is not an absurd description of a reasonable world. It is a rational description of an absurd world."

Capitalism has proved it is the best kind of economy. It has defeated fascism and communism in this century, and the whole world wants to get in on it now. The problem is, in order to keep it going you need people who will buy more and more things they don't need, and in larger and larger quantities. Our way of life demands that we be consumers of masses of things we do not need. In order to do this we need to make a lot of money, and that means we need to spend more of our life working and less of it with our family and in building relationships. The major portion of our lives

**has to be given to the goal of purchasing things we do not need. The result is that we are slaves and do not realize it. We are bound by loyalty to our culture to sacrifice our lives for the sake of the value system. You see the paradox of it all and the absurdity of it all. We fall in love with our slavery to the system, for it is exciting to be able to have masses of things we do not need. The more we get, the more successful we are, and our self-esteem is raised.**

**The Sorensen's down sizing of their life style said this was one of the major problems they had to cope with-the loss of self-esteem as they ceased to buy what they did not need. The bottom line is this: The vast majority of Christians are a part of our materialistic consumer oriented culture. None of us would dare to say I do not have a lot of things I don't need. As good Americans we need to have a lot of things we don't need. But a Christian leader is to be one who is self-controlled, and who is moderate in the degree to which he or she is motivated by the consumer spirit.**

**We already conform to the world too much in this area, but a Christian leader is to be one who may be rich, but who displays moderation in lifestyle. Many extremely wealthy Christians have done this successfully. They have made millions, but live a life style not that different from the average middle class Christian. On the other hand are the many middle class Christians who live like they have millions, and they devote their life to consumerism and the acquiring of things for status. The more I study Paul's qualifications for a Christian leader, the more I realize how hard it is to be a truly committed Christian in our culture. The scary thing is that we haven't even gotten to the positive things yet, and already it seems impossible to find Christians who can measure up.**

**I have concluded that hardly anyone is worthy to be a leader in the church, or to be a pastor. Just as we are saved by grace, so we are allowed to serve God by grace. We are not worthy, but everyone**

**so chosen is to be a person who is committed to excellence of character, and one who is clearly striving to be an example of Christlikeness. As strange as it sounds, the more you know about how the world functions, the more you realize that being like Christ has strong financial implications.**

**I can rationalize my conformity, for I just look at my peers and say that I am only doing what they all do. I live up to the level of my income. I buy things I don't need because I can, and I am sure you do the same. We need to be reminded of the warning of Jesus in Luke 12:15, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed: A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Jesus knew that Christians would have a battle with greed and the persistent hunger to possess things. Paul's point is, only those who are winning this battle are qualified to be Christian leaders. Moderation in all things and self-control in all things is the quality to look for in a Christian leader. This should be the goal of all of our lives.**

## **7. POSITIVE LEADERSHIP Based on Titus 1:5-9**

**Late one night in Philadelphia and elderly couple came into a little third class motel. The husband said to the night clerk, "Please don't tell us you don't have a room. My wife and I have been all over the city looking for a place to stay. We didn't know about the big conventions that have filled the motels. We are dead tired and its after midnight. Please don't tell us you have no place for us to sleep." The clerk looked at them for a long moment and then said, "The only room available is my own. I work at night and sleep in the daytime. It's not as nice as the other rooms but its clean. I'll be happy to let you use it for the night." The wife said, "God bless you**



**young man."**

**The next morning they invited the clerk to breakfast and they said, you are too fine a hotel man to be in a place like this. How would you like to be the manager of a large luxurious hotel?" The clerk was suspicious about them, but he did stammer out, "It sounds wonderful." They said they would contact him, and believe it or not, the man became the best known hotel man in the world. That couple were the Astors, and they went and built the famous Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. It had 1900 rooms, and this young man who shared his room for one night of hospitality was made the manager. He had not entertained angels unaware, but he had entertained a millionaire. And he was rewarded beyond his wildest dreams.**

**Paul does not say that Christian leaders will all be rewarded with great jobs if they show hospitality, but he does make this a requirement just to be a positive Christian leader. We think of hospitality more along the lines of having people over for a meal, or of scheduling parties as a place for people to meet and fellowship. This is a valid concept, but the experience of the young clerk is more in keeping with the original idea of hospitality. The word comes from hospital, and if you trace the word hospital, you discover that it was first of all a place to shelter and entertain strangers. The first hospitals were more life motels and hotels. People travelling needed a place to stay in the old days as well as now, and where they stayed was in the hospital.**

**This is directly related to the Greek word we are exploring for hospitality. It is the word philoxenos, which means the love of strangers. To be hospitable means to be open to care for the needs of people you do not know. Paul is not saying a Christian leader is one who must run his own motel, but he is saying that they must be those who are willing to take people in and give food and shelter.**

**The idea is that a leader should set an example of Christlikeness in being willing, as Jesus was, to share all he had to meet the needs of others. Hospitality is part of the spirit of ministry. You have to give of yourself to be hospitable. It takes time, effort, and money to care about people. The Good Samaritan found a stranger in need and gave of his time and money to put him up in a motel.**

**The original meaning is love of strangers, and so it is not the same thing as having fellowship with other Christians at your home. It has to do with your compassion for the people you don't even know. Peter uses this same word in I Pet. 4:9 where he writes, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Apparently some Christians were doing the right thing, but with the wrong spirit. They help their fellow Christians in their travel, but they did not like it, and it was a burden.**

**The fact is, the only way to be a good Christian is to bear one another's burdens. You just can't get by and be a good Christian if you don't pay some sort of price in helping others along the road. Sometimes we forget this and expect to sail along and not have to bear other's burdens, but that is escapism, and it is not fitting for someone who is a Christian leader. If every Christian is to be hospitable, then the leader is one who is to be setting the pace and be showing hospitality in a conspicuous way.**

**Hospitality to Christians can be a burden. The cost of food is such that feeding people very often can be a major expense. But this is usually enjoyable and you benefit from it on the spot. But Jesus said in Luke 14 that we are not to invite people you know to your party. Invite people you know will never invite you back. They are the poor and handicapped, and they could not be good hosts if they wanted to. This is real hospitality, and you are then managing a hospital-a place where the needs and health of strangers is cared for. This is a real sacrifice, and there will not necessarily be any reward**

**on the spot. But Jesus concluded in Luke 14:14, "Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."**

**One of the records that God keeps in heaven is the record of all the acts of hospitality that we perform. If you show love for a stranger and be hospitable, you may be as surprised as the young clerk who got the reward of his life for being hospitable to strangers. Jesus said that even a cup of cold water given in His name will not go unrewarded. God loves the hospitable person in a special way because it is a special form of love that makes itself available to all in need. This is a very God like quality. Jesus came unto His own and His own received Him not, but there were some who did. They opened their home to Him and gave Him a place of comfort and retreat. In Bethany, for example, was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They were special people in the life of our Lord because of their hospitality.**

**Jesus took the issue of hospitality so seriously that He made it a basis for judgment when He comes again. Those who are welcomed into His kingdom are those who exercised hospitality. Matt. 25:34-36 says, "Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed of my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." You could reduce this paragraph to one sentence and say, "I was in need of hospitality and you gave it to me."**

**The first Christian hospital was founded in obedience to this passage. In the year 370 A. D. in the town of Edessa, Syria there was a severe famine. The hermit Ephraim came out of his seclusion**

to scold the citizens who had abundance for letting the poor die of starvation. They said, "But there is nobody we can trust to use our wealth for good." He said, "What about me?" They agreed that he was an honest man and large sums of money were given. He ordered 300 beds to be set up in the public porches, and the first Christian hospital was born to feed and care for the poor. Strangers and local inhabitants were equality welcome.

Five years later Basil, bishop of Caesarea, open up another hospital not far from this first one. From then on to this day Christians have been in the hospital business. Many famous preachers in history were builders of hospitals. John Chrysostom, the golden mouth preacher, in the early 400's build several hospitals. There were the motel type just for strangers to have a place to stay as they traveled. The church started the motel business out of the spirit of hospitality. But the needs were varied and so they built hospitals for the ill as well, and then they built them for cripples, and then for orphans. The first was founded by St. Jerome in Bethlehem. They had hospitals for the old as well, and also for the very poor and destitute. The monasteries were built also as places where strangers could find shelter and food.

St. Augustine started a hospital in his own home, and often he sat down to eat with the guests. Bishops were expected to manage hospitals, for all Christian leaders were expected to be hospitable. The point is, the teachings of Jesus and Paul radically affected the history of the church in the area of hospitality. In modern times many of these institutions started by the church have become secular businesses. The Gideons still have their Bibles in the motels and hotels, but it is basically a secular business. When you travel and have a nice place to stay and rest, remember that you have it because Jesus demanded that strangers be treated with love.

Philoxenos means love of strangers, and that is the Greek word

**for hospitality that Paul says a Christian leader is to possess. If you don't care about strangers, but only care about people you know, you do not qualify to be a Christian leader, for you lack a basic Christlike quality of spirit.**

**The next positive qualification Paul gives is that he must be one who loves what is good. This seems so obvious that you would think that it would go without saying. Whoever heard of the question being asked, "Do you love what is good, or is the bad your preference?" You have to keep in mind we are dealing with a very corrupt culture in Crete. It was the custom to love lying, laziness, and gluttony. The bad was so popular that a Christian leader had to love what was good, which meant the truth, being honest, and being a good worker. It meant he had to be living a life of balance. A Christian leader is to be one that gets his pleasure in life by means of the virtues rather than the vices. It is a life where what is true, lovely, and of good report is basic to ones pleasures.**

**To be a lover of the good is somewhat vague, and no doubt this is one purpose, for what is good is quite subjective. What is good music, art, food, or anything where the tastes and opinions of men vary? Paul does not get specific, for the idea is simply that a Christian leader is to be one who loves what is universally accepted as good. A lover of good is always a positive influence in the church and the community, for he loves what is good for all. You can depend on them to support what is good for the body and what will make life better for all. A lover of what is good is a lover of all people, for they care about everyone getting what is good for them.**

**Everyone does this at some time. A little girl who was usually quite disruptive in Sunday School was very good one Sunday. The teacher said to her, "You have been such a good girl today." And she responded, "I couldn't help it, I got a stiff neck." To be a qualified Christian leader Paul says you have to be good and a lover**

**of the good, and not by accident, but on purpose.**

**The third positive quality is that he must be self-controlled. The best form of government is the self-government of one whose ultimate loyalty is to God. Our pledge of allegiance says, "One nation under God." That is to be our personal pledge-one life under God. When I can so control my life and all my drives so that I can choose to obey the will of God, as best as I understand it, then I am self-controlled, and living under the best form of government in the world. I cannot control what happens in Washington, or at the state capital, or in my neighbors life, but I can control what happens in my life. I have the deciding vote in all of my choices. In fact, I am a dictator and a totalitarian ruler over the dominion of self. If my allegiance is to Christ, and the Bible is my constitution, I can live under the perfect form of government.**

**Most Cretans were not self-controlled, but were under the control of the culture. They conform to the culture and went along with the lack of moderation. This led to a great deal of dishonesty, deception, and sensual indulgence. They were not in control of their lives, but were the captives of the culture being swept along with whatever the craze of the moment was. You cannot be a leader if you are not in control of your life. If you are just being swept along by the current of the culture, how can you lead others to be not conformed to the world? A Christian leader has to show that he or she is not under the control of the culture, but that they operate under self-control.**

**A leader of others needs to be first of all a leader of self. A. J. Gordon said, "The greatest battlefield in which a man ever fought is within himself." A leader is to be one who has fought that battle and won so that he is in control of the territory called self. He can rightly surrender this territory to Christ because he is its ruler. The reason so many Christians cannot surrender many aspects of their**

**life to Christ is because they are not in control. I cannot surrender to His Lordship what I do not control anymore than I can surrender my neighbor's bank account over which I have no control.**

**The United States is the most powerful nation in the world, but it cannot surrender to the U. N. property in Canada over which it has no control. You have to have self-control to yield yourself to Christ. If the culture controls 50 per cent of your life, that 50 per cent will be a battle ground. Why do Christian leaders fall into sin and destroy their ministry, and damage the cause of Christ? It is because they have certain areas of their life where they do not have self-control. They are not fully in charge, but are under the control of outside forces. They cannot surrender these areas of life to Christ because they do not control them.**

**This lack of self-control is the number one cause for Christian leaders falling into sin. They end up as poor leaders even though they may succeed marvelously for a while, and it is because they fail to gain full self-control. It is universally acknowledged that there is no greater victory in life than the victory over self. Shakespeare in Love's Labor Lost says, "Brave conquerors, for so you are that war against your own affections and the huge army of the world's desires." Paul says that only those victorious in this battle should be leaders of others, for how can you lead others if you cannot even lead yourself to be obedient to the Lordship of Christ?**

**The 4th quality he adds is that of being upright. This is a virtue referred to over 80 times in the New Testament. It is a virtue of all the good people of the New Testament, and it refers to the character of God and Jesus also. The key words in the KJV in English are just, right, and righteous. This term covers the whole of life, and the upright person is one who can be counted on to do what is right. It includes all of life, and it becomes a term to cover the whole category of people that please God. God sends rain on the just and the**

**unjust. The just are the upright. The same Greek word is used to refer, not just to a virtue, but to the whole body of God's people.**

**Paul says the just shall live by faith. They are those who are upright and pleasing to God. Jesus refers to the resurrection of the just, and He means all those who are saved. This word came to stand for all God's people. They are the just and the upright. Every Christian is to be this, but the leaders especially, for they are to be examples of how good God's people can be.**

**The next qualification is somewhat scary to us, for Paul says a leader is to be holy. It is not the usual word for holy that is used over 200 times in the New Testament. The word here is hosios which is used only 8 times. This word means kind and gracious. It is the focus on just one aspect of God's holiness. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God is so kind and gracious that it is beyond our comprehension. A leader is to reflect this kind of love for people. He or she is to be an example of just how kind and gracious a Christ like person can be.**

**Many Christians are damaged goods in this area of life. They have been so conditioned by their past that they find it very difficult to be kind and gracious to certain people. They have deep seated prejudices that hinder them. If they lack the self-control to prevent it, they will let their unkindness be exposed, and they will do damage to the cause of Christ. A leader is to be one who could go the home of a Pharisee and eat with him even though he despised his attitudes and actions. He could be kind and gracious to the worst of people, be they high and noble, or the most lowly and despicable.**

