

Being an Elder in a Tough Place: Crete

- A. The standard qualifications remain the same.
- B. Basic Qualification: “Above Reproach”
- C. Theological Qualifications

A. The standard qualifications remain the same.

1. The fact that Crete was such a deplorable place to serve (Ti. 1:12-13a) did not call for radically different qualifications for its elders than other ancient locations.
2. Generally, what Paul told Timothy in Ephesus would have applied in Crete as well (1Tim. 3:1-7; 2Tim. 2:24-25) with slightly different emphases here and there.
3. So, all that was needed in Crete was the word of God accurately presented by godly men, that is, men who lived the word or if you please, men who practiced what they preached.
 - Based on what I'm reading in the news, the church in North America has an **enormous** problem in this area with many church authorities being found hypocritical.

B. Basic Qualification: “Above Reproach”

1. Titus needed to be well-acquainted with all the qualifications if he were to succeed in fulfilling his assignment as given him by the apostle Paul (Ti. 1:5).
2. This assignment involved two key things:
 - a. Setting “in order what remains” – “set right or correct in addition (to what has already been corrected)” – effectively reorganizing
 - b. Appointing or assigning “elders in every city” – so that the churches were under proper leadership

3. First things first: Appointing elders meant finding men “above reproach” in leading their families, that is, men who had no conspicuous weaknesses or failings or major faux pas re: things at home and so were qualified to lead in church (vs. 6; 1Tim. 3:4-5). To disregard this is to risk bringing church to public humiliation and ruin just as David brought reproach on Israel in his illicit relationship with Bathsheba in the OT. In that, David left us an example to *avoid*. Being above reproach in this meant the man must be;


- a. “the husband of one wife” – meaning that he is completely committed in heart and action to his one and only wife. This likely does not imply a requirement to be married, but if he is these Christian character qualities must be in place.

- b. **Positive** requirement: “having children who believe,” better, “having faithful children” (LEB, NET, AV, HCSB) – The first entry for this word BDAG is “pertaining to being worthy of belief or trust, *trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust/faith.*” So, the sense is “having children whom you can count on to do what is right.”
- c. **Negative** requirements: “**not accused of dissipation** (ἄσωτίας, asōtias).” To save here is “to preserve”; its opposite here is “to waste.” So, his children’s conduct cannot be marked by “reckless abandon, debauchery, dissipation, profligacy.” **And not accused of “rebellion”** – mng. “refusing submission to authority, *undisciplined, disobedient.*” ***This result depends in part on compliance with Ti. 2:1-10, which things Titus was to speak.***

4. Again, Paul explained, “the overseer must be above reproach” – Vine says, “*anenkklētos*” is the absence of even a charge or accusation against a person. And this is important because the overseer is “God’s steward (*oikonomon*),” an individual who manages somebody else’s possessions, here the elder is managing God’s possession, the church. Paul said, “it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy” (1Cor. 4:2b). The KJV’s “dispensation (*oikonomia*)” is a related word in Eph. 1:10. Certain character qualities must mark the man who oversees His church. First, things that must be absent:

- a. not self-willed – *stubborn, arrogant*; Louw & Nida say, “*arrogant as the result of self-will*”

- b. “not quick-tempered” – “*hotheadedness*” irascible, irritable, short-tempered, short-fused, bad-tempered, ill-tempered, hot-tempered, touchy, edgy, crabby, waspish, dyspeptic, surly, cross, grouchy, crotchety, cantankerous, curmudgeonly, ill-natured, ill-humored, peevish, fractious, hot under the collar, iracund.
- c. “not addicted to wine” – “*mē paroinon*,” lit., “not alongside wine,” that is, “not lingering long beside his wine.” Cf. not “enslaved to much wine” (Ti. 2:3b), basically not an alcoholic.
- d. “not pugnacious” – “*mē plēktēn*,” lit., “not a striker,” not a bully or a violent, demanding person (cf. Louw & Nida).


