

A Study of The  
Qualifications & Work  
of  
ELDERS, DEACONS,  
&  
GOSPEL PREACHERS



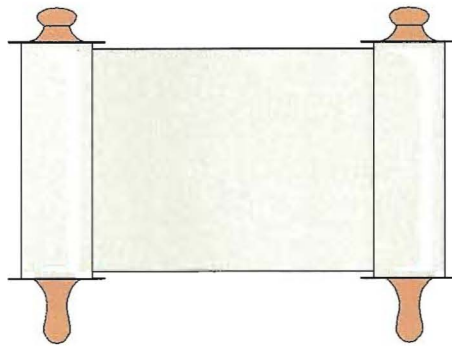
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An Outlined Study

on the

**Qualifications  
&  
Work**



of

**ELDERS, DEACONS, and GOSPEL PREACHERS**

plus

The Role of Women in the Lord's Church

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## Qualifications and Work of Elders

- A. Some Introductory and Background Information about Elders (Adapted from Outline by Roy J. Hearn).
1. This is a Bible theme, and is thus deserving of studying. Without a grasp of the New Testament pattern for the organization of the local church, we would be operating in the dark.
    - a. The organization of a local congregation in the New Testament was very simple and functional, and vastly different from the usual denominational practice. Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Ephesians 5:17: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."
    - b. In studying any Bible theme, it is essential that we eliminate all preconceived ideas, and allow God's word to instruct us. Cf. Acts 10:34f; Romans 2:11; 1 Timothy 5:21.
    - c. The trend is to reorganize, to eliminate elders and deacons, and substitute boards, committees, and leaders. There is an unwillingness on the part of some members to acknowledge the authority God has given to elders. But God's laws are immutable. What the Bible says on the subject of elders and deacons is as binding as any other truth it affirms.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other" (NKJ).
      - 2) 2 John 9: "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" (NKJ).
  2. Some observation concerning the eldership.
    - a. Often, in times of departure from the truth, those who are charged with teaching and defending the truth are inclined to "tread softly" because of fear. 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." Galatians 4:16: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"
    - b. The qualifications of elders are clearly set forth in the Bible: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11.
    - c. To appoint men to the "office" of elder does not of itself *make* them elders. One is an elder only if he meets the qualifications and is appointed to the work. Many unqualified men have been given the position; these men often are the source of discord within the congregation.
    - d. Some who desire the "office" of elder are mere "office-seekers." They are not dedicated to the great purpose of tending to the flock of God.
    - e. Some are in the eldership who do not even qualify as faithful Christians, and are surely not fit for the work of elder. Acts 20:28-31: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."
    - f. For a congregation to call a man an elder, does not make him an elder. For a man to call himself an elder does not make him an elder. To call a dog's tail a leg does not give the dog five legs. One could call himself the governor of the state, but that does not make him the governor.
    - g. Men have been chosen to be elders for unscriptural reasons. Just because a man has wealth, or has been successful in business, or has been a Christian for many years, or has natural leadership abilities, or has a wonderful family, does not mean that he is qualified to be an elder.
    - h. Elders are made by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit makes elders by providing all the qualifications and describing the duties; this he does through the inspired word. The Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) by giving all the information and motivation in the inspired

word, which guides us into submitting to the requirement. The Holy Spirit does not baptize or make a man an elder by a miraculous or direct operation.

3. Some observations on the term "elder."

a. *Elder* is translated from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which primarily describes one who is *older*. In the context in which it is used in this study, the word designates one who is qualified for and does the special work ordained for elders. Regardless of the qualifications, no one is an elder who does not do the work of an elder.

1) The first mention of the term in the singular is in Genesis 10:21: "Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were *children* born."

2) The first mention of the word in the plural is in Genesis 50:7: "And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt."

3) The word is used with respect to the nation of Israel. Exodus 12:21: "Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover."

b. The term is later used to designate "overseers."

1) Note Jethro's advice to Moses: Exodus 18:13-26.

2) Not all the old men of Israel were overseers (officers). Numbers 11:16: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee."

c. The use of the term in the New Testament.

1) The elders are mentioned as distinct from the apostles. Acts 15:2,4,6: "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question....And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them....And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."

2) As indicated in Acts 15, the church at Jerusalem had elders, and Acts 6:1-6 shows that they also had deacons. The word "deacon" designates one who serves; these seven men served the church, and thus may be correctly called "deacons." The organization of the church at Jerusalem included both elders and deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1).

3) Elders are first mentioned in Acts 11:30: "Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." It is apparent that they had been in the church for some time, even though their appointment is not recorded.

4) Titus was commissioned to see to it that elders were appointed "in every city" (Titus 1:5). From Acts 14:23, it is clear that every congregation was to have elders. Acts 14:23: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." Each congregation had a plurality of elders.

5) The church at Ephesus had elders. Acts 20:17: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." Cf. Acts 20:28.

6) The church at Philippi had elders. Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."

7) Conclusion: The eldership is a permanent office (work), intended for all times and places. God has always had some means of government among his people.

d. There are various terms used in reference to this same group of men.

1) Elder or presbyter is from the Greek word *presbuteros*.

- a) The word literally designates an older man.
  - b) Wisdom is acquired at different rates by age and experience; no specific age can determine whether a man is sufficiently wise to serve as an elder. Some might have gained enough wisdom by the age of forty, while others at the age of sixty would still be lacking.
  - c) Not every old man is eligible for the eldership. Sufficient time in the church, knowledge of the Bible, ability and wisdom, in company with the other qualifications, identify his fitness.
- 2) Bishop or overseer is from the Greek word *episkopos*.
- a) This word is used interchangeably with *elder*. Acts 20:17,28: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church.... Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Titus 1:5,7: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee.... For a **bishop** must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre."
  - b) 1 Peter 5:1-4: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."
  - c) The word bishop means "overseer."
- 3) Pastor or shepherd means "to feed, tend." These terms are used interchangeably with "elder" and "bishop," clearly showing that these words are all used in reference to the same men.
- a) Acts 20:17,28: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church.... Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**, to **tend**, to **feed** [verb form of *pastor*] the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
  - b) 1 Peter 5:1-2: "The **elders** which are among you I exhort, who am also an **elder**, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **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."
- e. Additional remarks.
- 1) Scriptural elders are assigned to an important work, ordained of God. They should be highly respected as special servants of God, and should conduct themselves so as to demand proper respect.
  - 2) Men should strive to prepare themselves for the work of elders. They should be chosen only according to qualifications.
  - 3) Perfection should not be expected of elders, except in meeting the physical qualifications; there is always room for growth in the spiritual qualifications.
4. The apostle Paul gave Titus the assignment of appointing elders in the various congregations on the island of Crete. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Tit. 1:5).
- a. "Paul, clearly from this, had been at some time in the Island of Crete, south of Greece, and had preached the gospel there. Titus was with him, and he had left him to remain in the island for a time" (Lipscomb, p.263).
  - b. Titus had been given the job of setting "in order the things that are wanting." Paul does not detail

all that was lacking on the part of the churches and Christians on Crete, but in the epistle, he shows some things Titus was to do in correcting their problems and deficiencies.

- 1) Titus 1:5: He was to appoint elders in each place where qualified men could be found.
  - 2) Titus 1:13: "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."
  - 3) Titus 2:1ff: Instructions were to be given to the various age groups in the church.
  - 4) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."
- c. Titus had been given the job of appointing "elders in every city" on the island of Crete. With other passages in view, this directive required Titus to appoint a plurality of elders in each congregation.
- 1) Each congregation in Asia Minor had a plurality of elders appointed by apostolic authority. Acts 14:23: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."
  - 2) The church at Philippi had a plurality of elders. Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."
  - 3) With each congregation autonomous and with each having two or more elders overseeing it, there was less likelihood of their being corrupted by false doctrine or sin.
- d. Titus had a difficult job ahead of him, owing to the nature characteristic of the citizens of Crete. "Crete was the cradle of the ancient Minoan civilization, and there were said to have been a hundred cities on the island. The population was of mixed races, noted for their trickery, drunkenness and licentiousness. A temple of Bacchus was there, and the island was famed for its wines. Paul himself, in following verses, would discuss the evil character of many of the people. It was not an enviable assignment which Titus here received from the apostle. Still, there were many congregations of believers there, some, perhaps, dating from those citizens of Crete who on Pentecost had heard the good news in Jerusalem (Acts 2:11)" (Coffman, p.320).
- e. The work assigned to Titus was not that of an overseeing bishop, but was the work any inspired preacher could accomplish. He was not given the authority to select elders, but to appoint those the churches selected (cf. Acts 6:1-4). By the use of his spiritual gift (s), Titus could instruct the brethren in their duties, correct their problems, guide them in selecting men for the eldership, and appoint them to their office. The following qualifications were to be used in identifying those who were equipped for the work. The authority of the apostle Paul, who was equipped with miraculous power, lay behind the work Titus was to do.

## B. Negative Qualifications of Elders.

### 1. The passages that give the qualifications:

- a. 1 Timothy 3:1-7: "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 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?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
- b. Titus 1:5-11: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 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 there 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."

- c. 1 Peter 5:1-4: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."
  - d. In 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul introduces the statement concerning the good work to which a bishop is called by the familiar observation that what he is about to say is a true or faithful saying. The man who desired to do the work of a bishop, was seeking to do a good work. The office of a bishop is a work, not a mere position. There is no greater work than that of overseeing the flock of God, and thus requires the greatest of qualifications and dedication.
    - 1) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
    - 2) Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
  - e. The qualifications which follow are preceded by the word **must**, which denotes requirements. These are not mere recommended qualities or desirable traits, but God-given requirements. "Some would eliminate arbitrarily some of these qualifications; others seek to 'reason' them out of the list, hence, the verb 'must' would indicate they are not to be eliminated, any more than the conditions one 'must' obey in order to be saved from past sins. Cf. Acts 16:30; Acts 9:6b" (Hearn, p.8). Cf. Acts 2:5ff.
2. A bishop **must not be given to wine**.
- a. "The elder is not to indulge in the use of any beverage, especially alcoholic, that would tend to unbalance mind and body. Every Christian should avoid such. The priests under the Old Testament were forbidden to use wine or strong drink (Lev. 10:9). All Christians are priests (I Pet. 5:4-9), the antitype of Old Testament priests, therefore, should refrain from intoxicants. Since deacons were forbidden to be 'given to *much* wine' (I Tim. 3:8), it is argued they and elders may drink some wine. Paul told Timothy to 'use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities' (I Tim. 5:23), therefore, the use of wine was limited to medicinal purposes, not for regular or social use" (Hearn, MSOP, pp.72f).
  - b. To "be given to" is from the Greek *prosecho* which means: "to give one's self up to, be addicted to, engage in, be occupied with" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p.349).
  - c. The ASV translates the Greek term as "no brawler," and gives this marginal rendering: "Not quarrelsome over wine."
    - 1) "No more dangerous and hurtful practice is known to man than the use of strong drink. An elder must set a good example in all things" (Lipscomb, p.147).
    - 2) "The root meaning goes back to the effect of wine on the individual who carries over it. 'Given to much wine' is the translation in some versions. The usage of the word in the language of the time supports the idea of a 'rowdy.' Hence an elder is not to be a rowdy. Those who drink are usually disturbers of the peace" (Roberts, p.29).
    - 3) The qualifications of elders and deacons are for the purpose of bringing men to the leadership who have the highest qualities. These qualities separate them from the rest of the church, making them to be superior to the others in these areas. If an elder is not to be given to wine,



does this imply that the other saints may be given to wine? If a deacon is not to be given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:8), does this imply that the other saints may be given to much wine? If it is the case that elders and deacons may drink intoxicating wine in moderate amounts, would not this mean that other Christians could drink intoxicating wine in immoderate amounts? Or does it mean that all saints, including elders and deacons, must abstain from alcoholic drink? The latter is the prudent position. What proves too much, proves nothing.

- 4) The word *wine* in both the Old and New Testaments is used in reference to both intoxicating and non-intoxicating liquids. The context must determine which is intended.
3. A bishop must **not be a striker**.
  - a. A striker is one who does not control his temper, who is ready to strongly resent insult or wrong, whether real or imagined, one who is of a quarrelsome disposition and ready to strive with another.
  - b. Paul uses the term in the verse in contrast to being patient and gentle of spirit. A violent person is not suited for the eldership, and his standing with Christ is questionable.
  - c. This quality of heart does not prohibit the elder (or any other Christian) from strongly opposing sin or error. Paul was one who possessed this disposition in a highly developed state, but he did not ignore the opposition. Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
4. A bishop must **not be greedy of filthy lucre** (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7).
  - a. The ASV omits this qualification. It is found in Titus 1:7 in both the KJV and ASV, so the trait is part of the requirements.
  - b. In Titus 1:7, the elder is not to be given to filthy lucre; in the text, he is not to be greedy of it. An elder must not seek financial gain through any base or dishonorable means; he must not be involved in any shady or illegal business.
5. A bishop must **not be a brawler**.
  - a. This word is from *amachos*, and means literally "not fighting (*a*, negative, *mache*, a fight, combat, quarrel), primarily signifying invincible, came to mean not contentious" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.234).
  - b. Jude 3: "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." The word "contend" in Jude 3 "signifies to contend about a thing, as a combatant (*epi*, upon or about, intensive, *agon*, a contest), to contend earnestly, Jude 3. The word 'earnestly' is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.233).
  - c. 2 Timothy 2:24-26: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive [*machesthai*]; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."
6. A bishop must **not be covetous**. [The word used in the text is from *philarguros*].
  - a. "There are six words in the New Testament translated covet, covetous, and covetousness, as follows: *Epithumeo*, 'To fix the mind on' (Rom. 7:7); 'have a desire for, long for' (Jas. 4:2). *Philarguros*, 'One who wishes to have more; especially what belongs to others; greedy of gain' (I Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:5). *Oregomai*, 'To extend the arms for anything; to stretch oneself out in order to grasp something' (I Tim. 6:10). *Pleonexia*, 'To wish to have more; greedy desire to have more' (Col. 3:5; II Pet. 3:5). There is only one good sense in which covet is used, as in I Corinthians 12:31, 'But covet earnestly the best gifts.' Here *zeloo* is used and means literally, 'To be zealous for, to be zealous in the pursuit of good' (Rev. 3:19)" (Hearn, MSOP, p.73).
  - b. Luke 12:15-21: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life

consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

- c. 1 Timothy 6:6-10: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
  - d. 1 Timothy 6:17-19: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
  - e. Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
  - f. Ephesians 5:5: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
  - g. Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
7. A bishop **must not be a novice**. "'Not a novice,' from *neophytos*, 'One newly planted,' a new convert, 'One who has recently become a Christian.' Such are incapable of responsibility and will need considerable time to grow in knowledge and wisdom. Green lumber that has not had time to cure or season, when used to build a house, will in time buckle and cause problems. Operators of loco-motives on railroads must spend much time in training before the throttle is turned over to them. Likewise pilots of ships or airplanes must go through rigorous training. It is unwise to turn the affairs of the household over to young people, especially a baby. Though one may be sixty years old when he obeys the gospel, that does not qualify him, but moral and spiritual qualities, aptitude and studiousness must be considered in addition to age" (Hearn, MSOP, pp.74f).
- a. Paul appointed men in the churches of Asia Minor to the eldership shortly after their conversion. It is likely that they had obtained and cultivated the leadership qualities in their former business, family, and religion connections (some of them were from a Jewish background), which would have prepared them for overseeing the flock of God. Paul could also have imparted to them spiritual gifts which would have provided them with the knowledge and wisdom to do the work.
  - b. One who is a novice is likely to be unable to handle the authority and responsibility inherent in the work of an elder. Many of us have known individuals who achieved success, prosperity, and lofty responsibility before they were able to handle either. A little success can be a great promoter of self-confidence, but it can also lift a man up in sinful pride.
  - c. "To push the new convert too quickly into positions of leadership tends to give him an exaggerated idea of his importance and leads to vanity and pride. And 'pride goeth before a fall' (Prov. 16:18). The condemnation of the Devil is probably objective and means the kind of condemnation to which the Devil is himself worthy or subject. He will be cast into Hell (Rev. 20:10). Many a young man as a young preacher, scholar, or leader has developed a swelled head over too-rapid progress,

which has led to his apostasy and spiritual ruin. Several years should lapse, and a man should definitely prove his ability before being selected to the presbytery" (Roberts, p.32).

8. An elder is **not to be self-willed**.

- a. This term is from the Greek *authades* which means: "self-pleasing (*autos*, self, *hedomai*, to please), denotes one who, dominated by self-interest, and inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will..." (Vine, Vol. 3, p.342).
- b. Cf. 2 Peter 2:10: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, **selfwilled**, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."
- c. "This has to be one of the most important qualification enumerated, despite the fact of so little attention being paid to it; once a self-willed, opinionated elder is appointed, then his prejudices, his opinions, his judgments and his vision become the automatic boundaries of the church's progress" (Coffman, p.322).
- d. "This does not mean that he is not to be firm and steadfast in his purpose, but that he must not be of such a stubborn spirit that he clings to his own will and refuses to listen to reason or facts. One in such position must have the sincere desire to fully investigate all sides, to know the full truth, and then be guided by it, and not by the self-will of his own" (Lipscomb, p.264).