**This is a sort of holiness that just the opposite of what we usually think of as holy. Holy is usually to be separated unto God. It is to be detached and free from the sin and folly of the world. But here is another side of holiness. It is the ability to be in the presence of sin**



**and sinful people and be kind and gracious rather than offensive. A Christian leader needs this ability if he or she is going to represent the Lord Jesus, who was and is the greatest friend of sinners.**

**Commander Mitsuo Fuchida lead the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that killed thousands of Americans. He was in Hiroshima the day before the atomic bomb was dropped, but he left and escaped getting some of his own medicine. He wondered why he was spared. After the war ended he was very bitter against the Americans. He sought of evidence that they were like beasts who tortured Japanese prisoners. He asked a friend who had been a prisoner of war about his experience. The friend eagerly related how a nurse, the daughter of American missionaries, had nursed him back to health with love and kindness.**

**This nurse knew her parents had been shot by the Japanese in the Philippines. They were shot as they knelt in prayer. Fuchida was shaken by this testimony, and others like it. He got a Bible and began to read it. Listen to his testimony: "When I came to Luke 23 and read Christ's prayer just before He died on the cross, then I understood. I met Jesus that day. He came into my heart and changed my life from military officer to a warrior for Christ." He traveled over the world preaching the Gospel, and all this happened because a Christian showed great kindness to one who was an enemy. That is positive Christian leadership that changes the world.**

**The final positive quality we are looking at is that a leader is to be disciplined. Temperate is the word in the KJV. It is used in all its forms only 5 times in the New Testament. It means to be self-restrained. It is the word Paul used in I Cor. 9 to describe the sportsman who goes into strict training to discipline his body so that he can be a winner in the games. It is part of the whole issue of self-control, but it narrows down to being one who exercises to build**

**up his ability to refrain from that which hinders his running the good race for Christ.**

**A leader is not content just to be a Christian. He wants to be a good Christian, and the best Christian he can be. They put forth effort in order to grow. They are ever reaching up to find better ways to apply God's Word in their lives. They are the people who are not satisfied with surface Christianity. They long for depth, and they do something about it. The implication is clear. There is no easy road to being a Christian leader. It is usually very hard work. You can be a natural in sports, but if you are not disciplined you will not win, for someone with less talent will be working hard to beat you, and they will if you rely only on your talent. Discipline is what keeps breaking records in every event of the Olympics. Discipline is what makes the best in every field of endeavor.**

**When Lillian Nordica, the great soprano, gave an amazing performance in Indianapolis, Albert Beveridge, who became a U. S. Senator, praised her for her incomparable throat, she became angry and said, "Not my incomparable throat but hard work, weeks of it-years of it! Discipline and sacrifice, these made my performance tonight possible!" Top notch people in any field resent the idea that they just have the gift, and so it is no big deal that they are so good. They give their lives to be that good. It takes enormous discipline. So to be the best positive Christian leader you can be takes discipline and sacrifice. It is hard work, and without those willing to make the sacrifice to be such, the church cannot survive, let alone thrive. May God motivate us to pay the price to make our Lord proud of us by being committed to His standards of positive leadership.**

## **8. EXCELLENCE EXCLUDES EXCESS Based on Titus 1:5-9**

**As I read Barbara Shields book Winners-Women And The Nobel Prize, I was so impressed by the life and leadership of Agnes Gunxha, better known as Mother Teresa. As I read of her life and ministry I kept seeing her fulfilling the requirements that Paul lays down for one to be an elder, or leader, in the church. We see such words as blameless, not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to much wine, not violent, and not pursuing dishonest gain.**

**That is a lot of nots that are not to be, but Paul does not stop with the negative, but goes on to add these positives: Be hospitable, love what is good, be self-controlled, be upright, be holy, be disciplined, hold firm to the truth, and encourage others. The ideal Christian life is one of balance with much that is popular in the world to be excluded, and much that is unpopular to be included. Negatives and positives in balance is what the Christian life is all about. I was impressed at how a nun could achieve this balance. She had been in a convent for 20 years, but at age 38 she launched a new ministry to the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India. The filth and ugliness, and the daily death of babies and others starving was beyond description.**

**For months she worked alone. She would gather children between a hut and teach them the alphabet by writing with a stick on the ground. She had no money, for she had taken a vow of poverty. Some people became aware of what she was doing and gave her a little money and some bars of soap. These children had never seen a bar of soap. She taught them how to clean themselves, and she told them of the love of God. She had to beg for medicine to give to these people. Other women joined her. They would rise at 4:30 A. M. to worship and have a balanced breakfast. Mother Teresa was strong on having a good diet for health and strength to do the demanding work they were doing.**

**Their labor was all in vain she taught if it was not done in joy.**

**Cheerfulness and love did more for people than food and medicine she taught, and so all her helpers had to join in the evening fun time where they would laugh and shout, and play games and sing. It was hard work, and it was often depressing, and so they needed this for balance. They lived in poverty like the people to whom they ministered. They would rescue abandoned and dying babies left in trash bins. Mother Teresa had a vast collection of photos of her children that had been adopted from her home to families around the world. She built the Town of Peace with the help of the Indian government. This is a town where lepers are treated, and where they learn a trade, and live a normal life.**

**We can't begin to describe all of her work among the world's poorest, and most rejected population. She touched so many lives and received an avalanche of awards from all over the world. Vast amounts of money were involved, and all of it went to building more ministry to the poor. She lived in a small room with no symbols of affluence. She could pack to move in about 10 minutes. Young men began to join her Missionaries of Charity, as they were called, and whole new ministries were started for men and boys in the slums. So many around the world began to contribute to her cause that she expanded and opened homes in most of the large cities in the world from New York to Tokyo.**

**What she learned is that the greatest hunger in the world is not for bread but for love. It is poverty of the spirit that is the heaviest burden to bear, and even rich people suffer this kind of poverty. In December of 1979 she flew from Calcutta to Oslo, Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. It was the tradition to have a great banquet in the honor of the recipient of this great prize. She begged the committee to forget the banquet and give her the money. This added 7 thousand dollars to the 190 thousand dollar prize. She used it all to build homes for the poor and the lepers. That year she opened 14 centers outside of India. She has over 100 centers in operation with**

**7 thousand people a day being fed in Calcutta alone.**

**The stories of her love and care for those rejected by the world are endless. I share this description of her life and ministry because it exhibits what Paul is getting at as he lists the requirements for being a Christian leader. Excellence is the bottom line, and that means a life that displays the spirit of Christ in attitude and action. Here is a person who has over a lifetime demonstrated self-control. She could have changed radically from her commitment to the poor. She could have let the money she won lead her to greed. She could have been overcome by the chance to live the life of the rich and famous. But she was so disciplined and self-controlled that she did what many other Christian leaders could not do. She remained the same person with wealth in her hands as she was when she had nothing. That is excellence of spirit.**

**Paul says this is what Christian leaders are to be. They are not to be people who get captured by the culture, or by circumstances. They are to be people who are stable and consistent in their commitments regardless of changes in life. Christ-centered people are not violent, overbearing, and self-centered, which disqualifies one for Christian leadership.**

**There are many books today with studies that reveal that the Bible holds women equally accountable for living up to these standards of excellence. So as we look at the specifics we need to keep in mind that these apply to both sexes and not just to men, just because they were the vast majority of leaders in the early church. We are starting where we left off in a previous message. The next requirement to be a church leader is to be one who is-**

**NOT OVERBEARING.**

**The Greek word here is used only twice in the New Testament.**

**It is powerful negative word that describes a person who is so arrogant and self-willed that they denounce any voice that it disagrees with them, and that includes the voice of God. This person who is so presumptuous as to think his view is always the only right one is not qualified to be a leader in the church. Why? Because he will be an offensive person who has no consideration for other people's perspective. Being closed like this will make him unsympathetic and judgmental, and this is a poor example of Christ likeness.**

**Keep in mind, you can be a Christian and still be all the bad things Paul says a leader is not to be. In other words, Christians can be people who are not pleasant to be around. They are saved by their trust in Christ, but they are far from sanctified, and far from being qualified to be leaders. If all Christians were mature and qualified, and living up to the standards and excellence that Paul lists here, there would be no need to distinguish between Christians who are qualified and those who are not. Anyone could serve as a leader, and listing these qualifications would be unnecessary if one was qualified simply by being a Christian. But it is not so. There are Christians who are self-willed and arrogant enough to consider everyone who disagrees with them as inferior. They are not good leadership material.**

**Let me share some of the ways the two cases of this word are translated. Peter uses it once in II Pet. 2:10: "Presumptuous are they and self-willed." Goodspeed has it, "Rash, headstrong men." The 20th Century New Testament has it. "Audacious and self-willed." Here in Titus other translations stress words like stubborn, arrogant, presumptuous, and overbearing. The reason such a person is not qualified to be a leader in the church is that they are not teachable, and so they are not open to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. They already know all that is worth knowing in their mind, and such arrogance makes them unfit tools to help**

**others to grow. If you are not open to grow, you are not a good example for others.**

**The philosopher Hume said something Paul and Peter would certainly say amen to. He wrote, "When men are most sure and arrogant they are commonly most mistaken, giving passion to views without that proper deliberation which alone can secure them from the grossest absurdities." The vast majority of heresy and religious nonsense that deceives masses of people comes from arrogant people who exalt their pet ideas to the level of God's revelation. As Paul goes on to say, the leader has to be able to encourage others by sound doctrine. The arrogant person will be more concerned with promoting his own ideas. A Christian leader is one whose primary concern is the truth God has clearly revealed, and not his own self-centered perspective.**

**The next negative quality the Christian leader should lack is to be not-**

### **QUICK-TEMPERED.**

**If you are arrogant and are convinced your subjective feelings and perspectives should be shared by all, you will likely have a short fuse when people disagree with you, and call your perspective foolishness. Arrogance leads to the hot temper, for the self-willed person feels that any attack on them is equivalent to an attack on God. To disagree with them is the essence of evil, and such evil needs to be smashed, and so the arrogant person is one who is convinced that anger and violence are justified when dealing with people who have the audacity to defy them.**

**Anger is a legitimate emotion for the Christian to have, but it must be like the anger of God and of Jesus to be a virtue. They were and are slow to anger, and always have it under control. The vice**

**that Paul rejects here is to be quick tempered, or hot tempered, or short tempered. It is referring to those who are quarrelsome people, and who are always looking for a fight. Charles Ashcroft tells of the mountain guide who said to him as they climbed a jagged volcanic mountain in South America. "This would have been our tallest mountain if it had not blown its top." If you have ever seen pictures of Mt. St. Helen after it blew its top, you know how radically a mountain can be reduced by such an explosion.**

**That is Paul's point when it comes to Christian leadership. They can be reduced so quickly to a low level if they have quick temper. They are high risk to be in positions of leadership, for their lack of self-control can do great damage. Listen to this testimony of a wife who wrote to a counselor about her husband's temper. "I have a husband who is 99% good and 1% rotten. He is a lovable mate and a considerate father, but his one outstanding fault periodically ruins all his good qualities. That point is his violent temper. He is like a cow that gives a good, big pail of milk and with one, vicious kick, spills it all over the place. The peculiar thing is this: These spells come only once in a while and last for only a few minutes. But, when they happen and while they last, he is like a raving maniac. He snorts and cusses and cavorts until he is red in the face. Just as quickly as the storm begins it subsides. Then he is apologetic; admits he didn't mean the abusive things he said, and is really contrite and penitent. But before the stage is reached, sometimes almost irreparable damage is done."**

**That 1% of hot tempered violence in a 99% good man disqualifies him from being an elder, for the elder must be one who conveys a consistent testimony both in the church and in the world. Of course, this is a standard of near perfection, and who can measure up? Most of us have lost our temper and blown our top at some point in life. But the point is that many of us have also come to the place where we feel it coming on, and we have matured enough**



**to know it spells trouble, and so we find ways to control the energy that threatens to explode. It is those who has reached this level of maturity who qualify to be elders. There is always the risk that any leader may still lose it under great pressure. Nobody can offer a guarantee, but when it is known to happen in a person's life on any sort of a regular basis, that person is not to be chosen as a leader.**

**A bad temper is a bad testimony. Some people never gain control of their temper. Euthymius tells of the monk who joined the monastery because he hoped that atmosphere would help him control his bad temper. But he found the other monks irritating and so he left. He went into a desert place to live alone, for that would remove him from all irritation he thought. But one day as he was using his only bowl to get water from the spring he bumped the bowl on himself and spilled it. He dipped it in again and as he walked away his foot slipped and he spilled the bowl again. In a furious passion he dashed the bowl against a stone and smashed it to pieces. When he cooled down he looked at his broken bowl and said, "What a fool I am! How can I escape the temptation which is in my very nature?" It was not other people, but his own hot tempered nature that was his problem, and the only solution was not escape, but self-control.**

**A mature Christian is one who has learned this. You often cannot control other people and irritable circumstances. You can only control how you react to them. Those who have learned to control their temper are qualified to be leaders. Alligators are harmless they say if you can just keep their mouth shut. This is true for people in leadership positions as well. It does not always happen, however, and you have the record of Moses, who was one of the greatest of leaders of God's people, losing his temper. God takes temper control so seriously that he punished Moses for his loss of control by forbidding him to enter the Promised Land.**

**This is not a mere minor defect in God's eyes. I have to confess that so many of the sins Paul makes a big deal about I have been conditioned to think of as minor. I have had deacons in my churches that I knew were hot tempered. One got so angry he tried to put his fist through a cabinet and broke his wrist. I like the guy and never dreamed this would disqualify him from leadership, for he was a good friend. So what if he blew up once in a while? It seemed to hurt him more than anyone else, and I just overlooked it as a minor matter. I have a hunch most of us feel this way about people we know with a quick temper. But Paul says we are to take it seriously. There is a place for anger and righteous indignation. But this is different from losing one's temper. That is a rational thought out response to evil, and not an explosion provoked by some spark of evil. Evil wins when it gets you to lose your temper and add to the world more evil. The poet speaks truth when he says-**

**When I have lost my temper  
I have lost my reason too.  
I am never proud of anything  
Which angrily I do.  
When I have talked in anger  
And my cheeks are flaming red  
I have always uttered something  
That I wished I hadn't said.**

