

# (Titus - Part 6): Set in Order the Things That Are Wanting

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of organization and leadership within the church as outlined in Paul's instructions to Titus in Crete.*

**Duration:** 39:05

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 6:4, Ephesians 4:14, 1 Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:5, Hebrews 6:1, 1 Peter 5:2

**Topics:** "Titus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of organization and structure in the church. He uses the example of a man with a physical disability to illustrate the need for order and organization in the body of Christ. The speaker also emphasizes the role of certain individuals who are called by God to dedicate their time to spiritual activities. He mentions the example of John of the Nedward, who spent 13 hours a day in prayer, Bible study, and writing. The speaker also highlights the importance of recognizing spiritual authority in the church, but cautions against giving any individual dictatorial power. He references the apostle Peter's words about being examples and shepherds to the flock. The sermon concludes with a discussion of the letter to Titus and the importance of setting things in order and appointing elders in every city.

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## Transcript

That ends a kind of salutation. Then he launches into the epistle with verse 5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou should set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. Now I want to clean up two or three things here before we begin with verse 5. To Titus my known son, after the common faith, so on.

Paul says to Titus my known son, and I didn't want to skip that, but I just wanted to call attention to something. I always assume the intelligence of my audiences. And I want to mention something here, the problem of the Bible teacher.

The problem of the preacher who preaches from the Bible and preaches the Bible, he faces a problem always. And I think that most of us fail here, and I think that's the reason we are so very dull as a rule. The problem is how to deal with the obvious.

Now in the scriptures there are many things that are obvious. And I would say that a large percentage, if not practically all, false doctrines come out of inability to know what to do with the obvious. Laboring the obvious is what makes a teacher dull.

If you listen to a sermon sometime here or anywhere else, and you say to yourself now, that was true, all right. I can't deny it was true, but it didn't do me any good and it was dull. What was happening was that the speaker, this one or some other one who might be in this pulpit, was laboring the obvious.

That is, he was explaining that which needed no explanation. And was assuming that he must laboriously run over ground already cultivated, and do over again that which had already been done. That's what Paul found wrong with the Hebrews, or whoever wrote the book of Hebrews.

I usually say Paul. When he wrote to them and said, leaving the doctrines, the foundational doctrines, the elementary teachings, let us go on unto perfection, laying on of hands, baptism, and so on. He said, let's go on.

Well, the reason we don't make better progress is that so many simply go over and over that which everybody already knows. Dr. A. B. Simpson never taught divine healing to a congregation. He taught broader things to a congregation, and then he said, now if anybody's interested in being prayed for, if you're sick, come out Friday afternoon.

And he talked to a narrower crowd, and could advance and go on. It was the same with the Salvation Army. When they were preaching, they preached to the crowds.

Then they said, now we'll have a holiness meeting. And that was a narrower crowd, and then they talked about a holy life, and how to attain a holy life. This was for those who were prepared for it.

Well, that is at least one way to get out of the dilemma here. Because if we labor the obvious, we go over the same ground, and we fall under the sharp attack of the apostle, who tells us that we are to go on unto perfection. And then, if we avoid the obvious, we take for granted that because we know it, everybody else does, then we leave gaps in the knowledge of some people.

Some preachers, in order that there might be no gaps, go over the same thing over and over and over again. I have often said, I trust with some charity and kindness, that I don't need to listen to the average preacher, because if he tells me he's sick, I'll tell you what he's going to say. I won't know his illustrations, but outside of that, I'll know what he's going to say, because he'll go over the same familiar ground again, laboring the obvious.

Now, I brought that up, because Paul says, to Titus, mine own son. And somebody says, now wait a minute, what did the man mean here? Jesus said, call no man father. And if Titus was Paul's son, then Titus would have to call Paul father.

And we could get ourselves all mixed up in the obvious, but it only means this, my friends. Paul was using a figure of speech, and as he wrote this, I could see a smile coming on his face. He wasn't using the word, mine own son, in the sense that David did, when he said, my son, my son Absalom.