9. An elder is **not to be soon angry**.

- a. He is not to be irascible, but a man who can control his temper, as well as his other emotions, who operates under control. A man who is easily irritated or provoked, is super-sensitive, is ill-tempered, or wrathful, could not serve well in the eldership. Indeed, one of this temperament must overcome this weakness if he is to be a faithful Christian.
- b. An elder (and all Christians) are to imitate Christ. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23). "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots" (Luke 23:34).
- c. Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."

C. Positive Qualifications of Elders.

1. Again, the passages that give the qualifications:

- a. 1 Timothy 3:1-7: "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 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?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
- b. Titus 1:5-11: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 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 there 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."

- c. 1 Peter 5:1-4: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."
- d. In 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul introduces the statement concerning the good work to which a bishop is called by the familiar observation that what he is about to say is a true or faithful saying. The man who desired to do the work of a bishop, was seeking to do a good work. The office of a bishop is a work, not a mere position. There is no greater work than that of overseeing the flock of God, and thus requires the greatest of qualifications and dedication.
- 1) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
  - 2) Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
- e. The qualifications which follow are preceded by the word **must**, which denotes requirements. These are not mere recommended qualities or desirable traits, but God-given requirements. "Some would eliminate arbitrarily some of these qualifications; others seek to 'reason them out of the list, hence, the verb 'must' would indicate they are not to be eliminated, any more than the conditions one 'must' obey in order to be saved from past sins. Cf. Acts 16:30; Acts 9:6b" (Hearn, p.8). Cf. Acts 2:5ff.
2. The qualified man must **desire the work**. No man is qualified to serve as a bishop who does not desire that work, even though he may meet all of the other qualifications listed. The demands of the work are so great that the strongest motivation is essential to fulfill the required functions. One is not apt to succeed as an elder if he needs regular commendations from the brethren. Words of encouragement and appreciation do not often come to the elder who is doing his job properly. Elders must be strong in the faith, able to withstand opposition from sinners and false teachers, have enough faith to remain loyal to Christ under all circumstances, and determined to fulfill his work.
  3. A bishop (elder, pastor) must be **blameless** [*anegleetos*], **as the steward of God** [1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6]. No man, even those with great spiritual powers, is beyond the appeal of temptation; no one can claim sinless perfection. The apostle Paul (1 Cor. 9:27) and the apostle John (1 John 1:6-10) both confessed that they were not beyond the possibility of sin. The apostle Peter clearly committed sin, thus was blameworthy (Gal. 2:11-14). No one today could claim to be the spiritual superior of either of these great men.
    - a. To be blameless, therefore, does not mean sinless perfection. The Greek term is defined to mean "that cannot be laid hold of, hence, not open to censure, irreproachable" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.131).
    - b. The ASV renders the word "without reproach" (in 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14). As a steward of God, his life must be beyond reproach; there must not be any regular practice in his life that is worthy of censure.
    - c. One who is blameless is one who is without guilt, one against whom no evil charge can be sustained. One is blameless who does not have a continuing practice of sin; he does not live in sin, even though he stumbles on occasion.
  4. A bishop must be **the husband of one wife** (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6).
    - a. Some have misinterpreted this condition to forbid polygamy, but not to require him to be married. But can one be the husband of one wife without being married? Again, notice the word *must*, which applies to this qualifying condition. If one does not meet the condition, he is unqualified to be an

- elder.
- b. The statement, "husband of one wife," affirms that a bishop must not have more than one living wife, and that he must have one wife.
  - c. It has been argued that the two statements ["a bishop must be the husband of one wife" and "a bishop must be married"] are "not parallel, for in I Corinthians 7:2,9, it says: 'Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.' Thus, one is not required to be a married person to be a Christian. This being true, then one can be an elder without being married. BUT, notice the reason for Paul's statement in I Corinthians 7:2: 'to avoid fornication' hence, everyone who cannot contain so as to avoid fornication is required to be married. The command to be married is bound upon everyone to whom the language is applicable. The language, 'husband of one wife' is applicable to the bishop hence he must be married (not applicable to all Christians...)" (Hearn, pp.8f).
  - d. What about an elder who loses his wife to death? If he is otherwise qualified, must he resign if his wife dies? Each of the qualifications listed is prefaced with the condition "must be." Furthermore, the elder must **be** the husband of one wife. The condition speaks of what the elder **has**, not what he once **had**. If the wife is dead, the elder no longer has a wife. A loyal wife is a continuing aide to the elder, furnishing her encouragement and support as he does his work.
  - e. "A married man certainly possesses advantages for such a work that are impossible to an unmarried man, and the experience of the world must confirm the wisdom of the requirement that the overseer shall be the husband of one wife. It may be well to add that one living wife is clearly meant, and that there is no allusion to the number of deceased wives he may have had" (J.W. McGarvey, *The Eldership*, p.57).
5. A bishop must be **vigilant** (1 Tim. 3:2).
    - a. This is from a Greek term which means "to be awake, cautious." The ASV renders the word "temperate." Elders are to be watchful over themselves and those under their charge. Sin separates the guilty from God and will cause the soul to be lost eternally.
    - b. Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
    - c. Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
    - d. Religious error must be avoided. Elders are under divine directive to protect their flock from it. Titus 1:9-11: "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 there 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."
  6. A bishop must be **sober** (sober-minded) [1 Tim. 3:2: Tit. 1:8].
    - a. This term "denotes of sound mind...hence, self-controlled, soberminded" (Vine, Vol. 4, p.44). If one is sober-minded, he is not given to frivolity, is not flighty or flippant, but is self-restrained and uses good sense. He is "not affected by passion or prejudice; well-balanced" (Webster).
    - b. An elder takes his work very seriously. The welfare of immortal souls is in his care. A man who is given to frivolity could not be expected to command the respect and obedience of others.
    - c. It is hardly necessary to say that one who is given such responsibility for the care of souls will completely shun intoxicating drink of all kinds.
  7. A bishop must be of **good behavior** (orderly - ASV) [1 Tim. 3:2].
    - a. "Not only must he be wise and self-restrained in himself, but his outward bearing must in all respects correspond to his inner life" (Lipscomb, pp.146f).
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- b. An elder will not be sloven or rude in his deportment; he will be a Christian gentleman in all instances; he will not be crude in speech or conduct. He will be tactful in his dealings.
8. A bishop must be **given to hospitality** (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8).
- a. The parallel statement in Titus 1:8 says the elder must be "a lover of hospitality." A desire to show hospitality fills his heart, and he devotes himself to that service.
  - b. To show hospitality is to entertain or receive a stranger (sojourner) into one's home as an honored guest and to provide the guest with food, shelter, and protection. This was not merely an oriental custom or good manners but a sacred duty that everyone was expected to observe. Only the depraved would violate this obligation. Hospitality is demonstrated in kindness and generosity shown to strangers or guests, at home or elsewhere.
  - c. "Hospitality probably grew out of the needs of nomadic life. Since public inns were rare, a traveler had to depend on the kindness of others and had a right to expect it. This practice was extended to every sojourner, even a runaway slave (Deut. 23:16-17) or one's arch enemy. Hospitality was regarded as a sacred obligation by the ancient Greeks and Romans, one that was approved by Zeus, the god and protector of strangers. The Egyptians claimed it as a meritorious deed in life. For the bedouins, it was an expression of righteousness. The word is not used in the Old Testament, but its elements are recognizable: Abraham and the three visitors (Gen. 18:1-8), Lot and the two angels (Gen. 19:1-8), Abraham's servant at Nahor (Gen. 24:17-33), Reuel and Moses (Ex. 2:20), Manoah and the angel (Judg. 13:15), Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10-11), and Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-11). The Pentateuch contains specific commands for the Israelites to love the strangers as themselves (Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:18-19), and to look after their welfare (Deut. 24:17-22). The reason for practicing hospitality was that the Israelites themselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Some acts of hospitality were rewarded, the most notable of which was Rahab's (Josh. 6:22-25; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). Breaches of hospitality were condemned and punished, such as those of Sodom (Gen. 19:1-11) and Gibeah (Judg. 19:10-25). The only exception was Jael who was praised for killing Sisera (Judg. 4:18-24). Hospitality seemed to form the background of many details in the life of Jesus and the early church (Matt. 8:20; Luke 7:36; 9:2-5; 10:4-11). It was to be a characteristic of bishops and widows (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Titus 1:8) and a duty of Christians (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9). It was a natural expression of brotherly love (Heb. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:8-9) and a necessary tool of evangelism. Furthermore, one might even entertain angels or the Lord unawares (Heb. 13:2; Matt. 25:31-46). Both the Didache, which contained early Christian instructions, and rabbinic literature provided guidelines for guests' behavior and their duration of stay. Guests were enjoined to act appropriately, to observe the rules of etiquette, and to avoid presuming upon their hosts" (Holman, Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan).
  - d. Hospitality is a requirement of every Christian. Hebrews 13:1-2: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Mark 12:30-31: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
9. A bishop must be **apt to teach** (1 Tim. 3:2).
- a. An elder needs the ability to teach (publicly and privately) in order to do his duty as an overseer of the flock. If a false doctrine or sinful practice is advocated in a public Bible study, in a sermon, in a song or prayer, or in a private setting, any elder present must be able to recognize and refute it. Titus 1:9-11: "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 there are many unruly and vain
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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."

- b. An elder is to have the ability and skill required to teach; if he does not have this capacity, he is to that extent disqualified to serve. There is always room for improvement in this matter. To meet this qualification, the individual must have demonstrated a measure of ability and skill, and have the willingness to improve himself in these areas.
  - c. "This is one of the most ignored and abused among the qualifications. It is translated from the Greek *didaktikos*, and means "Apt and skillful in teaching." This is one of the most important requirements for elders. This work demands that he have an adequate and accurate knowledge of the Scheme of Redemption, and be able to teach others. 'Teach' means to impart knowledge, but one cannot impart that which he does not have. Those without this skill may be classed merely as 'ruling elders,' which is without sanction in the New Testament. This qualification is not limited to private teaching, but demands that the elder be able to teach publicly, from the pulpit if necessary. Otherwise, how can he properly 'Feed the flock' (I Pet. 5:2) and expose and oppose false teachers (Tit. 1:9)? This qualification must not be set aside and treated lightly" (Hearn, MSOP, p.72).
  - d. Again, every Christian should seek to develop and utilize his ability to teach. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).
10. A bishop must be **patient** (I Tim. 3:3).
- a. The ASV has "gentle" in the place of "patient." The word is from *epiekes*, and "indicates a fair, mild, gentle, lenient, yielding spirit, one who is undisturbed by delays or obstacles, and who is willing to endure sufferings and persecutions (Jas. 1:3; I Pet. 2:19-20)" (Hearn, MSOP, p.73). James 1:3: "Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." 1 Peter 2:19-20: "For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God."
  - b. "Here the idea is that of mildness or of moderateness in one's temper or attitude toward others. Some people are unreasonable in their attitudes. They have no moderation in their ideas and can tolerate no opposition to their opinions. A false sense of 'authority' gives many people a domineering attitude. In modern times this has probably caused more church trouble than all other things put together" (Roberts, pp.29f).
  - c. The word is used in the verse as a contrast to being a striker or contentious. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."
  - d. This kind disposition does not forbid opposing sin or error. Titus 1:13: "...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Cf. Galatians 2:11-14; Matthew 23.
11. A bishop **must rule well his own house** (1 Tim. 3:4).
- a. "He who knows how to train children and lead them in the right way - in a kind and gentle manner so as to make worthy men and women of them - exercising the qualities given here for the bishop. The same qualities are needed for the proper training of a family that are needed for the training of a congregation" (Lipscomb, p.147).
  - b. "'Rule' is from *proistemi*, meaning 'to be over, superintend, preside over.' House refers to the whole family, including wife and children (Acts 16:31). Wives sometimes seek to be the 'power

behind the throne,' and dictate the policies of the congregation. Ephesians 5:23 teaches that the husband is the head (*kephale*) of the wife, which metaphorically means anything supreme, chief; and of persons, master, lord, or a husband in relation to wife. First Peter demands that wives be in subjection to their husbands. Paul affirms God's law to be that women are not to usurp authority over the husband (I Tim. 2:11-12). Experience with would-be 'she-elders' is always an unhappy one. Unruly, bossy wives disqualify otherwise good men. Wives should try to fulfil the Scriptures to help husbands to qualify" (Hearn, MSOP, pp.73f).

12. A bishop **must have his children in subjection** (1 Tim. 3:4).
  - a. "Children are also to be respectful for and in subjection to their fathers. When children attend services faithfully as long as they are at home, then as soon as they have graduated from high school desert the assembly and cease to be faithful, this indicates their father did not have proper control, did not rear them properly, therefore could be questionable as elder material. It should be observed, however, that not all children are of the same disposition. Twin horses may have the same trainer and training, and one be unruly, unresponsive. The same is true in human circles. However, when ALL the children become unfaithful upon leaving home, something is wrong. Questions on this topic seem to be endless. However, if one is faithful for a number of years after leaving parental guidance, and on his own departs from the faith, it is unlikely parents are to blame" (Hearn, MSOP, p.74).
  - b. "In Titus the qualification is 'having believing children.' This might indicate that the subjection which Paul has in mind is submission to his teaching and leadership in the church as well as in family life. If the child rebels against his authority not only in the home but in refusing obedience to the Gospel, the father would seem to lack the power to lead. There seems little doubt in Titus 1:6 Paul means that the children should be Christians, as in II Corinthians 6:15. This would not necessarily mean that all children would have to be old enough to be Christians, provided there was no exception among the older children. The question always comes: Must there be a plurality of children? The noun is plural, but it may have the generic sense which the plural noun has in I Timothy 5:4; Matthew 22:24; and many passages in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The wording, of itself, would not demand a plurality of believing children. On the other hand, the context of the passage with the demand for proved experience in rulership in the family situation as a prerequisite to a place in the situations of one child do not lend themselves to any demonstration of that ability for the simple reason that there is little give and take in such a family" (Roberts, pp.31f).
13. An elder is to have **faithful children**, who are not accused of riot or unruly (Tit. 1:6). "If any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, **having children that believe**, who are not accused of riot or unruly" (ASV).
  - a. The word translated "faithful" is from the same word used in Revelation 2:10, in the statement: "Be thou faithful unto death...." This is taken to mean that those children in a prospective elder's family who are old enough to obey the gospel, have done so. Little children would not be old enough to be described by the words "riot" and "unruly."
  - b. The prospective elder's children must not be accused of riot. "Riot" is from *asotia*, and means "an abandoned, dissolute life; profligacy" (Young); "prodigality, a wastefulness, profligacy (*a*, negative, *sozo*, to save)" (Vine, Vol. 3, p.299). The word is rendered "excess" in Ephesians 5:18. Vine also says that *aselgeia* ("lasciviousness") is synonymous to *asotia*.
  - c. The prospective elder's children must not be accused of being unruly. *Anupotaktos* means "not subject to rule (*a*, negative, *n*, euphonic, *hupotasso*, to put in subjection)" (Vine, Vol. 4, p.174). The word is translated "disobedient" in 1 Timothy 1:9. If these children are disobedient to their parents, they are disobedient to God (cf. Eph. 6:1-4).
  - d. "Children are also to be respectful for and in subjection to their fathers. When children attend



services faithfully as long as they are at home, then as soon as they have graduated from high school desert the assembly and cease to be faithful, this indicates their father did not have proper control, did not rear them properly, therefore could be questionable as elder material. It should be observed, however, that not all children are of the same disposition. Twin horses may have the same trainer and training, and one be unruly, unresponsive. The same is true in human circles. However, when ALL the children become unfaithful upon leaving home, something is wrong. Questions on this topic seem to be endless. However, if one is faithful for a number of years after leaving parental guidance, and on his own departs from the faith, it is unlikely parents are to blame" (Hearn, MSOP, p.74).

- e. "In Titus the qualification is 'having believing children.' This might indicate that the subjection which Paul has in mind is submission to his teaching and leadership in the church as well as in family life. If the child rebels against his authority not only in the home but in refusing obedience to the Gospel, the father would seem to lack the power to lead. There seems little doubt in Titus 1:6 Paul means that the children should be Christians, as in II Corinthians 6:15. This would not necessarily mean that all children would have to be old enough to be Christians, provided there was no exception among the older children. The question always comes: Must there be a plurality of children? The noun is plural, but it may have the generic sense which the plural noun has in I Timothy 5:4; Matthew 22:24; and many passages in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The wording, of itself, would not demand a plurality of believing children. On the other hand, the context of the passage with the demand for proved experience in rulership in the family situation as a prerequisite to a place in the situations of one child do not lend themselves to any demonstration of that ability for the simple reason that there is little give and take in such a family" (Roberts, pp.31f).
- f. In the parallel statement in 1 Timothy 3:4, Paul says that the elder must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Some Bible students understand the statement in Titus 1:6 to mean that the elder's children are to be faithful to parental rule, and not necessarily faithful Christians. However, it is more accurate to see that in the passage from Timothy, Paul emphasizes the obedience of the children to their father, and in Titus, their faithfulness to the Lord. If a young person is faithful to Christ, he will be obedient to his father (Eph. 6:4); and if he is obedient to his father, he will be led to obey the gospel at the proper time.
- g. More on the plurality of children.
  - 1) Genesis 21:7: "And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born *him* a son in his old age." Sarah had only one child, but her statement is still correct: she used the plural to include the singular. One child was sufficient to make the statement true.
  - 2) Leviticus 25:39-41: "And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: *But* as an hired servant, *and* as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, *and* shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee: And *then* shall he depart from thee, *both* he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return." This provision of the Mosaic Law applied to the man who had only one child as well as the one who had more than one.
  - 3) Matthew 19:29: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." The promise applies to the individual who has one child as well as to the one who has more than one child.
  - 4) 1 Corinthians 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." Again, the plural includes the singular.

