

Choosing a Pastor

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Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 1

The New Testament Church

The Meaning of the word “Church”

In modern English the word “church” is used in several ways:

1. A building designated as a place of worship.
2. A denomination or particular sect, i.e. Baptist, Methodist.
3. The Body of Christ; the universal church composed of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture.
4. The local church, a geographically limited assembly of believers who meet in a specific location composed of members of the universal church.

Only the last two of these are recognized in the New Testament. The Greek word translated “church” in the N.T. is “ekklesia, (ἐκκλησία).” It literally means “a called out group or assembly.” It was used of the nation of Israel while in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) but not while they were in the land. It is also translated “assembly” and used of a gathering of citizens in a public meeting place (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). These two uses of the word are in striking contrast to the N.T. Church that Jesus said that He would build (Matt. 16:18). He was referring to what is commonly called the “universal” church, “the church, which is His body” (Eph. 1:22, 23) which He “purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). You cannot join this one. You must be spiritually born into it by belief in Christ (John 3:3, 16).

The Origin of the Church

The church was a mystery (something previously not revealed) in the Old Testament (Eph. 5:32). It was first prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 16:18, “...thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church... ” There is a Greek play on words in this prophecy. Thou art Peter (petros, πέτρος), literally a stone or a rock), and upon this rock, (petra, πέτρα, literally a rock-mass; referring to himself), I will build My church. The church is not being built upon Peter as the Roman Church claims, but upon Jesus Himself.

When did the church begin? The Bible does not specifically give that answer. Based on the facts given to us in Scripture, the Day of Pentecost seems to be the most reasonable answer.¹ Shortly before His crucifixion Jesus reassures his disciples that after He is gone that the Comforter will come, the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 17; 16:7). After His resurrection and immediately before His ascension He tells them more specifically to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. They were there to be baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:3-5), (All believers now are baptized in the Spirit without waiting — I Cor. 12:13.)² The Power that they would receive was for the purpose of being witnesses of Jesus (v8). Part of the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy is recorded in chapter 2 of Acts. The Holy Spirit came upon them and others. Many witnessed the miraculous signs that accompanied this event. After Peter’s evangelistic message there were “added unto them about three thousand souls” (v41). This same group of believers participated in some “church-type” activities (vs 42-46) and was first called the church in v47. The rest of the book of Acts records the fulfillment of the Gospel being spread to “Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Many churches were started and we begin to see some of God’s plan for the purposes of the local church and how it is to be organized.

¹ It had to be *after* the statement Jesus made in Matt. 16:18, “...I will build my church.” It also had to be *after* the crucifixion of Christ; Eph. 2:11-20, the Gentiles who were “far off” v13, have been brought near by the “blood of Christ,” and reconciled Jew and Gentile into “one body by the cross.” It had to be *before* the events recorded which occurred immediately after Pentecost (Acts 2:47).

² Contrary to some prevalent doctrine, God’s word nowhere tells us to be baptized in/by/with the Spirit. Believers of this age are already baptized into His body. All the references to Holy Spirit baptism (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; I Cor 12:13) are in the indicative mood (not imperative as in a command). The commands to the believer in reference to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 4:30; Eph. 5:18; I Thess. 5:19) have to do with yieldedness and obedience, not seeking a baptism which we already have (I Cor. 12:13).

The Purpose of the Church

The ultimate purpose of the church is to bring honor and glory to its Head, Jesus Christ. It fulfills this purpose by obedience to Him as found in God's word. This goal is specifically achieved by our compliance to some commands that Jesus left for us:

Mark 16:15, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*"

Matt. 28:19,20 "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*"

These commands include telling others of the good news of salvation through belief in Jesus, discipling, baptizing, and teaching others to obey Christ. (In verse 28, the first rendering of the word "teach" literally means to "disciple").

To accomplish this task, the church needs some tools. I Cor. 12 and Rom. 12 speak of spiritual gifts or enablements that God gives to believers as *He* pleases. These gifts are varied and essential (I Cor. 12), they are to be exercised in divine love (chap 13), and they are to be used for the edification of the body which brings honor to the Head (chap 14). Note how many times variations of the words, "know" or "understand" occur in this "edification" chapter.

Eph. 4:11-16, speaks of gifts that He gives to the church; men with a specific commission or objective. These are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. Eph. 2:20 tells us that the church was "*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*" The foundation of the building has already been laid (the apostles and the prophets, we have the completed word of God), now we are building the rest of the building until He returns for His church. We still have need of the evangelist and the pastor/teacher.

Notice the balance of the text. These men are given for the maturing or completing of the saints, for the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ, for ensuring sound doctrine, spiritual growth, promoting the speaking of truth in love, and much more.

The Pastor/Teacher has a great responsibility. What does the Bible say about his requirements? Hint: Study I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Do these verses refer to the pastor/teacher of Eph. 4:11?

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 2 Bishops and Deacons, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

When Jesus prophesied that He would "*build His church*" (Matt. 16:18), He left us with instructions for how this task was to be accomplished. The Bible gives us guidelines for the growth and leadership of His growing church.

There are two offices in the New Testament church, elders or bishops and deacons (I Tim. 3:1-7, cp Titus 1:5-9; Phil. 1:1). The terms "elders" and "bishops" are used interchangeably in the New Testament. (Titus 1:5, cp. 1:7; Acts 20:17, cp. 20:28; I Pet. 1:1, cp. 1:2, oversight).

"Elder" (presbuteros, πρεσβυτερος) means an "older man." "Bishop" (episkopos, επισκοπος) means "overseer" and is translated as such in Acts 20:28. They designate the same office. "Elder" refers to the man (assumed to be older, not a novice or neophyte, I Tim. 3:6) and "bishop" or "overseer" refers to one of his functions.

The title of bishop has fallen into disuse in fundamental circles of today, probably because of the misuse of the position in Church history. The word seems to do little for us in the way of definition. "Overseer" is self-defined and is a function of the elder.

There are other elders mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament these were usually the elders of Israel or sometimes elders of various cities. The Synoptic Gospels and Acts contain references to elders that usually refer to the elders of the Jews such as Matthew 11:27, "the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders."

Revelation mentions the 24 elders. None of these are relevant to the requirements for the church elder of today and will not be discussed in this study.

The other office is that of a deacon (diakonos, δῆκονος, one who renders service). The qualifications are stated in I Tim. 3:8-13. Deacons are first mentioned in Acts 6:2-4, where the qualifications are condensed and stated as history; "...men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." As the infant church started to grow, various practical needs arose. Deacons were appointed so that the apostles could give themselves "*continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*" This is possibly a play on words. Verse 1 states that some of the Grecian widows were being neglected in the daily ministration (diakonia, service). Verse 3 states that it is not reason for the apostles to leave the word of God to serve (diakonein) tables but will give themselves to the service (diakonia) of the Word (Verse 4). All believers are to serve but the deacons (diakonus, I Tim. 3:8) have a specific responsibility in that area. The qualifications of the elder and the deacon are very similar except that the elder is to be "apt to teach" (I Tim. 3:2). The responsibilities of the elder also include teaching, ruling, and rebuking error (Titus 1:9-13).

The Biblical norm was to have a plurality of elders. The following verses clearly present this fact.

Acts 11:30 - "To the elders" of the Jerusalem church (v27).

Acts 14:23 - "Ordained elders in every church."

Acts 15:2,22,23 - "Elders" of the Jerusalem church.

Acts 16:4 - "Elders which were at Jerusalem."

Acts 20:17 - "Elders of the church" (Ephesus).

Acts 21:18 - "All the elders were present" from Jerusalem.

Phil. 1:21 - "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with all the bishops and deacons."

Titus 1:5 - Titus was told to "ordain elders in every city."

Some churches of today make a distinction between the pastor and the elders. There is usually no contention about multiple elders until it is realized that the elder of Titus 1:5, *is* the pastor/teacher of Eph. 4:11 and that we should have more than one in each local assembly. What evidence is there for this assertion?