**In anger I have never done  
A kindly deed, or wise,  
But many things for which I know  
I should apologize.  
In looking back across my life  
And all I've lost or made,  
I can't recall a single time  
When fury ever paid.  
Author unknown.**

**None are more Christ like than those who learn that a quick temper is the devil's tool, and that true strength of character is found in self-control. David MacLennon in his book Making The Most Of Your Best tells this story: "When the distinguished Negro Roland Hayes was a boy, he heard an old Negro preacher contrast two kinds of power confronting each other, Christ and Pilate. Pilate irked by the silence of Jesus, cried: "Why don't you answer me? Don't you know I have power?" The old preacher went on to say, "No matter how angry the crowd got, he never said a numberlin word, not a word."**

**Years later Mr. Hayes stood before an audience in Berlin's Beethoven Hall. The audience was ugly, hostile, resentful of a Negro daring to sing in the center of Aryan culture. Hisses, growing louder and more ominous, greeted him. For 10 minutes Hayes stood there in silence, resentment and anger swelling up in him like an irresistible tide. Then he remembered the sermon of long ago, and One who answered his enemies not a word-"He never said a numberlin word, not a word." He shouted back no angry resorts. Standing there silently, he prayed, knowing that ultimate power was on his side. "The quiet dignity of his courage subdued the savage spirits of his audience, and in hushed pianissimo he began to sing a song of Schubert. He won; without so much as a numberlin word."**

**Temper control is a requirement for a Christian leader because it has always been a requirement for a mature person of God. The next requirement Paul lists is, "Not given to much wine." Other translations have it, "Not a lover of wine." "Not addicted to strong drink." Not a drunkard." "Not excessive in the use of wine." Here again we see a clear distinction between being successful and being qualified for leadership in the church. Many successful people drink to excess. If you could see the list of the patients who have been treated at the Betty Ford Clinic, you would see many of the most famous people in our culture. Many gifts people who are leaders in**

**their profession are not qualified to be leaders in the church, and it is because they are often given to much wine. They may be superior in many ways to those who do not drink, but this habit is not consistent with the image that Christ desires His church to convey to the world.**

**There are cultures where it is a common practice for Christians to drink modest amounts of alcohol. But no where is it acceptable for a Christian to be called a drinker, or one who loves to consume alcohol to excess. The whole idea of self-control demands that a Christian leader not be under the control of any substance. Paul does not mention drugs, for that was not a major issue in his day, but this would certainly apply in our culture today. A Christian leader is not to be under the control of any drug. We are not talking about medicine, for there is a lot of alcohol in many medicines. We are talking about a life style where alcohol and drugs play a role in people's lives. Christian leaders are not to be a part of that scene.**

**Paul's stress is not on being given to much wine. This leaves the door open to the moderate use of wine. But elsewhere he says that if it is offensive the ideal is to be total abstinence. In Rom. 14:21 he writes, "It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that will cause your brother to stumble." Dr. Carl Lundquist, former President of Bethel College and Seminary, did a through study of wine in the Bible, and he concluded that Paul did okay some moderate use of wine in the churches pastored by Timothy and Titus. He also concluded that the wine was not mere grape juice but was fermented wine. The evidence is over whelming that Jesus and the early Christians did drink fermented wine. He concludes that the New Testament clearly teaches moderation, but he taught total abstinence. Why? Because for 28 years as President of Bethel he saw a growing number of youth coming from our best churches who developed drinking problems.**

**Moderation can lead to excess, but abstinence never does. Too many people can take that first step and then not know how to stop. He felt that Christians should be preventing those who cannot stop from ever starting. Almost 10 million college students drink in America, and 50% of them develop serious drinking problems, and unfortunately many of them are Christians. I have known many Christian leaders who are moderate drinkers, and Paul's words here do not prohibit them from being leaders. But I have to agree with Dr. Lundquist. Abstinence is the best, for it prevents the tragedy of those who just cannot handle alcohol and tend to go to excess. Since the goal of Paul is excellence in all areas of life, Dr. Lundquist concludes that the risks are too high with moderation. Abstinence is the better way. Moderation is a must, however, for the bottom line of Paul's teaching is that excellence excludes excess.**

## **9. CHRISTIAN EXCELLENCE Based on Titus 1:5-16**

**For some unknown reason a sculptor hacked an 18 foot high piece of marble into an awkward shape, and then left it unfinished to lay in a Cathedral courtyard in Florence, Italy. For about a hundred years it laid there until Sept. of 1501. The damaged block had been offered to other sculptors, but none of them felt capable of doing anything with it. Then Michelangelo was asked if he could make a statue out of it. He felt he could, and so a contract was drawn up for him to complete the work in 2 years.**

**He built wooden walls around the block so he could not be seen or interrupted. Others hired assistants, but he did not. From first to last it was his mallet and chisels that did the work. He would not leave his shed for days on end. He often slept there so that he could get busy on it without delay. The 2 year deadline came and he was**

still not finished. It was not until 1504 that he completed the project.

Everyone agreed when they seen it that he had created a masterpiece. Out of that rejected piece of marble he created his famous statue of David-the slayer of giants. Contemporaries declared that nothing equaled to it had been produced since the ancient days of Greece and Rome. The 18 thousand pound statue was moved to a conspicuous place where all could enjoy it. For 3 and a half centuries it stood outside as the pride of Florence, but the in 1873 it was moved inside to protect it from the weather. Copies of the statue can be found all over the world, including a downtown park in my hometown of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Michelangelo is famous because he was devoted to excellence. He was so devoted because he knew that excellence was on of the ways men are drawn to God. He said, "If it be true that any beauteous thing raises the pure and just desire of man from earth to God, the eternal fount of all, such I believe my love." And such was the love of Paul as well, and that is why he chose Titus to stay in Crete to straighten out what was unfinished. Like the marble block of Michelangelo, these Christians were far from finished. They were Christians; they were saved for eternity, but they were messed up in many ways and they needed a spiritual sculptor to shape them up.

What we see in this letter of Titus is that Paul was committed to excellence. The goal of God is not just to get His Son a bride, but to get Him a bride who is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. In other words, the goal of God is always perfection. We can never achieve this in time, but we can and ought to be devoted to excellence as we move toward the perfection that only God can achieve. That is the essence of what Paul is telling Titus to aim for in completing the unfinished work in Crete. Appoint leaders who are devoted to excellence. They are to show excellence in character,

**in their family life, in their social life, in their economic life, and in their spiritual life.**

**This was Paul's goal in every church, and that is why he writes to the Corinthians who were having so many problems because of their focus on some of the lesser gifts. He writes in I Cor. 12:31, "But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way." Then he goes on in his great exposition of love in I Cor. 13. Paul is saying that all the defects of the church are due to low aim. If we aim for excellence and focus on the best, the highest, and the noblest, we will not be part of the problem, but part of the answer. The bottom line is this: The servant of Christ is called to excellence. In Col. 3:23 Paul writes, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." This is not a call to manageable mediocrity, but a call to excel in excellence.**

**Titus is told to choose leaders in the church who are heeding this call to excellence. Not all Christians listen to this call. Just as there are all different levels of faith, knowledge, and hope, so there are all different levels of commitment to excellence. The first graders work of art on your refrigerator may not be an excellent work of art, but if it is the best a child can do at that stage, it deserves praise, for excellence is not so much a destination as it is a direction. The excellent Christian leader is one who is committed to growth. They are never content with where they are, but ever striving for the better way to serve and be pleasing to Christ.**

**The great violinist Isaac Stern was asked by a reporter, "What truly distinguishes a great musician?" Sterns replied, "A great musician is one who is always seeking to improve, never content with his performances, always moving on to discover more about the instrument and music he loves." The great Christian is likewise always seeking to improve and discover more about the Word of**

**God and the Lord he loves. He hears and heeds the call to excellence.**

**This call to excellence, however, is not the same as the call to success which is so popular in our sexual culture, and in the health and wealth Gospel movement in the church. Jon Johnston, professor at Pepperdine University and Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote a whole book called Christian Excellence Alternative To Success. Success is a matter of cultural matters, but Christian excellence is a matter of biblical values. The two are not the same. If you have a million dollars, it does not make any difference to the world if you have a different wife every few years, and a few girlfriends on the side. It makes no difference if you are an alcoholic, and so hot tempered that you fire your employees for minor mistakes. Your personal life can be a disgrace from a biblical point of view, and yet you can be considered a great success. Success is very worldly and based on the accumulation of things and notoriety.**

**On the other hand, the Christian who aims for excellence, like the elders in Crete were to do, may not be wealthy at all. Their excellence is not based on things or achievements and popularity, but on the kind of person they are, and the good qualities of their behavior. They are Christ like people pleasing to God and man. They are just good people. Our culture has made many Christians twist this into a success theology that says if you love Jesus you can be a champion in athletics, win beauty contests, be leaders in business and politics, and just be among the elite in every realm of life. Christian excellence has been tied to secular success so that Christians think a successful Christian should be winning Olympic medals and big contracts and popularity contests of all kinds.**

**Tony Compolo says this is all a perversion of Christian excellence. Jesus never called His disciples to success, social**



**prestige, and large bank accounts. These things are not necessarily inconsistent with Christian excellence, but they have nothing to do with it. The least known Christian is just as called to excellence as the most famous. We need to make the distinction clear, for when the two concepts are blended as one the standard of the church and the biblical standard of excellence is set aside.**

**Christian excellence opposes mediocrity as an enemy, and so it will lead the Christian to strive for excellence in the secular realm as well, and thus be an aid to his or her success. But it must not be equated with success, for this leads Christians to be motivated by secular rather than a biblical standard. Leadership in the church is to be based on Christian excellence and not secular success. It is ones character that counts and not ones achievements. What this means practically is that we are to be as committed to being what God wills for us as the successful person is committed to being successful.**

**When we have a task to do in the body of Christ, we are to do it with the same determination as one who will win a gold medal if they strive for excellence. The complaint is heard far and wide that excellence is out and mediocrity is in, for nobody wants to be bothered to give so much energy to the things we do as Christians. The result is that our young people grow up thinking church things are secondary, and mediocre is good enough for church. The world also sees and concludes that if Christians don't take God any more serious than they do, why should I bother?**

**The witness of mediocrity is that God is not worthy of excellence. But this is contrary to all that the Bible tells us. Psalms 8:1 says, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." Psalms 36:7 says, "How excellent is thy loving kindness." Psalms 148:13 says, "Let them praise the name of the Lord: For His name is excellent." The name of God represents His whole being, and**

**everything about God is excellent. Only excellence can reflect in any measure the glory of God. Chuck Swindoll wrote the book *Living Above The Level of Mediocrity*, and as he comes to the end he writes, "As I have emphasized throughout this book, a commitment to excellence is neither popular nor easy, but it is essential." That is the message of Paul to Titus, and the message of this letter to all God's people.**

**Now let's get specific as to just what excellence means for leaders in the church. The leaders are called elders. The Greek word for elders is *presbuteros* from which the Presbyterians take their name. The word originally meant, "old man or bearded one." When we say to youth that they should respect their elders, we just mean people who are older. The elders in Bible times were the older people. It is assumed that people who live longer get more mature and are better qualified than to be leaders. This is not always the case, but it is a valid rule of thumb that an older Christian is wiser. These elders Paul refers to are not all that old by our standards. They still have children at home. They are not senior citizens, but just older than most in the church.**

**The beard was a sign of maturity in the Eastern culture and it commanded respect. Steward Briscoe tells of going to Bangladesh where he was warmly received. The young missionary he stayed with said to him, "I don't get anything like your reception among the people even though I have been working among them for years. I can't wait until I can grow a beard." Briscoe had a beard and this gave him instant respect. This is the point of elders being the key leaders in the church. They should be people who command respect because they are seen as mature people. Age is not the key, but maturity. Young men who are mature can qualify as leaders.**

**This concept has guided God's people from the beginning. In the Old Testament the elders were the leaders of each city. They**

**made the laws and enforced them, and they settled disputes at the city gate. Later on the synagogue developed the governor of the synagogue, and he was an elder or presbuteros. Paul was just following the tradition of God's people when he said to appoint elders. Tradition is not always good, but when it is based on very good logic it is unwise to change it. The older a Christian gets the more he or she should exhibit Christian excellence in their character and conduct. That is why they should be the leaders. It is not age but excellence that qualifies them.**

**An old Christian who is slipshod and indifferent to excellence is no more qualified to lead than a junior high youth, and maybe even less so. The bottom line is excellence, for this is the sign of Christian maturity. The first way this excellence is to be manifested in his role as a husband. A mature Christian is one who will have only one wife. An immature Christian is one who lacks this commitment and keeps looking for the ideal woman even after he is married. The grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence to the immature man. He thinks he would be more successful and more loved if he had another woman for his wife. It might even be true, but it is immature, for when you marry you are making a commitment for life, and not just until something better comes along.**

**To be blameless means to make the right choices so that no one can say you are a jerk in your relationship to the opposite sex. Excellence in relationships means commitment. A leader has to be committed to his mate or he will not have the respect needed to lead others. Excellence in a leader means he is a one woman man. The implication is clear. God's best for male and female is a life time commitment to each other. Man is ever toying with this, but he can't improve it by any other arrangement.**

**We need to pause here, however, and recognize that our culture**

**has produced what was rare, or even nonexistent in the Bible, and that is masses of singles. Does this passage say a man who has no wife cannot be an elder. Or what if he is married and has no children? Does that disqualify him? Not at all. Paul is dealing with the typical situation and not the exceptional. If you become a legalist here, Paul himself was not qualified, for he had no wife or children. This text does not rule out singles and childless men. They just did not exist like they do today. The focus of Paul is on the excellence of the lives of Christian leaders. Jesus lived the most excellent of all lives as a single and as one who was childless. Paul would not want his words to be interpreted so as to exclude the Lord of the church from being a leader in the church.**

**Paul says that the leader, or elder, must also have children who are believers and not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. In other words, a leader is to be an excellent example of a father, and show by his own family discipline how children should be raised. This implies that the children are under his discipline. If a child is old enough to be out on his own he is no longer responsible for their behavior. But as long as he is responsible the leader is to have disciplined children who set the example for others.**

**The point of Paul is that the Christian is to be committed to excellence. The only way the church can have an effective witness to the world is by producing better people. If the world can produce people as good or better than the church, why should they pay any attention to the Gospel that the church preaches? How is it good news if it does not make its possessors better people? Leaders of the church need to be examples of just what kind of excellence can be achieved by lives based on faith, knowledge of the truth, and hope.**