- 5) Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This obligation applies to the father who has only one child and the father who has more than one.
  - 6) 1 Timothy 5:4,9-10: "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God....Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." The widow would qualify if she had only one child; the plural is used to include the singular. If Paul had used the singular word *child*, that would have cast doubt on the qualification of the widow who had more than one child; but his use of the plural word *children* clearly includes the widow who has only one child.
  - 7) "All you with children..." includes those with one or several children.
  - 8) "There is no escape from the fact that if I Timothy 3:4 means the bishop must have a plurality of children to the exclusion of only one, all these other passages that are similar must carry the same meaning. But if in all these other passages where the plural 'children' is understood to mean offspring without regard to definite number - including the singular with the plural - I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 have the same meaning" (Phillips, p.150).
- h. If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Lord's church? By having guided his family and having reared his children to be responsible citizens in society and in the church, a man will have demonstrated the knowledge, ability, leadership, and example which are essential ingredients of a good elder. On the other hand, if one has met with failure in rearing his children and guiding his family, he is not likely to be able to be a good elder. This does not mean that the prospective elder must be a perfect parent, for perfection in parenting is impossible.
- 1) The purpose of the qualification of having obedient, faithful children is not to prove the elder's potential to produce children; it is to demonstrate to the church that he has the ability, wisdom, knowledge, and skill to bring up his children so that they will obey the gospel and be obedient to him and faithful to the Lord.
  - 2) The man who qualifies for the eldership in this point has shown his ability to lead, train, guard, and control his children, without regard to the number of his offspring. It might be more difficult to rear one child up to this point than several, for there are special challenges to bringing up an only child.
  - 3) If two children better qualifies the elder for his work, would twelve children give him even greater qualification? Not necessarily.
  - 4) If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Lord's church? By having guided his family and having reared his children to be responsible citizens in society and in the church, a man will have demonstrated the knowledge, ability, leadership, and example which are essential ingredients of a good elder. On the other hand, if one has met with failure in rearing his children and guiding his family, he is not likely to be able to be a good elder.
- i. There are some hard questions that must be addressed at times regarding an elder and his children. These questions include these:
- 1) What if one or more of the elder's children become unfaithful? Does this disqualify him for the work? If they are still under the father's authority, this would detract from his qualifications, and it would adversely affect his influence as an elder.
  - 2) Suppose he has seven children, all of whom obey the gospel, but three later apostatize? What if three of these do not obey the gospel? Suppose the man has five children, and two of them either do not obey the gospel or fall away? Has he shown his ability to rear children? Has he

shown he has ability to govern the church? Remember, twin horses have been raised and trained by the same man, with one of them being rebellious, while the other accepted the training.

- 3) A man, having only two children, and they are both faithful Christians, is appointed to the eldership. When his two children are seventeen and eighteen years of age, they both are killed in a tragic accident. Does their death disqualify the father from the eldership? Suppose they were about thirty years of age when they die? In neither case should the elder be considered unqualified, for he effectively trained his children right, and it was not his fault that they died.
  - 4) Every person has free moral agency. There is no guarantee that any person who obeys the gospel will maintain an unending faithfulness to Christ. There is a continual danger that faces every child of God that he might fall away (1 Cor. 10:12; 9:27; 1 John 1:7-10). There is no parent (elder or non-elder) who can so-rear his children that their faithfulness to the gospel is guaranteed never to falter. The teacher is not responsible for the apostasy of a genuine convert. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:11-15).
  - 5) "Suppose an elder of two fine Christian children who are both in their late teens or early twenties are killed together while traveling in an automobile. Yesterday he had children; today he is void of children. Does this mean he can no longer serve? Not at all! He had children - obedient children - when appointed. He met the qualification. Paul's purpose in setting forth this qualification in the Timothy table of requirements was to suggest that if a man knew not how to take care of his household, how shall he take care of God's church. But if they were both in their late teens or early twenties, then practically all the days of their lives under his roof and under his paternal protection are now in the past. The very fact of their being taken in this tragic manner would not deprive him of the practical training in household direction characteristic of the past. With such an experience as this in his background he will be in position to comfort the flock over which he serves as overseer when similar tragedies strike families. Much of an elder's work is in the realm of dealing with those who face tragedies along the pathway of life. In no sense of the term should either he or the congregation think of his resignation on such grounds as the foregoing" (Taylor, pp.85f).
  - 6) "An elder is responsible for his children as long as they are under his rule at home. He is responsible for their behavior and the training he gave them while they were under his leadership. If they were Christians then and were faithful in the same while under his influence, then he met the qualification set forth in the Timothy and Titus tables of eldership requirements. It seems grossly unfair to say of an elder who has a son or daughter forty or more years of age and who has been gone from home for twenty or more years who is now not faithful as should be the case that this godly elder can no longer serve. Yet this same son or daughter was faithful to the Lord all the days he or she lived under the roof of the father. He saw to that and it now grieves his heart and sorrows his spirit that a son or daughter might not now be faithful" (Taylor, p.86).
  - 7) Such situations as the above should be handled on a case-by-case basis.
14. A bishop must **have a good report from those who are without**.
- a. "'Report' means to give a formal account; as a treasurer reports the receipts, and as a noun, an account of relation, particularly of some matter especially investigated. The word in this text is translated from *marturia*, which means 'In a legal sense, of testimony before a judge. In an ethical sense, of testimony concerning one's character.' Third John 12 states, 'Demetrius hath good report

of all men, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record, and ye know that our record is true.' Any member of the church who conducts himself in an ungodly manner is a hindrance to the cause of Christ, especially one who is supposed to be in a position of authority and to be an example to the flock and the world. A shepherd, therefore, must have the respect of those not Christians" (Hearn, MSOP, p.75).

- b. If a man is considered to be a poor worker on the job, or if his honesty is suspect in the business world, he would make an equally poor leader of the church. His influence in the community would be weak at best, and most likely negative; his influence on the church would likewise be negative or ineffectual. An elder's life is to be an example for the flock.
  - c. 1 Peter 5:1-3: "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (NKJ).
15. A bishop must be a **lover of good** (Tit. 1:8).
- a. The text says "good men," but the margin has "good things." The ASV renders it as "lover of good" and the NKJ has "lover of what is good." It is God's will that every Christian be a lover of all people, not just those who are good (Matt. 5:44-48).
  - b. This qualification extends beyond loving only those who are good, to include love for all good people, things, and practices. Titus is told to "be ready to every good work" (3:1). Christians are instructed to "do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).
  - c. Arndt & Gingrich defines the term [*φιλαγαθον*] as "loving what is good" (p.866). "A lover of good or benevolence generally. [The appellation points here to that large heart which finds room for sympathy with all that is good and noble and generous.]" (Lipscomb, p.265).
16. An elder is to be **just**.
- a. "Dikaios (*dikaios*) was first used of persons observant of *dike*, custom, rule, right, especially in the fulfilment of duties towards gods and men, and of things that were in accordance with right. The Eng. Word 'righteous' was formerly spelt 'rightwise', i.e., (in a) straight way. In the N.T. it denotes righteous, a state of being right, or right conduct, judged whether by the Divine standard, or according to human standards, of what is right. Said of God, it designates the perfect agreement between his nature and his acts (in which he is the standard for all men)" (Vine, vol. 2, p.283). To be just is to be righteous.
  - b. The elder's dealings with men are to be fair and impartial. 1 Timothy 5:19-21: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."
  - c. The elder's life is to be a demonstration of obedience to God's will. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:17,18; 7:1).
  - d. Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."
  - e. "The one who is just is one who tries strictly to perform his duties toward men - the duties which integrity and justice seem imperatively to ask of him in his relation with his neighbor." (Lipscomb, p.265).

17. An elder is to be **holy**.
- To be holy is to be pious and devout, and is the opposite of that which is unrighteous or defiled. "The three words - sober, just, holy - present the three sides of human duty - duty to oneself, duty to men, and duty to God. In all these the man of God is to show himself a true man" (Lipscomb, p.265).
  - The holy man is one who is undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure, holy, pious (Thayer, p.456).
18. An elder is to be **temperate**.
- One who is temperate is one who maintains self-control. "Holding all his desires and appetites in restraint so moderate in their gratification. The bishop not only must be able to control his tongue, his eyes, and his hands, but must show a just and wise moderation" (Lipscomb, p.265).
  - "We apply the term, now, with reference to abstinence from intoxicating liquors. In the Scriptures, it includes not only that, but also much more. It implies control over *all* our passions and appetites" (Barnes, p.269).
  - Acts 24:25: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."
  - Galatians 5:23: "Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."
  - 2 Peter 1:5,6: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness."
  - 1 Corinthians 7:9: "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." 1 Corinthians 9:25: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."
19. A bishop must be able to **hold fast the faithful word [exhort and convince gainsayers]** (Titus 1:9).
- "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 there 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." (Tit. 1:9-11). "Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (ASV).
  - Elders are not to allow any false doctrine to be taught or practiced within the congregations over which they serve. They are to stand fast for the truth.
    - 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
    - Titus 2:7-8: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."
    - Jude 3: "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."
  - An elder is required to hold fast to the faithful word. The word of God is trustworthy and reliable; it always says the same thing on every subject; it is not susceptible to changing its position with the passage of time. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:9: "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."
    - "That is, the true doctrines of the gospel. This means that he is to hold this fast, in opposition to one who would wrest it away, and in opposition to all false teachers, and to all systems of false

- philosophy. He must be a man who is firm in his belief of the doctrines of the Christian faith, and a man who can be relied on to maintain and defend those doctrines in all circumstances..." (Barnes, p.269).
- 2) "The primary duty of elders, namely, that of watching over and protecting the flock of God, requires that they be students of the holy scriptures, having a broad knowledge of what is and what is not sound doctrine" (Coffman, p.323).
  - 3) One of the qualifications elders must meet is that of being able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). This verse shows that the depth of an elder's knowledge must be sufficient to expose error and teach truth, along with the capability of putting a stop to the efforts of false teachers to spread their error.
- d. Using sound doctrine, elders are obligated to exhort and convince gainsayers. "This shows *why* an elder must be apt to teach and must possess an accurate and extensive knowledge of the holy truth revealed in the scriptures. A moment later, Paul will give further information regarding the particular gainsayers he had in view here; but, apart from that, there are evil and seductive teachers in all generations who exercise their subversive talents for private gain, doing much damage to the faith of many. Such men must be prevented from achieving their evil purpose; and an eldership not having sufficient ability in the scriptures is unequal to such a task" (Coffman, p.323).
- 1) The Greek term (*elencho*) translated "convince" means "(a) to convict, confute, refute, usually with the suggestion of putting the convicted person to shame; see Matt. 18:15, where more than telling the offender his fault is in view; it is used of convicting of sin, John 8:46; 16:8; gain-sayers in regard to the faith, Tit. 1:9..." (Vine, Vol. 1, p.239).
  - 2) "Gainsayers" is from a Greek term (*antilego*) which signifies "to contradict, oppose, lit., say against..." (Vine, Vol. 2, p.140). "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and **gainsaying** people" (Rom. 10:21). "*Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to please *them* well in all *things*; **not answering again**" (Tit. 2:9).
- e. Even on the island of Crete, the Judaizers were active, attempting to pervert the faith of the Gentile Christians. These people had ostensibly obeyed the gospel, but Paul elsewhere described some of them as having only gone through the outward motions.
- 1) Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
  - 2) These Jews who had "come into the church" but were more interested in getting the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law than there were in following the gospel only, were a primary source of trouble for the Lord's people. Paul says that "they of the circumcision" were especially bothersome. Acts 15:1,2,5: "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question....But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."
- f. Describing those who were creating trouble for the saints, Paul speaks of the many who were unruly, vain talkers, and deceivers. The Judaizers were the principal ones the apostle had in mind.
- 1) The word for unruly (*anupotaktos*) is also used in verse six. *Anupotaktos* means "not subject to rule (*a*, negative, *n*, euphonic, *hupotasso*, to put in subjection)" (Vine, Vol. 4, p.174). The word is translated "disobedient" in 1 Timothy 1:9.
  - 2) These trouble-makers were vain talkers. A vain talker is one whose words are meaningless. In the context, Paul uses the expression to describe religious vain talkers. The term is akin to the

- "vain jangling" of 1 Timothy 1:6-7, where the apostle makes a very similar statement: "From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."
- 3) These discord-producers were deceivers. In order to convince others to accept his doctrine, a false teacher must deceive his victims. He usually includes enough truth to give his teachings an appearance of rightness, but when one measures them by God's word, their unreliability is obvious. It is essential that we know the Bible! Cf. Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 5:17; 2 Corinthians 2:11.
- g. The mouths of these false teachers must be stopped, and elders are to have the knowledge, will, and ability to attend to this unpleasant task. The Greek term (*epistomizo*) "means, properly, to check, or curb, as with a bridle; to restrain, or bridle in; and then, to put to silence. It is, of course, implied here that this was to be done in a proper way, and in accordance with the spirit of the gospel" (Barnes, p.269).
- 1) This passage illustrates the authority with which God empowers elders to do their work. If the elders of every congregation always did their duty, false teaching could be kept out of the body of Christ! It is obvious that few did so in the latter part of the first century and in the ensuing years, or else the great apostasy could have been begun then.
  - 2) "Here is ample authority for the elders of the church to exercise decisive control over the teaching from their pulpits, or even privately. The widespread notion that congregations should democratically hear any kind of teaching that comes along is incorrect. Purity of a church demands that the fountain from which it drinks must be pure. Elders have both the right and the duty to silence unsound, subversive and inaccurate teaching" (Coffman, p.324). Some elders may be more concerned over someone getting paint on the carpet than in the fallen state of a wayward member or over some false doctrine being taught or practiced in the congregation.
- h. False teachers not only destroy their own souls, but the souls of their followers. A false teacher usually works under cover in a congregation until he gains enough supporters to take control. If he can conquer one member of a family, oftentimes he will also contaminate the entire family. The word "subvert" means "to overthrow" (cf. John 2:15). "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18).
- i. The means used by these wicked men is their false doctrine. It does not matter that the false teacher may be sincere, or that his disciples honestly think they are doing right; anyone who believes and practices religious error is wrong.
- 1) 2 Timothy 4:2-4: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."
  - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- j. The cause for their evil work is filthy lucre. They do it for the monetary gain they receive. "That is, they inculcate such doctrines as will make themselves popular, and as will give them access to the confidence of the people....Religion is the most powerful principle that ever governs the mind; and if a man has the control of *that*, it is no difficult thing to induce men to give up their worldly possessions. In all ages there have been impostors who have taken advantage of the powerful principle of religion to obtain money from their deluded followers" (Barnes, p.270). Jim Jones duped hundreds of people into his accepting him as their spiritual guide, and evidently turned over to him their money and property. He and 900 of his disciples committed suicide or were killed.

**Negative Qualifications of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11)**

<b>QUALIFICATION</b>	<b>PASSAGE</b>
Not given to wine	1 Timothy 3:3
No striker	1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7
Not greedy of filthy lucre	1 Timothy 3:3
Not a brawler	1 Timothy 3:3
Not covetous	1 Timothy 3:3
Not a novice	1 Timothy 3:6
Not self-willed	Titus 1:7
Not soon angry	Titus 1:7

**Positive Qualifications of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11)**

<b>QUALIFICATION</b>	<b>PASSAGE</b>
Must be blameless	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6
The husband of one wife	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6
Having children in subjection	1 Timothy 3:4-5
Having faithful children	Titus 1:6
Vigilant	1 Timothy 3:2
Sober	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
Of good behavior	1 Timothy 3:2
Given to hospitality	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
Apt to teach	1 Timothy 3:2
Patient	1 Timothy 3:3
Rule well his own house	1 Timothy 3:4
Of good report from those without	1 Timothy 3:7
Lover of good men	Titus 1:8
Just	Titus 1:8
Holy	Titus 1:8
Temperate	Titus 1:8
Holding fast the faithful word	Titus 1:9



### Comparison of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11

1 Timothy 3:1-7	Titus 1:5-11
Desires the Work	
Blameless	Blameless
Husband of One Wife	Husband of One Wife
Vigilant	
Sober	Sober
Of Good Behavior	Just
Given to Hospitality	Lover of Hospitality
Apt to Teach	Able to Exhort and Convince
Not Given to Wine	Not Given to Wine
No Striker	No Striker
Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre	Not Given to Filthy Lucre
Patient	Not Soon Angry
Not a Brawler	Not Self-willed
Not Covetous	
Rule Well His Own House	
Have His Children Under Subjection	Have Faithful Children
Take Care of Church	
Not a Novice	
Have Good Report Among Outsiders	
	A Lover of Good
	Holy
	Temperate

#### D. The Duties of Elders.

1. The "office" of an elder is not a mere official position, but a **work**. "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1). One who is a Christian in name only is not a genuine Christian; one who is an elder only in name is not a genuine elder. The work of elders is indicated by the various terms which denote their office.