Absolutely born of David, David's own life. He didn't mean it in the sense that the Bible says, Abraham begot Isaac, and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Dan, Levi. He didn't mean it in that sense.

I'm laboring the obvious here, for a moment, to show you how it's done. And to help you to see, when you're reading your Bible, don't get stuck behind a little tree. There are plenty of big ones, so to get out from behind the little ones.

This is an awfully little one, because all Paul meant here was, through the power of the gospel, I brought about the new birth of Titus, ergo, Titus is my boy. He meant it about the same sense that the president, when he got off the plane, and Nixon came to meet him, put his arms around him, and said, he's my boy. Well, a little, a little closer than that, but not much more.

It was just Paul saying, you're my boy, Titus. I won you to the Lord, through the power of the word. I planted the word in your heart, and the Holy Ghost brought about your conversion, your birth.

So I'm your father. But there was nothing biological meant by it here, and nothing even theological. So there is how to labor the obvious, but it's also how not to avoid it, so people don't know what we mean.

Then another matter says, after the common faith. Now, what do we mean by the common faith? A young Christian might wonder about that, and assuming that there are new Christians, and I know there are, who wonder what the common faith means, because that word common is not always a good word. It is a word that has many definitions.

And what do we mean by the common faith? Well, we talk about common bread, and it's said to let Jesus into the common hall, and they talk about death, which is common to all. Paul talks about common temptation, and we read about a common drunk, or hear about a common drunk, or a common scold. We say that's a common sight.

Then, of course, this is the age of the common people, Mr. Roosevelt said. So the word common there doesn't always mean, it means the opposite of excellent. It means the opposite of elite.

It means the multitude, the hoi polloi, the crowd, when it's used, of course, of people. And yet, Paul turns around and uses it of the faith of our fathers. Why would he put the adjective common back of the word faith, meaning the gospel faith, the Christian faith? I say a young Christian might wonder about that, but that's nothing again, and you don't want to get lost again behind the obvious here, because the Bible talks about common faith and common salvation.

And, of course, it means one of two things always. It means shared by everybody. It used to be in the small towns, and I think there are in England still, places they call the commons.

Not belonging to anybody, but belonging to everybody commonly. Communally, we would say, if it wasn't that communists have cursed that word. But there's something shared by everybody.

You walk down the street, it's a common sidewalk. You go to the park, it's common for everybody. That's one meaning of the word.

And the other meaning is open to everybody. So it says our common salvation. Jude refers to common salvation, open to everybody.

It's not esoteric. When I was a kid, there boarded at our house a young fellow about my age, a year older maybe, who was very proud of the fact that he belonged to what he called an esoteric religion. He ate certain things and didn't eat other certain things.

He belonged to the esoteric. Well, esoteric, of course, means hidden and belonging to or discovered by only a few. Exoteric means the opposite.

It means common, open to everybody. And Paul said, or Jude said, the common salvation is not esoteric, belonging to a few who have been initiated into it, but it's open to everybody. Let whosoever will come and take of the water of life freely.

And when Paul said, my son, after the common faith, he meant a salvation that was shared by everybody, open to everybody. And then it means this too, shared by the speaker and the hearer. Let me explain it like this.

Suppose that a man and his wife had a little child and the little child, after staying around long enough to get all woven into the emotional heart strings of their, its parents, died. Well, those parents would say, we share a common grief. He belongs to you and me, he would say to his wife.

That's a common grief we share, a common grief. If later they had another happy little one that lived, they'd say, this is our common joy. Nobody else would share it.

Even though their friends would congratulate them in the birth of the new baby or sorrow with them in the death of one, still nobody knows that grief except the parents. They shared a common grief. Now that's what Paul meant.

After the common faith, a faith shared by the speaker and the hearer, by the writer and the reader, by the apostle and his son after the common faith, Paul. Now that's what that means. Then he says, grace, mercy, and peace.

Now I'm deliberately going to skip that because that would be laboring the obvious too greatly. Now he said, for this cause left I thee in Crete. And I told you at the beginning that Crete was one, I think I told you that Crete was the third largest island in the Mediterranean.

