
*To
Grace Church*

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The Titus Mandate

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Part 1

Defining The Titus Mandate



Rescuing Christians From Danger

Sheryl didn't grow up in church, but became a Christian in her thirties while married and busily raising two active children. Soon after being miraculously redeemed by Jesus Christ she found a church that promised to be a wonderful place for spiritual growth and for making friends with other Christians. But what happened at that church actually brought Sheryl great sorrow. It wounded not only her, but many Christians throughout that region. Sheryl's story of heartache illustrates why so many Christians find themselves in need of *The Titus Mandate*.

At first the church looked terrific. She enjoyed the preaching and the programs for her children. The people were friendly and relationships grew quickly. But then little cracks appeared. She witnessed spats when she began attending church meetings, and watched people grow alienated and isolated. The tension spilled over into Sunday worship as more and more people retreated to the back, singing quietly to themselves. After worship they quickly bee-lined their way to the parking lot. She didn't pay attention to it at the time, but her church was dying. Why?

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It was living out a culture of worldliness that reared its head every time decisions had to be made. It's a church culture most readers of this book live in too, and don't even know it.

Having lived apart from Christ all her years Sheryl first assumed this was a normal part of church. To some extent it felt familiar, but at the same time she felt scared, and even powerless. Some in the church tried to calm her fears by explaining that occasional spats and disagreements are marks of a spiritually healthy church. But she knows better now because the church ended up breaking her heart. Without anybody really meaning to, the people grew loveless. They passed each other in the hallways with only a nod and sat apart from each other on Sunday mornings. The frequent church meetings exposed frustrations as people vented disappointments and differences. Then all too quickly, it seemed, people just began to “disappear.”

That's when the inevitable came. The church held meetings to “clear the air,” but nothing really got cleared. Instead, people got locked into sides on issues. It all became too much and the flock scattered in every direction, disillusioned and deeply wounded. The church just fell apart, and Sheryl left it too... discouraged, feeling empty, unimportant, and especially, unloved. The sudden loss of so many important relationships stung too deep for words. For months she wandered from church to church, looking for a fellowship that would provide genuine Christian love, stability and unity. Over time her heart grew distant from the Lord and other Christians. She even started to get cynical.

Eventually, she and her family attended another church in her home state with a different sense about it. Although she couldn't put her finger on it right away she knew that this church was a safe place for believers in Jesus Christ. What she found were true shepherds, congregational peace, and the calm authority of Scripture ruling all things. Now, several years later, Sheryl wrote to me, hoping I would relay to you what she had to say:

“The rewards of living out the Word of God are glorious!
I must remember, though, to pray often for my elders –
they have an enormous responsibility to God
and to their flock. Praise God for them!”

Sheryl's praise illustrates *The Titus Mandate*. The Good Shepherd showers His restorative love upon us when we live in a godly and healthy church led by godly men. He led Sheryl's troubled soul to lie down in green pastures where she was restored beside quiet waters. Her words reflect what so many believers wish they felt about their church, but can't. If today you are in Sheryl's former predicament, without a spiritually healthy church to call home, keep your hope in God and learn the marks of a safe church. Take some time to acquaint yourself with *The Titus Mandate*. It will help you in so many ways.

Perhaps you already know this from personal experience, but a story like Sheryl's is sadly commonplace. You might even have your own story that isn't resolved yet. I've met people everywhere, from a Los Angeles factory where I worked during seminary, to a Louisville restaurant on a Sunday morning, who have told me their own stories of pain and sorrow in churches. I've met and ministered to believers in Germany, Asia, and

Ukraine who describe a journey similar to Sheryl's. You'll meet about thirty of them as you read their testimonies in the sidebars of this book. The Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, has led them into safe churches and they all wanted to tell you how important that is. Like Sheryl, they love their church and the power of *The Titus Mandate* that made it a safe and healthy place for them and those they love.

What Are The Warning Signs?

Maybe the simple truth has been there all along but we have ignored it because we only wanted a comfortable church, not a holy one. Or, it could be that we have a hard time seeing spiritual danger because we sit under it week after week, convincing ourselves otherwise. Some of us aren't the brightest sheep in the fold and maybe it takes us a while longer to see danger. Only after we are hurt do we stop long enough to ask the right questions, and *really* pay attention to what God says in Scripture.

