



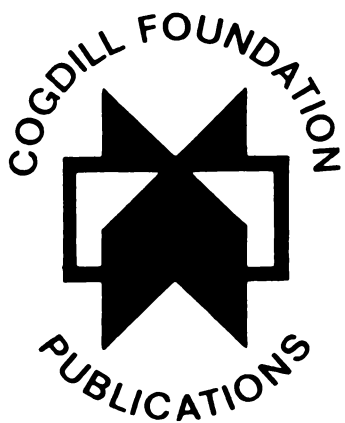




# **SCRIPTURAL ELDERS AND DEACONS**

**by**

**H. E. Phillips**



**Box 403  
Marion, Indiana 46952**

**Copyrighted, 1959**

**by**

**H. E. Phillips**

**All rights reserved**

**Printed in U.S.A.**

TO

*my wife,  
affectionately  
known to all as Polly,  
my faithful, loyal and devoted  
companion for more than two decades,*

TO

*my three  
devoted daughters,  
Carolyn, Juanita and Elaine*

TO

*my God  
fearing parents  
for my early training*

TO

*God fearing  
Elders and Deacons  
in every congregation of  
the church of our Lord,*

*This volume is affectionately dedicated.*

## PREFACE

When great authority has been given to any person it increases opportunities for service, temptations for self-exaltation and consequences for failure. Possession of authority brings grave responsibility. No greater responsibility rests on any man today than that which comes from the authority granted elders in the Lord's church. Hence, we have the Spirit's commendation, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor," and his warning, "Take heed therefore to yourselves . . . for I know this . . . of your ownelves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." Elders are called upon to feed, to rule, to take the oversight of, and to watch in behalf of the souls of God's people, knowing that they must give an account for this stewardship. The very seriousness of such responsibility should impress all with the gravity of the task. Elders should be keenly alert to the possibility of failure and diligently guard against the development of any defection. Two focal points to watch are: first, an indifference toward their God-given responsibilities as shepherds of the church, and second, a misuse of the position of honor and authority to which they have been elevated. Indifference can stifle the growth of the church and hinder the spread of the gospel; abuse of power can create a despotic monster which will seek to dominate and enslave the consciences and the lives of those who are subjected.

The need for constant study of the governmental features of the local church is evidenced by past history and present conditions. God gave Israel the kind of government He wanted her to have. As long as His people respected that form of government they prospered. When they exchanged the will of God for the desires of their own hearts and instituted a form different from that which God ordained, they were on the road to complete apostasy which culminated in the Babylonian captivity. God gave to the church the kind of government He wanted her to have. As long as the people respected that form of government they were blessed. When they exchanged the will of God for the desires of their hearts and instituted a form different from that which God ordained, they too were on the road to complete apostasy which culminated in the development of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. When New Testament Christianity was restored and the divine pattern of church government was again respected, the people were wonderfully blessed, but when they desired to imitate the nations round about them and substituted human organizations for divine arrangement, they walked the path of apostasy into the full embrace of modernistic denominationism. From the story of the past we should learn a lesson of the ever present dangers of apostasy. Any religious group which fails to retain the simple governmental structure of New Testament churches is on the road to complete apostasy. There can be no alteration in official

function or extension in presbyterial oversight without setting the stage for the tragic consequences that always follow.

In view of the extreme importance of the question of church government, we should be especially grateful to men who are willing to give endless hours of study and research to explore every possible answer, and to help bring into clear focus the light of instruction from God's divine revelation, Brother Phillips is a diligent student of the Bible and a logical analyst of its teaching. Through the years he has made a concentrated study of the eldership and is adequately prepared to discuss it in a scholarly manner. He has delved deep into the many phases of his subject and has been thorough in his discussions. He is to be commended for the extensive research he has done on this vital theme. It will be evident to the reader that he has fully examined every source of information available to him. Much has been written on the subject of the eldership and church government, and the author has rendered a valuable service by his careful examination and treatment of the various positions set forth in many other works. He is especially to be commended for the high degree of objectivity and the evident fairness which he displays throughout his work. The reader will receive valuable suggestions regarding the major positions held on practically every phase of this wide topic.

It has been a pleasure to read the manuscript before it goes to press. It is our opinion that the book is a significant contribution to the field of Christian literature, and that it supplies a fair, unbiased treatment of an important subject in the light of present needs. We are glad to recommend the book for your prayerful study and serious consideration.

FRANKLIN T. PUCKETT

BOB F. OWEN



## INTRODUCTION

A study of the organization and function of the New Testament church is of utmost importance in this day of religious confusion and deviation. The innovations and corruptions that have slowly crept into the church to hinder and disrupt its mission, and the plan to mellow and compromise the call of the gospel, have grown rapidly in recent times because of an inefficient and unqualified eldership. An inefficient and unqualified eldership is the result of failure to teach and practice what the New Testament teaches on the subject. When we turn to "make all things according to the pattern showed to thee," respecting the oversight of the church, we will establish an unsurmountable barrier against all innovations and corruptions in the way of real Christianity. One of the greatest needs in the church today is a qualified, working eldership.

The doctrine taught in this book is nothing new; it is nearly two thousand years old. Concerning the New Testament "anything new is not true, and anything true is not new." The author makes no claim to originality of truths presented here more than the compilation and organization of the material presented.

Two main goals have been sought in this work: to glorify God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to edify all Christians in the knowledge of the New Testament concerning the organization of the church. I am aware of the great controversies that have raged over this subject, and have humbly approached the task with the full cognizance that no power lies within me, but that all power is in the Lord Jesus Christ and his word. I am made to feel very humble in offering this book for the investigation of the reading public for at least three reasons: (1) I feel my complete and total dependance upon God and His word. I know that it is within man to err, but God never makes a mistake. I realize that "in him we live, and move, and have our being." (2) I realize the seriousness of the subject with which I have dealt. It can not be treated lightly or with indifference. (3) I am aware that this work will be compared with that of great and respected men of God in the past and present who have written on this subject. I regard the works of these men in highest esteem, and only depart from them when the evidence of God's word demands it.

At least eight years have gone into the research and preparation of this book. Literally hundreds of articles, tracts, booklets, and books have been read in whole or in part in the search for the truth on the subject. I am aware that the New Testament contains all truth to "completely furnish a man unto every good work," but different positions and questions had to be thoroughly analyzed to determine whether or not they were scriptural. I do not make the claim that there are no errors in this work; that would be expecting too much from any human production. But all errors should be attributed to me, and all truth found within these pages is from God; give Him the glory.

I am compelled to express my appreciation to the many authors whose works have given me valuable information and understanding. The list is entirely too long to give in this introduction. I am indebted to all of those, both living and dead, who have contributed to a better understanding of the Bible doctrine on the elders and deacons. Some with whom I have disagreed on some points have been of considerable help on others.

I wish to especially acknowledge my profound appreciation to the following men who have contributed of their valuable time to read and criticize the entire manuscript: Franklin Puckett, gospel preacher and professor of Bible, Florida Christian College; Bob F. Owen, A.B., M.A., Dean of students and professor of Greek and Bible at Florida Christian College; Marvin A. Brooker, Sr., Ph. D., Dean of the College of Agriculture, University of Florida, and one of the elders of the University Avenue Church of Christ, Gainesville, Fla., where I now preach. Clinton Hamilton, A.B., M.A., Dean of Florida Christian College and professor of Bible, and Granville Horn, Ph. D., University of Florida and a deacon of the University Avenue Church of Christ, read the manuscript in part. Many helpful suggestions from these men have been applied to the final construction of this work.

With the full understanding that what has here been written will remain for examination after my pen is still in death, and with the realization that I must answer in the judgement for what I have written, I humbly and fearfully present the following pages for the reader's prayerful and serious consideration. May God bless us all who sincerely strive for the perfection given in His word.

January 10, 1957

H. E. Phillips

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

In January of 1957 when I wrote the Introduction to this book I had no thought of a second edition being published. Now, after eighteen years, I reflect upon the passing time and review the unbelievable changes that have taken place within the church, and observe the great need to restudy the Bible principles that govern the organization and function of the church. I have no apologies to offer for the general contents of this volume. I believe it presents the truth now on the subject it purports to discuss just as I believe it did then. The only changes I would attempt to make if I were to write another such volume now would be to include a chapter or two on the false doctrine that the church of our Lord is not an organized functional entity, and some additional study on the super-organizational structure of liberal churches as they accelerate their speed toward complete apostasy.

I perhaps would also rephrase a few sentences for clarification, but I would not change the substance of the material. The subject matter is controversial, and probably always will be. I lay no claim to infallibility, but I would urge sincere study of what is herein presented.

When brother Cecil Willis approached me about reprinting this volume, I had some reservations about its value until I realized that a new generation has grown up and they must face the same problems which still exist. I have made no changes in this volume in order that it may still serve as a reference work with the first edition. I hope to publish another volume on this subject viewing it from current objections and problems.

I am grateful to all who have encouraged the reprint of this volume. I pray that every person who reads it will search the word of God to see if these things be so.

February 18, 1974

H. E. Phillips

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I—The Nature Of Church Organization .....	1
Chapter II—Perverted Organizations In The Church .....	5
Chapter III—The Scripturally Organized Church .....	11
Chapter IV—No Elder Theory.....	18
Chapter V—The Relationship—Apostles, Elders, Preachers.....	31
Chapter VI—The Eldership And Apostasy.....	39
Chapter VII—The Authority Of The Eldership.....	44
Chapter VIII—Scriptural Appellations Of The Oversight Of The Church.....	64
Chapter IX—Attitudes Toward Qualifications Of Elders And The Consequences.....	74
Chapter X—The Qualifications Of An Elder.....	90
Chapter XI—The Duties Of The Eldership.....	189
Chapter XII—Duties Of The Church Toward The Elders.....	213
Chapter XIII—Ordaining Of Elders.....	232
Chapter XIV—The Office Of Deacon.....	255
Chapter XV—The Qualifications Of Deacons.....	259
Chapter XVI—Duties Of Deacons And The Church.....	270
Chapter XVII—Concerning Wives Of Officers Of The Church.....	274

## CHAPTER I

# THE NATURE OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION

### I. PURPOSE OF THESE STUDIES

I begin this work with the realization that it is a highly controversial subject which has been debated and discussed since the Restoration Movement. The various conceptions of church government stem back to the errors of Catholicism and the confusion of the Reformation. Many different ideas have been vehemently presented in a variety of degrees. It is certain that if there is any New Testament teaching on the subject, all of these ideas cannot be correct. But to the honest seeker for truth, the doctrine of Christ and His apostles will forever settle the matter.

In this treatise we do not hope to forever settle this matter for all people any more than we would expect a series of sermons on baptism to forever settle the differences on that subject. But to all who respect the word of God, a clear presentation of Bible facts will forever settle it for them. To such a class we appeal in this book.

I have no ulterior or vindictive motives in the presentation of this work. My purpose is not—

1. For personal gain either financial, social or political.
2. To expose the errors of, or to denounce, any single elder or deacon of personal acquaintance, either of the congregation where I preach or elsewhere. On the other hand I will not keep back any Bible truth for their sakes.
3. To expose the errors of, or denounce, any single member of the church where I now preach or elsewhere for personal reasons. On the other hand I can not keep back any Bible truth for their sakes.
4. To use the pulpit or this book to vindicate any theory I may hold. I have not been provoked to preach on this subject because of anyone or anything in particular either where I am now living or elsewhere. I solicit your careful investigation of all I say in the light of God's eternal truth. If what I say is not in agreement with the Bible, reject it at once! But if what is taught on this subject here is found in the Bible, you have no choice but to accept it if you want to be saved.

On the other hand my purpose is—

1. To present the New Testament truth on the ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST with equal force as we would teach on any other phase of the church.
2. To teach that which will help develop a strong church spiritually. Large numbers are not always a sign of spiritual strength (Matt. 7:13, 14).
3. To speak in the fear of God and the judgment, without par-

tiality toward anyone. I wish to follow the charge Paul gave to Timothy in preaching the "things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses" (2 Tim. 2:2), to "observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (I Tim. 5:21). In this connection Paul gave instructions for the qualifications and appointment of elders and deacons in the church.

Any quotations in these studies from uninspired men will be given ONLY to show their understanding of the matter and NOT to prove a thing right or wrong. Only the Bible is final proof.

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

It would be extremely unwise to enter into a study without first taking into account the true definitions of the terms to be used. The words—"organism" and "organization" do not appear in the English Bible, but the expressions that mean the same thing are found therein.

The word "apostasy" does not appear in the Bible, but the expression "falling away" is found, and "falling away" means the same as "apostasy." It does not follow that there is no such thing as "apostasy" taught in the Bible just because the word itself does not appear. The same could be said for "Bible." This word is not found in the sacred Scriptures, but it does not follow that there is no such thing as the *Bible*.

What do the words "organism" and "organization" as we use them mean? Webster's Unabridged Dictionary is a good authority and here are his definitions:

*Organism*—"1. Any organized body or living economy; any individual animal or plant. 2. The state of being organized (rare). 3. An organized body of people; an organization. 4. Any organ of a living body."

*Organization*—"1. The act of organizing; the act or process of arranging and getting into proper working order; as, the ORGANIZATION of an expedition. 2. The state of being organized; that which is organized; an organized body. 3. Organic structure; the disposition or arrangement of the organs for the performance of vital functions. 4. The arrangement of the parts of an aggregate or body for work or action; systematic preparation for action."

Now that is the meaning of the English words "organism" and "organization." But what are the words in the New Testament that carry the same meaning?

From Young's *Analytical Concordance*, Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon* and others we have the following. All these do not refer to the organization of the church, but they show what the words mean.

*Ordain*—(Tasso)—“To form, prepare; to arrange, set in array” (Acts 13:48—“As many as were ordained to eternal life believed”) and (Rom. 13:1—“The powers that be are ordained of God.”)

*Order*—(Taxis)—“Arrangement, order.” (I Cor. 14:40—“Let all things be done decently and in order.”) Gr. Diatasso—“To arrange thoroughly.” (I Cor. 11:34—“And the rest will I set in order when I come.”)

*To Set In Order* (Titus 1:5—“Set in order the things that are wanting.”) Thayer says, page 238: “To set in order besides or further.”

*To Join Closely* (Eph 2:21—“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”) (Eph. 4:16—“From whom the whole body fitly joined together.”) Thayer says, page 601: “To join closely together; to frame together.”

### III. NECESSITY OF ORGANIZATION

Organization is absolutely necessary to order and to accomplishment to the fullest of ability when two or more people are associated in any given task. The lack of good organization in the church is the greatest hindrance to the efficient administration of the mission of the church. Since the Lord has but one church, and has given us one pattern for all congregations, it follows that the organization revealed in the New Testament is the only acceptable one. Any departure from or substitution for that divine pattern is heresy before God.

