

I Timothy 3:1-7) & Titus 1:4-16
The Qualities and Abilities of a Bishop
Setting things in order that are lacking

I. **Definitions:**

A. **Bishop** (episkopos) – overseer, indicates the character of the work being undertaken

B. **Elder** (presbuteros) – “an elder”; indicates the mature spiritual experience and understanding of those so described

II. **The Qualifications concerning:**

A. **Moral Virtue and Character** – What kind of men can serve as elders? Are the qualifications so exacting that only a very few can qualify? When properly understood, there is very little more required of elders than is required and expected of any Christian. All qualifications are essential; not one can be ignored. Yet, we must remember that some are relative (degrees of possession) and some are absolute. Some are positive, and some are negative.

1. **Blameless** (vs.2) neg,rel (anepileptos) – without reproach, having nothing which others can lay hold of to show as wrong
 - a) **Titus 1:6** – anegkletos = not just acquittal from an accusation, but the absence of any proven accusation or charge altogether.
2. **Temperate** (vs.2) pos,rel (nephalios) – temperate, sober, circumspect
 - a) **Titus 1:8** – engkrates = exercising self-control
 - (1) **App** – The ability to be aware of his surroundings and circumstances and act accordingly, controlling himself
3. **Sober-minded** (vs.2) pos, rel (sophron) – of sound mind, good judgment
 - a) **App** – The ability to use good judgment with regard to God’s people
4. **Of Good Behavior** (vs.2) pos, rel (kosmios) – orderly, decent
 - a) **App** – Conducts himself faithfully, and orderly, as an example
5. **Given to Hospitality** (vs.2) pos,rel (philoxenos) – loving strangers, being hospitable
 - a) **App** – DOES NOT mean, as some think, that he must routinely have people to his home!!
6. **Not given to wine** (vs.3) neg, abs (paroinos) – not tarrying at wine, not involved with wine
 - a) **App** – Not given to alcohol, or anything that would prevent sound judgment
7. **No Striker** (vs.3) neg,abs (plektes) – not violent
 - a) **App** – One who does not strike another, or is given to violent reactions
8. **Not greedy for money** (vs.3) neg,abs (aischrokerdes) – disgraceful or shameful gain
 - a) **App** – Not involved in things by which he would gain money disgracefully or shamefully (gambling, money-laundering)
9. **Patient** (vs.3) pos,rel (epieikes) – befitting, fair, moderate, gentle
 - a) **App** – One who conducts himself befitting the role of an elder; fair, gentle in conduct
10. **Not a brawler** (vs.3) neg,abs (amachos) – not contentious, looking to argue

11. **Not covetous** (vs.3) neg,abs (aphilarguros) – free from the love of money, not greedy

a) **App** – Someone whose motivations do not stem from the love or pursuit of money

12. **Necessary that he have a good** (vs.7) (kalos – beautiful) **report** (maturia – testimony, witness) **of them that are without** (outside) pos,abs

a) **Lest he fall into reproach** (oneidismos – defamation) **and the snare** (trap)**of the devil**

b) Those that are outside the church must not be able to bring any reproach or blame because of something he has done outside in the world. If they can, what example is he to the flock?

B. His Family – The character of an elder as a father and husband can be summed up in one statement by Paul, “*For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*”

1. **The husband of one** (mia – one, first) **wife** (vs.2)– A one-woman man (pos,abs)

C. He must be married

D. He must have only one woman as wife – not two or three

(a) Death of spouse – He would currently not have a wife, and it could be a hindrance to his work as an elder – therefore no longer qualified

E. Judgments calls:

(a) Remarried due to scriptural divorce – Nothing Unscriptural by itself, unless there are mitigating circumstances,

2. **One that ruleth** (proistemi) **his own house well** (vs. 4) (pos,abs)

a) **App** – One that cares for, leads, maintain, his family well

3. **Having his children in subjection** (hupotage) **with all gravity** (semnotes) (vs. 4)

– with his children in submission to him, obeying out of respect, not forced (pos,abs)

(1) **Titus 1:6** – “Having faithful (pistos – believing) children (teknon = that which is born or begotten; having custody), not accused of dissipation” (asotia = prodigality, excess) “or insubordination” (anupotaktos = not submissive, disobedient)

b) He must have children (one or more)

c) All children must be in submission, respecting him

d) His children must be faithful, based on the pattern of ruling his house well

F. Certain Abilities – In order to do the work of an elder, there are certain capabilities that one must have. Instead of looking at eldership as an office to be filled, we need to look at it as the work that needs to be done, and these are the things needed.