**Then Paul in verse 7 writes of the overseer or bishop, and people get confused about this office, but it is just another word for the**

**elders. Both Catholic and Protestant scholars have concluded that these words are interchangeable, and so Paul is not switching channels on us and going to another office. He is still talking about the same leaders and giving more qualifications for those who are to be appointed to this leadership role.**

**Blameless is a term Paul uses again, and this sounds like Paul is saying that Christian leaders are to be perfect. But as Calvin points out, if this is what Paul meant, Titus would have to find his leaders from another planet, for no such creatures exist on this one. The point of Paul is that the leader has to be one who is not marked by disgrace, and under any accusation of immoral behavior. A Christian who is charged with some crime is not to be a leader of the church. The image of the church is to be one of excellence. If a life is tarnished by a bad reputation but makes the world skeptical of the church, that person should not be a leader in the church. Leaders are to exemplify excellence. The church may be filled with people who are poor examples of godliness, for the church exists to minister to such people, but the leaders are to be examples of the best that godliness can produce.**

**It would be very easy to develop a spirit of pride as a church leader. One could feel that by being chosen to this position they are superior to the rest of the body. One could learn to look down their nose at the second class Christians of the flock. This would leave the leader unqualified, for they would no longer be blameless and excellent examples of Christlikeness. One of the ways a leader shows his superiority is by the love and encouragement he gives to those who are inferior in their Christian growth.**

**Howard Hendricks is one of the greatest Christian leaders, teachers and authors in America. As a boy he was a major trouble maker. His 5th grade teacher had to tie him to his desk and gag him because he was so wild and unruly. His 6th grade teacher did not**

**treat him that way. She loved him and told him she believed in him and his good qualities. He became a good student for her. The 5th grade teacher would see him in his classroom sitting and clothed in his right mind and wonder how it could be. Love had changed his life. As a leader he teaches other leaders that they can change lives too by loving those who are far from what they ought to be.**

**The reason Paul has a high standard for leaders is because he knows that only those who reach a level of excellence will be able to adequately love and care for those far from this goal. Leaders are not in their position to be praised and glorified, but to be servants of the rest of the body, and helping all to climb to a level of excellence. All job descriptions tend to be ideal and rightly so. Maybe nobody can fully live up to them, but they establish that the goal is always excellence. The real may not match the ideal, but it should always be pointing in that direction.**

**Even among the Cretans, a people known for their low life level, the standards of Christian leadership are high. What a Christian leader is at home is a key factor in his qualification to be a leader. What he is as a husband and a father is basic. A Christian leader is not one who can look good on Sunday, but is one who all week long in his home exhibits excellence. A loved wife and disciplined children are the evidence of Christian excellence.**

## **10. TO THE PURE ALL IS PURE Based on Titus 1:5-16**

**A sophisticated social leader was expecting a large group of friends at her home one evening. Knowing her husbands habit of using guests towels indiscriminately when he came home from the office, she put a note on the ones she put out for the occasion. It**

**read, "If you use one of these towels, I'll slay you in cold blood." Even the most insensitive husband would get the message loud and clear. The problem was that she got busy and forgot to remove the note before the guests arrived. At the end of the evening she found, to her shock, that the note was still there, and not one towel had been touched. Here was a message that called for interpretation. A discerning guest should have known that in this context the note was a warning to the husband and not to the guests. They should have felt free to use the towel without fear.**

**Life is full of messages that have to be interpreted wisely or they make no sense, or they lead to consequences not intended. It is like when Mrs. Grand instructed her old servant, "Now Maggie, for the first half hour you stand at the drawing room door and call all the guests names as they arrive." "Thank you very much ma'am," she replied, "It's what I've been wanting to do to some of your friends for the last 10 years." Maggie was getting a message that was quite different from the one Mrs. Grand was sending.**

**Sometimes messages are deliberately made difficult to interpret. Like the man who said to another, "I have two and a half dozen children." The man was amazed, but the father explained it so that it was not that amazing. "I have 2, and then a half dozen more, which is 6 plus 2 making 8. I have 8 children, or as I said, 2 and a half dozen." Without explanation the words carry a different message.**

**At other times people read into a message more than the speaker intends to say. The disciples did this with Jesus. In John 21 Jesus said, "If I want John to remain alive until I return that is my business and not yours. You just follow me and don't worry about John." The rumor spread among the disciples that John would not die, but Jesus did not say that at all. John had to write and put a halt to this misinterpretation, and tell people that Jesus did not say**

**that he would not die, but only that if it was His will that was His business and not theirs. Even the Apostles could interpret the words of Jesus in a way that did not convey His true message. This means that correct interpretation is absolutely vital to the understanding of truth. The Bible does not mean whatever you or I feel it means. It means only what the author intended to convey when he was inspired to write it.**

**It is true that people get many different impressions as they read the same words, and there can be a variety of perspectives, but the bottom line is that only the message the author intended to convey is valid. The reason this is important is because without this principle the Bible can be used to support all kinds of nonsense that contradicts what it clearly means to convey.**

**We have come to Titus 1:15 which is an ideal example of how important it is to know what Paul intended, and not just let any interpretation be acceptable. Paul makes a startling claim when he says, "To the pure all things are pure." This verse can be used to justify every form of evil and folly known to man. It has been used to justify polygamy, stealing, and even murder. Is that what Paul is saying? There is nothing impure to the pure, and so all evil becomes pure?**

**Sirhan, the assassin of Robert Kennedy, read Madam Blavatsky, the founder of theosophy. She taught that every man has the right to interpret truth in his own way regardless of what others think. The New Age religion teaches this to children. If something seems right for them, than it is right for them, even if it is contrary to the value system of their parents or society. If it's right for you, than it is right. Sirhan concluded that he was doing the will of God when he murdered someone he felt should be eliminated, for it seemed right to him.**



**Do you think for a moment that this was the message Paul was trying to convey, and that he was teaching that everything was right and pure to certain people? Was he saying that they can do anything the Bible forbids if they just have the right spirit? You can see how this appeals to the fanatic. I am pure, and so I can violate all the commandments of God, for now everything is pure and right for me. If ever there was a text calling for proper interpretation, this is it. This verse does not mean whatever anyone wants it to mean. It means only what Paul intended it to mean, and we know he did not intend it to eliminate all that he has just written. It is easy to see what Paul does not mean, but it takes some thought to discover just what he does mean.**

**We need to interpret this in a way that is confirmed by other passages where Paul uses this same word for pure. Paul said that all God made is pure in the sense that it is valid for food and not to be rejected because of some legalistic or superstitious tradition. Men contaminate a lot of food by adding to it what is not healthy, but God never created a bad food. In Rom. 14:20 Paul says that all food is clean. So to the pure all food that God makes is pure. It is good and not forbidden. There is no forbidden food to the pure.**

**Mark has Jesus teach this very truth to eliminate all the legalistic restrictions of Judaism. Jesus taught that nothing going into a man can make him unclean, but only what comes out of him. In Mark 7:19 he adds this comment: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean." Both Jesus and Paul make an issue out of this, and they make it clear that if you really believe in Jesus and His rejection of all the food legalism of Judaism you will not have hangups with any food. To the pure all foods will be pure. Only to the unbeliever will there be fears, doubts, and corruption connected with food. The bottom line is that there is no natural food that is forbidden by God, and so the pure Christian can enjoy anything God has made with**

**thanksgiving.**

**This is not a major issue with most of us, but it was a major issue in the Reformation period, and John Calvin made these strong statements: "They do wrong, who impose religious scruples on conscience in this matter... Accordingly, this must be true till the end of the world, that there is no kind of food which is unlawful in the sight of God. Thus, if any law binds the conscience to any necessity of abstaining from certain kinds of food, it wickedly takes away from believers that liberty which God has given them."**

**If you carry this through in all areas of life, you get Paul's point. Whatever God has made is good and pure. Did God make marriage and sex? Then it is pure, and as Hebrew says, "The marriage bed is undefiled." Did God make desire, appetite, and the love of competition? If so, then the world of work and recreation are pure as well. It can be good to work to make money and possess things. It can be good or pure to play and enjoy exercise and sports. If these are seen as God given blessings, then they are pure, and they will not defile the man who loves God all the more for his chance to participate in these aspects of life. He does so with thanksgiving because to the pure all things are pure, and they are from God.**

**The pure live life based on this sound doctrine: If God made it, it is good. If God approves it, it is good. If God recommends it, it is good. If God commands it, it is good. This means that even in this fallen world so corrupted by sin the vast majority of reality is still pure. There is goodness everywhere. Even in the hearts of fallen men there is an abundance of truth, wisdom and value. The world is loaded with good things, and the pure in heart see it and enjoy it, and they praise God for it. The Christian does not say that this tastes so good it must be sinful. They say that it tastes so good that it must be from God.**

**But there is a constant battle in the minds of those who see only evil and pessimism. They try to rob Christians of the good life in time. Paul writes to Timothy about this very thing in I Tim. 4:1-5, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving."**

**If you can give thanks for it, it is good and pure, and we are to give thanks in all things, and so it follows that to the pure all things are pure. In the mind of the faithful Christian there is already a taste of things to come. There is a heaven on earth with daily joy and pleasure. The abundant life is now and not just in the sweet by and by. Not all things are actually pure, but all is potentially pure to the pure in heart. They see the putrid and say it can become pure. Jesus saw the prostitute as a potential saint, and because He did He saw some of them come to sainthood. The same was true of the tax collectors and all other sinners. Jesus saw their potential to be pure and righteous. He saw in Saul the potential to become Paul the Apostle, and He made him such by grace. To Jesus all things and all people were potentially pure and so worthy of being loved.**

**The impure see the potential in all things and all people for evil, and so they are pessimists, and they do not have the mind of Christ. A Christ like mind sees the potential for the good, the true, and the lovely in all. When Florence Nightingale was called to the Crimea to help the English Army that was being decimated by the Russians, and even more so by malaria and cholera, it looked hopeless. Dirt, disease, and disorder were dominant everywhere. The make shift hospital was infested with vermin and rats. No wonder the death**

rate was 60%.

**She saw this mess as a potential place of hope and health. She began to get teams to scrub, launder, and make the environment pure. Then she began to cook good food for the wounded. In 10 days she reduced the death rate from 60% down to 1%. To the pure all things are pure. Even a death trap of corruption can become a life giving sanctuary to those with eyes to see it. Jesus used this same word that Paul uses here in His beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." They will see Him, not just in heaven, but in time, for they will God at work in the most awful places and lives bringing forth beauty, order, and purity. The pure see the world and fallen man with the eyes of Christ. They see the saint and the sinner, and the diamond in the mud.**

**In contrast, Paul says, "To those who are corrupted and who do not believe, nothing is pure." Paul here describes the pathetic reality of a Christian who is so heavenly minded they are no earthly good. He actually ends this chapter by saying that they are unfit for doing anything good. They are part of the church, but all they add to it are corruption and confusion, for they are totally negative, and if they are allowed to spread their pessimism they will destroy the church completely. That is why Paul says they must be silenced. Christians need to be protected from other Christians who have a bad influence on them, and who hurt their faith. Their own faith is corrupted, and they are carriers of pessimism.**

**Paul says that to them nothing is pure. They are like the woman who thought her neighbor's wash was always still dirty because her own windows were unwashed and full of spots. The history of the church is full of this kind of nonsense where nothing is pure. We know there has always been a lot of impure sex in the world, but for centuries Christian leaders taught that even married sex was impure. They became so pessimistic about the lust of men that they**

**decided that the whole business of sex was of the devil. This is what led to monks and the monastery, and the total escaping from the realm of sex even in the marriage bond.**

**Christians need to beware of over reacting to the sinful nature of man. It is true that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that all of our righteousness is as filthy rags. We need to be honest about sin and recognize it has infected everyone and everything. Nevertheless, the creation of God is good, and all that He made is good. Sinfulness cannot destroy the beauty of God's original plan and purpose. Sex is God's plan, and no matter how vile man makes it, it is still good and beautiful when used as God intended. To the pure, that is to those who love God and all He has made, it is pure, and it is a wonderful gift. It is only to those who reject God as its author who see it as impure.**

**The point of Paul is this: Once you reject sound doctrine based on God's revelation you are going to corrupt everything with man-made doctrine. Nothing will be purer, for the fact is, when God is left out of anything it is impure. The Jews who were legalists even made the good works of Jesus to be evil. They said the Sabbath law is more important than people and their health. Every time Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath they criticized Him. They made His miracles of compassion impure. They said they were the works of the devil. This is how blind people can get who operate on unsound doctrine. They can take the best gifts of God and make them acts of evil. Jesus was crucified because people have the ability to make every thing impure.**

**The people of God in the Old Testament made the Sabbath impure, the sacrifice impure, the temple impure, and even praise and prayer impure. Every thing that God made for good they were able to corrupt, and God said that he detested their worship because they made impure all that He had made pure. Just as there is**

**nothing the pure cannot make pure, so there is nothing the impure cannot make impure. You cannot talk of higher values than prayer and worship, but they can be made impure by the impure.**

**Paul says in verse 16 that these people claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. Paul is confirming the proverb that actions speak louder than words. Doctrine that does not lead to deeds is worthless. Belief that does not change behavior is of no value. Faith without works is dead. In the culture of Crete where lying was habitual there were professing Christians who were even lying about their faith in God. This was a problem in the early church, and John in I John 2:4 wrote, "The man who says I know Him, but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."**

**The New Testament is quite clear. The professing Christian who does not follow up his profession with a life of obedience to God's commands is good for nothing. That is how Paul ends this first chapter. This is strong and shocking language. Saddler writes, "No words worst than these could be applied to the lives of the heathen, and yet this is all said of unworthy Christians. The Christian has the capacity to make this evil world a better place, and even a wonderful place. But they also have the capacity to make it even worse than what it already is. The plan of God is that Christians add light to the world so that even in this darkness there can be a taste of heaven on earth.**

**If Christians have a rotten negative attitude toward life they will make the world a place of negatives. These impure Christians will take even the blessings of life and make them impure. They will, like Peter, in his unenlightened state call unclean what God has made clean. They will by their narrow and legalistic minds make good things evil. But the pure who let the mind of Christ be their mind will find the world filled with things for which to give God**

**thanks. They will find blessings everywhere, and people to love everywhere. They will experience the abundant life Christ came to give His people in time as a foretaste of heaven. There will no end to thanksgiving, for to the pure all things are pure.**