##### a. Elder.

- 1) "The title *Elder*, which is most frequently used by the Apostles, and which is still the most popular of these titles, obtained an official signification among the Jews long before its adoption into the [Lord's] Church. Originally it designated the older men, or heads of families in Israel, who exercised a patriarchal government over their posterity: see Ex. 4:29; 19:7. In the days of Christ it had become the title of the rulers of the Jewish synagogues, and of one of the classes composing the Sanhedrim. Reliable information in reference to the functions of the office among the Jews is quite meagre; but it is sufficient to justify the assertion that those who enjoyed the title exercised authority in some capacity. When it was adopted, therefore, into the [Lord's] Church, it brought with it at least this general idea, that those to whom it was applied were rulers in the church. The exact nature and limits of their authority it [the word elder] could not of course designate" (J.W. McGarvey, *The Eldership*, p.20).
- 2) "The responsibility of the elders is continual from day to day in the congregation over which they rule. They have not been appointed to 'let another do the work' of overseeing and tending the flock, because only the elders can do the work of elders....In some localities the bishops have tried to transfer all the responsibilities of their office to the preacher. This is impossible in God's plan....Preachers can not scripturally assume the duties of the eldership for three well defined reasons: (1) The elders can not delegate the duties that are peculiarly their own to anyone. (2) Preachers are often not qualified according to the Bible to be elders. (3) No preacher, as such, has authority to take the duties of the elders" (H.E. Phillips, *Scriptural Elders and Deacons*, pp.190).
- 3) The term *elder* is used because it is indicative of wisdom gained over many years of experience and study. In most societies, respect is taught for the elderly. The accumulation of years does not necessarily provide the individual with either knowledge or wisdom, but those who meet the qualifications of the New Testament will possess both in sufficient abundance to oversee the flock. The respect that the flock has for them in regards to their age, wisdom, knowledge, and God-given authority will cause those saints to be submissive to the rule of the eldership.
- 4) Age itself is not the qualification, but those who have the qualification need many years of study and experience to develop the qualifications of the office. Those who possess the traits required for the work are almost invariably those who are older in years.

##### b. Overseer (*episcopos*: bishop).

- 1) "The term *episcopos* brought with it a more clearly defined significance, and furnishes more definite information in reference to the duties of the office. Among the Athenians it was the title of 'magistrates sent out to tributary cities, to organize and govern them.' ...Among the Jews it had very much that variety of application which the term overseer now has in English. It is used in the Septuagint for the officers appointed by Josiah to oversee the workmen engaged in repairing the temple, 2 Ch. 34:12,17; for the overseers of workmen employed in rebuilding Jerusalem after the captivity; Ne. 11:5,14; for the overseers of the Levites on duty in Jerusalem; Ne. 11:22; for the overseers of the singers in the temple worship; Ne. 12:42; and for subordinate civil rulers; Jos. Ant. 10. 4. 2. In all these instances it designates persons who have oversight of the persons for the purpose of directing their labors and securing a faithful performance of the tasks assigned them. Such a word when applied to a class of officers in the [Lord's] Church, necessarily carried with it the significance already attached to it. It indicated,

both to Jew and Greek, that the persons so styled were appointed to superintend the affairs of the church, to direct the activities of the members, to see that everything was done that should be done, and that it was done by the right person, at the right time, and in the right way. Anything less than this would be insufficient to justify the title *overseer* as it was currently employed in that age" (McGarvey, *ibid.*).

- 2) "The word *Overseer* signifies one who superintends or oversees. This gives us the idea of **ruling** as a part of the duties of the elder. This rule is not unlimited, but one that must conform to the standard of Christ. A ruler is one who exercises authority; in this case delegated authority. This rule is confined to the 'flock which is among you'" (Phillips, *ibid.*, p.191).
  - 3) The word used here [bishop: overseer] necessarily includes authority to act within the realm of his God-given responsibility. The elders cannot formulate or annul any part of God's word; they cannot make any changes to it. Their authority is to see that the word of God is followed in the congregation where they serve. They are authorized to make decisions and take action in the realm of expediency [i.e., when to meet; how to use the contributions; and other such matters].
- c. Shepherd (pastor).
- 1) "The title Shepherd is still more significant than either of the other two. The Jewish shepherd was at once the ruler, the guide, the protector, and the companion of his flock. Often, like the shepherds to whom the angel announced the glad tidings of great joy, he slept upon the ground beside his sheep at night. Sometimes, when prowling wolves came near to rend and scatter the flock, his courage was put to the test: (Jno. 10:12); and even the lion and the bear in early ages rose up against the brave defender of the sheep. 1 Sam. 17:34-36. He did not *drive* them to water and to pasturage; but he called his own sheep by name, so familiar was he with every one of them, and he *led* them out, and went *before* them, and the sheep *followed* him, for they knew his voice. Jno. 10:3,4" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, pp.23f).
  - 2) Old Testament passages emphasize the idea of shepherds.
    - a) Psalms 23: "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."
    - b) Isaiah 40:11: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young."
    - c) Jeremiah 23:1-4: "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD."
    - d) Ezekiel 24:1-23.
  - 3) "With such a history, the word shepherd came into the terminology of the church with a most clearly defined secondary meaning. When applied as a title in the church it necessarily represented its subject as the ruler, the guide, the protector, and the companion of the members of the church. When Paul and Peter, therefore, exhorted the elders to be shepherds to the flock

of God, all these important and tender relations were indicated by the word" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, p.24). Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." 1 Peter 5:2: "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."

- 4) "This exhortation, or rather this apostolic command [Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2], has failed to make its due impression on the English reader, because of the very inadequate translation of *poimaino* in the common version. It occurs eleven times, and is seven times rendered *feed*, and four times *rule*. When connected with church work it is uniformly rendered *feed*. No doubt the translators intended by this rendering to make their version intelligible to their uneducated readers in England and Scotland, where very little is known of a shepherd's work except *feeding* the sheep through the long winters...Let it be noted, then, and never forgotten, that the term employed in these passages expressed *the entire work of a shepherd...*" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, pp.24f).
2. Elders are to take heed to themselves (Acts 20:28).
    - a. In their own lives, they are to be guided by the word of the Lord; the same standard which they apply to the members is also the standard by which they are governed. It is not enough to be as good as another person; one must meet the Lord's standard. 2 Corinthians 10:12: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."
    - b. Elders, and all others, are to take careful inventory of themselves. 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Cf. 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
    - c. Elders and potential elders need to ask themselves such questions as the following, and with an open, honest mind, give answer:
      - 1) "Do I have the willingness and ability to keep myself pleasing to the Savior?"
      - 2) "Do I have the ability to perform my duties as an elder so that God will be pleased with me?"
      - 3) "Do I have the will, the desire, and the competence to keep this congregation in the faith?"
      - 4) "Am I able to help lead this congregation in the performance of its God-given obligations?"
      - 5) "Am I able to act without partiality toward each member of the local church? Do I show any preference toward members of my own family, or to my close friends?"
      - 6) "Am I willing to put my heart into disciplining unfaithful members, even if a member of my own family or a close friend is the offender?"
      - 7) "Do I have the strength to endure unjust criticism, to make unpopular decisions, to stand up for the truth, to oppose error, and to do what is right, regardless of the consequences?"
      - 8) "Am I willing and able to give the time and effort necessary in order to discharge my duties as an elder in the Lord's church?"
      - 9) "Do I have the willingness to accept correction if I should stumble into an offense?"
  3. Elders are to take heed to the flock (Acts 20:28).
    - a. This duty cannot be done without knowing the members. As each personality differs, so the many problems of individual Christians differ. Elders must know their sheep in order to provide for their needs.
    - b. If elders are unconcerned over the welfare of the flock, the flock is in grave danger, and the elders thereby forfeit their right to be shepherds of the flock, and have placed their own souls in extreme peril.
    - c. To take heed to the flock is to have an honest and sincere concern for its welfare as a whole, and to be equally concerned over the welfare of each member.

- d. It involves caring for the members. When a problem occurs, the elders take whatever action the situation demands.
  - e. It involves visiting and praying for the sick. James 5:14: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."
  - f. It involves feeding, guiding, protecting, admonishing, and disciplining the flock, individually and collectively
4. Elders are to be ensamples to the flock.
    - a. 1 Peter 5:3: "Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Their lives are to be a pattern for the flock to imitate. This condition is given as the opposite of lording over the flock.
    - b. This is a good reason for elders to be older men; they will have had time to develop the Christian characteristics sufficiently to be good examples for others to follow. Only with the passage of time will great wisdom, knowledge, seasoning, and experience be obtained. Cf. Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
    - c. Preachers are expected to be good examples, but no more so than the elders. 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
  5. Elders are to take the oversight of the flock.
    - a. This involves watching for the souls of the members (Heb. 13:17).
    - b. This involves watching for grievous wolves: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).
    - c. Involves stopping the mouths of vain talkers: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision" (Titus 1:10).
    - d. Involves settling disputes and problems.
  6. Elders are to rule.
    - a. Those elders who rule well are worthy of "double honor" (i.e., financial support). "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5:17-18).
    - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves."
    - c. Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
  7. Elders are to feed the flock (Acts 20:28).
    - a. Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own

blood."

- b. 1 Peter 5:1-2: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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."
  - c. This involves teaching the members ["apt to teach"]. Hebrews 13:7: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation."
  - d. This involves rebuking the members: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:12-13).
  - e. This involves correcting wayward members, even withdrawing from the impenitent..
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 5:11-13: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."
    - 2) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
8. Elders are to teach the word of God.
    - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:12: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you."
    - b. Hebrews 13:7: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation."
  9. Elders are to be prepared to give account of the souls under their care. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).
  10. Elders are to be able to exhort and convict the gainsayers: "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 there 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" (Titus 1:9-11).
  11. Elders are to watch for grievous wolves: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).
  12. Elders are to admonish the church: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you" (1 Thess. 5:12).
  13. Elders are to take the lead in exercising discipline.
    - a. Offenses committed by members include those of a private nature (known only to a few). Matthew 18:15-18: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you,

Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

- b. Offenses committed by members include those of a public nature (known of several or many). 1 Corinthians 10:32: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."
  - c. Those to be disciplined include:
    - 1) The disorderly: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6).
    - 2) The negligent (Heb. 10:23-31).
    - 3) Busybodies: "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:11-15).
    - 4) Those who cause division: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).
    - 5) Those involved in immorality (1 Cor. 5).
14. Elders are to select teachers and preachers.
- a. Timothy was appointed.
    - 1) 2 Timothy 1:6: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."
    - 2) 1 Timothy 4:14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."
  - b. Elders follow the lead of the apostles, in directing the work of evangelism.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 4:17: "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."
    - 2) 1 Timothy 1:3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."
    - 3) 1 Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
    - 4) 1 Timothy 4:6: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."
    - 5) 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
15. Elders are to be interested in reaching the lost, near and far.
- a. There is a need for preachers and teachers to be sent into the field (Rom. 10:1-17).
  - b. Preachers were sent: "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:4-5).
  - c. The gospel is intended for all, and elders, who rule local congregations, are obligated to do all within their means to see that the truth is made available to as many as possible. Mark 16:15-16.

## The Qualifications and Work of Deacons

### A. Deacons in the Lord's Church.

1. 1 Timothy 3:8-13: "Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. Even so *must their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."
2. Men who aspire to the work of deacons are obligated to meet certain qualifications, just as do men appointed to serve as elders. The qualifications are different, but they are still demanding.
  - a. "Our English word "deacon" is simply a transliteration of the Greek word *diakonos*. The original word meant a servant, especially a table waiter (John 2:5,9), and then it had a general meaning of a servant of any kind (Matt. 22:13). It always had the idea of a willing service, not of slavery or bondservice. In the New Testament the word is used in the sense of 'service' or ministration of different kinds (Matt. 20:26; Col. 1:23; John 12:26). The verb form generally is translated by the English 'serve' when the general sense is apparent. Special uses of the word to designate particular areas of service are usually translated by the English 'minister.' Thus the apostles spoke of the 'ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4) as opposed to that of 'serving tables.' In this sense Paul often spoke of his companions who labored as evangelists and helpers as 'ministers' (Col. 4:7). In this sense it is synonymous with evangelist or preacher. There is also in the New Testament evidence of a technical use of the word to designate a special servant of the church. When this meaning is apparent from the context, the word is transliterated and we have the word 'deacon' or the verb 'serve as deacon,' as in I Timothy 3:10.
  - b. "As an illustration consider the uses of the expression 'minister' in the following governmental expressions: One wearing the title of President might say that he wants to be a 'minister' or 'servant' of the people. Here it is merely descriptive. But in the title 'Foreign Minister' it is a technical term.
  - c. "The technical use of the word 'deacon' is demonstrated for the New Testament by the following facts: It is listed in Philippians 1:1 along with 'bishops' and as distinguished from 'saints.' It is found in the listing of qualifications for a special group in...(I Tim. 3:8ff) as a parallel to the other special group - elders. Furthermore, the fact that the qualifications contain conditions not demanded of all Christians (i.e., 'Husband of one wife') is proof that the usage is not a general one" (Roberts, pp.34f).

### B. The Qualifications of Deacons.

1. A deacon **must be grave.**
  - a. The work a deacon is called on to accomplish is one that the Lord has given. It is important and necessary, and must not be entered into with flippancy.
  - b. A deacon, therefore, is to be grave, serious, sober-minded; he is not to be frivolous, obnoxious, undignified, uncouth, but be reverent, steady, and sedate.
2. A deacon **must not be double-tongued.**
  - a. One is double-tongued (*dilogos*) if he says one thing when in certain company, but something entirely different when with another group.
  - b. One who is double-tongued will say one thing when talking directly to a certain party, but says something else behind that person's back.
3. A deacon **must not be given to much wine.**
  - a. "Given to" [*prosecho*] is "to hold the mind towards, i.e., pay attention to, apply oneself to, adhere to..." (Strong). To "be given to" is from the Greek *prosecho* which means: "to give one's self up



to, be addicted to, engage in, be occupied with" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p.349).

- b. "No distinction is taught here between the amounts of alcoholic beverage elders and deacons are allowed to drink. 'Not given to wine' ('no brawler' - ASV) is from *paroinos*, meaning to be alongside of wine in the sense of lingering or tarrying with it. The ASV places the secondary meaning ('brawler') in the text, because one who drinks usually becomes quarrelsome. 'Not given to much wine' in reference to deacons is a totally different expression (more so in the Greek than in the English), referring to the hold (addiction) which wine has on those who freely imbibe it. The two passages represent two different ways of issuing warnings about the danger and evil of drinking wine. It is passing strange that some profess to see justification for drinking in two passages which warn men of the evils of the same!
    - 1) "The justification for 'social drinking' that many brethren (even elders and preachers) seek on the basis of this qualification for deacons is non-existent. Who is going to decide how 'much' it takes to equal 'much wine'? The drinker himself cannot do so, for by the second or third drink his judgment is impaired by alcohol.
    - 2) "If 'not given to much wine' means that it is all right to drink moderately, consistency would demand that 'Be not over much wicked' (Eccl. 7:17) grants permission to be somewhat wicked. Likewise, when Paul ordered, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body' (Rom. 6:12), one may as well argue he was actually giving license to sin as long as one does not completely yield to it. Would it be all right to steal or commit fornication 'moderately' as long as one did not become addicted to those practices? Such is the 'reasoning' of those who would defend drinking in any amount from I Timothy 3:8.
    - 3) "Further, if this passage authorizes 'moderate' drinking (I deny that there is such a thing), it does not merely justify moderate *consumption*, but moderate *addiction*! Notice: If 'not given (addicted) to much wine' means that one can drink some, it also means that one can be addicted to some wine. This obviously proves too much and therefore proves nothing.
    - 4) "Any interpretation of this passage which makes it contradict many Scriptures that elsewhere condemn strong drink (Prov. 20:1), those who drink it (I Pet. 4:3), and those who encourage others to drink it (Hab. 2:15-16) is obviously a false interpretation. There is no Scriptural authorization here for consumption of any amount of alcohol as a beverage for a deacon or any other Christian" (Dub McClish, MSOP, pp.105f).
  - c. The qualifications of elders and deacons are for the purpose of bringing men to the leadership who have the highest qualities. These qualities separate them from the rest of the church, making them to be superior to the others in these areas. If an elder is not to be given to wine, does this imply that the other saints may be given to wine? If a deacon is not to be given to much wine, does this imply that the other saints may be given to much wine? If it is the case that elders and deacons may drink intoxicating wine in moderate amounts, would not this mean that other Christians could drink intoxicating wine in immoderate amounts? Or does it mean that all saints, including elders and deacons, must abstain from alcoholic drink? To say the least, the latter is the prudent position. What proves too much, proves nothing.
4. A deacon must not be greedy of filthy lucre.
- a. "A deacon cannot be one who is covetous, greedy, and materialistic. This prohibition also rules out anyone who is involved in a dishonest or dishonorable means of profit. Greed will often cause a man to seek gain at the expense of righteousness, truth, and honesty, thereby rendering such gains 'filthy.' Although some may not exhibit this trait by dishonorable profiteering, they may do so by refusing to give to the Lord's cause as they have been prospered. The thrust of the qualification is to rule out any who are either materialistic or dishonest. Deacons must be men in whom spiritual principles have triumphed over material concerns to an observable degree. It is not surprising that the identical qualification is given for elders (Tit. 1:7)" (Dub McClish, MSOP,

p.106)

- b. *Filthy lucre* "means 'dirty money,' that is, money acquired through questionable or dishonest means; but more than that is meant. Any man whose chief end in life is the acquisition of wealth, or whose affections are primarily set upon the things of this life, or who has any inordinate love of material possessions - any such person should not be named as an elder [or deacon - bw] of the Lord's church" (Coffman, p.322).

