

**A COMMENTARY ON PAUL'S LETTER TO**

# **TITUS**

**BY DANIEL W. BAILEY**

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## *PREFACE*

I offer this study guide to the reader with hopeful prayers that it will be helpful in your own walk with God and life-long study of His word. In this work, and indeed in all of my writings that deal with Scripture, I have strived in all ways to neither go beyond what is demanded by the original text, nor to in any way subtract from it. When a writer begins to pontificate on matters that are simply not addressed in the original text, he or she steps beyond the boundary clearly drawn for us by Christ: *“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God”* (I Peter 4:11 NIV). Similarly, detracting from the word of God by minimizing or even falsely explaining away the solemn truths of the Scriptures exposes the Bible student or teacher to the condemnation of the close of the Book of Revelation: *“...if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”* (Revelation 22:19). And so, this commentary is also offered to you with an urgent request: simply refuse to accept any of these comments or explanations blindly, but rather follow the command of the inspired apostle who wrote, *“Test all things; hold fast what is good”* (I Thessalonians 5:21).

For honest students of the Scriptures, any literary work attempting to interpret or comment on God’s truth is always a work in progress, and this book is no exception. There are many passages that deserve a fuller discussion (at least one of which that is plainly labeled, *“Under Construction”*). As for those passages that demanded a more lengthy consideration that might detract from the flow of the study, two special studies were appended to the end of the work, with hopes that a third (*“The Christian and Civil Government”*) will be added in the near future.

It truly would not be possible to list or acknowledge all of the preachers, teachers and writers who have influenced my understanding of this great letter, and so I make no claim to originality or uniqueness in this study guide. Not being a strictly academic work, I have chosen to refrain from extensive and cumbersome citations, but rather have cited those authors directly quoted while occasionally mentioning other literary works that might prove helpful to supplement your own study. If you happen across a statement that proves confusing or even untrue, you would be my friend to bring those errors to my attention so that both this text and my own understanding might be more complete (cf. Acts 18:26).

# **THE EPISTLE TO TITUS**

## **INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE**

### **I. Author**

That the apostle Paul penned this letter is indicated by both internal and external evidence:

- Salutation, 1:1
- Familiar characters from Paul's letters and journeys:
  - Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; II Tim 4:12)
  - Apollos (Acts 18-19; I Cor 1:12, 3:4-6,22, 4:6, 16:12)
- The testimony of church history (see *Reese and Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*):
  - Clement of Rome (95 AD), *I Clement 2*
  - Muratorian Canon (170 AD) attests to the Pauline authorship of *Titus*
  - Theophilus of Antioch (180 AD), *To Autolyucus 3*
  - Irenaeus (200 AD), *Against Heresies 3:3:4*

### **II. Time And Place Of Authorship**

Following Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, he traveled for several years before eventually being rearrested and executed. During this period of travel, the apostle visited Ephesus (where he left Timothy, I Tim 1:3), Macedonia, Crete (Titus 1:5), Nicopolis, Troas (II Tim 4:13), Corinth and Miletus (II Tim 4:20). Furthermore, Rom 15:24,28 along with secular history (especially Clement of Rome and the *Muratorian Canon*) suggest that Paul realized his long-time ambition of reaching Spain in the farthest reaches of the West. Sometime between the first and second imprisonments, then, Paul penned I Timothy and Titus. Though the precise date cannot be established with certainty, it is probable that Paul wrote this letter to Titus from Greece sometime between 63-66 A.D.

### **III. Titus the Evangelist**

Interestingly enough, the primary recipient of this letter is nowhere mentioned in the book of Acts, though Paul's epistles show that he journeyed with this beloved disciple, trusted in him greatly, and worked with him in several places. From the very beginning of the letter, Titus is referred to a person whom Paul respected and loved as his "*true son in common faith*" (1:4). Similarly to I Tim 1:2,18 and II Tim 1:2, 2:1, most commentators believe this phrase means that Titus was converted through Paul's preaching, and this is probably true of both Titus and Timothy. However, Phil 2:19-22 show that Paul's relationship with Timothy as a son in the faith was mainly due to the love, commitment and devotion they shared for one another in the Lord's work – and this is almost certainly true of Titus as well. As a son labors with his father, Titus shared with Paul in the work of preaching the gospel and strengthening the people of God (cf. II Cor 8:23).

Much can be learned about Titus from Paul's other epistles (2 Cor 2:13, 7:5-16, 8:6,16,23, 12:18; Gal 2:1-3; II Tim 4:10). Titus was a Gentile by birth (Gal 2:3) who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem during the controversy over circumcision (Acts 15:1-2; Gal 2:1-5). During the third missionary journey, Titus was personally sent by Paul to deliver letters to and instruct/encourage the the church at Corinth. Titus did not return to Troas at the time Paul expected, and so the apostle anxiously their reunion at Macedonia (II Cor 2:12-13). Eventually, Titus arrived and

brought to Paul no little joy with his report of how penitently the Corinthians had received his admonishing letter (II Cor 7:5-16). Then, Paul sent Titus and at least two other brothers back to Corinth, carrying the epistle of *II Corinthians*, to exhort those Christians to prepare and complete their collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem (II Cor 8:16-9:5).

When Paul wrote the epistle at hand, he had left Titus on the island of Crete “*set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city*” (1:5), while he himself went on to Greece, spending the winter in Nicopolis (3:12). Some time shortly thereafter, Paul sent this letter and expressed his intentions to send either Artemas or Tychicus to relieve Titus, freeing him to travel and be reunited with Paul at Nicopolis. Whether or not these precious brethren did indeed meet again in Greece we cannot be sure, however they must have worked together again for Paul’s final letter indicates that Titus was with him in Rome but sent on to work in Dalmatia (II Tim 4:10, a region of the Roman Empire north of Greece, bordering the Adriatic Sea – near to where Paul had labored in Illyricum, Rom 15:19).

#### **IV. Purpose Of Writing**

It is important to note that, though Titus was the primary recipient of this letter, Paul intended this letter to have a much wider audience than just the young evangelist. This will be discussed further in the analysis of the text, but notice two supporting passages here:

- Paul’s rigorous and authoritative identification of himself at the very beginning of the letter is indicative that this epistle was meant to be read a larger audience than just Titus, who already knew and had total confidence in Paul’s apostleship (1:1-3)
- The farewell of the letter states, “*Grace be with you all. Amen.*”

Thus, Paul intended this letter to first guide Titus through his difficult task of doing the work of an evangelist in Crete, while at the same time reinforcing Titus’ own authority in the eyes of the brethren there with a tangible admonition from an apostle himself. The parallels between this letter and the first letter to Timothy are numerous and unmistakable: in both cases, Paul is urging a young evangelist to fulfill his work in helping a church of God’s people grow up to spiritual maturity in Christ. Some of the commands given to Titus in this regard are:

- To ensure that qualified elders were appointed in every city (1:5-9)
- To preach those truths in accordance with godliness and sound doctrine (2:1)
- To exhort the brethren to be continuously “*zealous for good works*” (2:14; 3:1,8,14)

A cursory reading of the text shows that “good works” is a key phrase in this great letter (1:16; 2:7,14; 3:1,8,14), and so an appropriate theme for this epistle might therefore be: “*Maintain good works!*”

#### **KEY VERSE – Titus 3:8**

*“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable for men.”*

# THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

## CHAPTER 1

### I. Salutation

#### A. Paul's Stewardship and Apostleship (vs. 1)

- “A *bondservant of God*” – Paul uses this word *doulos*, here translated *bondservant*, several times in his epistles to describe his servitude to God and Christ (see Rom 1:1, Gal 1:10, Phil 1:1), and even his service toward other Christians (II Cor 4:5). The word is employed by others in the New Testament in reference to themselves (Jam 1:1, II Pet 1:1, Jude 1), and also in reference to others (Col 4:12), even all Christians (I Pet 2:16, Rev 1:1). Strong defines this word as “a slave (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary; frequently, therefore in a qualified sense of subjection or subserviency).” As some people were and are bondservants or slaves of men (see Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-25, I Pet 2:18-25), Paul viewed himself and all Christians as bondservants of God and slaves of righteousness (Rom 6:18). Paul’s life and writings are evidence that he constantly kept in mind that in Christ he had *given* himself to the service of God, to serve Him only, and to work His will in this life. In his own words, from Gal 2:20, “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*” Furthermore, Paul strived to remind all Christians that this same privileged relationship, with all its responsibilities, is shared by every child of God:
  - *Servants of God* – Col 3:1-4; Rom 6:1-23, 12:1-2
  - *Servants of one another* – Gal 5:13-15, 6:2; cf. John 13:2-17
- “An *apostle of Jesus Christ*” – Paul was one of the few men chosen by Christ to be an apostle, literally “one sent forth,” a witness of His resurrection and a preacher of the gospel to the whole world (see Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:2,8). In Acts 26:12-28 we learn that Christ chose Paul to be a “minister and a witness” to preach the gospel specifically to the Gentiles (cf. Gal 2:7-10). Titus knew full and well the authority Paul had as an apostle of Christ, but referring to himself in this way served two purposes:
  - Reassured Titus of Paul’s authority and reminded him of the importance of his own work as an evangelist, commanded by an apostle as a commandment of the Lord (I Cor 14:37).
  - Stood as testimony against the enemies of the gospel and those skeptical Christians who might attack Paul’s (and thus Titus’) authority that these instructions were not spoken from man’s wisdom but the truth of God (I Thess 2:13). As mentioned in the introduction to the book, this was meant to be more than just a personal letter – it was tangible evidence to “*all*” the brethren (Tit 3:15) that Titus spoke the truth of God with the authority of an apostle of Jesus Christ behind him!
- Paul’s apostleship was in accordance with “*the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness*” – i.e. anyone who denied Paul’s apostleship and authority was in actuality denying the faith and the truth of God! Remember that “*the elect*” or chosen of God simply refers to Christians (Col 3:12 with 1:2; I Thess 1:1-5), chosen in Christ through the call of the gospel (Eph 1:3-12; II Thess 2:13-15; I Pet 1:22-2:10).

## B. Paul's Purpose as an Apostle and Motivation for Teaching (vs. 2-3)

- *"In the hope of eternal life"* – All that Paul did as an apostle, including writing this very letter, was done in accordance with and looking forward to eternal life. This was the reward he strived to attain (Phil 3:7-14), and the reward he strived to share with others in the gospel (I Tim 6:11-12, 18-19; etc.). This very promise, the foundation of all our hope in Christ (II Pet 3:13-14), God purposed and planned before time began, even since eternity (II Tim 1:9), and passed this plan down through His prophets in the Scriptures (Acts 26:6-7; Rom 1:2).
- *"God, who cannot lie"* – The promises of God stand upon the unshakeable truth that "it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18) – i.e. it is against His very nature, being "*a God of truth and without injustice*" (Deut 32:4), and thus His word is truth (John 17:17; Ps 119:160), His every manifestation is truth absolute (John 14:6-7, 17; I John 5:6), and His counsel is immutable (Heb 6:17). Upon God's truth rests all our hope and trust in His promises (Josh 21:43-45; I Kings 8:56; II Cor 1:20, 6:14-7:1; Heb 10:23-25; II Pet 1:2-4).
  - Note that some question the congruence of declarations of God's omnipotence (e.g. Matt 19:26; Luke 1:37) with declarations of things God cannot do (e.g. lie, Heb 6:18; deny Himself, II Tim 2:13).
  - Without doubt, there is nothing beyond God's power to accomplish – "*With God, nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:37), or in another way, "*With God all things are possible*" (Matt 19:26). See also Gen 18:14, Jer 32:17.
  - It may be that God cannot lie simply because to do so, being against His very nature as a God of truth (Deut 32:4; John 14:6), would cause Him to stop being God – i.e. God cannot do anything against His nature (II Tim 2:13).
  - It may be that God cannot lie simply because it is against His purpose (cf. Job 42:2) – i.e. God cannot do anything against His own purpose or will.
  - It may be that whatever God speaks is the absolute *definition* of truth and thus cannot in any way be false or a lie.
  - Whatever the case, there are reasonable answers such that this verse poses no contradiction to the rest of Scripture, and the beautiful truth remains: whatever God promises He is certain to perform, and upon this truth rests all our hope!
- *"Promised before time began"* – This very promise, the foundation of all our hope in Christ (II Pet 3:13-14), God purposed and planned before time began, even since eternity (II Tim 1:9), and passed this plan down through His prophets in the Scriptures (Acts 26:6-7; Rom 1:2).
- *"But has in due time manifested His word through preaching"* – Before the revelation of the gospel, the God's plan of salvation was a mystery to man, even to angels (I Cor 2:7-13; Eph 6:19; I Pet 1:10-12). When the precise and perfect moment in time had come (Gal 4:4), God revealed this mystery to man and opened the door to salvation in Christ. And of all the methods He could have possibly chosen to reveal this message, the Lord who is infinitely wise chose *preaching*, i.e. He chose for man to teach man, starting with the apostles.
  - I Pet 1:22-25 – Purified by obeying the word passed down through *preaching*
  - Rom 10:14-17 – Belief and faith comes through hearing the word of God through *preaching*. Paul's questions imply that the unbelieving *will not* hear the gospel if it is not preached – it will be made known in no other way!

- Matt 28:18; Mark 16:16 – Christ’s final words to His disciples were to command them to preach the gospel to *every* creature: not one creature would hear the message in a different way! Even though we never heard the apostles speak, we still learn the truth of the gospel through their preaching in the word!
- “*Which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior*” – Why did Paul take such great pains and suffer so many trials to preach the gospel? Why did he make it the aim of his entire life to preach to “every man” that would listen (Col 1:28-29)? Because God chose for the gospel to pass on to man through the preaching of the apostles, and without his obedience in spreading the word all would be lost! Well did the apostle say, in 1 Cor 9:16-17, “*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*”

#### C. Titus, Paul’s True Son in the Faith (vs. 4)

For information about Titus, see the Introduction, *Titus the Evangelist*.

### II. Titus’ Mission In Crete: Set In Order What Is Lacking

After Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment, he evidently traveled to many cities, probably leaving Timothy in Ephesus (I Tim 1:4) before traveling on to Miletus (where he left Trophimus, II Tim 4:20) and then to Crete. The apostles plans evidently were to pass through Corinth (where he left Erastus, II Tim 4:20) and then travel to Nicopolis (in Northwest Greece) where he would stay through the winter (Tit 3:12). Just as he had left other faithful men to carry on important work in other cities, Paul chose to leave Titus on the island of Crete to work with the churches there. The young evangelist was given an important work to accomplish: “*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you*” (Tit 1:5). Note several important aspects of the apostle’s command:

- “*Set in order the things that are lacking*” – Remember that these words were written at a time when the Christians in Crete couldn’t stroll into the nearest book store and pick up a copy of the New Testament! The Lord gave His apostles the mission to teach His completed revelation to the first Christians (see John 14:24,26, 16:12-15; Matt 28:18-20; etc.). If the early churches were going to fulfill their work, they needed to be instructed in the teaching of the apostles as it was revealed to them by Christ. The apostle Paul, having instructed and trained Timothy in the ways of the Lord, chose to leave the young evangelist in Crete to “teach, exhort and rebuke” (Tit 2:15), that the precious souls on that island might follow the apostles’ doctrine in word and in deed (cf. Acts 2:42).
- “*And appoint elders*” – Some misguided souls have come to the erroneous conclusion that churches are better off without elders – however, it has never been the Lord’s intention that churches continue on indefinitely without spiritual leadership! Without elders, any church of the Lord’s people is “lacking,” and so the people of God should pray and diligently strive to grow and mature that every church might fulfill the will of God in serving Him under the oversight of elders. This chapter, as well as other passages of the Scriptures will illuminate some of the reasons that spiritually mature and qualified men are so desperately needed to shepherd the Lord’s flock (cf. Acts 20:17,28-32; Heb 13:17; I Pet 5:1-4; etc.).

*Note:* The *appointment* of elders. The word “*appoint*” in vs. 5 means “to arrange for, to establish, to put in charge, to cause something to be done” (Reese 327), and truly says nothing about how or by whom the actual selection of these men is to be made. The idea that the evangelist is to solely select and ordain the eldership is absolutely false: this same word is used of the apostles appointing the servants of the Jerusalem church in Acts 6:3, and there it is clear that the apostles themselves *did not* select those seven men. But what did the apostles do in that case? They merely delivered the requirements of the Lord for the characteristics and qualifications of those men chosen to serve, just as Peter had done in preparation for the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:21-23), and just as the apostle Paul gave the qualifications for elders in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. When Paul instructed Titus to *appoint* elders in every church (just as he himself had done on his missionary journeys, Acts 14:23) he simply commanded the young evangelist to instruct those churches in how to identify and select those qualified to serve, and in all probability he would have in some way shown his approval that those chosen did indeed meet the Lord’s qualifications (cf. Acts 6:6, though there is no scriptural evidence for an official ordainment ceremony or any such fanfare in the appointment of elders, either directed by the evangelist(s) or anyone else).

- “*In every city*” – As seen elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. Acts 14:23, 20:28; I Pet 5:2; I Tim 4:14), a plurality of elders is to rule over one church and one church only. The concept of a committee of elders serving over all the churches in an area, or a convention of leaders ruling over all the churches in a country, or even one bishop ruling supremely over all the churches in the world are all traditions which originate in the mind and will of man and are totally foreign to the pattern of the New Testament. To the honest reader of the Scriptures, the highest level of organization within the Lord’s church is independent, autonomous congregations, each under the spiritual oversight of a plurality of willing and qualified elders (perhaps served by qualified servants, or “deacons,” I Tim 3:8-13, Phil 1:1 – and these churches are answerable to only one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:22-23; Col 2:19). *Elders* are referred to as *bishops* (i.e. overseers, NASU; compare Tit 1:5 with 1:7; I Tim 3:1-7; Phil 1:1) and *pastors* (i.e. shepherds, compare Eph 4:11 with Acts 20:17,28 and I Pet 5:1-2) – these not being lofty religious titles, but descriptive labels of the qualities and responsibilities belonging to these men. Taken together, the elders of a congregation are referred to in I Tim 4:14 as the “*eldership*” (NKJV) or “*presbytery*” (NASU) – the original Greek, *presbuterion*, simply meaning “an assembly of aged men” (Vine), just as it is also used to refer to the high council (or Sanhedrin) of the Jews in Christ’s day (cf. Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5).