1. **Apt to teach** (vs. 2) pos,rel (didaktikos) – skilled in teaching See @ Tim. 2:24))

Term means “

a) **Titus 1:9** – Holding fast the word of faith, teaching, exhorting, and convincing gainsayers

(1) **App** – Must have the knowledge and wisdom to use the word of truth to teach, exhort, and convince Christians and non-. Alike – THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN PUBLIC SPEAKING

b) **App** – Not someone given to contention, fighting, or arguing

2. **Not a novice** (vs. 6) neg,abs (neophutos) Not newly planted, new convert

a) He must be founded in the faith, with knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

(1) **Lest** (that not), **being lifted up with pride** (tuphoo – being high-minded, puffed up, wrapped in smoke), **he fall into the condemnation of the devil** (lest he be judged with the devil)

(a) A novice would be tempted to become high-minded and puffed up at being given such a responsibility of shepherding the flock.

III. Conclusion

A. A man does not have to be perfect in every sense of the word to be an elder. Who then could be one? But a man that is a child of God, has put to death the works of the flesh, develops the Christian graces, has a Godly family in which he demonstrates Godly management, and possesses love and concern for truth and souls, is the kind of man who may be selected to serve as an elder if he has the characteristics spoken of by Paul in I Tim. 3.

Setting things in order – Titus 1:4-16

Intro

As Paul addresses Titus, a “true son in common faith” (v.4), he gives the reason why he left Titus in Crete, (v.5) – to set things in order. Why did Titus need to set things in order? There were things lacking (left behind, absent, wanting) in Crete – namely the lack of elders. Titus was to appoint elders in every city.

We realize that elders are part of the divine design for the church, and Paul knew they would be needed in Crete. This hour, let us examine some particulars about these elders in Crete, and let these particulars help us in our understanding of elders today.

I. Paul says that when elders are absent, things “are lacking”, v.5-8

A. Titus was commanded to set in order (epidiorthoo – to restore to order, arrangement) things that are lacking (leipo – that which has been left behind, wanting) by appointing (kathistemi – to make, to set, place a person in a place of authority) elders in every city – building upon truth

1. It was the reason he was left in Crete, v. 5

2. Paul could have had the attitude that as an apostle, he was all the saints needed to be faithful. Yet, he was willing to adhere to the structure that God had planned for the church.

a) **App** – Do we ever think that having just the “men of the congregation” would be better than having elders?

(1) Paul felt it was important, so important that he left Titus there and commanded him to appoint elders

3. **App** – Does this example authorize preachers to appoint elders? If so, does this give any special power to the preacher?

a) It does give precedent for the preacher announcing elders, making sure they possess certain characteristics, but does not give him any power or authority

b) Either a congregation has men who are qualified, or it doesn't

II. Characteristics of men to be appointed as elders in Crete, v. 6-9

b) Not given to filthy lucre – aischrokerdes – greedy of base gain; do anything for money

(1) **App** – How could an elder who cares only about himself and his own bank account be able to properly care for the house of God?

(a) As Christians, as we not all supposed to set others above ourselves? (**Phil. 2:1-5**)

4. Righteous

a) Just – dikaios – rules well, right

b) Holy – hosios – pure from evil conduct, set apart from world

c) Holding fast (antechomai – to hold firmly, cleave to) the faithful (pistos – trustworthy) word

(1) Inference suggests this also means being **able to teach it**

(2) **App** – As a steward of God, this man should rule righteously, according to the word of God

(a) How could he rule righteously if he himself is not holy, but rather involved in sinful things of the world?

(3) **App** – He is to hold fast this word, not his own, but God's, being able to teach it

III. **The society from which elders came, v. 12, 10, 15-16**

A. Character of society, v.12

1. Liars – they are not trustworthy, but falsify words

2. Evil beasts – therion – wild and dangerous beasts

a) In reference to the people, for there were not wild beasts on Crete

3. Lazy gluttons – (argos – inactive, not working, idle, unfruitful) (gaster – bellies, denotes gluttons)

a) We have a contradiction here – they are lazy and will not work, yet are capable of being gluttonous – how?

(1) They achieve profit by base means, not by working honestly

(a) **App** – What would it be like to live in a society in which it can be testified of an inspired apostle that the inhabitants are always liars and evil beasts and lazy gluttons?