The word "pastor" used in Eph. 4:11, literally means "shepherd" and is the same word commonly translated such (poimen, ποιμην). Acts 20:28 records Paul's parting exhortation to the elders (presbuteros) of the church at Ephesus (v17). He instructs them to take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers (episkopos), to feed (verb form, poimen, shepherd, pastor) the church of God. This passage ties in the overseer function and the pastor or shepherd function to the elders. The context also includes the teaching and rebuking functions mentioned in the first chapter of Titus.

A similar passage is I Pet. 5. Here we see Peter exhorting the elders of a number of churches that resulted from the dispersion (1:1; 5:1). In verse 2 he tells them to "feed" the flock of God. "Feed" here is "poimen" the verb form of "shepherd," taking the "oversight" (participle form of episkopos) thereof. Again we see the words and functions assumed to be that of the elder. Verse 4 speaks of Jesus, the chief Shepherd (poimen with a prefix) and I Pet. 2:25 speaks of Jesus as the Shepherd (poimen) and Bishop (episkopos) of our souls.

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 3 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

When a church or congregation seeks a pastor, what criteria are used to determine their choice? Frequently, the following is a sampling: a good speaker, enthusiastic, friendly, leadership qualities, formal education, ability to instill programs for church growth, etc. What about the choosing of an elder? Frequently, the one sought is a successful businessman, perhaps the president of a local bank. He may be just someone we like or even just someone who is willing to assume the position.

What is right or wrong about the above criteria when compared to God's word? The good part is that God uses people with or without many of these qualities. God does not require us to work with something we do not have. He requires faithfulness with what he has given us (I Cor. 4:2). It is encouraging to know

that, in God's sight, even the "*members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary*" (I Cor. 12:22).

The negative side of this reasoning is twofold: One is that the biblical qualifications of the pastor are the same as that of the elder because they are the same person with the same responsibilities. The second reason is that, for the most part, the above requirements are not on the list that God gives to us. God sees things differently than the world and, sadly enough, this includes many believers (Isa. 55:8; Prov. 14:12; Gal. 1:10). If Jesus had been bound to the above criteria when He chose His disciples, He would have picked someone else.

Qualifications of the Elder

A Synopsis

I Tim. 3:1-7

1. Blameless
2. Husband of one wife
3. Vigilant
4. Sober
5. Of good behavior
6. Given to hospitality
7. Apt to teach
8. Not given to wine
9. No striker
10. Not greedy of filthy lucre
11. Patient
12. Not a brawler
13. Not covetous
14. Rule well his own house, children in subjection with all gravity
15. Not a novice
16. Have a good report of them which are without

Titus 1:5-9

1. Blameless; with family
2. The husband of one wife
3. Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly
4. Blameless; as steward of God
5. Not self-willed
6. Not soon angry
7. Not given to wine
8. No striker
9. Not given to filthy lucre
10. Lover of hospitality
11. Lover of good men
12. Sober
13. Just
14. Holy
15. Temperate
16. Holding fast the faithful word... to exhort, convince the gainsayers

Scripture Explained, I Timothy 3:1-7

1. *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of bishop, he desireth a good work.*

This is a true saying, (Lit. "a faithful saying") If a man desire the office of bishop, ("office of bishop" is from one word, lit. "overseership) he desireth a good work. It is not wrong to desire the position but a man's motives and qualifications must be proper before he is appointed.

This verse also seems to limit the office to a man. Some "Christian" religions ordain women as Elders/Pastors and there is a growing movement in this direction. Logic is presented to justify this action but limiting the office to a man has nothing to do with a supposed superiority of either a man or a woman. God has chosen a man to preside, both in the home and in the church, regardless of their respective talents. *Both* men and women are required to be faithful (I Cor. 4:2; Gal. 3:28).

Though it is true that the overseership is limited to a man, this is not the verse to use to prove it. The phrases "*If a man...*" and "*he desireth*" are both gender-generic. Literally, it is "If someone desireth" and "he desireth" could be masculine, feminine, or neuter, depending on the context.

No doubt, the translators rendered it masculine because the context and the grammar of the context both demand it. The word "elder," used interchangeably with bishop in Titus, literally means "an older man." It

would be an impressive feat for a woman to achieve that goal or to fulfill the requirement of v2. by being “*the husband of one wife.*” (also a requirement of a Deacon, v 12) The pronouns used throughout could be either masculine or neuter, neuter obviously being ruled out by the context. Chapter two, verses 11 and 12 present an introduction to the passage considered and would be contradictory if the overseership of the church included women. God, in His wisdom and sovereignty has provided other valuable roles for women.

Verse 2. *A bishop then must be blameless*, Literally, unaccusable, unrebukeable, a different word than is used in Titus, but with similar meaning. This does not mean that he is without sin. It means that he is now and should have over time shown a pattern of life; a reputation, that would not give legitimate cause for blame or rebuke.

It is a likelihood that Paul is first stating a general principle, then following up with specifics of how this may be recognized. In other words, he may be saying, “*A bishop must be blameless*” then gives details how we may determine that he shows this pattern. This may be similar to the basic requirement given for the first deacons in Acts 6:3; “...*men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom....*” “Honest report” means “given testimony to” or as we would say, “A good testimony.”

As we begin to study these qualifications it is important to recognize that Paul is emphasizing not something that we just see today in the man. We are looking for character traits that have become a way of life in him over a period of time. As in Acts 6, the choosing of deacons was limited to “men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.” A good reputation is not earned in a day. The elder qualifications also require a pattern of life over a period of time.

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 4 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

A bishop then must be... the husband of one wife, This one requirement seems to be the most controversial of all the others on the list. Probably the reasons include the fact that the issue of divorce and remarriage, in itself, is such a prevalent and controversial problem in and for the church. A second reason for the controversy may be that some of the criteria may be considered vague in concerning how much or how long one must comply. But if we interpret this criterion as many do, that he may not be a *divorced* person, this makes it a clear-cut yes-or-no issue. Even if a divorce occurred 10 years ago, we can decisively (and maybe hypocritically) determine our judgment upon this man.

An in-depth Bible study on the subject of divorce and remarriage is beyond the scope and the purpose of this study though some statements are necessary in order to cover the elder issue.³ It may safely be stated that there is much unbiblical teaching on divorce and remarriage in the Christian Church. The obvious ground for this statement is that much contradictory teaching prevails, ranging from what seems to be unreasonably legalistic to “anything goes.” It cannot all be true. Let us not be ruled by our prejudices but honestly seek what the Scriptures say.

Three of the most common interpretations are the following:

1. He must be married as opposed to being single.
2. He must be married to *only* one woman; no polygamy.
3. He must be married once and only once in his lifetime, excluding a divorced or divorced and remarried man and, in some instances, a widowed and remarried man.

³ The Biblical stance on divorce and remarriage is a significant issue and study should be honestly and diligently pursued from God's word (not from tradition, expediency or a majority rules mentality). But if the interpretation posited later in this paper is accurate, the issue of whether or not the Bible allows certain cases of divorce and remarriage has very little to do with the requirements of the elder. The requirements are for what a man has presently shown to be a pattern over a period of time, not for what he has been all of his life, (for example, he could not have been “not a novice,” or “having at least two children,” etc. all of his life). The only way that I see that this could be brought into the present issue is if he is *now* living in adultery (as some claim without Biblical backing) and therefore, continuing sin is not being confessed, judged and forsaken as other Scripture admonishes. If this is Biblically shown to be true then this man is not only unfit for Eldership, he is not even fit for good-standing membership. He should be under church discipline with the goal of restoration. Paul was a self-admitted murderer but that issue had been settled with God by the time that God greatly used him for His glory. Would *we* allow the Apostle Paul to take up the offering or to serve communion in our church? See footnote # 9 for recommended books of Biblically based studies on the issue of divorce and remarriage.

