

1 Timothy 3:1-3

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August 21, 2005

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"It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money."

Introduction

In the Disney movie, *Hercules*, there's this particular scene where Meg is used by Hades (who pretends that he's got her captive) to have Hercules give up his strength to save her. Hercules agrees to do that and lo and behold, it turns out that she was betraying him all along. All of the sudden, Cyclops comes to kill everybody and in the midst of this new development, Hercules goes out there without any of his strength. Meg asks Hercules, "Where are you going? You're going to get killed!" And in a heroic manner he says, "You know, there are worse things." Hercules goes out to face the monster as a mere, normal human being. That's the part of the movie that I like the most because there's something noble about giving up power for the sake of doing something exceptional. Not because you have great ability, but because you have just a good desire.

There's something exceptional about the men of God that God can use for great effect, not because they are more precious and talented than others, but because the Lord, Himself, is powerful through them.

I would like to remind you of one of the great portions of scripture found in Hebrews 11 when it talks about what it means to have faith or rather, what the historic characters of the scriptures and the martyrs of the past have demonstrated to us of what it means to live by faith. The chapter speaks about Adam and about Abraham. It talks about all these great men of faith. Towards the end of that list starting in verse 35, it talks about just everybody:

"Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground." (Hebrews 11:35-38)

When you read through that list, you realize that the men and women of faith in the history of our faith have encountered incredibly difficult circumstances. I mean look at some of the stuff that's on the list. They've experienced mockings, scourgings, chains and imprisonments. It says that they could have been released, but they weren't willing to accept release. Why? Because there were greater things to obtain. There were worse things than just dying for the glory and reputation of God. *"They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword... men of whom the world was not worthy..."*

That last phrase ought to strike a chord in us—that there was and is a worthiness in the pursuit of the things of the Lord; and there's a worthiness in exemplifying His reputation as best as we can; unto the point of sacrificing our very own lives. There are some things that are worse than dying; primarily, being (in our minds at least) the disrepute that is brought to God and His character.

So as we look at the verses today, look at them not so much as a disqualifying list; one that we might check off for ourselves or for others, but rather, look at them as an issue of reputation—not just your reputation, but God's reputation, and how we display His glory. Let's ask the Lord to teach us and instruct us around His Word this morning.

Heavenly Father,

As we come before You, we thank You for the blessing of the Word of God. We thank You that we might join together, raise our voices in worship and that we might gather together in corporate prayer; and now as we look upon the Word of God, that we might be instructed.

Father, we thank you for the qualifications of the overseer and as we look at these things, that the men of this congregation might be challenged to live in a manner that is worthy of You, indeed; that they might aspire to something greater in their lives than just a comfortable retirement, than just a reasonably safe house and just living their lives as all their neighbors in the world might live; that they should have a spiritual ambition, Lord, that exceeds and goes beyond just the mere living for things in this world.

I pray that You would make that true of them. I pray that You would make that true of me. I pray that as we look at this portion of Scripture, Lord, that we would come under the very strong admonition of the Word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit; that we might see in ourselves a desire and a purpose to lead Your church, to make the bride of Christ, indeed, honorable.

And I pray that the church, Lord, would be a special place. Not just because our friends gather there Lord, but because the glory of God is displayed in the gathering of corporate worship of its saints.

We pray to thank You for it's blessings and ask that You would make the Word of God understandable; make it applicable to our lives today, again, by the power of Your Holy Spirit.

*In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.*

First Admonition (1 Timothy 3:1-3)

"It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money."

As we look at these verses, we will pay particular attention to verse 3, which I said gives a list of negative qualifications or rather, a list of disqualifications (i.e. things that an overseer must not represent in his life). We begin at the top of that list by talking about this issue of wine.

"An overseer, then, must be... not addicted to wine..."