#### A. The Qualifications Of Elders (vs. 6-9)

As in I Timothy 3, Paul lists the Lord’s commands concerning the qualifications a man must meet in order to become an elder of a church. Some of these qualifications are quite absolute – e.g. a man is either the husband of one wife or he is not – while others are exist in varying degrees – e.g. hospitable, gentle, self-controlled. Faithful elders are those who meet all of the absolute qualifications, meanwhile exhibiting all of the more relative qualifications to a strong degree, enough to be role models to all the flock (cf. I Pet 5:3), but of course are also striving to “*abound more and more*” as they press on toward perfection in Christ Jesus (I Thess 4:1; Phil 3:12-24). The list of qualifications given in I Timothy 3 is nearly identical to that in Titus 1, and these qualifications are summarized in the table below:

**Qualifications Of Elders**  
(from the NKJV, NIV and NASU)

| I Timothy 3:1-7  | Titus 1:6-9  |
|--|--|
| vs. 1 – Desire, aspiration for the office                                | vs. 6,7 – Blameless, above reproach  |
| vs. 2 – Blameless, above reproach  | vs. 6 – Husband of one wife  |
| vs. 2 – Husband of one wife  | vs. 6 – Having faithful children (children who believe) not accused of being wild or disobedient |
| vs. 2 – Temperate  | vs. 7 – Not self-willed, overbearing   |
| vs. 2 – Sober-minded, self-controlled, prudent                           | vs. 7 – Not quick-tempered   |
| vs. 2 – Of good behavior, respectable                                    | vs. 7 – Not given to wine, drunkenness   |
| vs. 2 – Hospitable   | vs. 7 – Not violent  |
| vs. 2 – Able to teach  | vs. 7 – Not greedy for money or pursuing dishonest gain  |
| vs. 3 – Not given, addicted to wine;<br>Not given to drunkenness         | vs. 8 – Hospitable   |
| vs. 3 – Not violent, pugnacious  | vs. 8 – A lover of what is good  |
| vs. 3 – Not greedy for money   | vs. 8 – Sober-minded, sensible   |
| vs. 3 – Gentle   | vs. 8 – Just, upright  |
| vs. 3 – Not quarrelsome, but peaceable                                   | vs. 8 – Holy, devout   |
| vs. 3 – Not covetous, not a lover of money                               | vs. 8 – Self-controlled, disciplined   |
| vs. 4 – Rules, manages his household well,<br>with reverence and dignity | vs. 9 – Faithful and sound in doctrine, able to teach, exhort and convict                        |
| vs. 4 – Having his children in submission                                |  |
| vs. 6 – Not a novice, recent convert                                     |  |
| vs. 6 – Not puffed up with pride, conceited                              |  |
| vs. 7 – Good reputation among unbelievers                                |  |

Note that the fact that the elders are spiritual leaders and examples to the church is indicative that these qualifications are important for the spiritual growth of *all* Christians, not just those who may one day be elders. Many of these traits require a lifetime of learning, maturing, building up a good reputation and making wise decisions (e.g. who one will marry) in order for a man to one day be qualified for the eldership. There are highly important lessons for all Christians to learn within these qualifications!

1. *Blameless* (vs. 6) – Not sinless (see I John 1:7-9) but of spotless reputation and above reproach: no one can bring against him a *true* charge of wrongdoing (for even Christ’s enemies accused Him of *false* charges, Matt 26:59ff). The qualified elder has an impeccable reputation amongst Christians and “those who are outside” of the church (I Tim 3:7) so as not to bring reproach upon the Lord, His gospel, or His church – a reputation that begins to be formed in one’s youth (Tit 2:6-8)! This characteristic is important to remember while considering all the qualifications that follow.

2. *Husband of one wife* (vs. 6) – There are several popular views of this verse, but the straightforward reading is simply this: in every aspect of life, elders are to be examples to

the whole church (I Pet 5:3) – and this demands that an elder’s relationship with and leadership of his family must be blameless. God simply demands that elders be faithfully married – a fact that flies in the face of those who claim that celibacy is a mark of higher and more pious spirituality (see I Tim 4:1-3). At the same time, the condition, “*one wife*,” demands that his marriage be scriptural (i.e. approved by God): there is no unscriptural marital or sexual relationship that satisfies this condition! Note that this qualification *does not* prohibit the scripturally remarried man from serving as an elder. (See the special study, *The Question Of Remarried Elders*.)

*Note: The No Wife Theory* – There are many teachers who claim that an elder does not *have* to be married, but only in the case that he is married, he must be scripturally married and faithful to one woman. Another take on this interpretation is that an elder who was once scripturally and faithfully married but whose wife died after his appointment to the eldership may continue in his office. Both of these views run into the same problem: the language of Titus 1:6 and I Tim 3:2 demands that the qualified elder be *presently a husband*, and there is no other revelation on this matter. The assumption made by the proponents of this argument is that this qualification is only necessary to prove that the elder can rule over his own household with reverence and dignity (I Tim 3:4), and the elder whose faithful wife passes away has *already proven* this ability. Without a doubt, this situation is foreseeable (since elders by definition are of substantial age), unfortunate and emotional – but the question remains: is there any indication in this passage or I Timothy 3 that previous proof substitutes for current qualification? The person who answers in the positive must scripturally answer the questions that necessarily follow:

- An elder must be a “*husband*”: is a widower a husband?
- Would it then be authorized by these passages (for there is no other revelation on this issue) for a man whose faithful wife died *before* his appointment to serve in the eldership?
- Might there be required functions an elder must fulfill that may be inhibited without a faithful wife, e.g. times of hospitality or private teaching that would be inappropriate without a wife present?
  - Some may cast out this question as mere speculation, but note that this entire viewpoint is founded upon the *speculation and assumption* that God only demands that elders have wives in order to prove that are able to rule over a household well! In fact, this assumption goes too far: God does not reveal in the Scriptures that this is the only reason an elder must be married! As is the case for many of these qualifications, the Lord does not delineate all of His reasons for their importance – in this case, God simply tells us that the qualified elder “must be” (I Tim 3:2) the “husband of one wife”!

*A common objection:* In objection to the idea that a widowed elder must resign from the eldership, some have posed this question: Tit 1:6 demands that an elder have “*faithful children*” – if all of his children die, must he resign the eldership? This question is answered in more detail in the special study, “*The Children of Elders*.” However, note that whether one answers in the positive or negative, this question has absolutely no bearing on the fact that the elder must still be a husband! Whether a man has ten children or no children, if he is married he is a husband, and if he is widowed he is not a husband.

The fact that an elder whose wife passes away is no longer qualified for the eldership is not a punishment but simply a commandment of the Lord that must be heeded. There is no indication in these texts to the honest reader, and no other passage(s) to go by, that an elder must only be scripturally married at the time of his appointment but not necessarily later. In fact, is this argument true for *any* of the qualifications in these lists? For example, an elder must be hospitable, gentle and of good reputation – are these qualifications only needed at the time of his appointment and not later?

3. *Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination* (vs. 6) – For the meaning and implications of this requirement, see the special study, “*The Children of Elders.*”

4. *Blameless, as a steward of God* (vs. 7) – Before beginning a list of five unwholesome qualities that an elder must *not* have, the apostle reminds the reader again of the *reason* for these qualifications: elders serve as stewards of God and are entrusted with a tremendously important aspect of God’s work! Notice two points concerning the beginning of this verse:

- *Bishop* (vs. 7) is used interchangeably with *elder* (vs. 5) – Remember that these terms are *descriptive* of the functions of the eldership, not haughty titles (which Jesus condemns, e.g. Matt 23:8-12). In the New Testament, the elders of the church are also referred to as *bishops* (i.e. “*overseers,*” NIV, NASU, Phil 1:1; I Tim 3:1-2), *pastors* (or shepherds, see Eph 4:11 with Acts 20:17,28 and I Pet 5:1-4), and simply as “*those who rule*” (or “*leaders,*” NIV, NASU, Heb 13:17).
- Elders are *stewards of God* – A steward is a manager, or a servant entrusted with great responsibility. In a sense, all Christians are stewards of God, having all received some talent or ability the Lord entrusts us to use in His service (compare I Pet 4:10-11 with Rom 12:3-8). And yet, even in I Pet 4:10-11, the limited use of *steward* in the New Testament usually applies to those entrusted with leadership and teaching responsibilities, namely apostles (I Cor 4:1-2), elders (Tit 1:7) and preachers (I Pet 4:10-11). The dire importance of the stewardship entrusted to elders is portrayed most succinctly in Heb 13:17 – “*they watch out for your souls*”! Only highly qualified, spiritual men qualify for such awesome responsibility: elders are Christ’s gift to build up the church (Eph 4:11-16), and without them no church can reach full maturity and potential (Tit 1:5).

5. *Five Forbidden Characteristics* (vs. 7) – Next, five qualities or characteristics are listed that, if possessed, disqualify a man from serving as an elder. A qualified elder must not be:

- a. *Self-willed* – Or as the NIV states, *overbearing*. With much power comes the temptation to pridefully wield control in an unholy and overbearing way. Evidently, Satan himself fell into such a temptation before the beginning of time and so came under the judgment and condemnation of God (see I Tim 3:6). A self-willed man might abuse the eldership in at least two ways:
  - Assuming the authority to make commands and traditions against the will of God and the gospel of Christ. Christ alone is the head of the church (Eph 1:22-23),

and He alone has the authority to dictate the work of the church (Matt 28:18). Elders are not *legislators* of the work, worship and organization of the church, but simply overseers, taking care to see that Christ's will is accomplished in the church. The self-willed man might be tempted to shun the doctrine of Christ in order to cling to the traditions and commandments of men (see Matt 15:6b-9).

- Refusing to consider the concerns, needs and suggestions of the rest of the church. Elders are warned through Peter, who himself served God as an apostle and an elder, that they are not to be lords or forceful, dominant rulers. Around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem under the Babylonian empire, the spiritual leaders of Israel were condemned by God for ignoring the needs of the people while ruling over them by force and cruelty (Ez 34:1-10). In the same way, Christ noted that the rulers of the world often similarly dominate their own people (Matt 20:25). However, in following the example of Christ, the Good and Chief Shepherd, the elders of the church must rule with servitude, compassion, and the utmost concern for the needs of the flock (see Matt 20:26-28; Phil 2:1-8)
  
- b. *Quick-tempered* – In shepherding a group of Christians with unique, problems, concerns and temptations, the elder is certain to face situations peculiar to his office that test his patience and temperance. And so, the elder is required to be a temperate and wisely cautious ruler (cf. I Tim 3:2). While one might be angry without sinning, wrath carries with it special temptation to stumble against the will of God (see Eph 4:26, Matt 5:22, Rom 12:19). By example, the elder must show those under his leadership how to appropriately handle anger and frustration – after all, Christians are commanded, one and all, to be “slow to wrath” (Jam 1:19).
  
- c. *Given to wine* – There is much discussion concerning this negative qualification as to what extent consumption of alcohol is allowed by this verse. At the start, notice that “*not given to wine*” or “*not addicted to wine*” (NASU) or “*not given to drunkenness*” (NIV) are in no way endorsements of moderate drinking, any more than “*do not let sin reign in your mortal body*” (Rom 6:12) is an endorsement of moderate sinning, or “*do not become idolaters*” (I Cor 10:7) is an endorsement of occasional idol worship. If a person seeks to find approval in the New Testament for moderate, occasional or social drinking, he or she will have to look somewhere other than this passage! In fact, as far as this verse goes, Paul does not speak of wine in a commendable sense at all, but clearly implies the danger inherent to drinking alcohol, not physically, but to the spiritual growth and faithfulness of the Christian. Consider the following notes on the subject of alcohol consumption as it is discussed in this verse and the rest of the Bible:

The original language for “given to one” is but one Greek word, *paroinos*, and is used in the New Testament only here and in I Tim 3:3. This word literally means “staying beside or tarrying at wine” (see Vine’s), and thus denotes attachment, habit or addiction to alcohol. The meaning of Paul’s use of this word has been the subject of much discussion and debate, and thus various translations of this verse are quite different from each other:

- “not addicted to wine” (NASU)
- “not given to wine” (NKJV)

- “not given to drunkenness” (NIV)
- “not...a drunkard” (RSV)
- “not a brawler” (KJV, ASV)

Two other similarly translated phrases can be found in I Tim 3:8, speaking of the qualifications of deacons, and Tit 2:3, speaking of the appropriate behavior of older women (and truly, all Christians, indicated by the frequent use of “likewise” in Tit 2:1-8). These phrases are translated “not given to much wine” by the NKJV, and the original Greek differs only at the word translated “given”:

- *Douloo* (Tit 2:3), meaning to enslave, either literally or figuratively (see “you became slaves” of righteousness in Rom 6:22, or “under bondage” in I Cor 7:15).
- *Prosecho* (I Tim 3:8), meaning figuratively “to hold the mind,” i.e. pay attention to, adhere to (see “give attention” in I Tim 4:13, or “take heed” in Acts 20:28).

Thus, in both I Tim 3:8 and Tit 2:3, which evidently hold the same meaning as I Tim 3:3 and Tit 1:7, Christians are warned not to be enslaved to the use of alcohol, and not to let the love of alcohol captivate their minds and behaviors. In all of these verses, Christians are warned that drunkenness and addiction to alcohol both stand in absolute contrast to spiritual mindedness and spiritual growth.

- Drunkenness and loss of self-control through addiction should be totally contrary to the character and behavior of all Christians, especially the leaders of the church:
  - Eph 5:18 – Drunkenness is a form of dissipation, i.e. a way of living “*indifferent to moral restraints, given to immoral or improper conduct*” (Random House).
  - Rom 13:11-14 – Drunkenness is a work of darkness
  - I Pet 4:3 – Drunken revelry and drinking parties are listed on par with lewdness, lusts and abominable idolatries
  - I Cor 5:11 – Do not even keep company with a brother who refuses to cast off the love of alcohol!
  - I Cor 6:10 – Drunkards will not find a place in heaven!
- In fact, if a man is addicted to alcohol or chooses to become drunk (either occasionally or often), he cannot possibly exhibit several of the other qualifications demanded of elders! Drunkenness is the polar opposite of:
  - Temperance (I Tim 3:2), i.e. sober, discreet behavior
  - Sober-mindedness (Tit 1:8), i.e. self-controlled, prudent, sensible in mind and way of life
  - Good behavior (I Tim 3:2), i.e. respectable, honorable, balanced conduct
  - Self-controlled (Tit 1:8), whereas both addiction and drunkenness are symptomatic of a lack of self-control which the consumption of alcohol can only make worse!
- Notice that, though I Tim 3:3,8 and Tit 1:7, 2:3 are specifically limited to abuse of alcohol, these same principles of drunkenness and addiction apply to a host of substances which are commonly abused by men.

*Other important considerations concerning the Christian and alcohol:*

- Not a single verse in the New Testament speaks commendably or positively of the consumption of intoxicating substances. Timothy (following the example and teachings of the Lord through Paul) abstained from wine altogether, even in his frequent sickness, and so had to be urged by Paul to drink a little wine for medicinal purposes (I Tim 5:23).
- Prov 23:29-35 – A wise person won’t even look at alcoholic drinks!
  - It may look good to the eye (i.e. the lust of the eyes, I John 2:16), but it’s poison!

- Drunkenness leads one’s heart to utter perverse things, i.e. to do and say wicked, improper things he wouldn’t otherwise do (see Prov 20:1).
  - A drunkard is like a person who chooses to nap on the dangerous seas, destined to be dashed to pieces or drowned.
  - Drunkenness causes one to be abused, disgraced and filled with pain and sorrow, yet come back for more as soon as the next drink is available!
  - The honest reader will find no excuse in these passages for using intoxicating substances in moderation! Consumption of intoxicating substances for recreation is destructive, corrupting and damning!
- d. *Violent* – As in I Tim 3:3, the NASU translates this adjective (used only in these two passages) *pugnacious*, meaning “inclined to quarrel or fight readily; quarrelsome; belligerent; combative” (Dictionary.com). Thus, the qualified elder is not a quarrelsome, argumentative, aggressive person, but rather is a man of patience, a wise temperament, and a maker of peace (Matt 5:9). Dealing with and leading a diverse people with diverse ideas and problems calls for the utmost patience and temperance. Peace, even between brethren, is something that is *pursued* by the spiritually mature (Rom 14:16-19), with the holiest example of the peacemaker being Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6; Phil 2:5-22; Rom 5:6-10; etc.). In following Christ’s example, our motivation for every interaction with our brethren should be love from a pure heart (I Pet 1:22) – and the perfect love taught by God is “not easily provoked” (I Cor 13:5). This holy attribute of the elder is tremendously important when considering his responsibility to teach (I Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9) – Christ instructs His disciples that *how* we teach is as important as *what* we teach (cf. II Tim 2:24-26; Gal 6:1; I Pet 3:15; II Cor 10:1; etc.).
- e. *Greedy for money* – Translated from one Greek word (*aischrokerdes*) and used only here and in I Tim 3:3, 8 of elders and deacons. This word is translated quite differently amongst the best English versions, including “*not pursuing dishonest gain*” (NIV) and “*not fond of sordid gain*” (NASU). Christians are commanded, as much as they are able, to work with the abilities God gives them to provide for their needs (cf. I Thes 4:11; II Thes 3:10-12; Acts 20:33-35; etc.). At the same time, because the leaders of the church must devote so much of their time and effort to the work of the Lord, the church is commanded to financially support elders and preachers (cf. I Tim 5:17-18; I Cor 9:3-12; etc.). Herein lies a possible temptation for the eldership (and for preachers, too): the temptation of serving as an elder only to receive financial benefit, or even to abuse the authority he has over the Lord’s treasury (cf. I Cor 16:1-2a). The love of money and the dishonest pursuit of wealth corrode the soul, as does all covetousness, and elders must be examples to the flock that you cannot serve both God and mammon (Matt 6:24). Read I Tim 6:6-10, 17-19.