(b) **App** – Would we be able to maintain a godly example in the midst of such evil?

B. Character of false teachers that came from this society, v.10, 15-16

1. Insubordinate (anupotaktos – will not subject to rule)

2. Idle talkers (mataiologos – talking idly; words to no profit)

3. Deceivers (phrenapates – to trick one's mind)

4. Of the circumcision – Jewish Christians

5. Defiled (miaino – stained, soiled, with regards to morals) and unbelieving (apistos)

a) Even their mind and conscience is defiled (miaino)

6. They profess (homologeō – confess, acknowledge) to know God, but in works they deny (arneomai – to say “not”, to contradict, disavow) Him

a) Are abominable (bdeluktos – object of disgust, detestable), disobedient (apeithes – unwilling to be persuaded, spurning belief),

and disqualified (adokimos – not standing the test, rejected, useless) for every good (agathos – beneficial) work

- (1) The character of these teachers is not only incompatible to that of a Christian, but is contrary to God and evil
- b) We see how these Christians went back to many of the same characteristics as their comrades of society
 - (1) Idle, defiled, evil, greedy, selfish, lazy
 - (a) **App** – Are we ever tempted to fall back into the world we left? Are we tempted to join in with what society does?
 - (i) **Rev. 2:14** – the saints @ Pergamum

C. Yet, elders also came from this society

- 1. We have seen how pure and godly their character would be
- 2. These elders would be opposite of the false teachers and men of Crete
 - a) Self-controlled as opposed to gluttons
 - b) Not given to filthy lucre as opposed to those who are
 - c) Blameless as opposed to liars and lazy
 - d) Just and holy as opposed to deceivers and defiled
 - e) Useful and qualified for beneficial work (exhorting and convincing) as opposed to disqualified
 - (1) **App** – We see the power the Gospel has to save those from any background and make them holy children of God
 - (a) Out of love for God, we can change our character
 - (i) These elders had to
 - (b) **App** – When we repented of our sins and were baptized, did we change our character, or did we feel we could change a little at a time?
 - (i) Paul did not change a little at a time when he was converted, Acts 9
 - (ii) Maybe we have habits and weaknesses that threaten our integrity as Christians – we must change those qualities, that character, to one that would not be threatened by these sins.

IV. **The qualifications of an elder at work in Crete, v.9-14**

A. What specific use would holding fast the word faith have for the elders? V. 9-12

- 1. Will equip them with that healthy instruction by which they can exhort and convict the gainsayer (antilego – one who contradicts, speaks against), such as the insubordinate
 - a) This would take boldness also, to stand up to error
 - b) All of the other characteristics are at work here, this man loving the good word and truth, wanting to help these gainsayers, not being selfish, righteously applying the word of God
- 2. They had to hold to the faithful word in order to successfully combat these influences and preserve the flock
 - a) **App** – Do our elders hold fast this faithful word?

- (1) I think so, and we should support them in this
- B. The danger posed by the insubordinate (anupotaktos – will not subject to rule)
1. They subvert whole households with their teachings, all in the pursuit of money
 - a) They turned from the truth, and were attempting to subvert (anatrepo – to overthrow, upset, turn over) whole households, getting money from them, v.11
 - b) They used Jewish fables and commandments of men as a means of gain, v.14
 - (1) Their mouths must (is necessary) be stopped (epistomizo – silence the mouth from speaking), v.11
- C. Titus was also to help the cause of Christ by rebuking (elegcho – cutting refutation, refuting, convict) the saints sharply, v. 13-14
1. That the saints may be sound in the faith
 - a) This rebuke would involve very distinctive teaching, stepping on toes
 - (1) **App** – Do we appreciate distinctive teaching, possibly rebuking someone we know, or us, stepping on toes in order to help us be sound in the faith?
 - (a) Or do we get mad, even though it is the truth?
 2. That they may not give heed to Judaizing teachers
 - a) Titus' job was to make sure the saints were guarded against these false teachers, realizing the error of their ways
 3. We see the elders were to deal with the error and those who taught it, and we see Titus was to deal with the saints, helping them to guard against error
 - a) It wasn't other way around, with the preacher dealing with the error and false teacher and the elders dealing with saints as many brethren seem to think
 - (1) **App** – Elders are to kill the wolf that threatens the sheep, not assign the preacher to do it.
 - (a) This means the elders would have to be able to kill the wolf – being grounded in the word, being able to teach
 - b) **App** – Do our elders and preacher work together to keep error out of the church as Titus and the Cretan elders were instructed to do?
 - (1) Imagine a church in which these things are done well, and error can never get a foothold...would the design of God's church be accomplishing its purpose?

