

## Set in order what remains

by Hendrik Joubert

When the apostle Paul informed Titus that he left him in to **set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you (Titus 1:5)**, the phrase *set in order what remains* is often confined to Titus having to **appoint elders in every city**. Does the statement have reference only to appointing elders, or is it a preamble to the whole letter? From what follows it seems the appointment of elders was only part of, or in addition to *setting in order what remains*. He was to **set in order what remains and appoint elders**.

Qualified elders would definitely be helpful in setting in order of the matters the apostle specifically mentions. The discussion of the qualifications of an elder concludes with **holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:9)** These remarks lead into a practical discussion on why elders need the qualifications discussed: **For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, <sup>11</sup> who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. Titus 1:10-11.**

Churches all over the world need men who are able to take care of deviant characters as described here. Most false teachings are *for the sake of sordid gain*. Salvation by faith alone diminishes the need for repentance and for believers to be **reverent in their behavior. (Titus 2:3)** False doctrine on divorce and remarriage affords proponents the opportunity to continue in sin, and does **not** encourage **young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands. Titus 2:4-5.** Again, the need to repent is denied. The sordid gain of every false doctrine becomes evident when one considers the reason for the teaching.

After the apostle exhorts Titus to **speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)**, he embarks on a discussion of the *basic qualifications* for different collectivities and therefore individuals who desire salvation. In the process instructions are given to **older men, older women, wives, young men, bond slaves** and others as part of his discussion on what amounts to sound doctrine. The doctrine of Christ involves more than the steps of salvation and acts of worship directed to God. The doctrine of Christ contains complete and detailed instructions to the individual in every circumstance on how to **be reverent in their behavior. (Titus 2:3)** All of this amounts to demonstrating faith in God and worshipping Him.

It is through Peter we receive the following instruction from Christ, and therefore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: **As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; <sup>16</sup> because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY. 1 Peter 1:14-16.**

This instruction and the level of reverence seem intimidating. One cannot deny the role of the grace of God in the process of redeeming lost sinners. The grace of God should not be used as an excuse for sin though. Through the apostle the Lord points out that His grace instructs sinners to repent and live righteously: **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. Titus 2:11-14**

It is Jude who warns that ***certain persons have crept in unnoticed***, and that they are ***ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 4***. Denying Christ does not consist of a literal verbal action only. The Lord is denied when individuals refuse or fail to live as Christ instructed.

Setting things in order is a process of conversion where an individual is transformed from being a sinner into a saint. (Romans 12:2) Everything the Christian does should be done with eternity in mind. In the words of our Lord: ***For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Matthew 16:26***