In all ways, the elder is an example of control, decency, diligence and spiritual mindedness, and in the following verse the apostle will go on to list six more necessary characteristics to further show this truth:

6. *Hospitable* – From the Greek *philos* and *xenia*, meaning literally “brotherly love of a stranger” (cf. Vine’s). Of all the people in all the world, Christians should be the most compassionate in lifting the burdens that others carry – because of all the people in all the world, we understand most of all that this is how God has loved us (I John 4:7-11). And so, Christians are to practice hospitality (Rom 12:13, NASU), not only with the people we know intimately, but with any who are in need, “since [we ourselves] are in the body also” (Heb 13:1-3). Christ loves those who are *spontaneously* hospitable and caring, charitable without grumbling (I Pet 4:9), and such conduct will be rewarded on the Last Day (Matt 25:34-40). Elders must share this wonderful quality, and through word and deed teach the flock to do the same.

7. *Lover of what is good* – One of the downfalls of the rulers of the Jews, as seen in the Gospels, was that they lost the ability to truly distinguish between good and evil due to the love of their traditions and esteem for the teachings of men (see Matt 15:1-20). The elders of the church must be spiritually mature men, with their “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14). A person who approves of beliefs or practices that are evil in God’s sight has no place in the eldership; just as the person who is quick to condemn beliefs and practices without consideration and examination of God’s word is not fit to lead God’s people.

*“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;  
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!  
Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,  
And prudent in their own sight!”*

– Isaiah 5:20-21

The qualified elder takes the time to consider the word of God in order to rightly distinguish between right and wrong, and he cherishes those things that are good in the sight of the Lord.

8. *Sober-minded* – The same word is translated *sensible* (NASU) and *self-controlled* (NIV) by other translations, and literally means “of sound mind” (Vine). In Tit 2:5, speaking of the proper behavior of young women, the same Greek word is translated *discreet* (NKJV) and *sensible* (NASU). The point seems to be that elders are to be both pure and wisely mature inwardly as well as outwardly: they must be controlled and moderate in thought and behavior, passion and opinion; their words and actions must be evidence to all of their wisdom and spiritual maturity at all times. The Lord is not only concerned with our obedience to him outwardly, but the growth and renewal of the inner man (consider Mark 7:14-23; II Cor 10:5; Phil 4:8; Rom 12:1-2).

9. *Just* – Before Israel was destroyed by Assyria, Micah brought a message from God of condemnation because of their many sins, including the extent to which they exploited one another. God poses a timeless question in Micah 6:8 –

*“And what does the LORD require of you  
But to do justly,  
To love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with your God?”*

To deal justly means to act in honesty and fairness, giving to all what is due (cf. Rom 13:7; Col 4:1, etc.). In essence, then, every sin is an act of injustice, either against God or man: deceit causes others to go through life believing what is not true; theft strips from others what rightfully belongs to them; adultery is unjust to the harmed spouse whose covenant is broken; fornication is unjust even to the other consenting party because his or her consensual behavior leads to damnation, and it is certainly unjust to the consenting parties spouse (I Thes 4:3-6); and the list goes on. However, God expects His people to deal justly with all other people, to be honest and fair. “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them*” (Matt. 7:12). Elders, especially in their position of authority and rule, must be men of justice – for the temptation is certainly real for them to deal with partiality (I Tim 5:21; Jam 3:17) or to stubbornly seek their own will (Phil 2:1-4; I Pet 5:1-3).

10. *Holy* – This is not the Greek *hagios*, meaning separated or set apart (I Pet 1:15; II Peter 3:11), but rather the Greek *hosios*, meaning upright, righteous, unpolluted. In I Tim 2:8, the apostle commands that men pray everywhere, “lifting up holy hands” – simply meaning that those who lift their voices to God in prayer, especially on behalf of others, should themselves be upright and striving to live in righteousness. To live bearing the name of Christ demands nothing less than uprightness in thought, speech and actions – “*You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly (hosios) and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory*” (I Thess 2:10-12). As the elder leads the spiritual flock, his every behavior must be exemplary of uprightness before God and man, refusing to compromise with sin or to allow evil to continue unchallenged (see Prov 25:26).

11. *Self-controlled* – The original Greek *egkrates* is employed only here in the entirety of the New Testament and literally means strong or masterful in a thing, thus a *master of self*, or as Strong defines it, “(figuratively and reflexively) self-controlled (in appetite, etc.)” To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them*” (I Cor 6:12-13, NASU). Surely, controlling one’s intake of food (so as to not offend others) was not the apostle’s only concern, for he would go on to speak of sexual self-control, too. As Christians, our very being belongs to the Lord – “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Gal 2:20-21). This kind of control takes practice, exercise, continual learning and diligence, and the elders of the church must be prime examples of Christ-like self-control.

12. *Holding fast the faithful word* – The faithful elder is not only a master of himself, but is also learned and skilled in the word of God (Heb 5:14). In the list of qualifications found in I Timothy, the apostle simply states that the elder must be “*able to teach.*” Here in Titus 1, that same virtue is expounded upon somewhat more:

- Holding fast and placing his trust in the word of God, as it was passed down by the apostles and those they taught (I Thes 2:13; II Thes 2:15; II Tim 1:13), certainly not changing or watering down the message for anyone or any reason (cf. Acts 20:27).
- Ready and able to exhort and convict those who, in word or deed, stand against the truth of the gospel. Such exhortation and conviction must be based upon the sound doctrine alone, not his own opinions, philosophies or traditions!
- “Sound doctrine” is wholesome teaching that accords with the word of God as revealed in the gospel (cf. I Tim 1:10-11; II Tim 1:13, etc.).
- This qualification echoes the admonition given the evangelist in II Tim 4:2-5 – both evangelists and elders are exhorted to “labor in the word and doctrine” (I Tim 5:17).

#### B. The Need For Good Shepherds (vs. 10-16)

Having discussed Christ’s required qualifications for elders, Paul goes on to explain why spiritually wise and experienced elders, readily able to exhort and convict with sound doctrine, are so desperately needed in the churches: savage wolves, some with false doctrines and all rebellious to God, threaten the flock daily!

- *“For there are many insubordinate”* – i.e. rebellious people (NIV, NASU). Both from within the flock (e.g. I Cor 15:12; I Tim 1:3-4,19-20; II Tim 2:17-18) and from outside the flock (i.e. false teachers from among the Jews, etc.), false teachers speak empty doctrines and deceit, leading away even whole households from the truth. As Paul warned in Rom 16:17-18 – *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”* These false teachers are:
  - *“Idle”* (NKJV) or *“empty talkers”* (NASU) – i.e. their doctrines are false and worthless. The apostle spoke of such people in I Tim 1:6-7, stating that such ignorant and dangerous deceivers *“have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”* Why do they desire to be teachers?
  - *“For the sake of dishonest gain”* – i.e. desiring preeminence and the praise of men (cf. Matt 6:1-2,5,16; Acts 20:29-20; III John 9-10), or desiring actual financial gain (I Tim 6:5).

As the predator singles out the prey that is lame, maimed or otherwise in distress, these insubordinate deceivers prey – not upon faithful preachers and spiritually mature leaders of the church – but on the weak and simple in the faith, those *“tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”* (Eph 4:14). In such passages, all Christians are warned to beware, to grow in knowledge in order to stand steadfast against such doctrinal assaults (cf. II Pet 3:14-18), and to be thankful that the Lord has ordained diligent and wise shepherds of the flock to watch out for those who profess what is *“falsely called knowledge”* (I Tim 6:20-21; II Pet 2:3).

- *“One of them, a prophet of their own...”* – Far from prejudicially labeling all the people of Crete, the apostle here alludes to what was evidently a commonly known and used phrase and applies it to the insubordinate idle talkers and deceivers plaguing the churches of Crete. Many commentators point to the fact that these words were coined by one of Crete’s famous philosopher-poets, Epimenides (circa 550 BC – note that the word

“*prophet*” only denotes his reputation in that society, not that he was in any way truly inspired).

- It may be that the apostle means to affirm these ancient words as aptly descriptive of the *general* society and culture of the Cretans, declaring them to be “*liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.*” Paul and Titus certainly lived amongst the Cretan society long enough to observe whether or not this ancient epithet was generally true. In this case, the “them” of the following rebuke is all the Cretan Christians: reminding them not to behave like the rest of society (cf. II Cor 6:14-7:1) and not to foolishly accept any doctrine that “tickles the ears” (II Tim 4:3, NASU; cf. I Thes 5:21, I John 4:1-3)
- It may be that, rather than generally applying this quotation to the society of Crete, the apostle simply refers to this widely-recognized testimony and *applies it to the insubordinate deceivers themselves* in order to emphasize his warning to the Christians in Crete: be aware of the lifestyle and demeanor of those who might try to persuade you away from the gospel. A liar and an evil beast (i.e. one who entertains and indulges his every evil appetite, even if deceit is necessary) is not difficult to recognize – and “*you will know them by their fruits*” (Matt 7:16). In this case, the “them” of the following rebuke is the rebellious empty talkers and deceivers “whose mouths must be stopped.”
- “*Therefore, rebuke them sharply*” – Both those who proclaim false doctrines and those easily swayed by them must be rebuked so that the cancerous falsehoods die and sound faith can grow and mature (cf. I Tim 5:20; Tit 2:15; Rev 3:19; etc.).
- “*Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men*” – Both the foolish traditions and false doctrines of the Judaizing teachers and the vain and worthless commandments of men are proclaimed by people who refuse and deny the truth of God revealed in His word (cf. Ps 119:160). Only the truth could possibly produce sound faith and pure religion (cf. Rom 10:17; John 4:24, 8:31-32; etc.), and so the young preacher, along with the elders in every city, had to be ready to “convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” by preaching the word of God (II Timothy 4:2).
- “*To the pure all things are pure*” – Having just spoken of “Jewish fables and commandments of men,” Paul reminds his audience of the futility of man-made regions and their uninspired regulations – “*do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men*” (Col 1:20-21). To those purified and saved by the blood of Christ, consciences cleansed through faith and obedience in baptism (cf. I Pet 1:22 with Acts 15:9; Heb 9:14 with I Pet 3:21), there is no food or drink that stains the soul if it is received with thanksgiving (cf. Rom 14:14,20; I Tim 4:1-4). Neither is there any observance of days, months, years, moons, festivals or Sabbaths that can improve upon one’s purity in Christ (cf. Col 2:16).
- “*But to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure*” – On the other hand, to those who refuse the gospel of Christ and substitute their own religions, all of their actions can only amplify their lost and depraved condition. They might build up for themselves vast and complex systems of man-made religion – with countless ordinances, regulations, observations and ceremonies – but such false doctrines and religious systems only increase self-righteousness, false humility, and pride (Col 2:18-19), rendering their worship and sacrifices worthless and vain (Matt 15:8-9), and

driving their hearts and minds farther and farther from God and His true will. The testimony of these verse and all others like them is consistent and admonitory: **man-made religions and the commandments of men can only drive their adherents farther and farther from God and salvation!**

- “*But even their mind and conscience is defiled*” – In fact, even if they do *some* things that are good, they are still lost – their defilement is not only in outward displays of false-religion, but from a mind and conscience that is in rebellion to God, and thus defiled. The source of the problem is not in their actions which are against God’s will but in their hearts that are turned against His word and His dominion in their lives. The mind and the conscience can only be cleansed by submission to the Lord through His gospel – and this is the very thing they are unwilling to do.
- “*They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him...*” – Still speaking of the promoters of deceptive and false religions, the apostle states pointedly that with their *words* they claim to know God and serve Him, but in their *actions* they prove that they have no acquaintance with Him at all (again see Matt 15:8-9). Jesus Christ said, “*If you love Me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15) – and that is the test: if we truly know God, and if we are truly disciples of the Lord, we will strive to do exactly what He asks of us, nothing more and nothing less. To knowingly transgress the Lord’s will, substituting any other will in its place, is absolute proof that we have no real fellowship with Him at all: “*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son*” (II John 9).
- “*being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work*” – This is the state of every person before hearing and heeding the gospel of Christ (see Tit 3:3; Eph 2:1-2; etc.). The only way any person becomes able to do good in the name of God is by submitting to the Lord and being cleansed by belief and obedience to His truth (see Eph 2:4-10; Tit 2:11-14, 3:4-8; etc.). Until one is willing to do that, to become obedient to the one true and living God in coming to Him through Jesus Christ, no amount of goodness is accounted unto righteousness. “*Disqualified*” in the NKJV is translated “unfit,” “worthless” and “reprobate” by other major translations, and means “*rejected as worthless when tested*” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary; see Heb 6:7-8). True obedience to the Lord and the cleansing power of His blood is what gives the Christians his or her *worth*. Those who instead serve themselves through false religions and man-made doctrines prove themselves *worthless* and abominable in the sight of God.

# THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

## CHAPTER 2

### I. Exhortations Concerning Godly Conduct

In chapter one, the apostle Paul stressed the need for the church to be instructed in sound doctrine under the supervision and guidance of strong spiritual leaders. The members of the churches in Crete, and indeed the churches of all the world, needed to grow spiritually by absorbing and practicing the word of God so that they would be sound in the faith and spiritually progressing themselves (cf. I Pet 2:1-2, 3:17-18, etc.), and so that they might guard against false teachers and destructive doctrines (cf. Eph 4:11-16). Now the inspired apostle goes on to instruct Timothy in how he should exhort the members of the Lord's body in their various walks of life. The qualities mentioned in verses 2-8 of this chapter are inseparably linked by the repeating adverb *likewise*, and thus have application in some form or another to all Christians. These exhortations are all in accordance with "*sound doctrine*" (vs. 1), meaning the healthy and wholesome teachings of the true gospel (cf. Tit 1:9; I Tim 1:10-11, 6:3; II Tim 4:3-4), and thus must not be ignored by any who wish to be faithful to the Lord.

Remember that the young evangelist was not to teach these things as a pompous authority in the church, but as a meek and patient teacher (II Tim 2:24-25; II Cor 10:1), and as a fellow servant of Christ (cf. Eph 2:19; Rev 1:9) – just as Paul reminded Timothy, "*Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity*" (I Tim 5:1-2).

#### A. Instructions to older men (vs. 2)

- *Sober* – Temperate (NIV, NASU)
- *Reverent* – Worthy of respect (NIV) and dignified (NASU)
- *Temperate* – Self-controlled (NIV) and sensible (NASU)
- *Sound in faith, love, patience* – Faith: Tit 1:13; I Tim 1:13;

#### B. Instructions to older women (vs. 3)

The older women are to be instructed *likewise* as the older men: the qualities of vs. 2 apply to these women, while the qualities of vs. 3 have application in some form to older men, too!

- *Reverent in behavior* – "Suited to a sacred character" (Vine)
- *Not slanders* – Malicious gossips (NASU), see notes at I Tim 3:11.
- *Not given to much wine* – See notes at Tit 1:7.
- *Teachers of good things* – i.e. "*teaching what is good*" (NASU)

Among those whom the older women are to instruct are naturally the younger women, to whom they are examples and role models. While male teachers may in some situations and subjects instruct all Christians equally (including young women, I Tim 5:2), in many situations it is most appropriate for wise, spiritually mature, experienced women to be the teachers of the younger women.

#### C. Instructions to younger women (vs. 4-5)

- *Love their husband and children* – From the Greek “*philandros*,” meaning “love of man” (i.e. affectionate as a wife), “*philoteknos*,” meaning maternal love (Strong). Young wives and husbands (connected by the “likewise” of vs. 6), are to love one another in the way that God teaches love, sacrificially (Eph 5:25), impartially (Eph 5:28,29), and purely (I Cor 13:4-8a) – a love that is taught and learned!
- *Discreet* – Self-controlled (NIV) and sensible (NASU).
- *Chaste* – Pure (NIV, NASU), in all their behaviors and relations.
- *Homemakers* – “Busy at home” (NIV), “workers at home” (NASU), meaning the same as “managing” or “keeping” the home (I Tim 5:14, NIV, NASU, KJV). As opposed to being inappropriately absorbed by the affairs of other people, wives are to manage their *own* homes, being primarily concerned with their duties and concerns for their own families – just as husbands are to be as well (e.g. Eph 6:4; I Tim 5:8). Furthermore, a precedent is presented, both here and in I Tim 5:14, that the home is the domain of the wife: not that she must constantly spend her time there, or that she is the only person with authority and responsibility in the family, but that she is the manager of domestic concerns. This implies undeniably that though God has ordained a hierarchy of authority in the home which places the husband (humbly and sacrificially) above the wife (see Eph 5,6; Col 3), there are some domestic circumstances in which even the husband needs to submit to the management of his wife!

*Note:* There are some misguided people, ignorant of the Scriptures, who twist Titus 2:5 and I Tim 5:14 to teach that wives must remain at home, seeing over familial affairs, and are not to take jobs or participate in other activities/responsibilities that might call her away from the physical house itself. This doctrine is not scriptural and thus not true. A wife is given the responsibility by God to busily oversee domestic duties in the home, but these verses certainly do not prohibit her from functioning outside the home as well, even working outside the home if necessary or if she and her husband so will. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. In this inspired description of the worthy and virtuous wife, notice that this godly woman worked inside and outside the home – not out of poverty, widowhood, calamity or distress, but for the betterment of her family and to better the lives of others (i.e. those in need, vs. 20). Did this woman set a poor example for other God-fearing wives? Without question or hesitation, no! The Holy Spirit testifies concerning her:

*“Who can find a virtuous wife?  
For her worth is far above rubies.  
The heart of her husband safely trusts her;  
So he will have no lack of gain...  
Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,  
But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.  
Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
And let her own works praise her in the gates.”*

– Proverbs 31:10-12,30-31

- *Good* – i.e. Kind (NIV, NASU)
- *Obedient to their own husbands* – Or *subject* to their husbands. Every organizational unit must have some sort of leadership, and God, the Creator of the human family (see Gen 2), ordains that the husband be the highest authority within the home (see I Cor 11:2; Eph

5:22ff). The wife is not inferior to the husband in any way – God has simply instructed that the husband and the wife fulfill different roles and different responsibilities in making their homes functioning and complete. This is not to teach that the husband is a strong-fisted, iron-willed dictator – he is likewise instructed to give *everything* in order to love and care for his family. However, as the considerate husband strives to make decisions for the provision and protection of his family, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, the wife should rule by his side, and when necessary submit to his will “in the Lord” (Col 3:18, meaning within the will of God, not including sin). In the unfortunate case that the husband is unbelieving and inconsiderate, both of his wife’s will and the will of God, the wife should still submit to him – as long as he does not demand her to sin – in order to show forth the love and sacrifice of Christ, in hope that he may turn and be saved (see I Pet 2:1ff).