A Bishop Must Be Married.

The interpretation that a Bishop must be married seems reasonable on the surface, especially if we consider this to be the best translation of this requirement. Support for this reasoning is found in the context. The logic used is found mostly in verses four and five. Ruling well in his household relates to ruling well in the church, and also the assumption that he has his children in subjection.

There are also problems with this interpretation. The Apostle Paul, whom God used to give us these qualifications was, at least at that time, not married. There is apparent tension between this interpretation and the tenor of I Corinthians, chapter 7:8; 25-33. Paul encouraged celibacy under certain circumstances because of the distraction caused by caring for his mate detracts him from caring “*for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.*” It would hardly be consistent to require marriage in order to serve in this capacity, yet encourage one to stay single so as not to be distracted from serving the Lord.

Another reason that this view may not be the best is that the context is not so much concerned with his marital status as with his character. Also, it will be shown later that “the husband of one wife” is likely not the best translation.

He must be married to only one woman at a time.

At first glance, any reasonable interpretation would, at least, include this assumption.⁴ But Paul seems to be saying much more than only that a Bishop must not be a polygamist. In the society which he primarily addressed, promiscuity was more of a significant problem than polygamy. If character or good testimony is the issue, there is much more at stake in the marital arena than just not having several wives.

He must only be married once in his lifetime

Some would enforce this requirement upon a man who had been widowed and remarried. Romans 7:1-6 uses marriage and the death of a spouse to illustrate our freedom in Christ from the law through His death. In the illustration, through the death of the spouse one “is loosed from the law” of the spouse (v2, 3). It is hardly fitting to state that one is free to remarry after the death of their spouse and then claim that he is unfit to serve as an Elder.

Concerning the divorced man; if Paul had meant to say that “an elder must be married only once,” “cannot remarry,” or “must have had only one wife,” it would have been worded completely differently in both the Greek and the English. We cannot dogmatically impose a requirement that the Bible does not declare.

Usually, this requirement is placed upon one who is divorced or even marries a divorced woman (even though they are clearly adding another on which the text is silent). Occasionally an exception is made for one who has been “scripturally” divorced, i.e. the exception clause of fornication (Matt. 5:32).

This passage does *not* say that an elder must not be divorced. If this translation is taken at face value, a man could have been divorced, remarried and now be “the husband of one wife.” Some would even place this requirement upon Sunday School teachers, choir directors, etc. which has nothing to do with the context.⁵ Divorce is not the “unpardonable” sin. God hates divorce⁶ and so does this writer. God loves divorced persons and so does this writer. The Christian army seems to be the only one who shoots their own wounded troops.

⁴ In his book, “Divorce and Remarriage, Recovering a Biblical View,” William Luck presents a Biblically convincing view that polygamy was *not* morally wrong in the Old Testament and that this statement is speaking more of the interpretation that is later presented in this paper. The polygamy issue will not be pursued here as it is irrelevant to us today.

⁵ As mentioned elsewhere in this study, most of these requirements for the elder are the same as exhortations for other believers. The issue here is that if a believer is disobedient in these areas, he is not to be allowed overseership in the church. If a believer in the church is in a willful sinning state (some will maintain that the divorced/remarried person is necessarily living in adultery), then he should not even be a Sunday school teacher, choir member, greeter, etc. He should be under church discipline. Obviously, this writer believes that the Bible teaches some valid ground for divorce and remarriage and that we cannot automatically assume that the person who is divorced has sinned or is sinning in this area. See footnote recommending books.

⁶ The statement of God in Mal. 2:16 that He hates divorce, seems to be a catch-all verse, the “final word” for those who teach that all divorce is wrong. The context seems to indicate that God hates “treacherous” divorce. God Himself divorced Israel (Jer. 3:8). This was a proper disciplinary action. God hates the sin that *causes* divorce. *Sometimes* the divorce itself is also sin.

As stated before, the issue of divorce and remarriage is a controversial one. Opinions abound and emotions run high. Many have suffered because of divorce. Is divorce or remarriage a sin? Divorce is always caused by sin but a person is not necessarily sinning because he is divorced. Matt. 5:32 gives one example and I Cor. 7:15; 27, 28, adds to this. Remarriage under the Mosaic Law was assumed because the adulterous party was to be stoned, freeing the living party from the marriage. If one has sinned regarding a divorce we are commanded to forgive as God has us (Eph. 4:32). If we choose not to fellowship with divorced persons then we are placing ourselves in the unenviable position of not fellowshiping with God. He divorced unfaithful Israel (Jer. 3:8).

This passage does *not* categorically eliminate a divorced man from the office of Bishop. Related factors could conceivably affect the general testimony of the man and he may possibly be eliminated by some of the other requirements. Let us not be like the Pharisees and impose oppressive and unbiblical restrictions (Matt. 23:4) on someone and limit him from service in an area in which God allows him to serve. It is easy to judge someone in an area in which we have victory or maybe even just experienced God's grace, in spite of ourselves. (Maybe we have just been able to cover our tracks better. Is this not hypocrisy?)

A Suggested Interpretation is:

“A One-Woman Man”⁷

The phrase “husband of one wife” (μίας γυναίκος ἀνδρα) literally is a “one woman man.” The words “gune” and “andra” are translated “woman” and “man” or “wife” and “husband” depending on the context which is usually clear. There is good reason to translate it in this passage as “a one-woman man.”

The issue under discussion is established character. Paul here mentions 16 character traits. He is not listing 15 character traits and an event such as a divorce that occurred sometime in the past, in which he may or may not have sinned. It is conceivable (and sad to say, likely) that a man of today could be accepted as a church leader, been married only once, never been divorced, yet he improperly “checks out” every attractive woman who walks by. This man is not being faithful to his wife and is not a “one woman man.” His character needs a basic pattern change before he can qualify under this requirement (Matt. 5:28). Paul's other writings do not shun mentioning sin in the moral and sexual arena. If the interpretation presented here is incorrect, he is certainly missing an opportunity to require obedience in this area for the Elder.

This understanding emphasizes a man's character or testimony rather than his marital status. A man may not even be married and still fulfill this requirement. “γυναίκος” is best to be understood as a genitive of quality, that is, giving characteristic to the noun which it modifies. That is to say, we are referring to a “one-women type of man” whether he be married or not. In other words, not a womanizer, philander, or flirt. He must be one who is morally upright and trustworthy in his association with the opposite sex. To be a “one-woman type of man,” he must have demonstrated a chaste and mature attitude toward his wife, if applicable, and to other females.

It has been argued by one Greek student that this text *is* correctly translated “husband of one wife” instead of “a one-woman man” based on a similar rendering in I Tim. 5:9. “*Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.*” “The wife of one man” is the identical grammatical construction as used in 3:2 except for the reversal of genders. It is obvious from the context that the widow had to have been married to a man, not *just* to have been a “one-man woman.”

It needs to be noted that in this verse the words, “having become” are from one word in the Greek and is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense is “something that occurred in the past but the condition continues to the present.”⁸ What Paul is saying is that for the widow (who was married at least once) to be enrolled, she must have been in the past and *still be* a “one-man type of woman.” She obviously cannot still have her husband after he dies. Paul even encourages the younger widows to remarry (5:14). Would he do this if it

⁷ For much of this concept I am indebted to Ed Glasscock and his article, “The Husband of One Wife Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2” *Bibliotheca Sacra*—Vol. 140 #559—July 83—244.

⁸ “The Greek perfect tense denotes the present state resultant upon a past action.” *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, Richard Machen. P. 187. “The force of the perfect tense is simply that it describes an event that, completed in the past (we are speaking of the perfect indicative here), has results existing in the present time (i.e., in relation to the time of the speaker). Or, as Zerwick puts it, the perfect tense is used for “indicating not the past action as such but the present ‘state of affairs’ resulting from the past action.” *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics—An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Daniel B. Wallace, P. 574.

categorically disqualifies her for later support or even survival if her second husband dies? This verse suggests the understanding of the requirement that the Bishop must be a “one-woman type of man.”