This is a curious phrase. A similar concept was given to us when it says in verse 2 that an overseer must be "temperate." In fact, that term "**temperate**" in the Greek is **nēphaleos** (νηφάλεις), which can be defined literally for someone "who exercises temperance or abstinence from any kind of alcohol" or it could be used of that clear-headed thinker; of someone who is never drunk. In verse 2, the term was used to signify that kind of clear-headedness found in individuals who would be qualified to be the elders, the overseers and leaders of our homes and our churches. In other words, overseers ought to be clear in their insight and understanding of things.

So, here now is a question of addiction to wine. The term "**addiction**" is an interesting one. It's a 20th century idea that is kind of thrown in there to give us an idea of what this word **paroinos** (παροινος) might mean. Many think that this term is a strong one and so they use things like "addiction" or that he must not be a "drunkard" as some modern translations would say—all to imply a strength to this particular word. But what does the word literally mean? In the Greek, the term is a compound word from the terms "**para**" (to come alongside) and "**oinos**" (wine). In other words, one thing that the elder must not be or that would disqualify him is that he is known for being near his wine. His reputation is such that he enjoys his alcoholic beverages *freely*.

Does this mean that we can never drink anything that has alcohol in it? Did you know Nyquil[®] has alcohol in it? Forget about all that stuff and let's not haggle over such issues. The point is that the elder or the spiritual leader is careful about his reputation concerning this area.

In fact, I have a lot of Christian friends who have a little wine with their meals and if we are together at a restaurant, it doesn't offend me for them to drink wine; nor do I take the wine and throw it on the ground and stomp on it. I don't drink and I don't care to drink. I encourage others not to drink because as in all liberties, it has no spiritual benefit. Unquestionably, it has no spiritual benefit. But it does have some strong warnings in Scripture.

What does bother me however (and what I realize in a lot of my friends who do partake of wine now and again) is that people really haven't thought through the issue by way of a personal conviction; as to whether or not the Scriptures address it in any real sense. For instance, the first thing that a friend of mine said to me about drinking when we were discussing it was that Scripture didn't condemn the drinking of wine. And I said, "That's true! And is there anything else you can say about it?" One thing *is* clear, the scriptures condemns any person who in any situation becomes drunk.

Now like I said before, I know of some good Christian friends who have on occasion unintentionally been "a little inebriated" and the question is whether that is appropriate for a man of God. And the answer is never! Never! I fear that we don't take seriously enough God's hatred for drunkenness.

Unfortunately, in our society people (e.g. your neighbors, your coworkers, those around you) think you are nuts if you don't drink. I remember when I was at an event and someone offered me something and I said, "No thanks. I don't drink." And I got this look like "Never!?" They were shocked at the fact that I didn't drink any kind of alcoholic beverage. But am I so legalistic about it that if we were at a church or if we were on a trip in Israel and they were serving communion and they used real wine that I wouldn't take it? No, in that particular case I would drink it.

Listen, it is not about how much you drink. It is not about measuring things. That is not the issue. The issue is *am I known for my wine?* To me, it is not a virtue. It is not necessarily a vice, but it doesn't encourage my life any and it's not something that I desperately need, so why not leave it on the shelf?

Interestingly, there are those who enjoy the idea of being a "hero" in drink. I give them the same warning of Isaiah 5, in that third section of woes against Judah, whom God is bringing judgment against. Isaiah says He's going to wipe clean His own people meaning, God will sweep you off of the face of the earth for a while; the Lamb that was yours by promise will be gone for a while; that City that is the City of God, the Temple which you love, destroyed, ravaged, will all be gone for a period of 70 years. When that occurs, you will know why. This is one of the reasons for God's judgment:

"Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, And valiant men in mixing strong drink; who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!" (Isaiah 5:22-23)

It goes on to talk about how everything is turned upside down. Nowhere in the scriptures does it encourage us to enjoy drunkenness. It tells us quite the opposite. In the Old Testament in particular, there is that concept of drinking that is mentioned. There's no question about that.