- So that the word of God may not be blasphemed –

#### D. Instructions to younger men (vs. 6)

Only the first quality mentioned in vs. 6 – i.e. sober-minded (or self-controlled [NIV], showing sensibility in all things [NASU, and footnote]) – is directly applied to young men, since after this the apostles goes on to instruct the young evangelist how he himself is to be an example to the young men and to all Christians (vs. 7-8). However, these instructions are inseparably connected to the teachings of vs. 4-5 by the term “*likewise*.” This repeated word teaches us that all the groups of Christians mentioned in vs. 2-10 are to be instructed in the same manner, since all Christians are striving to attain the same holiness (I Pet 1:15-16) and perfection in the faith (Matt 5:48; Phil 3:12), walking in the footsteps of Christ and become like him (cf. Eph 4:12-13; Phil 3:16; I Pet 2:22; etc.). Young men should be instructed similarly to the young women:

- To love their wives and their children (Eph 5:25-33, 6:4; Col 3:18-21)
- To be discreet (i.e. self-controlled and sensible; Gal 5:22-23; II Pet 1:5-9; etc.), chaste (i.e. pure; Matt 5:8; I Tim 5:22; II Pet 3:1; etc.) and good (Matt 6:22, 12:35; Rom 2:10, 12:9; etc.) in all their conduct and relations with others.
- To care for their families, physically, emotionally and spiritually (I Tim 5:8; I Cor 7:3; Eph 5:25, 6:4; etc.)
- To honor his wife (I Pet 3:7; etc.)

In all aspects, the young men should be taught likewise as the young women, though note that a man (here, the evangelist) is given the command to teach the younger men, while older women are instructed to teach the younger women, as previously noted.

#### E. Instructions to the young evangelist (vs. 7-8)

In every aspect of his life, the evangelist is to show himself an example of what it means to be good in God’s sight, not hindering the gospel but rather amplifying it in every way (see I Tim 4:12-16). In this passage, the evangelist is reminded to:

- Show integrity and purity in doctrine – Teaching the whole truth (Acts 20:27), without partiality, prejudice or fear (cf. I Tim 5:21; II Tim 4:1-5; etc.).
- Behave and teach in reverence and dignity – Realizing the full seriousness of his task, and the full ramifications of his influence and example (see Matt 9:42; I Cor 8:9-13; Heb 12:28-29; Jam 3:1-2; etc.).
- Exhibit soundness in speech, beyond reproach or condemnation – Speech that is holy and wholesome, logic that is consistent, persuasive, accessible, and teaching that is

unwaveringly truthful. Anything less might give the enemies of the cross reason to blaspheme God, His gospel, and His people (see II Sam 12:14; Ez 36:21-24; Rom 2:24; I Tim 6:1; etc.).

#### F. Instructions to servants of men (vs. 9-10)

There are five great texts in the New Testament dealing with the responsibilities of masters and servants: Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; I Tim 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10 and I Pet 2:18-21. Christ's instructions to servants can be summarized in this way:

- Work as to God rather than man, for He is the Master of all
- Work with a sense of duty, sincerity of heart and obedience, not with rebellion, thievery or sloth
- Work genuinely for the good master as well as the unjust master, considering their souls
- Work so as to show the light of Christ and the purity of His teachings

In all of the above passages, the motivation for working with all one's heart is the reward which comes, not from men, but from God. In all circumstances, whether treated justly or unfairly, the servant is to work as to the Lord, not causing blasphemy or reproach to fall upon the church or the name of Christ. One must note that the servant is to obey all commands of the master unless they violate the principles of the gospel (cf. Acts 5:29).

*Note:* In Titus 2:10, a truly beautiful notion is expressed: by fulfilling one's responsibilities toward other men as God commands, he or she "*adorn(s) the doctrine of God.*" The Greek verb here translated *adorn* is *kosmeo*, the very same word from which is derived the English term *cosmetic* (Vine). In Luke 21:5, this word is used to describe the beautiful and ornate decorations used to adorn the temple. In Rev 21:19, the word is used to describe the truly indescribable beauty of the "walls" surrounding heaven, the New Jerusalem, where God Himself dwells – physical words have no meaning in describing heaven; the closest that John could come was to say that it is a place adorned with all kinds of precious jewels. The idea Paul expresses in Titus 2:10 is that Christians, by their manner of life before the world, can make the gospel either appealing or repugnant. One of the great truths recorded in passages like Matt 5:14-16, II Cor 3:2, 4:2; Phil 2:15; I Pet 3:1, etc. is that our very lives must be a message from God – not through elaborate religious fanfare or pretentious orations, but through the simplicity of a quiet and dignified life, full of peace, mercy, generosity, self-control, joy, and all other perfect qualities that Christ showed so perfectly in His life on earth. By living such a life that reflects the light and love of Christ, our actions *adorn* the teachings of the gospel – amplifying its beauty and demonstrating without question its benefits – "so that in every way [we] will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (NIV, Tit 2:10).

## II. Perfectly Trained By The Grace Of God

Verses 11-14 begin with the word *for*, inseparably linking these statements to those which came before. The inspired apostle now gives a *reason* for Christians to live such godly lives as those described in vss. 1-10: the grace of God has appeared to us and indeed to all people, *teaching* us how to live that we might lay hold of salvation at the end of our days.

#### A. The grace of God brings salvation through instruction (vs. 11-12a)

The *grace* spoken of in vs. 11 is the Greek word *charis*, and literally means unmerited favor. It refers to a blessing given to a recipient who first of all needs the blessing but is totally unable to supply it for himself. In this case, the blessing of God given by His grace is *salvation*:

- Salvation that man could not supply for himself (Eph 2:1-3; Rom 5:6; Heb 10:1-4; etc.)
- This blessing was supplied through the sacrifice of Christ by the grace of God (Heb 9:26-28; Rom 5:8-11; Eph 2:4-10; etc.)
- This grace does not come to man individually through any mystical, miraculous, unsolicited event: the grace of God *teaches* man what to do!
  - John 6:44-45 – Just as Jesus Himself declared: no one comes to salvation in Christ without the instruction of God (see Is 2:1-4, 54:13)
  - II Tim 3:16-17 – This instruction comes completely and perfectly from the Scriptures, the very words of God
- Note that to be *taught* involves an intellectual process of:
  - Understanding – Acts 8:30-35; Eph 3:1-5,5:17,6:19; Col 1:9-10; II Pet 3:14-18; etc.
  - Belief – John 3:16, 20:30-31; Rom 10:9-17; I Cor 1:21-25; etc.)
  - Obedience – Heb 11:8; Acts 2:38-39 w/ 5:32; Rom 1:5, 16:25-26; Heb 5:7-9; etc.
  - Without any part of this intellectual process, we receive the grace of God in vain (II Cor 6:1-2) – i.e. the grace of God brings no benefit to us whatsoever!

#### B. Instructions from the grace of God (vs. 12-14)

Thus, God sent His Son as a sacrifice of redemption for all those would hear and believe in His gospel and obey all His commands. This incomprehensible gift is handed down to us by the grace of God which instructs us that we might be saved. What does the grace of God teach us to do?

- Firstly, as we have already seen in the verses listed above, it is only by God's grace that one comes to have salvation in Christ to begin with. God's grace allows man to hear the gospel, believe in Christ and repent from sin, and finally bring faith to perfection in obedience to the gospel through baptism for the remission of sins. Having done so, the Bible speaks of the new convert as a person who is in Christ (Rom 6:1-4; Gal 3:26-27), a new creature (I Cor 5:17; John 3:5).
- However, after a person becomes a Christian, Christ expects no less than a lifetime of learning His teachings and obeying His will, a lifetime of walking in His steps (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 6:40; Col 1:21-23). So far in Titus 2, the apostle Paul has focused on the instruction that Titus needs to give people *who are already Christians* – older men, older women, younger men, and younger women who have already submitted to Christ in obedient faith to be saved by His blood, who have been purified (vs. 14) by obeying the word of truth (I Pet 1:22).
- Therefore, the instructions we find here, given by the grace of God, are meant for Christians to hear and heed, "*working out [our] salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phil 2:12-13), running "*with endurance the race that is set before us*" (Heb 12:1-2).

##### 1. *Deny ungodliness and worldly lust*

Firstly, the apostle points out to a negative command of the grace of God given in His word: deny ungodliness and the impure lusts of the world. *Deny* means to forsake or renounce: for example, just as Moses "refused" (same Greek verb) to sin against God and the people of

Israel by living as a godless Egyptian (Heb 11:24-26). A similar exhortation is given young Timothy in I Tim 6:11 when he is told to “flee” from error, greed and sin, but to pursue “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” The people of God are commanded to make an active and concerted effort to avoid sin in all of its treacherous forms. And in this passage, the inspired writer lists two spiritual obstacles that must especially be forsaken utterly:

- *Ungodliness* – i.e. irreverence and indifference toward God, His will and all that He calls holy. Just as godliness describes an inner reverence and diligent concern for God and His will (cf. I Tim 2:2; Heb 12:28), ungodliness is an attitude (displayed in outward unrighteous behavior, Rom 1:18) of disinterest and apathy toward righteousness, holiness and all things pertaining to God.
- *Worldly lusts* – i.e. the desire and intent to sin against God and His will. See James 1:13-15; I Pet 2:11; Rom 13:11-14. What is the prescription for keeping lusts from leading to sin and sin leading to death? Deny those worldly lusts: make no provision for them to bloom into sin. Starve yourself from those empty pleasures that war against and destroy the soul! The person who is recovering from alcohol addiction doesn’t sit at the bar with bottle in hand straining feverishly not to take a sip, but refuses to enter into those circumstances that might overthrow his or her will to abstain. In the same way, Christians are warned: flee from lust (II Tim 2:22), deny those temptations completely, and thereby keep yourself pure!

## 2. *Live soberly, righteously, godly*

Now comes the positive command: upon purging out those ungodly and lustful tendencies, strive to live:

- *Soberly* – i.e. sensibly and self-controlled, “*bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*” (II Cor 10:5). Those who make the decision to become Christians hand over their lives to God to live as His servants, slaves of righteousness (cf. Rom 6), and therefore must behave, think, speak as people whose lives “are hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:1-3).
- *Righteously* – i.e. upright and holy in the sight of God, placing His will always before our own. Jesus Christ loved righteousness (Heb 1:9), and this led Him to “*always do those things that [pleased] God the Father*” (John 8:29), even subjecting His own will to die the death of the cross (Luke 22:39ff with Heb 5:7-9). Christ left us this example that we might follow in His steps and live for righteousness (I Pet 2:22-25). Therefore, “*awake to righteousness, and do not sin*” (I Cor 15:33-34)!
- *Godly* – i.e. an inner attitude of reverence and diligent concern for all things pertaining to God, just as mentioned above. “Set your mind on things above,” Paul told the Christians in Colossae (Col 3:2), not meaning that Christians should wander around aimlessly dreaming of the halls of heaven, but that we should live with a consciousness of God and His will for our lives. Godliness cannot be described by a checklist of commands, or a fixed number of ordinances that must be obeyed: godliness describes an entire way of life, the way of life of a person who gives himself or herself entirely to learning God’s will, living God’s will, and magnifying God in every decision, relationship, thought and behavior.

## 3. *Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of Christ*

Paul preached concerning this same hope and suffered for that message throughout his whole life as a Christian – the glorious hope of the resurrection of the dead upon the return of Christ Jesus (cf. Acts 23:6-8, 24:14-16, 26:6-8). Notice the tense of the verb which begins vs. 13: while denying ungodliness and striving to live in godliness, Christians are to *continually* be looking forward to the coming of Christ, “*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God*” (II Peter 3:12). It is not wrong to seek happiness and fulfillment in this life (Ecc 11:9; I Pet 3:10); neither is it sinful to enjoy the comforts of friends and close companions (Ecc 4:9-12); likewise, the wealth of riches in and of itself is not damning (I Tim 6:17-18). However, for a Christian, this impermanent and fleeting mortal life is not about happiness, friends, riches or any other fulfillment or ambition that exists only in the here and now. For the Christian, the citizen of heaven (Phil 3:18-21), the child of light (Eph 5:8), all aspects of this earthly life are simply preparation for the life that is to come. The next life is eternal, with no remembrance of time or any other temporal, physical, insignificant thing (Rev 21:1-8, 22:1-5). All goals pail in comparison to reaching heaven; all pursuits lose meaning when placed beside the race of faith; and all accomplishments seem worthless when contemplated against the achievement of walking in heaven, hand in hand with Christ. If you believe these things, no other aspiration or goal matters; and if you don’t believe these things, nothing really matters at all (Matt 16:26). And so the holy apostle urges Timothy, his students, and indeed all Christians of all time: be faithful to God and zealous, placing the goal of the resurrection and meeting Christ face to face and heaven always before your mind and heart. Read Rom 8:18-25.

Christ died to give us this hope (Tit 2:14) – and what a motivating force it should be for Christians that our redemption and glory was paid by such an awful price (cf. I Cor 6:20; Phil 1:27)! But this hope can be taken away and destroyed, even from the most godly (Col 1:23). The Hebrews author wrote to Christians who were slipping from faithfulness and consequently their hope was fading and in risk of becoming extinguished like a frail candle flame in a treacherous wind. The inspired message to these wavering Christians is vitally important for us to learn as well:

- “*Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end*” (Heb 3:6)
- “*Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises*” (Heb 6:11-12)
- “*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast*” (Heb 6:19)
- “*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*” (Heb 10:23-24)

**Note: Zealous For Good Works (vs. 14)**

Christians were created in Christ to do good works (Eph 2:10). The dictionary definition of the word *zealous* is perhaps a bit unhelpful: “*full of or characterized by zeal.*” However, like so many words, *zealous* is a bit easier to define with its synonyms: passionately active, devoted, enthusiastically diligent, eager, fervent, intense. These descriptive words paint the picture of someone who is truly passionate about what they do, not just interested but *actively* interested. A person who is zealous about something puts his whole heart, soul and effort into doing it or

pursuing it, the way that an athlete trains for a sport; or an avid sport fan has passion for the game; or a true teacher thrives on helping children to learn and grow; or an artist pours his or her heart and soul into their work. A zealous person is not a nonchalant person, a careless person, an indifferent person, a lackadaisical, apathetic, disinterested, half-hearted person: none of these words are congruous with zeal.

In Titus 2:14, the apostle instructs that Christians are to be zealous **for good works**. When we set ourselves to the task of doing anything good, nonchalance, half-heartedness, apathy and disinterest should be far, far from us. Our hearts should be filled with devotion, enthusiasm, diligence and eagerness to simply do the will of the Lord to the very best of our abilities.

After all, we became Christians, the spiritual children of God, at a great price – Christ “gave Himself for us” (vs. 14a, I Cor 6:20)! *An innocent, good, compassionate and merciful God came to earth in the form of a man and died on the cross so that we could be purified from sin and qualified to do good works (contrast Tit 1:15-16)! And Jesus Christ did not die on the cross so that His followers might half-heartedly serve Him, giving a minimum of their time and effort to spiritual things, rarely doing good toward others, and approaching the service of God with nonchalance and indifference. Christ suffered so that all Christians might recognize His love and the sacrifice He paid for us, and thus be intensely motivated to show the same love and the same sacrifice toward serving Him with good works.*

▪ *A Warning – Read Rom 10:1-3*

The people for whom Paul lamented had some zeal, but it was an ignorant, unrighteous zeal: a zeal which led them to do things contrary to the will of God, though thinking they served Him.

- Think of the apostle Paul when he was still known as the dreaded Saul of Tarsus: he had zeal, but not truly for the law of God (Gal 1:14), and so in his zealous ignorance he persecuted the church (Phil 3:6, I Tim 1:13)!
- Herein lies a warning for all who seek to serve God in holiness: zeal for God, if not tempered by knowledge, can lead to unwise decisions, rash actions, and sin – the very opposite of good works

As Christians, our zeal must be tempered and honed into righteous zeal: we must be zealous, not for what we *think* are good works, but for what we *know* are good works. Where do we gain this knowledge? Read II Tim 3:16-17. The word of God thoroughly and completely equips us for good works, thus our zeal in serving Christ must be tempered by the word of God. Listen to the words of the wise man in Proverbs 19:2 – “*It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way*” (NIV).

▪ *Our Need For Zeal In Serving God*

What areas of our service to God demand our zeal? The answer from Scripture: **ALL** aspects! Whatever we put our hand to doing in serving God should be done with the utmost diligence, passion, devotion and eagerness.

- Matt 21:12-13 – Jesus had zeal for the Lord’s house: it was holy and it was to be filled with worship, but the people trampled it as a common thing, transforming it into a place of commerce, exploitation and thievery.
  - We should have this zeal for the church, the spiritual house of God (I Tim 3:15)

- Ps 122:1; Heb 10:24-25 -- Our attendance should be described by zeal, and if so we stir up zeal in others, too!
- Psalm 30:11-12, 104:33-34; John 4:24 – Our worship and praise should be filled with zeal: what a wondrous blessing that we have tongues and voices to praise the infinite God of the universe, and assurance that He hears us!
- II Cor 9:6-7 – Our giving should be filled with zeal: we have opportunity to further the Lord’s work in teaching and preaching the gospel!
- I Cor 11:23-30 – Our remembrance of Christ in the Lord’s supper should be characterized by zealous remembrance and self-examination!
- I Thes 5:16-18; Col 4:2 – Our prayers should be continually filled with fervent zeal, rejoicing always in the Lord’s blessings and in our unlimited access to the ear of the God of the universe!
- Ps 119:97-104; Jam 1:21-25 – Our studying the word of God should be filled with zeal to soak up His will!