I think I told you that the first message that I gave here when we were talking about Crete. But I've looked this up on maps and I find that Crete is not the third largest. It is one of the five large islands, Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, Crete, and I think maybe one other.

Cyprus, that's right. I might know our brother down there would know about it. And those are the five large islands and Crete, as I could figure it, is not the largest but one of the five largest.

Now what there was about this Greek island that made it of significance was its population. From all I can gather from commentators and dictionaries and encyclopedias, you wonder what I do brother? I dig stuff out for you that you've too busy to dig out. And then tell it to you in five minutes and you say, well that's not, that's not, I got much to do.

Well it's not giving in five minutes but it takes two or three hours to find out things. So I find that Crete was inhabited by a rather wild mixture of races and religions and philosophies. There were a lot of Jews there and it was supposed to be the birthplace of Bacchus.

You've heard the word bacchanalian meaning wild drunken orgies and that's the kind of religion they had there. Old Bacchus they said was born there on that island, Crete, and their religion sort of centered around Bacchus. And of course there was drunkenness and all kinds of immoralities that went with the

religion they had.

Then there were Jews who held rather closely to the Jewish religion and then when the Christians came, of course, they pulled loose both from the orgies of the bacchanalian Greek worshippers of false gods and from the Jews. And there were many of them I understand, large numbers of Christians when Paul got there. And Titus and Paul were traveling together just as two preachers now might start out or two missionaries.

Two missionaries might start out together. This man and his wife might start out somewhere. Well, that's the way they were doing.

And Paul, when he saw the situation in Crete, he left his young friend there and said, now Titus, I haven't time to stay here and organize, but this place is a mess. You got to organize. I don't know what the slang word was for what was wrong with them there.

Dr. R. Brown says it's status quo. He said the preacher kept referring to the status quo in the church and somebody asked him what that word meant. He said it's Latin for the mess we were in.

And this mess he was in, the status quo in Crete among the Christians was very bad. And Paul said that you stay Titus and I'll go on. You stay and set it in order.

There were, said somebody, plenty of Christian life, but no Christian organization. Some persons despise organization and they quote this passage where two or three are gathered together in my name. There am I in the midst of them.

And they say, now there you have your church. That's your typical church and all churches should take that for a standard. A few people gathered together in the name of Christ.

Well, they're right that far, but have you noticed that their idea is no authority, no order, no form, no obedience, just freedom and fellowship and the quality and joy. It is a sort of ideal state which they think up, but never has been realized. The scriptures teach quite otherwise.

The scriptures teach not that there is that a church consists alone of a group of people, two or three or more met together. Two or three, Jesus said in the name of Christ without order, organization, obedience, authority. The Bible teaches something else all together.

Now Israel was organized thoroughly. If you read your old Testament, you will see that nothing was left to people. God organized it from the top and he organized it, cleared down to the last Kohithite to carry on his shoulder.

The accoutrements of the temple. And then those first disciples that gathered around Jesus had some kind of organization because they did have a treasure. They say that if there were three Americans cast up on a desert Island, one would take a stick and call the other two to order and they would have a meeting and they would elect a president, vice president and secretary.

And if there were four, a treasure. But you find that Judas was the treasure. He turned out bad, but he was tempted more than the others were.

And he wasn't probably a born again man ever, so he turned out bad, but they did have a treasure. Somebody kept the bag. And then act six, do you notice what happens as soon as it ceases to be two or

three and becomes more? And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, the Grecian Christians.

That is, they were Jews, uh, proselytes, I understand, and had, and were from, uh, from other countries and were in Jerusalem. Then there were the Hebrew Christians blown in the bottle, real Hebrews that were Hebrews of the land. They spoke one language and the Grecians might've spoken almost anything, uh, from whatever land they came, they would speak that language, but they were all Christians and the disciples multiplied and there arose a murmuring.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples under them, not two or three, but the multitude. You see, the problem came from numbers. Always remember that lots of people want a tiny little church with only a few and they say, oh, it's so much better.