I like what William Muntz in his great commentary on the pastoral epistles says about this:

"Where as in the Old Testament drinking wine is sometimes pictured as a good thing, in the New Testament, wine is not pictured in a positive light, except once for medicinal use. This neutral use, for example, the wedding of Cana in John 2, the parable of the wineskins in Mark 2, the last supper in Mark 14, and the messianic banquet in Luke 22, is precisely that. Precisely what? A neutral use of the concept of them drinking wine. Drinking for enjoyment is never recommended."

Now, I thought that that was insightful and significant for us to consider. Would we disqualify someone who is otherwise qualified for the office of an overseer because he has a little wine with his meal every now and then? No. But, if his reputation is such that he is known for such things and that he demands that freedom of himself and that no one should impinge upon his right to enjoy such things then, I think that that's an issue. It's an issue of his heart. It's not an issue of what he drinks or how much or if he's inebriated. It's an issue of his heart.

It is a liberty. No question. But as in all liberties, we need to consider the teachings of Scripture. Have you ever looked in the New Testament when it talks about the concept of wine, like in Ephesians 5:17-18? Ephesians 5:18 says *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."* The phrase *"be filled with the Spirit"* is one of the key elements in the concept of walking in the grace of God and in salvation. All Christians are filled with the Spirit. It doesn't mean that we are given this weird, ecstatic state. It means that we walk in a manner where the Holy Spirit, God Himself, influences us.

Do you guys understand the importance of that? I mean, it's not Paul saying "be filled" with just the concept of doctrine (which would be perfectly acceptable) as opposed to other portions of Scripture where he reminds us to follow through with our doctrine. But there it says to "be filled" with God's Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity; that the Holy Spirit would have divine influence upon your heart.

That's an incredibly strong and absolute statement about salvation, not just our regarding our justification, but also our sanctification, that is how we are growing in the things of God until we are finally transformed in that unchangeable state of perfection. *"Be filled with the Spirit."* That's a wonderful phrase and it is contrasted to being drunk with wine which is dissipation; which means that it is the most wasteful of excesses.

Listen, if you have wine every now and then, it doesn't bother me, but you need to make sure that you are never drunk. Because being drunk is the opposite of being filled with the Spirit. It is a display of dissipation or a wastefulness of lifestyle that is the opposite of everything that you would spiritually live for. Drunkenness should not represent the men and women of God. We ought to discourage it. There is no primary benefit in it whatsoever.

Have you ever looked at the warning in 1 Corinthians 5:11? Paul says there:

"But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person,"

It's talking about sexual immorality. Paul says don't associate with someone who is allegedly a Christian and calls himself a Christian and yet is immoral. And it goes on in this list and it says:

"or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one."

Have you taken that seriously? If you're out with your Christian friends and there's a particular brother, this good guy, but he tends to have a little too much drink on occasion and more than once you've seen him get inebriated. Do you take the admonition of Scripture seriously enough in 1 Corinthians 5:11 so that you would say "Listen bro, I need to talk to you. Because as far as the Word of God tells me, I think I'm suppose to break fellowship with you over you drunkenness. I know it's happened only a few times, but it's not right." It's not something you want to be a part of and certainly not something the Church needs its leaders to be a part of.

Now, let's address the passage in [1 Timothy 5:23](#) where it addresses medicinal use (inevitably, since there is no positive admonition anywhere in the New Testament to encourage us to have a little wine now and then, someone will go to this particular verse). Paul tells Timothy here:

"No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."

People argue that here Paul is encourages the drinking of wine, at least to Timothy; and he certainly does, but let us make sure we understand exactly what the verse is talking about.

Paul is not saying, "Timothy, I want you to be a good example of moderate drinking, so I want you to start drinking wine with all your meals to demonstrate that that is a good and excellent thing to do." That is not what he's saying at all. He is saying instead that he would recommend it *for strictly medicinal purposes*. He says "Since you are having stomach issues don't drink just water. Mix it with a little wine."

I have no idea what it was like in those days. I mean, you can't have a Diet Coke. There's no Iced Tea. You either have wine diluted to some degree or another or you have water that isn't even filtered. I can't even handle drinking from a water faucet. I need it to be filtered and iced and all this ridiculous stuff. It just goes to show you how sissy of a man I've become.