Read Rev 3:14-22. God is absolutely repulsed by nonchalance, arrogance and indifference: this is true of individuals and churches. If we are indifferent toward serving God, He will spew us out of His mouth. What was the prescription that Christ offered this troubled church that had lost its flame for God: “*Be zealous and repent*” (vs. 19). May God help all Christians to realize that we who stand sanctified and justified by the blood of Jesus Christ were given new spiritual life, not to serve ourselves or to be constantly absorbed in the carnal interests of this world, but to be zealous for the work of the Lord. We were bought back from sin at an enormous price, the price of Christ’s innocent blood. And the same zeal for God’s will which led Jesus to the cross should describe us in serving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Where zeal for earning money, or zeal for perfecting a talent, or zeal for gaining worldly knowledge might consume those of the world, children of the Almighty God have a higher calling: we must have a zeal that transcends this lowly mortal existence and its carnal priorities; a zeal which motivates us to always seek the good and perfect will of God. Read Eph 2:1-10.

#### C. A command to teach and not be silent (vs. 15)

Lastly in chapter 2, the apostle reminds young Titus to speak these things in teaching the Christians in his hearing, with urgent exhortation and correction as needed, “*with all authority*” – i.e. these are not mere suggestions from a wise man but urgent commands and requirements of God! No man can urge or rebuke with authority unless he relays only the word of God (II Tim 3:16-17). As soon as the preacher begins to speak his opinions and human wisdom instead of God’s word, all foundation of credibility and authority is lost – “*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*” (I Cor 3:19)!

The last phrase of vs. 15, “*let no one despise you,*” is parallel to Paul’s teaching in I Tim 4:12. The preacher is urged to live in such a way that his behavior does absolutely nothing to call into question the authority, wisdom and truth of the message he proclaims. The evangelist who preaches the gospel of purity but sets an unholy and imprudent example by his behavior is despised for hypocrisy and lack of wisdom. No preacher of the truth can afford this mistake: the incomparable value of one’s influence and reputation cannot be put into words!

# THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

## CHAPTER 3

### I. Subjection To Rulers And Authorities (vs. 1-2)

#### *This Section Under Construction...*

Continuing his instructions meant for all Christians concerning godly conduct, Paul tells Titus to *remind* them all of the teachings they have already heard and learned: live in subjection to rulers and authorities in the governments of men. There are several great texts in Scripture dealing with the Christian's relation to civil governments – Matt 22:15-22; Acts 5:29; Rom 13:1-7; I Tim 2:1-2; I Pet 2:13-17; along with this passage. A summary of the instructions in these passages follows:

- *Pray for all rulers* – Whether just or unjust, moral or immoral, Christians are commanded to pray for all those who are in authority. What are we to pray? Specifically, “*that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*” (I Tim 2:2).
- *Pay your taxes* – Whether just or unjust, whether their use is wise or unwise, moral or immoral, Christians are commanded by God to render taxes to whom they are due.
- *Obey all rulers, but only in the Lord* – Whether their demands be just or unjust, wise or unwise, as long as the rulers of the earth demand nothing contrary to the will of God, Christians are simply to obey with a humble and quiet.

Pray, pay and obey – these are the commands given to Christians concerning subjection to rulers and those who are in authority. Remember that the words of this epistle, and especially the words of I Peter, were written at a time when the government which ruled over the majority of the “known world” was hostile towards Christians. A few years after this letter was penned, Christians would be driven from their homes, stripped of their possessions, imprisoned, tortured and killed in the most gruesome of ways, all for their belief and confession of Christ as the Son of God and King of kings. The command of the gospel to these Christians living under a violently oppressive government was the same as the command for all Christians of all the world under all governments today: live in subjection and obedience toward your rulers, praying for them and paying your taxes.

The Christian needs no more reason for obedience to civil rulers than the simple fact that God demands it. However, there are reasons given in Scripture for our subjection to the governments of men:

- *Their authority comes from God* – All things are under the subjection of the one true and living God. There could exist no power or authority among men unless God allowed it to be so (John 19:11). Notice that this fact says nothing about whether or not the rulers themselves or their actions are approved by God: the Lord has used the wickedness of nations for His own purposes and then punished in turn them for that wickedness (e.g. Assyria, Is 10, 30; Babylon, II Kings 24, Is 13-14,21). Even in the case of Pilate, Herod and the Sanhedrin, their authority came from God, and ultimately their actions fulfilled

the plan of God since before time began (II Tim 1:9; Gal 4:4) – and yet the crucifixion of Christ is the most heinous crime of injustice and cruelty this world has even known!

- *God's purpose for them is good* – “*It is a minister of God to you for good,*” an exceedingly difficult phrase (Rom 13:4). It is quite clear from the history laid down in Scripture and from our own experience that many governments do not work good, either for Christians or otherwise, but often are the source of atrocious evil. Yet, the truths expressed in Romans 13 are true of all governments of all the world – even as much as they were true of the tyrant Nero and other cruel rulers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Romans 13:4 is not a conditional phrase: it applies to all governments, whether just or oppressive, honest or deceitful, democratic or tyrannical, caring or corrupt. People who claim that governments are only God's ministers for good when they deal justly and rule according to God's will are terribly incorrect and dealing falsely with this passage. Simply stated, Romans 13 teaches that all governments are ministers of God for the good of Christians (i.e. the “you” of Rom 13:4, not all the world, but Christians, cf. Rom 1:7). Paul used language similar to this previously in this epistle, Rom 8:28 – “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” Now, clearly not every occurrence in the life of the Christian will be good and joyful (cf. John 15:18ff; I Pet 4:1; Phil 4:11-13; etc.), and yet by the unseen hand of God, He is able to make sure that all things work together for ultimate good in the lives of His children. God's hand also works through the governments and kingdoms of men (cf. Dan 5:21; etc.), and He allows the governments of the world to have authority to meet His purposes, whether they realize and acknowledge His sovereignty or not. Therefore, Christians are commanded not to resist the government – even if they are evil and malicious – because God's hand is working through them toward eventual or immediate good in ways that we perhaps cannot see or comprehend. In fact, the good that comes about as a result of the governments of today may not even come to fruition until years, even generations, in the future, as in the case of God's preparations for the Christ (Eph 1:10; Gal 4:4).
- *God desires all people to be saved* – Here is the very point of Titus 3:1-2. Christians are commanded to live:
  - In obedience to rulers
  - Ready and zealous for good works (cf. 2:14, Eph 2:10)
  - Speaking evil of no one
  - Peaceably among all people, as much as depends upon us (Rom 12:18; Matt 5:9)
  - In gentleness and meekness
  - Showing all humility to all people

And what is the reason for all of these commands concerning our conduct before the world? God desires all people to be saved (cf. I Tim 2:4; II Pet 3:9)! Christians are the means by which the Lord has chosen for His gospel of saving grace to reach the hearts and minds of all the world – through both our words and our deeds!

*“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

– Matthew 5:14-16

Our work in saving souls and changing the world for the better is too important to allow rebellion, laziness, the love of evil, malicious speech, hatred, vengeance, pride and vanity to harm our influence before the world. Nothing in our speech or conduct should ever compromise the glory of the gospel message. Nothing in our speech or conduct should ever give the world a reason to turn from the gospel because of our stained influence (cf. II Sam 12:14; I Tim 5:14; etc.).

*Check Back Soon For Updates!*

## II. Lost But For The Mercy And Grace Of God (vs. 3-7)

What might motivate the Christian to live with the peaceable, gentle, meek, submissive spirit described in vs. 1-2? In the next verses, the inspire apostle suggests that a quiet reflection upon our former lives will provide the impetus needed to conduct ourselves amongst other men in godliness and reverence.

a) *For we ourselves were also once...*

Read Rom 3:21-26; I Cor 6:9-11; Eph 2:1-10; Col 3:5-11. Every Christian once lived in unrighteousness and sin, separated from God (cf. Is 59:1-2) due to our own decisions to choose sin over godliness. While dead in trespasses and sins, we also lived in:

- *Foolishness* – i.e. Making terrible decisions while knowing better. Foolishness manifests itself in many different ways:
  - Luke 24:25; Prov 1:7; Matt 7:26-27 – Despising or ignoring the word of God
  - Gal 3:1-3 – Tasting God’s blessings in the gospel and then falling away
  - I Tim 6:9-10 – Covetousness, envy and malcontent, all of which lead us to fall into harmful lusts and sin
- *Disobedient* – Primarily to God (cf. Rom 1:30-32; Tit 1:16), but by extension disobedience to all those whom God puts in authority, namely parents (II Tim 3:2) and civil rulers (see previous discussion).
- *Deceived* – Every misplaced priority, every ungodly decision made prior to our conversion was in some way caused by deceit: the deceit of Satan (John 8:44-45; Rev 20:10); the deceit of vain traditions and philosophies of men (Col 2:8); the deceit of false teachers (II Tim 3:13; II Pet 3:14-16; II Cor 11:3); the deceitfulness of riches (Matt 13:22); the deceit of bad companions (I Cor 15:33); the deceitful idea that we will not answer for our misdeeds in this life (Gal 6:7); etc. Because of his deceit, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire unto ultimate destruction at the end of time: but his fault does not render us innocent! God has graciously given the world His Son, His patience, and His perfect and complete word by which we can escape the snare of deceit and be saved. If we continue to ignore Him and His instruction, being thus willfully deceived or simply ignoring the truth, we will answer for our sins at the judgment!
- *Serving various lusts and pleasures* –
- *Living in malice and envy* –
- *Hateful and hating one another* –

The thousands of ungodly people that we will come across in our lifetimes have several things in common:

- They have all been taken captive by Satan to do his will (II Tim 2 26)
- They are all as we once were before we heard and obeyed the gospel (Eph 2:1; I Pet 4:3)
- They are all precious in the sight of God who desires all people to be saved (I Tim 2:4; II Pet 3:9)

Each lost soul that crosses our path needs to same consideration and patience that we ourselves once received, leading to our obedience of the gospel! As seen in the previous chapter, the grace of God has appeared to us, as it has to all men, and by it our lives have been transformed. We

grace the earth as the children of light, and we stand by the power of Christ's blood which is able to save to the uttermost – but none of these great blessings have been received because of our innate worth or great works which we've done! We owe everything to the grace of God! And as we live in humility and quietness, striving to shine forth Christ's light (Matt 5:14ff) and reflect all the glorious attributes of God (Eph 5:1), we effectively show others what the power of the gospel might hold in store for them, too. Our lives of godliness and holiness are living invitations to the world to taste and see how gracious the Lord truly is!

b) *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared...*

What blessings and reasons for thanksgiving are held in that little word, “*but*”! We ourselves once walked this earth as the living dead, with lives characterized by all of the terrible faults described in vs. 3. And if it were not for God, there would be no “*but*” – only the “*certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries*” (Heb 10:27). Praise be to God that He did not allow the story of mankind and indeed the story of our lives to end in that most pitiable state! Instead, He showed to mankind His kindness (in Christ, Eph 2:7) and His love (in laying down His life in our stead, Rom 5:6-8), and “*He saved us*”:

*“Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him*

*That there was no justice.*

*He saw that there was no man,*

*And wondered that there was no intercessor;*

*Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him...”*

– Isaiah 59:15-16

- *He save us* – i.e. He saved our souls (I Pet 1:9) by forgiving our sins, to be remember no more (Heb 10:14-17; Acts 26:18). These sins separated us from God, and thus brought us to spiritual death (Is 59:1-2; Eph 2:1). We were totally deserving of spiritual death, the just wages of sin (Rom 6:23), but instead Christ died in our place and took away our sins by His blood (Eph 1:7; I John 1:7) and brought us back to life – in fact, eternal life (I John 5:11-13; Rom 2:7)!
- *Not by works of righteousness that we've done* – The sentiment here is the same as at I Tim 1:9-10 – we were neither saved because of our works (we deserved death) nor by our works (no good work could be done by us to even the scales and right our wrongs – remember Tit 1:15-16), and certainly not by the works of the Old Law (cf. Gal 2:16). Without the mercy and grace of God given to mankind through Jesus Christ, we could not possibly do any amount of good works in order to earn salvation! Salvation is the gift of God (Eph 2:1-10). However, because of this fact, some misguided souls come to the conclusion that no form of obedience to God is necessary to gain salvation in His mercy and grace. It is important to note:
  - *Salvation by God's grace is not unconditional* – In the very next statement in Titus 3, we find *conditions* for our salvation through God's mercy and grace, namely the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, without which we could not be saved! The Lord requires a number of obedient works that all people must obey in order to be saved in Christ:
    1. Hearing the word of God and learning from His is a work without which no man will be saved – Rom 10:17; Matt 11:15,13:9, etc.; Matt 10:14

2. Belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is a work without which no man will be saved – John 6:29 (Note passages like I John 3:23 where belief is a command to be obeyed!)
  3. Repentance is a work without which no man will be saved – Acts 2:38, 17:30f
  4. Confession of Jesus Christ is a work without which no man will be saved – John 12:42; Rom 10:9-10; Matt 10:32-33
- *If every step along the road to salvation listed above requires man to obey God, why is it hard for some to accept that there is another work that brings faith to perfection and marks the moment that God takes away sin?*
5. Baptism for the remission of sins is a work without which no man will be saved – Acts 2:38; Rom 6:1-4; I Pet 3:21

In every age, God has required man to both believe Him *and* obey Him to receive His promises. Think of Abraham leaving his home in Ur (“by faith Abraham obeyed,” Heb 11:8). Think of Moses speaking to the rock (and the consequences of disobeying God’s command, even while believing water would come forth, cf. Ex 17:6ff with Num 20:7ff). Think of Joshua marching around the walls of Jericho, and how they never budged, trembled or cracked until the seventh day of marching, and then not until the men yelled and blew their trumpets – following every word of God’s commands. In all of these narrations and countless others like them, faithful obedience did not negate the power of God’s grace – but without obedience, faith would have been meaningless and vain. And so in this day and age, when a person yearns to be saved in Christ, let him or her heed the words of Heb 5:9 – “[Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (NASU). And to all those who believe false doctrines that salvation can be gained by God’s grace without obedience, let them heed II Thes 1:7-8 – “...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

c) *Through the washing of regeneration*

The word “through” is translated from the Greek preposition *dia*, which denotes “*the channel of an act*” (Strong), thus this is one of several passages in the New Testament which discuss not just the motivation of God in offering salvation to man (i.e. His grace, mercy, love, etc.) but the actual means by which a person comes to be saved. In other passages, salvation is said to be *through*:

- Belief in God the Son, John 3:16-17 (cf. I Cor 1:21)
- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, extended equally to all people, Acts 15:11
- The death and resurrection of the Son, Rom 5:10
- Faith, Eph 2:8
- The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Tit 3:5
- Baptism, I Pet 3:20-21

It is important to point out that in the case of belief, faith and baptism, our salvation is dependent on actions that we take in accepting God’s mercy and grace in salvation – we ourselves *choose* whether or not to believe (John 6:29; I John 3:23) and obey (Acts 2:38-41; Heb 5:8,9). This is exactly the case of the *washing of regeneration*: it refers to baptism for the remission of sins, an action that we choose to take in obeying the commands of God to gain salvation.

How can we be sure that the *washing of regeneration* refers to baptism for the remission of sins? First of all, if there is an alternative meaning, one must show proof from the Scriptures that there is some other washing that is shared alike by all Christians through which we are saved, and no other such option exists in the New Testament – there is but “one baptism” shared in common by all believers (Eph 4:5). Secondly, notice that the apostle specifically includes himself in the language of Tit 3:5-7, using the pronouns “we” and “us” (e.g. “...*He saved us, through the washing of regeneration...*”). Thus, the apostle Paul himself was likewise saved through the washing of regeneration. This fact greatly helps to explain the meaning of the *washing of regeneration* (as well as the *renewing of the Holy Spirit*, discussed below).

The washing that Paul submitted to for his salvation (while he was still referred to as Saul of Tarsus) is described first in Acts 9, and recounted again in Acts 22 by Paul himself. After appearing to Saul on the road to Damascus and temporarily blinding him, the Lord commands that he continue into the city and wait for instruction. Saul obeys the command of the Lord, realizing his terrible mistake in persecuting Christ’s church, and spends three days in prayer until the Lord’s messenger, Ananias, comes to him. In Acts 22:16, Ananias commands Saul to “*Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (cf. Acts 9:18). Note that even after repenting, turning to the Lord Jesus for instruction, and praying for three days, Saul’s sins remained: he was not yet saved! However, Ananias taught Saul words by which he would be saved: having already certainly believed in the resurrected Savior and repented from his wrongs, Paul was baptized in water for the remission of his sins.

This was the same baptism that Peter commanded to the guilt-stricken Jews in Acts 2:38 saying, “*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.*” It was the same baptism that the believing and repentant Corinthians obeyed, to which Paul referred in his letter to them: “*but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit or our God*” (I Cor. 6:11, cf. Acts 18:8). This was the same baptism, the same washing, that Paul spoke of in Romans 6, stating that both he and the Christians in Rome “*were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” The people who submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ gained newness of life, regeneration, rebirth by immersion in water – echoing the words of Jesus in John 3:5, they were “*born again of water and the Spirit.*”

The *washing of regeneration* spoken of in Titus 3:5 is not some metaphorical, mystical baptism in an intangible substance, nor a baptism of the heart by the Holy Spirit, nor any other explanation originating in the mind of man. The Scriptures explain that this washing is the immersion in water of a repentant believer, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.

*Note:* Is baptism just an outward symbol or representation of an inner salvation by faith alone?