Instead of supporting the requirement of an elder being not ever divorced, this verse gives strong support to the idea that Paul is *not* speaking of an event in the past but to his testimony, a character trait that has become a pattern in his life, that the Elder be a one-woman type of man, whether married or not.⁹

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 5 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

“A bishop then must be ... vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, ...”

It is important to realize that we are not only looking at character traits required for an overseer, but that most of these qualities are God's plan for every believer. The issue presented in I Timothy and Titus is that unless a man possesses these traits, he is not to be appointed as an elder. Most of these traits are also commands to believers who do not hold this office. Please study the verse references presented here in their context as most of them apply to believers in general.

Vigilant: to be sober, not intoxicated, figuratively to be vigilant, discreet, circumspect. Translated “sober” in I Thess. 5:6,8; I Tim. 3:11; I Pet. 1:13; 5:8.

Sober: literally, safe or sound mind. Of a sound mind, sane, in one's senses. Translated “discreet” in Titus 2:5, and temperate in Titus 2:2 (in contrast to “temperate” in 1:8 which emphasizes self-control).

Of good behavior: literally, Orderly. Well arranged, seemly, modest, decent conduct. The word is found twice in I Tim. 2:9; “...that woman adorn (infinitive) themselves in modest apparel.

Given to hospitality: Friendly or kind to strangers, generous to guests. Titus 1:8; I Pet. 4:9. This is translated from one word in the Greek which is a combination of two words, “phileo” (brotherly love, fondness, or kindness) and “xenos” (stranger). In Titus 1:8, a parallel passage, the elder is required to be “a lover of hospitality” (philoxenon), and “a lover of good men” (philagathon), literally a lover of goodness or good things.”¹⁰

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 6 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

“A bishop then must be... apt to teach;” (didaktikon, διδακτικον; apt and skilful in teaching, qualified to teach). The elders in the church are *all* to be apt to teach (Remember that the NT always speaks of a plurality of elders or pastors). This does not mean that one or several could not be the primary teacher or

⁹ Two recommended books on the marriage/divorce issue are “Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage” by Jay Adams (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing) and “Divorce and Remarriage, Recovering a Biblical View” by William Luck (Harper & Rowe, no longer published) Both of these books are available on loan from the writer of this article.

¹⁰ Some passages in which “phileo” and “agape” are used:
“**Phileo**” friendly, affection, is used in the following passages:
I Cor. 16:22; “if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema”
Titus 2:4; “the young women... to love their husbands, to love their children,”
Titus 3:4; “love (philanthropy) of God our Savior toward man appeared...”
Heb. 13:1; “Let brotherly love (philadelphia) continue.”
“**Agapeo**” divine love, is measured by sacrifice for benefit of the one loved.
Matt. 5:44; “love your enemies”
Matt. 19:19; “love your neighbor as yourself”
Mark 12:20; “love the lord thy God”
John 3:16; “God so loved the world” (also I Jn. 4:7-21)
John 14:15; “if you love me you will keep my commandments”
II Cor. 5:14; “the love of Christ constrains us”
Gal. 5:22; “the fruit of the spirit is love...”
Eph. 5:25; “Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church”

teachers. Ideally, they would have a variety of gifts that could be exercised in the various functions of leadership in the church. This concept detracts from the common notion of requiring the one pastor to be a “superman,” master of all the gifts.

Titus expands on this theme by presenting some of the responsibilities that require the elder to know God’s word well enough to be “*apt to teach.*” Titus 1:9 speaks of the elder, “*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers (contradictors).*” Later verses mention those who are “*vain talkers and deceivers... whose mouths must be stopped, ...Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.*” One does not “exhort”, “convince the gainsayers,” “stop the mouths of vain talkers and deceivers, etc.” by just *telling* them to “be quiet.” This task must be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, boldly with truth (learned Bible doctrine) and love (Eph. 4:15). This is hardly a task for one who cannot stand firmly upon God’s Word and know why he does.

Let us also remember, although these are requirements that must be met before a bishop is appointed, that most of these criteria are also commands to believers in general. II Tim. 2:24, tells us that “*the servant of the Lord must... be... apt to teach...*” (same Greek word). This is not just for elders. All of us should be “*servants of the Lord*” and all of us, in one form or another, should be “*apt to teach.*” None of us who are believers are exempt. The methods and circumstances will vary but the command still stands (I Cor. 12:4-6; I Tim 2:12; Titus 2:2, 4).

The context gives us a hint on how we can become “*apt to teach.*” It makes sense that before you can teach something, you must know it. Verse 15, tells us, “*Study (lit. be diligent, speed up) to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” This task is not optional. The widespread disobedience to this command is a major reason that the Church is so anemic in the spiritual battle. Most Christian’s doctrinal stand is as strong as the last entertaining speaker that they heard. If we do not stand for God’s Word, we will fall for anything.

You might say that you do not have much time for Bible study. It is true that no one else can judge precisely how you can spend your time. God’s word says to be diligent in this endeavor, so He has a reason for it and it can be done. May I suggest that it will cost you something to become proficient in “*rightly dividing the word of truth.*” It might mean reevaluating our priorities like turning off the TV, or even giving it away. Let us look at our activities with eternal values in view. It may even require something “radical” or “unreasonable” like forsaking something secure and comfortable in our lives and actually trusting God. Luke 12:42-48, relates the tremendous loss experienced by the “*servant which knew his lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will*” (v49). Certainly not a declaration of “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matt. 25:23).

What about women teaching? Doesn’t I Timothy 2:12 forbid woman from teaching? “*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*” No, this verse is not saying that a woman cannot teach. It is telling us that she may not teach a man in the manner of usurping authority over the man. “Silence” here does not mean “without a sound.” It means “with a quiet spirit.” This also fits the context.

Titus 2:3,4, exhorts the older women to teach the younger women some important facets of family and Christian life. The following verses which instruct us as believers to teach others are “gender-generic:” II Tim. 2:24; Col. 3:16; Heb. 5:12.

Both men and women should teach others by our example. II Cor. 3:2, speaks of believers being “*epistles... known and read of all men.*” Our lives may be the only representative of God’s word that some may see. Surely, a Godly testimony is essential if people are going to listen to us as we present the Good News of Salvation (Matt. 5:16; John 13:35; Titus 3:8).

Heb. 5:11-14, presents a dismal commentary concerning believers who have not grown past infancy and still require “baby-food.” In time, they should have become teachers (v12), but apparently, did not use what God had provided for them (v14) and remained stunted in their growth. I Pet. 2:2 instructs us, “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*” It is no disgrace to start life as an infant but it is sin and a tragedy to remain one.

The man who qualifies for the office of bishop has not always been “*apt to teach.*” We shall see later that he must not be a novice (lit. neophyte, newly-planted). By implication, he once was a novice. He had to start somewhere. He grew by doing just what every believer is commanded to do; “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*”

II Pet. 3:15; “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*”

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 7 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

“*A bishop then must be... Not given to wine,*” (I Tim. 3:2,3)

“*Not Given to Wine*” Lit. “from or beside wine,” by implication, the effects of tarrying by wine: abusive brawling, quarrelsome, etc. Used only here and in Titus 1:7. “*Deacons... not given to much wine.*” (Lit. not giving heed or attention to) and Titus 2:3; “*Aged women... not given to much wine.*” (Lit. not having been enslaved to).

The contrast between elders “*not being given to wine*” and the deacons and older women “*not being given to much wine*” is probably not what it may initially appear to be. It is not contrasting that the elder may drink no wine and that the deacon and the aged woman may drink a little. In both cases the gist of the admonition is that wine should not be controlling the person.