This was a time when there were no such things to purify the water to the extent as in our modern era. You drank either wine or drank water or some parts of wine and water. Apparently, Timothy was having problems with his stomach, so Paul tells him you better have a little wine.

Now, isn't it curious that he commands Timothy to do that? Obviously, drinking must have been a major issue as Paul addressed it to Titus and to Timothy in Ephesus and Crete. Even in the qualifications of the elder listed here in 1 Timothy 3, Paul mentions that he must not be close to his wine.

This is the same characteristic mentioned in [Titus 1:7](#) where Paul tells Titus the elder not to be a drunkard; must not be near his wine ("not addicted to wine"). The qualification of deacon later on in this same chapter (v. 8) tells us that the deacon must be careful not to be addicted to much wine also. It occurs that this concept or this admonition against addiction occurs three times in all three of the leadership lists of the Pastoral Epistles.

Why is that notable? Obviously, it must have been a severe issue. We are reading between the lines a little bit, but Timothy must have been abstaining from wine. It would not have been normal for any of them to be completely abstinent from wine drinking and drinking water only and yet, Timothy was doing just that. Did you ever wonder why was he doing that? It was probably because it had become a severe issue in the church and Timothy after consulting Paul and the Scriptures (Romans 14:15-21; 1 Corinthians 8:13) and considering carefully the weakness of his younger brothers completely abstained for the sake of those who had been overly imbibing.

Here, Paul is telling him, "Timothy, your stomach is bothering you. Have a little wine mixed with water. It might make you feel a little bit better for medicinal purposes." It is true that wine is not forbidden in the Scriptures, but those who take the Word of God seriously will find only two things: 1) Warning; and 2) Discouragement, not commendation.

There is no passage in Scripture that says enjoy wine and the liberty of wine because that is your right. The Scriptural man would not take such things as a right. We would follow the example of Timothy and abstain, if necessary, for the sake of the weaker brother.

I'm not trying to spoil your enjoyment of some things. I'm just saying we need to think about what the reputation of God is as the men who lead our church and families. Does that mean you could never have a drink? No! I don't care to say that. I don't want to go beyond what the Scripture says, but at the same time, make sure that your mind is balanced and understand that if you are ever drunk, even once, that ought to end the whole issue for you. You are in absolute dissipation, that is, a wasteful lifestyle that demonstrates not the things of the Lord, but things of the earth and the god of wine and revelry. You don't want to be involved with that.

So the first admonition against us is that we should not be addicted to wine.

Second Admonition (1 Timothy 3:1-3)

“An overseer, then, must be... pugnacious...”

Secondly it says **"or pugnacious."** This word *plekteēs* (πληκτεῖς) is a great word. It literally means "a striker." It talks about an individual that is so driven by anger and rage that he would "go to blows," that he would throw a punch. It is inappropriate for the man of God to be a brawler. That's what that word pugnacious means.

Let's talk about this idea. It's either connected with that first negative admonition in verse 3 "addicted to wine" and if that's the case, the idea is that they compliment each other and that you should not be a drunkard (one that is given to too much wine) and in your drunken stupor fall into brawls. In other words, you should not be a bar fighter. Can you imagine the pastor or a man of God, falling out of the local bar? There's something that doesn't fit there in terms of the reputation of God.

I think however that the phrase is not connected to the concept of "addicted to wine," but rather is connected to the next word "pugnacious." The reason why I say that is because in your English translations you see the term **"but gentle."** That word **"gentle"** is to be contrasted with something and I think that it is contrasted with the word that is right before it. It is talking about not being pugnacious or a brawler, but instead being gracious. An overseer is not given to anger to the point of physical violence. Instead, he is a man of gentleness.