## **11. SOUND DOCTRINE based on Titus 1:15-16**

**Rusty Stevens, a Navigator Director, tells this story. He was pushing the lawn mower around his yard trying to get done before supper was on the table. His 6 year old son Mikey came out and stepped in front of him, grabbed the handle of the mower and started to push. The father quit pushing and the mower slowed to a stop, for Mikey did not have the strength to push it, but he wanted to help. Dad had the impulse to say "get out of here. You are in my way", but instead he said, "Son, I'll help you." So he began to push with his legs spread apart to avoid hitting his son. He was now moving slower and less efficiently with Mikey's help.**

**It suddenly dawned on him that this is the way God works with us. As our heavenly Father he could get the work done of building his kingdom so fast and efficient alone, but he wants us to help. Out help is often a handicap, for we only slow things down and are less efficient. But God's plan is to let us help. We see this so clearly in Paul's letter to Titus. Paul does not say, "Just choose who you will, or call for volunteers to be leaders and pastors of the churches. Paul does not teach that it makes no difference who is leading because God in his sovereignty will make it all work out no matter what you do. Instead, Paul says it makes a world of difference who you choose, for God does not build his kingdom, and Christ does not build his church without the help of men and women who are channels of his will in the world.**

**If excellence only depended on God, then there is nothing to worry about, for God is always excellent. But if excellence depends on men, then the qualifications of those men makes a lot of difference in the outcome. the quality of a church depends upon the quality of its leaders. The pastor and lay leaders form the character of the church. We have looked at all the things they should not be, and most of what they should be. This message brings us to the 9th verse of chapter one where the issue is doctrine. The leaders of the church of Christ must be people of sound doctrine. they must hold firmly to Biblical truth, and be able to teach it to others, and be able to refute those who oppose it.**

**The stability of the church depends on the leaderships commitment to the Word of God. The orthodox doctrines, or teachings that come from Christ and his Apostles is the foundation that can never change. It has to be passed on from generation to generation. When there is a shift from this foundation to some other source for guidance you get a corrupted Christianity. The big corruption that Paul is ever fighting in his day is legalism. the Jewish Christians keep going back to the Old Testament law and they try to impose it on the Christians who have been set free in Christ from that bondage. He urges Titus to fight this perversion of the faith by sound doctrine.**

**This battle is never ending and that is why Christian leaders need to be educated in doctrine. The cults are deceiving untaught Christians by the thousands in every generation. Many cults specialize in enticing Christians who do not know their own doctrines well enough to know the difference between true Christianity and clever imitations. This letter of Paul is focus on the intellectual battles of the church. In his letter to the Corinthians he deals with the emotional issues. But we need to recognize that the Holy Spirit works in both the mind and the emotions. Sometimes what the Christian needs is a great lift and an emotional high. But at**



**other times they need a solid rock of truth that can weather any intellectual storm that comes.**

**Craig Larson says that power can be used in two ways. It can be unleashed, or it can be harnessed. If you throw a match into a ten gallon container of gas, you will unleash its power in a great explosion. but if you take that same ten gallons of gas and put it into your car, it will by controlled explosions propel you a couple hundred miles. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came like tongues of fire, and the church of Christ exploded on the stage of history with 3000 Jews being saved in one day. But not every day in the life of the church is a day of explosion. Most days are days like Paul deals with here. They are days of a need for the power of the Holy Spirit to be harnessed and enabling leaders to proclaim the truth and defend it, and also prevent opponents from perverting it and hurting the body of Christ.**

**You will notice that Paul gives some of the characteristics of this New Testament church. In verse 10 he said it is full of rebellious people who are all talk, and who are deceivers. He says the Jewish Christians are especially so. They come into the church with all their legalistic baggage. They are teaching things to the new Christians that are ruining their lives. In verse 11 he says that whole households are being ruined by their heresies. They are wrapped up in Jewish myths, and they are corruption the Christian faith by their nonsense. Paul ends the chapter by saying they are just detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.**

**When people say they want a New Testament church I hope they mean the kind Paul is trying to get them to be, and not the kind they were. This New Testament church was a mess, and by false teaching they were actually making people worse instead of better. They were taking perfectly good pagans, who may have been decent people, and turning them into corrupted Christians who believed**

**lies and myths. They made Christianity a mockery of true godliness. Can a church do people more harm than good? Paul says that they can, and it was happening in this church of Crete.**

**How do you prevent a church from being a curse to the world rather than a blessing? Paul says you do it by strong teaching of sound doctrine. Let a church depart from the Bible as the sole and supreme authority for all it believes and practices, and you are heading for a church that will be agent for evil rather than for Christ. Without sound doctrine the church becomes a channel for all the religious nonsense that man is capable of conceiving. The religious scams that people fall for are pathetic, and the cults that thrive off people is one of Satan's greatest joys.**

**The new age cults are growing by leaps and bounds in our nation, and Christians are often persuaded to join them because the church has been enticed away from sound doctrine to focus on the current issues of the day. The demand for the church to be relevant as led the church to become irrelevant, for they have focused on issues rather than sound doctrine. The best way to be relevant is to make sure the truth of God's Word is the foundation for all you do. But instead, the modern church has decided to use the Bible only as a resource with the main focus on the wisdom of men in psychology, politics, and sociology. The result is, the Bible collects dust as Christians try to keep up on the latest in contemporary thinking. We know this is so because every generation of Christians knows less about the Bible.**

**This leads the church right back to the New Testament church which was full of problems because people did not know their Bible. It was not just in Crete. Paul wrote to Timothy who was pastoring the church in Ephesus and the same problem was in that church. Paul writes in I Tim. 1:3, "As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain**

**men not to teach false doctrines any longer." He goes on to say that they have departed from sound doctrine and are just into meaningless talk that hurts the church.**

**Out of the 19 times this Greek word didoskalia is translated doctrine in the New Testament 17 are by Paul, and 15 of them are in his letters to Timothy and Titus. One of the major tasks of the local church is to make sure Christians are founded on sound doctrine, and that false doctrine is weeded out. This is often a thankless job, for people get bored with the truth, and they get restless as they look for something that is fresh, flashy and more contemporary. Paul warns Timothy in II Tim. 4:3-4 of what he can expect: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."**

**Christian people can get bored to death with the very truths that save them and gave them good news to share with the world. It is hard to believe isn't it? But the fact is that a recent poll revealed that over half of Americans believe in reincarnation. This is one of the strong points of the new age cults. They have been able to persuade even a large number of Christians to believe this false doctrine. It is also a very popular idea that everybody who dies goes into a new and wonderful world. I find the movies based on this theme quite interesting myself, and I need to keep reminding myself that it is contrary to sound doctrine, and it undermines the Gospel completely. It is highly unlikely that any of us have escaped being touched to some degree by the many popular false doctrines that bombard our culture.**

**Every Christian needs a course in biblical theology, and leaders especially need it, for they are responsible to protect the rest of the**

body from the cleverness and appeal of false doctrine. Paul says in II Tim. 3:16 that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine. So wherever you are in Bible study, remember that your goal is to let the truth of that part of the Bible establish in you some biblical doctrine that will give you a basis to evaluate the things you hear. Walter Martin, author of over 15 books and the world authority on cults in the United States, says there are nearly 20 million cult members in this country. And they have an enormous impact on the things we see and hear.

Our culture provides an ideal environment for the growth of cults. We are fanatics for what is new and improved, and the cults work this for all its worth. They all have this characteristic: They have a new and improved revelation from God. Many of them say the Bible is okay, but it's not the latest thing. If you want to be on the cutting edge you will follow us, for we have the new and improved pure truth. This appeals to a people who are interested in what is up to date and current. The cults portray Christians as being in the stone age of God's revelation. If you want to be with it, you will be with us.

Add to this their focus on the self-centeredness of our culture. Look out for number one. Self is the most important single entity in the universe. Self-help books by the dozens are the best sellers in the land. Forget the idea that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. This is not good for self-esteem. You can be all you can be is the popular message. You can be set free to be successful, beautiful, healthy, and have the best of everything. You can become your own god is the subtle message that all the cults capitalize on. Self-deification is the bottom line which takes us right back to the origin of evil where Lucifer sought to exalt himself as God. The cults are not up to date at all, but are as old fashioned as the devil himself, for their goal is self-deification. Why submit to God when you can be your own god?

**This appeals to the American mind, and so you can find books galore to help you become your own god in all the best book stores. Time magazine back in 1988 noted that there were over 25 hundred new age or occult book stores in the U. S. The point is that false doctrine is everywhere, and people are reading it by the millions everyday. The media that bombards us everyday is influence by these ideas, and so the Christian needs to be evaluating everything by the Bible. Is it according to sound doctrine, and does it ring true to the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles? If you don't feel sure about it, then be very skeptical until you search the Scriptures to find the evidence you need to support it or reject it.**

**The Christian faith is based on an objective revelation, and this is the measure by which we test all things. If any teaching is not compatible with the New Testament it is to be declared false doctrine and avoided. Why is there so much false doctrine? Paul says in verse 11 that it is because there are so many rebellious people. Other translations say so many insubordinate people, or people not willing to be submissive. These kinds of people love false doctrines because they hate the authority of anyone trying to tell them what to do and believe. They want to be free to do their own thing, and so they modify the Christian faith to fit their individual preferences. They are mere talkers always trying to rationalize their rebellion against authority. Unfortunately, he says they often succeed in deceiving others into following them.**

**This battle is fought on a thousand fronts all through history. One of the first signs that you are dealing with a heresy, or a cult, is the message that comes through that in some way you save yourself. This is the bottom line of all false doctrine. It says that Jesus is not the only way. You can get to heaven by some other route and be your own savior. This is so appealing to the pride of men, for what can be a greater ego builder than to believe you can save yourself? This is the number one heresy of history, and it is often packaged so**

**cleverly that even Christian people fall for it as they obviously did in Crete.**

**This word that Paul uses for ruining whole households he uses again in II Tim. 3 where he is dealing with the false doctrine that came into Timothy's church. He writes in verses 17-19, "Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some." The word destroy is the same word Paul uses here. False doctrine can ruin and destroy people's faith. It is a great evil to allow false doctrine, and so Paul says it must be silenced. It is a never ending battle to keep Christians focused on the truth of God's Word, and not get sidetracked by the clever reasoning of men.**

**You would think mere talkers would be no threat to anybody. We say that talk is cheap, but the fact is, mere talkers scared Paul because people listen to talkers and are led astray. They may be like blind men telling you how to find a black cat in a dark room that isn't there, but their empty talk can do great damage because all of us are gullible. All Satan had was mere talk, but he persuaded Adam and Eve to disobey God with his clever words. Never underestimate the power of mere talkers. Words are powerful weapons and they could lead Christians to follow the way of heresy.**

**We have a problem today that did not exist in Paul's day. If Titus and Timothy could silence the voices of heresy in their churches, the Christians were safe from its destructive power. Today the world is full of books of all kinds, and mass media loaded with heretical doctrine. I find it even in our own church library as people donate books that they do not realize are published by the cults. A reading Christian today will likely be exposed to false doctrine, and so the challenge is even greater than it was for Titus and Timothy to get Christians grounded in sound doctrine.**

**Almost every cult in America was started by clever talkers. They learn that people are easily persuaded by eloquence and clever talk. They use this power to deceive, and as they did in Paul's day, they do it for the sake of dishonest gain. You can get rich quite fast in America if you have some religious gimmick. Some have sold bottle of water from the Jordan River, and some have sold healing hankies, and a host of other things that give people hope of direct contact with God through manmade products. But the biggest gimmick of all is to sell words. The greatest conflict in the world is the battle of the Word against words. God's Word against the words of men.**

**Clever words can give us false assurance even though they are empty. A woman worried about her heart called to talk to her doctor. He said, "You need not worry. Your heart will last as long as you live." She felt comforted by such meaningless words. A nervous lady went to a captain of a ship on its way to Europe by the Northern route. She asked, "What would happen if we struck and iceberg?" The captain replied, "Calm your fears madam. The iceberg would continue on its way as if nothing had happened." She went away assured.**

**These, of course, are ridiculous illustrations of the power of words. But then look at Robert Kennedy's assassin, Sirhan. He was deeply involved with new age thinking. He read The Secret Doctrine by Madam Blavatsky the founder of Theosophy. She taught that man is intrinsically divine, and had the right to see truth from his own perspective independent of all others. He was doing God's will by killing one that he did not like. It was the judgment of God. He was being the god whose will he was carrying out. It was all logical and reasonable within the system he was deceived into by clever words.**

**The new age teaches children that they are perfect and sin is not an issue. If they feel something is right for them, then it is right for**

**them, even if it is a rejection of everyone else's value system. This is destroying families today just as heresy was doing in Paul's day. What is so deceptive about the new age doctrine is they use good words and so we who love good words can be taken in by them. Words like Jesus is divine are a sure eye catcher for those of us who love Jesus as Lord. But what we do not see is that they mean nothing by the words. They think the same about every religious leader in history. All of us are divine and so Jesus is just like everyone else and not the Lord and the most unique man of history because he was also God. The words Jesus is divine in their meaning is really a heresy. Things are just the same today as in Paul's day, and so it is still essential that we all be anchored in sound doctrine.**

## **12. CULTURE CONFORMED CHRISTIANS Titus 1:15-16**

**An insurance adjuster tells of a life policy taken out in the name of Abraham Brown in a small southern town. For five years the insurance company received the premiums when they were due. Then all of a sudden they stopped without warning. The company sent several notices and then finally there came this reply: "Dear Sirs: Hope you will excuse us. We can't pay no more insurance on Abe because he died last Sept. Yours truly, Mrs. A. L. Brown."**

**Here was a wife more ignorant than most about insurance, but the fact is we live in a world when all of us are ignorant about so many things and the result is there are con people everywhere seeking to profit from our ignorance. Like the salesman who was bragging about selling a widow a new suit for her husband to be buried in. He was bragging because he sold her a suit with an extra pair of pants.**



**The desire to profit from others ignorance and gullibility was a problem in Paul's day even in the church where he says in v.11 that eloquent con artists were teaching false doctrine for the sake of dishonest gain. It is a universal trait of human nature, and so even on this island of lazy people some were working hard to deceive and rip off the people.**

**A father have his little boy a dollar for his birthday and the boy spent all afternoon going from store to store asking the clerk to change the dollar into silver, and then he would go and get it changed back to a dollar bill. When his father heard of it he asked the reason. Little Sanday replied, "Sooner or later somebody is goin to make a mistake and it ain't going to be me." Here was a small lad illustrating the universal desire to make a profit off of other people's mistakes. Unfortunately, such crime does pay, and that is why Paul is so strong in his determination to silence the con artists in the church. . They were making a profit and their victims were suffering great loss.**

**Paul is giving witness to the great power of words to both defend the faith and to destroy it. ?Words can ruin lives or redeem them. When Paul says they are mere talkers he does not mean they are no threat because of their empty words. He says they are a great threat, for words are weapons that can do what bullets and bombs cannot do. Words have awesome power for good or evil, and it is a never ending battle to keep them from being destructive. James says in his letter in 3:5-6, "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and it itself set on fire by hell."**

**The tragic truth is, both Paul and James are writing about Christians when they describe the destructive power of the tongue. Christians destroy the lives of other Christians by gossip and**

slander, as well as by false teaching. This has not change since the days of Paul. Good people still start fires that do great damage. I read about the greatest prairie fire to ever take place in Kansas. It was set by an officer of the U. S. government. He and a party of officers from Fort Hayes were returning from a wild turkey hunt. This officer just wanted to shock and surprise the others. It was a practical joke he had in mind when he touched a match to the dry grass. He had no idea of the power he was dealing with. The fire took off like a frightened deer and swept across the prairie. Nothing could stop it. It swept all the way across Kansas into Oklahoma and burned out thousands of settlers. They not only lost their homes but their horses and cattle as well.