The Bible is our final authority so we turn to 2 Peter 1:3: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . .” And Paul says: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Since the Bible was given by God, and since it furnishes us to every good work, it is necessary for the church to be organized after the divine pattern to be acceptable to God. Those who teach and practice a substitute organization in the congregation, declare by that action that what the Bible teaches on congregational organization is not essential to furnish men unto every good work in the church.

If we allow a deviation from the divine organization of the local church, how can we object righteously to the change or innovation in the worship of the church, or the terms of entrance into the church? One is as important as the other.

### IV. DIFFERENT KINDS OF ORGANIZATIONS

There are principally three kinds of government possible in the local church. If one of these classifications falls into the divine pattern,

the others are not possible in church organization.

**A. MONARCHY**—A government where all legislative, judicial and executive powers are invested in one man. He is the law-giver, the judge and the executor of the law. The subjects have no power at all except as the supreme ruler delegates. The subjects have two alternatives: (1) To submit to the laws of the supreme ruler and enjoy his promises, or (2) rebel and pay the consequences.

**B. DEMOCRACY**—A government where all powers are invested in all the people equally. An absolute democracy would require every person to meet and to make the laws, all to act as judge, and all to execute the law. This is not possible with any large number of people, hence there is no absolute democracy. It is a self-rule of the people.

**C. REPUBLIC**—A government where the powers are invested in elected representatives of the people. The elected delegates have the authority of making, judging and executing the law over the people. The people who elect the representatives do not have the power given to the delegates elected. But the people have the power to elect or impeach the representatives to the office.

There are generally five conditions of organization of the church today. Almost if not all will come in one of these conditions.

**A. SCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED**—Having qualified elders and deacons appointed and performing the mission of the church in a scriptural way.

**B. SCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED**—Having no members qualified for elders and deacons, hence having no officers of any kind exercising an oversight. This is usually characteristic of newly established congregations or a small number of Christians meeting temporarily under unusual circumstances such as a group of soldiers meeting on an army post.

**C. UNSCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED**—Having unqualified and unscriptural men ruling as elders, or some human organization as "committees" or "business meetings" ruling the congregation.

**D. UNSCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED**—Having men scripturally qualified for elders and deacons but have never been appointed and are not serving, but where they ought to be appointed. This condition often exists because some few men who are not qualified desire to keep a controlling hand in the affairs of the church and thus keep those who are qualified from being appointed.

**E. SUPER-ORGANIZED**—Having various inter-organizations within the church to substitute for the scriptural organization. This would include "Youth Organizations," "Ladies Organized Classes," "Sunday School Organizations," etc., within the congregation.

## CHAPTER II

### PERVERTED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CHURCH

#### I. DANGER OF CHANGING CHURCH ORGANIZATION

No man or group of men have ever been given authority to decide how many times a year the Lord's Supper is to be observed; or whether a man may be baptized by sprinkling or pouring water on his head; or to change the terms of entrance into the church. Why then, should we think that the order of organization can be changed by uninspired men? A change in the organization leads necessarily to a change in laws. If we change the organization of the church, we have to change the gospel of Christ to allow us to change the organization. The method of doing a thing is as important as the thing done, if God has told us **HOW** to do it.

Many religious leaders have departed from the New Testament model of the church in several ways, but no departure is more glaring than that of the organization. Most gospel preachers would contend loudly for sound **DOCTRINE** in the church, but are careless and indifferent toward the **ORGANIZATION**. Those who teach and practice a perverted-organization in the church are as unsound as the one who preaches another gospel, and should be disciplined as false teachers, for so they are.

The Bible teaches that we must follow the directions of the Lord in every point. In speaking of the priesthood of Christ, Paul said, "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law" (Heb. 8:4). Christ, not being of the Levitical tribe, could not be a priest under the law. Then Paul explains why: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). Every thing had to be done exactly according to the pattern given by God in building the tabernacle. Now if it was so under this law which was the "example and shadow," why would it not be even more so under Christ? We must make all things of the church, including the organization, according to the pattern showed us through Christ.

#### II. ELDERS JUST PUPPETS

This is a condition where men are selected and appointed without regard to the qualifications, but just to satisfy the demand of the Scriptures to "have elders." These men who are so serving are stripped of all authority and left only as puppets. They are either under the command of some of the influential men of the church or to a group of women,



including their wives, who dominate them completely. This is a perversion of the scriptural organization of the church.

### III. TRIAL GOVERNMENT

It has been suggested by some that in the absence of elders certain men may take, or be appointed to take, the oversight on trial to prove themselves. Many of the writers of the Restoration period believed that when a number of disciples met together for worship and work, they could pick from among themselves certain ones to be rulers even before they were qualified, and let them develop into the qualifications while serving. Or, even worse, that the duties of the eldership may be distributed among the members until men are qualified.

There is no such suggestion in the New Testament as a "trial rule" in congregations. The duties of the oversight absolutely require the qualifications BEFORE the work can be scripturally done. God does not experiment in His plans. He knew what would work and what would not work before He set the standard for congregational government. Since He did not provide for "trial oversight" we necessarily conclude that such is not scriptural.

The Bible furnishes us with all things necessary to completely perfect us unto EVERY good work before the Lord. And since this is true, why did not the Holy Spirit make some provision for "trial government" if such is necessary to any good work? The answer is evident. No such plan comes from God. It is a perversion of church organization. Unless men are qualified to be appointed to the eldership, we cannot appoint any without becoming guilty before God.

### IV. PREACHER RULE

In a congregation with no elders, is the preacher an overseer? Is he to direct the affairs and rule over that church? Some may insist that there is no other course, but no passage of Scripture gives an evangelist any oversight in any sense of the word over a congregation. It is true that often the preachers take the most active part in the oversight: caring for all correspondence in the business of the church, and making all or most of the contacts and contracts for the church, and even directing the meetings of the elders. But the fact that it is being done in some places does not make it right. Preachers should do the work of preaching the gospel and leave the oversight to the elders. In fact, if it is to be scriptural the elders must TAKE the oversight and not allow preachers to assume it.

But if preachers have the oversight of the church with the elders, in the case of no elders, such a plan would give the preacher THE oversight and make him THE overseer. Often young and energetic preachers feel the urge to have such power, and feel that the church

would be better off if they could just take things in hand. Therefore, they encourage this plan in some places. But from a scriptural point of view no preacher as such has the oversight of a single congregation.

## V. LEADERSHIP RULING

“Leadership” may be a dangerous word implying improper authority in the church or something in substitution for the eldership. Leadership in the local church may be divided into three classes and properly used.

A. Scripturally appointed elders who exercise proper “leadership” in the oversight of the church. No one else has the right to exercise a leadership in the oversight but those who can scripturally be in the oversight—the elders.

B. Scriptural teachers, preachers and deacons who exercise “leadership” in doing their work well and setting a proper example to others. They take the lead in doing the work assigned to them by the eldership of the church. This is not a “leadership” in ruling.

C. Faithful members of the church who exercise “leadership” by setting spiritual examples of Christianity.

Beyond this “leadership” has no authority in the church of Christ. When we speak of “leaders” in the church, we should designate the character of such leadership, for if we speak of “leadership” as the governing power of the congregation, we should make sure we are speaking of the eldership. Only the eldership has leadership in the oversight.

There is a general practice that LEADERS should be appointed in the church in the place of elders, if none are qualified, and that they be called “Leaders” instead of “Elders.” This is another way to avoid obeying the Lord in appointing men to the eldership who are qualified. Many qualified men are never appointed to the eldership because of jealousy on the part of some others in the church. However, in the case where no man is qualified scripturally to be appointed to the eldership, what scriptural principle could be used to substitute another “office” called “Leaders” in the place of the eldership? Any such would do violence to the word of God. Also the “office of the Leaders” provides a way of placing in the oversight men who can not qualify to be elders. It is disobedience to God.

## VI. MAJORITY RULE (BUSINESS MEETINGS)

Some have tried to make the “business meeting” the substitute for the eldership. If these “general assemblies” (business meetings) are the ruling part of a congregation what is to hinder this force from changing the worship or making new regulations regarding any part of the work

of the church? If one answers: The Bible will keep them from doing that, I answer: The Bible did not keep them from forming an organization of oversight unknown to the Bible; and if they do one thing unknown to the Bible, why will they not go further and do something else?

No one should legislate where God has not legislated. Some try to turn the church into a democratic convention, and resort to popular vote and majority rule in the oversight. The majority-rule system of church government is as unscriptural and sinful as any ecclesiastical system taught by Catholics or others of denominational groups.

## VII. COMMITTEE RULE

This is a very popular system of church rule. It is based upon two suppositions: (1) A "necessary inference"—(How else can we do it?) (2) It is the most successful and approved method in clubs and lodges, hence it must work in the church.

The New Testament does not teach that the church may form several organizations called "committees" to do different things in oversight of the local church. The only authority ever delegated by Christ in the church, in the way of oversight, was the eldership. The elders may assign certain work to a person or group of persons, but they cannot delegate the oversight to anyone. One may as well try to get to heaven by not obeying the gospel as to try to get into the oversight without scriptural qualifications.

Imagine the church in Jerusalem, or Antioch, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or any place in New Testament days having an official organization of the following committees:

1. Membership Committee
2. Devotion Committee
3. Social Committee
4. Community Committee
5. Finance Committee
6. Recreation Committee
7. New Member Committee
8. Janitorial Committee
9. House and Grounds Committee
10. Organization Committee
11. Invitation Committee
12. Transporting Committee (Transportation)
13. Visitation Committee
14. Ushering Committee
15. Preaching and Teaching Committee
16. Bulletin Committee
17. Absentee Committee
18. Revival Committee (Revival Meetings)

19. Advertising Committee
20. Funeral Committee

I have seen in bulletins and reports from congregations every one of the above named committees, so I know that some churches have one to all of these committees operating in a ruling sense.

In the editorial of *The Firm Foundation* of March 6, 1951 brother G. H. P. Showalter quotes from a deacon of a congregation who wrote him: "There seems to be a general movement among the churches in Texas, California, and possibly other states, to supplant God's plan of governing the local churches through their elders and deacons. Committees are appointed for every work of the church. They are supervisory in their nature and leave nothing for the elders and deacons to do in their official capacity. I am a deacon here in one of the congregations, but I am at a loss to find any work left for me to do as a deacon. The list of committees that have been in use in this congregation since about 1945 are: (1) Advertising, (2) Bible School, (3) Charity, (4) Finance and Building, (5) Flowers, (6) Funerals, (7) Grounds, (8) Meals, (9) Songs, (10) Ushers, (11) Missions, (12) Pulpit, (13) Reception-men, (14) Reception-women, (15) Sitting up, (16) Visitation-men, (17) Visitation-women, (18) Committee on Committees . . ."

One of the greatest objections to this system, besides being unscriptural, is that sometimes women are placed on the committees, and are even made chairmen of them, especially so of committees for women. The Lord did not intend that women should be placed in the oversight or supervision of the Lord's work.

Webster defines "Committee" as "a body of persons to whom any business is committed." The ordinary meaning of the word may apply to a group of persons assigned to a certain work by the elders, but this group can assume no authority or oversight because the elders cannot delegate their oversight to others. Nor can such "committees" be formed to substitute for the eldership. Such work as financing, preaching, teaching, etc., needs no "committee" group because it is directly the work of the elders.

Two great objections may be offered against self-styled or majority-appointed committees in the church. (1) When a committee is established to do a special work it often eliminates all the other members from that work, and often it is a work that all members should do, such as visiting the sick or helping the poor. If others try to do this work the committee is horribly offended! (2) Committees so appointed for a special work under special circumstances sometimes arrogate to themselves PERMANENT and OFFICIAL authority in the matter, and will insist upon performing that function always.

Since the New Testament nowhere authorizes "committees" to assume authoritative or supervisory positions in the organization of the church, we must not allow it to permeate the scriptural oversight of the church. The New Testament church can and did perform its full mission without "committees," and it can do so now. All such are innovations in the local organization of the church.

### VIII. INTER-CONGREGATIONAL RULE

In the days of the Restoration several prominent men thought, as Alexander Campbell, that there were some things to be done by the church that were too large for the local church, hence some organization should be formed to carry on this work. One consequence of this idea is the organized Missionary Society of today. This same idea is at work today among many in trying to find a way to lock hundreds and thousands of congregations together in caring for orphans and in doing "mission" work at home and abroad.

One of the greatest weaknesses of modern denominationalism is its "top-heavy" organizations. The church of Christ in some places is following the same pattern. We become as weak as they when we set aside the wisdom of God in organization and try to establish similar inter-congregational ties of organization. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (I Cor. 1:27). The world may look upon the simplicity of local organization as weak, but it is the most powerful in all the world because it is of God. I say again, No man can improve upon the arrangement of God.

Some organizations are smaller than the local church. It is as wrong to have an organization smaller than the local church as to have one larger, including several churches. Some have organized "Sunday School Classes" with their officers and treasuries. Others have "Youth Organizations" of various kinds with full election of officers. These sorts of organized groups within the church, or without so far as that goes, should not be allowed. It is adding to and substituting for the scriptural organization of the church.

## CHAPTER III

**THE SCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED CHURCH**

Since the church of Christ must be organized, and since the Bible teaches the complete will of Christ in all matters relating to the church, we must see what the Scriptures teach about the organization of the church. If we follow the Scriptures in organizing the church, it will be a "Scripturally Organized Church." We have already searched into the meaning of "Organization," and we understand "Scripturally" to mean "according to the Scriptures." We must determine what the Bible means by "Church."

## I. SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF "CHURCH"

There are three ways in which the word "church" is used in the New Testament, each of which must be understood when speaking of the organization of the church.

A—The church is used in the aggregate or universal sense. This refers to all the people the world over, young and old, men and women, who are in the church. It is used in such passages as Ephesians 1:22, 23—Christ is head of the church; Ephesians 3:10—wisdom of God made known by the church; Ephesians 5:24—the church is subject to Christ; Matthew 16:18—Christ will build his church. In this sense the church is the body of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, the family of God. (Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:12, 13; Col. 1:13; I Tim. 3:15). It is composed of many members and all are "officers" in a sense, though not all the same (Rom. 12:4, 5).

In this use of the word "church" there is no organization except Christ the head and King, and all members are subjects. There is no other ruler but Christ. But under this King, and acting by His authority, are the apostles of Christ. Today their writings are the law of the church as their spoken word was when they were living. Then under the apostles were the inspired preachers (prophets) and teachers; and today the evangelists and teachers who are charged with preaching the same truth revealed through the apostles. All of these can do their work among several congregations, although they exercise no oversight or control.

B—The church is used in the sense of all the people of God in a district or country. This includes several congregations geographically separated from others, as in Gal. 1:2—"Unto the churches of Galatia." Gal. 1:22—"Unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ." We notice that they are here called "churches" meaning several congregations in that area.