See Coffman's notes on this verse:

"The Expositor's Greek New Testament sums up the meaning here thus:

*God saved us by baptism, which involves two complementary processes, (a) the ceremony itself which marks the actual moment in time of the new birth, and (b) the daily, hourly, momently renewing of the Holy Spirit.*<sup>14</sup>

It is inexcusable to say that baptism "is only setting the seal on the essential act of faith"... or that baptism is little more than a purifying act; as Beasley-Murray stated it, "Neither of these contentions is worthy of discussion."<sup>15</sup> In the verse we are considering, as the same writer added, "Baptism is efficacious by itself."

But isn't baptism only a symbol? This has been shouted so loudly and so frequently and for so long that many believe it; but it is untrue. Lenski sets the matter straight. Commenting on the affirmation that "Man submits to baptism after the new birth to picture it forth to men," he has this:

*Paul excludes this idea in a double way. "God saves us by means of the bath, etc. - this is the bath of regeneration. How can anyone think Paul would say, "God saved us by means of a picture of regeneration? Compare Jesus' own words in John 3:5."*<sup>16</sup>

14: Newport J. D. White, op. cit., p. 198.

15: G. R. Beasley-Murray, op. cit., p. 213.

16: R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 934.

#### d) *And renewing of the Holy Spirit*

As shown in the previous section, the writings of Paul, as well as the accounts of his conversion to the Way of Christ detailed in the book Acts, reveal that the washing of regeneration refers to the immersion in water of a repentant believer in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The second requirement of salvation mentioned in this text, the renewing of the Holy Spirit, merits attention this week.

The noun "renewing" literally means a renewal, a rebirth, and comes from the Greek verb that means to make new again – "renewing" is equal in meaning to "regeneration" from the previous phrase (Vine). Therefore, the renewing of the Holy Spirit is not presented in this passage as an occurrence separate and apart from the washing of regeneration, but these phrases refer to one and the same event, described from two different aspects of the rebirth. Jesus Himself uses similar language in John 3:5, when He teaches Nicodemus that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The question then becomes, how does the Holy Spirit renew? How is the rebirth of a repentant believer in the waters of baptism a rebirth of water **and** the Spirit?

Consider the following verses. In John 16:8, Jesus Christ tells His apostles that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin. In John 16:13, Jesus tells them how the Holy Spirit would impress this conviction upon the world: the Spirit of truth would guide the apostles into all truth, the whole word of God, and they would teach it to all the world (Mark 16:15f). Paul notes this convicting power of the inspired word in Titus 1:9, when the apostle states that sinners will be convicted by the elders of a local church by sound doctrine, by holding fast to the faithful word which was revealed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, not a single person in this world would ever be convicted of sin without the word of God as revealed only by the Holy Spirit. Not a single person would know their

need for a Redeemer without the conviction of God given by the Holy Spirit in revealing the word through the apostles and inspired writers of the New Testament.

The same idea is expressed in Scripture concerning faith in Jesus Christ – sinful man cannot know that he needs to believe in Jesus as God’s Son (that he might obey God and be saved) without the teachings of the Bible (John 20:30f; Romans 10:17). The same principle is true concerning repentance – man cannot know that he needs to repent from the works of unrighteousness unless he is taught so by the word (Matthew 4:17; Acts 17:30). And, of course, the same is true concerning baptism for the remission of sins – a person cannot know the essentiality of baptism without hearing the gospel (Mark 16:15f; Acts 2:4,38). And in each of these cases, the word that is necessary to change the heart of an unbeliever is available only because God revealed it to the apostles through the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21)

Every step that leads to salvation in Jesus Christ can be learned only through God’s revelation of His word through the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:10-15). Therefore, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is simultaneously a washing of regeneration and a renewing of the Holy Spirit because the necessity of baptism is only learned through the inspired word of God given to the apostles and holy writers of the Bible through the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 does not teach successive stages in the salvation experience, but one event, namely the rebirth of a child of God to walk in newness of life through the waters of baptism as taught by the Holy Spirit in God’s word.

*Note:* Some people question how salvation can come both through baptism (Tit 3:5; I Pet 3:21; etc.) and through faith (Eph 2:8; etc.). Remember that Jesus Himself commanded that those will be saved who both believe and are baptized (Mark 16:16), such that the person who believes but is not baptized only makes it half the way to salvation, while the person who is baptized without belief also misses the mark by half. Similarly, Col 2:12 states that Christians were “*buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead,*” that is, raised to walk in newness of life, saved from sin (Rom 6:4). Thus, baptism by itself means nothing, and belief without obedience in baptism brings no remission of sins (cf. Acts 2:38, 22:). But when a penitent believer is baptized for the remission of sins, the divinely powerful combination of faith and obedience brings salvation from God. Baptism is meaningless without faith; but faith is dead without obedience!

e) *Whom He poured out on us abundantly*

“*Whom*” might be translated “*which*” in this passage, except that an examination of the original text demands this pronoun be linked to the Holy Spirit, not to the washing or renewing of the previous verse (see, for example, the discussion in Reese or Patton). “*Us*” must refer to Paul and his readers, and by the context *all Christians* – i.e. all the saved (vs. 5). Thus, Paul continues his argument that Christians must maintain good works before all people, especially before those who are not Christians, by reminding us that the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us abundantly by God through Jesus Christ. What exactly does this mean, and why should it motivate us to maintain good works before all men? Generally, three possible answers are suggested:

1. The Holy Spirit is poured out in the form of baptism in the Spirit, evidenced by miraculous works.
  - John 14:15-18, 16:5-15; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:7-8 – Christ promised the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit upon them to give them power and authority to speak from God
  - Acts 2:17-18, 33 – The apostles explained their miraculous ability to speak in tongues (along with other miracles to follow) as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit from Christ, now exalted at the right hand of God
  - *Problem 1:* Nowhere in the New Testament is it suggested or verified that *all Christians* received baptism in the Holy Spirit, nor the ability to work miracles.
  - *Problem 2:* Why would the ability to work miracles give the Christian reason to maintain good works before all people (the whole point of the passage)?
  
2. The “Holy Spirit” is mentioned in reference to the blessings and promises given to Christians through the word of God, emphasizing that the generous giver of all these wonderful things is God through the Spirit.
  - Referred to by Patton as “*metonymy*” – the “*use of one word for another that it suggests, as the effect for the cause, the cause for the effect, the sign for the thing signified, the container for the thing contained, etc.*” (Webster).
  - See Matt 10:34; Luke 16:29; Acts 8:5, 16:34; Ps 14:7 with Ps 22:23; Luke 11:13 with Matt 7:11.
  - *Problem 1:* Metonymy is a type of figurative language, only to be assumed if a *literal* interpretation of the word or phrase is impossible (as in the first examples above) or if the speaker explains it as figurative (as in Luke 11:13 w. Matt 7:11).
    - Is there any reason a literal interpretation of “whom He poured out abundantly” is impossible?
    - Some authors say the literal interpretation is impossible, but not based upon any Scripture at all! [For example, Patton states, “*Since the Holy Spirit is a person (third person in the Godhead), he cannot be shed on us...Obviously, something else is meant besides the Holy Ghost in person*” (302-303).]
    - Who are we to say what the Holy Spirit can or cannot do unless the Scriptures reveal it to us (cf. I Cor 2:7ff; John 4:24)?
    - In fact, the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit can literally be poured out upon a person – this happened in Acts 2:1-4 and Acts 10:44-48. Jesus referred to these events as immersion in (or with) the Holy Spirit!
  - *Problem 2:* If this is a case of metonymy, then the phrase can be taken to mean that God poured out His blessings abundantly through the word revealed by the Spirit. The principle is indeed sound, but is this a valid interpretation considering the context of Tit 2:4ff? Remember that the “us” and “we” in verse 6 refers to Christians: saved people are not the only ones to whom blessings and promises are made available in the word, for the word has been given to the whole world! (See Tit 2:11; Rom 16:26-27; Eph 3:1-7; Acts 17:30; Mark 16:15-16; Matt 28:18-20; Is 2:2-4; etc.)

3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this verse refers to the “*indwelling of the Holy Spirit*” – the seal that God places upon the saved, and the down payment (or guarantee) of their salvation which awaits completeness after death.
  - Some say this indwelling is indirect and through obedience to the word, just as Christ dwells in us through faith (Eph 3:17), and just as we are filled with the Spirit as we allow the word to direct our will (compare Eph 5:18-19 with Col 3:16-17).
  - *Problem 1*: The word of God has been revealed by the Spirit to all men, not just to Christians (see verses mentioned in point 1 above).
  - *Problem 2*: The logic of this interpretation is backwards compared to Paul’s argument. Paul states that the Holy Spirit having been poured out on us should motivate us to obey God’s will (i.e. Holy Spirit comes first; obedience follows). This interpretation states that the Holy Spirit dwells in us if we obey the word (i.e. obedience comes first; indwelling of the Holy Spirit follows as a result). The same logical dilemma occurs when this argument is applied to I Cor 6:18-20.
  - Others say this indwelling of the Holy Spirit is personal and literal, received as a down payment from God at the point of salvation, as promised by the apostles in Acts 2:38-39 (cf. Acts 19:1-2) and taught in the epistles (Rom 8:9-11; II Tim 1:14; Rom 5:5; II Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; Eph 1:13-14; etc.).
  - Coffman: “As Lenski said, “This is not a reference to Pentecost... but to baptism and the Spirit’s outpouring in it.”<sup>18</sup> Thus the Pentecostal emphasis of “repent, be baptized... and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38,39) is identical with what is revealed here. The gift in view here is the gift ordinary, the earnest of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of promise, the indwelling Spirit which is received by every true convert to Christ.” (18: R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 936.)

*Note*: The united work of the Godhead (see I Pet 1:2). The reader should not overlook the clear reference to the three Persons of the Godhead (Rom 1:20; Col 2:9) and their united work in offering salvation to mankind!

- a. God the Father – “*He poured out*”
- b. God the Holy Spirit – “*whom He poured out upon us richly*”
- c. God the Son – “*through Jesus Christ our Savior*”

f) *Through Jesus Christ our Savior*

Again, following the flow of the language through this passage, the Holy Spirit was poured out generously upon the saved through Jesus Christ our Savior. The meaning of this phrase can be variously interpreted equally in harmony with each of explanations above.

- If Jesus had not become our Savior, none of the blessings and promises of the gospel (revealed by the Spirit) could possibly be ours, for we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins (II Tim 1:8-10; Eph 2:1-10).
- The Holy Spirit was not poured out in any measures upon Christians until after Jesus Christ offered Himself on the cross and was resurrected to sit at the right hand of God (see Acts 2:33). This is exactly the meaning of passages like John 7:37-39, 16:7.
- It is only when we are united with Jesus Christ in baptism (Rom 6:4-5) that we receive the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our inheritance (Acts 2:38-39; Eph 1:13-14).

g) *That having been justified by His grace...*

“That” indicates that a reason is here given for all of the actions of God mentioned beginning in vs. 4, namely that He saved us. *Justified* holds the same significance as “saved” in vs. 5, but with a slightly different meaning. To justify literally means to make level or square, and in the language of the Scriptures (as in the court room) it is the opposite of condemnation (cf. Rom 8:1,33f). Through obedient faith in Jesus Christ, we are made righteous again in the sight of God, not because we are proven innocent, but because we are acquitted by His grace (Heb 10:16-18).

And what is the result or purpose: so that Christians “*might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (NASU). God intended that we should become children (Eph 1:5) and heirs (Rom 8:17) along with Christ Jesus His Son. The inheritance an eternal home and glory together in heaven with our God (cf. Matt 25:34; Tit 1:2, John 3:16) – just as Christ received from God upon His ascension. In a sense, Christians have life in Christ now, yet we still hope and long for the redemption of the body and the complete fulfillment of our inheritance (see Rom 8:24; I Pet 3:5-9).

### **III. Last Instructions To The Evangelist (vs. 8-11)**

Bringing his letter to a close, the apostle instructs the young evangelist concerning his exhortation of Christians, foolish talkers, and those who would divide the church.

#### **A. This Is A Faithful Saying (vs. 8)**

Paul uses this phrase to put emphasis on abundantly important truths (cf. 1 Tim 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; II Tim 2:11). Here the “faithful saying” is probably all the preceding verses concerning God’s salvation of mankind by grace through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, though the New King James translators evidently associated the phrase directly with what follows, “*that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.*” Regardless the grammatical structure, the meaning of the passage is abundantly clear: remind Christians constantly of the price that was paid for their salvation, and thus motivate them to strive constantly to do good works. Good works should not sporadically pop in and out of Christian’s lives, but in every way we should be characterized by good works. We owe the Lord nothing less – this is exactly what we were created and purposed in Him to do (Tit 2:14; Eph 2 10). We need to be reminded of this great truth “constantly.”

#### **B. Avoid Foolish Disputes (vs. 9)**

But while constantly reminding Christians of the truths that will make their salvation sure, the evangelist must constantly be on guard not to be dragged into the foolish and useless controversies of ignorant men. Paul epitomized these controversies by referring to the useless wrangling and foolish disputes concerning Hebrew genealogies and the Old Law (cf. I Tim 1:4, II Tim 2:23; Col 2:16-19). Under the Old Law these genealogies were important, since certain tribes and families were ascribed specific duties – and after so many generations, the genealogies

must have become extensive, broken, and controversial. However, those ceremonial duties passed away when Christ died on the cross, along with any importance of Hebrew lineage since now salvation is offered equally to all people of all nations (cf. Is 2:2-4; Lk 24:47; etc.).

The point all Christians must take away from verses like these is this: always be on guard that you do not allow petty, foolish, useless controversies distract you from your true duties to God and to His word. Teachers and preachers every day are being pulled away from the truth and distracted from the importance of their responsibilities (II Tim 4:2) by ignorant disputes which cause strife and division rather than godly edification. Your soul, the souls around you, and the church cannot afford any time wasted on unprofitable, divisive arguments and debates.

#### C. Reject A Divisive Man (vs. 10-11)

But some people will not cease from their foolishness: a man who continues in his destructive ways, clinging to controversy and/or refusing to relent from false teaching, must be warned and warned again, then withdrawn from (II John 10; Rom 16:17-18; Matt 18:15ff). Christ died for the unity and peace of His spiritual body (John 17:20-23; I Cor 1:10; Eph 4:11-16; etc.) – it is too precious to be torn asunder and perverted by ignorant, foolish, sinful, deceived men.

### **IV. Final Farewells (vs. 12-15)**

#### A. Artemas or Tychicus (vs. 12)

Artemas is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, though Tychicus is mentioned in Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21f; Col 4:7-9; II Tim 4:12 – a diligent and faithful worker and companion of Paul. See the notes at II Tim 4:12. Evidently, Paul planned to either send Artemas or Tychicus to relieve Titus in Crete in order for him to join Paul at Nicopolis for the winter. It appears that Paul himself had not yet arrived at that destination.

#### B. Zenas the Lawyer and Apollos (vs. 13-14)

Zenas is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, though we learn about Apollos' great influence on the early church in Acts 18:24 and I Cor 16:12. The term "lawyer" means a person skilled in the Mosaic Law (cf. Luke 7:30, 10:25, 11:45-54, 14:3, etc.).

Zenas and Apollos were evidently on some kind of preaching trip, perhaps working with the Jews considering their extensive knowledge of the Old Testament. Paul urges Titus to prompt the churches of Crete to provide for Zenas and Apollos, that they might have everything they need to live, work and travel. Thus, here is another passage in the New Testament exemplifying the church's work of providing financially for preachers and teachers of the gospel (cf. Phil 4:15-16; I Cor 9; II Cor 11; etc.). Performing this good work, the churches of Crete were bearing fruit from good works and storing up for themselves glory with God (cf. Gal 6:6ff; I Tim 6:17-18).

#### C. All Those With Paul (vs. 15)

As mentioned in the introduction, Paul penned this letter sometime after his first Roman imprisonment, probably from Greece. It is not possible to know who was with him at the time, but what a comfort it must have been to be surrounded by faithful souls with the love of Christ in them. As is customary in his letters, the beloved apostle concludes with a simple prayer – “Grace be with you all” (cf. Col 4:18; I Tim 6:21; II Tim 4:22; Heb 13:25(?)). That is to say, may God’s richest blessings and strength be with you always.

# Special Study No. 1: The Question Of Remarried Elders

## Introduction

In I Timothy 3:2 and again in Titus 1:6, the apostle Paul speaks by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in stating that a man who is qualified to serve in the office of an elder “*must be...the husband of one wife.*” Though the simple and straightforward reading of this passage is that an elder must presently be the husband of but one woman, demanding marriage but forbidding polygamy or adultery, commentators are far from unified upon the meaning of this apparently simple phrase. For centuries, perhaps dating as far back as the second century Western Latin Church<sup>1</sup> or at least the fourth century Council of Laodicea<sup>2</sup>, the argument has been made that the language of these passages demands that an elder be a man married *only once in his lifetime*, thus forbidding any remarried man from serving in the eldership. This argument equally prohibits the widower who remarries as well as the scripturally divorced man who remarries from serving as elders in the Lord’s church. The purpose of this brief investigation is to illuminate the meaning of this qualification for elders, specifically answering the question of whether or not the otherwise qualified remarried man may serve as an elder.

## I. The Original Language

At the start of this study, one fact must be noted: neither the subject of remarriage nor that of divorce is specifically mentioned in I Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:6. Thus, if these passages forbid the elder from having been remarried, it must be necessarily implied by the language and/or context of each verse. There is no other passage in scripture which deals with this qualification of the eldership, and so any scriptural conclusion must be drawn from the language used in these two passages of holy writ. If the student concludes that I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 mean more than the readily apparent meaning of the common English translations of these verses, there must be a reason *within these passages* that *necessarily implies* the alternate meaning.