5. A deacon **must hold the mystery of the faith.**

- a. The term "mystery" refers to the great plan of the gospel which God developed in his mind before the beginning of time. He knew by his infinite knowledge and wisdom that man would not remain obedient, and thus would need to be redeemed. God conceived the plan by which he would redeem man, but he kept it secret until the time was ripe for its revelation (Gal. 4:4). After it was revealed, it was no longer a mystery.

- 1) Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."
- 2) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
- 3) Ephesians 3:3-5: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
- 4) Colossians 1:25-29: "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."
- 5) Colossians 2:2: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."
- 6) Colossians 4:3: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."

- b. "The faith" is used in the New Testament as a reference to the gospel, which is a system of faith.
- 1) Ephesians 4:4-5: "*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism."
  - 2) Acts 6:7: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
  - 3) Galatians 1:23: "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."
  - 4) Jude 3: "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."
- c. "To hold the faith in a pure conscience, is to have the truth of the gospel in a pure heart. A mere intellectual attitude toward the gospel, without a righteous life, is not enough; deacons must retain a positive attitude toward the gospel, as it respects both their faith and their practice" (ALC, 1970,

p.199).

1) One must be sincere in his profession of Christianity, or else his religion is meaningless. 1 Timothy 1:19: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

2) "Paul made a great deal of the conscience; and, while a clear conscience does not prove one is right, an impure conscience most certainly proves one is wrong" (Coffman, p.182).

6. **A deacon must first be proved.**

a. Neither elders nor deacons are to be selected from the ranks of the inexperienced. New converts are not suitable for the eldership, and unseasoned men are not qualified to be deacons.

b. "A man is *first* to be proved or tested, and only if he is found blameless is he to serve as a deacon. Oftentimes, men are very careless about the appointment of both elders and deacons" (Dub McClish, MSOP, p.103).

c. A prospective deacon must have his life, ability, sincerity, steadfastness, and faithfulness tested; if he is manifestly deficient in one or more of these areas, he is unqualified for the work. If he is weak in attendance, for example, his influence for good will be more hurtful than helpful.

7. **A deacon must be found blameless.**

a. His conduct, words, and life must not contain a continuing practice or habit that is sinful. Even the best Christians are subject to occasional, isolated acts of sin (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 John 1:7-10). He must so live that no evil charge can be sustained against him (cf. Matt. 5:14-16).

b. "This qualification is also parallel to that given for bishops (1 Tim. 3:2,7). I do not understand this to mean that a man must never have any accusation or criticism of any sort brought against him, for no man could pass such a test. Rather, he must be blameless in regard to the qualifications listed. When new deacons are being sought, it is the responsibility of any member of the church to step forward with any information regarding a man's failure with respect to any of these qualifications. Sad experience teaches that it is much easier to 'make a deacon' of one who is unqualified than to 'unmake' one! The church is subject to grave harm when untested men are appointed as deacons" (Dub McClish, MSOP, p.104).

8. **A deacon must be the husband of one wife.**

a. "This is the identical phrase (in both Greek and English) to the one relating to elders (v. 2). Remember that 'must be' prefaces each of these inspired requirements for both bishops and deacons. This rules out deaconesses (women deacons) because no woman can be a 'husband of one wife.' This means that a deacon must be married, for one cannot be a husband without being married. A few brethren and some denominational commentators take the position (regarding elders *and* deacons) that Paul means *if* they are married they must have only one wife. That is not what Paul says. By this qualification all bachelors, polygamists, and men with unscriptural marriages are ruled out" (Dub McClish, MSOP, p.104).

b. In his wisdom, God ordained the necessity of a deacon being married to a faithful wife. There are many situations in which the deacon would be inadequate and unsuited, by talent or convention, to do certain things. Also, his loyal spouse would be of great encouragement and assistance to him in the performance of his duties.

9. **A deacon must rule well his children and his house.**

a. "Again this is the exact wording of the qualification of the previous section concerning elders. The qualification is here continued in about the same language, though shorter. Instead of 'having children in subjection' Paul says here 'ruling them.' This would follow as a matter of course. Paul does not say 'believing children' of the deacon as he does in Titus concerning elders' children" (Roberts, p.36).

- b. "The children of a man who would serve as a deacon should show the effects of proper training by their father. When a man allows his children to run wild or to rule the home, he demonstrates a woeful lack of moral courage or responsibility or both, and he fails this qualification, however much he may possess the others. 'Ruling one's own house' includes wife as well as children" (Dub McClish, MSOP, pp.104f).

C. Deacons Occupy a Position of Honor and Influence.

1. 1 Timothy 3:13: "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (KJV). "For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (ASV). "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (NKJ).
2. "The deacons that serve well gain to themselves a good standing - that is, as they care for the needy and afflicted and attend to their designated responsibilities, they gain skill in comforting and encouraging and teaching those who are in need of spiritual and material assistance. Of the seven men chosen to serve tables under the direction of the apostles, at least two of them - Stephen and Philip - emerged as great effective and dynamic evangelists....Deacons that serve well not only gain to themselves a good standing: but they also gain to themselves a good boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. This means that they gain confidence and courage, and they soon reach the point where they teach with boldness. The office of the deacon can be a base for greater work and influence for good in the kingdom" (Rex Turner, *Sound Doctrine*, "Deacons and Their Work").
3. "The word 'standing' means a position, a grade or rank, a step in a career. Stephen and Philip of the original seven went on to become well-known evangelists in the church. Most elders, perhaps, in the church today have previously served as deacons in the church. A job well done in one position indicates ability and invites the confidence of the church. Paul seems to say that the work of a deacon is a good place to start up the stairs of service to the church....Paul says that those who serve well also gain much boldness in the Lord. This word means freedom of action or speech, open disposition to do something. Some Christians seem timid to begin taking a public part in the work of the church. To serve as a deacon is a good place to try one's wings in public service for Christ" (Roberts, p.39).

D. The Work of Deacons.

1. "The role of deacons in the local church is subject to considerable misunderstanding. This is especially true regarding the relationship of elders and deacons as respective groups. Some have the concept that elders and deacons are somehow coordinate with each other; deacons are thought of as sort of 'co-elders' or 'junior elders.' I know of some cases where elders and deacons would regularly meet together in a local church, making decisions wherein everyone present had an equal voice. Obviously, if there are more deacons than elders (the usual case), the deacons could control any or every decision, or one elder and a few deacons could overrule the thinking of the majority of the elders. This cannot be right because the elders are overseers (the meaning of 'bishops') of the local church (Acts 20:17,28) and every member of the congregation must submit to their rule (Heb. 13:17). Deacons are servants (the meaning of the term) and must submit to the rule and oversight of elders like every other member. A servant has no authority except what is delegated to him by his overseers.
  - a. "Others have the concept that elders and deacons are independent of each other. Such people argue that elders have oversight of 'spiritual' matters, while deacons have oversight of material, physical, and financial matters, and neither has any authority in the field of the other. In the first place, it is impossible to divide the business of a local church into neat, separate 'packages' of 'spiritual' and 'material.' Everything pertaining to the work of the church should be considered 'spiritual' because it has a spiritual purpose behind it. In the second place, such a concept of 'independence' is anti-Scriptural. The church in Antioch sent its famine contribution to the elders, not the deacons, in Judea (Acts 11:30). Further, elders are charged with *all* of the oversight of *all* of the work of

*all* of the church (Acts 20:28).

- b. "There is yet another false concept of the relationship between elders and deacons that sees them as dependent on one another. This concept goes beyond the normal dependency all Christians should feel toward one another. This concept views the elders and deacons as somewhat like the House and the Senate in Congress, respectively. It would require the elders to pass on the ideas of the deacons, but also the deacons to pass on the proposals of the elders before any action could be taken. The aforementioned Scriptures expose the fallacy of this view, as they do the errors already discussed.
  - c. "There is no specific information in the New Testament to tell us the work of deacons. The nearest thing to a statement concerning their work is at the conclusion of the qualifications: 'For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus' (I Tim. 3:13). The key words here are 'served well'; it is the work of deacons to serve well in whatever responsibility they are given. Also, remember that the very meaning of *diakonos* connotes willing service....
  - d. "While the seven men appointed to serve in Jerusalem are not called 'deacons' in the text, the work of service performed by them may be considered typical of tasks that would be assigned to deacons. It seems obvious in the nature of the case that elders would want to assign and delegate to deacons many of the tasks relating to physical matters and 'busywork' in the local church, thus leaving them more free time for matters peculiar to the work of elders. So did the apostles with the seven men in Jerusalem (Acts 6:2-4).
  - e. "A failure of elders properly to assign and delegate various tasks to deacons produces a sad state of inefficiency and waste in the local church. It leaves elders doing work which they should have assigned to deacons, preachers trying to get their own work done plus doing the work neglected by the elders, and deacons with no assignments, wondering what they are supposed to be doing. The work of a deacon may be to supervise the church property, to administer a program of benevolent work, to organize and select men to serve at the Lord's table and lead prayers, or to coordinate the Bible class program. Any work that the elders assign that is Scriptural and is within his ability to perform should be willingly and diligently performed by a deacon" (Dub McClish, MSOP, pp.107-109).
2. The word *deacon* (s) appears five times in the New Testament:
    - a. Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."
    - b. 1 Timothy 3:8: "Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre."
    - c. 1 Timothy 3:12: "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."
    - d. 1 Timothy 3:10: "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless."
    - e. 1 Timothy 3:13: "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."
  3. Although the seven men selected to serve the church at Jerusalem are not specifically called deacons, Bible students generally think of them as deacons. Acts 6:1-6: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and

of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them."

- a. After an unknown amount of time, and the church had grown to a great membership, a problem developed involving the Grecian widows being neglected in the daily ministration. The Grecian widows were Jewish Christians with a background in the Greek world, speaking the Greek language, and had likely come to Jerusalem for the feast days of Passover and Pentecost where they had learned the gospel (Acts 2). Some scholars think that about four or five years had passed since the beginning of the church; if so, the ladies had survived their husbands and remained in Jerusalem. But they may have moved there from Grecian lands at some other time.
  - 1) The problem was that the Grecian saints perceived that the widows of the Grecian background were being neglected in the daily ministration. Nothing is said in rebuttal to this charge, so it appears that the charge was true. However, there is nothing to demand that we conclude the neglect was intentional. This was the first challenge to the unity which the church had always enjoyed. "The daily ministration" indicates that the brethren had a continuing practice of providing for the necessities of the widows. That was the purpose of the members selling property and goods (Acts 4:34-37).
  - 2) "The tendency of human nature is to murmur, complain, find fault, a very easy thing to do, the very word 'murmur' being made up of two infantile sounds - mur mur! There is no sense in it, no wit in it, no thought in it, being the cry rather of a brute than of a man, just a double groan!" (Spurgeon, as quoted by Coffman, p.122).
  - 3) The twelve (the 12 apostles, including Matthias) called the church together to discuss and resolve this problem. That a problem existed was not denied, but these inspired apostles knew that the problem could be resolved without their leaving the high calling of apostleship to serve tables personally. This initial statement may indicate that they had not personally been taking care of this ministration, or else they would have already left the word of God to serve tables. But it is most likely the case that they were overseeing the distribution, but could not continue to see to such a vast work and preach also. The church now numbered many thousands.
  - 4) The number of needy members was so large that the job had become too much for the apostles to oversee and still do their primary work. It was far more important that the apostles do the job for which they were selected and prepared to do, and let those others tend to this ordinary work. The preaching of the word is more important than helping the needy.
- b. At this point in the history of the Lord's church, elders had not been appointed [as far as we know]. We read of elders in the congregation later. There was only one congregation, and the apostles were seeing to its needs. These men about to be appointed would be servants of the church, working under the oversight of the apostles.
- c. The plan was for the church to search out from their number seven men who met the qualifications given by the apostles to be set over the work of distributing to the needy. No formula was given by the apostles by which the seven men were to be selected. But with the qualifications specified, all that was needed was to identify and bring to the apostles, those who met the criteria. There is nothing in the guidelines given to permit a general election. Spiritual qualifications, not popularity, were to be the deciding factor. The qualifications are given below.
  - 1) They must be of honest report. If their reputation was not sterling, there might be questions raised about their honesty in distributing the money and food. This qualification could be ascertained without undue effort.
  - 2) Full of the Holy Spirit. When this term is used in other places, the reference is usually to miraculous abilities. See Acts 2:1-4; 4:8. But in Ephesians 5:18f, it is clear that being filled with the Holy Spirit means to have the Spirit-given word in our hearts and lives (as the parallel verse shows: Col. 3:16). In the present case, therefore, either of these could be what is meant.

Certainly, a man who did not believe and obey the gospel himself should not be placed in such a responsible position. But it later develops that Stephen and Philip were men who had the power to work miracles. Did they have this ability prior to their selection to this work or did they receive it when they were appointed to the work through the laying on of the apostles' hands? We may not be able to know which was true, but from our point of view, it is relatively unimportant. It seems to this writer that this qualification required the candidates to have miraculous powers, at least prospectively. Not every Christian received a spiritual gift; hence, it might be the case that the candidates must be men who were able to receive a gift. The exercise of miraculous powers depended on the degree of faith possessed by the individual. Matthew 17:14-20; cf. Acts 3:16.

- 3) They were to be full of wisdom, "which means that they were to have practical sagacity, good sense, and sound judgment" (Boles, p.96). "How desperately this quality is needed in a delicate situation like that in Jerusalem! Those who have witnessed or been involved in a confused condition like this will readily understand Solomon's statement concerning the need for wisdom (Prov. 4:5-7)" (Claiborne, *ADL 1985*, p.120).
- d. When these men had been selected and appointed to the work, the apostles would give themselves continually to prayer and ministry of the word. The word "continually" may imply that they had been devoting part of their time to the work of distributing the food.
- 1) If it was essential for Jesus to spend much time in prayer to God during his public ministry, it was no less important for the apostles to do so in their great work. It is likewise essential that we spend a great deal of time in prayer. James 4:2. God answers prayers by his providence, not by miracle. While we may not understand exactly how his providence works, it is obvious to those who believe the Bible that his providence is efficacious and that he answers prayers. We are in need of his providence to help us find those who may be receptive to the gospel. Sincere and fervent prayers should attend our efforts every day. Let us pray for opportunities to reach the lost! (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12f; Col. 4:2-5; 1 Th. 3:1; Acts 19:8-20).
  - 2) The preaching of the word was the primary function of the apostles, and it remains the greatest part of the preacher's work. To preach and teach the gospel requires a continuing study of God's word, for one cannot teach what he does not know. Many of the truths presented by preachers are things he learned in the past, but to keep these things fresh in his memory, plus learn more and deeper truths, he must study!
- e. The plan was readily accepted by the brethren, and they set about to identify those men who met the qualifications given.
- 1) Stephen was chosen, who is described as being full of faith and the Holy Spirit. This may not suggest that the others were any less filled, but in view of what this man accomplished for the Lord, it is expected that such a tribute should be paid him at this juncture. Luke wrote Acts after the events portrayed had occurred.
  - 2) Philip is named next. He went on to become a great preacher of the gospel, carrying the truth to Samaria.
  - 3) Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, and Parmenas are not named elsewhere in the Bible. They likely did many good things for the cause of Christ, but only eternity will reveal to us what these great things were.
  - 4) Nicolas is identified as a Jewish proselyte from the city of Antioch. Irenaeus, a writer of the Ante-Nicene period, asserted that the Nicolaitanes of Revelation 2:6 were followers of this Nicolas. Doubt is cast on this assertion by another ancient writer, Victorinus, who suggested that certain heretics merely adopted the name of Nicolas to further their influence.
  - 5) We are told that each of the seven names are Greek names. But we are also told that Jews commonly had Greek, as well as Jewish, names. If all of these men were from Grecian lands, then a magnanimous spirit was shown by the brethren. But Boles suggested that, "Some have contended that the Greek names do not prove that these were all from the 'Grecian Jews'; they think

that three of the seven were Hebrews, three Grecians, and one a proselyte" (p.97). The truth is, we do not know the real back-ground of these men; it is sufficient for us to know that they were faithful men, who met the quali-fications given, and who discharged their obligations as was intended.

- f. These seven men were brought before the apostles; the 12 prayed and laid hands on them. This might very well have been the occasion when miraculous powers were conferred upon these seven (cf. Acts 8:14-17; 19:6; Rom. 1:11). We know that Stephen and Philip had spiritual gifts, and may safely conclude that the other five had them also. The Hebrews had long had the custom of laying hands on others on solemn occasions. "Jacob laid hands on the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:13,14); it is recorded also that Moses laid hands on Joshua (Deut. 34:9); the Levites were set apart to the service of the tabernacle by the imposition of hands (Num. 8:10); hands were laid on the scapegoat to impart to it the sins to be carried away (Lev. 16:21). The laying on of hands was a symbol of the impartation of the gifts and graces which were needed to qualify them for their new duties; this was accompanied with prayer that God would bestow the necessary gifts upon them" (Boles, pp.97f).

