



This letter appears to be the first of the pastoral letters: see the introduction to the first letter to Timothy.

This was early in the year 58 A.D. and shortly before, Paul had written a letter to the Christians of Rome. Paul thinks that he does not have any more work to do in the eastern part of the Roman Empire and he prepares to go to the western part of the Empire, especially Spain. In fact, God had planned things differently: in a short time, Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem and after several years of captivity in Caesarea, he would be taken to Rome to be tried before the emperor's tribunal.

Paul said goodbye to the communities of Greece and of "Asia," the province of the empire corresponding to western Turkey (Acts 20:25). It was no doubt the day before meeting with the presbyters (elders) of the Ephesus area, a meeting that took place in Miletus (Acts 20:1), that Paul wrote this letter that precisely gives special attention to pastors of the Christian communities. The other important points of the letter deal with the duties of Christians according to their situation in society, respect for their social obligations and submission to authorities. Here, Paul repeats or develops what he had presented in the second part of the letter to the Romans. This same letter inspires him a few shortcuts about God's plan that we find in 1:3-4; 2:11-14 and 3:4-7.

Paul was already thinking about his journey to Rome. He did not know that he was going to be arrested in Jerusalem and he planned to go to the capital of the empire by land after handing the collection he had brought over to the Jerusalem Christians (Rom 15:25-28). One of the stages was Nicopolis on the west coast of Greece, an area that Paul had evangelized (Rom 15:19) and where he had arranged to meet Titus who was in Crete.

1 From Paul, servant of God, apostle of Christ Jesus, at the service of God's chosen people, so that they may believe, and reach the knowledge of truth and godliness.

²The eternal life we are waiting for was promised from the very beginning, by God, who never lies, ³and as the appointed time had come, he made it known, through the message entrusted to me by a command of God, our Savior.

⁴Greetings to you, Titus, my true son in the faith we share. May grace and peace be with you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

On the elders of the Church

⁵I left you in Crete because I wanted you to put right, what was defective, and appoint elders in every town, following my instructions. ⁶They must be blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, and not open to the charge of being immoral and rebellious. ⁷Since the overseer (or bishop) is the steward of God's House, he must be beyond reproach:

• **1.5** Titus had to organize the churches of Crete with leaders in every city.

We do not know if the title overseer (in Greek, *episcopos*, from which comes bishop) was given to all these elders or presbyters, or if the title was reserved for those with executive duties. After a while, there was only one bishop in charge of the entire community. After the apostles' death, bishops served as their representatives and ruled the Church with the same authority.

What Paul says here about the requirements for a presbyter or bishop is the same as what we have in 1 Timothy. We may note the following:

– *Married only once* (v. 6). Obviously it is not necessary to be married, but as men of a certain age, usually married, were the ones who were consecrated, Paul is here considering the frequent case of Christians who had been divorced and remarried several times while they were still pagans.

– *He must be blameless* (v. 6), not he alone but his family as well. His fitness to preside is essential to his vocation, and he will not be accepted by the community if his background gives an unfavorable witness.

not proud, hot-headed, over-fond of wine, quarrelsome, or greedy for gain.

⁸On the contrary, he must be hospitable, a lover of what is good, wise, upright, devout and self-controlled.

⁹He must hold to the message of faith, just as it was taught, so that, in his turn, he may teach sound doctrine, and refute those who oppose it.

¹⁰You know, that there are many rebellious minds, talkers of nonsense, deceivers, especially the party of the circumcised. ¹¹They have to be silenced when they go around disturbing whole families, teaching, for low gain, what should not be taught.

¹²A Cretan, one of their own prophets, has said, "Cretans: always liars, wicked beasts and lazy gluttons." ¹³This is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, if you want them to have a sound faith, ¹⁴instead of heeding Jewish fables, and practices of people who reject the truth.

¹⁵To the pure everything is pure; to the corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure: their minds and consciences

– *He must be hospitable* (v. 8). The Church is communion more than organization. Everyone must be welcomed and feel at home in the house of the presbyter or the bishop. He must also welcome the brothers and elders from other districts in order to assure unity and communion among different communities. The human balance in this *bishop* is then part of his vocation: he cannot be a man of uneven character whose interventions could wound, whose authority ignores the elementary rules of social contact and respect of persons: although known for their faith, Church leaders are often reproached for not knowing how to act in a human way.

Verses 12-16 are a cautionary measure against the return to a religion of practices and abstinences inspired by Jewish law. *To the pure, everything is pure* (v. 15): in the spirit of Matthew 15:11 and Romans 14:20. That will never mean to say that our intentions (our intentions are always pure!) justify our actions. That would be to forget that the tree (the desire urging us to act) is judged by its fruit; these cannot be justified if they are contrary to the will of God manifested in the law.

2Tim
2:13

1Tim 3:2

Heb 3:2;
1P 5:2

1Tim
1:10

1Tim
4:1

Mt
15:11;
23:25;
Rom
14:14

have been defiled. ¹⁶They pretend to know God, but deny him with their deeds. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.

Live as responsible persons

2 • ¹Let your words strengthen sound doctrine. ²Tell the older men to be sober, serious, wise, sound in faith, love and perseverance.