Like Sheryl in her earlier days, we may be ignoring the warning signs in our church: conflict, politics, and unqualified leaders. Even with our eyes wide open we can find ourselves unable to resolve church tensions. Or worse, we feel powerless to do anything constructive about it. Maybe you've been told that conflicts are an important and necessary part of church life. But in fact they are warning signs that expose the enemy's foothold. Most directly violate God's Word. To counteract these problems, Christians all over the world are going back to Scripture and implementing *The Titus Mandate* in their churches.

Titus 1:5

The Titus Mandate is a comprehensive plan for Christians and their churches that is holy and very simple to understand. It is taught in Titus 1:5:

“This is why I left you in Crete,
so that you might put what remained into order,
and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”

This verse of Scripture and its amazing implications are what this book is all about. By it Titus was granted sovereignty over every church on the Mediterranean island of Crete. He used that authority to rescue Christians from dangerous churches, while at the same time setting up a safe church in each town. Titus 1:5 is church done right. It's not a suggestion or even a recommendation. It's an apostolic mandate from Paul that could at first strike you as overkill, but it is not. *The Titus Mandate* is a matter of spiritual life and death for all Christians and all churches today, even as it was in First Century Crete.

It may not be apparent to you why this verse is so important, or how it rescues and protects Christians from danger today. But isn't that the way God's Word often is? Initially it seems a bit plain, but after thinking about it for a while, you realize it is so much more profound and far reaching than you first thought?

Where Is This Book Going?

To help you understand *The Titus Mandate*, we'll examine our key verse, Titus 1:5, in chapters 1 through 4. Then chapters 5

through 9 will explain how *The Titus Mandate* applies to any and every church that loves the Lord. In those chapters we'll cover the controversial issues and, hopefully, if I've done my job well, you'll see how it corrects harmful church practices. In chapters 10 through 13, I'll defend and apply *The Titus Mandate* with some in-depth Bible study, and expose the reasons why churches that fight it end up opposing the gospel. These are the spiritually dangerous places you need to be aware of. I hope you'll visit that section often so you can spend time meditating on the sufficiency of God's inerrant, infallible and inspired book—the Bible. Finally, chapter 14 explains how churches can go about implementing *The Titus Mandate* today.

The Titus Mandate Was Written for You

Even though Paul wrote the letter to Titus, it wasn't for him. Paul had already told him all about *The Titus Mandate* in a prior face-to-face conversation, reflected in the last words of Titus 1:5, "as I directed you." Titus already knew what Paul wanted him to do. Paul actually wrote Titus 1:5 so the people on Crete would know what Titus was doing with their churches. But God also wrote Titus 1:5 for us who live far beyond the beautiful shores of Crete in our towns and cities around the globe. God inspired Paul to write *to us* who live all these years later, which is why we recognize this letter as an important part of our Bible.

The last verse of the book happily bears this out. Paul addresses even you with his final words, "Grace be with you all" (Titus 3:15). By this we are assured that the whole letter was

written with the purest of motives to all who have been saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's exactly the way the Lord Jesus wants you to think of this whole letter, including *The Titus Mandate* in Titus 1:5. It was written from Him to you with illuminating truth for your spiritual safety. That's what every Christian needs in a world of dark dangers.

Here's a surprise to some: church can be much more dangerous than the world. The wolves who put on sheep's clothing in order to eat them do so in the church (Matthew 7:15). Sunday morning might be the most dangerous time of the week. Churches everywhere are led by unqualified men. They are greedy, too, according to Titus 1:10-11. In Crete the wolves ruled the pulpits and feasted on the flock. How would you like to go to church, knowing your offering fills the pockets of false teachers who in turn fill you with hell's teaching? Paul's first word to describe these men is one you must hear today: *many* (Titus 1:10). Dangerous church leaders outnumber the faithful ones.

Your situation is no different than Crete's. Many churches with dangerous leaders who are skilled at misleading Christians exist in virtually every town. The Christians in them probably have no one fighting for their safety. The few who do see the evil are usually cowed into silence. A lot of genuine Christians need rescuing. Maybe you, or someone you love, is one of them.

Surgery for Defective Churches

So who had the wisdom and courage to expose them as money-hungry wolves? Who could see past the church marketing, the

slogans, the shallow façades, and rescue the Christians from the *many* false teachers? Our beloved apostle Paul could. And because he saw past the artificiality and hypocrisy, he authorized Titus to reform Crete’s churches into wonderfully healthy and holy places for all who love the Lord. It was a massive undertaking, but you know what? Christ’s sheep are always worth it.