Wine is referred to over 200 times in the Bible. The vast majority of times it is mentioned matter-of-factly as in the normal course of people’s lives, whether Godly or ungodly. It frequently is mentioned as a blessing from God. There are examples given where abuse of wine or strong drink has been a factor in the cause of great sin and tragedy (e.g. Gen. 9:21ff; 19:32ff). There are also a number of warnings concerning the potential danger in strong drink:

“*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*” (Prov. 20:1)

“*Be wise... Be not among the winebibbers;... For the drunkard shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.*” (Prov. 23:19-22).

“*Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine;... It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*” (Prov. 23:29-35)

In light of these warnings, what should our attitude be concerning the elder or other believers drinking wine? Apparently, wine holds no intrinsic evil. Jesus turned the water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana (John 2:1-11). He would not, in any way, endorse sin. Apparently, Jesus Himself drank but did not abuse wine (Luke 7:34; Matt. 26:29). Paul told Timothy to “*use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.*” (I Tim. 5:23). It is interesting to note that the word “use” here is not the word used for “drink.” It means “to make use of,” “to employ,” “to avail one’s self of.” This verse is speaking of a health-related value of wine for Timothy’s infirmity. Though this is not directly addressing “social” drinking it does let us know that at least some wine drinking is not wrong and in some cases could be beneficial.¹¹(Note also, Luke 10:34. It is not likely that the “Good Samaritan” poured oil and *grape juice* on the victim’s wounds).

How do I apply this in my life? Can I claim Timothy’s admonition for myself? We probably will not be in the same situation as Timothy as our available medical care is more advanced. How about just normal, daily wine-drinking as was prevalent and considered acceptable in the culture of Jesus’ day? In some

¹¹ Please see the writer of this paper if you are interested in scientific articles regarding the health benefits of moderate wine drinking. If you have a conviction that you should not ingest any alcohol, praise God, that is right for you. I just suggest that the Bible does now allow us to impose this regulation upon all. The intent of this study is not to initiate a non-drinker into moderate wine-drinking. It is an attempt to honestly exegete God’s word in spite of our social prejudices and theological presuppositions. I take seriously God’s command in Galatians 5:1 to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free” (along with the love balance presented in verse 13). I have seen legalism in the Christian life area also affect the purity of the free grace Gospel. I also take seriously the warning of Galatians 1:6-10 concerning polluting the grace Gospel.

countries today moderate drinking is acceptable and in some areas the water is not safe to drink. In America, there is little need to base our wine-drinking upon this reasoning. We usually have clean water supplies that are safe and do not carry the potential for abuse.

On the other hand, we seem to get so much of our doctrine from our culture instead of God's word. The Bible explicitly condemns excess in drinking wine but accepts moderation. Where should we stand? Do I have liberty in this area? I used to think that Romans 14 was a chapter concerning "doubtful" things (see verse 21). After further study I now believe that it is a chapter concerning areas of liberty for the believer. It also contains admonitions against misuse of that liberty.

From the following verses we see that Paul highly valued his liberty in Christ but did not wish to misuse it. He had liberty to do things that were not inherently wrong but he labored to redeem every opportunity to glorify Christ. He gave up some of his "rights" that were lawful for him so that others would not stumble, but would be edified. "Love" was his motive. Note; two words used repeatedly concerning the possible effect of the improper display of our liberty to others are "stumble," and "offend." "Stumble" means "to strike out against, to beat upon." "Offend" means "to entrap or trip up." The gist of both of these terms is "to cause or entice to sin." The words do *not* refer to hurt feelings or someone's critical spirit.

Rom. 14:21; *"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."* By implication, neither food nor wine are intrinsically wrong, but each can be misused. In the context of potential stumbling blocks for the weaker brother, this verse puts meat (in v. 20 it is literally "food")¹² on the same level as wine. Does that convict any of our Elders who are too short for their weight?

I Cor. 10:31; *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God:"*

I Cor 6:12; *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."*(See the admonition to drink wine and strong drink to the Jew under the Mosaic Law in Deut. 14:22-26).

I Cor. 10:23; *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."*

Gal. 5:1,13; *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,... For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."*

The requirement is *not* that an Elder cannot drink wine. It has to do with "tarrying" by wine or being controlled by it. If Paul had wanted to say that the elder (or a believer who is not an elder) is required to totally abstain, he certainly could have and would have. I, therefore cannot Biblically judge an elder who drinks wine in moderation. Should not you as an Elder or even as a Spirit-controlled believer have the same freedom?

I would suggest that you go by the God-given principles of liberty (an important doctrine to God, Gal. 5:1; cf v.13). The above verses sum up some of these principles. It appears to me that that the Bible teaches that moderation in wine is an area of personal liberty for the Elder and for any believer. Do not misuse this liberty nor improperly judge one who appropriately exercises this liberty.¹³

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 8 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

¹² The word "meat" in verse 20 (βρωμα) is commonly used for food in general, that which is eaten. The word "flesh" in verse 21 is not the usual word used for the literal flesh of a person or animal, but is (κρεας), used only here and in I Cor. 8:13 and refers to flesh of a *sacrificed* animal. A parallel to this passage is also found I Cor. 8: In verse 8 and 13 the word "meat" is "βρωμα" and "flesh" in verse 13 is "κρεας." Please study the whole context. It shows a marvelous balance between our freedom in Christ and how we should limit our own freedom because of love.

¹³ The best in-depth Bible study on the subject that I have found is the book, "God Gave Wine" by Kenneth L. Gentry. A Google search shows several sources where the book may be purchased. Two recommended shorter Bible studies on this topic are "The Bible and Alcohol" found at http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=988 and "Wine and The Disciple" found at <http://www.freedomring.org/fts/chap8.html>

“A bishop then must be... no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;” (I Tim. 3:2,3)

God’s requirements for leadership of His church are listed in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Notably absent are qualities of worldly success or position. Paul enumerates character qualities demonstrating that true leadership emanates from our walk with God rather from achievements or vocational success.

Also important to emphasize in this study is the fact that most of these requirements for the bishop are also commands for every believer. We are all to maintain a “blameless” testimony before the world and other believers. We are to let our *“conversation (manner of life) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ”* (Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:1). Titus 3:5, says that it is *“good and profitable”* for the believer to maintain good works. Matt. 5:16, tells us that our good works glorify our Father in heaven.

“No striker” (lit. pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome, combative, ready for a blow) used only here and in Titus 1:7. Part of the fruit of the spirit is temperance or self-control (Gal. 5:22,23). We have all met people with a contentious spirit, particularly while driving. Of course, it is always the other guy. This is hardly an attribute that even the world esteems as respectable.

“Not greedy of filthy lucre” (from two words meaning: indecent, dishonorable, vile, and gain, or profit, but not necessarily only material gain, e.g. Phil 1:21; 3:8; I Cor. 9:19ff; I Pet. 3:1), or, in modern English; eager for dishonorable gain. It is used in I Tim. 3:3; 3:8; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 5:2, as commands to refrain as true teachers. It is used in Titus 1:11 as a characteristic of false teachers. This phrase is not found in most newer translations, those which use the Critical Text as their basis. The vast majority of older Greek manuscripts *do* contain it.¹⁴

This is not to say that the elder should not gain from his labor. It is referring to the prohibition of improper gain and to his improper motives. Paul said that the elders who rule well should *“be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.”* (I Tim. 5:17). This instruction likely includes being counted worthy of reasonable financial remuneration. The word “honor” literally means “value” or “estimate of worth.” It is translated “price” in Matt. 27:6,9; Acts 4:34; 5:2,3; 19:19; I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; and “sum” in Acts 7:16. It is translated “honor” in the sense of “honor” or “esteem” in I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Rom. 13:7; I Pet. 3:7.

I Cor. 9, presents God’s mind on the subject of paying the Christian teacher and how Paul applied the principles in his own life and ministry. Paul had been answering questions that the Corinthian church had asked via a previous letter (7:1; 8:1). Chapter 7 concerns marriage, divorce, and celibacy. Chapter 8 covers the topic of whether or not a believer should eat meats offered to idols. Although Paul had that liberty he warned that some are weak and could be offended. The conclusion is that we should *“take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak”* (v9). And that we *“sin against Christ”* when we wound their weak conscience (12). Therefore he would forego his liberty so that he would not offend the weaker brother (v13, Gal. 5:13).