But always remember the proverb that says where no oxen are, the stall is clean, but much increase comes from the ox. What do you mean by that? They mean that if you just want a clean barn, don't have any oxen. But if you want your farm to grow and you want to have much fruit, much increase, you're going to have to have oxen.

And if you're going to have to have oxen, you're going to have to keep cleaning out the stables and looking after the oxen. If all you want is a nice, clean barn, why you will have no fruit, no vegetables, no grain. And otherwise that has been said, you can't make an omelet without breaking an egg.

And here you, if you're going to reach a lot of people, you're going to have to take the problem that comes with having more people. So they had to face it out. And the 12 called the multitude of the disciples under them and said, it isn't reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

Therefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over the business. They didn't go off and say, pick you out seven men. They said, pick them out.

You know them better than we are people better than we do find the best people possible and we'll appoint them, but we'll give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Now, uh, they set them, they picked out seven of them and it names them whom they set before the apostles. And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

So you see, there was organization in the sixth chapter of acts. As long as there were two or three gathered together in the name of the Lord, there'd be no reason for organization. But as soon as the multitude or the number of the disciples increased, then there had to come some sort of organization.

Then the pastoral epistles, Titus, first Timothy and second Timothy deal with, with organization, order, obedience and authority in the church. And then there's first Peter says, the elders among you, I exhort feed the flock of God, which is among you taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly not for filthy lucre, but have already mine. Neither is being lords over God's heritage, but being in samples to the flock.

Well, that's about all there is to it this time, except that Paul said, thou should ordain elders as I appointed. Now I want to ask a question. If these elders were selected by the congregation, approved by Titus and appointed by the elders, or appointed by the apostle.

And I wonder where all that democracy is we hear so much about. Now we're set up here as a democratic church. We're not quite Baptist, but we're close to it.

But we, you know, I think you can democratize yourself to death. You go back to the old Testament and you find that when the Lord wanted to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, he selected one man and he worked through that man. And when he wanted to lead them into the land, he selected another man.

When he wanted to lead them back from Babylon, he selected two men and all down the years, it's been the same. It seems to be inherent in crowds that they can't hear God speak. A man has to get alone and pay the price for listening.

Then when he hears God speak, he goes to the people and tells them and they hear God speak through him. That seems to be the order. That's the biblical order.

And I'll stand up to anybody on that. That's why I can't go along with my good friends, the Plymouth brethren. I admire them.

I learned from them and yet I can't go along with them on their refusal to acknowledge pastors and so on. Now, here was the order. Paul at the top, Titus beneath him, the elders still further down on the totem pole.

That seemed to be God's order. Now, what do I gather from all this? Well, I'll give you seven. I'm a good, good fundamentalist.

I'll give you seven points here now, just briefly given to you in quick, that I learned from the Apostle Epistles, from Titus, and from this that Paul says, I set the left in creed that thou mightest set in order things that are wanting and ordain elders as I've appointed. Here's what I, what I gather from this, these seven points, that wherever there is corporate action, there must be organization. Wherever there is corporate action, there must be organization.

Otherwise, there can be no order and where there is no order, there can only be chaos and waste motion. So that any group, any group of Christians that are meeting together, if they're going to function as a church in the body of Christ, they've got to have some sort of organization. The great proof of this lies in the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians, where Paul likens the church to the body, and the body's organized.

If it isn't organized, then you have these dear poor people. They wouldn't thank me for pitting them, but you can't help but pity them. I have a friend, I'm not going to name his name, but he's one of the most learned fellows I ever saw.

He teaches advanced Greek in the college, but he is, what do they call it, can't control himself, he's spastic, and he simply goes all the pieces. He has to be fed, he has to have his clothes put on him, he can hardly hold a book, he's just all over the place, can't even control his face. He smiles, but he smiles and goes all awry.

He's a brilliant fellow, a brilliant fellow. I've watched him now for the last 15 years or more, growing, and he sits before a class, and he teaches brilliantly, but he's a spastic. Well, a body that isn't organized is like that.