The deep remorse of the officer could not take back the damage his careless act had caused. He did not intend it to get out of hand, but he had no control once it was set loose. So it is with words. Once you let the fire of words get started you no longer have control over them. They can go about doing damage you never intended. That is why Paul says to Titus that the only way to go is to prevent the words from being uttered. Silence the false teachers and don't let their flame throwers be turned on. This is easier said than done, and in our culture it is nearly impossible.

Paul says that Christian leaders have a two fold responsibility. One is to promote sound doctrine and the second is to prevent false doctrine from being taught. Tolerance is a great virtue, but it has its limitations. When teaching is false, and it harms people's lives and faith, it is to be no longer tolerated. Christians are to be open minded and let a variety of perspectives be shared, for great and godly leaders have different insights into God's Word. The variety must always have its unity in Christ, however, and be consistent with God's Word.

When teaching departs from this standard it is no longer to be

**tolerated as a Christian option, but it is to be labeled for what it is, and that is heresy. Those holding to it, or teaching it, are to be rebuked says Paul so that they will reexamine their ideas in the light of the Word, and return to a sound faith based on its truth. This puts Christians into a paradoxical situation in our land of freedom. It is a right in our land to hold to any religious conviction you choose. If you desire to worship cardboard and have a chapel of cardboard in your back yard, and save cardboard as if it was the most valuable possession in the universe, and write prayers on your cardboard, and try to win others in your community to join you in your cardboard religion, that is your right, and Christians have to support that right. It is a duty of American Christians to honor that right and tolerate it.**

**But here is where the separation of church and state comes in. A Christian is not to tolerate such religious nonsense in the church. If a church member begins to exult cardboard to the level of worship, and starts encouraging others to do so, that is not to be tolerated, but to the rebuked. What is right for a Christian to tolerate as a citizen of the United States is not to be tolerated as a citizen of the kingdom of God. The two kingdoms are intertwined in many ways, but they are radically different also, and when they are linked together as one there is inevitable tragedy.**

**If Christians, for example, get political power and say that the state must deal with heresy just as the church does, then you lose the very foundation of religious freedom that we love in America. If Christians in government say that we will no longer tolerate the worship of cardboard, and they ban all the cardboard religion, they have broken down the wall of separation between the church and state. Once that happens they can say that now we will no longer tolerate any religious idea that is not sanctioned by the church. Now you have the basis for the Inquisition where people who did not conform to the convictions of the church were killed, and all their**

**property was confiscated by the church.**

**Baptists are famous for their centuries of fighting for the separation of church and state. It is because every time the two become one there is great evil. Thank God everyday that the President and Congress cannot tell any American how they are to worship, and what they are to believe. This is one of the greatest freedoms of life, and most people in history have never enjoyed it.**

**In the state we have to tolerate freedom of religion, for that is the freedom we demand and expect. But in the church we are not to tolerate freedom to believe and teach whatever people choose. We are to be intolerant of all but what is taught in God's revelation. There are different perspectives, and so we have to allow for variety, but nothing that is clearly contrary to Scripture is to be tolerated. The Christian lives in two kingdoms. In one he is to be opened minded and tolerant even of heresy. In the other he is to be closed minded and totally intolerant of heresy. If you switch these two perspectives, and you become intolerant as a citizen you are a bad American. If you become tolerant as a church leader, you are a bad Christian.**

**Paul is only dealing with the church here, and he does not tell Titus to go out and rebuke the Cretans outside of the church for being liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons. The people he is to rebuke are the Christians who are following their culture rather than Christ. Christians need to be rebuked when they conform to their culture and fail to give the world an alternative life-style. The Cretan Christians were strongly influenced by their culture. They were using the church to do what they did in their culture, and that was to rip off the gullible for the sake of gain.**

**Polybius wrote of them, "So much in fact do sorted love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them, that the Cretans are the**

**only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful." If a fellow Christian leaves the church and loses his faith, that is no big deal if I make a profit in the deal. There were serious problems in this church, and probably more than most, for Paul admits that the insults heaped upon the Cretans is not slander at all, but it is a valid judgment.**

**In verse 12 he quotes one of their own prophets. We know Paul was quite a reader of pagan authors, for he quotes from them three times in the New Testament. The prophet he quotes here is Epimenedes of Crete. He lived back in the 5th century B. C. He was called the 7th wise man of Greece, and Cicero, the ancient Latin author who lived 106-43 B. C., wrote of him, "He knew future events and prophesied under a divine influence." In Acts 17:28 Paul quotes the pagan poet Aratus, and in I Cor. 15:33 he quotes Menander. It may be shocking that part of the New Testament was written by pagans, for Paul is quoting them favorably, but this is an important issue to consider.**

**If it is valid to quote a non-Christian because what they say is true, then this means a Christian needs to be a student of the best of his culture. This is what a liberal arts education is all about. You study the history of man, his acts, literature, and music, and not just the Bible and Christian history. They are the foundation of our faith, but they are not the soul source of knowledge and wisdom. Calvin wrote, "All truth is from God, and consequently, if wicked men have said anything that is true and just, we ought not to reject it for it has come from God." Luther wrote, "Truth comes from the Holy Spirit regardless of who says it, especially the true saying of the poets, when they show us our sins."**

**I quote pagan authors every once in awhile because they are found in all quotation books, and they say some things in a concise and brilliant way that is biblically valid. A Christian who says**

**something which is not true should not be quoted, but a pagan who says what is true should be quoted. The New Testament, and especially Paul, promotes a liberal arts education in which a Christian reads and learns all they can from the secular world, and then seek to see how it fits into the biblical world view. Calvin said, "From this passage we may infer that those persons are superstitious, who do not venture to borrow anything from heathen authors." The point is, Paul is fighting heresy in the church and not truth outside the church. False doctrines taught by Christians is what damages the body of Christ, and not truth taught by pagans.**

**What people often do not realize is that the classical pagan literature of the ancient world was preserved in the Christian monasteries. It has always been a Christian conviction that you cannot study history and man if you do not read the literature of men. There is a ton of trash nobody needs to read, but all Christians should read some secular literature, for it is part of wisdom to know the value system of those who oppose the Christian value system.**

**But lets get back to Paul's insult of the Cretans. It seems out of character for Paul to say Epimenedes knew his subject well when he called them liars, evil brutes and lazy gluttons. Whatever happened to, "If you can't say something nice about someone, don't say anything at all?" This little proverb is not in the Bible, and there are just times when there is a need to say the bad thing. For Paul it was here in dealing with the Cretans. They were just to conformed to their culture. They needed to be treated roughly because that was the only language they understood.**

**They were a crude people and had a bad reputation. Cicero, the ancient writer, said, "Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans consider highway robbery to be honorable. The ancients called Crete the land of liars. Paul does not leap to the defense of**

these people, but instead he confirms the insult in verse 13, and says that this testimony is true. Paul knew these people lived up to their terrible reputation, and many of them were Christians who needed to be sharply rebuked. The goal is that they maybe sound in the faith. You cannot save a pagan and make them sound in the faith by rebuke, and so it is clear that it was the Cretan Christians who were still liars, evil brutes and lazy gluttons. Talk about being conformed to the culture. These Christians were radically conformed.

When Christians are this far from Christlikeness there is no alternative but the way of rebuke. Paul knows the Cretan Christians have to be dealt with severely or they will never be what they ought to be. There is a place for being highly critical and judgmental as a Christian, and that is when you are dealing with Christians who are Cretan-like rather than Christ-like. If a Christian is no different from the culture in their life style, they need to be rebuked, or they will never be sound in the faith. But you will note that Paul did not say to Titus that he should pack up and get out of that God-forsaken island as fast as he could. Or that it is so corrupt and evil that it is no place for the church to try and make a difference.

There is no place so bad that the church should not be there. The worse the place is plagued by evil the more the need of the Word of God to change it. You do not forsake bad people. You labor to make them sanctified saints, for that is the point of the Gospel. It does not just save people for eternity. It saves people for time as well. The pagan that Paul quotes said those bad things about the Cretans almost 600 years before Paul's time, and Paul says nothing has changed in over half a millennium. There is nothing that can change it but the Word of God.

Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher, said, "Out of such crooked material as man is made of, nothing can be hammered quite

**straight." Paul disagreed with this. He was optimistic about the power of the Gospel. He was convinced that the worse people can become sound in the faith and be people who bring honor to Christ by their godly lives. It was not just theory but fact, for he was a terrible self-centered person who hated others who did not conform to his ideas. In Titus 3:3-5 he includes himself, and all the Christians he knew, as being quite godless in their pre-salvation state. He writes, "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy."**

**Human nature is not basis for optimism, but God's mercy is, for the worst of people can become the best of people by the mercy of God. Paul was a prime example of this. The goal is to take these people with such a bad reputation and make them examples of the grace of God. In this sense the New Testament church was and is our ideal. It is a body of people far from what they ought to be, but moving in the right direction by the grace of God.**

**Howard Hendriks is one of the great Christian communicators of our time, but he may have never been so had he not been severely rebuked for his self-centeredness as a student. Here is his testimony: "A man in Wheaton, Ill., changed the whole course of my life when I was a student at Wheaton College. He called me into his office, sat me down, and every time I opened my mouth he said, "Keep your mouth shut and listen." I came out of that office so mad I could have spit nails. But today I call this man blessed because he's the only man who cared enough about me to face me with hard facts about my stubborn self-will. I made a 180-degree turn that I'm still following. "Open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a friend are better than kisses from an enemy!" "(Prov. 27:5-6, LB).**



**Ungodly behavior in Christians who conform to their culture is to be rebuked so that they can get on the right track and become sound in the faith. Stuart Briscoe sees the need to apply this to Christians who bring their secular thinking into the church and try to make it conform to the secular culture. He writes, "Now, it's the easiest thing in the world for people to become totally secularized in their thinking. Then they bring their thinking into the community of believers, demonstrating their utter biblical illiteracy, but chattering on about secular concepts and ideas, trying to twist them into biblical or spiritual principles. The secular world does not take time to find out what God's Word says, but they bring all their secular thinking to bear on the affairs of the church and try to fit the church into the mold of basic secular thinking. When people do that, the Apostle Paul says, "Rebuke them sharply."**

**He goes on to give examples of people who get into the singles ministry because there are so many lovely single women who can be easily led. The problem is that they are easily led to bed, and the show of spirituality is just designed to engage in sensuality. His point is, Cretan Christians are still with us. People who are captives to the culture, and who seek to get the ways of the world to dominate the church are still active.**

**If Christians are not different from the world in the way they do business, and in the way they live and think, then they are cultural Christians, and not the product of the Word of God. The goal is not to be a New Testament Christian, for they were often terrible. The goal is to be a biblical Christian, which means to be of sound doctrine, and with behavior and life-style consistent with the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles.**

**The importance of seeing this is that we become aware that being saved is easy. We do nothing but trust in the finished work of Christ. All we do is receive the gift of eternal life by trusting him as**

**our Savior. But there is a hard part that follows, and that is where we have to enter into the process and work like mad to be sanctified. We have to study the Word, pray, and seek forgiveness when we fail. We have to strive to grow and choose to conform to the image of Christ. It calls for commitment and discipline, and just plain hard work to become a good Christian. The only hope of success is to be aware that we are all under a lot of pressure to be molded by our culture. We need to make a conscious commitment to not become culture-conformed Christians.**

### **13. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF WOMEN Based on Titus 2:1-8**

**Janette George played the role of Corrie Ten Boom in the movie The Hiding Place. She wrote an interesting book called Travel Tips For The Reluctant Traveler. In it she tells of her 35th birthday. That was the year she finally accepted the fact that she would never play Peter Pan. But she expected a lot in life, and especially as she woke that Sunday morning of her birthday. She laid in bed waiting for the first telephone call to greet her with good wishes. But when none came she reasoned that they were being thoughtful and waiting until afternoon. She had expected something in the mail the day before, but she just assumed the mail was late as usual. She got ready for church and dressed in her very best dress because she had a lot of friends at church, and she figured they might make something special of her birthday. But her Sunday School class did nothing to acknowledge her birthday. She thought that they probably notified the pastor to say something from the pulpit, but that did not happen either.**

**Persisting in her optimism she thought that they are probably planning a special lunch, and so she lingered after the service**

**waiting for someone to invite her to this event. But no one said a thing. She reasoned that her friends knew where she ate on Sundays, and they would probably have a table reserved and would be ready to surprise her. She went to her favorite eating place and walked in prepared to register her surprise at the table full of laughing friends, but there was no such table.**

**Most people would be facing reality by this time, but Janette was an incurable optimist. As she ate alone she concluded that her friends were probably waiting at her apartment to surprise her. This, of course, proved to be mere fantasy like all her other speculations, and she sat alone puzzled by the lack of response. She knew the phone had to ring, for the man who wanted her to marry him was out of town, but he would certainly call on her birthday. Her mother was also a sure thing, but it never rang. Now listen to her own words:**