The word for "gentle" is *epieikēs* (ἐπιεικής). It is an interesting word. If you look in Philippians 4:5, the same word is used there and depending on which version you look at the word will be translated differently. The reason is *epieikēs* is one of those words that is difficult to choose one English word to define it. I like the term "gracious" because I think it captures the idea of it. It does not mean soft. The idea here is that he is a gracious individual. *Philippians 4:5* says *"let your forbearing spirit be known to all men."* And it is that same term, the concept of having a forbearing spirit because the Lord is near, that you would be gentle and gracious to all people.

In classical Greek, Aristotle would use this word for a person that remembers good rather than evil. In fact, he would remember the good he has received instead of the good that he has done. It is someone that is magnanimous. Have you heard that term before? It means he is forbearing, gracious, considerate of others, and one who easily pardons human sins and failures.

Why would that be necessary for an elder and overseer, a minister of the grace of God? Because how could he display the graciousness of God if he himself is so judgmental? He needs to be a man that if he is offended by someone he could let that pass.

Oswald Sanders, I think he was the first to say "spiritual men need to be tough skinned and tender hearted." In their hearts they need to hurt and bleed when things are not right, but in their exterior they need to be strong enough that when there are criticisms, if there are challenges, if there are people that fail them or that fail their responsibilities concerning stuff, that they are not easily broken, offended, or injured. They continue on as graciously as ever. It is not a weak term. It is a strong one. It is not just gentleness. This idea is that of magnanimity. He is strong in his graciousness.

The same word is connected to "heavenly wisdom" in James 3. If you ever wonder whether or not a thing is wise you should look at *James 3:17*. It says:

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy."

How do we know it's a wise decision that we've made or if it's a wise pursuit that we should have? Well, we can examine those particular characteristics right there in James 3:17. Do these things actually display itself in the decision I make here? Is it wisdom that is from above or is it earthly? Is there purity involved? Is it peaceable? Is it this word gracious? Is it reasonable, full of mercy, good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy?

Instead of finding discouragement in ministry, the men of God ought to be this—gracious. It is a strength that is mentioned here. It means that there is no politicking amongst the people of God, at least not amongst the spiritual leaders. There should be Christ-like graciousness and a desire to see all God's work accomplished and His glory displayed. A spiritual leader should have a gracious heart towards others, not an attitude of judgment, not an attitude of attack or unnecessary defensiveness.

He is not to be of an angry sort that he would come to blows, rather that he would be the opposite. That he would take the swings and arrows; he would trust in God and he would demonstrate a graciousness in life that is a courage and can only be exemplified by the Holy Spirit's work in his life.

Now, this idea of "gentle" is also closely connected to the next word which is **"peaceable."** So an overseer is not to be addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle and then, **"peaceable."** The word *amachos* (ἀμαχος) means literally "not to be contentious or to bicker." The idea here is that his attitude is not quarrelsome. He does not look for an argument. William Muntz in his great commentary says that it's a strong term describing active and serious bickering.

This is a strong word. It means that when someone says something, you stand over them and say "That's dumb. Why would you even suggest that?" It is the individual that becomes quarrelsome. That actively bickers. It can even go so far as to be used for physical combat. It is similar to pugnacious, but now it is just an individual that looks to get into arguments. There are guys that are like that. They love the argument.

The men of God that lead the church and God's people and families cannot be men easily given to quarrelsomeness. They want to contend for something. They want to argue about something. It is just not appropriate. It is closely connected to this idea of graciousness.

Graciousness is the bridge to this idea of "pugnacious," that is, angry to the point of fighting and being argumentative. Graciousness is that positive thing that is given right in the midst of these two negative things. So, do we disqualify a man because he is quarrelsome or because he has anger issues?

Instead of worrying about that maybe we should go to the middle and ask whether the man is gracious? Is he magnanimous? Is he gentle and have a strong spirit? Full of mercy? Is he that type of character? And if we know him to be that type of character, then you don't really have to worry if he is pugnacious or if he is peaceful. He will be those things. It is just natural.