The original Greek language at I Timothy 3:2 is “*mias gunaikos andra*” while that at Titus 1:6 is “*mias gunaikos anar.*” For a detailed study of these words, the student is referred to *Scriptural Elders and Deacons* by H.E. Phillips, pgs. 98-99<sup>3</sup>. Term by term, these words mean<sup>4</sup>:

- *Mias* – One (feminine)
- *Gunaikos* – A woman or a wife
- *Anar (Andra)* – A man or a husband

Whether the term *gunaikos* means a woman (of any age) or a wife depends upon the context of its use. For example, Matthew 9:20 and 13:33 both use the word in its general sense, a woman; meanwhile, I Corinthians 7:3 and Ephesians 5:22 each use the word in its specific sense, a wife. Similarly, *anar* (or *andra*, for they mean the same) may mean a male person (e.g. Acts 8:12 or I Timothy 2:12) or specifically a husband (e.g. Matthew 1:16 or John 4:16). The text at hand can be rendered two ways: “of one wife a husband” or “of one woman a man,” and thus the context dictates the reading: “*the husband of one wife,*” as is found both in the NKJV and NASU translations.

These are the only three words present in the phrase translated “husband of one wife” in the NKJV and NASU translations. Now, a translation that presents other words – such as *but, once,*

*married, only*, etc. – is not a translation in the true sense of the term, but a paraphrase in which the translators have added their own words to emphasize their own interpretation of the three simple words appearing in the original Greek. Of 28 translations surveyed, only seven translations showed significant variation from the NKJV and NASU translation<sup>5,6</sup>:

- “must have only one wife” – Charles Williams, *A Translation in the Language of the People*
- “faithful to his one wife” – *The New English Bible*
- “he must be married only once” – James Moffatt, *A New Translation*
- “only once married” – Edgar J. Goodspeed, *An American Translation*
- “true to his one wife” – Richard F. Weymouth, *The New Testament In Modern Speech*
- “married only once” – Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest Expanded Translation*
- “he must have been married only once” – William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*

According to the testimony of Greek scholars, none of these are literal translations of the passages at hand. When translators go beyond relaying a simple, literal translation of the text and instead substitute a supposed meaning to the original phrase, they pass beyond the realm of translators and into the realm of commentators: and for many of the above “translations,” an easily understandable *paraphrase* was exactly the author’s noble intention! However, the unquestioned literal translation of I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, agreed upon unanimously by unbiased Greek scholars, is “*the husband of one wife.*”

Now, literally, what does this phrase mean? Taken word for word, it means that the elder must be married (or else he is no husband) to one (that is, more than one but less than two) wife. The statement presents both a positive and a negative condition upon the scriptural elder: marriage is demanded, while polygamy and adultery (discussed in more detail afterword) are forbidden. Notice that the phrase does not have in its grammatical scope the elder’s previous marital condition(s) at all: *it is an entirely present tense statement.* In the words of I Timothy 3:2, the qualified elder must simply “*be*” (present state, currently) the husband of one wife. In the words of Titus 1:6, a man is qualified for the eldership only if he “*is*” (present state) the husband of one wife. Is the man who was once widowed but has since remarried said to be the husband of two wives? Certainly not! In Romans 7:2-3 and I Corinthians 7:39 (as well as in Christ’s own words in Matthew 22:29-30), the Holy Spirit clearly testifies that a marriage bond dissolves upon the death of either spouse such that the two are no longer married! If the living spouse goes on to marry again, he (or she) is no adulterer, for he is the husband of but one wife. What about the man who divorces his mate for the only scriptural reason, namely, fornication (see Matthew 19:9)? If the scripturally divorced man goes on to marry again, is he said to be the husband of more than one wife? Certainly not! In Matthew 19:9, Jesus states that the man who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery *except* if he divorces her because of her sexually immoral behavior. Thus, if the exception is true and a man divorces his wife for fornication and marries again, he *does not* commit adultery according to Christ: he is *not* bound by God to one woman yet married to another, for he is the husband of but one wife. There is no indication in the language of I Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:6 to indicate that a scripturally remarried man who is otherwise qualified may not serve as an elder.

## **II. The Context**

The contexts of I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 are exactly the same: the apostle Paul, by inspiration of God, is giving preachers of the gospel the information necessary to guide local churches of the Lord's people in the process of appointing spiritual leaders, namely elders and deacons. When speaking of elders, the spiritual shepherds and examples of the church (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:2-3), the mandated qualifications paint a picture (context) of a spiritually mature man with a stable and faithful life who is growing in the image of Christ and who has the ability, experience and wisdom necessary to teach, correct, guide and nurture the children of God. So, even though the *language* of I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 does not forbid the remarried man from obtaining an office in the eldership, is there any additional information supplied by this *context* which might disqualify him?

In one very specific sense, which must be evaluated on an individual basis, the answer to this question might be positive. An elder is said to be a man of "*blameless*" (NKJV, NIV) reputation, "*above reproach*" (NASU) both with fellow Christians and unbelievers (i.e. "*those who are outside,*" I Timothy 3:7). Sometimes it is the case, even in a scriptural divorce due to sexual immorality, that both parties share the blame for the destruction of the marriage. The spouse who did not actually commit fornication may have been involved in treacherous behaviors, observed by the church and the world, which led in part to the marriage breakdown – behaviors such as neglect (I Corinthians 7:3-5), abuse (the opposite of Christ's example, Ephesians 5:25), etc. In such an instance, the husband who was sexually faithful may have ruined his reputation among the church and the world by his spiritual unfaithfulness. In this case, the man may marry again, and be the husband of one wife, but he is not blameless or above reproach. Of course, this judgment must be made on a case-by-case basis, but it is possible that the scripturally divorced and remarried man is not blameless and thus cannot serve as an elder.

However, beyond this specific and unfortunate circumstance, is the remarried man who is in all other ways qualified forbidden by this context to serve as an elder? Does the simple fact that a man is remarried damage his reputation, his spiritual wisdom, or his ability to lead? First consider the case of the remarried widower: the New Testament speaks many times of widows and widowers remarrying, but not once do the inspired writers cast such marriages in an unholy or objectionable light. In Romans 7:3, Paul states that the living spouse is "*free,*" or at liberty, to marry again – and the apostle makes no mention of any spiritual repercussions at all. If the gospel of Christ allows a widower to marry again, certainly he does not damage his reputation or spiritual example in using this liberty! And truly, the gospel does not merely *allow* the living spouse to remarry, but in at least some instances a second marriage is actually *encouraged* by the New Testament: "*Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully*" (I Tim 5:14). Far from damaging her spiritual reputation, notice that the widow gives her enemies absolutely no occasion to speak reproachfully by choosing to marry again – in this new marriage she maintains a spotless influence! In the same manner, Jesus allows for divorce in the case of an unfaithful spouse in Matthew 19:9, and makes no indication whatsoever that the innocent spouse errs or sins at all if he or she chooses to marry again. Is it scriptural then to say that the context of I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 condemns the scripturally remarried man as having damaged his influence when no other passage in the New Testament speaks of scriptural remarriage in an unfavorable or objectionable way? To the honest and objective reader of the New Testament,

nothing in the context of I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6 or any other passage forbids the scripturally remarried man from serving as an elder if he meets all other inspired qualifications.

### III. Common Objections

There are several popular objections to the simple interpretation presented in the previous paragraphs, most of them taking on some form of explanation that the emphasis on “one wife” in both I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 demands an interpretation beyond the obvious meaning. Some of these objections will now be considered:

#### A. Polygamy Was Not A Problem For The Recipient's Of Paul's Letters

This argument cannot be based upon any scripture, but states that the Roman Empire (under which Paul lived) did not legally recognize polygamous marriages, thus “the husband of one wife” must mean something more than simply a condemnation of polygamy. Note two answers to this argument:

1. The Jews to whom Paul, Timothy and Titus preached were familiar with polygamy, this being a common practice in their culture (as evidenced by the Old Testament). Reese<sup>7</sup> states that the historian Josephus speaks of polygamy as still being practiced amongst the Jews at the time Paul's letters were written, so much so that Roman law made concession for Jewish polygamy in 212 AD, but finally banned polygamy even amongst the Jews under Emperor Theodosius in 393 AD – and even then it was practiced, though not legally recognized. Now, all of that said, Rome may or may not have allowed polygamous marriages, but *either way it does not change the meaning of these scriptures!* The inspired words of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 stand true for all people of all cultures of all times – and many people and cultures since Paul's day have practice polygamy, even to this very day! Thus, it is not accurate to claim that I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 were penned only for readers with previous knowledge that polygamy is prohibited under the law of Christ.

2. Secondly, it has already been noted that the phrase “the husband of one wife” does not *just* forbid polygamy: among other things, it also *demand*s marriage among the spiritual leaders of the church – a commandment which is certainly not understood or obeyed by all religious groups who claim to bow to Jesus as Lord. Thus, the honest interpreter cannot truly state that I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 *only* or *merely* forbid elders from having polygamous marriages!

The studied and experienced Christian today who picks up I Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:6 and decides that a prohibition of polygamy is too obvious a meaning of this qualification forgets that the recipients of the gospel in the first century *would not* have taken this prohibition for granted. These people had to learn, just like many people still must learn today, that God defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman for life – and the elders of the church are to be examples of this spiritual principle (see I Peter 5:3). In fact, other than Matthew 19:4-6, these two passages are nearly the only inspired commands in the New Testament clearly teaching against polygamy! And so, if the language and context of these passages do not demand further meaning, the Bible student has no authority to assume and force any supposedly “implied” meaning into the words of Paul.

#### B. One Wife Is Redundant If It Only Means One Wife

Another common objection to the most simple reading of I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 is that if Paul really meant that the elder was to only have one wife, he could have simply said that elders must be husbands, thus the emphasis on “one wife” must hold a deeper meaning. According to this argument, “one wife” is redundant if it only means “one wife.”

1. Once again, this argument makes the grievous error of assuming that just because a certain principle is stated elsewhere in the Scriptures, a simple restatement of that principle in another passage is redundant and therefore must hold a deeper meaning. Perhaps the obvious meaning is well understood by the person who has studied the completed revelation of the New Testament for many years, but is it truly redundant to the person just hearing the gospel for the first time? Or would it have been redundant to the Christians of the first century who were being guided out of other religions and only had the teachings of inspired men to live by? Is Ephesians 4:6 implying some deeper meaning because the Scriptures elsewhere obviously teach that there is but one God? For that matter, are the rest of the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 redundant because it is obvious that no Christian should be “given to much wine,” “violent,” or “greedy for money”? By the reasoning of this argument one might question why Paul didn’t simply say that an elder must be a Christian and then let all other qualifications be implied! The bottom line is that the honest interpreter only finds justification in trying to produce some implied or alternate meaning if and only if the language or context of the passage demands it. If the obvious meaning agrees with the context and the rest of the Scriptures, there is no reason to produce an esoteric interpretation – and there is certainly no authority to reject the obvious meaning as redundant simply because it is taught elsewhere in Scripture. Truly, it is not the place of any person to question why God chose to state (or restate) any instruction or command: Christians must simply read His word *for what it clearly says* and obey.

2. If “one wife” truly holds implies a meaning significantly different than what is obvious, the supposedly implied meaning must be *necessarily* implied by either the language or the context of these verses – after all, I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 are the *only* passages that detail this particular qualification of scriptural elders. Before accepting some alternate meaning of this verse, one must honestly and objectively ask whether or not the implied meaning is truly implied and truly a *necessary* inference. For example, in John 20:22-24, some disciples found in Christ’s words an *implication* that the apostle John would never die – however, this inference was neither necessary nor true. Again, in I Corinthians 5:9-11, Paul reveals that some of the Christians in Corinth found in his first letter an *implication* that they were not to keep company with sexually immoral unbelievers – however, this inference was neither necessary nor true. Similarly, if a remarried man is forbidden to serve as an elder, there must be *proof* of this meaning in these passages – and the above discussion of the language and context of the passages makes it clear that such proof is at best lacking, but more accurately totally absent.

3. If Paul meant “having only been married once” when he commanded that an elder be “the husband of one wife,” there were Greek expressions readily available to him that would have made this meaning clear, avoiding any and all ambiguity. In fact, the Hebrews author (in all probability, Paul himself) used such a phrase in Hebrews 10:2 – “the worshippers, having once been cleansed” (NASU) – clearly meaning that the sacrificial cleansing from sin, if effectual, would have needed to occur once and only once. Now, “*hapax gegamemenos*” would be the Greek phrase for “having been married only once” (Grudem<sup>8</sup> 917). However, notice that no such word or phrase appears in Paul’s language at I Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:6, statements which refer to the *present* condition of the elder and not his previous marital status at all. Should

the honest interpreter bind a harsh and oppressive qualification on elders prohibiting remarriage when the language used by Paul neither implies nor demands it?

If “the husband of one wife” is simply interpreted with no prejudices or predispositions, the emphasis placed on *one* wife poses no difficulties at all. Remember that elders are described by the New Testament as spiritually mature men who are examples to the flock in all aspects of life, including in their exemplary marriages. These two little words, “*one wife*,” clearly carry much significance:

- The elder is not to have more than one wife, for God defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman for life (see Matthew 19:4-6).
- The elder is not to have divorced his wife and married another, except for sexual immorality, for then he would truly have *two* wives according to the Scriptures: bound to one woman in the sight of God, yet married to another according to the laws of the land – and thus he is, by definition, an adulterer (see Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:3).
- The elder is not simply married to one wife but is *faithful* to one woman: a “one-woman man” in every sense of the term, as I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 literally state.

In sum, what does the emphasis on “one wife” imply? In the words of Reese<sup>9</sup>, “this qualification says that to be qualified to be an elder, a man must be married, and implies that his marriage is to be exemplary” (114). Sexual fidelity, adhering in all ways to God’s definition of marriage – the elder, being the “husband of one wife,” proves himself an example to all Christians by his unquestionably scriptural marriage. By simply stating that the elder is to be the husband of one wife, Paul clearly prohibits the man from the eldership who is involved in *any* sexual and/or marital arrangement which violates God’s will for marriage! Is there really need to find more meaning in this phrase than what is clearly taught? Indeed, who has the authority to say that these clear instructions are unimportant or redundant?

## Conclusion

To say that I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 deny the scripturally remarried man from serving the Lord as an elder is to demand a requirement that no translation of the original language truly verifies. The men chosen to serve as elders must have exemplary marriages – marriages that are unquestionably scriptural and pure – but nothing in either of these inspired passages demands or even necessarily implies that a second exemplary marriage disqualifies an otherwise qualified man from the office of an elder. Some commentators and preachers might say that the stricter interpretation of these passages is the safest option, but such counsel is unwise: to make a requirement that the Lord does not demand in His word is in no way safe – “*Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar*” (Proverbs 30:6)! If the stricter interpretation keeps a man from the eldership when he is truly qualified, he is then denied a “good work” (I Timothy 3:1), and a church might even be denied having an eldership at all, simply because of the opinions and “wisdom of men” (cf. I Corinthians 2:5, 3:18-23). God’s desire for every church is that they mature to the point that they each have their own elders (see Acts 14:32, Ephesians 4:11ff, etc.). If I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 are honestly and simply interpreted, the blameless man who is in all others ways qualified, though perhaps scripturally remarried, may serve as an elder and fulfill his good work in shepherding the saints of the Lord.

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## Special Study No. 2: The Children of Elders

### Introduction

In Titus 1:6, after establishing that a qualified elder must be a scripturally married man, the inspired apostle goes on to speak of the elder's household: "*having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.*" This phrase is similar to that in I Timothy 3, the only other passage in which Paul describes the necessary qualifications of elders: the elder "*must be...one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)*" (vs. 4-5). Apparently, the straightforward meaning of Titus 1:6 is that an elder must have his own children who are Christians. In having raised such a family, along with his faithful wife, the elder gains the experience necessary to rule over the household of God (cf. I Timothy 3:15). At the same time, the qualified elder demonstrates his experience and wisdom to the church through the fact that he has trained up his own children to the point that they are faithful Christians. Despite the evidently simple principle taught in these verses concerning the elder and his children, several questions are often raised about this subject that demand close inspection and careful consideration. The questions that this brief study will attempt to scripturally answer are:

- Must the elder have a plurality of children, or is one child sufficient?
- Must the elder's children be Christians, or simply faithful to him and his rule?
- Must *all* the elder's children be Christians?
- Is an elder still qualified if his children fall away?

Though each of these questions are applicable to foreseeable situations, it matters very little (if at all) what human wisdom, tradition and emotion might lend to the argument. The conclusions drawn in this paper, as in all other questions pertaining to Scripture, must be based soundly and purely on the word of God alone, or else they are to be rejected! A good answer to any of these questions must neither go beyond nor fall short of exactly what the Lord has revealed: if a conclusion falls short of the meaning revealed by God then men might be appointed to the eldership who are not truly qualified by the standard of the Lord; if on the other hand a conclusion is more strict than what the word of God requires, a truly qualified man might be kept from the "good work" of serving as an elder (I Timothy 3:1), and a church may even fall short of having an eldership at all. It is a necessary part of God's great plan of salvation that "every church" with a plurality of qualified men should work and worship under the oversight of an eldership (cf. Acts 14:23, Ephesians 4:11ff, Titus 1:5, etc.), and so the honest interpreter must be ever so careful to neither encourage unqualified men nor discourage qualified men from the most honorable office of shepherding souls belonging to God.

### I. The Original Language

For a detailed study of these words, the student is referred to *Scriptural Elders and Deacons* by H.E. Phillips, pgs. 140-141<sup>1</sup>. The following definitions are a conglomeration of those cited by Phillips as well as those given by Strong's *Expanded Greek/Hebrew Dictionary*<sup>2</sup> and Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*<sup>3</sup>. The original Greek language translated "having faithful children" in the New King James Version of Titus 1:6 is "*tékna échoon pistá.*" Term by term, these words mean<sup>4</sup>:

- *Tekna* – Children, without regard to sex or age
- *Echooni* – Having, holding, possessing
- *Pista* – Faithful, believing, trustworthy

Meanwhile, the Greek words from I Timothy 3:4-5 pertaining to this study are:

- *Idiou* – One’s own, denoting ownership
- *Oikou* – House, household, race, lineage, all the persons forming a family
- *Proistamenon* – To stand before (i.e. in rank), to preside over, to rule, to superintend
- *Hupotage* – Subordination, subjection, obedience

One fact that is clear from both Titus 1:6 and I Timothy 3:4 is that the qualified elder has his own household, his own children. Many arguments have been made through the centuries to deny this fact and allow childless (even unmarried) men to serve as elders, but most of these arguments are built upon speculation and human reasoning, and all of them fall short of explaining away the truth revealed by God that an elder must be married and must have children. For a detailed discussion of the “No Children Theory,” the student is referred once again to the classic work *Scriptural Elders and Deacons* by H.E. Phillips, pgs. 141-144.