#### E. The Qualifications of The Wives of Elders and Deacons.

1. 1 Timothy 3:11: "Even so *must their wives be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (KJV). Other versions give the following translations of the verse:
  - a. "Women in like manner *must be* grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things" (ASV).
  - b. "Likewise *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things" (NKJ).
  - c. "*Their* wives also are to be serious, not gossips; temperate; faithful in all *things*" (English Study Bible).
2. If the apostle Paul had intended for his readers to understand that the qualifications given in this verse to be for female deacons, he would surely have made it plain.
  - a. "It is alleged that the word 'women' is ambiguous in the Greek, and well it may be; but in context the word has to mean wives. To make it read 'female deacons' is a gross transgression of the word of God. The verse says absolutely nothing about any female deacons; and the supposition that it does would mean that *no qualifications whatever* are laid down for the wives of elders and deacons, a fault that no man has the right to charge against the apostle Paul. This verse on the qualities of officers' wives is absolutely mandatory to be observed. The wrong kind of wife can ruin any elder or any deacon; and to make the qualifications in sight here applicable to a whole new class of church officials would be to make Paul guilty of a very glaring omission" (Coffman, p.183).
  - b. Paul would not have given a list of qualifications for the wives of deacons without also specifying qualifications for the wives of elders. Although this verse is situated in the midst of a discussion of the qualifications of deacons, it is also amid a discussion of the qualifications of elders. It cannot be the case that specifications are given for the wives of deacons (a lesser office) and none be given for the wives of elders (a greater office). Hence, it seems beyond question that the qualifications given in this verse are intended to be applicable for the wives of both elders and deacons. Both the elder and the deacon are required to the husband of one wife; this verse sets the standard for these wives.
  - c. "I suggest that Paul's reference to the women in the midst of the qualifications of elders and deacons is just that - a reference to women (or wives). It is my view that he is referring to the wives of both elders and deacons, since both must be 'husbands of one wife' to be qualified. But would merely being married to a wife of any sort meet the demands of the qualifications of these men? Hardly. Would not the women described in I Timothy 3:11 be peculiarly suited to complement the work of any elder or deacon? These qualifications for wives are best construed as extensions of the qualifications for elders and deacons, therefore" (Dub McClish, MSOP, p.110).
3. The wife of an elder or a deacon **must be grave**.
  - a. The husband (elder or deacon) must be grave, and so must be the wife. If she is flighty, frivolous,



or flippant, the serious work of her husband will be undermined. As the husband is to be grave, serious, sober-minded, reverent, steady, and serene, so must be his wife.

- b. Without the full cooperation of his wife, no elder or deacon can reach the full potential of his talents and opportunities. If the wife hinders his efforts, by direct intervention or by indirect influence, the elder or deacon will not succeed.
4. The wife of an elder or deacon **must not be a slanderer**.
  - a. In fact, no Christian who is a slanderer is faithful. Even meddling in the affairs of others is prohibited of all Christians. 1 Peter 4:15-16: "For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if *a man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (ASV).
  - b. "A slanderer is one who repeats or makes up untruthful statements concerning other people. He is one who utters false or malicious statements tending to harm the reputation of another. In so many passages of the Bible, especially in Solomon's writings, this sin is condemned. The word 'devil' in the Bible is from the same Greek word as the word 'slanderer'" (Roberts, p.38).
5. The wife of an elder or deacon **must be sober** (temperate - ASV).
  - a. "The word is the same one used of elders in I Timothy 3:2. It originally meant abstaining from wine; its proper meaning is 'not intoxicated with wine,' but probably here it has its secondary sense of 'sober' or 'sober-minded'" (Roberts, p.38).
  - b. One who is sober-minded is of a serious disposition, is not easily excited, is steady and dependable, and is not quick to take offense.
6. The wife of an elder or deacon **must be faithful in all things**.
  - a. Faithfulness extends first to the Lord, then to the husband, family, and friends. A wife who is not faithful to Christ will be of no use to her husband (an elder or deacon), and surely not to the Lord.
  - b. They are to be faithful to all the requirements and restrictions placed on them by the Lord. 1 Peter 3:1-6: "In like manner, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior *coupled* with fear. Whose *adorning* let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible *apparel* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well, and are not put in fear by any terror" (ASV).
7. Were there deaconesses (female deacons) in the church of the first century? Should the church today appoint women deacons? The following bulletin article by Dub McClish, which appeared in "The Edifier," Denton, Texas on September 22, 1988 gives a clear and scriptural answer to these questions.
  - a. "For several years it has been the practice of some religious groups (including the Independent Christian Church) to appoint 'deaconesses.' Predictably, some of the 'faddists' among us are now adopting the practice. Is there Scriptural warrant for it? Those who answer affirmatively usually point to Phoebe who is called a 'diakonon' (feminine form of word for 'deacon') (Rom. 16:1). They will usually suggest that their qualifications are given in 1 Timothy 3:9-11). We are not at all convinced that Phoebe or any other woman was ever a 'deaconess' in the same sense that certain men were appointed as elders and deacons.
  - b. "First, *diakonos* is frequently used in a general sense in the New Testament. The term is applied to civil rulers (not even Christians) and to Christ in the near context (Rom. 13:4; 15:8), but surely none would say they were deacons in the church. Paul was not a 'deacon,' yet he called himself a '*diakonos*' (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; et al.). By what right then does one assume that the term is used in an official sense concerning Phoebe? The 149 scholars who translated the King James and American Standard Versions, respectively, simply rendered the term 'servant' in Romans 16:1,

rather than 'deaconess,' with which we heartily agree.

- c. "Paul's reference to the women in the midst of the qualifications of elders and deacons is just that - a reference to women (or wives) (1 Tim. 3:11). Had he referred to 'deaconesses' he could have (and doubtless would have) used the term to indicate it clearly, but he did not. Our conviction is that he was referring to the wives of both elders and deacons, since both must have wives to be qualified (vv. 2,12). Not just any sort of wife would be suitable, but one described in verse 11 would certainly complement the work of an elder or deacon.
  - d. "The 'enrolled' widows (1 Tim. 5:9-10) are just that. To assume that they were 'deaconesses' is eisegesis (reading it into the text) rather than exegesis (deriving it from the text). The qualifications of elders and deacons are clearly stated (1 Tim. 3:2-12; Tit. 1:6-9). That they were appointed and served in the first century church is a matter of record (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phi. 1:1; Tit. 1:5, et al.). We have none of the above for 'deaconesses.' The mere fact that one serves a church in some capacity does not make one an 'official.' The appointment of 'deaconesses' is an unauthorized innovation."
8. Comments on Romans 16:1-2, Paul's Commendations of Phebe to the Brethren at Rome: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."
- a. Phebe was from the city of Cenchrea, where Paul shaved his head when he returned from his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18). Located about nine miles southeast of Corinth, it was the port city of Corinth for those travelling eastward by ship.
  - b. We are not told how the church in Cenchrea was started, but possibly as a result of Paul's stop there, or perhaps by the work of the brethren in Corinth. Paul could personally vouch for this good woman, commending her to the church at Rome for the help she gave to Paul and many others, and because she was a servant of the church at Cenchrea.
  - c. This verse states plainly that she was a servant of the church; *servant* is translated from the Greek *diakonos*. From this word our English word *deacon* derives, and is so translated in 1 Timothy 3:8 and Philippians 1:1. When the Greek word carries an official connotation in the context, it is properly translated *deacon*; when the word is used in its ordinary sense, *servant* is the appropriate rendering. Should this instance of the word be translated "servant" (feminine gender) or "deaconess?"
    - 1) Those who are supportive of the modern feminist movement assert that it ought to be *deaconess*. There are some in the brotherhood who accept this view. If Phebe was an official female deacon, serving the Lord's church at Cenchrea, where are the qualifications she had to meet to be appointed? No list of qualifications are given in the New Testament for deaconesses. There is a list of prerequisites for those widows who were to be enrolled for the church to support (1 Tim. 5:3-16); and there is another list giving the criteria that the wives of elders and deacons were to meet (1 Tim. 3:11). But neither of these lists is connected to any supposed *deaconesses*! If Paul had intended to give qualifications for deaconesses, he would have specifically addressed that issue. Since there is no New Testament criteria for the office of female deacon, and there is no definite example of anyone holding that position, then there is no New Testament authority for such an official office today.
    - 2) It is obvious that *servant* is used in the Bible to identify the general good work which God has given all of his people to do. Just because one is spoken of as a servant of the church does not make that person automatically the holder of some official position in the church. As Whiteside observed, "We let our minds run to official-ism too much.... To select a person for a certain work does not necessarily make him an officer in the common acceptance of that term. To select a man to hold a series of meetings does not make him an officer, and no one thinks so. Selecting certain women to attend to certain duties does not make them deaconesses in any official sense" (p.293).

- 3) Phebe was no more a deaconess than a civil ruler is a deacon or deaconess (Rom. 13:4). Paul spoke of himself as a servant (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4), but no one understands him to be claiming to be a deacon. Christ is called a servant (Rom. 15:8), but our Savior does not serve tables!
  - 4) When Paul addressed his epistle to the brethren in Philippi, he described the entire membership under the three headings of saints, bishops, and deacons; no deaconesses are indicated. The bishops (or elders) and deacons are distinguished from the rest of the saints; if there were deaconesses in the church at Philippi they should have likewise been addressed separately. If there were no deaconesses in Philippi, there were none in the other congregations.
  - 5) The word *apostle* means "one sent on a particular mission." The word is commonly used in the New Testament in reference to those men who were specially chosen and equipped to bear witness of the resurrection of Christ, and to do other things which only they were empowered to do (Acts 10:34-42; 2 Cor. 12:12; John 16:13f; 14:26; Matt. 19:28). The word, however, is used in reference to Christ's earthly ministry (Heb. 3:1), and to certain other men who served the church: Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14); and Epaphroditis (Ph. 2:25; the word *messenger* is from the same word translated *apostle* elsewhere). The word is used in a special sense with reference to the Twelve (and Paul), but in a more general sense in reference to Barnabas and Epaphroditis, who were sent by the local church. Similarly, Phebe was a servant of the church at Cenchrea; she did not occupy an official position as a lady deacon.
  - 6) *Deaconesses* would violate the restrictions of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.
- d. Phebe was a willing servant of God in the church at Cenchrea. The exact nature of her work is left unspecified. It is thought by some that Paul's statement here indicates that she bore the letter to the brethren in Rome, but that conclusion is uncertain.
  - e. Paul describes Phebe as "our sister." The relationship is spiritual. The closeness of association is thus shown to be very high between members of the Lord's family. Such a pure and intimate relationship is incumbent and becoming of saints today. Paul commended this good and faithful sister to the brethren. With Paul's commendation, she was sure to be well-received by all those who recognized Paul as an inspired apostle of Christ. Such a recommendation by brethren could facilitate changing of membership from one congregation to another, and quite possibly prevent a wayward brother from finding acceptance in another congregation until he repents.
  - f. Paul requested that the brethren in Rome receive Phebe; it was (and is) becoming of saints to thus receive into their fellowship all others who walk in the light of the gospel. Their reception of Phebe had a practical application. He desired that they accept her and render to her whatever assistance she needed. He refers to her business in Rome only in a very general way, which might be primarily of a secular nature. The apostle's recommendation of Phebe rested in part on the fact that she had been a succourer of many, including the apostle himself. The word is translated *helper* in the ASV. This description shows that her work was a service rendered to others, and not to some official activity.
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## The Selection of Elders

by Roy J. Hearn

### A. Introduction.

1. The importance of selecting qualified men cannot be over stressed.
2. Remember that elders are not infallible, but are human before and after being selected.
3. Care should be used in selection. Use the best men possible. From a study of the many qualification and duties, we can see the seriousness of this work.

### B. How Elders Are Made.

1. Elders are made by the Holy Spirit. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Notice that this passage does not tell how the Spirit made them elders.
2. The Holy Spirit revealed the qualifications in the written word.
  - a. John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
  - b. Galatians 1:11-12: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
  - c. Compare John 4:1-2: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)." Jesus baptized his converts, but he did so through the apostles; they baptized the converts for the Lord at his direction. Similarly, the Holy Spirit made elders through the instrumentality of the revealed word.
3. The Spirit reveals the qualifications for, and makes, Christians also, but he does not do so literally or in a direct manner. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

### C. Some Suggested Means of Selecting Elders.

1. Existing elders can choose other men to serve with them. The names of the selected men should be submitted to the congregation for approval.
  - a. Things that may favor this method.
    - 1) May know best who are qualified.
    - 2) May know whom they can best serve with.
  - b. Things that may be objectionable to this method.
    - 1) Few, if any, opposers object directly.
    - 2) Prejudice of one or the few may decide the selection.
    - 3) First elders nor deacons were selected by other elders.
2. Some think one just grows into the eldership.
  - a. What did Paul do in Acts 14:23? "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."
  - b. What was Titus commanded to do? Titus 1:5: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."
  - c. List things good or bad about the suggestion.
    - 1) Certainly must develop.
    - 2) Selection must be made.
    - 3) Then appointment.
3. Evangelists select and appoint elders.
  - a. In the New Testament they were authorized to appoint (Tit. 1:5) not select.
  - b. Favorable: Generally have best knowledge of qualifications.
  - c. Objections to selection by evangelists.
    - 1) May seek to "feather" nest.

- 2) May not be sufficiently acquainted with material especially in strange places. Cf. time of gospel meeting.
  - 3) Local man may yield to pressure and appoint somebody else's favorite.
  4. Selection by the congregation and appointment by an evangelist.
    - a. Objections to this method.
      - 1) Young members may not be able to choose wisely.
      - 2) Members not acquainted with qualifications, hence could not know if one is qualified.
      - 3) The uninformed may select unqualified men.
      - 4) Minds may be prejudiced by self-interest seekers.
    - b. Things that favor this method.
      - 1) Usually some wisdom among members.
      - 2) Should congregation have any say in selecting a preacher? or should elders alone decide? Compare to elders selecting.
      - 3) Members can be taught qualifications. Can then select men they know are qualified; that they are willing to be led by; to be fed by; watched by; overseen by; men they select.
  5. The method that was employed in selecting deacons in Acts 6:1-6: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them."
    - a. Some think this to serve an example for selecting elders also.
    - b. Apostles, though in highest office, did not do selecting.
    - c. Response of the multitude. Acts 6:5.
    - d. First a selection, "set in order," then appoint. Titus 1:5.
- D. When, How and Why Elders Are, or May Be, Unmade.
1. The eldership is a work, not merely an official position.
    - a. Romans 12:4-5: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."
    - b. 1 Timothy 3:1: "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."
  2. Hence, if one fails, ceases to do the work of elder.
  3. If he loses qualifications by inactivity or incapacitation.
  4. If he fails to set good example.
  5. If he becomes a lord over the rest and over the flock. The Bible does not indicate any distinction in authority of elders....
- E. Regardless of how selection may be done, let it be in harmony with Biblical principles.
1. Scriptures which relate to the point:
    - a. 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
    - b. 1 Corinthians 14:33,40: "For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints....Let all things be done decently and in order."
  2. Strive to fulfill all God's requirements, exactly as commanded, when specific instructions given; and in the best way, when method not specified. [adapted].
- F. 1 Timothy 5:17-18: Some Elders to be given Double Honor.
1. Verses 17f: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who

labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward."

2. Those elders who "rule well" are to be deemed worthy of double honor; they are to be honored on account of their work, plus they are proper recipients of financial support for their labor. That elders have authority is implied by the statement about their ruling well.
  - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves."
  - b. Hebrews 13:7: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation."
  - c. Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
  - d. 1 Peter 5:1-4: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."
3. All elders are to be "apt to teach." In the case Paul cites, the elders indicated labored in word and doctrine (teaching). They discharged their duties in a praiseworthy manner; they both taught and exercised oversight over the congregation (Acts 20:28).
  - a. These elders, wherein possible, were to be given double honor. The exact meaning is difficult in itself, but seen in the context, the significance becomes apparent.
  - b. The apostle has just finished a rather lengthy discussion of the church supporting those who are widows indeed. The double honor here would naturally involve giving financial support to those elders who rule well.
  - c. Elders are to receive honor from all of the members of the congregation; they are to be respected for their work's sake. But Paul's statement about double honor does not mean that a good elder is to be accorded double the honor that others are to receive. To provide a good elder with financial support for him and his family would free him to do even more work for the Lord, thus to honor and assist him.
4. The apostle clearly implies that the elder indicated may be remunerated. Further evidence for this conclusion, is seen in the two quotations Paul gives: The Israelites were forbidden to muzzle the ox that was used to tread out the grain; and, the worker is worthy of his hire.
  - a. Leviticus 19:13: "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob *him*: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning."
  - b. Deuteronomy 24:14: "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant *that is* poor and needy, *whether he be* of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that *are* in thy land within thy gates."
  - c. Deuteronomy 25:4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*."
  - d. 1 Corinthians 9:9: "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"
  - e. Matthew 10:10: "Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."