It's interesting because in the New American Standard version, they translate it "peaceable." It is actually a negative term. Instead of saying "peaceable," a better translation might have been something like "is not contentious" or "is not quarrelsome" because all the other ones in the list, except gentleness, are given to us in that kind of negative sense. [2 Timothy 2:24-25](#) says

"And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth"

These are good words. It kind of gives us a framework to think about what this word means. It is not to be "quarrelsome". You should "be kind, able to teach, patient when wronged, and with gentleness correcting". Why, because in the end it is whether or not God would be gracious enough to save that individual, to work such a truth into that individual's life.

You know, the greatest thing that a young minister can learn early on in his ministry is to understand that you have no power to change anybody. There is a desire in all of us, especially as young men going into ministry to change so many people; to try to accomplish and do so much for the sake of the things of the Lord. But in that zealotry, sometimes we forget that in the end we ourselves have no particular power. Charles Spurgeon used to say:

"What is that I can actually do? I can tell a few stories. I can make a few of you cry, but is it not the power of the Word of God and graciousness of the Spirit of God that could actually transform your hearts?"

And we need to get our minds around that. There's no need to be quarrelsome because in the end you can't change anybody. You can only take them to the One who can change them.

The great philosophy of ministry that Paul gives to us in [1 Corinthians 2:1-5](#) (that's a must for anyone who wants to do any kind of ministry) says:

"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

That's what you love about Paul: his humility. You recognize that he understood one thing—that God purposely made him flawed, weak, incapable of doing great things; and he made him that way, foolish in the eyes of the world, so that the proof of God, God's wisdom, and the Word of God, the transforming power of His Spirit would be excellently displayed through him. That's true for every man who wants to do ministry. He should not be quarrelsome. What would he be quarreling about? He could not win somebody by way of argument into the kingdom and neither can you win somebody by way of argument into a sanctified life. You cannot win someone by force of argument, period. Right? All you can do is win an argument and what is that worth? Last time I checked, that's worth nothing. There isn't going to be a big scoreboard when you get to heaven and see how many arguments I've won. It does absolutely nothing! Instead, the man of God ought to be gracious. He ought to learn what it means to be uncontentious and live in a manner that would display God's grace.

Third Admonition (1 Timothy 3:1-3)

“An overseer, then, must be... free from the love of money.”

Be free from the love of money. If we are looking at all these different negative qualifications, I say that you ought not to be contentious, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not quarrelsome, and then finally, **“free from the love of money”** and gentleness, that graciousness, magnanimity, fits right in the middle. The beauty of that particular word, *epieikēs*, is that it encompasses the very opposite of all the other things listed in verse 3. That word is broad enough to include not just a graciousness in character and personality, but also a graciousness that he would gladly and freely give. It is the opposite of this idea of having this love of money.

The **“love of money”** is an excellent translation. It is a compound word *aphilarguros* (ἀφιλάργυρος). It comes from the words *philos* or “a man that loves, the love of” and *arguros* which means “loot” or “money.” The idea is that the false leaders seem to be working for material gain. This is our first indication that some of the false leaders and elders in the Ephesian church were primarily motivated by material and not spiritual gain. They were not just liars, but they were full hypocrites. They claimed to be working for God's glory, but apparently that was not the case.

You might think how it would be odd for someone to go into the ministry for material gain. Why would you be an elder of a church if it was just for material gain? When you consider that in Roman and Greek society, if you were a philosopher or if you had words to say and were a dynamic and powerful speaker, it was not unusual for individuals to be sponsored.

These itinerant philosophers would go from town to town and preach and if he was good or if he was exciting or if he could pull goose livers out of people, if they did all these exciting and interesting things, the net result would be that people would say “I like your ministry. I like what you have to say.” If he could pick up enough sponsors, he would have a very good life just traveling and enjoying himself.

There is a real danger for that to occur in the mission field, that is, this desire to just go abroad and enjoy and experience different things. Are those evil desires in and of themselves? No. But let that not be *the primary motivation of anything pertaining to ministry!* We need to be free from a love that is of purely money. 1 Timothy 6:8-10 says:

“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

That's a strong admonition and a dangerous warning to us—that we should be free from the love of money; that particularly, in 1 Timothy 6:6 is an admonition to all of us in the corporate church. How much more should the elder or the pastor, the teaching ones of the church and of our families, be all the more careful that they are indeed free from the love of money.

