

**Title:** Pt. 1 – Biblically Qualified Elders

**Scripture:** Titus 1:5-8

**Series:** The Pastoral Epistles

1. Introduction:

- a. In our study of the book of Titus, we now come to the section in which Paul is concerned with the appropriate leadership of the church. God has ordained that spiritually chosen men lead healthy churches. Only then can the church be an example to a lost and dying world.
- b. Having ministered in Crete with Titus, Paul now exhorts Titus to do the work he had been appointed. As the apostle's representative, Titus must ensure that the churches located in Crete each have biblically qualified elders.
  - i. Paul reminds Titus that not every man is qualified for this position. This passage in Titus sets forth the spiritual and moral qualifications essential for church eldership.
    1. Today we will focus on the moral qualifications and, in our next sermon, we will focus on the spiritual qualifications.
  - ii. The importance of godly leadership becomes evident in the fact that Paul details the qualifications of an elder both here and in the epistle to Timothy.
    1. Therefore, no church is granted the ability to change, forsake, or ignore these qualifications in the choosing of its elders. Beloved, much harm

has been done to the people of God and the reputation of Christ by men who were not qualified to lead yet appointed. The church commits grave sin when it ignores these commands and appoints unqualified men.

- c. It's not that God requires more from potential leaders but that he requires them to live in such a way that they become examples to the church regarding how all men and women must live.

2. Verse 5: The Necessary Leadership of a Church: 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—

- a. We immediately learn from this verse that Paul was not in an undue hurry to appoint any man to an office that they were not qualified to fulfill. He had been at Crete and had left Crete without appointing the necessary men. Because there were no men ready when Paul departed, Titus had remained behind in Crete to eventually appoint elders in every town where there was a church. This work would be long and arduous but essential for the stability of the church.

3. Verse 6A and 7A: The Positive Moral Character that is Essential in Choosing an Elder: if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers... (7A) For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach

- a. **if anyone is above reproach...For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach:**
- i. the umbrella qualification of an elder is first listed for us here. An elder must **be above reproach**.
  - ii. The phrase **above reproach** carries the idea of being completely blameless. It implies not merely being acquitted of any charge but the absence of the credible possibility of leveling a charge against such an individual.
    1. An example of this is found in **Daniel 6:4** Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.
  - iii. Beloved, Paul is not speaking of sinless perfection (only Jesus Christ is perfect). Still, he is declaring that leaders of Christ's Church must have no sinful defect in their lives that could justly call their virtue, their righteousness, or their godliness into question. There must be nothing in their lives to disqualify them as models of moral and spiritual character for believers under their care to follow. They not only must teach and preach rightly but also must live rightly. In other words, their Christian lives must be both orthodox and orthoprax.
  - iv. We are to remember that the position of elder is not a status symbol but an opportunity to serve both God

and his people humbly. This is why Peter was commanded to tend to the sheep of God.

- v. A pastor is a selfless servant who finds his greatest fulfillment and joy in emulating the devotion, sacrifice, humility, and love of Jesus. He wants to show Christ to his people.
- b. A person is above reproach if he is the husband of one wife:**
- i. The Greek behind this phrase is more literally translated as being a one-woman-man.
  - ii. Here the phrase refers to the singularity of immense faithfulness to the woman who is his wife.
  - iii. An elder must have an untarnished, lifelong reputation for devotion to his wife and sexual purity. He must be utterly free, throughout his Christian life, of fornication, adultery, divorce, remarriage (except after the death of a wife), mistresses, illegitimate children, and all such moral stains that smear the reputation of Christ and his church.
  - iv. **Commentary:** It should be carefully noted, however, that a man who has never been guilty of sexual sins is not necessarily morally or spiritually superior to a man who has fully confessed and been forgiven. It also does not mean that a repentant man will never be used effectively by the Lord in Christian service. It simply means that only a sexually pure and faithful man is qualified to be the pastor and example in Christ's church.

1. Much harm has been done to the people of God and to God's reputation by men who have failed in this area and have been appointed to ministry or been allowed to continue in ministry. Men who have failed, as Christians, in the area of purity cannot serve as an example of the love of Christ for his bride.
- c. Two points of clarification:
- i. The fact that the elder would be **the husband of one wife** assumes that the wife is a believer.
    1. **1 Corinthians 9:5** Do we not have the right to take along a **believing** wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?
    2. No man that finds himself in an unequally yoked marriage can assume the pastorate. It does not matter when that marriage first occurred. If a man has an unbelieving spouse, his first and foremost responsibility is to live out the gospel in hopes that his unbelieving wife will repent and turn to Jesus one day.
  - ii. Our second point of clarification is that the pastorate is reserved for men. Paul calls for the pastor to be the **husband** of one wife. In other parts of scripture, we are told that the headship of the church must be male. Here we must be careful not to read some bias toward women into the scripture. God has defined specific roles for males and females within the church and family unit.

d. **A person is above reproach if his children are believers:**

- i. The second qualification that makes a man above reproach is family leadership. A man who cannot spiritually and morally lead his own family is not qualified to lead an entire congregation. To determine if a man is qualified for leadership in the church, look first at his influence on his children.
- ii. **Commentary:** A potential elder, whose child is old enough to be saved, but is not, can hardly be considered faithful.
  1. If a man's children are too young to understand the gospel and to trust in Jesus as Lord and savior, then the standard given to Timothy first applies. An overseer, or elder, must manage **his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive**. However, as children grow older and the issue is no longer control, the more demanding criteria in Titus comes into play.
  2. Many Christian men who work hard to support and manage the household utterly fail in leading their children to salvation. According to God, a potential elder demonstrates his love for the gospel in that he has first effectively evangelized his children.
    - a. Now we know that salvation is a work of God the Holy Spirit in an individual's life. Only God can save. Paul is stating that God the Holy Spirit will use the dedicated believer as

a means for salvation in the life of the children that are given to him. A man must first have poured out his life and energy seeking salvation for his children.