Conclusion

Could we imagine church functioning according to God's design, having elders that do not meet these qualifications? Could we ever hope to have a strong church where elders and preachers do not work together in truth to maintain the godliness of the body?

We can see the wisdom of God in designing the position of elders of the church of the saints, in that these men possess certain characteristics so that they

can better keep error out of the church and guard their flock against false teachers. The harmony that can exist between the preacher and elders in their stand for the truth can help a church be strong in the faith.

Let us always strive to meet the standards of truth, both as individual Christians and as a congregation of the Lord's body.

I. Introduction – What happens if an elder is widowed?

- a. Elders have specific qualities that they must have to be able to be appointed
- b. Confusion/disagreement about what “husband of one wife” means
 - i. Does it mean he can only be married once?
 - ii. Referring to polygamy?
 - iii. A reference to his being faithful?
 - iv. Means that he simply must currently be married?

II. Let's Look at the Passage- 1 Timothy 3:2

- a. “husband of one wife”
 - i. Husband- “aner”: a man, fellow, husband, sir
 - ii. Wife- “gune: woman; specially, a wife
 - iii. One- “mia”- one or first, a (certain)
 1. Compare this phrase with the one used in 1 Timothy 5:9 talking about widows indeed:
 2. The only difference of the phrase used here in I Timothy 5:9 and the one used in I Timothy 3:2 “wife of one man” (and “husband of one wife”) is the Greek term “one”
 3. This “one” in 1 Timothy 5:9 means a primary numeral one. Meaning that she was only to be married to one husband in her lifetime to be considered a widow indeed.
- a. So what?
 - i. Comparing these extremely similar phrases you can see the intention of Paul whenever he said that an elder is supposed to be the “husband of one wife”. Paul is saying that the man who is under consideration as an elder was supposed to be a husband of a certain woman. Paul is not emphasizing the “one” aspect as much as he is emphasizing the aspect that the elder should be married.
 - ii. We can make the conclusion from this that if an elder is in his second marriage (godly of course) he meets the qualifications of having a wife. For example: If a man's wife died when he was thirty and he decided to remarry, he could still be an elder, even though he was married twice. The emphasis is that he has a wife.
- b. Present vs. Past Tense
 - i. Going back to I Timothy 3:2, this qualification should be read as “a bishop then must be...the husband of one wife”
 - ii. This is a present tense term, meaning that a man under consideration must currently have this characteristic to be qualified to be an elder, namely to have a wife

- iii. Compare this verse to the 1 Timothy 5:9- “having been the wife of one man”- this is a past tense phrase which is saying that this widow was indeed the wife of (and only) one man.
- iv. Therefore, the qualification “a bishop must be...the husband of one wife” has to be read as a current, present characteristic
 - 1. The text does not read “must have been the husband of one wife”
 - 2. If you asked a man whose wife died if he is the husband of a wife, he wouldn’t respond “Yes. I was”. He would respond “No, I used to be though”
 - 3. Therefore, if a man is not the husband of one wife, how can he claim to be the husband of one wife, as Paul commanded?
- c. These characteristics (qualifications) must be continual, not “at-one-time-was”
 - i. Paul does not distinguish between characteristics that a man must meet to get him into the eldership and characteristics that he must continue to meet after he has become an elder. To read such a distinguishing separation into the text does not have the authority of God. At no time in the New Testament is there a “grandfathered-in” clause or treatment to elders.
 - ii. For example, Paul mentions no difference in status between “must be the husband of one wife” and the qualifications about being blameless, vigilant, sober, or being of good behavior
 - iii. The argument is made that an elder whose wife dies can still be an elder because he did (past tense) have a wife, and thus, he fulfills (present tense) the qualification
 - 1. Going with that logic, that means that if a man who is an elder becomes a drunkard he is still qualified because at the time when he was appointed an elder he was sober minded
 - 2. This would not make sense to anyone. However, Paul does not distinguish between past and present tenses of being sober-minded and being the husband of one wife. Why should we?
 - iv. This issue itself has a built-in logic problem. Those who suppose that it is lawful for a man to be an elder as a widower assume that as long as he was married at the time he was made an elder he continues to be qualified (grandfathered-in). But suppose the man was a widower before being made an elder. Many would take issue with this...but why? At one time he was the husband of one wife. What difference does it make when his wife dies? The logic doesn’t make sense. If he is qualified to serve in the office of an elder as a widower based on “having been” the husband of one wife, why wouldn’t that apply to his being made an elder to begin with? If we feel with have lawful authority to maintain an elder whose wife has died while he is an elder, then we should have lawful authority to establish an elder who is already a widower. The basis of the argument would still remain “he was the husband of one wife”