It would go all the pieces. It has to be organized. Your brain has to tell your nerves what to tell your muscles, and your muscles have to have the cooperation of the joints, and the whole thing has to work together.

So the Church of Christ must be, if it's going to work, it's going to have to be organized. Our problem comes when we organize after they're dead. I find that the more organization, usually it's an indication of lack of spirituality.

A certain amount of organization is necessary to control life, but when life goes out, then we try to make up by organization what we lack in life. That happens in churches. Well, that's one thing.

Wherever there's corporate action, there must be organization. Two, to be a true New Testament church, there must be offices, authority, and obedience. And if we're not ready and willing as Christians to admit this, then we're going to have to walk right out of the New Testament, because that's what it teaches.

Three, ordination is a New Testament doctrine. You know, good men can say things that they never should have said. I remember that Charles Haddon Spurgeon, though he was a Baptist all his life, somebody said to him, Mr. Spurgeon, have you ever been ordained? And he gave this classic reply.

No, he said. Nobody's ever laid his empty hands on my empty head. And that was quoted all over the world.

Moody said something about the same, and he never was ordained. The result was laymanism took over. And we see it today in its crassness and rawness throughout the whole evangelical church.

But in spite of a quip some fellow might make in a weak moment, ordination is a New Testament doctrine. And so whoever rejects that also rejects the scripture, because the scripture very clearly teaches it. Select you out from among you seven men of good report.

They know who they were, but they didn't function until the apostles laid their hands on them and prayed for them and ordained them to their specific ministry. Now, the fourth thing is that God gives no dictatorial powers, power to any man, to a church. He gives no man dictatorial authority over church.

He gives him a position, and he gives him a certain spiritual authority there, which if the church is a church of God, they will recognize, but he gives him no right to call all the shots and to rule everybody's life and to stand up and dictate. Absolutely not. Peter, you'll remember, I read to you there that he said, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being in samples to the flock.

They are to be shepherds to lead the flock, not sergeants to command the flock. There's a difference there, and the good leaders are those who lead us, not those who command us. Then the fifth is that a pastor is not a hired man.

That ought to be remembered also by churches. There are boards. I never was unfortunate enough to ever have to deal with any of them, and it's certainly not true of any we've ever had here, but they imagine the pastor is a hired man.

I remember in Canada, there was a church, one of our great alliance churches, and they had there one of the senators, I believe, or a member of parliament anyway. He was a member of the church, and they had a military officer who was in charge of the orchestra, and it was pretty big stuff, you know. So they invited a

pastor, and the pastor wanted to know who was chairman of the board.

They said, that's not any of your affair, reverend. He said, you come and preach, and we'll run the church. In other words, you're a hired man.

We hire you to come, then we'll run the church. No, that isn't the way it is. A pastor isn't a hired man, neither is he a dictator.

He's one of the crowd ordained of God to take a certain leadership, and the flock follows him as he follows the Lord, but never think of him as a hired man, to be hired and fired at the dictation of some board member who had a bad day at the office, and who, when he comes to the meeting, isn't feeling well. Then there is the sixth point. Too much democracy isn't good for religion.

We need desperately, desperately lead the right, need the right kind of leadership now. We need it in the Christian church. We're getting a certain leadership, but it's not the leadership of the Holy Ghost.

It's, it's a lay leadership in the direction of all sorts of organizations, and all sorts of new schemes and methodology, as we say, or as they say, and the result is that there's, it's, we've democratized ourselves to death. Nobody's willing to stand out, and we, we want men who will go along with the crowd. Then seventh is that the right order, gifts and offices and democracy and cooperation, that's the right order.

Gifts in the church, which are recognized by the people, offices, ordination, those gifted men ordained to offices in the church, and then the democracy, meaning that the people are there, and they have a voice, and they're God's sheep, and they have a voice, and, and they have a say, and they help to select those who are to set things in order, but they, they do not finally select that man. You're not, you're not an elder by election. Keep that in mind, Brent, that you cannot become an order, an elder by election.