4. Verse 6B and 7B: The Negative Moral Flaws to Avoid in Choosing an Elder: (speaking of his children) and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination... (7B) He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,

a. **and not open to the charge of:**

i. **debauchery or insubordination:** The apostle has nearly grown children in mind. This term **debauchery** is commonly used of drunken parties at Pagan festivals like those mentioned in Ephesians 5:18. **Insubordination** means personal disobedience, refusal to recognize or submit to proper authority, of parents or of society. Even if he is a genuine believer, a man whose children are behaving in this manner is not qualified for pastoral elder duties. He has failed his children and therefore cannot be trusted with the Church of God.

1. We are to remember that the first responsibility of any man is his family. We're reminded of this in **Deuteronomy 6:5-7** You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your

children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

**b. He must not be:**

- i. **Arrogant:** a self-interest that asserts its own will with utter disregard for how others might be affected. In one way or another, Proud self-interest is the root of all sin because it not only disregards the interest and welfare of other people but, even more importantly, disregards God's will and replaces his purpose and glory with man's.

1. The world usually looks to the aggressive, self-assertive person for leadership. But these characteristics disqualify a man for leadership in the church, where pride and arrogance have no place.

- a. **Matthew 20:25-28** But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. (26) It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, (28) even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- ii. **or quick-tempered:** we are speaking about the propensity to anger. The quick-tempered person is



irritable. He has a "short fuse" and is easily provoked. All perceived slights cause these men to lash out. Their anger is indicative of being under the sway of the evil one.

1. **Proverbs 14:29** Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

iii. **or a drunkard:** the man of God should never have impaired judgment and therefore should never be intoxicated or under the influence of anything addictive. A person in spiritual leadership is to be clearheaded, in control of his senses and judgment at all times.

1. It is interesting that whenever we touch this area immediately, some question whether a Christian can drink alcohol. The group is quick to point out that they have the liberty to do so. They have memorized every portion of scripture that condones and seems to condone alcohol use.

2. Whatever rights or liberties a Christian believes he has in this area is far surpassed by the fact that we have a greater responsibility to all believers, especially those weaker in the faith.

a. **1 Corinthians 8:9-13** But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. (10) For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered

to idols? (11) And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. (12) Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. (13) Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

iv. **or violent:** the man of God is not to be a violent person. We are not to settle our differences with our fists. We are not to resolve our differences with a sharp tongue. When conflicts arise, they must be settled peacefully, responsibly, and without animosity.

1. **Romans 12:18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

v. **or greedy for gain:** much damage has been done to the church and to the reputation of Christ by men who have been **greedy for gain**. They view the gospel as a means to enrich themselves. The church must make sure that the man who is being considered for the position of an elder can manage his money and is satisfied with what God has given.

5. Verse 8: The Purity Required of an Elder: but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

a. Purity:

- i. **Hospitable:** this does not mean that the pastor's home has to be open to every person at all times. But it does mean that a pastor is a person who gives practical help to anyone who is in need, a friend or stranger, believer or unbeliever. In other words, the pastor models the life of Jesus Christ to both the congregation and to the unbelieving world. His life is open to others.
- ii. **a lover of good:** the pastor should love those persons and things God loves.
  1. The thought is captured for us in **Philippians 4:8**  
Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
- iii. **Self-controlled:** of a sound mind, sane, in one's senses; curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate. This is a man who is not tossed about by his desires.
- iv. **Upright:** righteous, observing divine laws. A pastor must be fair and just when dealing with God's people. The pastor remembers that the people belong to God, and therefore he must serve them in a way befitting their status.
- v. **Holy:** undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure, holy, pious. This term is often used of God in the

New Testament. The pastor is to model a genuine desire to live according to the Word of God.

- vi. **Disciplined:** having the power to master and control the desires of the flesh. A pastor lives an exemplary life on the outside because he submits to God the Holy Spirit's control on the inside. A pastor continuously monitors his life by submitting to the word of God. He constantly offers to the Lord's cleansing so that he can keep a clear conscience. He does so not to please man but God.
6. Only after having demonstrated that his character is **above reproach** in the ways that we have just spoken of can a man then be considered for the position of elder. We have studied the moral qualifications necessary for the eldership. In verse nine, we preview the spiritual qualification that will be the subject matter of our following sermon. Verse nine reads, "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." The final qualifications are entirely spiritual. They are gifts from God and God alone. In our next sermon, by God's grace, we will endeavor to expound them.
7. Conclusion: Although many might have the desire to enter into the eldership very few men are ever chosen by God. The moral duty of an elder is to emulate the life of Christ to the congregation. In so doing, the elder affirms the possibility of leading a godly life. It's not that God requires

more from an elder but that God requires that an elder live up to the standards of Christian duty given to all Christians. Every believer is called to live in such a way, but not every believer does so.

- a. If a potential elder is not morally qualified to lead, it does not matter what spiritual gift he possesses. We are not appointing men because they're either charismatic, good-looking, a great speaker, or even a good Bible teacher. The Holy Spirit appoints men that will lead the church to Jesus Christ both by their lives and teaching.
  - i. Beloved, please understand this last point! Both the life and teaching of a potential elder must be in harmony with the Word of God. Only then can the church be considered biblical.

#### 8. Benediction:

- a. **2 Timothy 4:1-2** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

### **The Public Reading of Scripture** **1 Timothy 3:1-7**