Now, this spiritual danger in Crete’s churches might not bleed through in some English translations. When Paul writes “put what remains into order” (Titus 1:5) it almost sounds like Titus put some finishing touches on Crete’s churches. But Paul’s words in the Greek reveal a more sinister story. It is the Revised Standard Version that gives a closer translation: “amend what was defective.”

Crete’s churches were *defective*. The original word is even stronger—referring to something that is dangerous, sick, or broken. It describes cataclysmic disasters like locust plagues and forest fires (Exodus 10:5; Isaiah 10:19). Jesus used it too, telling the rich young ruler that his very soul was in eternal *danger* (Luke 18:22). And here it was only thirty years after Jesus’ resurrection and Crete’s Christians were living in dangerous churches. Paul couldn’t just say, “well, I’m not responsible.” His wise leadership, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, enabled him to enact a brilliant plan. That plan, called *The Titus Mandate*, rescued thousands of hurt and endangered Christians on Crete. And because that plan is clearly laid out in the Bible, it is still rescuing Christians from dangerous churches 2,000 years later.

Paul's compassion for hurting souls explains why he told Titus to "amend" every church (Titus 1:5, RSV). "Amend" translates a medical word we are all familiar with – *ortho*. From this word we get orthotics, orthopedists, and orthodontists. These are surgical and dental arts that repair hurting and broken body parts so that they feel good, are healthy, and can sustain weight. We even call correct doctrines "orthodox" because they give spiritual health when embraced. They heal souls. So when Paul wrote "*amend what was defective*" he gave Titus the green light to perform surgery, because the churches on Crete were broken, unable to stand straight, and spiritually diseased. By apostolic order *every* church went under the knife for emergency surgery. They were that dangerous and diseased.

Looking at the surrounding verses we see that the source of the disease: their leaders. Whole families were being overturned in their faith by the teachers of these churches (Titus 1:11). Most Christians assumed they were under trustworthy spiritual leaders in their church, but they were dead wrong. Though their leaders claimed to be saved, many were not (Titus 1:16).

WHY I LOVE ELDERSHIP

"Being in a church that is governed by a plurality of wise and godly elders has been a tremendous blessing and has brought me much needed comfort throughout my life. There is peace of mind, knowing that the pattern of leadership follows God's design and therefore engenders confidence that the church is in the best position for God to bless. The elders of our church are a great source of comfort, wisdom, teaching, and prayer. I have seen firsthand how their loving care and guidance has been used to bring back straying sheep. God's wise design works."

Brian S.
Community Bible Church
Vallejo, CA, USA

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The Christians were in churches that acted just like their culture (Titus 1:12). That’s a familiar problem in our churches too, isn’t it? It’s hypocrisy to say we’re salt and light when we’ve made our churches function like the world. How can we practice the world’s ways and expect to live like Christians? *The Titus Mandate* is surgery that rescue both believers and churches.

This explains why Titus was to teach “sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Here Paul uses yet another word from the world of medicine – the word from which we get “hygiene,” a word connoting cleansing. Our broken souls and sick hearts are cleansed when we are nourished by solid, biblical teaching week-by-week. God Himself uses such teaching to bring us health. But that teaching must be in a church that rejects the world’s way or else it fails to cleanse and bring health.

Imagine being told to walk with Christ, but having broken legs, or to sing praises to God with ruptured vocal chords. Good teaching requires a good church so you can learn Christ in a genuinely Christian culture. You can hear all the best teaching but if you live in a church that functions like the world you aren’t seeing it lived out as God wants. At best you are getting the Christian message but not the Christian life.

This is why the rest of the letter reads like a life and death diagnosis for spiritually sick believers. Every type of Christian, male or female, young or old, receives a personal rehabilitation plan because it’s do or die on Crete. Without spiritual health, a hypocritical witness for Christ will continue on the island, and

without a true witness for Christ, the churches are doomed to cultural insignificance. My former pastor, John MacArthur, hit the nail on the head when he wrote that Titus “is an evangelistic letter whose ultimate purpose was to prepare the church for more effective witness to unbelievers on Crete.”¹ The only way we Christians can bear effective witness for the gospel is for our lives to be healed in the context of a safe and godly church.