Chapter 9:1-5, speaks of his liberty to have a family with him in his ministry. Then verses 7-18 present a case for paying the faithful laborer and also show how Paul chose to take advantage of this liberty in his ministry.

¹⁴ The KJV and the NKJV were translated from a compilation of the “Majority text” family of manuscripts of which there are several thousand early copies. The Greek text used for the KJV was compiled from a few of these and was later known as the “Textus Receptus” or the “Received Text.” These manuscripts are from the Asia Minor area where the original manuscripts were first circulated and were available for verification of later copies. These copies were actively used (and worn out) by the growing early churches there.

Most of our newer versions are translated from some form of the “Critical Text.” This was compiled around 1881 and comes primarily from two Western texts (Egypt). Though these manuscripts are older, this writer believes them to be less reliable than those from the Majority text family. The two Western texts have over 3,000 differences between each other just in the Gospels. The textual variations between these two texts and even in comparison to the Majority text are almost all minor and doctrinally insignificant. Critics argue that there are important doctrines affected such as some verses omitted referring to the divinity of Christ. This is true and I believe, inexcusable, but many of the other “proof” texts for these same doctrines still remain. The Critical text is earlier but many believe, not the more reliable. It could be called the “minority text” by about 6,000 to 2. This persuasion is not universal among Christian leaders today. Though the Critical text and the resulting modern translations have some verses and many words and phrases absent which are present in the Majority text family (about 3,000 words in the Greek NT), the significant doctrines still remain in the shorter text.

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?... Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.... If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?... Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (v7-14).

His response to this liberty — *“Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.... What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.”* (v12,18). He applies the same love and properly placed priorities here as he does in chapter 8 in reference to other liberties.

Even though the teacher has a greater accountability (James 3:1), the elder’s attitude toward temporal gain should be the same as any other Spirit-controlled believer. Jesus said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matt. 6:33). We should set our *“affections on things above, not on things of the earth.”* (Col. 3:2). Speaking to those who were sacrificially giving in order to further the work of Christ, Paul said, *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 4:19). If we can trust God to save our soul, we can surely trust Him to provide a hamburger. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and He even owns the hills. (Ps. 50:10; 24:1).

“But patient,” a positive trait, is a fitting contrast to the pattern of being a “striker.” It means to be equitable, fair, mild, or gentle. This is the same word that is translated “moderation in Phil. 4:5, *“Let your moderation be known to all men... .”* This is a command to believers in general and is in the context of how to have the peace of God. It is translated “gentle” in Titus 3:2; James 3:17; and I Pet. 3:18.

“Not a brawler” Lit. not a fighter, used only here and in Titus 3:2 (again in contrast to being gentle).

“Not covetous” Lit. not a lover of money. Different than *“not greedy of filthy lucre”* which could refer to any kind of improper gain including recognition, popularity, etc. “Not covetous” or “not a lover of money” is contrasted to the positive form in 6:10, *“For the love of money is the (a) root of all evil(s).”* Much of chapter 6 contains valuable wisdom concerning riches and our attitude toward them - *“Having food and raiment let us therewith be content. But they that will (desire to) be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”* (v8,9). Please study the whole chapter.

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 9 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

“A bishop then must be... One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (I Tim. 3:2,4,5)

Ruleth well; To be over, superintend, preside, maintain, and finely, excellently, rightly. Same word as I Tim. 5:17; “the elders that rule well...” Also I Thess. 5:12; Titus 3:8,14.

Godly leadership in the home is for elders and for Christian men in general. *“Husbands, Love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.”* (Eph. 5:25). This admonition is found right after the oft-quoted verses (22-24) that states, *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,... the husband is the head of the wife,... as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”*

If husbands were to love their wives as v25 commands, there would be much less problem in the application of the other three verses. This “ruling” should be patterned after the way Christ loves and rules His church. The Bible command for a man to be *“the head of the wife”* is no excuse for a man to be domineering or to misuse his Biblical role as leader for a “spiritual club” to bash his wife and family into submission. Too often overzealous efforts to “rule” are nothing more than thinly-veiled attempts to cover up insecurities or a low self-esteem in a man. Actions falsely deemed as “loving” are sometimes motivated

by pride, selfishness, or the misdirected efforts to control those around him. Men, we are to “ *dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.*” (I Pet. 3:7).

*Having his children in subjection*¹⁵ *with all gravity*; Gravity: honor, dignity. Commentators are divided whether the gravity is required of the elder or of the children.

Does this mean that a man must be married and have children living at home in order to become a bishop? See previous comments on “the husband of one wife.” Paul would have disqualified himself on the marriage issue as he was not married at that time, possibly never. This interpretation would cause some tension when compared with I Cor. 7:8; 25-33. Paul encouraged celibacy under certain circumstances because of the distraction caused by caring for his mate detracts him from caring “*for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.*” It would hardly be consistent to require marriage in order to serve in this capacity, yet encourage one to stay single so as not to be distracted from serving the Lord.

What about children in his home? Paul did not qualify on that count either. The next verse states that he may not be a “novice.” This word and the term “elder” both imply that the man has acquired some age. It is conceivable that by the time some men reach this stage, their children are “out of the roost.” What if he legitimately qualifies as an elder and assumes that role for a number of years, then his children reach an age to start their own families? Should he be “demoted?” Rigidly denying either of these hypothetical men the office of bishop would be doing injustice to the general theme of the qualifications: a man must be blameless, or, in other words, a pattern of a good testimony. He must rule his own house well, or have his own house in order, whatever the legitimate variations may be.

Nevertheless, the parenthetical and rhetorical question, “*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*” remains valid. Many of the same skills and qualities are needed for both. Success in leading his family may well indicate potential success in leading the church. Likewise, failure in his family should raise some doubt about his ability to lead the church. The man’s family is frequently (though not always, e.g. Hosea) a good indicator of his pattern of obedience to God.

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 10 **Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**

“A bishop then must be... not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” (I Tim. 3:2,6)

“*Not a novice*” (Lit. newly planted, neophyte) Christian maturity is required before one is appointed as a bishop and every believer is commanded to grow toward maturity. We are exhorted to grow and to press on to maturity by obedience to God’s Word (I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:11-14; James 1:22; Phil. 3:7-14). What is the maturity that is referred to here?

Every believer of this age is baptized in/by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). Contrary to what is frequently heard in the Pentecostal/Charismatic circles, there is *no* Bible command for a believer to be “baptized in the

¹⁵ Subjection; to rank under, submission, obedience.

Other verses using a form of the same Greek word:

Luke 2:51; Jesus, as a child was *subject* to his parents.

Luke 10:17,20; The demons were *subject* to the disciples.

Romans 8:7; The carnal mind is not *subject* to the law of God.

Romans 10:3; Israel tried to establish their own righteousness and did not *subject* themselves to the righteousness of God.

Romans 13:1,5; Everyone should be *subject* to government authority. Also Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:13.

1 Corinthians 14:34; Women to be in *obedience* in the church. Also I Tim 2:11.

1 Corinthians 16:16; *Submit* yourselves to faithful laborers.

Ephesians 5:21; *Submitting* yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Also I Pet. 5:5.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, *submit* yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Also Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Pet. 3:1,5.

Ephesians 5:24; The church is *subject* unto Christ.

James 4:7; *Submit* yourselves therefore to God.

Ephesians 1:22; (Jesus) And hath *put* all things *under* his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Also Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:8. I Cor. 15:27.

spirit.”¹⁶ The reason for this is that God does that Himself when we believe. The Charismatics also often equate “baptism in the Spirit” with the “filling of the spirit.” They may occur at the same time but they are totally different operations.