The church as used in this sense has no organization other than Christ as the head and all equally subject to Him. But as in the reference to the church universally, the apostles, with delegated authority from Christ, exercise control over all of them. Their writings are the guide and authority in this sense today. The evangelist may work among several congregations in this sense but does not exercise any oversight over them. There is no controlling power above the apostles' doctrine that ties any two congregations together. We often speak of the church in the sense used here, such as "the church in Florida," meaning all the local churches geographically located in the state of Florida. There are no organizational ties of the churches in this sense.

C—The church is used in the local sense. This refers to all Christians living and meeting in a certain place. This is in the congregational sense. Christ is the supreme Ruler, and the apostles exercise his authority in all doctrinal matters. But in addition to this the eldership is delegated with local authority in the church. All work and worship is done through the local church, therefore, all work must be done under the eldership, properly the authority in the church. No worship, praise or part of the mission of the church can be expressed outside the local church. All work of the church that is done in a scripturally organized form must be done under the eldership. There is no organization, except the apostles under Christ, in the church in the first two senses. If such an organization can be formed to supervise several local churches, why are not all organized missionary societies and such like scriptural? The same authority that would grant one would grant the other.

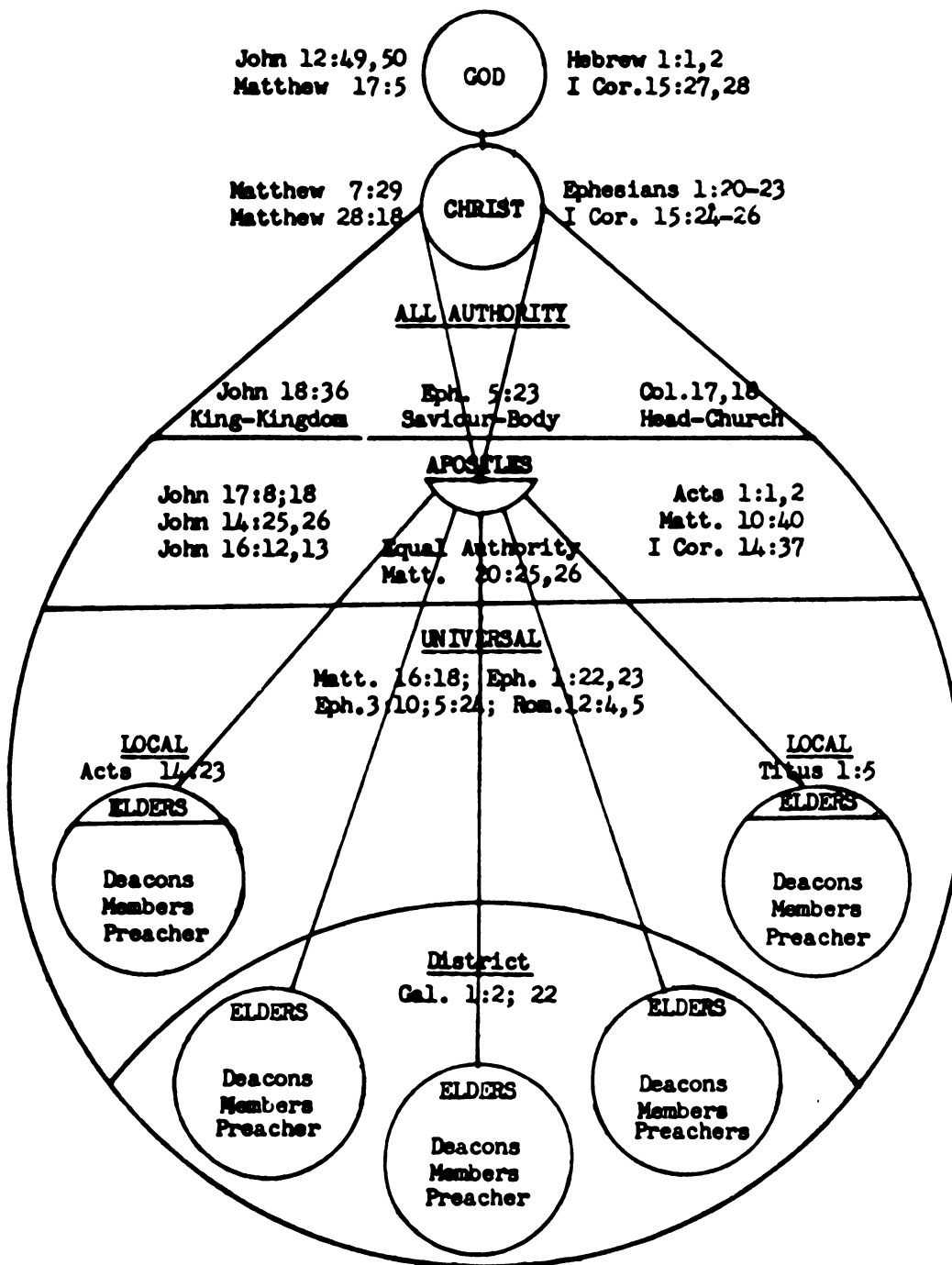
Every person baptized into Christ must be associated with some local church somewhere, even if only he and one other composed that church. He must be associated with a local group to do any work and worship as the church. One may not be obligated long with one single congregation, as an evangelist who travels, but what work he does must be with a local church, even if only he and one other compose that church.

## II. SCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED CHURCHES

When two or more are baptized into Christ and begin to meet at a certain place, they compose the church of Christ in that locality, and are as scriptural as a church well established and scripturally organized. Some say that there is no church without elders, but this cannot be true because there must be something to be overseen before there can be some to oversee. Such a condition existed in Crete and Paul left Titus there to "set in order the things that are wanting." Even though it may be a scriptural congregation, it still has something "wanting." But in such cases the unorganized had no oversight. That was the thing wanting (Titus 1:5).

Paul appointed elders in "every church" on his first preaching journey from Antioch (Acts 14:23). These churches existed for a time

1. All authority is from God through Christ in this age.
2. All authority in the church is from Christ through the apostles
3. All Authority in the local church is through the eldership





as approved churches without an eldership—perhaps two years, as some have suggested, or maybe only a few months—but evidently Paul knew something was lacking and he returned and appointed them elders in every church. There is no Bible evidence that any sort of “leadership” or “governing boards” substituted for the eldership until Paul appointed them elders.

In the assemblies without elders, no one should assume or exercise an authority of oversight. In a case where there is a need for some sort of discipline, the church can discuss the matter thoroughly, be of the same mind and accord, and act accordingly. There is no need for voting to determine a majority rule. As soon as men become qualified among them, these should be appointed to the eldership and thus supply the “things that are wanting.”

### III. SCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED CHURCHES

The church, scripturally organized, is a MONARCHY. ALL authority, legislative, judicial and executive, is in Christ. He is the Supreme Ruler (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). He has all authority (Matt. 28:18); and will continue to have it until the end of time and the judgment (I Cor. 15:24). He is seated in this authority in heaven at the right hand of God (Acts 2:32-36). All members of the church must be in complete subjection to Christ in all things. He is the only law giver (James 4:12).

We notice in the chart on the previous page that God the Father is above all things, and from Him all authority and power comes. Christ Himself says that He speaks as God commands: “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:49, 50). God commanded men to hear His Son: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). Paul tells us that Christ is the medium through whom God speaks to man today: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . .” (Heb. 1:1, 2). We learn also from Paul that God gave all authority to Christ, and that it will be returned to the Father after the end of all things: “For he (God) hath put all things under his (Christ’s) feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (I Cor. 15:27, 28). The only one not under the supreme authority of Christ is the Father who gave Him this authority. But after the complete reign of Christ is finished, He will return this authority again to the Father that He might be all in all.

Christ is in the church as its Head; He is the King in His Kingdom. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He is the Saviour of his body. "And he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). He is the head of the church: "Even as Christ is head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:17, 18).

Christ has all authority. He spoke as one having authority (Matt. 7:29). He said He had all authority in heaven and in earth just before He ascended into heaven (Matt. 28:18). God placed Him in supreme authority over all things. "Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:20-23).

Christ will exercise all this authority in the church until after the resurrection. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:24-26).

This government of Christ over the church is perfect, without a flaw, because Christ is perfect in His Rule; and it cannot be overthrown.

Christ does not appear personally to direct and rule His People, but has delegated authority and rule to certain men and has set the limits of their authority. The one who exercises this delegated authority is acting with the authority of Christ, the Supreme Ruler, and cannot be changed by man. An example of this delegated authority is that of a father who has the authority over the home, but assigns an authority to an elder child over the others and sets a limit of either time or degree or both on that authority. When that older child exercises his authority, it is really the authority of the father. Again, when the owner of a business, who certainly is the supreme authority in that business, delegates authority to a qualified man as superintendent or foreman, that foreman exercises the authority of the owner of the business. So it is with the church. It belongs to Christ; He is the sole Ruler, but if He delegates authority in the church, the person to whom the authority is delegated may exercise that authority, and of course within the limits of time and degree. Otherwise he cannot exercise authority.

Christ exercises all authority through the select group of men called

the "apostles of Christ." We will show that NO authority in the church is the authority of Christ unless through the Apostles of Christ. In prayer to the Father, Christ said of the apostles: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). In verse 18: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Having sent them into the world with His authority, He qualified them to speak for Him. "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name (by his authority), he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:25, 26). This Holy Ghost to be sent to the apostles would not speak of himself, but would speak as Christ commanded him, thus the authority of Christ. "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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" (John 16:12, 13).

Now how and when did Christ begin to exercise his "All Authority" through His apostles? "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that . . ." (this shows when: after his ascension into heaven) "he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." This tells how he administered his authority: through the apostles (Acts 1:1, 2).

The authority of Christ is fully administered through the apostles. In speaking to the apostles, he said: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40). We cannot receive Christ without receiving the apostles; and to receive the apostles is to receive their words. Paul affirms that he speaks the commandments of the Lord in his writing. "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" (I Cor. 14:37).

The authority delegated to the apostles is over the church universal. The apostles had no authority above them except Christ. They were equal in authority. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, We know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Matt. 20:25, 26). No one apostle was over the other apostles, but all were equal in authority.

Paul said he had upon him daily "the care of all the churches"

(2 Cor. 11:28). The apostles exercised authority over all the congregations in every place. Today through their writings they continue to exercise the authority delegated to them by Christ.

In the district sense of the word "churches" the only organization is the supreme rule of Christ through the apostles as in the case of the church universal. No authority to bind together congregations in an organizational way is scriptural except the writings of the apostles of Christ, and that does not form an organization.

The church in the local sense has delegated authority from Christ through the apostles. This authority is limited in degree and time. The degree is limited to the caring and feeding of the church and not making divine law to govern it. The degree of time is only when men are scripturally qualified to perform this work; and at such time as they cease to be qualified, they cease to have local authority from Christ.

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." These elders were to take the oversight of the local church (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2). Any local church without elders has something "lacking" or "wanting." Paul left Titus in Crete to set in order the things that were "wanting" and ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5). No other group of men have ever been delegated authority in the local church by Christ, who is the only one to give authority.

As the church spread from Jerusalem, men had to be delegated by Christ to oversee the work in each locality in as much as the apostles could not be in all places at once, and could not live forever. The Holy Spirit gave certain conditions for men to comply with before they could be appointed to this position of local authority in the church. The authority of elders differs from that of the apostles both in degree and limitations.

The Scriptures will furnish a man to very good work (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The church government that is not taught in the New Testament is not classed as a good work. We must be careful never to go beyond that which is written in the word of God (I Cor. 4:6). The church, being of divine origin, is not susceptible to any change or modification by man. If the church is to be organized, let it be scripturally organized, else let it remain unorganized, until men become qualified according to the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER IV.

### NO ELDER THEORIES

No man can read the Bible and come to the conclusion that the church of our Lord does not have and need the office of elders today as it had in the days of the apostles of Christ. The theories are promoted for selfish reasons, and in a complete disregard for Bible authority.

The eldership has been the occasion of much disturbance among brethren in many places. There are many positions taken on it. All should say what the Bible says on the subject, and not try to rearrange it to suit a pet theory, or to fit some existing circumstances. If all would speak as the New Testament speaks on this subject, there would be no division over this matter.

#### I. REASONS FOR ADVANCING THE "NO ELDER" THEORY

A—Some preachers, young and old, want the authority themselves to control the affairs of the church. This certainly is a selfish desire and without any Bible proof. But why do some preachers want to control the church rather than allow the elders to do it?

No doubt many desire the authority to make sure of their "soft job." When a preacher is located with a group where he has little to do, but where the pay is good, and where he holds high prestige, he wants to make sure of the position. He can only do this by holding enough authority to defeat any advance to discharge him. If that congregation had scriptural elders he would be unlikely to continue there with that disposition, therefore, he begins to advance the doctrine of "no elders."

Some preachers have "theories" on certain subjects that qualified elders would not tolerate, so in order to be able to advocate the pet doctrines, they must do away with the eldership. In order to find the force with the people to do it they must try to prove by the Bible that the eldership passed away with the spiritually gifted men.

Some preachers desire to hold the controlling hand on the finances of the church; to tell where it is to go and how much to spend here and there. As long as qualified elders are in the church, such preachers cannot do it, therefore, they find some way to do away with the eldership that they may better control the money of the church.

B—Some ungodly and unrighteous church members want to do away with the eldership so that they may not be stopped in doing some things they want to do. Unrighteousness has a way of rolling over and destroying any thing that stands in its way. But what is to be gained by denying the eldership?

Some influential church member is practicing some sin he does not want to give up, either because of pleasure or gain. Therefore, he tries to find a way to get rid of the eldership that he may continue in the sin without rebuke.

Some young, energetic member of the church wants equal authority and power in all matters of the church, but must find a way to do away with the eldership before he can exercise his desired power. These young members of the church, many not more than twelve to fifteen years of age, do not have the wisdom to lead in such serious matters, yet without the eldership they have as much authority as a fifty-year-old man, if majority rules.

## II. PROOFS OFFERED FOR THE "NO ELDER" THEORY

A—*There Is No Such OFFICE In The Church As ELDERS.* It is argued that there is no such thing in the church as an "office." That the expression "office of a bishop" in I Timothy 3:1 is from "episcopee" which means twice "visitation" and twice "oversight," but not at any time as "official" authority. It is further argued that this is a WORK and not an authority: "If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good WORK."

It is further contended that the word "office" in respect to a deacon in I Timothy 3:10, 13, is from the Greek "diakoneo" and is found 36 times in the New Testament, 24 times translated "to minister," and 10 times "to serve." Only twice is the word translated "office" and that is in this chapter. The reason given for this translation here is that the translators of the King James Version were mostly from the Episcopal Church, and the idea of "office" was prominent in their minds.