You can only become an elder by ordination, and if the great God Almighty doesn't ordain a man, he's not an elder, no matter how often he may be elected. So a position in a church ought to be a position of ordination. Presbyterian church, they ordain elders, and they do it in certain other groups, and I believe in, and we have something close to it when we call those elected down and pray over them at the end of our annual meeting.

Rather ragged, maybe, but at least it's a reach, a stretching out in the right direction. Just, just count the votes and see who gets in. Never.

I get awfully weary of this town hall method of conducting the church. It isn't good, my reverend. We mustn't forget that the spirit runs his church, and we mustn't forget that the spirit has historically always worked through men whose ear he could get.

You say, does this put other men, common men down? No. It only means this, that the working man, the professional man, the laboring man must work, and he does, and by having funds, he's able to carry on the work of the Lord financially, home and abroad, but it also limits the amount of time that he can give to any spiritual, specifically spiritual activities. So the Lord picks out certain men who can give time.

Jonathan Edwards spent 13 hours a day in his study, in prayer, and in Bible searching, and in writing. In order to get exercise, he had his desk built up level with him here, so that he could walk along his desk, pick out his books, and do his writing standing up, in order that he might not sit down and spread out, and get the diseases that they say are the result of a sedentary occupation. I've always smiled about that.

That means sitting down, but Edwards wouldn't do that. He stood up and walked along his desk, and wrote his great world-shaking books, and got his great world-shaking sermons. Well, that's it then.

Democracy, yes. There is some democracy in the church. Pure democracy, no.

Leadership, yes. Dictatorship, no. Fellowship, yes.

Cooperation, certainly. Order, got to be. Organization, there must be.

Now, all that is here. It's all implied here, and Titus, the rest of Titus, the two Timothys, as well as 1 Corinthians, and the practice in the book of Acts, all bears out what I've said this morning. But it's wonderful, wonderful to work together, and have everybody working, and doing his job, and operating, and nobody angry, nobody mad, nobody jealous.

Everybody willing to do it, not by constraint, but willingly. Wonderful. The teachers, and officers in the Sunday school, and in the choir, on up to the teachers, and others.

To work together like that, that's wonderful. And where the Spirit of God is, I doubt whether there's any likelihood at all of any difficulty. It's only when carnality gets in.

But he said, what do you believe in, Mr. Tozer? Do you believe in the Episcopal form of government? Do you believe in the Presbyterian form of government? Do you believe in the Baptist form of government? You know what? Dr. Samuel Johnson once said something, and I think it was one of the wisest, most penetrating observations ever made by an uninspired man. They were sitting around there, as they did, you know, Burke, and Samuel Johnson, and Goldsmith, and the rest of them, discussing everything, heaven and earth. There was nothing too high nor too low for them to discuss.

They didn't sit around, make clips, and tell jokes the way men do now. They discussed learned things. And they were discussing forms of government.

And Dr. Johnson settled it, and for me, he settled it for all time. He said, Sirs, I have observed that it makes little difference what form of government prevails in a country. The people will be happy if only the rulers be just men.

Put a good man in charge, and everybody will be happy, I don't care what they call it, a democracy, an oligarchy, or a monarchy. If he's a good man, everybody will be happy. The problem is a personality problem.

It's getting the right man in there. Get the right man in. And if you get the right person leading you, it'll be all right.

Right man in Washington. I wouldn't want to see the country organized a new organization. I don't think we need a new organization from the top down in Washington.

I simply think we need a more selective crowd up there in Washington. Get good men like the Lincoln we celebrate, whose birthday we celebrated last week. Get good men in, everybody will be happy.

Sirs, I've observed that it matters little what form of government prevails in a country. The people will be happy if only the rulers be just men. So if the Holy Ghost controls in the teaching, in the preaching, in the leadership, what little there is, if he controls, the people will be a happy, worshipful, good-natured people,

there'd be no trouble.

But get the wrong man in. Get a dictator, or a lazy tramp, or somebody who wants to lord it over God's heritage, you've got trouble no matter what form of government you got. Well that's Titus for this morning.

We'll go on into Titus, and I promise you that's a mighty rich mind. Amen.

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