Any believer can instantly be “filled with the Spirit.” The Bible uses this wording (Eph. 5:18), but because of the prevalent misuse of the word it may communicate the Bible meaning better to use different terminology. “Filled” means to fill in the sense of being “imbued or influenced.” Its meaning is similar to Gal. 5:16, “Walk in the spirit.” This means for our manner of life “to be “guided by” or “responsive to” the Holy Spirit, or as in Gal. 5:22, “to walk in step with.”

Contrary to the statements concerning “baptism in the Spirit,” many of the “filling” related passages are in the imperative mood, i.e. commands. Because of all the commands in the Bible for the believer to be obedient in various areas, it is evident that this does not occur automatically. Believers may be Spirit-controlled one moment and not the next. We need to confess our sin (I John 1:9) and again yield ourselves to God in obedience in order to become Spirit-controlled (Rom. 6:16).

This leads us to the subject of maturity. When one is habitually obedient to God over a period of time he grows. He attains a level of maturity and discernment (Heb. 5:14). The bishop is to now possess and to have shown a pattern of obedience to God’s Holy Spirit. This is not determined by emotional eruptions but by the Word of God. Emotions are God-given and different people express them differently. Our emotions also are fickle, changing and unpredictable. We must interpret our experience by God’s Word, not God’s Word by our experiences.

We can infer from this passage that if a person displays sinful pride that he is not spirit-controlled at that time. A bishop should show a pattern of humility.

Note the progression; Lifted up — fall. When we are lifted up by pride we will fall. “*Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall*” (Prov. 16:18; Matt. 23:12; Eze. 30:6; Hos. 5:5).

Satan fell by pride (Isa. 14:12-17; Eze. 28:8-19). Pride heads the list of the sins which God hates (Prov. 6:16-19). Those who teach contrary to God’s Word are proud (I Tim: 6:4). James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5 tell us that God resists the proud. These verses also contrast pride with humility. Pride is on the list of attributes of those who have walked away from God and have a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:25-32).

In spite of these warnings, how often do we see sinful pride displayed in the Christian church? Of course, it is always in others, the ones who object to me having my way when I am being proud. We must judge and forsake this sin. It divides and weakens the Body of Christ. Jesus is the Head, not you.

Humility is not an easily acquired trait. Humanly speaking, a humble person is often considered weak or “wimpy.” No one likes to be labeled as such. The stigma can be paralleled to one becoming “a good loser.” You have to “lose” to become one. Nonetheless, James 4:10 truthfully admonishes us, “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up.*” (See also I Peter 5:6). This is the opposite of falling.

Commentators are divided on the meaning of “*the condemnation of the devil.*” Is it referring to “the devil’s judgment of us” or “the same type of judgment that the Devil incurred for his pride.” Either way, we would be wise to shun the prideful spirit that would invite this judgment. The similar statement in the next verse is obviously referring to what the Devil is doing to us.

¹⁶ The following are the verses that mention the baptism of the Spirit. None are commands, (imperative mood) just statement of fact (indicative mood).

Matt. 3:11. “...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”

Mark 1:8. “I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with fire.”

Luke 3:16. “...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”

John 1:33. “...upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 1:5. “...but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence”

Acts 11:16. “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”

The first five verses are all prophecies given before the beginning of the Church telling of Jesus, who, sometime in the future, would baptize in or by means of His Holy Spirit. The sixth verse is Peter’s reiteration of the what Jesus had told them just before Pentecost (Acts:1:5).

Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 11 Qualifications of an Elder, I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (I Tim. 3:7)

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without;” It is necessary that he be well-testified of by those who are outside of the family or household of God. (cp 3:15). One translation (actually somewhat of a *transliteration*) has it, “An overseer must also have a good reputation with outsiders” (NIV). He must have established good character which speaks well for the Church of Christ among the unsaved world.

“Lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” If the overseer does not maintain a good testimony in the sight of the unbeliever, it brings reproach to the name of Christ and he becomes ensnared in a trap of the Devil (lit. slanderer or false accuser).

Having a “good report” does not mean that he will please everyone. Paul said in Galatians 1:10, *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”* He is not saying that he did not please men but that his motive and priority was to please God, no matter what man’s view happened to be. This was said right after pronouncing a curse upon those who compromised the grace of Christ by teaching a false gospel. Paul certainly was not trying out for a popularity contest. He adds in I Thessalonians 2:4, *“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”*

What is the “good testimony” that is to be well spoken of by the unsaved world. May I suggest that it is speaking of the elder living a life of consistent obedience to God’s word? That is the focus of this whole text concerning the qualifications of the overseer. There are many Bible principles with which the world does not agree, but, in some cases, they will respect a believer who is consistent in his beliefs and actions.

The world does not respect a lukewarm believer. Hypocrisy is difficult to conceal. They frequently do respond to someone who is sincerely *“speaking the truth in love”* (Eph. 4:15). Sometimes the world seems to ignore or even scoff at a Spirit-controlled man until there arises a crisis or predicament that seems overwhelming. The same scoffer frequently turns to someone that has shown a pattern of love, sensitivity, and who knows the Book. What an opportunity to present the good News of Salvation by grace through faith.

Sin *does* pay but we do not like its wages (Rom. 6:23). Many times there is pleasure in sin but only for a season (Heb. 11:23). The season is short and we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7). Sin is deceitful (Heb. 3:13). We are often fooled by the time-lapse between sowing and reaping (Eccl. 8:11).

Qualifications of the Elder - A Synopsis

I Tim. 3:1-7

1. Blameless

2. Husband of one wife
3. Vigilant
4. Sober
5. Of good behavior
6. Given to hospitality
7. Apt to teach
8. Not given to wine
9. No striker
10. Not greedy of filthy lucre
11. Patient
12. Not a brawler
13. Not covetous
14. Rule well his own house, children in subjection with all gravity
15. Not a novice
16. Have a good report of them which are without

1. Blameless; with family—similar to I Tim.
2. The husband of one wife—same as I Tim.
3. Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly—excess, not subject to control
4. Blameless; as steward of God—Similar to I Tim.
5. Not self-willed—not arrogant
6. Not soon angry—not prone to anger
7. Not given to wine— same as I Tim.
8. No striker— same as I Tim.
9. Not given to filthy lucre— same as I Tim.
10. Lover of hospitality —same as I Tim.
11. Lover of good men—lover (phileo) of good things or goodness
12. Sober— same as I Tim.
13. Just
14. Holy
15. Temperate
16. Holding fast the faithful word... to exhort, convince the gainsayers

Titus 1:5-9

**Church Leadership in the New Testament, Part 12
Responsibilities of an Elder**

An understanding of the qualifications that God requires of an elder will help us to appreciate his responsibilities. One could not possibly fulfill these responsibilities without a thorough preparation and maturing which requires time to attain.

The obligations of the office can be placed under two main headings; **teaching** and **ruling** (Titus 1:9; I Tim. 5:17).

Teaching:

Titus 1:9-14, tells us that the elder should be, *“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For their are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. ...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they be sound in the faith;...”*

Sound doctrine, healthy teaching.

Exhort, “parakaleo, παρακαλεω” to comfort, console, beseech. The exhorting may not necessarily seem comforting at the time. The noun form of the word (Comforter, “paracletos, παρακλητος”) is used of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-19; 16:7-11). The Holy Spirit is the Great Comforter but as he rebukes us in love He can also be a Great Discomforter (Heb. 12:11).

Filthy lucre, base or dishonorable gain, not necessarily financial, same as I Tim. 3:3 and I Peter 5:2.

Convince, convict, rebuke, reprove. Same word as II Tim. 3:16, God’s word is profitable for “reproof,” and John 16:8, The Holy Spirit will “reprove” the world of sin. Also used in Titus 1:13, “Wherefore rebuke them sharply.”

Gainsayers, opposers, those who speak against God’s truth.

Paul tells Timothy (an active worker and possibly an elder in the early church) in his parting words to *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (II Tim. 4:2).