³The older women, in like manner, must behave as befits holy women, not given to gossiping or drinking wine, ⁴but as good counselors, able to teach younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be judicious and chaste, to take care of their households, to be kind, and submissive to their husbands, lest our faith be attacked.

⁶Encourage the young men, to be self-controlled. ⁷Set them an example by your own way of doing. Let your teaching be earnest and sincere, ⁸and your preaching, beyond reproach. Then, your opponents will feel ashamed and will have nothing to criticize.

⁹Teach slaves to be subject to their masters, and to give satisfaction in every respect, instead of arguing.

¹⁰They must not steal from them, but be trustworthy. In this way, they will draw everyone to admire the doctrine of God our Savior.

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²teaching us to reject an irreligious way of life, and worldly greed, and to live in this world, as responsible persons, upright and serving God, ¹³while we await our blessed hope—the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. ¹⁴He gave himself for us, to redeem us from every evil, and to purify a people he wanted to be his own, and dedicated to what is good.

¹⁵Teach these things, encourage, and reprove with all authority. Let no one despise you.

3 • ¹Remind the believers, to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, and to be ready for every good work. ²Tell them to insult no one; they must not be quarrelsome, but gentle and understanding with everyone.

³We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient and misled. We were slaves of our desires, seeking pleasures of every kind. We lived in malice and envy,

• **2.1** Here, there is a reminder of the duties of the faithful according to their situation in life. In the society of the time, far simpler than ours, all was reduced to slaves or the free, men or women, young or old. In our age, it would be necessary to ask people to look more closely at their responsibilities in life.

There is insistence on our duty to bear fruit: the following paragraph will say that if Christ has sacrificed himself for us, such a sacrifice must not remain fruitless.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all (v. 11). Here Paul returns to the essence of the Christian message: it is a gift of God and so it must produce the fruit of goodness and reconciliation and draw people away from the self-centeredness which paralyzes them.

He gave himself for us (v. 14). As in Ephesians 5:25 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, Jesus' sacrifice is primarily to purify those who become

his people. In fact, it is by looking at Jesus that, little by little, we let go of what is evil and violent in us.

Teaching us to reject an irreligious way of life (v. 12). God brings us to purify our motives and our hearts.

– *Responsible*, because the practice of Christian living brings us to a more serious attitude.

– *Just with others* by being primarily just with God.

– *Serving God*: this means first of all being sincere with God.

• **3.1** Speaking to the first Christian generation, Paul had underscored the transformation of the one who has been converted: becoming Christian involved breaking away from the past. In the following generation, while the Church was being established in various provinces of the Roman Empire, the hope of an imminent return

1Tim 5:1

1Tim 3:11

Eph 5:22; Col 3:18

1P 2:15

Eph 6:5; 1Tim 6:1

1Jn 2:16

1Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20

19:5; Eph 5:25

1Tim 4:12

Rom 13:1; 1P 2:13; 1Tim 2:2

Eph 2:5; 5:8

hateful, and hating each other. ⁴But God, our Savior, revealed his eminent goodness and love for humankind, ⁵and saved us, not because of good deeds we may have done, but for the sake of his own mercy, to the water of rebirth and renewal, by the Holy Spirit ⁶poured over us through Christ Jesus our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we should become heirs, in hope of eternal life.

• ⁸This is the truth. I want you to insist on these things, for those who believe in God must excel in good deeds; that is what matters, and is profitable to us. ⁹Avoid stupid arguments, discussions about genealogies, and quarrels about the law, for they are useless and unimportant.

¹⁰If anyone promotes sects in the

church, warn him once, and then, a second time. If he still continues, break with him, ¹¹knowing that such a person is misled, and sinful, and stands self-condemned.

¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, try to come to me at Nicopolis, as soon as possible, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Do your best to send Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos, on their way soon, and see to it that they have everything they need. ¹⁴Our people must learn, to be outstanding in good works, and to face urgent needs, instead of remaining idle and useless.

¹⁵All who are with me send greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

2Tim 1:9;
Eph 2:8;
5:26

Rom
3:24;
8:17

2Tim
2:14

Mt 18:15

of Christ began to decline. Thus, if the Church is called to last, it is important for the Christian to appear, first of all, as a model of an ordered and just life. Since obedience was then the pillar of family and social life, this letter insists that the believer must obey from the heart in every aspect that is not opposed to his faith.

In the teaching of the New Testament, it will be easy to speak of contradictions, or opportunism: here, social loyalty and family virtues; or else ignoring one's father and mother. Actually, they are not contradictory: obedience coming from the heart as long as there is no opposition to the will of God, but a complete rejection of dependence when a human authority presumes to replace God, disregarding the conscience and rights of a person.

What remains here is an insistence on social virtues; it was the same in 2:5; 2:10 and also 1 Timothy 2:2 and 2:11.

• 8. Possible translations for the word Paul uses here are "sects" or "heresies" (v. 10): they are two aspects of a Greek word that means "selection." Instead of accepting the faith as the Church transmits it, a heretic chooses what seems most important to her and what she likes the most. She rejects part of the message and leaves the Church taking with her disciples to form her own group. In preferring her own judgment to the doctrine of the Church, she loses the in-depth faith attitude; she destroys unity and condemns herself, even though she keeps a major part of the message.

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