Can I say something? It is not to say that you are to be free from money because that is not possible in our day and age. It wasn't possible in Paul's age. I mean, how would they live? That's ridiculous. The whole point is do you love it? Is that your primary motivation? And how do you know? It is a dangerous grade. It is impossible to say at what point you turn around and say “Hey, I love money.” It is that subtle thing that we shift back and forth between and at times we feel magnanimous, gracious, giving, desiring to free ourselves from encumbrances of such things; and at other times, we say, “Man, I wish I had that car.” Then all of a sudden we got to fear whether or not the love of money creeps into our hearts again. We'll never be free from actually having to deal with money and monetary material things.

The love of money is a constant temptation for all, yet the reputation of God's man is that he needs, for the most part, to be free from such a love. He is not bound to things of money and of the pursuit of material things. It doesn't mean he doesn't have material things. It doesn't mean that a rich man can never be an elder of the church. It means that he is in his heart free from desiring them more than spiritual things.

And the concept of fasting and prayer, John Piper's *“A Hunger for God”* is a good book on that subject and why it developed as a means of ardent prayer. The idea is that the hunger for the things of the Lord, whether it is to see people saved or whether it is for yourself to become more spiritual or for your church to develop and grow in its maturity, for that individual, that wife, that child, that father or mother, that you desire desperately to come to Christ; that as you pray for them, it would be so consuming that you might desire to say “Listen. I don't want to eat. Besides physical sustenance, I have this spiritual need that is of deeper and greater necessity.” That's the concept and we ought to apply that freely when we talk about prayer and fasting.

Let me just also say a word about gambling. I don't want to say too much about it and risk offending many. I want to be careful, but I do want to say a word about it. As a society, I think gambling and gambling addiction in particular, has grown by leaps and bounds. I read how in 1998 less than 20% of teenage kids would gamble. Today, 70% of kids ages 10-17 say that they have gambled in the past year.

I've taken my chances on slots and playing cards and stuff. I have done that kind of stuff before and I realize that that can be addictive. I realize that and I don't need that. Why? Because it gives no benefit to me spiritually. In heaven, there is no

scoreboard to see how much money I've won in the games of chance. It is not an excellent thing that you encourage others to continue to throw their money in and you win their money. That's not a delightful or excellent thing.

Bekah is going to be 9 years old this year. So that's kind of like saying that of her group of friends next year, I would expect 7 out of 10 of them to have gambled. That statistic according to this particular news article is growing. I think that's insane. There's an incredible danger in that. Not just to our children, but to ourselves. Am I going so far as to say don't ever enter into your office pools?

Again, it is an issue of liberty and it's not that big of a deal. The issue is "Is it a delight to you?" And there lies in your heart the question that is of greatest danger, if it's a delight to you. It's not just gambling. It's about anything material. Let's talk about shopping.

I don't buy into this idea that people are addicted to shopping. I think people are nuts. They seem addicted to shopping, but in the heart is materialism. Do you love to buy stuff? I mean do you enjoy it? If you do, that is a god. If you take the admonition of Scripture, particularly the admonition of the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, remember what He says about the idea of Plutus or the god of money. He says you can only serve one master. This is our Lord speaking and when He speaks to us, He says there is only one of two masters to serve in this life. You can either serve the God of Scripture, or the god of money. You'll love one master and hate the other or you will cling to this master and hate that one.

There is no such thing as a Christian that kind of imbibes himself in the spending and the gambling and the use of money and materialism; who loves money and is desirous to earn more, who has that craving desire, the ambitious pursuit of life and also says that he loves the Lord with all his heart and soul and mind. That just does not happen. That's the Word of God, and in particular, that is the word of our Lord reminding us this truth.