Peter tells the elders in I Peter 5:1-4, to “...*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage but being ensamples to the flock....*”

We see from the above verses that the teaching function of an elder can be discharged in the following ways:

Exhorting — comforting, consoling, etc. by sound doctrine.

Rebuking — combating error that is harmful to the body of Christ.

Preaching — proclaiming God’s word.

By example — Providing a pattern for others to follow by a Godly life-style.

Sound or healthy doctrine is essential if one is to perform the above tasks. What is sound doctrine? Jude 3, gives us a pointed command concerning our stand for truth. “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*”

Many answers are given as to what *is* this faith that we “*should earnestly contend for.*” The response furnished is frequently dependent upon one’s doctrinal bias or pet dogmas. May I suggest that the answer is found in the context? Verse 4, speaks of those deceivers who were “*turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” We are to earnestly contend for the proper application of the grace of God and we are not to deny that Jesus is God.

These are two areas of importance in which the cults are notoriously in error; the grace of God and the Lordship of Christ. More insidious is the fact that even some groups which we would call “fundamental” lapse into similar error. Each of these topics seems to carry two unhealthy extremes.

The “Grace” Error—Saved By Faith *Plus* Works:

The vast majority of people to whom I have witnessed had been blinded by a false gospel, one in which the grace of God was mutilated. The grace-plus-works message for salvation sounds appealing but it is lethal. The “gospel” message that Satan loves is one that is close enough to the truth to sound good but is actually error and will not save. Satan’s ministers are ministers of righteousness, man’s righteousness in place of God’s (II Cor. 11:3, 13-15).

Matthew 7:21-23 speaks of those who professed God, prophesied in God’s name, cast out demons, and had done many wonderful works (translated “miracles” in I Cor. 12:28,29). They had fallen for a false gospel. They had never trusted in Jesus. His response to them was “*I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” This passage should also alert us to the danger of basing our doctrine upon miracles. Just because something is attractive, sounds good, is powerful, or *even if it works*, does not mean it is of God. Satan is a liar and deceiver (John 8:44). We must never fall into the trap of judging God’s word by our experience. We should always judge our experience and our doctrine by God’s unchanging truth.

We are saved by grace through faith and not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works (Eph. 2:8, 9). We cannot be saved by a mixture of faith-plus-works (Rom. 11:6). God pronounces a curse upon those who teach a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Let us always stand for the “faith once delivered to the saints.”

Many teachers who proclaim the “faith-plus-works” message as a requirement for salvation legitimately lament the sad state of life of the average believer. This also grieves God who bought us and paid for us (Eph. 4:30; I Cor 6:19, 20). Front-loading the Gospel by adding works to faith as a requirement for salvation, and thus polluting the Gospel, is *not* the cure. Back-loading the Gospel by adding the requirement for a certain pattern of good works or faithfulness after faith in order to be stay saved or to prove one’s salvation also is not the cure.

The answer to error is *not* more error. The answer *is* God’s truth (II Tim. 3:16, 17; Titus 2:11,12). Two commonly-neglected doctrines of importance in this area are the teachings of God’s chastening of His children and of the Judgment Seat of Christ, before which all believers will stand to determine their rewards for service, not their destination. That has *already* been determined (Heb. 12:5-11; II Cor 5:10; I Cor 3:11-15).

The “Grace” Error—Grace Means, “Live As You Please”:

Are we surprised that Satan, the master counterfeiter and deceiver, peddles a message of good works for salvation. When a man finally sees through that error and is “saved by grace through faith, ...not of works (Eph. 2:8,9), neither Satan nor any other power is strong enough to make God renege on His word and lose that soul. (John 6:37, 39; 10:28).

The Devil’s tactics then change. Eternal salvation cannot be lost, but the expected reproduction process can be clogged to a standstill. Two major areas in which he accomplishes this feat are: 1. By encouraging the believer to propagate the “grace-plus-works” message that confuses. 2. The other major area is to encourage the believer to become involved in sin or even in other “good” priorities (Heb. 12:1) so that he does not effectively serve God. That may be why the Bible is replete with commands for the person who has already believed and is eternally secure. Obedience does not necessarily become automatic after salvation. We must *choose* to obey God.

A reading of I Corinthians should impress us with a selfish bunch of believers who were living carnal and disobedient lives. Paul repeatedly warns them to judge and to forsake their sins but never implies that they are not eternally saved or had lost their salvation.

After his brief but magnificent passage on God’s grace (Rom. 5), Paul answers, once for all, the question, “...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid...” Rom. 6:1, 2). That would certainly be “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” We are not only “saved by grace” (Eph 2:8, 9), but we are taught by grace to live the proper kind of life (Titus 2: 11-13).

We have great liberty in Christ. It is not license to sin. It is freedom to serve. Let us use this liberty to His Glory.

“For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” I Cor. 8, 9).

The “Lordship” error—“Jesus Lord Must Be Of Your Life In Order To Be Saved”:

This error is just another “spiritual-sounding” form of “faith-plus-works for salvation.” Should a believer make Jesus “Lord of his life?” There is no doubt about it. We, as Christians are commanded to yield our all to Him. Do all Christians do it? No, read I Corinthians again. If we as believers experience difficulty doing it with the Holy Spirit’s power, how can we expect an unregenerate person to do it on his own? We are saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, not by becoming a mature and obedient believer before we have been spiritually born. The Bible does not teach “Lordship Salvation.” It commands Lordship Christian living of the believer.

This is Galatianism in another dress and is still error. Lordship *salvation* is one of Satan’s counterfeits for salvation. Lordship *Christian living* is God’s commands for the believer. The test of the true gospel is grace (Gal. 1:6-9). A message that detracts from this grace is a perverted message.

The “Lordship” error—“Jesus Really Is Not God”

Many of the cults err in that they say that Jesus is not God. The terminology often used is misleading. For example, the Watchtower adherents will agree that Jesus *is* God. What do they mean by that? He was just “a god,” but then, so are you and I. He was less than the “Almighty” God. That is blasphemy. We must believe on the name of the Son of God in order to know that we have eternal life (I John 5:13). His name means something. The name “Jesus” comes from two Hebrew words which mean “Jehovah is Salvation.” Jesus claimed equality with the Father (John 10:30; 8:58). If Jesus is not God Almighty as He claimed and proved, then we do not have salvation by trusting in Him. He could not be a lesser god as some claim. He would be a liar and an impostor.

Ruling

I Tim. 5:17, *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”*

The word “rule” here is the same word as used in the requirement of the elder to “rule” well his own house (I Tim 3;4,5) It means to “preside over, to superintend.” It does not mean to be a tyrant or a dictator. It also does not mean that decisions are always made without input and counsel from the other believers.

The elders are accountable for promoting healthy doctrine and for the welfare of the flock of God. The word “bishop” used interchangeably with elder means “overseer.” He must oversee the flock and make vital decisions which affect them. He must combat error in order to protect and nurture them in their growth.

The word “pastor” is also used interchangeably with elder. It means “shepherd.” The pastor is to shepherd the flock. He must lead them in areas that promote their well-being, spiritual growth, and reproduction. These activities all require the necessity to make authoritative decisions. These men are given by God to the church “*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...* (Eph. 4:11-16).

This leads us to the conclusion that the elder should have more authority in the local church than is usually permitted. Is this healthy? Yes, but only when it is done God’s way. Two basic suggestions are: One, do not appoint an elder who does not fulfill the Biblical requirements of an elder, and two; More than one elder is needed to maintain checks and balances, and to have a balance of gifts, abilities, insights, etc.

The church is God’s plan for this age. We are born into the universal church (the body of Christ) by faith in Jesus (Gal. 3:26; John 3:5). We are told to fellowship with other believers (Heb. 10:25). This, no doubt, assumes that some of this fellowship will involve service in a local assembly. The closer we can come to God’s way of running the local church, the more effective we will be in carrying out His commission of Matt. 28:19-20.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”