The word "office" in I Timothy 3:1 is from "Episcopee" and is defined in *Abbott-Smith's Greek-Lexicon* as: "Office, charge, esp. office of an episcopos." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* gives a similar meaning.

But some contend that we cannot take these lexicographers for they do not always give the true meaning. Webster gives the meaning of "baptism" as: "Sprinkling, pouring or immersion," therefore, if we take one we must take the other.

This is not true because it is the work of a lexicographer to define words in their current usage—as they are understood at the time of their use. Thayer defines words, not as what they now mean, but what they meant when spoken. Webster defines words as they are understood generally today, and that is what he did in the case of "baptism."

But it is admitted in the above that twice the word in I Timothy 3:1 means "oversight"; and that twice in I Timothy 3:10, 13

the word means "work." Is it to be understood that anything that is a work is not of authority? Christ was and is in authority—supreme authority in the church—but he also had work to do. All men in authority, whatever degree it may be, must work in executing that authority. It is true that the "office of a bishop" is a "good work." But it is also admitted in the above argument that the word means "oversight." What is oversight? It means to oversee, to look over, to superintend. Does one appointed to look over the affairs of another have any authority at all? Authority always carries the idea of responsibility, and responsibility carries the idea of authority. If one Christian is in any way responsible for another Christian, to that extent he has authority and must exercise it in order to fulfill his responsibility.

The word "office" in I Timothy 3:10, 13 means to serve. But since this is a special sense of service, and office is the word to designate that service, the office of a deacon is simply the work of a deacon. But the fact that it is a work does not imply that there is no office. All Christians have an "office" to perform, which means a "work." In 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." All members of the body of Christ have an "office"—WORK to perform. All these officers are not the same—some have authority over others—but each has authority to do the work assigned him.

It is contended from I 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,"—that the older members are to take the oversight, not in an official capacity but just to do the work.

In the first place, if the older members were to take the "oversight" or superintendency of the other members, it implies that much authority. You just can't get around the idea of authority in the oversight. In the second place, Peter is not talking about the older members, but those who are the elders—Peter himself was such an elder—to take the oversight. It is a perversion of the passage to say "older members." This would include women as well as men, which would put them in the "oversight."

It is also argued that in Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves,"—does not imply an office, and then they refer to the marginal note of the Revised Version which says: "Obey them that are your guides or leaders." But if one is a guide or leader, is he not performing an assigned work? If so, the work is the "office" and the one who does the work is an "officer." And since he is to rule or guide, he has authority to do that. He is an officer in the office that rules.

B.—*There Is No Authority Of One Man Over Another In The Church.* It is argued that one member of the church does not exercise any authority over another member, else some would be submitting to man rather than to Christ.

This cannot be true for wives are taught to submit to their husbands in everything (Eph. 5:23, 24). If both are Christians, we have one Christian submitting to another by the authority of Christ. Again, in Ephesians 6:1 children are to obey their parents in the Lord. If both child and parents are Christians, we have one Christian submitting—obeying—to others. These passages destroy the above argument of no man over another in the church.

If we submit to men called “elders,” we will have to do away with the authority of Christ, it is said. But to reject the authority of the eldership as Christ has appointed would do away with the authority of Christ. Any man to whom Christ has delegated authority must be recognized as such or we reject the authority of Christ.

But some say, “Christ said no one would exercise authority over another—Matthew 20:25, 26. There will be none in the church to exercise authority over any other.”

Let us examine this passage and the conclusion drawn in this argument. When James and John with their mother came to Jesus they came “worshipping him.” They did not regard him as a mere man or as a servant on this occasion, even though Jesus is pictured in some places as a servant. They regarded him as a King; not only that, but as THE KING. To say that a King is not an official is to totally ignore the meaning of the word. Then the request made by this mother for her two sons was that they might “sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom.” It is clearly evident that she was speaking of their authority IN HIS KINGDOM. The right hand and left hand indicates supreme authority next to Jesus. When Christ sat at the right hand of God, it meant that he was given authority next to God. These recognized the authority of Christ, thus his official capacity as King. The parallel passage is found in Mark 10:35-45, and in verse 40: “But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.” The mother is simply asking Jesus to disregard the other apostles and place her sons above them in authority.

Jesus answered: “Ye know not what ye ask.” They did not understand the nature of his kingdom. Certainly they knew what they were asking for, but they did not understand that the kingdom of Christ was to be a spiritual kingdom without earthly authority. They did not understand that the greatness in his kingdom depended upon service rather than ruling authority. He asked them if they were able to endure



his suffering—"drink this cup," and they answered ignorantly that they were. Mark adds, "to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," meaning his suffering.

Now when the other ten heard that James and John had made this request they were angry. Their anger did not stem from the fact that James and John had asked for a favor, but that they had asked for authority over them. It was a known fact that the apostles of Christ were continually arguing about who was to be the greater, which they conceived to be the one in authority over the rest. Jesus then proceeded to show them that his kingdom was not like that of the Gentiles, which denoted all other than the Jews. Greatness in his kingdom did not depend upon official rank, but upon service, and Jesus cites himself as an example of service. He did not imply that he was not a king, an official in the kingdom.

In verse 17 he was talking to the twelve and not to all men. What he said to them included them only. The passage does not teach that there are no authorities in the kingdom of Christ. That is to completely miss the point of Christ's statement. He did not teach, by referring to the kingdoms of the Gentiles, that there would be no authority of officials in his kingdom; he said: "and they that are GREAT exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (verses 26, 27). "And it shall not be so among you" refers to "greatness" rather than authority. The great of the Gentiles were those in authority, while the great in the kingdom of Christ were the ministers.

Since he was talking to and about the twelve apostles, he did not intend that they should exercise authority over each other. He said, "It shall not be so AMONG YOU." It is true that the apostles themselves were officials in the kingdom as "witnesses," "judges," and "rulers." But the apostles had no authority, one over the other, but all had equal authority under Christ.

*C—There is no need for elders to rule over the church as we have the Bible today.* It is contended that all Christians have the Bible today as a perfect guide and do not have need for men called "elders" to rule over them. If all obey the Bible, they obey Christ. If elders must follow the Bible in their rule, why cannot all follow the Bible? If this is true, they say, we have no need for elders today.

One cannot possibly follow the Bible without obeying the commands of Christ, one of which is to submit to the elders in each congregation. Christ has commanded it. Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." And I Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor."

But if elders are not needed because we have the Bible today, neither do we need preachers and teachers today. Just let each one follow the Bible. But we know that to follow the Bible we must have preachers and teachers of truth because the Bible requires it. It is absurd to say we do not need a thing because we have the Bible when the Bible itself demands that thing. One is not following the Bible when he denies that the church today needs elders to oversee the local work.

D—*We cannot have elders today because we have no inspired men: spiritually gifted men.* It seems that because some were inspired or had spiritual gifts to some measure, that elders today must have the same gifts, else we cannot have elders in the church. We do not deny that some elders in New Testament days were spiritually gifted men, but it is equally certain that there were some who were not.

It is argued that Acts 8:14-18 is an example of Peter and John going to Samaria after the church had been established there to give spiritual gifts, including inspiration, to make elders. When this inspiration ceased the elders ceased.

This is not the case, as will be seen by carefully reading this entire chapter. Elders are not one time mentioned as being made in Samaria, especially at this time. How could one imagine that Peter and John made elders by giving them the power of inspiration, when neither "elder" nor "inspiration" is mentioned in the chapter? The spiritual abilities given at Samaria were to enable the church to continue in its growth and edification, because the New Testament had not then been completed and they had no guide as we have today. The New Testament now does exactly what those spiritual abilities did then.

It is also argued that we know all elders were inspired because God ordered the early church to hear and obey them and submit to them. The Holy Spirit would not have told those people to obey the elders and then leave them exposed to error. Hence, elders were inspired, and when inspiration ceased, the elders as such ceased.

In the first place, where did God ever say: "hear and obey inspired men"? He said to hear Christ (Matt. 17:5; Acts 3:22). Christ is the only one to be heard in religious matters, but he speaks to us through his apostles and prophets.

In the second place, inspiration did not do one thing more for the men in the early church than the written word of God will do now. The difference in the spiritual gift of inspiration to preach and teach then and now is in the method of receiving the message rather than in delivering the message. Preachers are the same, the message is the same, but the method of receiving it is different. Then it came by direct inspiration, but now it comes through the written word of God. Elders are the same today as then. The spiritual gifts gave them the ability to

do the work assigned them just as the word of God gives them the knowledge now.

In the third place, some elders received instructions from Paul. Why would Paul teach them their duties and tell them their responsibilities if they were inspired to know those things? In Acts 20:27, 28 Paul said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 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." Paul had declared to them the counsel of God and then told them their duty. Why this if they were all inspired?

In the fourth place, inspiration provided that the one who possessed it could not err in teaching, but then some elders did err in teaching, for Paul said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall greivous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves (elders) shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30). This proves that all elders did not have the spiritual gift of inspiration. But if some were inspired, it does not prove that elders were done away when inspiration ceased any more than it proves that preachers were done away with inspiration, for some preachers had the gift of inspiration.

In the fifth place, Hebrews 13:7 says that some have the rule. From I Timothy 5:17 we learn that the elders are to rule. Those who had the rule were not all inspired so far as the record shows. The general date of the Hebrew letter is about 63 A.D. In chapter 5:12, we learn that some had been in the church long enough to be teachers. Does that mean that they had been in the church long enough to be inspired? Some were teachers by living in the church long enough to learn the truth so as to teach it. In Titus 1:9, speaking of the elders, Paul says "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught." Does this sound like inspiration?

In the sixth place, Paul did not mention inspiration as a qualification for the eldership in I Timothy 3 or Titus 1. If it had been essential it would have been mentioned along with the other qualifications.

It is argued that I Cor. 12:1-13 and Eph. 4:11-13 show that spiritual gifts included elders or pastors and that they were done away with the spiritual gifts when the perfect way was revealed (I Cor. 13:8-10). It is further argued that I Cor. 12:28 proves that the elders were done away by the term "governments," which passed away with other spiritual gifts. The following syllogism is given to prove it:

1. Elders, by implication, are included with the spiritually gifted men of I Cor. 12 and Eph. 4.
2. The spiritually gifted men ceased with the close of spiritual gifts.

3. Therefore, there are no elders or church officers today.

First, I Cor. 12:1-13 and Eph. 4:11-13 do not show that spiritual gifts included elders or pastors. Gifts were not the men as such in Ephesians 4:11, for verse 8 says, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These men as spiritually endowed workers were given to the church. Many things are gifts, but the word itself does not tell what is given. Christ is a "gift" (John 3:16), but it does not mean a spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit. These men were "gifts" but they had "spiritual gifts," or abilities. Men as men were not given to the church as "gifts" but men with spiritual gifts (elders included) were given.

Second, the passage tells how long the "spiritually gifted" men were to be in the church: "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Now that we have the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God which is revealed in the New Testament, we do not need spiritual gifts in men. But the spiritual gifts have ceased, not the men. The unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God supply these men now with the same that spiritual gifts supplied then.

Third, if elders are done away with spiritual gifts in these passages, evangelists and teachers are also done away. Even some Christians had spiritual gifts, such as the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9), but Christians did not cease when the spiritually gifted Christians ceased. The spiritual gifts just gave away to the complete word of God when it was revealed. But if it be admitted that preachers, teachers and Christians remain today, though not spiritually gifted, it must be admitted by the same rule that elders remain today in the same way.

The syllogism in the argument is not true because the conclusion is not in agreement with the premises. It should be:

1. Elders, by implication, are included with the spiritually gifted men of I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.
2. The spiritually gifted men ceased with the close of spiritual gifts.
3. Therefore, there are no spiritually gifted elders or church officers today. But it does not follow that there are no elders of any kind today.

E—*We cannot have elders today because no one can qualify.* It is argued that the qualifications listed for a bishop are too perfect for man to reach, and, therefore, we cannot have elders today.

If this reasoning be true, it follows that no man could have ever been an elder, even in the early church, because no man is perfect. But we know the early church did have elders. We further know that these elders were not perfect, for those in Ephesus to whom Paul talked in

Acts 20 needed building up (Acts 20:32), and Paul prophesied that some of them would lead disciples away after them (Acts 20:30).

The standard for a Christian is perfect. If we follow the same reasoning as above, we must conclude that no one can be a Christian today because no one can be perfect. Every standard of God is perfect. An elder must measure relatively high in every qualification given in the word of God, but he must continue to grow.

*F—We have no elders today because we do not know how to appoint them.* It is argued that since the Bible does not specify HOW to appoint the elders, we cannot have them in the church today.

But the Bible does not tell us HOW to serve the Lord's Supper, or how many songs to sing in worship, or the order in which we should worship on the Lord's Day. Are we to conclude that we are not to have the Lord's Supper, sing songs of praise to God or worship on the Lord's Day just because God did not tell us just the procedure of doing these things? These are left to human judgment in full harmony with all Bible principles governing such matters. The same is true of appointing elders.

*G—We can have no elders today because we have no one to appoint them.* Three reasons are given why we do not have men who can appoint elders today, and, consequently, can have no elders.

1. In the New Testament times inspired men did the appointing and now we do not have inspired men, and therefore, can have no appointing.

2. There are three qualifications of elders that no man can know unless he is guided by the Holy Spirit: (1) Blameless (2) Holy (3) Just. One must be able to read the heart to know this, and only the Holy Spirit could guide men to select elders. Timothy and Titus received this power of inspiration from Paul and could appoint elders; today we cannot.

3. No one can lay hands on men today and give them the spiritual gifts they need to be elders.

Let us now examine each of these in order.

1. There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that inspired men were to do the appointing. Just because Timothy and Titus did the appointing of some of the elders, and Paul and Barnabas also did some appointing, it does not follow that only inspired men must do the appointing. These men preached also, but it does not follow that only inspired men can preach. It can not be proved that either Timothy or Titus was inspired. Paul told Timothy to teach what he had learned from him (2 Tim. 2:2); and from the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14, 15); and Paul told him to study to be approved (2 Tim. 2:15); and to read

(I Tim. 4:13). They may have had some spiritual gifts, but it had no bearing on the appointment of elders.

2. Blameless, holy and just are qualities that can be known in every man. Jesus said a good tree brings forth good fruit, and by that we may know the tree. "By their fruit ye shall know them" Matt. 7:20). How does one tell the difference between a child of God and a child of the devil? Paul knew Peter was wrong by his actions (Gal. 2:11).

But these are not the only qualities of man that come in the same class. Any condition of the heart cannot be known by another except by his actions or words. What about faith and repentance? How can a preacher know one has really believed and repented of his sins before he baptizes him? Must the preacher be inspired by the Holy Spirit to know this? No. He determines the condition of the heart by his words and actions. Just so one can tell when a man is blameless, holy and just.