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- e. “not fond of sordid gain” – “pertaining to being shamefully greedy for material gain or profit” – As with the deacons in 1Tim. 3:8, the elder must not seek the office for material gain or profit. He cannot be “in it for the money.” The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability was formed to bring about confidence in various ministries and to protect against financial irresponsibility. Had Titus 1:7 been followed, such a thing would not have been necessary.

5. Above on #4, we had things that must be *absent* from the life of one who would be an elder. “But (ἀλλὰ)” now we have things that must be *present* in his life. He must be:

- a. “hospitable (philoxenon),” lit., “love of strangers.” This was required of all believers in the NT (Rm. 12:13; Heb. 13:2), but especially of elders who would often need to welcome traveling ministers and missionaries and others into their homes because they simply had nowhere else to stay.
- b. “loving what is good (philagathon)” – there is the example of “haters of good,” lit., “not loving good” in 2Tim. 3:3. Jesus “went about doing good” (Ac. 10:38), and if you hate good, you hate what Jesus was doing!
- c. “sensible (sōphrōn)” – BDAG says, “pert. to being in control of oneself, prudent, thoughtful.”


- d. “just (dikaion)” – BDAG: “pert. to being in accordance with high standards of rectitude, upright, just, fair.” And again, “In Gr-Rom. tradition a (just) pers. is one who upholds the customs and norms of behavior, including esp. public service, that make for a well-ordered, civilized society.”
- e. “devout (hosios)” – BDAG: “pert. to being without fault relative to deity...pious, pleasing to God, holy.” Louw & Nida: “pertaining to being holy in the sense of superior moral qualities and possessing certain essentially divine qualities in contrast with what is human—‘holy, pure, divine.’”
- f. “self-controlled (enkratē)” – BDAG: “pert. to having one’s emotions, impulses, or desires under control...disciplined.”

6. Above and beyond all the foregoing Christian character qualities, an elder must be a man who is “holding fast the faithful word.” The Greek for “holding fast (antechomenon)” means “to have a strong attachment to someone or someth., cling to...be devoted to.” Such a man will continue to believe the word and live by it *no matter what*. The expression, “which is in accordance with the teaching” simply means that the written word matched up with the word properly proclaimed at that time, the recognized body of Christian doctrine. So, if someone read the Bible and then heard Paul or Peter preach, the two would match perfectly for all practical purposes. So, potential elders on Crete must hold fast the faithful word for a two-fold purpose, so that he will be able both:

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- a. “to exhort (parakalein) in sound doctrine” (his positive ministry),
 - b. “and to refute (elenchein) those who contradict (antilegontas).” To “refute” means “to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing, *convict, convince* someone of something *point something out to someone.*” This is perhaps the most difficult work of the elder.

7. Examples of what needed to be corrected followed:

- a. Vs. 10 “those of the circumcision” – Typically Jews who taught that the Law of Moses must be kept for salvation or sanctification or both.
- b. Vs. 11 Nobody was learning or growing under this false teaching, which should *not* have been taught. Instead, “whole families” were being upset. The motivation for teaching these errors was “sordid gain,” i.e., money.
- c. Vv. 12-14 Paul’s solution to the corrupt state of affairs on Crete; “reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths (Speculations, of a Gnostic sort – Ryrie) and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.”

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8. Examples of positive exhortations are found in the text also:
- a. Vs. 11 God's grace has appeared – salvific to all men.
 - b. Vs. 12 It has behavioral implications, “instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” –
 - c. Vs. 13 At the same time, it has a forward aspect: “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,” the one
 - d. Vs. 14 “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed (salvation), and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (sanctification).”
 - e. Vs. 15 “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” (cf. 1Tim. 4:12)

- f. Ti. 2:1-2 General exhortations: “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”
- g. Vs. 3 Paul made no claim to inherent moral superiority over the Cretans: “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”
- h. Vv. 4-7 It was God’s free gift of salvation that changed him.
- i. Vs. 8 Clearly, all of us who have believed ought to be careful to engage in good deeds. See also Ti. 2:7, 14; 3:14.