Now, the case might certainly arise in which a man aspires to one day become an elder and yet he and his faithful wife are not able to bear children. Despite emotional claims to the contrary, this man is not unfairly prohibited from the eldership. God’s purpose for the elder having faithful children is revealed and not at all a matter of speculation: without having raised his own children to the point that they decide to become Christians he cannot have the preparation necessary to rule over the house of God (see I Timothy 3:4-5). No part or portion of this divinely inspired qualification demands that the qualified elder must have actually begotten his own physical offspring! If the elder and his wife have lovingly and graciously *adopted* children and raised them up to become Christians, would not these surrogate children fulfill the requirement of I Timothy 3:4-5 and Titus 1:6? In fact, the very word translated *children* in both of these passages (*tekna*) is used in Romans 8:16-17 and Galatians 4:28 to describe the children of God – not children according to the flesh, but children according to promise and “adoption” (Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5)! Likewise, Paul used the word *tekna* to speak of many people as his children – for example, the Corinthians (I Corinthians 4:14), Timothy (Philippians 2:22, etc.) and Titus (Titus 1:4) – though he had no physical offspring, having chosen not even to have a wife (cf. I Corinthians 9:5). Thus, the word *children* in these passages does not demand that an elder *beget* his own children, but simply that he must raise his own children, thereby gaining the experience necessary to rule over the family of God, the church.

Now, having established that an elder must indeed have raised his own children, much debate still stirs around both the words *children* and *faithful*. Does *children* demand a plurality of children? Does *faithful* mean faithful and submissive to the father (as in I Timothy 3:4), or faithful as in believing Christians? These words evidently demand more careful examination.

## II. Child Or Children?

Many writers have pointed to the fact that in both I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 the word *children* is a distinctly plural noun, and so some conclude that only a plurality of children can possibly

fulfill the qualification described in these passages. At first glance this seems like a sound and straightforward argument. The problem arises when one tries to reconcile this argument with other passages of Scripture which employ the same or similar plural nouns.

In other passages of Scripture, when the Holy Spirit saw fit to require that a certain quantity be greater than one, His words are abundantly clear. “*By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established,*” meaning that one witness is simply not enough (Matthew 18:16). “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,*” meaning that one sole person does not constitute a congregation with Christ in their midst (Matthew 18:20). Even in the words of Paul, when instructing Timothy how to deal with accusations made against elders, “*Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses,*” meaning that one lone accuser is not sufficient to bring a charge against such a tried and trusted shepherd of the flock (I Timothy 5:19). The language in all three of these passages does not allow or admit the singular case.

However, with a plural noun such as *children*, where the number is in no way specified, it is not so easy to dismiss the singular case: there are many passages in Scripture in which God uses plural nouns that allow for and include the singular case.

- In Genesis 21:7, Sarah exclaimed in near disbelief, “*Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.*” Sarah lived to nurse “children,” so the Holy Spirit records, and yet Abraham and Sarah were only promised one son and they only bore one son. Thus, *children* in Genesis 21:7 allows for the singular noun *child* (compare also Genesis 11:30 with 16:1).
- In Genesis 46:7, the Holy Spirit records that Jacob entered in to Egypt along with his sons and his “*daughters*” – and yet, the Scriptures record that Jacob had only one daughter, Dinah (Genesis 30:21).
- In Matthew 22:24, the Sadducees approached Jesus with a question concerning a qualification of the law of Moses very similar to I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 in the sense that the qualification depended on whether or not a man had children: “*Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.*” Now, if “children” in this passage excluded the singular “child,” a man under the law of Moses must have had at least two children before he was qualified as having “offspring” or “seed” (Greek, *sperma*). But the Scriptures reveal that this interpretation is not true, because in Galatians 3:16, Paul speaks of the promise of God made to Abraham and his seed (Greek, *spermati*): “*He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.*” Thus, a man has seed or offspring if he has any number of children, one or more. In total agreement with this truth, the Old Law itself states the debated qualification this way, “*If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man...*” (Deuteronomy 25:5). Thus the plural noun *children* in Matthew 22:24 means the same as the singular noun *son* (or *child*, KJV) in Deuteronomy 25:5 – as in other places in the Scriptures, the plural includes the singular case.
- In I Timothy 5:4,16, the inspired writers states: “*But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God...If any believing man or woman has widows, let*

*them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.*” Now, notice two conditional statements in these verses:

- If a widow has “children,” her children should provide for her and the church should not be burdened.
- If a believer (man or woman) has “widows” in his family, the believer ought to relieve his own widows.

Both of these are qualified statements based on a plural noun – in one case “children” and in the other “widows.” But to the honest reader, do either of these plural nouns forbid the singular case? In other words, if a widow only has one child, should she be cared for by the church since she does not have a plurality of children? Certainly not, for I Timothy 5:16 makes it clear that if a believing man (singular) has a widow in his family, he should care for her! The plural “children” in vs. 4 includes the singular “believing man” of vs. 16! Therefore, the plural noun *children* in I Timothy 5:4 necessarily includes the singular case, *child*. (Apply the same logic to I Timothy 5:10.) At the same time, if a Christian has only one widow in his family, should the church care for her since the believer does not have a plurality of widows? No honest, objective interpreter could render vs. 16 so falsely: even the plural *widows* of vs. 16 necessarily includes the singular case, *widow*!

- In fact, all instructions in the Bible given to the fathers of children apply both to the father with one child as well as to the father of many children.
  - Proverbs 20:7 – “*The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.*”
  - Proverbs 31:28 – “*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.*”
  - Ephesians 6:4 – “*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*”

Does the plural form, *children*, in any of these passages (or others like them) exclude the parent who has but one child?

The apostle Paul used exactly the language that the Holy Spirit intended him to use in describing the *children* of elders. This same language is used in many other places in Scripture and always leaves room for the singular or plural case. And if the generic “children” includes the specific case of “a child” everywhere else in Scripture, what rule of interpretation would justify assuming a different meaning in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6? “*If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (I Peter 4:11) – the oracles (i.e. inspired words) of God reveal that the plural noun *children* in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 allows for the singular case of *a child*, and so the honest interpreter must conclude from the language employed in these passages that the otherwise qualified elder with only one faithful child is indeed qualified for the eldership.

*Assignment:* Apply this same reasoning to the term *elders*. Does the plural noun *elders*, for instance in Acts 14:23 or Titus 1:5, authorize a church to have only one elder? Prove your answer with the “sum of God’s word” (Psalm 119:160, NASU). *Hint:* The Scriptural answer is that a church must have two or more elders!

## **II. Faithful Children**

Beyond just having children, the inspired apostle places the further condition upon the elder’s family that he must indeed have *faithful* children. As already point out, the original term

translated *faithful* in the NKJV is from the Greek adjective *pistos*, which is variously translated trustworthy, believing, faithful, etc. (see Vine<sup>4</sup>). Upon examination of passages that employ this word, it becomes clear that sometimes *pistos* refers to those who are trustworthy and sometimes it refers specifically to Christians, i.e. those who are believing and faithful to God. For example:

***Pistos* referring to general trustworthiness**

- Acts 10:45 – “those of the circumcision *who believed*”
  - Acts 16:1 – “certain Jewish woman *who believed*”
  - II Corinthians 6:15 – “has a *believer* with an unbeliever”
  - Ephesians 1:1 – “to the *faithful* in Christ Jesus”
  - I Timothy 4:3 – “those *who believe*”
  - I Timothy 3:11 – “*faithful* in all things
  - I Timothy 4:10 – “*those who believe*”
  - II Timothy 2:2 – “commit these to *faithful* men”
- ... Among many other examples

***Pistos* referring to Christians, the faithful to God**

- I Corinthians 1:9, 10:13 – “God is *faithful*”
  - Ephesians 6:21 – “*faithful* minister”
  - I Timothy 1:15 – “this is a *faithful* saying”
  - Hebrews 2:17 – “merciful and *faithful* High Priest”
- ... Among many other examples

Considering the above definition and examples, the necessary question concerning Titus 1:6 is this: does the Lord require that the elder’s children be Christians (i.e. faithful in Christ), or does He simply require that the elder’s children must be faithful and trustworthy to their father? Some commentators and interpreters draw a parallel between I Timothy 3:4 (“*having his children in submission with all reverence*”) and Titus 1:6 (“*having faithful children*”) and conclude that an elder’s children must simply be faithful in the sense that they are in obedient submission to their father. Is this really how Paul uses the term *faithful* in Titus 1:6 and other similar passages?

***A. The Testimony Of Greek Scholars***

From the testimony of Greek scholars through various translations of the Bible, the answer to this question is quite clear: nearly every major translation of Titus 1:6 makes it clear that the elder must have children who are believing Christians.

- “whose children believe” (NIV)
- “having children who believe” (NASU)
- “and his children are believers” (RSV)

In fact, of 28 translations and paraphrases consulted, not a single translation provided a definitively different meaning other than that stated above, unless the language of the KJV and NKJV (i.e. “faithful children”) is assumed to mean something other than “children who believe.”

***B. Similar Language In Other Passages***

When the New Testament speaks of *believers* or those *who believe* (without any other qualifying language) it speaks of persons who have become Christians by believing and obeying

the gospel of Jesus Christ (see *believers* in Acts 5:14, II Corinthians 6:15, I Timothy 4:12 and 6:2, etc.; and *those who believe* in Acts 21:25, Romans 4:11, I Corinthians 14:22, I Tim 4:3,10, I Peter 2:7, I John 5:13, etc.). Similarly, especially in the letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul frequently uses the word *faithful* (i.e. full of faith) to describe Christians:

- *I Timothy 3:11* – “*Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.*” Here the apostle describes the appropriate character of the wives of elders and deacons, and the inspired qualifications state that such women must be “faithful in all things.” Does this mean faithful to their husbands in all things, or faithful to God in all things? All of the other qualifications are spiritual in nature, thus the context demands that the wives of elders be *faithful to God* in all things. The man with an unbelieving wife is not qualified to be an elder or deacon!
- *II Timothy 2:2* – “*The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*” In this verse, the apostle places a condition upon those who should teach and preach the gospel: they must be faithful men. To whom or what must these men be faithful? Clearly, the context (as well as the testimony of the rest of the Scriptures) dictates that teachers and preachers of the gospel must be *faithful to God in Christ*.
- *Colossians 4:9* – “*...Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother...*” Again, Paul uses the word *faithful* to indicate that Onesimus was a Christian, faithful in Christ.
- *Ephesians 1:1* – “*...To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus*” (NIV). As in other passages, the apostle speaks of the saints objectively as *the faithful*, i.e. those faithful in Christ.

Paul’s use of the term *faithful* in other passages which list divinely inspired spiritual qualifications indicates that “faithful children” or “children who believe” in Titus 1:6 demands that the elder have children who are Christians.

### *C. The Context Of Titus 1:6*

Remember that Titus 1:6 and I Timothy 3:4-5 must be interpreted within the context of the divine qualifications which a) prepare a man for the office of an elder, and b) demonstrate to the church with irrefutable evidence that the man is indeed prepared for the eldership. The main responsibility of elders is to spiritually lead and nurture the church of God, teaching the flock the spiritual knowledge that they need to remain faithful to God and avoid temptation and error (see Acts 20:17,27-31; I Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17). Now, caring for and leading a household is the method prescribed by God best suited to preparing for this enormous spiritual responsibility – for I Timothy 3:5 rhetorically asks, “*For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*” A child or children who have obeyed the gospel and are faithful to Christ afford proof to the congregation that a man is able to spiritually lead and nourish souls in the gospel. However, if a man has not raised up children and trained them in the “*teaching and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4) to the point that they decide to become Christians, a) has he truly prepared himself to spiritually lead the church, and b) has he truly demonstrated to the church that he is able to watch over a congregation of the Lord’s people? Plainly stated, the context of Titus 1:6 and I Timothy 3:4-5 demands that a man must have raised up children to become Christians in order to qualify for the eldership. If a man has not raised up such a household, he is not prepared to serve God as an elder, and the church has insufficient evidence to conclude that he is ready for the responsibility of ruling over the Lord’s house.

### III. Other Common Questions Concerning The Children Of Elders

Many other questions have been raised concerning the children of elders that have application to truly foreseeable situations. Some of these questions can be readily answered from Scripture; the answers to others may be more difficult to clearly define.

#### 1. Must All The Elder's Children Be Christians?

This question is difficult to answer with certainty. Two prominent views demand examination, and ultimately the church that is appointing elders is responsible and answerable to God for which answer they deem best:

##### *A. All Of The Elder's Children Must Be Faithful Christians*

Many agree that this is the clearest meaning of Titus 1:6. Whether a man has one or more children, the passage demands that they be "faithful children, not accused of dissipation and insubordination" thus requiring that they *all* be faithful in Christ. If Paul's language allows a man to have only *some* children who are Christians while others are not, it also allows him to have *some* children who are obedient while others are accused of insubordination, but this clearly violates the context of the passage. Therefore, all of the elder's children must be Christians not accused of being "wild or disobedient" (NIV).

##### *B. Must Have At Least One Child Who Is A Christian And None Accused Of Riot*

May a man serve as an elder who has a child (or children) faithful to Christ but another (or others) too young to have obeyed the gospel? This interpretation certainly answers this question in the positive. Children who are too young to become Christians provide no proof to any congregation that their father is able to lead people to spiritual maturity. However, the father who has some faithful children and others who are obedient and submissive but too young to be Christians *has indeed* demonstrated that he can both ably rule over a household *and* lead souls in the training and admonition of the Lord, though some of his children are not Christians! This argument is apparently Scriptural because of one important fact: in I Timothy 3:5 the Holy Spirit gives the exact reason that an elder must have faithful, submissive children. Thus, any interpretation of Titus 1:6 must agree both with the language used and the reason given, and this particular argument seems to meet both tests. If the inspired purpose for this qualification was not so clearly explained, the honest interpreter would be constrained to interpret the language of Titus 1:6 more strictly, as in viewpoint (A). But, within the confines of the divine purpose, the man with some children who are Christians and some who are submissive but too young does indeed have "children who believe" and has no children accused of rebellion or disobedience. Meanwhile, note that interpretation (B) *does not* allow for the situation in which a man has some children who are faithful Christians and others who are *grown* and accountable to God but are unbelievers: in such a case, the children who are disobedient and rebellious to God disqualify their father from the eldership! Titus 1:6 along with I Timothy 3:4-5 demand that an elder have at least one child who is a faithful Christian but not even one child accused of rebellion.

#### 2. Must The Elder Resign Whose Child (Or Children) Fall Away?

At the start of answering this admittedly realistic and emotional question, it must be clearly understood that there is no passage in the Bible specifying the duration in which an elder must hold the qualifications in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6. To say that these inspired qualifications must only be true at the time the elder is appointed, but not thereafter, is to go beyond what is revealed and to abuse the Scriptures. Can a man be hospitable at the time of his appointment to the eldership, but become unsociable, ungenerous and rude later in his life and still serve as an elder? Can a man be above reproach at the time of his appointment, but ruin his reputation and blamelessness later in life and still serve as an elder? In truth, all of these qualifications necessarily imply that a man must hold true to them throughout the duration of his service as an elder!

Now, what about the tremendously unfortunate situation of a well-loved and venerable elder whose child or children fall away at some point while he is in office? Go back to the qualifications and ask the question again: “Does he have faithful children, not accused of dissipation or insubordination?” The honest answer is, “No: he has a child (or children) unfaithful and in rebellion to him and to God.” Remember that these qualifications are not simply required to prepare the elder for service, but also to prove and demonstrate to the flock that he is able to lead and nourish souls in the gospel. If a man’s children become unfaithful, his reputation as a spiritual leader is damaged, and he loses reliability in the sight of the flock that he is able to guide, and even save, individual souls. Certainly his credibility is damaged in the circumstance that he has to deal with rebellious children and their parents! The clear and honest answer from the Scriptures concerning this terrible situation is that an elder whose children become unfaithful and thereby call into question his ability and reliability to lead must step down, at least until the time he is able to nurture his own children back to spiritual health.

Is the elder not accountable for his children if they are no longer living under his roof? Be careful and aware: nothing in the word “house” or “household” in I Timothy 3:5 implies that the elder’s children are actually living at home! This term simply refers to the elder’s “family” (NIV), just like “household of God” in I Timothy 3:15 refers to the spiritual family of God. Clearly, the Lord does not expect children to always live at home, for the Scriptures testify, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24). It is commonly understood that if a man has faithful children, but none of them live at home, he is still qualified for the eldership. This means that the church must judge a man’s qualifications based even upon the faithfulness of those children that do not live under his roof. Now, what if the reverse were true: a man has at least one child, not living at home, who is a known unbeliever – is this man qualified for the eldership? The resounding answer from I Timothy 3:5 and Titus 1:6 is, “No!” Truthfully, the Scriptures do not accuse the parent of a rebellious child of sharing in his rebellion, but the word of God does not declare the parents blameless, either! “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6). Read I Samuel 2-4: Eli, the priest of God, was given an extremely harsh judgment from the Lord because he “*did not restrain*” his adult sons (I Samuel 3:13)! The bottom line is that the elder is to be a shining example of spiritual maturity: his maturity, wisdom and faithfulness is exemplified in his reputation, in his behaviors, in his marriage, and in his children. If a man has unfaithful children, he is not qualified for the eldership, whether he has never served as an elder before or he has served as an elder for thirty

years. No amount of human reasoning and emotional appeals can change this basic truth of the Scriptures.

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