3. It has already been shown that elders do not need spiritual gifts today to do their work. They can use the word of God now. But the Bible teaches that some besides the apostles "laid hands" on men to appoint them elders, and none but the apostles could transmit the spiritual gifts (Acts 8:18). Timothy and Titus were not apostles and could not give any measure of spiritual gifts by the "laying on of their hands."

But besides all this, the "laying on of hands" did not always signify the giving of spiritual gifts. This act was for a number of things. The expression in the Bible may refer to unpleasant things also. Notice:

(1) Acts 4:3—The Sadducees "laid hands on" the apostles to put them in prison.

(2) Acts 5:18—Again the Sadducees "laid hands on" the apostles and put them in prison.

(3) Acts 6:6—Apostles "laid hands" on those selected by the multitude and appointed them to the work. Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost." The multitude selected and the apostles "appointed," verse 3.

(4) Acts 8:17, 18—The apostles, Peter and John, "laid their hands" on some in Samaria to "give the Holy Ghost"—spiritual gifts.

(5) Acts 13:3—The church at Antioch "appointed" two whom the Holy Spirit had selected, to do a certain work. No spiritual gifts are indicated.

(6) Acts 28:8—Paul "laid his hands" on the father of Publius to heal him. No spiritual gift given, but a means of miraculous healing.

(7) I Tim. 4:14—The presbytery "laid hands on Timothy" with respect to some gift of prophecy regarding his work.

(8) 2 Tim. 1:6—Paul "laid hands" on Timothy to convey a gift of God—probably some spiritual gift.

(9) I Tim. 5:22—Paul told Timothy not to "lay hands" suddenly on any man. This refers to appointing.

We glean from these few passages that the "laying on of hands" sometimes meant "to arrest or take hold of"; sometimes "to appoint or designate"; sometimes "to transmit a spiritual gift of one kind or another"; and sometimes "as a means of miraculous healing." Spiritual gifts are not essential today to elders in performing their duties, as the word of God is sufficient, hence we have no need for men who "give spiritual gifts by laying on of hands."

H—*We do not have elders today because there is some work that no elder can do today.* It is argued that since there is some work that no man can do today, that was done by the elders of the early church, there can be no elders today. Following is a list of some of those things they say no man can do today.

(1) James 5:14, 15 teaches us to call for the elders of the church when one is sick, and they will come and anoint with oil in the name of the Lord and pray for the sick and he will be healed. This was miraculous healing and cannot be done by so called elders today.

Let us notice this passage. The healing of James 5:14 was really by the power of God. The oil poured on by the elders does not necessarily mean a miracle. Oil was used for several things in the Bible:

- a. Appointing one to a charge (I Sam. 16:12, 13).
- b. For medicine (Luke 10:34).
- c. For food (Ex. 29:2).
- d. For a cosmetic (Ps. 104:15).
- e. For a light (Ex. 27:20).

Not one time is oil used to perform a miracle. Miracles were used to confirm the word, but when the word was fully confirmed and completely revealed the miracles ceased, but the preaching of that word did not cease. Since this passage says the oil was poured on sick people, it is more reasonable to believe that it was used for medicine. The elders are called to administer whatever aid they can to the sick, while at the same time praying for them. The writer here says the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and then uses Elias praying for the rain as an example (verse 17, 18). We read that the reference of Elias was not a miracle but by natural process: a cloud coming from over the ocean (I Kings 18:44, 45). So neither the oil nor the prayer would suggest that they were to perform a miracle. But if those elders did perform a miracle, would it follow that all elders are to perform miracles? Some preachers performed miracles at that time, but preachers are not to pass away because no preacher can perform miracles today.

(2) It is argued that no elder today can "lay hands on" another to give him spiritual gifts, and that was one work of elders in New Testament times. The presbytery (eldership) gave such a gift to Timothy (I Tim. 4:14).

It has already been shown that "laying on of hands" did not always mean the conveying of spiritual gifts. In fact it never referred to that except in the case of an apostle, and then it may mean something else as determined by the context. The "laying on of hands" in I Tim. 4:14 means the same as in Acts 13:3—appointing to some work. No elder as such ever laid his hands on any man to transmit to him a spiritual gift.

(3) It is argued that an elder can not feed the flock of God. No man is qualified today to feed anyone that the word of God does not better feed. The church can feed itself by studying the word. What can an elder feed that any other member of the church can not feed?

To feed the flock is to put the word before them and see that they learn it. Things that elders can do that others can not do in this realm is a matter of authority. Many can do certain things but do not have the authority or right to do it. The Bible calls those who are Christians "children" (I John 2:1; Eph. 5:8; Rom. 8:17; Eph. 5:1). Elders are the older, stronger children who have been commissioned by the Saviour to feed the others the word of God. One might make arrests for violation of a law IF he had the authority of the higher powers. Christ, who is head of the church, gave authority for the local church to the eldership. They can exercise that authority when others in the church can not, because of the authority given them by Christ through his word.

(4) It is also argued that one thing an elder can not do today is to rule and take oversight. Only the apostles and inspired men could do that, and as we have no apostles or inspired men alive today we have no one to rule and take oversight.

Again this is a matter of authority. If the Bible teaches that the congregation is to submit to those who are in the oversight, can one be submissive to Christ and not be submissive to the elders? Can a wife obey Christ without obeying his authority to submit to her husband? We have the writings of the apostles and inspired men today as a guide, but someone must see that it is obeyed and followed exactly as it should be. Who is to do this? Even the church in Jerusalem, where the apostles were, had elders, If they needed elders there, do we not need them today with the writings of the apostles?

As to the matter of authority, I can not walk out on the street and arrest a man for a traffic violation, but a policeman can because he has the authority to do it. If I were to become a policeman I would have the authority to do some things in that line that I can not now do. Others may be physically able to do some things—even all things—an elder can do, but he does not have the authority from Christ to do them. That is the difference. It is not to be understood that in all points I am making the elders policemen in the church. I am simply comparing the right to do things by authority over others.



I—*The Holy Spirit made elders in Ephesus, and since the Holy Spirit does not make elders now, we do not have elders today.* The Holy Spirit did make elders then, and He makes them now. The Holy Spirit makes elders just as He makes Christians. He gives the standard of qualifications, and when one complies with them he becomes a Christian. The same is true of the elders. When one complies with all the requirements to become an elder that have been given by the Holy Spirit, he is an elder made by the Holy Spirit. That is the very reason the list of qualifications is recorded in I Timothy and Titus.

J—*Some Churches did not have elders, so we all need not have them today.* This is based upon the assumption that at least the Bible does not teach that all churches had elders. For instance, the church at Corinth, the elders are not mentioned. But after the days of the apostles, Clement of Rome wrote an epistle to the Corinthians and at the close he mentions the elders. Paul appointed elders in every city where he preached (Acts 14:23), and it follows that he practiced the same thing at Corinth.

There is not a single argument made against the appointment of qualified elders in every church that will stand the test of God's word. "Beloved, believe not every spirit . . ." (I John 4:1).

## CHAPTER V

# THE RELATIONSHIP—APOSTLES, ELDERS, PREACHERS

### I. THE RELATIONSHIP

A relationship exists between the apostles and elders, and between elders and preachers. This relationship must be respected, yet not transgressed. "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" (Rom. 12:4, 5).

Since all these members are in the one body, the church of our Lord, and all the members have not the same work to do, but all are under the same Head—Christ, there must be a close relationship between all three classes considered here as public workers in the church: the apostles, elders and preachers. This does not necessarily mean that their work overlaps; but there is a connection and relationship in their work that makes for the unity of the Faith.

It must be understood in the study of this relationship that the terms: *Apostle*, *Elder*, and *Preacher* do not mean the same thing and do not refer to the same work. They are very distinct, one from the other. However, the same man may be an apostle, elder and preacher all at the same time. Peter is an example. He was an apostle (Matt. 10:2); an elder (I Peter 1:1; 5-2); and a preacher (Acts 2—the first gospel sermon). This does not mean that because Peter did or said a certain thing that any preacher may do the same thing, for Peter may have been acting or speaking as an apostle or an elder rather than as a preacher. It must be determined in what capacity he was speaking or acting to know whether it applies to certain men today. There is quite a difference in the scope of authority and the nature of the work of these three classes of men in the church.

### II. APOSTLES AND ELDERS

When Christ delegated authority to a certain one, that one may exercise that authority, but another cannot assume it without violating God's plan. The apostles were granted an authority in the church that no other can take. (Matt. 16:19; 18:18).

#### A. *The difference in authority of apostles and elders.*

The authority of the apostles was universal in scope. Their rule and authority extended over all congregations equally. Their writings today are the authority of Christ in all churches of Christ. Paul said that he had the care of all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:28). When he exercised such authority it was only as an apostle and never as an elder or a preacher.

The authority of the elders is local in scope, never extending beyond the bounds that define a local church. There is never an exception to this rule in the New Testament. The elders have no rule over any person beyond the scope of their local authority in the church where they serve. When Peter acted in authority over different congregations, he did so as an apostle and not as an elder.

*B. The difference in the qualifications of apostles and elders.*

The work of the apostles was **REVEALING AND CREATIVE** as well as **SUPERVISORY**. The very nature of their work in revealing and creating suggested that there could be no successor to the apostles. The church has been established and the full will of God has been revealed, so there is no need for a further work of apostles. While, on the other hand, the elder's work is only **SUPERVISORY** and by nature requires succession to the office as long as the church exists.

The qualifications for the work of an apostle make it impossible to have apostles in the church today in the sense that we have elders. Notice some of the qualifications for this work:

1. An apostle must have been with Christ from the beginning of his ministry. (John 15:26, 27). Paul was the exception to this, but spoke of himself as "one born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:8). Today no one lives who has been with Christ from the beginning of his ministry, nor has one witnessed his resurrection as "one born out of due time." Hence, no one can qualify to be an apostle today.

2. An apostle must have been a witness of the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 26:32; 28:7; Acts 1:8; 2:32). No one can be an eye witness to the resurrection of Christ today, therefore, there can be no living qualified apostles today in the church.

3. An apostle must have been chosen personally by Christ for this work (Acts 1:2; Matt. 10:1-5). Christ does not personally select such men today, so there are no living apostles in the church now. This was so even in the case of Matthias (Acts 1:24).

The qualifications for elders are found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Any good, experienced Christian father and husband can develop these qualifications today. There is not a single one that any good Christian man should not have, with the exception of experience, age and family relations.

*C. The specific duties of an apostle are different from the duties of elders.*

The work of the apostles was:

1. To be ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). They were his

personal representatives here on earth after he ascended to the Father. The elders are not personal representatives of Christ today any more than any other Christian. The work of an ambassador is to speak for and represent a king or ruler in a foreign country. This is exactly the work the apostles did, but neither the elders, nor anyone else, has such duties today. Neither did the elders in New Testament times have such work to do.

2. The apostles were to reveal the will of Christ to all men. This has been done and completed. (Jude 3, 17; Gal. 1:8, 9). They were guided without error by the Holy Spirit to speak the full truth of Christ on all matters. (John 14:26; 16:13; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-4). The will of Christ is now complete and needs no addition. (2 Pet. 1-3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Therefore, the active work of the apostles is no more. However, their writings are the sole authority in all matters of faith in the church today. The elders are not empowered to reveal the will of Christ in addition to what has been revealed by the apostles. The work of the elders is to see that the revealed will of Christ is kept by the "flock which is among" them.

3. The apostles are to be judges of God's people. (Matt. 19:28). There is a sense in which the apostles will "judge" while Christ is on the throne of his glory. This "judging" is the "binding" and "loosing" of Matt. 16:19. Notice when this judging is to be: "In the regeneration"—when men are regenerated or born again. That certainly means now. Also it is to be when Christ sits on the throne of his glory. He is now sitting on that throne. (Acts 2:30, 31). The *Israel* refers to the people of God today in the church. We have no fleshly Israel now so far as Christianity is concerned (Gal. 3:28, 29), but all Christians are spiritual Israel (Rom. 2:28; 9:6; Gal. 6:15). The word *twelve* signifies all because the whole of fleshly Israel consisted of twelve tribes. The apostles are "judging" through their writings today while Christ rules with all authority upon his throne.

But the elders have no such authority. They have no authority to "bind" or "loose" in matters of faith. That has already been completed in the work of the apostles.

#### D. *The relationship between apostles and elders.*

It has been shown that their work and scope of authority are in separate fields, but there is a close connection between their duties and the fields of their work. In the New Testament times when matters of importance to the church arose, both the apostles and elders assembled and considered the matter. (Acts 15:1-6—the matter of circumcision and the law of Moses). This matter was settled by the Holy Spirit and not by the authority of the elders. But the elders as well as the apostles saw that the matter was kept in accord with revelation. Both are under

the authority of Christ; and both are working for the salvation of the world and the glory of God.

### III. ELDERS AND PREACHERS

As in the case of apostles and elders and their relationship, there is a relationship between elders and preachers that must be observed strictly if both are to do their work properly and scripturally. The work of elders and preachers is different; although one might be both an elder and a preacher at the same time. He can do things as a preacher that he cannot do as an elder, or do things as an elder that he cannot do as a preacher. For instance, he may preach for several congregations but he cannot exercise the authority of an overseer in any congregation. Or he may exercise the oversight as an elder in a certain congregation but he can not exercise the oversight of several congregations at the same time.

#### A. *Preachers sometimes try to dominate elders.*

Preachers often ignore the eldership. Young preachers sometimes try to do their work without elders, thinking that they can better carry out their ideas and plans without the restraint of the eldership to check them. Many think they know more than the elders, and the sad part is that they sometimes do, but this does not authorize preachers to usurp control of the oversight. No doubt one of the reasons for inefficient elders today is the zeal of young, ambitious preachers who have not learned the standard of God's organization for the church.

In the *Apostolic Times* of May, 1951, on page 123, brother Rue Porter made this observation: "Among the problems confronting the church today, none seems to be more constantly coming up than certain questions relating to the eldership. That is, no doubt, due to the fact that new congregations are constantly gathered together and we have a great number of young and enthusiastic preachers who seem not to have realized as yet that the eldership as pictured in the New Testament is the picture of a perfect standard toward which every man chosen for that work should aim and strive. . . .

"Most of the men who have been made elders get little encouragement for the efforts they make. They are looked upon by some preachers and many members as a sort of *necessary useless* sort of men. Some of us will accept the advice of a man who was never chosen by any one to oversee, rather than follow the counsel of a properly selected and appointed eldership."

To this I say, Amen. One might as well ignore some expression of worship that God has ordained in the church as to ignore this arrangement in the organization of the church.