Without *The Titus Mandate* surgically repairing and healing churches, spiritual health is skin deep. We Christians need truth and we need each other helping us live it out. In other words, we need church. That’s why, if your church is ever to be healthy, it needs a special breed of leader.

It’s Clear And Unmistakable

Let’s take another look at our key verse:

“This is why I left you in Crete,
so that you might put what remained into order,
and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”

(Titus 1:5)

Crete’s believers and churches were rescued from danger by a simple change called *eldership*. It’s so simple it only takes a single word to name, yet it’s so far-reaching it applies to every church in every town. How can something so simple rescue every believer and every church from every spiritual danger? It’s as straightforward as this: a group of godly men, and none but godly men, are properly appointed and entrusted to lead you and your church. Sounds good, right? So why is it so rare?

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Eldership, as designed in Titus 1:5, has been covered up by the accumulated dust of centuries of church tinkering. The only reason it is now making a comeback is because godly men are going back to the Scriptures and teaching us verse-by-verse. And as we understand God's Word verse-by-verse, wonderful things happen. Understanding leads to embracing, and embracing God's Word leads to spiritual life.

Over time we learn that our Christian lives are greatly influenced by the church we worship in, and in particular, the kind of leaders that govern us. Verse-by-verse teaching shows us that God wants a holy church, and in order to bring that to pass He has a plan that places holy men in leadership called *The Titus Mandate*. It's so different than the way men have designed church over the years. It actually protects Christians.

Eldership is easy to find in the New Testament. There is more instruction in the New Testament on it than there is on communion, baptism, marriage, child-raising, and work, *combined*. The larger passages on eldership, if you want to check this out for yourself, are Acts 15:1-29; Acts 20:17-38; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4. The smaller passages are sprinkled throughout Acts and the letters to the churches. If you start studying it you will discover it everywhere in the New Testament. So if this is your first time looking at eldership, the vast amount of verses could be overwhelming. If that's the case, don't worry. Eldership is easy to understand. God has just seen fit to give us a lot of teaching on it so we get it exactly right, because so much is at stake.

For many the issue of church leadership is a dark hole of uncertainty. It's often claimed that how a church is led is a "gray area" in the Bible. One encyclopedia devoted to explaining the Bible claims, "to discover in definite detail what kind of church government is mirrored in the New Testament is, no doubt, quite impossible."² But such statements are as plentiful as they are mistaken.

In Titus 1:5 Paul commands Titus to implement the same kind of governance for all churches: eldership. If it really was "quite impossible" to know exactly what Paul wanted Titus couldn't have obeyed him. But Titus did know "in definite detail" what Paul was telling him, and so should you. Church leaders who are ignorant or agnostic about church government put you in danger because it is clear and unmistakable in the New Testament.

I'm not diminishing the need for flexibility. We like flexibility, and truthfully, flexibility is needed in most situations. But in this one great matter – the protection of Christians' lives – Titus was denied flexibility. The stakes were too high. Paul's mandate couldn't be fulfilled until every church on Crete had the exact same form of governance. It's so clear, someone would have to be personally opposed to the apostle Paul not to see it.

WHY I LOVE ELDERSHIP

"Perhaps one of God's greatest provisions for the New Testament church is that of eldership. As overseers of our souls, elders shepherd us in Christ's likeness. I am so grateful for their selfless care even to the point of church discipline and restoration. It brings me great comfort knowing such trustworthy, faithful, godly men fill this biblical role in my church."

Theresa H.
Grace Community Church
Jacksonville, FL, USA

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Here's another way you can see just how clear it is. The first book written in the New Testament is the epistle of James, a letter sent to every church in the Roman Empire around 45 A.D. That means it was written within fifteen years of the Lord's resurrection. James instructs Christians to "call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him" (James 5:14). That means every church he wrote to had a group of elders, and it's easy to see why this is so. If even one of those churches didn't have elders, his command would have been meaningless: "*What does James mean, 'call for the elders?' We don't have elders!*" James' words could only puzzle his readers unless he knew every Christian had elders in their church they could call on.