There's an interesting quote from Spurgeon I'd like to share with you. I never thought about it this way, but he says this:

"The soldiers at the foot of the cross threw dice for my Savior's garments and I have never heard the rattling of dice, but I have conjured up the dreadful scene of Christ on His cross. The gamblers at the foot of it with their dice splattered with His blood. I do not hesitate to say that of all sins, there is none that more surely damns men, and worse than that, makes them the devil's helpers to damn others than gambling."

Now, that is a strong statement and a good one. I never really thought about the soldiers at the foot of the Cross. But isn't that what they were doing? That's what they were known for. And men, we cannot be known for that kind of stuff, right? Let us not be known as gamblers and men that love money, who pursue ambition because material things are the most important thing. Let us not be such men that desire sordid gain. Let us be men of a more noble character that display the magnanimity of Christ, the sense of the greatness of God, who are not tainted by earthly desire. We will always fight those temptations because those things always surround us. In the end, do we come back to the things of the Lord? Do we delight in Him and Him alone?

Concluding Remarks

The reason why 1 Timothy 3:3 (that disqualifying list) is so important for the qualifications of an elder is because in the end, life and doctrine go hand in hand. It is not a coincidence that [Romans 10:9](#) says:

"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"

How is a man saved? By his confession in what he believes. Verse 10 goes on to say *"for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."* There is that connection then between what a man says and does; what his heart says and does. There's a connection between our doctrine, what we believe, and how we live.

If you have been in the faith for any period of time, then certainly you know of at least one person who has walked the Way and then abandoned the faith. I'm convinced of that. Take any one of those that come to mind and think about this. There was a time when they affirmed the doctrines of Scripture just as you and I do today. There was time that they believed what we believed. There was a time when they understood salvation or at least they professed to believe salvation as we understand it. That time is now gone. And if you look, you'll notice that time or that situation, that change of conviction, came with lifestyle compromises. When they chose sin over the things of the Scriptures, when they compromised the things of their hearts, their convictions, their lifestyle, then when their lifestyle changed, their convictions changed along with them.

Your heart always desires to be consistent with your actions. It's a fact. You either love the Lord or hate sin or you learn to love your sin and hate the Lord; that comes by way of [Romans 10:9-10](#) which says that what you say with your mouth and what you believe in your heart is who you are and what you do.

You can be saved (redeemed) and made new (transformed), but it requires you to understand the doctrines of Scripture and not just the doctrines unto life, but life for the sake of doctrine—those things go hand in hand. In the end, it's the

reputation of God that is at stake. The man of God needs to be indeed that—a man of God that stands in the gap for His people. The man of God is a man of God that would stand in the gap between his wife and the Lord; between his kids and the Lord. The man of God is the man that is willing to be tough-skinned and tenderhearted, to fully display the character of God, Himself.

He should not be chained to anything in this world. There should be no earthly desire greater than to please his Lord and Savior. In the end, that's what salvation comes down to: life and doctrine, i.e. confession and what we believe fleshing out into good works. We want to preach this idea of being consistent in what we believe about God, but then our leaders definitely need to be consistent with who they are before the living God. Let's close our time in prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the graciousness of your Word. We thank you that you would admonish us. We thank you Lord, that there are some sensitive things that we must discuss. And as we do them Lord, that you would help the men and the women of the church to receive them graciously.

I pray for ourselves, each one of us. Help us not to think of another that needs to hear about some of these admonitions, but help us to examine ourselves in light of what the Scriptures would say this morning, to see if we have issues with our temper, whether we are quarrelsome men, whether we desire earthly things, whether it be of wine or of material possessions.

Lord, help us not be entrapped or enslaved to things that Satan himself uses to bring so many souls unto damnation.

Instead Lord, help us to be free and to demonstrate our liberty unto your glory; to demonstrate what we are capable of doing, not because we are stronger or smarter or less fragile than other men, but only because of the grace of God and that indeed because we believe in you.

So we thank you for your love and ask that you would grant us that steady patience for victory so that we might demonstrate a lifestyle over a course of time that lives and honors our God.

*I pray these things in Jesus name.
Amen.*