*B. Many preachers act as sole judges of who is and who is not qualified to be elders in a certain place, disregarding the Bible qualifications.*

We can all go to the Bible and determine who is and who is not a qualified elder. But when preachers say, "That is not necessary to be an elder," when speaking of some qualification, "I'll just appoint him anyway," that is going too far. Sometimes a preacher refuses to appoint, or allow to be appointed (as if he were the only judge), a qualified man to the eldership by giving some point of qualification that the Bible does not give. For instance, to demand that "apt to teach" means that the elder must be a seasoned, polished, public teacher or preacher. That is giving a meaning to this qualification that the Bible does not give.

Again in the *Apostolic Times*, May, 1951, page 123, brother Rue Porter says: "One congregation chose and appointed a man with others to serve them as elder, and a young preacher came along and decided that the congregation—most of whose members had been Christians and students longer than he, just didn't know enough to select men for the eldership, and so proceeded to attempt the 'unseating' of the elder to whom he objected! Of course the eldership and congregation were pretty prompt in teaching him a lesson he needed very much to learn. . . ."

"It seems easy for inexperienced preachers to decide that they *know* just exactly what elders must be in order to be elders, but for some unknown reason seem unable to catch a glimpse of what a perfect preacher should be!"

*C. Preachers claiming the position and authority of elders when they begin regular work at a place.*

A few preachers are so careless in the Scriptures as to claim to be an "Automatic Elder" when they move to a certain place to begin regular work there. They argue this way: The elders labor in word and doctrine (I Tim. 5:17); the preacher also labors in word and doctrine, and since the preacher always labors in this field, and it is the work of elders, it follows that the preacher is automatically an elder where ever he labors. That is the real argument. Just such reasoning! One might as well argue as follows: The elders are to "teach" (Titus 1:9), but women also are required to "teach" (Titus 2:4), therefore, women are automatically elders. Would not this argument be as strong as the one above?

There are some things wrong with this system. (1) This would completely disregard the qualifications for an elder as given by the Bible. Just any boy-preacher would be an elder where ever he preaches. The qualifications for an elder might as well be scratched from the Bible. (2) In a congregation where elders have never been appointed this young preacher would be THE ELDER—a one man rule. (3) This

would put a fence around the preacher that would block any move regarding his discharge from the pulpit, and also many of his other obligations. He would be in position to "block" any move by "the other elders" to do anything opposed by him. This would actually reduce itself to a one-man-rule.

Some preachers have actually contended that since it is the duty of the elders to feed the flock (Acts 20:28), and since some preachers do more feeding than the elders, the preacher **MUST** be one of the elders to have a scriptural arrangement. But it is also the business of preachers to feed (I Cor. 3:2). Just because some of the responsibilities of elders and preachers are very much the same, if not the same, is no reason to conclude that the one is equal to the other in all things. It was a responsibility of an apostle to teach, and it is also the responsibility of any Christian to teach the truth. Are we to conclude that every Christian is an apostle?

#### *D. Preachers exercising oversight in the place of the eldership.*

Some preachers follow the practice of denominationalism to make themselves **THE PASTOR** of the congregation where they preach. Why do some evangelists take this oversight? We give here three reasons for this practice.

1. In some places the elders are irresponsible and do not perform their work. This necessarily leaves the duties upon the shoulders of someone else, usually the preacher. He begins little by little to assume their work until finally he is acting as the eldership, even though he did not seek it in the beginning, then he tries to justify his practice in some way.

2. In some places there are no men qualified to become elders and either the membership places all responsibility and authority upon the preacher, or the preacher thinks he must assume the oversight in order for the work to go forward.

3. In some places the elders insist that the preacher take the leading part and make most of the decisions for them. It often forces the preacher into a position that he is not really seeking. But in all cases the evangelist of a congregation has no scriptural authority to take the oversight under any condition.

Among some of the extreme advocates of *Evangelistic Oversight* are those followers of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett who continually and tediously dwell on "The one-man Pastor System," by which they mean the preacher who lives for any length of time and preaches regularly for one congregation.

In the *Gospel Guardian* of May 24, 1951, page 6, a quotation is taken from E. M. Smith of Beloit, Kansas, in the *Mission Messenger*,

April, 1951, which reads as follows: "At present I have the evangelistic oversight of the Beloit congregation, and invite all the faithful to worship with us whenever possible."

Now what passage in the New Testament teaches *Evangelistic Oversight*? If such an idea is not in the New Testament, what right has the one who advocates it to complain when another wants to add instrumental music to the worship, or oppose any practice of innovation? The one has as much authority as the other.

E. *Preachers exercising oversight over the elders.*

This is the most extreme claim toward popery we have found to date in the church of Christ. It is contended that preachers are not only EQUAL to the elders in the oversight, but are ABOVE them! Imagine a gospel preacher claiming OVERSIGHT over the elders of the church! But that is not the end. Imagine a gospel preacher claiming OVERSIGHT over not just one group of elders, but over SEVERAL elderships at the same time! This makes the preacher a sort of ARCHBISHOP.

In an article entitled *Over and Under The Eldership*, by I. C. Nance in the *Gospel Broadcast* of February 24, 1949, page 141, we find the following: "Whereas it cannot be shown that either Titus or Timothy, evangelists, were *ever under* any eldership *after* they began their work of evangelism, it can be definitely shown that both of them were *over* the eldership of at least one (and that's enough). Timothy was placed over the eldership at Ephesus by apostolic authority. And, Ephesus was an old, large, and established church which had had elders for years *when* this happened. Read all of First Timothy, understandingly. Titus, on the other hand, just a plain evangelist, was placed by apostolic authority over all the churches in Crete. Among his duties was the appointment of elders. Since an evangelist is given power to exercise 'all authority' over a number of churches and, whereas, an elder has only partial authority in only *one* congregation, it follows that the authority of the evangelist supersedes that of the elder or the eldership. Hence, Titus was over any eldership you might name in Crete. If not, why not?"

The direction of thought in this article is wrong and scripturally untrue. The Bible teaches that the elders have the OVERSIGHT of the flock which is among them. If the evangelist is among the flock he is under the oversight of the elders. Titus and Timothy would be included. No passage in all the Bible teaches that any evangelist, as such, ever had the oversight of one person in the church, must less a congregation or several congregations, Timothy and Titus included. Titus was told to "rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15), but that is a far cry from "oversee with all authority." The authority of an evangelist is toward the preaching of the word. This, indeed, is a most dangerous doctrine and leads directly to the popery of Romanism. This dereliction of plain truth



by those who wear the appellation *Gospel Preacher* is deplorable.

F. *Elders exercising too much authority over preachers.*

Many times elders will keep placing their own responsibilities upon the preacher until he is actually trying to do all the work of the eldership. This is taking too much authority on the part of the eldership. Christ did not give the elders authority to delegate their responsibilities to others. They may assign certain work to others to do, but the OVER-SIGHT and responsibilities for such can never be assigned to another.

Then some elders try to control a preacher when he is beyond the bounds of their authority. Some have asked: "Do the elders of one congregation have the oversight of a preacher who regularly works with them but goes away for a meeting to another locality? Are the elders still over him while he works there?" The answer is, NO. And the simple reason is that the elders cannot oversee ANY WORK beyond the local church of which they are elders. The elders where he is in the meeting at the time he is there have the oversight over him and his work. A congregation may send a preacher into a new field of labor and support him, but they do not exercise the oversight over him or those converts where he is preaching in that work. They may discipline him for an unchristian conduct while away in a meeting after he returns, or they may withdraw their support from him and mark him as a false teacher if he does not continue true to the word while at some other place preaching, but that is the extent of their authority over an evangelist whom they may be supporting when he is not laboring among them. When we study the scope of authority of elders this truth will become more evident.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE ELDERSHIP AND APOSTASY

## I. THE MEANING OF APOSTASY

The word *apostasy* is not found in the Bible by that term, but the expression, "depart from the faith" is exactly what Webster says *apostasy* means. In I Timothy 4:1 we read: "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." This is a prediction of an apostasy to come during the latter times, but here it does not tell where and how it will come—only WHEN. But Paul tells us that this apostasy—"the mystery of iniquity"—was already at work as he wrote the second letter to the Thessalonians (2:7).

We ask, WHERE will the departing from the faith begin, and HOW will it develop? Does the Bible tell us? We read where Paul called the elders from Ephesus to meet him at Miletus and there he gave them the charge to watch themselves and all the flock among them (Acts 20:28). He then adds: "For I know this," (this was a prophecy which Paul knew by revelation,) "that after my departing" (after his death, for he spoke of his departure being near as death approached—2 Tim. 4:6) 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."

As to WHERE this apostasy would come, Paul said it would come from among the elders of the church. All real apostasy from truth begins there directly or indirectly. The eldership creates, or allows to be created, some innovation in the church. They become divided over matters and carry it to the whole church for settlement; or they become weak in the discipline and allow worldliness to corrupt the flock of God. As long as the eldership is pure and godly the church in that place will be strong.

As to the HOW, Paul said it would come by "grievous wolves" entering to devour the flock by false teaching; and some of the elders themselves will speak perverse things to lead away disciples after them. History gives us the full picture of this prophecy of Paul. The *apostasy* depicted in the New Testament was to come "in the latter times," through the eldership of the church, and by false teaching and deception, even within and from among the eldership.

There is a very close relationship between corruption in the eldership of the church and the apostasy. Great care should be taken in selecting and appointing men to be elders because the wrong men can lead to a complete departing of the whole congregation from the faith. That is

one reason why this matter is of a most serious nature to the purity of the church of Christ.

## II. HOW APOSTASY DEVELOPED AMONG THE ELDERS

Apostasy is a slow working of error. It is a slow departure from the truth. One does not realize that he is drifting, in most cases, until he has gone into apostasy or very near it. Its working is like the facial change of a man. We take a picture and in ten years take another and notice the radical change in the face and features of a man, yet we do not really see the change from day to day because it is so gradual. Apostasy may well be called the cancer of the soul. Like this horrible disease of the body, it begins small and unnoticed and gradually works its way through and around the vital parts of the body until, by its slow working and growth, the body succumbs to its deadly work. It is often too late when the disease is located. The best and only safe-guard against this evil power in the church is a periodical and complete check-up often. This slow persistent working of apostasy is what devoured the early church, and it is what hinders the church today.

Apostasy follows three well defined steps. (1) A change in the divine pattern for the oversight of the church. The governing power must be changed before anything else can be changed. As long as the proper authority remains in the proper place and proper way in the church, apostasy is impossible. (2) The second step is to go beyond the word of God. These corrupt practices religiously must come from some authority beyond the Bible. Something must be added. Once the governing part of the local church is set aside and another substituted, the next step may be taken, and this consists of adding some practice which is not authorized in the Bible, or changing some doctrine of the Bible to suit man's desires. (3) The third step is into complete departure from the truth of God. If one change in the divine order is allowed, who can stop further changes? Paul warned against any advance beyond what is written. (I Cor. 4:6). The first step beyond what is written opens the way for any number of steps one would desire to take, and the person who takes the first step can never criticize or censure the one who takes ten or twenty, or even goes completely away from the Bible. How can the man who takes the first step from God's authority by disregarding the divine organization of the church justly censure or correct the man who has gone further and denied the divinity of Jesus, or has denied the inspiration of the Bible? Is not one as much in disobedience as the other? Regarding this very principle James said to keep all the law, yet to disobey in one point is the same as disobeying in all points. (James 2:10). How many commandments of God must one disobey to be lost? It can be easily answered by the principle James gives.

Let us notice briefly just how this apostasy worked in the eldership

of the early church. The following is a very brief summary of the working of many years. If the reader is interested in a more thorough study of the development of the various denominational systems in their departure from God's order, he is referred to any good, authoritative church historian or any contemporary writer with these events.

A. The first step was taken when the bishops of a congregation decided to elect a chairman or spokesman for them, and gradually allowed this chairman or spokesman to become their chief. After a few years of this arrangement it was easy to drift into the practice of all other elders of that congregation submitting in most matters to the judgment and demands of the chief elder. This became the general practice in the larger congregations and finally developed into the office of *archbishop*. No doubt this did not appear to those involved to be a serious thing. It was just an "expedient," a method to increase the efficiency of the eldership. But it was a step toward apostasy.

B. This move that created the office of ARCHBISHOP led to another departure. After a few years the *archbishop* in the larger cities began to reach out and take under control the smaller churches in surrounding towns. Two reasons may be given for this arrangement: (1) The educational and influential superiority of the city bishops over the country bishops. (2) The financial and numerical pre-eminence of the city churches over the country churches. This action came as a direct result of the archbishop idea. The same idea is in process of development within the churches today. The elderships of "big" churches are having the elderships of "little" churches channel their money and authority through the "big" churches to do "big" things. Anything larger than the local church is not the New Testament church. The second step was to have ONE elder over several churches.

C. The third step was to organize the archbishops. These chairman bishops of several towns were organized into a "diocese" or county. From the archbishops a chief was appointed. This developed into the office of *Cardinal* or chief archbishop. This act puts one elder over a section of the country.

D. Still later one of the cardinals was elected from the group to become the chief elder over the church universal, now called the *Pope*. When this step was taken, the next naturally led to claiming authority for this chief elder which has never been given to any man, not even the apostles. This is the system of departure that started among the elders in a small way. No doubt it seemed to them such a small thing that one would have been branded a "crank" or "hobby-rider" to voice an objection to it. The departure was so gradual that it was not noticed by the majority of people. The same can be true in the church today.

### III. SCRIPTURAL ELDERS ARE THE SAFEGUARD AGAINST APOSTASY

There is a **NEED** for elders today in the church. Many things must be decided about the work and worship of the church. The time of assembling, the place of meeting, the order in the worship, the preparation for the worship, who shall preach and teach, and many other decisions are important. Somebody must do this directing. Is it to be decided by a majority vote, by the preacher or by the eldership? The latter is to make such decisions and is responsible to God for them being done scripturally. We need elders today in the church to do the work of overseeing the flock.

There is no greater work nor higher responsibility than that of the bishops of the church. When one reaches the good degree of Christianity that is required of the elders he has reached the very peak of usefulness in the church.

The elders need a pat on the back and a word of encouragement from the members of the church when they do a good work. We all need encouragement, but especially so when the heavy responsibility of the oversight is laid upon the shoulders of a man. The elders would work much harder and more earnestly if we would give them the encouragement they deserve when their work is well executed.

There must always be a plurality of elders in each congregation. This is one of the best safeguards against apostasy. The following passages of Scripture will show that there was a plurality of elders in each church: Acts 11:29, 30; 14:23; 15:4; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 4:14; 5:17 Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1, 2.

There can never be less than two elders in each local church. Some ask, How many should there be in a congregation? The answer is, "If **ANY** man . . ." Any and all men in each congregation who can qualify should be appointed. The more qualified men appointed, the more work can be done and the more efficiently it can be done.