We see this again in one of the last books written in the New Testament, 1 Peter. Peter also wrote to hundreds of churches over a vast region of the Roman Empire these words: "I exhort the elders among you..." (1 Peter 5:1). Peter would have been exhorting thin air if even one church didn't have eldership. Confused, those Christians would have read his words, "I exhort the elders among you" and said, "*Huh?... what elders?*"

So from start to finish eldership was universal when the apostles lived. If we had the apostles living today they would make all Christian churches eldership churches, because having godly men leading congregations is Christ's way of ensuring spiritual safety for all Christians. But today Christians are broken and abused because they don't have any true elders to "call on" (James 5:14) and who provide a godly example (1 Peter 5:2). You see, godly elders are not incidental to your life of godliness. God's design for you is to have loving, sacrificial, mature

male Christians in your life providing you biblical guidance and care. Without such men you have a hole in your life and in your church. *The Titus Mandate* remedies that critical need.

The only First Century churches that didn't have elders were those that didn't start with the oversight of Apostles. This is what happened on Crete. On Pentecost (the church's birthday!) some men from Crete were gloriously saved (Acts 2:11). They took the gospel back home and preached it and God blessed! I detail it out further in chapter 10, but basically Cretan Christians preached Christ and started churches. God so blessed their energetic evangelism that there was at least one church in every town, as Titus 1:5 shows. But when the apostle Paul arrived on Crete about thirty years later, he rightly took apostolic control over every church because they had become dangerous places for Christians. He took this step to rescue Christians from the influence of dangerous teachers who had taken control of their churches. Just like today, right? You too need godly men protecting you from Satan's dark strategies that place compromise, sin, and shame in church leadership.

No Exemptions

This helps explain why a lot of leaders won't teach you *The Titus Mandate*. In spite of the unambiguous testimony in the Bible that eldership is for every church, people make up all kinds of exemptions. Some will say that eldership is good for large churches but impractical in smaller ones. But Paul didn't see it that way. *The Titus Mandate* wasn't finished on Crete until the church "in every town" (Titus 1:5) had its own elders, and based on archaeology, some of Crete's towns were pretty small.

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I've also heard people say that today's churches are at liberty to be governed in the way each sees fit, according to its "unique identity and mission from God." It's a matter of free-

WHY I LOVE ELDERSHIP

"I have enjoyed the oversight and care of elders in the churches we've had the honor of being part of. The biblical qualities of maturity, character and gifts have been a means of manifold grace for my family. God's sovereign care through the pastors and overseers of our dear church families has served us so well through the years.

Peggy B.
King of Grace Church
Haverhill, MA, USA

and worldly assumption. It's also wrong. First Century Crete was Greek in culture and Roman in governance. Eldership is neither, but more Middle-eastern in social value. It would have had little to no social value among Crete's non-Christians.

Some claim God's blessings on their church exempts them from *The Titus Mandate*. They have seen in the past, or are experiencing today, His blessings on their ministry without elders. But the same could be said of Crete's churches. They were started by men saved by Peter's preaching at Pentecost, and it's hard to get more blessed than that! Crete's churches

dom, in other words. But Titus 1:5 took that freedom away from every church on First Century Crete. What makes us think we've earned it 2,000 years later?

Others assume the culture of Crete was friendly to eldership, and that Paul knew eldership would fly on Crete because he knew it reflected their existing social values. This thinking allows us today to choose for ourselves whatever form of church governance fits our values, but it's a dangerous

were so fruitful that by the time Paul arrived on Crete there were one hundred or more on that small island. Yet in spite of their blessed history and present fruitfulness, every church there came under *The Titus Mandate*. So in spite of God's present blessings on a church, there is never a good reason to ignore what Paul says on any matter, and certain danger when we do.

Rescuing Christians “In Every Town”

The Titus Mandate may do more than bring spiritual health and safety to your own life and church. It even has the potential to rescue others where you live. In what may be the most surprising element of *The Titus Mandate*, Paul told Titus to appoint elders over the believers “in every town,” not “in every church.” At first this may seem like a possible “slip up” to us, or perhaps we think to ourselves that “in every town” really means the same as “in every church.” This is when we need to be reminded that Paul's words here are Scripture. They are chosen by God right down to their very “jot and tittle” (Matthew 5:18, KJV). The words “in every town” are indeed correct, and comprise a key component of the apostle's brilliant strategy.