**"By the middle of the afternoon, I accepted it. No one was going to pop out of the closet with lighted candles on a walnut cake. No one was going to arrive from out of town. My birthday meant nothing to anybody! I cried a bit in moist self-pity, regretting every card I have sent to others that year. I even wished I had back the enameled earrings I had given my friend Margaret on her birthday. Tearfully, I stammered a prayer thanking God for my health. (It is one of the few things one can enjoy alone.)**

**"The I became angry. I wasn't going to go down without a struggle. One person could still celebrate my birthday. Me! Still crying, I marched into my bedroom and changed into the boldness costume of youth I could find: a pair of shining pink stretch pants and a silver-gray sweater. I put on makeup, jewelry, high heels, and a blonde wig. Blondes may not have more fun, but they can certainly look cuter in misery. I called out to myself in the mirror, "Happy Birthday! You are still young and will have a wonderful**

**year. Happy Birthday, my friend!"**

**She then went into her living room and sat down and opened the Sunday paper. What hit her was not the headlines, but the date. She was still a week away from her birthday, and all her agony was based on a miscalculation. Nobody remembered her birthday because it was not her birthday. She had made a fool of herself, but fortunately, she was the only one who knew it. This true story illustrates a number of things:**

**The forgetfulness of the human mind.**

**The folly of false assumptions.**

**The fears we foist on ourselves.**

**The forsaken feelings we feel unnecessarily.**

**The one we want to focus on now is the fallibility of the female. Paul has a high respect for women and the role they play in the church. But he also recognizes that, like men, they make plenty of mistakes and need to be taught all kinds of things that we sometimes take for granted are just inherent in being a female. Not so says Paul, for women are fallible and subject to error even in things as basic as loving their husbands and children. They have to be trained to do this well says Paul. This is necessary if they are going to be good Christian wives and mothers.**

**Paul is saying that Christian education is to cover the most practical aspects of life. Christian education is not making sure young women grow up and know the books of the Bible, the names of the Apostles, and hundreds of other Bible facts. All that is good and valuable, but it is not very practical if they do not learn to be good people, good wives, and good moms. Paul says that Christian education is to teach Christian women how to live, and not just how to think and believe. To believe all right and to behave all wrong is to fail in Christian education. Nobody has a more practical**

**curriculum than Paul has right here in Titus 2.**

**Paul tells Titus to start with the older women, and they will then become the teachers of the younger women. In Paul's idea of the ideal church everybody eventually becomes a teacher of others. Let's look at the details. The first thing they need to be taught is to be reverent in the way they live. We usually think of reverence as an attitude of respect we are to have in the presence of God. But Paul says that it is an attitude the older women are to have in all of life, and not just when they come to church.**

**Paul recognizes that there are few things in life that have a greater impact on this world than a reverent woman. The Catholics learned this centuries ago, and that is why the exalted Mary to the level they did. The holy virgin has touched millions through the centuries and around the world because there is something unique and truly special about a holy woman. A truly Christ like woman is one of the most beautiful people that can be conceived. She is a work of art that brings glory to the ultimate Artist. Such purity does not just happen. It has to be taught, and older women are the most likely to be the first to learn how to live a reverent life in such an irreverent world.**

**Paul writes, "Older Christian women should behave in a way that is proper for priests." The Greek word here means proper for priests. Older women in the church have the same high standards as the clergy. Nobody is ever going to call you Rev. Mrs. Brown, but the title is not important. It is the behavior and life style that matters, and Paul says older women are to live on the same level you would expect from one who is ordained to the ministry. Luther says here, "Paul says this in opposition to old women who adorn themselves as though they were girls of 15, which is a sign of frivolity and lust." Older women are to act their age, and live with a dignity that reveals that they have arrived to where their highest**

**goals are to please God and not the world.**

**Paul then gives some specific ways in which this reverent behavior is to be displayed. How a woman uses her tongue is the primary way that she demonstrates her holiness, or lack of it. Paul says to teach the older women not to be slanderers. This was a very serious sin, and it was one where women were more susceptible apparently. Any sin is common to all people, but some are a greater temptation to the female sex. When the Bible deals with lust its primary focus is on the male, for that is where they are most likely to be tempted. When it deals with the sins of the tongue its focus is on the female, for that is where they are most likely to be tempted. Is this being sexist? It is if you do not recognize that females are also lustful, and males are also slanderers. It is not sexist if you are just aware that one sex is more likely to be weaker in some areas than the other sex.**

**Paul only uses this word three times in his letters. He uses it here and then in I Tim. 3:11 where he says to the wives of deacons, "In the same way the wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in all things." Not malicious talkers is the same Greek word. Then in II Tim. 3:3 Paul uses the word in a more general way to cover all people, for slander is one of the signs of the last days. All people will be terrible with their tongue. The Greek word is translated devil 35 times in the New Testament. It is possible for a Christian to let his or her tongue become an instrument of the devil, and the most likely way for this to happen is by slander. The devil is the father of slander, and so when we let our tongue be used in this way we are tools being used for his purpose.**

**A lot of bad stuff has been preached about women based on our text. Both John Calvin and Martin Luther are very negative in their preaching on this verse. But they both point out something**

that we should mention. They both say that the older a woman gets the more likely she will become a slanderer. Older women tend to become more judgmental. They feel that no one is good enough, beautiful enough or pure enough, and so they become accusers of all who are younger than themselves. This is an easy sin to fall into, for as the times change and you see younger people doing what you never did it is so easy to accuse and injure the reputation of others.

If you find yourself being judgmental and putting other people down, do some self-examination for there is a good chance that you are being used of the devil to harm rather than help other people. The devil is the great accuser, and if you tend to do this, you are on his team no matter how righteous you feel about your accusations. The world is filled with people it is easy to slander, but if you take the Bible seriously, you will do a lot of tongue biting and refrain from this activity that is one of the most dangerous you can practice.

You might reason that if someone is obviously wrong that you are free to slander their name. But this is not what God has revealed to us. We read in Jude 9, "But even the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, the Lord rebuke you." Then he goes on to say that men are not so wise as Michael. They speak abusively against all sorts of things they do not understand, and by this folly they bring judgment on themselves. He warns those who misuse their tongue by being grumblers and fault finders that they will suffer severely in the judgment. This is a scary letter for those who do not learn to control their tongue. Slander is so popular in our culture that I fear many Christians never give it a thought that God may hate what we so easily accept. Paul is telling Titus to teach older women to avoid this serious sin that comes most easily to them.

The next thing Paul says older women are not to be is, addicted

to much wine. We have already dealt with this issue, for it is one of the requirements of elders that they be not given to much wine. Here is an area of life where the temptation to indulge seems to be equal for both sexes. Alcohol is a drug that both sexes have used and abused all through history. The Greeks and the Romans loved their wine, and the older people tended to abuse it more. The doctors in that day denied it to the young but prescribed it freely for the older people. Alcohol has always been a crutch for people to use in order to cope with life's loneliness and poor self-esteem.

Lillian Roth, the actress, has a testimony that fits tens of thousands. She said, "I always felt inadequate....I never liked the person I was, and later, I found alcohol helped me run away from myself." In a fallen world there are a lot of things everyone wants to escape, and wine is an aid to escape, and so it is a temptation even to Christians. Paul makes it clear that no Christian is to use alcohol in such a way that it damages their dignity, or causes anyone to lose respect for them. An older woman would lose respect rapidly if she was a loud mouth accuser and a heavy drinker. Some Cretan women were living this kind of life, and they needed to be taught that this is not acceptable behavior for a Christian woman.

They are not only to stop doing these bad things, but they were to become teachers of what is good. It is hard to teach what is good if you are being bad. How can you teach others to be loving and kind if you use your tongue to belittle and defame others? How can you teach others to live a life of respect and dignity if you are getting drunk and making a fool of yourself? Paul expected older women to be teachers. I have heard it often over the years as older women say, "I have taught children for many years, and so now let the younger women do it." This may be valid, but for an older woman to say she is through with teaching is folly, for she cannot help but be a teacher, for by her attitudes and actions she is teaching all the time.



**Paul says her focus is to be on the younger women. The primary focus he says is to, "Train young women to love their husbands and children." You would think this would be just natural, but let's face reality. The reason the divorce rate is so sky high in our culture is because young women never get this training. Wives do not know how to love their mates automatically, and nobody trains them, and so the failure rate is enormous. Loving husbands and kids is no easy task. It takes much wisdom and skill. In our day there are thousands of books and magazines to give young women the guidance they need. Paul did not have this in his day. Now we even have a vast number of videos, tapes, and libraries filled with aids to help wives love their husbands and children, but with all of this there is more failure than there was before we had it all.**

**What is the problem? The problem is that you cannot get experience out of a book, video, or tape. Paul's way is still the best way. The older women have been able to survive years of the ups and downs of marriage. They know how the male mind and body works. They should be the best resource for knowing how to love a man. This personal wisdom from an older woman is the best kind of practical education. Paul puts a high priority on experience. He does not say, get young wives to read their Bible and all will be well. You cannot learn to love your husband by reading the Bible. You need the counsel of an older wife who knows what the battles of marriage are all about, and who is a veteran who has survived them.**

**Not all older women are good teachers of young wives. I know of older women who hate sex and who tell the younger women that men are beasts, and they fill their minds with terrible advice. I have counseled many of these victims myself. Older women can be a curse to younger women by passing on the foolish and harmful information of their own mistakes. But happily married older women are the best resource for younger women to learn from when it comes to marriage. Wise is the younger woman who has an older**

woman for a teacher.

**You will notice that Titus is to teach everyone that Paul mentions except these younger wives. The implication is clear. Paul is dealing here with sex education that older women need to pass on to the younger women. Times have changed radically, and school girls now get information in school that even older women do not know. The fact is, however, that it will never happen that there will be a better way to teach than to have a wise experienced person share what they have learned by their years of experience.**

**I have a pile of books on the computer, but I can learn more in a few minutes with a person of experience than I can learn in many hours of reading those books. Give me the person of experience for my teacher. Paul's way is still the best, but we are deceived by the radical changes of culture. We think that because of all the knowledge available through modern technology we can forget the personal communication learned by experience. This is a trick of the devil that has become very effective. Older women no longer teach younger women because it seems unnecessary. We are reaping the harvest of this mistake. We need to get back to the New Testament idea of discipleship where an older Christian gives guidance to a younger Christian.**

**We need to keep in mind that many wives in biblical days did not chose their husbands. Their marriages were arranged by their parents, so they did not love the man they married. They needed to learn to love them in marriage. Love then is not just a feeling. It is a matter of choices. Love is what you do, and these younger women were to be trained so they would do what was loving to their husbands and children. The by-product would be the good feelings that we call love.**

**Jesus chose to die even for those who gave Him very negative**

**feelings. His love was not a matter of emotion, but it was a matter of the will and the choices He made. Being a loving wife and mother is likewise a matter of choices, and these choices can be learned. You can learn what choices to make when your husband is neglectful and your children are disobedient. When everyone you care about is being a pain, you can make wise or foolish choices. Learning the wise ones is what Christian education is all about. Learning to make loving choices is what love is all about. Love is the most practical of all the virtues. Helen Marshall put it in poetry:**

**Reason faces up to life,  
And sees things as they are;  
Hope sees things as they ought to be,  
And wishes on a star;  
Faith dreams of miracles to come  
That only God can do;  
Love to goes to work with patient hands  
To make those dreams come true.**

**The point is, love is not how you feel or dream, but it is what you do. Love chooses, and love acts, and the loving choices in acts can be learned. The trained Christian is one who can ask in any situation in life, "What is the loving thing to do in this situation?" And then they can make that loving choice. The untrained Christian will act on emotion or cultural forces that often are not the loving choice. If young mothers go by their feelings, they are going to be unloving and abusive to their children, for children provoke a lot of negative emotions, and so can husbands.**

**You will notice that Paul says in verse 5, right after the being trained to love husbands and children, that they are to be self-controlled. This means they are not being controlled by their emotions or cultural values which may not be biblical. They are to be in control so that they make the choices as to how they respond to**

**their husband and children. Again, the whole point of Paul in all of this letter to Titus is that being a Christian is a matter of learning and training. You need to learn the right choices to be a loving Christian wife and mother. If you don't learn the right choices, you can be a child of God with the hope of eternal life, but you will not be a Christian in behavior, and you will not be an example of what Christ can do in this life through a person who is submissive to His Lordship.**

**Why are Christians so often un-Christlike? We are all so often making choices based on self-centeredness and cultural conditioning. Christians can be awful people to deal with, and as sinful as their attitudes and actions as any lost person. It is so because we have not learned how to make the loving choices. We have not learned to ask, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" And then we have not chosen to do what we know He would choose. This is the goal of Christian education, and because we have not pursued this goal we all short of being like Christ. A young Christian woman cannot even love her husband and children properly if she is not taught the choices she needs to make to be loving.**

**The older women are not to be slanderers, but to teach what is good. Wives tend to slander their husbands often, and this is always an unloving choice. The damage this does to any relationship is great. Typical is the wife of the movie star whose husband went off fishing and left her alone. When someone called asking where he could be found she said, "Just go down to the bridge and look around until you find a pole with a worm on each end." The issue is not whether he was a worm or not, but rather, was this a loving choice to make or not? Maybe he was a worm to her because she talks to him and about him in a slanderous way. A different choice on her part could make a world of difference in their relationship.**

**Someone wisely said, "No man ever told a woman she talked too much when she is telling him how wonderful he is!" This works both ways, of course, but the evidence indicates that women are more likely to bad mouth their husbands than husbands their wives. Older women who are mature Christians need to help younger women learn the power of loving words and choices that produce strong relationships. May God help us find ways to implement Paul's advice, for in essence he is saying that the key to happy and healthy Christian families is in the Christian education of women.**

#### **14. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION Based on Titus 2:1-10**

**One of the most remarkable stories in the history of horse training is that of the horse named Snow Man. There is an old verse that jockeys supposedly whisper into the horses ear before a race:**

**Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
Horses that lose  
Are made into glue.**

**Snow Man apparently heard this poem once to often, and he was loaded into a van with some other nags heading for the dog food factory. But a man named Harry De Leyer who knew horses saw this big white horse and decided to buy it. He gave 70 dollars for it. It was in really bad shape. One shoe was missing, and it was filthy. Collar marks revealed that it had been in harness. De Leyer cleaned him up and sold him to a doctor for a nice profit. But the horse liked De Leyer so much that he jumped the fence and came trotting back to him. The doctor built a higher fence and Snow Man jumped that too. The doctor demanded his money back, and so De Leyer**

**was stuck with the horse.**

**He decided that if the horse could jump a fence maybe he could be trained to be a jumper. He began to train Snow Man seriously, and in his first show he beat the champion. He kept winning jumps until he went on to Madison Square Garden where he knocked off the reigning world champion by the name of First Chance. Within 6 months Snow Man went from dog meat to capture the triple crown in jumping, and he became the world champion.**

**This true story illustrates the purpose of Paul in this letter to Titus. He makes it clear that there are a number of crummy Cretan Christians who are the equivalent of a nag heading to the dog food factory. He closes the first chapter with a statement that they are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good. In horse language they were glue material. But Paul says to Titus that he should not give up. The goal is to teach and train and get these worthless rebels sound in their doctrine and faith so they can be champion Christians.**

**It is not easy and it is not automatic. It is a challenge, but losers can become winners, and bad Christians can become good Christians. The secret to success is Christian education. Just as Snow Man could be trained, so can Christians. Chapter two is a loud and clear call to make Christian education a priority in the church. Here is a brief survey of chapter two.**

**v. 1 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.**

**v. 2 Likewise teach the older women. Old people are very teachable, and God expects them to learn new tricks for Christ. It is old dogs that you can't teach new tricks to, and not old people.**

**v. 3 Not only are the older women to learn, but they are to also teach.**

**v. 4 Older women are to train the younger women.**

- v. 7 In your teaching show integrity and seriousness.**
- v. 9 Teach slaves.**
- v.10 Make teaching about God attractive.**
- v.12 God's grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness.**
- v.15 These things you should teach.**

**In ten out of the 15 verses of this chapter Paul actually uses the words for teaching. The other 5 are involved as well, even though the word is not used. There is no other place where Paul is so focused on teaching as the task of the pastor and all church leaders. To Paul the local church is to be a school for the education of saints. Christians do not think like Christ, or act like Christ automatically. They need to be taught. Becoming a Christian in one's life style is achieved by learning. You are saved by trust in Christ. You respond in faith and accept Jesus as your Savior, and you become a child of God. But being saved is like being born again. You are just a baby and far from being like the Savior who saved you. The only way to become Christian in your thinking, attitudes, and behavior is to be taught.**

**Christian education is the most basic aspect of the life of the Christian. Everyone in the body of Christ is to be learning all the time. This means that everyone who can be a teacher is to be a teacher. Teaching and learning is what the church is all about. Preach is only found 52 times in the Bible, but teach is found 114 times. There is no higher calling than to be a teacher in the kingdom of God. To teach biblical truth is to be partners with Christ and the Holy Spirit in the greatest task on earth. Part of the Great Commission of Jesus in Matt. 28:19 is to go and teach all nations. Jesus spent most of His public ministry teaching. He taught in the synagogue, on the hillside, and from the ship in the sea.**

**When Jesus was not teaching the multitudes He was teaching His disciples privately. They had the best teacher in the world, but**

even after all His teaching they were not done learning, for Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit to teach them all things. The major work of the Holy Spirit is to teach, and Paul says this is the major work of the church. He said that he was not opposed to tongues, but he would rather speak 5 words that would teach others something than ten thousand that were in an unknown tongue. Paul is saying that the way we judge the value of what we do in the church is not by how it makes us feel, but does it teach us. He said the great task of Timothy was to teach faithful men so they could in turn teach others.

We could go on and on dealing with all the verses that focus on the necessity of teaching. The church that is not a school is not a New Testament church. If people are not being taught the truth of God's Word and how to live a practical Christian life, then the church is failing to be what Christ expects it to be. Paul gets very specific as to who is to be taught what. In verse 2 he starts with the older men. Older men are to set the spiritual tone of the church. They are to be examples of what a good Christian ought to be. Cicero, over 50 years before Christ, said, "Old age may be animated with more courage and fortitude than is usually found even in the prime of life." Pagan wisdom supports the Jewish and Christian conviction that old age is never an excuse to stop learning.

Older people are to be taught to be temperate. The KJV has the word sober, and this is part of the meaning. To be temperate means to use moderation in all things, and that includes the use of wine, but it is not limited to the danger of drunkenness. To be sober means more than not being drunk. It means one is watchful so as to abstain from excess in all areas of life. Paul is saying that an older man is to be an example of balance. This was recognized as a virtue among the pagans, and Paul's whole point is that the Christian should be taught to be as good as the best pagans.



**Horace, one of the great Roman poets who lived in 8 B. C., and who was likely read by Paul, wrote, "There is a mean in all things; and moreover, certain limits on either side of which right cannot be found." The inscription on the walls of the temple at Delphi was, "Avoid excess." Paul lived in a world where the best pagans knew that the temperate life, that is the life of moderation, was the life of wisdom. He expected Christians to learn this and become examples of it that the pagan world could admire and respect. This is a major goal of the church to teach Christians to so live that they gain the respect of people in their culture. That is the next virtue Paul says the older men are to be taught. It is to be worthy of respect. This is not limited just to older men. It is the same virtue the deacons the women of the church are to aim for as well. Paul writes in I Tim. 3:18, "Deacons are to be men worthy of respect," and in 3:11 he writes, "In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect."**

**The standard for the common layman and the leaders are just the same. The standard for the male and female are the same. All Christians are to live a life that is worthy of respect. If non-Christians do not like you and respect you, you are not an asset to the kingdom of God. Why should anyone be interested in knowing more about a faith that does not produce in people what they admire? It is when people admire the Christian that they are drawn to the faith that made them worthy of this respect. Respectability is a goal for every Christian. Paul tells Titus to teach this first of all to the older men. They of all people need to be worthy of respect.**

**Then Paul says to teach them to be self-controlled. Again we see the same high standard for the leaders of the church is to be the standard for the followers as well. It is not as though the average Christian is free to be a slipshod Christian just because they are not leaders. They are not to be tossed about and unstable so that they**

**are not in control of their lives, but are being controlled by their culture, and any false doctrine that comes along. Christian men are to be in charge of their lives and not be manipulated by the whims and fads of society.**

**Paul refers to this virtue 5 times in the this letter to Titus. He is greatly concerned that Christian learn to be self-controlled and not controlled by the popular passions of the culture. This is relevant to our day as well, for what is popular captivates the Christian as well as others, and they can be caught up in the ways of the culture in the way they spend their time, energy, and resources. They only have leftovers for the kingdom of God because they are not self-controlled. The less you are self-controlled the less you are living a life pleasing to God. If you are not in control of your own life, you will not be free to do God's will. You will be in bondage to the will of others.**

**In verse 6 Paul says the younger men need to be self-controlled as well, but for youth the control is to be over their desires and passions, but for the older men the need is to be in control of their attitudes so that they do not become cynical. Dorothy Parker in The Veteran gives us a picture of the danger:**

**"When I was young and bold and strong  
Oh, right was right, and wrong was wrong!  
My plume on high, my flag unfurled,  
I rode away to right the world.  
Come out you dogs, and fight! said I,  
And wept there was but once to die.  
But I am old: and good and bad  
Are woven in a crazy plaid.  
I sit and say, the world is so,  
And he is wise who lets it go.  
A battle lost, a battle won,**

**The difference is small, my son."**

**Here was an older man who had lost control and was no longer in charge of his life fighting for the good and the right. He was now under the control of the pessimism of the aged. Life does not change. The same problems and sins of the former generations are still the same, and so why bother to fight. He yielded the control of his life to the reality of a fallen world. It seems logical enough, but what he failed to consider is that God does not expect His people to perfect the world, but only to be the light and salt so that some of the world will come out of the world and become children of God.**

**You cannot surrender to the world's fallenness just because it will ever be so till the end of time. Self-control will keep you committed to winning some of the world no matter how bad it is. It will always be the world until the judgment day, but the Christian is to present the world with an alternative that they can respect and admire, and hopefully choose it as the way they too will go. Without self-control Christians get sidetracked, and they forget the very reason Jesus left His church in the world.**

**The next thing the older men are to be taught is to be sound in faith. This means they are to have a healthy theology. There was much sick theology around that damaged lives, and Paul said that people need to have a healthy theology to fight the false doctrines. He keeps harping on sound doctrine in this letter, for the health of the church depends on its being founded on healthy thinking about God. The Greek word Paul uses here is the word for being whole and healthy. It is the same word Dr. Luke used in Luke 5:31 where he quotes Jesus saying, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick..."**

**Healthy is the same words Paul used for sound doctrine. Dr. Luke used it again in Luke 7:10 where he says, "They found the**

**servant well." The Apostle John used it in III John 2 where he says, "I pray that you may enjoy good health." Christians are in good spiritual health when their faith is sound. That is, their understanding of God, of Christ, and of their plan for the world are based on the clear revelation of God, and not twisted by myths and superstitious nonsense of men.**

**Then Paul says that these older men are to be taught to be sound in love. Healthy love is not necessarily known even by older men. There is so much unhealthy love in the world that has nothing to do with the love of God for mankind. It is often self-centered manipulation of others, or sheer lust, or some kind of neurotic dependence. Good healthy love where you really learn to care about other people and what is best for them is not automatic even for a Christian. Christians can be just as perverted in love and exhibit sick love just like anyone else.**

**Paul writes in II Tim. 4:10, "Demas, because he loved the world has deserted me.." Here was a Christian who fell in love with the world and his sick love led him out of Christian service. It happens everyday somewhere where unhealthy love leads people away from God. Many a Christian servant has let love for those they serve become perverted so that it does harm rather than good. I will never forget being with a group of pastors when Billy Graham shared with us that he had to fire one of his key leaders. This man was convinced that by having sex with black women he could break down racial barriers. He was sincere, but his love was sick. Compassion for the lonely has led many a Christian leader to use sex to comfort, and this is sick love.**

**A sick and unhealthy love is almost always manifested in the abuse of sex. A healthy love cares too much about people to use and abuse them. Paul describes healthy love in I Cor. 13. It is familiar, but let me share it again as the virtues that all Christians are to be**

**taught. "Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." A lot of things are called love that are not like this at all. Whatever it is, it is not Christian love, but some sick form of love that comes from the fallen nature of man. Sound and healthy love is Christ like, and this is one of the primary goals of Christian education to teach sound love.**

**Then Paul ends this list for older men with sound endurance. It is translated patience, perseverance and steadfastness also. The idea is that anybody can be a Christian for a week, a month, and maybe even more, but in a fallen world a good Christian is going to face trials. It may be family, or economics, or health, or any number of things, but it will put the pressure on to give up the struggle to live the balanced and good life. It is too much of a hassle to control myself and live in a loving way toward everyone. It does not solve my problem, and so why should I bother? Severe suffering will cause most Christians to go through some sort of conflict like this, and that is why Christians need to be taught to have sound endurance. This is the ability to not give up, but to hang in there and do the will of God even when it does not seem to pay off.**

**Tony Compolo tells of his friend Barbara Johnson. She lost one of her sons in Viet Nam, and then a second son was killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. Then her husband was seriously brain injured in another accident. Then she discovered a third son was homosexual. This is not a soap opera plot dealing with several families. This is real life for one of God's children. Many Christians with far less trial become weary in well doing. They just get out of the game and sit on the sidelines in bitterness.**

**Barbara and her husband exhibit sound endurance. They have**

**what is called the Spatula Ministries which is a support group ministry to Christian parents with homosexual children. It is not that she did not go through deep depression, but she remained steadfast in spite of it, and God using her in a unique ministry to His people. You never know what you will have to endure to stay faithful to Christ. Many have to go through something of hell on earth. Most have to endure a fair amount of frustration and suffering to be faithful to the Lord. It is not easy, and even those who saw the miracles of Jesus found it hard to stick with Him.**

**In John chapter 6 Jesus taught some hard things. In verse 50 we read, "On hearing it, many of His disciples said, this is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Then after a few more verses of hard teaching John says in verse 66, "From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him." Jesus lost disciples. People who were for Him and followed Him said it is just too hard, and so they quit and never showed up again. The lack of sound endurance. No Christian is going to escape trials that will provoke them to ask, is it worth it? Should I keep following Jesus, or just give it up? Does it really pay to be a Christian?**

**Unfortunately, this kind of battle never ends, for Paul says the older men need to be taught to endure. Long after the draft will not accept a man, and long after no army will welcome you, the Christian is still in the army of the Lord having to make the decision, do I go AWOL, or do I stand fast for my Lord and endure as a good soldier of the cross?**

**It is important that older men learn to endure because they then teach by their example. A faithful old Christian who has been through many trials, but who is still faithful to the Lord, will influence more lives to endure than any dozens of books by experts. People need to see it in real people. They need to see the beauty of suffering saints who do not throw in the towel, but keep on keeping**

**on whatever the cost. Paul is one of the greatest examples.**

**What a Christian has to learn to endure is not just a fallen world, but Christians who don't care and who don't understand, and who may just have a mean streak. Ann Kiemel has for years been one of the great dynamic forces for Christ. She has inspired millions to be enthusiastic about sharing their faith. But would you believe that she gets the nastiest letters and phone calls from Christians. A man called her and said, "I thought you were genuine and sincere, and that you really cared for the world and other people. Now I know its a hoax. I wrote to you about coming to my town, and probably because you thought we were small and insignificant you said no. I am very disappointed in you. You don't practice what you preach." She was devastated by this attitude, for this person did not realize that she had to say no to dozens of requests because she cannot be in more than one place at the same time. Her schedule is full, and it is first come first served. She has to say no to all other requests for that date, but Christians don't understand and treat her like dirt because she is not superhuman.**

**Ann has to endure the constant hurt inflicted on her by other Christians who do not understand. She gives her life to serve Christ and His body, but she has to suffer much pain from the body because of ignorance. It hurts, but she does not become weary in well doing. She has learned sound endurance, and so she goes on serving, and this needs to be taught because their will always be the trials caused by believers. Anyone in Christian service needs to learn this, for none will escape, and the more successful you are the more you will have to endure. It is vital that all Christian leaders learn this, and all that Paul writes of here. It is the very essence of the task of the church to make sure that all believers are getting the best in Christian education.**