Another question of interest: If all the elders die except one, can he remain an elder in that congregation? He can if others are appointed to take the places of those who have died, but he cannot be scripturally **THE ELDER**. That is exactly what he would be if he remained the only elder. There is no place in all the New Testament that teaches a one man rule in the local church. This would not disqualify him as an elder but it would disqualify his rule as **THE ELDER**.

Each church must be autonomous (self-governed). If one congregation drifted from the truth, others would not be affected by governmental ties. With each church governed by its own elders it safeguards against apostasy of the whole church.

A plurality of elders in each church will provide a supply for the deficiency in any one man. The strong, spiritual characteristics of several men blended together is a safer oversight than just one man.

#### IV. WHY MORE MEN ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO BE ELDERS

No doubt the first reason to mention why many are not qualified elders is the lack of energy and will to develop the godly characteristics needed to be a scriptural elder. It is not easy to obtain a good knowledge of the Bible, to live a life above reproach, and to govern and guide a family so as to keep them in the way of the Lord. That is what one must do to become an elder.

A second reason is that there has been such mass substitutions for the eldership today that many have grown to disregard Bible instructions for the elders. Many churches have substituted an office called *Leaders* to take the place of the eldership. These *leaders* do not have to be qualified according to the Bible, and since they hold the same office, the qualifications are considered unimportant.

A third reason is the abuse of the eldership in some quarters. This has caused men not to desire the work. When they do not desire the office of a bishop, they will make no effort to qualify. The reason many do not desire this work of oversight is because they have seen and heard the continual abuse and complaining of churches toward the elders. They have heard members speak of them in an unchristian way. They have seen them accused of many things of which they were not guilty. The lack of respect and honor for the bishops has caused many young men never to set their goal to be an elder.

The work of efficient elders is the highest, most noble and needed work among us today. The man who qualifies and does the work of an elder is as near God as he can get on this earth. They are deserving of the deepest and greatest of our love and respect, for "they watch for your souls, as they that must give account."

The fourth reason is that the lack of preaching and teaching on the subject has caused many to fail to qualify. Many preachers have purposely tried to keep men from reaching the point to be recognized as qualified men for the eldership. Others have been so unlearned on the subject that they could not preach the truth on the eldership. They do not want to lose any power or control over the church where they preach. In some places the membership of the churches have never heard a gospel sermon on the subject of the qualifications for the eldership. One might as well leave out any other phase of scriptural teaching as this one.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE ELDERSHIP

It has been established in the former chapters that the church is organized and has an established authority in each local church. We have also seen that it is not God's plan for the church to be governed by preachers, majority congregational rule, overseeing committees, official boards of leaders and such, but that Christ has willed that the church be governed by a group of men who meet certain qualifications laid down in the New Testament to become bishops.

There are three proper questions that arise at this point of our study and must be put down in a scriptural manner by a careful analysis of all passages that deal in any way with this topic. They are: (1) What is the SOURCE of this authority? (2) What is the NATURE of this authority? (3) What is the SCOPE of this authority? When these three questions are answered we will have a good knowledge of the authority of the eldership.

Again it is proper to caution that a thing is not made right because a great majority has practiced it for a long time without opposition. Neither can it be made right by appealing to the sagacious and learned of uninspired men. The only standard of right and wrong in the realm of moral and religious matters is the New Testament. We should neither go beyond it nor fall short of it, but do all that is therein written for us.

## I. THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

From whom does the eldership derive authority? This is a question that has drawn many answers. Look for a moment at some of them.

A. *From Self*—Many elders and elderships act and speak as if their authority was self derived. The derivation of local authority is not from the eldership itself according to the Scriptures. Christ is the head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:21-23; Col. 1:18). He has ALL authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). The only ONE not under his authority in the church and subject to his power is God Himself. (I Cor. 15:27, 28). The eldership does not have ANY authority to any degree that is self derived.

B. *From the Congregation*—Do elders receive their authority from the congregation over which they have been made elders? No small number of elderships conduct themselves as if they did, and many congregations seem to believe that they are the source of power in the eldership. If the source of authority is from the congregation, the eldership has no more authority than the congregation can or will give to

them. They cannot do more than the congregation permits. And if the authority is from the congregation, it can be taken away or changed or modified at the will of the congregation. That makes all discipline and work subject to the congregation rather than subject to Christ. If the authority of the eldership is not self-derived, and they derive it from the congregation rather than Christ, the will of the congregation is done instead of the will of Christ. No degree of authority in the eldership comes from the congregation over which the elders rule.

*C. From the Preacher*—A number of elders behave as if their authority came from no higher source than the preacher. They ask him every move they should make; they ask him to pass on every point of action to be taken by them. In short, they ask him to judge and pass on almost every decision concerning the church. But according to the New Testament their authority does not come from the preacher any more than it comes from the church or from themselves. Just because a preacher may teach—even elders—and may appoint them over a congregation, it does not mean that the eldership derives any of its authority from him.

Occasionally some one will ask me: "Why does not the church where you preach do this or that? Or why do they do some things?" My answer is always: I am not the overseer of the church. If they do certain things or do not do certain things which I believe are not in full accord with the word of God, I teach and preach to the limit of my ability, both publicly and privately, and that is the end of my responsibility to them and to God. I am not the overseer, nor am I the source of authority for the eldership.

*D. From Christ*—Does the eldership derive its authority from Christ? Christ has ALL authority in the church, so if any is delegated to anyone in the church, it must come from Christ. Through the apostles Christ set both the limit and degree of the authority of the eldership. All authority of elders comes from Christ. He also gives the scope of their authority. (Matt. 28:18; Acts 14:23; 20:28; I Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17; I Tim. 5:17).

The authority of the eldership in the church is the authority of Christ. To rebel against the scriptural eldership is to rebel against Christ. In the Old Testament this principle is shown in several places. God's system of rule over His people has changed, but the principle of rule has not changed (I Cor. 10:11). When God delegated authority to a person or persons, and the people did not respect that authority, they were punished by God.

Miriam and Aaron spoke against the authority God had given to Moses, and even questioned it. God was angry with them for it and punished them (Num. 12:9, 10). Then Korah, Dathan, and Abiram



rebelled against Moses and led many people in the rebellion. God told Moses and Aaron to separate from the rebellious group that He might consume them (Num. 16:21). He then opened the earth and swallowed the three rebellious leaders and fire came down from heaven and destroyed all their followers. (verses 31-35).

Christ gives the authority to the eldership and if they continue not in His will, he will remove them from that authority. God made Saul to be king of Israel. (I Sam. 15:17). But when he rebelled against God his power and right as king were taken away from him. (I Sam. 15:23). Christ delegates congregational authority to the eldership which meets with his qualifications for such, and if they continue not in those qualifications, he removes their authority so that they should not be obeyed as overseers.

## II. THE NATURE OF AUTHORITY

Just what is the nature of this authority Christ has delegated to the eldership? First, many seem to think that if they can get the O.K. of one of the elders to do a thing, they have full authority to do it. The mistake is that there is no authority of oversight whatsoever in ONE of the elders. So far as exercising the authority of Christ in the congregation, just one of the elders has no more authority than any other member. The authority is in the ELDERSHIP—all the elders of a local church. There must be a plurality of elders in each church and this plurality is the local authority of Christ. Elders must agree in deciding matters to be authoritative in the church. Two or three should never try to exercise the authority of oversight in the church where there are four or more elders. Just a majority of the elders does not constitute the authority of the eldership. The nature of their work requires them to be in unity and at peace with each other in their oversight. It takes all the elders to compose scriptural oversight in the church.

There are two realms in which authority may be administered: (1) Divine law—the making of laws and (2) Human judgment—deciding things in agreement with Divine law, which also includes the leading and guiding in harmony with the divine law. Now in which do the elders function?

1. The elders cannot make any laws for the church. The legislative powers are all in Christ. There is only one law-giver: Christ (James 4:12); and his law is the perfect law of liberty. (James 1:25). Sometimes the elders conduct themselves as if they had the divine right to make laws for the church. They try to make new laws for doing the work of the church; new laws for dealing with members of the church who are delinquent; new laws for the organization of the church. They have NO power to make even ONE law for the church. They have NO power to even CHANGE one law already given. They have NO power

to delete any law given by Christ. The elders get entirely out of bounds when they begin to try to make laws for the church to follow. Instead they are to see that the perfect law of liberty given by Christ is perfectly kept, or as nearly so as possible.

2. In matters of human judgment and decisions determining the course the church should take in obeying God's law the elders are to exercise the authority of the local church. This does not mean that the personal judgment of each member of the church is violated, but that such personal judgment as relates to the church is invested in the eldership. An example: What time shall the church meet for public worship? The elders decide and establish the best time, but that time must conform to the demands of the Scriptures. They cannot change the day of public worship from the first day of the week to the seventh day because the perfect law of liberty has established the first day as the proper time for the disciples to meet for worship. The hour of the day is a matter for the elders to decide because the Scriptures have not established it. Who shall preach? The elders may select anyone whom they believe will do the best work for them, but they must select a sound gospel preacher because the word of God has established that. Who shall teach this class or that class? Shall we have a meeting? What course of study shall we take in this class? Shall we send a man to preach in this place or that place? These and many other questions must be decided by human judgment in accord with the word of God, and the eldership should and must make the decision. Their qualifications should render them better able to make good and sound decisions in matters of this kind. Outside the realm of making divine laws for the church, the eldership exercises the authority of keeping the divine law and making such human judgment as relates to the church.

Some complain that "the elders do not let me do any work"—meaning they do not let him do as he pleases. Many times wisdom forbids certain things to be done in certain localities. The elders may make good and sound decisions and some of the members will object, but the elders have the authority of Christ to exercise such decisions and the members should not cry out against them **UNLESS THE ELDERS VIOLATE THE SCRIPTURES.**

There are some theories as to **HOW** bishops are to perform their authority in the local church which either ignore the principle of rule or so defy it as to render it insensate. Since they differ so widely, and since truth is not contradictory, we now look at the most prominent ideas to determine just which is right.

A. *Rule by Example Only.*—Some few grapple with the idea that elders cannot rule in any way except by setting the example for others to follow. If they do not follow the example of the eldership, nothing can be done about it by the elders. The pet passage for this idea is I

Peter 5:3: “. . . but being ensamples to the flock.” It is true that the elders are to be ensamples to the flock, but this is not the only way in which they rule.

1. There are some terms circumscribing the work of elders that show it to be more than just example. They are around the word *rule*. *Ho proistamenos* (he that ruleth)—showing one work of one class of members in the body of Christ (Rom. 12:8). *Ton egoumenon* (the ones having the rule)—having to do with following the words and faith spoken by those who have a rule (Heb 13:7). *Poimenas kai didaskalous* (shepherds and teachers)—a work of elders. (Eph. 4:11; I Cor. 12:28).

2. The church is to OBEY the elders (Heb. 13:17). *Peithesthe*—2nd person, plural of present imperative of *peitho*—“to suffer one’s self to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey, to follow.”

3. Many of the duties of the eldership, which will be studied later, clearly show that they rule in ways other than by just setting an example. To illustrate, how are the elders to treat a fornicator who will not follow their example? Is there any discipline to be used against such an one?

B. *Elders are only over the Spiritual part*—Many argue that the elders cannot and should not exercise congregational authority beyond spiritual matters. They contend that the Lord put elders over the spiritual affairs and the deacons over the physical affairs. The truth of the matter is, deacons have never been made “overseers” of any phase of the church, and the eldership has been made “overseers” of all the local church. The Bible makes no such distinction between spiritual and physical parts of the work of the church, putting deacons over one part and elders over the other part. This is purely a distinction without Bible foundation.

But we notice in the New Testament that elders exercised an oversight over the financial affairs of the church—money was sent to them from other places (Acts 11:29, 30). We see also that the deacons had part in the spiritual affairs of the church (Stephen and Philip were preachers.) (Acts 7 and 8). The difference between elders and deacons is not in their relation to different parts of the church, but that elders are overseers of the church and the deacons are special servants under the elders.

C. *Elders Are Just Over The Assembly*—Do elders have the authority only in the public assembly, or do they have it outside the assembly as well?

1. The church is designated and referred to as the assembly of God’s people for worship. (I Cor. 14:34, 35). “In the church” would be “in the assembly”—out of the assembly would, in this passage, be out of the church. Women could not speak in the church (assembly) but they

could ask their husbands at home (out of the assembly). It is certain that the elders have authority in the assembly. No one denies that who admits any authority at all for the elders. Therefore, the question reduces itself to this: Do the elders have any authority OUTSIDE the assembly of the church for worship?

2. The church is also referred to as the people of God outside the assembly for public worship. (I Cor. 14:23). Here the apostle speaks of the church "coming together," which could not be possible unless the church existed before it came together. There are certain matters under the authority of the eldership that must come outside the assembly, such as: adultery, lying, drunkenness, hate, etc. If the elders had no authority outside the assembly how could discipline be administered to those guilty of those sins unless they were committed in the assembly? The truth is that in all matters of Christian living and conduct, every member of the flock over which a group of elders rule must be subject to those elders.

3. Now, when it comes to matters that do not pertain to Christian conduct, but have to do with personal judgment out of the assembly, the elders do not have any authority. For example: The kind of house I live in; the kind of car I drive; where I work; what I do for recreation, and such like is no affair of the elders, UNLESS some of these things affect my Christian life and work in the church. If the place where I work should be a liquor store or something of that sort, it would be the business of the elders and would come under their authority because it affects my life as a Christian, otherwise it would be none of their concern as overseers. If any of the above things endangered my soul's salvation, it is the business of the elders who are responsible to God in such matters. Any matter that does not affect my Christian character and conduct out of the assembly of the church is not under the authority of the eldership, but any and every thing that endangers my soul or the church is the business of the eldership.

### III. THE SCOPE OF AUTHORITY

This is a difficult matter to approach because of the difference in opinion as to the scope and limit of the authority of the eldership. On the one hand, some think that the elders do not really have authority in many matters of local importance; while, on the other hand, many seem to think that the eldership has the authority to go far beyond the limits of local autonomy and superintend works beyond the local church.

I am not making apology for what I am to say at this point, but I should like to have each of you to think carefully about these things before you close your ears to examination. Usually such institutions as *Orphan Homes*, *Christian Schools*, and *Mission Programs* are involved, and when we begin to talk about them in an unfavorable manner many

people will not listen further, but will harden their hearts to all that is said. Let me say that these things are vital to sound doctrine. If they are wrong, no amount of practice and arguing will make them right. Without seeming to be an "anti" or "pro," let us candidly examine the evidence in the light of God's word.

### *A. Authority In The Local Church*

All local authority is in the eldership. No other group or person should try to assume any phase of direction and oversight of the local work. Only the eldership has the divine right to this responsibility. One must submit to the eldership in order to obey God (Heb. 13:17; I Tim. 5:17). But the eldership must rule according to truth (Titus 1:9; Heb. 13:7).