Let's consider the word “town” in Titus 1:5 a bit. The word “town,” or as some versions translate it, “city,” simply referred to a place where people worked and lived. It could indicate a small village in Israel called Nazareth (Matthew 2:23), or even the greatest city of that day, Rome (Acts 18:2, Acts 23:11). Apparently, Crete had a lot of them. Judging by historical records and archaeology, First Century Crete had at least thirty-five

cities and towns.³ And like the towns and cities you and I live in some towns had more than one church . Bible scholars affirm this. I. H. Marshall observes that “the geographical reference ‘in each city’ suggests that there were at least several different towns with house churches.”⁴ Another writes, “ what was known of the composition of the church in any one area? It may be that the church of a town was understood to be composed of several smaller house congregations.”⁵ Each church in town had their own ways – just like the churches in your town today.

Here’s where it gets radical. When Titus appointed “elders in every town,” he melded, or merged each town’s different churches into one church. When *The Titus Mandate* was finished, every town had one church with its own set of godly elders overseeing that one new church. For some, the idea of melding together is exciting and filled with potential. For others, it is threatening. You can see why. Picture all the churches where you live being merged together and you begin to get a feel for the radical nature behind Paul’s mandate. If merging is something you want to know more about, then skip over to chapter 9. But don’t be freaked out. Paul would never command Titus to do anything that exposed the Christians to greater danger.

Aggressive Planting And Aggressive Splitting

All of this raises some important questions. How did Crete’s towns come to have multiple churches, and why did Paul see the need to merge them? The answers to these questions are straightforward, but they are also disconcerting. Crete appar-

ently had a church history like that of our present day – that of aggressive church planting and yes, aggressive church splitting. It's that last one that can bring so much hurt to believers' lives. If you have lived through one, you can relate to Crete.

By the time Paul and Titus arrived on Crete thirty years of explosive ministry had planted in at least one church in every town, as Titus 1:5 tells us. Tracing back through those thirty years we can extrapolate the rest. Crete started with one church, which quickly expanded and began planting others. In turn, they too planted churches. Soon, they were even planting churches in each other's "backyards," that is, in towns with existing churches. That's one way a town gets multiple churches.

However, the letter of Titus bears witness to a sinful influence that brings a multiplicity of churches to the same town, and it's one that's crucial to understanding our present day. It's likely that many churches in the same town were the result of church splits, those awful realities that give patent testimony to the presence of pride and rebellion to God in the church.

Paul explains right up front the kind of church leaders who cause such tragedies. These are the ones you and those you love must either be rescued from, or protected against:

“For there are many who are insubordinate,
empty talkers and deceivers...

They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families
by teaching for shameful gain...”

(Titus 1:10-11)

THE TITUS MANDATE

There were so many dangerous men in Crete's churches that only an island-wide reformation could stem the evil tide. God revealed these leaders in Titus 1:10 as insubordinate deceivers—just the type who easily split churches. Christians are waylaid in their walk with Christ by these emissaries from the evil one. These are men (and women) who infiltrate churches, obtain leadership roles and influence the whole church to embrace compromise and hypocrisy. Even today, these wolves lead churches in virtually every town. They are Satan's most prolific form of spiritual danger, and in order to protect yourself and those you love from them, you need to understand *The Titus Mandate*. They are everywhere, and their presence explains why today there are so many hurting Christians in every town, and why so few churches are led to comply with Titus 1:5.

So based on Paul's mandate to appoint elders "in every town," and not simply "in every church," Titus merged each town's churches into one new church with a single set of godly leaders who all met God's qualifications for godly leadership in Titus 1:6-9. As I'll discuss in the next chapter, the Christians had no choice and no say in the matter. They were under Paul's apostolic authority which he had from Christ. We should be grateful for his authority. It was a great plan then, and it's a great plan now.

Of course, Paul could have told Titus to appoint one elder for each church in town. But that wasn't the apostolic way. Mark Dever, pastor of Capital Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. explains what you see when a church obeys Titus 1:5:

“Paul intended for each church in Crete to have a plurality of elders.”⁷ Such men join together to take responsibility for all the believers under their care. As always, they have to be men of proven spiritual worth. Only by that grace can they mature the body of Christ to be more like Him.

Driving Away Dangerous Men

We can now understand Paul’s rationale for *The Titus Mandate*. Prior to giving Titus the mandate, many, if not most of the churches had leaders who were masquerading as true shepherds. The masquerade had successfully fooled many truly saved believers, but not Paul. To rescue these Christians from the evil before their eyes but which they could not see Titus went about appointing elders in every town to make one healthy church for all that town’s believers. Far from some vague ecumenical get-together, *The Titus Mandate* was a call from Christ to make every church healthy and evangelistic. Doctrine wasn’t “dumbed-down.” Instead, *The Titus Mandate* raised the bar of obedience to Scripture so high it drove the false teachers, the power-hungry pastors, and their followers away in resentment.