## The Qualifications and Work of Gospel Preachers

### A. The qualification and work of Gospel Preachers.

1. The purpose is to better acquaint each of us with what God expects from preachers of the gospel and to see the qualifications which God has set for them.
2. These are important matters, for no preacher can please God unless he knows what God demands of him; and Christians might demand the wrong thing from preachers if they do not know what God requires.
3. Most people do not understand what the work of a preacher is. This subject, as many other Bible topics, has been misunderstood and abused so much by sectarianism and some brethren so that it has become a mystery to many.
  - a. The average person thinks of a preacher as a denominational *pastor*, a *do-gooder*, a *personality* who spends his time attending morning *coffee*s and afternoon *teas*, and whose most serious duty is visiting the sick.
  - b. Gospel preachers are looked on with reverence by some and in disdain by others; neither is true. Gospel preachers are neither to be revered nor held in contempt.
  - c. A gospel preacher is one who proclaims the gospel, that body of truths, commands, and promises by which God saves the souls of the lost. Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

### B. A Gospel Preacher is an Evangelist (*euaggelistas*).

1. The term means: "A bringer of good tidings, an evangelist. The name is given in the New Testament to those heralds of salvation through Christ who are not apostles" (Thayer, p.257).
2. The term refers specifically to an office or work which is separate from that of elders and deacons (Eph. 4:11). Philip was called an "evangelist" (Acts 21:8). What was his function? What did he do?
3. Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist, for that was his work (2 Tim. 4:5).
4. There is a special work for which evangelists (gospel preachers) are qualified and set apart to do. The work of a preacher is separate from other works, even as elders have their special work and deacons are assigned their special work. Elders are to oversee the flock; deacons are to serve the flock; and preachers are to preach the word.

### C. There are Certain Specific Misconceptions that Most People have Concerning Evangelists.

1. Some think that an evangelist and a gospel preacher have different works; that the evangelist is an evangelist only if he travels from place-to-place, having no local base of operations. However, by definition, an evangelist is one who brings good tidings (the gospel); this is done even when he works only in a local area. I bring the gospel to those in this place who will give ear. One does not have to be constantly traveling in order to be an evangelist.
2. Most people in the sectarian world have the idea that a preacher must receive a special, direct call from God before he is eligible to be a preacher.
  - a. God did call certain men miraculously during the day of miracles to become prophets. He does not do so now. No one on earth today can prove that he has received a miraculous call!
  - b. Where is the verse that says that anyone today must receive such a call before he is qualified to preach? The same gospel that calls one to become a child of God also calls on us to preach the gospel.
    - 1) 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
    - 2) Mark 16:15-16 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to

every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

- 3) Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
3. Increasingly, many are asserting the right for women to preach the gospel publicly. But in his wisdom, God determined that those who preach or teach the gospel publicly must be men; women are not permitted to do so.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."
  - b. 1 Timothy 2:8-15: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."
4. Some think that a gospel preacher must have a college degree before he is qualified to serve in that capacity. Just because one owns some degree does not insure that he either knows or lives the gospel, or has any ability to preach it. The absence of a degree guarantees nothing either.
  - a. A preacher should get as much formal education as he is able to acquire, but it is far more important that he know the Book of God!
  - b. The apostles were unlearned and ignorant men (Acts 4:13), but they possessed a knowledge of God's word and had the courage to proclaim it fully. Of necessity, they obtained their knowledge by miraculous revelation; we can obtain our knowledge only by diligent, unceasing study of the Scriptures.
    - 1) 2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
    - 2) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."
5. Many think that the preacher must be a *good mixer*, having polished *social skills*. Knowing the Bible and being able to teach it are often considered unimportant as long as social visits are made.
  - a. The Lord placed the emphasis on knowledge and belief of the word. Luke 10:38-42; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Acts 20:17-35; 1 Timothy 4:6-16.
  - b. Every Christian (including preachers) is to talk privately to the alien sinner and the erring saint. Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 8:4; 18:24-26.
  - c. A preacher visits the sick, teaches the lost, worships God, and studies the Bible because he is a Christian, not merely because he is a preacher.
  - d. In order to preach and teach the word, he must spend many hours in preparation and study each week. There is no other way that he can keep the Scriptures alive in his mind and life, and help others to do the same.
6. There are many who mistakenly think the preacher is the *pastor* of the congregation he serves.
  - a. The oversight and direction of the congregation has been given to the elders (who are also called *bishops, pastors, overseers*); these men meet special qualifications (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1) which prepare them for this demanding work. The preacher works under the oversight and authority of these men. Their authority is restricted to matters of expedience; they see that God's work is done, but they cannot change God's will. Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4. See Acts 20:17,28 and Titus



1:5,7 for proof that elders are the bishops and pastors.

- b. In the case of a congregation which has no elders, the preacher is just "one of the flock." He possesses no greater authority or responsibility in the affairs of the congregation than any of the other men. The only logical and scriptural way such a church can function is by the men meeting together to decide on matters of expediency.
- c. The preacher is an important part of any congregation, but he is not to replace the elders or the deacons.
- d. The preacher is not to be the center of attention; he is not to be the power to attract outsiders. Too often, when we think of a congregation, our minds automatically focus on the preacher, instead of Christ. The power to draw men to Christ is not the preacher or some other human personality; it is the gospel of Christ! Romans 1:16f; John 6:44f; James 1:21; Hebrews 4:12f.
- e. A preacher visits the sick, talks to the lost, worships God, and studies the Bible because he is a Christian, not merely because he is a preacher.

#### D. Gospel Preachers Derive Their Commission from Christ.

1. It is not man who sets the standards to which preachers are to be held accountable. 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."
2. Christ has set the standard by which gospel preachers operate; it is he that must be pleased.
  - a. 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
  - b. 2 Timothy 4:1-2: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
3. Gospel preachers must give themselves wholly to the Lord's cause, being willing to suffer whatever hardship that dedicated service entails.
  - a. 1 Timothy 4:13-16: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
  - b. 2 Timothy 2:3: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."
  - c. 2 Timothy 4:5: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
4. In small, struggling congregations, the local preacher must many times spend precious time tending to details; this cannot always be helped; thus, much time is spent on incidentals that could be better devoted to greater matters.
  - a. Unless there are others who are able and willing to aid, the preacher's primary work will suffer. Nevertheless, the preacher is also a Christian, and he bears as much responsibility to perform his Christian duties as every other Christian must.
  - b. Therefore, preachers will very often furnish transportation to people who need to visit a doctor, repair some item in a widow's house which she cannot afford to hire someone to do, check on someone's property while they are away, provide food and clothing to the needy, and hundreds of other such activities.
  - c. These things he does gladly! It is his Christian duty! If he refused to do them, he would be committing sin: James 4:17; Matthew 25:31-46. Christ gave him his Christian duties just as he gave them to all Christians. The Judgment scene of Matthew 25 includes every follower of Christ!
5. The gospel preacher's primary obligation in his work is to Christ; it is to his Lord he must answer if he fails to preach the gospel, publicly and privately, to the best of his ability and opportunity; he must proclaim the whole counsel of God, not just the parts that please him or his audience.

### E. The Bible Gives Several Qualifications Which a Gospel Preacher Must Meet.

1. Remember, that these qualifications came from Christ; they did not originate with the preacher or with any other human. These are traits and activities which came from God.
2. The following are sixteen qualifications and requirements imposed on every gospel preacher.
  - a. He must keep himself pure: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22).
    - 1) His life must be free from any practice of sin: 1 Thessalonians 5:21f; Titus 2:8.
    - 2) He must be free from the blood of others by proclaiming the whole counsel of God: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17). "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26f).
  - b. He must be unashamed of the gospel: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8).
  - c. He must be able to teach the gospel so as to make others understand it: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim. 2:24).
  - d. He must be able to discern character and faithfulness in others: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).
  - e. He must be willing to suffer for the Lord.
    - 1) 1 Timothy 1:18: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."
    - 2) 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."
    - 3) 2 Timothy 2:3: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."
  - f. He must have sufficient wisdom to refrain from worldly affairs that would hinder his God-given work.
    - 1) 1 Timothy 6:11: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."
    - 2) 2 Timothy 2:4: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."
  - g. He must be diligent to study and properly apply God's word: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). This familiar passage was given directly to preachers! "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13). Since every Christian needs to know God's will, we all must study.
  - h. He must not be contentious (quarrelsome) over matters of opinion: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim. 2:24).
  - i. He must keep his life in harmony with the gospel.
    - 1) 2 Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."
    - 2) Titus 2:8: "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."
    - 3) Titus 3:8: "*This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."
  - j. He must be gentle toward all sincere people (2 Tim. 2:24), but strong toward false teachers and their evil product: Titus 1:13; 2:15; 3:10f.

- 1) Titus 1:13: "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."
  - 2) Titus 2:15: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."
  - 3) Titus 3:10-11: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."
- k. He must be willing and able to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with God's word: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).
- 1) He has no right to reprove anyone in matters of opinion.
  - 2) He has authority and responsibility to reprove, rebuke, and exhort in matters of truth.
  - 3) His work of preaching is to be done by teaching; a process which may take a long time.
  - 4) His work of preaching is to be done with patience (longsuffering). Time and seasoning are necessary for men to learn their duties and to grow spiritually. We must be patient.
- l. He must be willing and able to do the work of an evangelist: "I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5, NKJV).
- m. He must be an example of believers: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). This familiar verse was first given to preachers; it applies to every Christian since no one has the right to live in rebellion to the moral and spiritual standard of the gospel.
- n. He must be sincere: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Tit. 2:7).
- o. He must be sound in doctrine.
- 1) 1 Timothy 1:3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."
  - 2) 1 Timothy 6:20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."
  - 3) Titus 2:7: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity."
- p. He must be serious-minded: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Titus 2:7).
- F. The Duties of a Gospel Preacher.
1. To teach Christians how to behave as children of God: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:14f).
  2. To remind brethren of the truths of the gospel.
    - a. 1 Timothy 4:6: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."
    - b. 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
    - c. 2 Timothy 3:14: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*."

3. To indoctrinate the members in God's word.
  - a. Titus 1:13: "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."
  - b. Titus 2:1-5: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."
4. To warn against apostasy.
  - a. Acts 20:29-31: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." [Paul is a great example of a gospel preacher].
  - b. 1 Timothy 1:3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."
  - c. 1 Timothy 4:1-6: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."
  - d. 1 Timothy 4:14-15: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."
  - e. 1 Timothy 6:3-5: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."
5. To charge the rich concerning their wealth: "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Tim. 6:13-18).
6. To reprove, rebuke, and exhort the church: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).
  - a. Reprove: "Convince, refute, confute, convict, bring to light, to expose, find fault with, correct, reprehend severely, chide, admonish, to call to account, show one his fault, chasten, punish" (Thayer, on *elegchol*).
  - b. Rebuke: "To tax with fault, rate, chide, reprove, censure severely; admonish or charge sharply" (Thayer on *epitamao*).
  - c. Exhort: "To incite by words or advice; to advise or warn earnestly" (Thayer on *parakaleo*).
7. To expose sin without partiality: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge *thee*

before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:20f).

8. To edify the church by preaching the whole counsel of God: Acts 20:17-32.
9. To hold the pattern of sound words.
  - a. 1 Timothy 1:10: "For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."
  - b. 1 Timothy 6:3: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness."
  - c. 2 Timothy 1:13: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."
10. To teach Christian servants and masters how to deal with each other in the work place: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort" (1 Tim. 6:1f).
11. To reject profane and old wives' fables: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7).
12. To be watchful in all things: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).
13. To give himself wholly to the truth: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim. 4:15).
14. To maintain good works, doing his duty as a Christian and as a preacher: "*This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

#### G. Gospel Preachers and Gospel Preaching Have Fallen into Disrepute in Our World.

1. The church has become so worldly in our time that young men are strongly discouraged from committing their lives to preaching the gospel; consequently, many of our brightest people pursue their life's work in secular fields where job security and wealth are to be found.
2. Many in the church speak evil of preachers and their work, leaving the impression that preachers are after money and that their work is unimportant. Liberal churches emphasize singing and other activities in their worship, and relegate preaching to only a brief talk; and such preaching as is done is not a proclamation of the gospel, but the telling of sweet little stories and human psychology. When the people hear a genuine gospel sermon, they are shocked and even angered!
3. The preacher in today's church is often expected to be an expert as an administrator, organizer, promoter, social specialist, master of ceremonies, cheer-leader, marriage counsellor, priest, teacher, song leader, and preacher. In what other work would an individual be expected to be an expert in such an assortment of duties? If the preacher does not measure up to these human standards, he is an outcast.

#### H. There is No Greater Work in the World Than That of a Gospel Preacher.

1. The only work that compares favorably is that of elders.
2. Gospel preaching is a way of life; he must be totally committed to the work: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim. 4:15).
  - a. A preacher never reaches the level where he no longer needs to study.
  - b. A preacher cannot punch a time-clock and go home, leaving his work at the office.
  - c. A preacher's time belongs to his Master, and to those whom he seeks to serve.
3. Gospel preachers spend their lives in learning and teaching God's soul-saving word! Alien sinners are shown the way of salvation, and urged to obey. Saints are taught their duty, preparing them for eternity. Christians are also shown their blessings, thus urging them on to faithfulness and heaven.

## The Role of Women in the Lord's Church

### A. Women are highly exalted in the Bible and in God's sight.

1. They are not second-class citizens in the kingdom; they are highly prized and praised in the Bible.
  - a. Consider Sarah, Hannah, the widow of Zarephath, and the worthy woman of Proverbs 31.
  - b. These are just a few of the Bible's remarks given in praise of women:
    - 1) Mark 14:3-9: "And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."
    - 2) Mark 15:40f: "There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem."
    - 3) Romans 16:1f: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchræ: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."
    - 4) Philippians 4:3: "And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life."
  - c. An old poem offers these beautiful descriptions of some godly women:

"Not she with traitorous kiss her Savior stung;  
"Not she denied him with unholy tongue;  
"But she while apostles shrank did dangers brave;  
"Last at the cross and first at the grave."
2. The gospel has done much to improve the lot of women.
  - a. A fragment of a letter from Hilarion to his wife, Alis, written June 17, 1 B.C. illustrates an ancient problem: "Many greetings...Be not distressed if at the general coming in I remain at Alexandria. I pray thee and beseech thee take care of the little child, and as soon as we receive wages, I will send them to thee. If...it be a male baby, let it live. If it be a female, expose it" (Benson, Vol. III, p.95).
  - b. Ancient societies usually regarded women as mere property; some Moslem countries deprive women the right to drive a car, work outside the home, or wear modern clothing; our own nation refused women the right to vote for many years.
  - c. Jesus showed his interest in women by talking with the Samaritan woman. John 4:27: "And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?"
  - d. Where the Bible has gone, women are no longer slaves to their husbands.
    - 1) Genesis 2:23f: "And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

- 2) Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."
- 3) 1 Peter 3:7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."
- e. Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."
  - 1) In Christ, all are of equal worth in the Lord's sight. All have the same blessings and are bound for the same reward; all have the same opportunities to worship and serve Christ.
  - 2) This prominent passage says nothing about the authority of men and women; it is describing the relative worth of each.
3. The Bible does not de-humanize women, but uplifts them and honors them.
  - a. When the Bible is respected and followed, the lot of animals is improved; the condition of human society is uplifted; the welfare of children is enhanced; the world is made a better place to live.
  - b. Because of the Bible, hospitals, sanitoriums, and benevolent programs are present. Wherever the Bible has had its natural effect, it exalts humanity in general, women in particular.
  - c. God gave woman a role in life for which she is ideally suited; when she steps out of her God-given sphere, she forfeits her claim to respect and honor, and loses the high spiritual qualities which enable her to be the best mother she can be for her children and best companion for her husband.
- B. In recent years, certain movements have had a huge impact on women.
  1. The Women's Liberation Movement and the defunct Equal Rights Amendment effort, ostensibly intended to encourage women to be more independent, convinced many that being a housewife is degrading to the modern woman, and induced many to believe that they are equal in every respect to men, in politics, in the military, and in physical prowess and strength.
    - a. It is certainly true that women are equal to men in intelligence, in talents, in value, and in human rights; and they should be given freedom to have careers if that is their wish, and earn equal pay and promotions with men.
    - b. It is also true that some women have abilities and intelligence superior to some men; on the average, men and women are on a par in these. It is true that there are some things for which they are not ideally suited because of physical size and strength, or perhaps because of other factors.
  2. What affects our country, usually affects religion.
    - a. For a good many years, sectarians have allowed women to fill any position earlier reserved only for men, inclusive of preaching.
    - b. What affects the religions of men, often affects the Lord's church.
  3. Thus, in recent years some of our brethren and sisters have been urging the brotherhood to allow women to serve the Lord's Supper, lead singing, be appointed as deaconesses, and teach and preach publicly, and lead audible prayers in the presence of men.
- C. A statement of the problem in the brotherhood.
  1. Randy Mayeux told of a teenage girl who wants to preach; he demands to know whether the brotherhood would "kick her out" of the church (in article by Steve Gipson, "Firm Foundation," March, 1991). Mayeux thinks she ought to be allowed to preach.
  2. Elders in a local congregation in Melbourne, Florida scheduled two women from other states to teach classes to mixed audiences of men and women (1989); this was part of the congregation's activities; they defended the right of these women to teach, without regard to the limitations placed on women by the Scriptures.
  3. "The Bering Drive church in Houston issued a report...dated March 5, 1989, in which they stated: 'On July 31, 1988, the elders presented a statement to the Bering family concerning the use of spiritual gifts by both men and women, expressing our conviction that it is scriptural and appropriate for sisters as

well as brothers to serve in Sunday morning worship roles of ushering, greeting visitors, receiving the offering, reading Scripture, leading prayers, leading singing, and serving communion'" (Alan Highers, "The Spiritual Sword," January, 1991).