III. Other POV's

a. Faithful POV

- i. This perspective suggests that the primary idea of this passage isn't about the elder having a wife so much as the elder is faithful to that wife. That he was a "one-woman man", describing his faithfulness to his wife.
- ii. Problems with this Idea
 1. The term "one" is not a numerical value. Paul is not emphasizing that an elder has this one woman.
 2. Why would Paul shroud this characteristic in such strange vocabulary? Why not just say "he must be faithful to his wife" or "he must not be guilty of adultery"? Paul does not "beat around the bush" with the other characteristics, why this one?
 3. Wouldn't the other qualifications of an elder already say that an elder must be faithful? For example: being of good behavior, being temperate, sober-minded, being above reproach- wouldn't all of these qualifications already suggest that an elder can't be cheating on his wife?
 4. Let's say that this passage is really talking about an elder being faithful to his wife. If his wife dies is the elder still faithful to her? For example, if Bob's wife dies and somebody asks Bob are you faithful to your wife, how would Bob respond? Would he say "Yes, I am faithful to my wife"? He currently is not faithful to his wife because she has died, and that covenant is now dissolved. This is shown in Romans 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:8-9; 1 Tim 5:14. Instead, Bob would say, "When she was alive, I was faithful to her." This is not the same as "a bishop must be the husband of one wife".
 5. If we suppose that a man must "have been" faithful to his wife when she was alive adds a qualification that Paul does not add. Suppose, when this man was 20, he did have an affair. It was a one-time occurrence; he repented and reconciled with his wife, and from that time on was faithful. This would mean that this man would never be qualified to serve as an elder, no matter how much he repented. He would not be able to say that he was "always faithful" to his wife when she was alive. If the argument is that, "Well, it doesn't mean that he had to always be faithful, he just has to currently be faithful", how can he be currently faithful if his wife is dead? Does this qualification only count if he was having an affair at the time of her death? If this phrase really does mean faithful, then we add a modifier that Paul does not say... "a bishop must not have, at any time, been guilty of adultery". Paul does not say this.

b. It isn't fair

- i. Many would say that it isn't fair that a man cannot be allowed to continue to serve as an elder if his wife dies. It's not his fault, why should he be punished for something out of his control?
- ii. Problems with this idea

1. One could make the same argument for a man who wants to become an elder, but his wife has died. He should still be allowed to become an elder.
 2. To suggest the man is being punished, suggests that to serve as an elder is a right. It's not. It is a privilege that many men will not be able to obtain because of any number of characteristics that are not met, whether it was in their control or not.
 3. These are God's commandments and qualifications. Who are we to argue with the fairness of God? We are not the judges of what is fair. God is.
 4. If we go with the argument of fairness, we would need to throw out a lot of verses in the Bible. For example, is it fair that women cannot serve in public worship? Is it fair that those who have attraction towards the same sex aren't allowed to practice homosexuality? Is it fair that if your spouse divorces you, you can't get remarried? The list can go on and on.
 5. There are several practical and observable reasons why God wants an elder to be the husband of one wife. How can an elder, whose wife has been dead for many years, give marriage counseling to couples who are struggling? How can an elder hope to be an example of a godly husband...if he isn't a husband? There are several other ways in which we can see the benefit of an elder being married, these are just two examples. But suppose a widowed elder wanted to resign and just be a deacon...he would not be qualified to be a deacon because deacons must also be married, and there are qualifications for deacon's wives! Do deacons have "stricter" qualifications than elders?
- IV. The Bottom Line
- a. Read the verse how it is, without any commentary or additions or subtractions: "a bishop must be...the husband of one wife". Just taking it for what it says, it is clear what it means...a bishop must currently be the husband of one wife. If that changes, he is no longer qualified as an elder
 - b. Are we willing to jeopardize each of our souls and an entire congregation because we take liberty with what the Scripture says? We profess that we must have authority for what we do...does this have the authority of the Scriptures behind it? When we get to judgment, we will each have to answer for how we applied Scripture. We will not be able to use the excuse that "the elders said it was ok".