You see, Crete’s “many” false teachers would have despised Titus from the start. Paul’s description of them in Titus 1:10 as “insubordinate” captures the inner restlessness of every false leader. These are people incapable or unwilling of submitting themselves to true and godly spiritual leadership. Since such people can’t humbly serve within a team of godly leaders, they use deception to gain authority and employ politics to keep it.

THE TITUS MANDATE

False shepherds love power, have an agenda, and will stop at nothing to call the shots in your church. They slander those who threaten them and skillfully pit people against each other. Paul pulls no punches when he tells us why: they aren't saved. They are "detestable, disobedient, and worthless for any good deed" (Titus 1:16, NASB).

If anything, the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world is in Crete's exact condition today. It may even be worse. Many church leaders profess to know God but deny Him by their ministry works. They despise the Lord, kick His sheep, and steal the liberating truth of the gospel from everybody. They ingratiate themselves to the unsuspecting and intimidate any who might call attention to their error. In virtually every town and city, people like this are leading churches of all stripes and flavors. You may be in one yourself and not even know it. Or, you may have been chased out of church by one. Such people slander the godly, deceive the naïve, despise true doctrine, resist accountability, and cause deep heartache for Christ's true children. God's plan for every church puts godly shepherds in charge who will lay down their lives for you.

This explains why the believers in the churches of Crete lived week-in and week-out in grave spiritual danger, and why so many do today as well. Many true believers sit Sunday after Sunday under just such false teachers. They need to be rescued, and then protected. Others have been kicked out of church by such evil men, and need to be found and helped to come back to a church with godly shepherds.

So Paul could not leave the Christians on Crete under the influence of so many evil men, and neither will godly shepherds today. Such men have to be confronted and exposed, and the Christians in those churches rescued from the spiritual danger. Paul's command in Titus 1:5 "to appoint elders in every town" removed a thousand ills from the lives of First Century Christians. It will do the same today, as well, if we will help raise the bar of our church's accountability to Scripture alone.

It always goes back to Scripture. With simple faith in God's inspired and inerrant word, you can be rescued and protected, and your church reformed. *The Titus Mandate* is God's New Testament rescue plan for every church in every part of the world. It comes from your Lord, so you know it is good and holy. If you or your church are just beginning to study eldership, then you are embarking on a journey into the Word of God that will bear great fruit if faithfully followed. You might also consider picking up *The Titus Mandate Study Guide* to help you and your church prepare for the greater accountability of Paul's mandate. It's available at Amazon.com and other retailers. Or, perhaps, if your church is already one of the tens of thousands of eldership churches, then this book can help you understand precisely how you can help fulfill its glorious call. Either way, your individual role in *The Titus Mandate* is vital to your church's ability to serve Christ. Without eldership, you are vulnerable and probably exposed to guilt and shame before God. And so to unmask this spiritual danger that may well be lurking on your doorstep, let's quickly turn to chapter 2.

Chapter 1

RESCUING CHRISTIANS FROM DANGER

¹ John MacArthur, *Titus*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series (Chicago: Moody, 1996) xi.

² E. J. Forrester and G. W. Bromiley, “Church Government,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 1:696. One recent seminary textbook states, “The New Testament provides no specific command or teaching providing details of how the Christian church should be governed” Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology* (Geanies House: Mentor, reprint 2006) 939; so also Rodney J. Decker, “Church Polity and the Elder Issue,” in *Grace Theological Journal*, 9:2 (1988): 259. The broader idea that the Pastoral Epistles are unreliable source documents on church order, polity, and governance is refuted by Andreas J. Köstenberger in “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7:3, (2003): 5-18.

³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999) 152. See also David W. J. Gill, “A Saviour for the Cities of Crete: The Roman Background to the Epistle to Titus,” in *The New Testament In Its First Century Setting: Essays On Context And Background In Honour Of B. W. Winter On His 65th Birthday*, edited by P. J. Williams, Andrew D. Clark, Peter M. Head, and David Instone-Brewer, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2004) 223.

⁴ Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 152.

⁵ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus, NICNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 680.

⁶ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles, NIGTC*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 288.

⁷ Mark Dever, “The Doctrine of the Church,” in Daniel Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007) 804.