4. The Cahaba Valley church in Birmingham "sent a letter to its members, dated January 1990, setting forth their view of the role of women in the church, stating: 'We further assert that women in the Lord may minister not only to women but also to men, as God calls them, as long as they are submitting to God's authority, the leaders of the church, and their commitments to their families.' They also announced that they 'will appoint deacons for this church on Pentecost Sunday, 1990. Deacons will be male and female.' By 1994 they indicate that women will also be 'speaking to the assembly in sermon'" (ibid.).
5. "In a survey taken at the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Tulsa, 46 percent answered yes to the question, 'Should women be given the responsibility of leading singing?' Twenty-six percent answered yes to a question about women serving the Lord's Supper, and 46 percent answered yes to the question, 'Should women be given the responsibility of reading the Scriptures?'" (Fred Davis, *Changes In The Church of Christ*, 1994 Bellview Lectures, p.118).
6. The November, 1992 issue of "Christian Chronicle" contained an announcement "regarding the first public prayer led by a woman at Pepperdine University. D'Esta Love, dean of students at Pepperdine University, gave the first prayer by a woman in a convocation ceremony on August 31" (ibid., pp.118f).
7. The front cover of "Wineskins," an ultra liberal publication, carried a picture of three women with this wording: "And when they came up out of the water...she went on her way rejoicing." "Managing Editor Phillip Morrison, in his 'After Glow,' explains that two of the women taught and baptized the third. After describing the preparations, he said, 'So late one afternoon, with a small group of friends including two Woodmont Hills elders and me, Margaret and Joan baptized Irina. As always, I sat in reverence and awe as Jesus' precious name was confessed and his death, burial, and resurrection were so beautifully portrayed. But this time I sat wondering why I had lived so long without witnessing what seemed so natural and appropriate...'" (ibid., p.119).
8. There are cases in the brotherhood where women are leading the song services, waiting on the table, praying publicly in the presence of men, taking active part in the business meetings of congregations, and serving on preacher-search committees. It is only a matter of time until they will be preaching publicly before men. All of the restrictions and limitations placed upon women by the Author of the New Testament will be essentially destroyed in these congregations.

D. The Bible gives women certain privileges and options in life.

1. They may pursue a career if they choose.
  - a. Acts 16:14f: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained *us*."
  - b. Acts 18:2f: "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."
2. Christian women have the privilege of teaching other women (and children).
  - a. Acts 21:9: "And the same man [Stephen] had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy."
  - b. Titus 2:3-5: "The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home,



good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

3. Christian women may privately be involved in teaching men. Acts 18:26: "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."
4. They may marry and raise a family: the highest and noblest calling she can fulfill in her native sphere. 1 Timothy 5:14: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."
5. They can obey the gospel and grow in the Christian graces, serving the Lord in countless ways, doing things for which they are preeminently qualified and suited.
6. They have the challenge of bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, preparing them not only for life, but also for eternity.

E. The Bible gives women a subordinate role to men.

1. This is not due to any insufficiency on their part; it is the way God ordered it.
  - a. Men and women are equal in value and in the blessings they are given in Christ: Galatians 3:28f: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
  - b. Genesis 1:27f: "So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."
  - c. Genesis 2:18: "And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."
  - d. 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God."
  - e. 1 Corinthians 11:8f: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."
2. God never intended for women to be mere property; he gave them safeguards in the Old Testament.
  - a. Deuteronomy 21:15-17: "If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, *both* the beloved and the hated; and *if* the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit *that* which he hath, *that* he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, *which is indeed* the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his."
  - b. Deuteronomy 24:1-4: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's *wife*. And *if* the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth *it* in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her *to be* his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that *is* abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance."
  - c. Matthew 19:3-9: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement,

and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

d. Through the years, Islam has placed severe limitations on women, sometimes having extremely harsh things to say about them. The following quotes are from Will Durant's *The Age of Faith*.

1) "The Arabs had always feared, as well as admired, woman's charms, and had revenged themselves for instinctive subjection to them by the usual male doubts about her virtue and intelligence. 'Consult women,' said Omar I, 'and do the contrary of what they advise'" (p.220).

2) "The Moslem husband knew the passionate temper of the Oriental, felt a need to protect his women, and saw no escape from their adultery except through their incarceration. It became reprehensible for women to walk in the streets except for short distances and veiled; they could visit one another, but usually they traveled in curtained litters; and they were never to be seen abroad at night. They were separated from the men in the mosque by a screen or railing or gallery; finally they were excluded altogether..." (p.221).

3) "Rarely, except in the lower classes, did the women sit at table with their husbands. It was unlawful for a Moslem to see the face of any woman except his wives, slaves, and near relatives. A physician was allowed to see only the afflicted part of a woman patient. The man found the system very convenient; it gave him at home a maximum of opportunity, and outside the home full freedom from surveillance or surprise" (pp.221).

3. The New Testament requires that the wife be in subjection to her own husband; and the husband is required to love his wife as he loves himself.

a. Ephesians 5:22-25: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

b. Ephesians 5:31: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

c. Ephesians 5:33: "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband."

4. A woman is out of order when she tries to change God's plan; so is the man.

a. In the home, God has ordained that the man have the authority, that the wife and children are to be under his jurisdiction.

b. As we shall see next, God has ordained that men have the authority in the church. There is no authority for women preachers, women elders, women deacons, women song leaders, etc.

c. It will be apparent from the verses we are about to notice, that women have no Bible authority to take the authority God gave to men in the government of the church.

#### F. The Bible binds this relationship in worship.

1. 1 Corinthians 14:23: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"

a. Here, as in 1 Corinthians 11:20, a gathering is called for in which the whole congregation is to come together in one place. When a congregation divides the worship assembly into two or more groups, a violation of God's word takes place!

b. Not only do they reject the example of having the whole church gather together in one place, they usually have women teaching and praying in the presence of men, a plain repudiation of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

2. 1 Corinthians 14:34f: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."
  - a. He is not speaking of physical buildings. When assembled, all together, in one group (vs. 23), this prohibition was to be enforced.
  - b. No instruction in the New Testament is more positive and clear and universal. However plausible may be the reasons which men may offer for disregarding this injunction, and for allowing women to take an active part in conducting public worship, the authority of God still forbids it. Keep silence; not permitted to speak - this is what God has said! This was also taught in the Old Testament law (Gen. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:5f).
  - c. The Greek word translated "keep silence" is defined to mean "to keep silence, hold one's peace" (Thayer, p.574). "However, this word is never used to mean an absolute and unqualified silence. Rather it is always to be understood with some sort of qualification in the context of what was transpiring or being discussed" (Gary Workman, "The Restorer," June, 1995, p.9). Notice these examples of its use:
    - 1) Luke 9:36: "And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept *it* close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen." The meaning of the term is that the disciples kept silent regarding the transfiguration they had beheld; they did not quit talking altogether.
    - 2) Luke 18:39: "And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, *Thou* son of David, have mercy on me." The blind man was not told to quit talking altogether, but to cease calling out to Christ.
    - 3) The word occurs in 1 Corinthians 14:28 where Paul instructs the *speaker* in tongues to keep silence if there is no interpreter of that tongue present. The man could *speak* in some other capacity. The same is true with the use of the word in verse 30.
    - 4) Women are directed to keep silence in the public assemblies (14:23,34). To "keep silence" is used in the passage in distinction to "speak." Since to "speak" (*laleo*) in verses 27 and 29 means to speak publicly, to address the congregation, then this is its meaning in verse 34. Paul uses this word 18 times in the chapter.
  - d. May women serve as interpreters for preachers in a foreign setting? Paul clearly denied women prophets the right to use their gift in the public assemblies; likewise, he denied women who had the gift of tongues or the gift of interpretation of tongues the right to exercise that gift in the public assemblies.
    - 1) If an inspired woman was not permitted to use her gift, we have no reason to think an un-inspired woman has that right. Would Paul have allowed an un-inspired woman who spoke Latin to interpret for a tongue-speaker who was using that language? What is forbidden in the text is *speaking* publicly. She is not even allowed to ask a question in these assemblies (vs. 35).
    - 2) In the case today of an English-speaking preacher delivering a message to a Russian audience which cannot understand English, in virtually every case a male interpreter could be found, even if he has to be hired.
3. 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."
  - a. Paul sets forth boldly that what he has written, was produced by the Holy Spirit; it is inspired; it is not the opinion of a "woman-hating, old bachelor." Concerning what he wrote about women keeping silent in the worship, some have chosen to ignore, or try to explain away, or have openly repudiated.
  - b. Some of the Corinthian saints possessed spiritual gifts, including the gift of "discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). Anyone with this gift could know the things Paul wrote were inspired; and no one speaking by spiritual gift could deny what Paul said. The principle stated here is true of all his books.

The Spirit would not reveal one thing to one and a contradictory thing to someone else.

- c. "To accept and obey the commandments of God as revealed in the Scriptures is the rule for all at this day by which to test their claims to spirituality" (Lipscomb). See Acts 17:11f; 1 John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20; Ephesians 3:2-5.
4. 1 Timothy 2:8-15: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." [*Silence* is from the same Greek term in both instances].
  - a. In verses 1-2, Paul exhorts that prayers are to be made for all men. Verses 3-7 deal with reasons why we are to pray for all men.
  - b. Verse 8 then states: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."
    - 1) "I will therefore..." An authoritative injunction. What he names is not a mere suggestion, but a binding decree (1 Cor. 14:37). With this verse Paul returns to the thought introduced in 2:1
    - 2) "I will therefore that men pray..." *Men* is from the Greek word *aner* which is used "with reference to sex, and so to distinguish a man from a woman" (Thayer, p.45). Vine says *aner* "is never used of the female sex" (p.34). In Acts 8:3,12 this word is also used to make the same distinction. *Aner* is used also in James 1:12, where the truth is stated that a man is blessed who endures temptations; the statement is made of a man (not a woman), but the same is true of a woman who endures temptations; James is simply making the point in reference to a man.
    - 3) The context of 1 Timothy 2:8 shows that a contrast is being drawn between the obligations of men and women. What is said in verse 8 applies to the man, not the woman. The Greek text has the article *the*, thus the injunction is issued literally to *the men*, and further emphasizes the restriction given. The restriction does not forbid women to pray at all for the Bible gives examples where women did pray (1 Sam. 2:1; Luke 2:36f). But there is no example in Scripture where a woman prayed audibly when men were present. We conclude that when both men and women are worshiping together, the men are to lead in praying, not women.
  - c. "I will therefore that men pray every where [in every place - ASV]..." Where ever and whenever Christian men and women are gathered, this restriction applies. This includes public and private gatherings. Men are to lead the prayers.
  - d. "...Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The bodily position is not being bound here for the Bible gives examples of prayers being offered where the hands were not lifted up (Luke 18:13). Lifting up the hands during prayer was a Jewish custom. Prayers are to be free from anger and doubting (disputing - ASV). Men are not to offer angry prayers or to pray *at* one another.
  - e. "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (2:9f).
    - 1) Modest apparel is clothing that is appropriate, decent and becoming. It is between the extremes of gaudiness on the one hand and indecency on the other. Christian ladies are to dress modestly on all occasions.
    - 2) Shamefacedness is a sense of shame that precedes and prevents any shameful acts (Thayer). It implies self-restraint that a woman imposes on herself to avoid anything that is low and unbecoming of a woman professing godliness. Sobriety is the result of this self-restraint

(Lipscomb).

- 3) "...Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but...with good works." This is a warning against extravagance in dress and appearance. The emphasis a woman is to make is in doing good works, not outward adorning.
- f. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (2:11f).
  - 1) "Let the woman learn in silence..." In 1 Corinthians 14:34 the word *silence* is from a Greek word (*sigao*) meaning "absolute silence" [with reference to public speaking; it is a stronger word than that used in 1 Tim. 2:11]. The word *speak* in 1 Corinthians 14:35 is from a word meaning "to utter a sound, to emit a voice, make one's self heard" (Thayer). But as noted above, the restriction is to making a public address. [If 1 Corinthians 14:34f requires a complete silence on the part of women in the public worship assembly (1 Cor. 14:23), it is to be understood that making the good confession and singing are exceptions to the rule.]
  - 2) But the word *silence* in 1 Timothy 2:11f is from a different word (*hesuchia*) which means "quietness; tranquillity; causing no disturbance to others." Busybodies in 2 Thessalonians 3:12 were told to work with *quietness*; and the same word is translated *peaceable* in 1 Timothy 2:2. Hence, Paul is not in this verse demanding that women be absolutely silent, but to be quiet, or tranquil, and cause no disturbance.
  - 3) The use of the present word gives women the right to ask and answer questions, read scriptures, and make comments in a class situation, or in private gatherings, when men are present. But in the worship assemblies the women are not given this right.
- g. "...But I suffer not a woman to teach..." This is not a blanket restriction applying to every situation for Titus 2:2-5 demands that older women teach the younger women.
  - 1) Acts 18:26 reports that Priscilla had some part in privately, with her husband, expounding (*setting forth, declaring*) the way of God more perfectly unto Apollos.
  - 2) But the word *teach* in 1 Timothy 2:12 is from *didasko* which means "to hold a discourse with others in order to instruct them; deliver a didactic discourse" (Thayer).
  - 3) Women may be "teachers of good things" to other women (Tit. 2:3f), but are not allowed to preach a sermon or deliver a discourse in the presence of men.
- h. "...Nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence" (*quietness* - ASV)." The word *nor* is from the Greek *oude* which "places side by side things that are equal...it always makes reference to something preceding" (Thayer). Thayer also says it serves to continue a negation (p.461).
  - 1) This means that for a woman to teach would be to usurp man's authority. Since women are told to teach other women, this passage does not forbid teaching as such, but forbids her exercising the authority God has given to men.
  - 2) For a woman to teach over men, or do any other duties assigned to men, such as lead prayers, wait on the Lord's table, lead singing, take part in business meetings, serve on a preacher-search committee, is to usurp man's authority. God gave men the responsibility to be leaders in the church; women are not given this duty. [Authority carries responsibility with it].
  - 3) When none but women are present, women can preach, teach, lead prayers, etc., since there is no usurpation of man's authority.

#### G. Why are women given the subordinate role?

1. The reason why women are given the subordinate role is because God created Adam first. Further, Adam was not deceived by Satan; Eve was first deceived, and was the first to transgress God's law.
  - a. However, if she fulfills her God-given duties (which are symbolized by her childbearing role), she will be saved.
  - b. Her sins are washed away by the same process as are the man's; but man has a different set of duties in life and in the church from the woman; she is to perform hers and the man his.

2. Women are not permitted to usurp the authority God gave to men. This forbids them from presenting a public discourse, or offer a public prayer, in the presence of men.
    - a. Women have no right to speak in the assembly and interrupt the proceedings with questions or comments. It is not their role in life to take a leading part in the services. If she has a question about something, she is to ask her husband (or someone else, privately) at home.
    - b. This was not merely dealing with a local situation in Corinth for the letter was also addressed to "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1:2). It is shameful for women to speak in the assembly. Shame or shameful: "of that which is opposed to modesty or purity, is translated as a noun in I Cor 11:6; 14:35, A.V. (R.V. 'shameful'); Eph. 5:12; in Tit. 1:11, 'filthy (lucre)', lit. 'shameful (gain)'" [Vine, p.16].
  3. These restrictions are not characteristic of the religious practices of the pagans. The pagan temple at Corinth had a thousand priestesses. Women occupied leadership roles in many of the man-made religions of ancient times. The Bible's restrictions concerning women are not representative of the times, but are distinctive in this matter; it calls man's attention back to God's original plan for the relative roles of men and women. Humanity had departed from God's pattern in virtually every subject, including this one.
- H. Women have wonderful roles to fill in the world, in the family, and in the church.
1. They have excellent talents which can be filled in secular positions. In our time and land, women have had virtually every field of endeavor opened to them, if they choose such a role.
  2. In the family, women have natural talents many of which are indispensable to the good of the children and husband.
  3. Women have abilities which they are to use in Christ in their proper way.
    - a. Some women in the first century had spiritual gifts (Acts 2:17; 21:8f); they were told to teach younger women (Tit. 2:3-5).
    - b. Women are forbidden to give a "teaching discourse" (1 Tim. 2:12) which usurps the authority which God gave to man, but this does not prohibit them from making a comment or asking a question in a Bible class situation since it is not a case where "the whole church has come together."
    - c. Women have talents now which are to be used as regulated by the passage we have studied in this lesson.
  4. A man labors in a public role for the lifting of fallen humanity; the woman labors in a private role for the same end. Woman was involved in the fall before man; she is now first in the rise of the race by being given the opportunity to mold and teach her children. The average Christian woman contributes far more to the spiritual climate of society than does the average Christian man. (Rex Turner).
  5. The same qualities that make women to be loving, sympathetic mothers also make them to be angels of mercy to the sick and elderly.
  6. Look around in most any assembly of the saints, and you will see more women than men. Women generally live longer than men, but also they are generally more interested in spiritual concerns than men. It is possible, therefore, that there will be more women in heaven than men.
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