This leads us to another inquiry: How much of the local work and worship is under the eldership? Often some parts of the work of the church are taken from the elders and given to another group such as a "board" or "committee" or to a person such as the "Minister." It should be observed here that where there is **AUTHORITY** there is **RESPONSIBILITY**. If the eldership is the authority in all work of the local church, the eldership is **RESPONSIBLE** to God for all that work.

Since the eldership is responsible for carrying out the mission of the church, just what work is the church to do?

1. *The Worship.* All matters involved in public worship are under the authority of the elders and they are responsible for them. Such things as the place of worship, the time of worship, the arrangements for worship, the preparation of all things needed in the worship, and the selection of persons to engage in the public part are subject to the authority of the elders. In short, all things that are essential to public worship are under the oversight of the eldership.

2. *The Teaching Program.* All persons and methods of teaching and edifying are under the direction of the elders of each congregation and they are responsible for it. Every Bible class, sermon, tract, etc., must be under the oversight of the eldership. Any "mission" work beyond the oversight of the eldership of a congregation cannot be "under" that group of elders.

3. *The Discipline.* All correction and discipline of the local church is under the eldership, and they are accountable to God for it. When a preacher of error leaves a congregation without proper discipline to correct him or mark him as a false teacher, the eldership of that church has made a serious error; they have not discharged their responsibility before God, nor to the church.

4. *The Benevolence.* All succor for the poor, hungry, sick, aged, orphans and widows and all other benevolent work that falls under the

charge of the local church is under the eldership of that church, and those elders are responsible to God. It is not the responsibility of one local church to care for the poor, orphans, widows or destitute of any kind of another locality. They may send what aid they are able to send to a local church who has more of this benevolent work in their own locality than they are able to care for, or if they are able they may reach into a territory where there is no church and help someone in need, but their responsibility lies in the realm of their own ability. For a church to seek such benevolent work in another locality, and then call upon others to help her, was not the practice of the early church. The eldership of one congregation has no oversight in the benevolent work of another church.

The autonomy of the local church must be respected. This is a matter that seems to be ignored in the present grab for power. Each local church must be autonomous in government.

*Autonomy* means: "right of self-government; a self governing state; an independent body." Each New Testament church was completely independent of all others by organizational ties. No one congregation may exercise any authority over another congregation under any circumstances or in any manner. This means that each congregation is to manage its own affairs and attend to its own work without supervision or control from any other. It does not mean that each church can do anything it wants to do.

Some seem to think that the only thing necessary to make a work scriptural is to put it under an eldership somewhere, but this is not true. Nothing can be put under an eldership that is not classed "the work of the church," and that must be within the realm of the authority of that congregation. If it involves more than the authority of that eldership, it cannot be scripturally put under them. That involves the autonomy of the church. There can be no oversight by remote control.

There are limits to local authority. There is a danger involved when elders do not recognize the limits of their authority. It is as abominable when they do not know these limits as it is when they do not recognize their responsibility at all.

Now for some observations on local authority. We have seen that the only scriptural authority that can be exercised in the local church is the eldership. This is true everywhere. We have also seen that the eldership is responsible to God for ALL the work in the local church over which they are elders. Their authority is over every phase of work and worship. They must see that it is done according to the Scriptures. Moreover, the eldership is LIMITED in authority to the congregation where they serve and must respect the autonomy of all other churches. The eldership cannot scripturally go beyond the scope of their own responsibility. They can only take the oversight of the "flock which is

among" them. (I Peter 5:2).

### B. *Exercising unscriptural authority.*

There is no doubt but that many good elders and preachers think they are within the bounds of local authority in doing many things in the work of the church today, but are not. Many systems of benevolent work, of carrying out the great commission, and of teaching in the churches today are unscriptural in that the elders have gone beyond their authority in performing the work, and are therefore condemned in this. It is as important to do a thing the WAY the Lord said to do it as it is to do the job itself. No phase of the work of the church, however good the results may be, is acceptable unless it is just as the Lord said to do it. Let us examine, for example, the "mission work" of the church. How is unscriptural authority exercised in this portion of the work of the church?

1. *Erroneous ideas of Mission Work.* Some of the following ideas are so established in the minds of many members of the church that it is nearly blasphemy to speak of them in an unfavorable manner.

There is a popular idea in the church today that we must do "mission work" to please God, meaning that we must send money to someone in a foreign land to preach the gospel. The words *Mission* and *Missionary* are not found in the Bible but the idea is there. We should remember that Peter said: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11). The idea of "Mission" may be the "carrying of the gospel to all the world," which is the great commission of Christ. It is the work of Christians to preach the gospel and they must do that. But "mission work" is any work of the church. It does not have to be preaching to the lost. It may be worshipping the Lord or relieving the needy or some such work. Any work the Lord has bound upon the church is "mission work." And a "missionary" is any member of the church who is doing any work or mission of the church, however small it might be.

Another mistaken idea is that "Mission Work" is preaching in a foreign country only. There is no such definition in all the Bible. The idea of a foreign country to our own is not inherent in the word "mission." Preaching is to be done any where and every where. One does not have to go out of his own country to do "mission work." He may go next door, if there is a lost soul there, and fulfill the command of Jesus to "preach the gospel to every creature." Christ did not mean in this commission that every preacher must preach to every other creature in the world, or that one congregation is to send "missionaries" to every country in the world, but he meant that the apostles were to preach the gospel everywhere and then teach those who had been taught to teach others, and so on to the end of the world. The carrying out of the great commission began in Jerusalem and spread gradually

to outlying territories until it went everywhere, and it was not done by some of the present methods of "Mission Work."

In performing any responsibility of the church the elders should not undertake any work beyond their ability and opportunity (2 Cor. 8:12). In the case of need and assistance by one congregation in doing the work under its own responsibility and oversight, other congregations may cooperate and help (Acts 11:29, 30). But no congregation should go further than its own limitations in doing the work of the Lord (I Pet. 5:2).

2. *Some Important Questions Answered.* Questions are sometimes asked to find the answer to many of these problems. These questions are vital to the subject, and express the idea of many toward this matter.

a. Question: Must a new congregation be established UNDER some eldership to make it scriptural?

Answer: This is an important question because many are in doubts as to the proper procedure. If it **MUST** be under some eldership when established, it is never scriptural until it is so established, and there are, no doubt, many hundred congregations not established under an eldership. There are many congregations started by individuals who moved into a new community where there was no church, and by preachers entering new fields and establishing congregations.

(1) The great commission does not require that a new congregation be established UNDER an eldership somewhere.

(2) This system is the "Mother Church" idea. If one church can be OVER (if a new congregation is UNDER some elders, the elders are certainly OVER it) one "mission point" (small congregation), this same church can be OVER two or ten or one hundred "mission points." This is certainly in violation of the independence of each New Testament congregation.

(3) A new congregation may be helped by another with elders, but that does not make the new congregation UNDER the eldership of the helping church.

Herbert Winkler, in his book *The Eldership*, page 25, says, after stating that the local organization is autonomous, "We understand that to be the status of each local congregation and that each congregation is designed to be a complete unit within its own organization and that so far as one congregation and its elders are concerned it has no authority nor power over any other congregation. In other words, the Lord designed the organization of each congregation to be a complete unit within itself of such a nature that if every congregation on earth were destroyed save one He would still have a complete church on earth."

This we believe to be correct and exactly as the New Testament



directs. There is no earthly organization in the church beyond the local church.

But Winkler gets away from the truth on the next page when he says: "We believe also that the elders of each congregation have vested within them the sole earthly authority in the church and that their authority is from Christ the Chief Shepherd. That being true the preacher or evangelist has no innate authority residing in him, and that he should be working under the direction of a well organized church. Even the grand apostle Paul was sent out by the church at Antioch to do mission work. And when the tour was ended he returned to that same church and reported the accomplishments of the journey. . . . But in the eyes of this writer as long as a congregation (?) has not developed to the point of having elder material it still retains the status of a mission and should be under the watchcare of the elders of a well established church."

Are we to understand that a "mission church" may be under the elders of another congregation? Just when is a congregation a "mission" and when is it not? What chapter and verse of the New Testament defines a "mission"? And then what chapter and verse says a "mission" should be under the elders of "a well established church"? When two or more children of God meet together for worship and service, they compose the church of Christ in that community. It matters not how young or old they are or how many members in that church. Now if the elders of one congregation can have the oversight (the mission be under them) of one mission, why not two, three, or ten?

When Christians begin meeting in a locality they become a local church and the elders of another congregation have no authority over them. Paul and Barnabas returned through the country where they had established churches, and appointed "elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). There is absolutely no Bible evidence that Antioch, Jerusalem, or any other church had any degree of supervision over these young churches at any time in their existence. These were churches before elders were appointed. The Bible does not call them "missions."

As to the contention that Paul was under the elders of Antioch as he went about preaching, look at the passage. (Acts 13:1-3). The elders are not mentioned. There were prophets there and the Holy Spirit had called them to separate Paul and Barnabas for a work the Holy Spirit had called them to do. Not a single word about the elders sending Paul to preach or exercising any oversight over him while doing so. I do not know of a single passage of Scripture that teaches the elders "sent" a preacher on a "mission" tour and retained the oversight of his work.

But it is said that Paul "reported" to the elders in Antioch. (Acts 14:26-28). Paul returned to Antioch from whence he had sailed and to

those who had recommended him to the grace of God. This is not the word for "sponsoring" or overseeing. Paul called "the church together" and rehearsed to them (told them) of how God had blessed him and the Gentiles were obedient to the truth. This was telling the church of his labors, not a report to the elders who had the oversight of him while he was away.

Winkler then says on page 28: "The autonomy of the local congregation is fully visible to the fluent pen of the writing Evangelist. He is usually understood as he writes to the effect that the local church, or its elders, have no jurisdiction over or in controlling the affairs of a sister congregation."

If the elders of a local church have no jurisdiction over a sister congregation, how can a "mission point" (a congregation without elder material, according to this writer, page 26) be under the elders of a "well established church"?

b. Question: Must an Evangelist who is doing meeting work altogether be under an eldership somewhere?

Answer: This also is a touchy question in view of the divided opinions on it. But what is consistent with truth? In view of the principle already established that a local eldership cannot oversee a work beyond its own labor, we answer, NO. A traveling evangelist is going from place to place and the elders of one congregation cannot oversee a work beyond their own bounds. Such a preacher would be under the oversight of the church where he is preaching at the time he is there. When he goes to another place he works under the elders at that place. If someone insists that such a preacher is under the eldership at one place while preaching at another, one of two things would be true. (1) The preacher is under TWO elderships at the same time, or (2) the eldership who is over the preacher has authority beyond its bounds into another congregation where the preacher may be preaching in a meeting. Either of these is contrary to the New Testament. It seems never to have dawned to those who make this argument that one can do his work in a limited sense without oversight of any eldership. The members of a scripturally unorganized church do so. Why cannot an evangelist in a new field?

c. Question: What about "Missionaries" (preachers) sent by one congregation into a new field? Is he under the authority of the elders supporting him?

Answer: This is a common practice right now among many churches; but does that make it right? Certainly not. The realm of labor is outside the local work and the eldership has no authority there. They may cut off his support and warn others against him if he is unsound, or they may support him and recommend him to others for support if he is faithful, but beyond that they cannot oversee him by the authority

of the Scriptures. The only authority they exercise over him is the same as they would exercise over a painter who is painting the church building, or a printer who is printing some tracts for them. They just withdraw support from the printer if he does not continue faithful in the work he is being paid to do. Just so, the eldership may withdraw support from a preacher who does not continue faithful in the work he is being supported to do, but the eldership exercises no more oversight over him and his work in a foreign field than they would over the printer and printing plant because they pay the printer to print some tracts for them.

If it be contended that the "missionary" is under the oversight of a certain group of elders who support him, then when he converts, say, ten people, who are they under? If the eldership who sent the preacher is over them, we have one church over another—a violation of the Scriptures. If they are not under those elders, we have a church divided: a part (the preacher) under elders of some distant church, and a part (the rest) not under them. Then, too, if the wife and children of the preacher are there with him, who are they under? The truth is that all who meet there form the church and the eldership of one church is never over another church. That preacher is subject to the eldership who supports him just as any workman would be subject to the eldership while doing a job for the church.

d. Question: Can a newly formed congregation invite and get the oversight of a group of elders until that congregation is able to appoint men?

Answer: NO. The elders have no authority beyond the place of their own membership, and cannot assume it under any condition. They may give advice if it is sought, but they can go no further.

e. Question: Can an evangelist assume the temporary authority over a new congregation until it is completely organized?

Answer: NO. An evangelist can never take oversight of any part of the church for any period of time by the authority of Christ. He is out of place at any time he assumes the oversight. The only authority he has is to preach the word (Titus 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2).

f. Question: How will newly formed congregations function if no men are qualified.

Answer: This question is often asked to justify a substitute system of control. It assumes that some oversight and authority must be invested in some person or persons, but it does not inhere. There is only one thing they can do. All must agree to the work to be done and have general agreement with no one taking "authority" of oversight. No one can scripturally take the oversight but the eldership.

3. *Centralized Oversight.* This is a problem that is causing much concern in many sections today. Centralized oversight is the centralizing of the control of a work larger than the local work under the oversight of one congregation. Centralization of power is sweeping the church into apostasy. Such centralized power as "Combined Mission" work, as is being done in some places, or some benevolent organizations linking together several churches, are examples of this departure from the New Testament order.

It is difficult to get those who advocate and practice church supported schools, church supported orphan homes, and centralized "mission" work to stop and consider their methods. They seem determined to continue these schemes.

We hear people sometimes wonder how the Missionary Society ever got into the church to divide it. Every argument made to establish any of these centralized organizations can be made for the Missionary Society, and was made years ago when it was right where some of these centralized efforts are today. No loyal church today will accept the organized Missionary Society of the Christian Church through which to preach the gospel to all the world, yet the very practice of Centralized Oversight in "mission" work is the Mission Society in infant form. The very arguments that the advocates of the Missionary Society made to vindicate the practice then are used today by the advocates of the Centralized Oversight in "mission" work.

4. *Sponsoring Churches and Arguments.* Those who favor and promote the "sponsoring" church style of mission and benevolent work will arduously contend for their cause. They first attempt to find some passage of Scripture to support their endeavor, and second they ask: What is wrong with this method? The paramount thing wrong with the practice is that it is not scriptural.

The SPONSORING church plan, as it is now practiced, is not a New Testament plan. This order runs along this line. One church with elders will "sponsor" a preacher in a remote field, and then call upon other churches to send money to the "sponsoring" church to help support the work in a foreign field. This is not in accord with the method used in New Testament days. In the first place, the eldership of one congregation does not have the authority to "sponsor" anything beyond its own limits of authority. Who gave any one congregation the supreme direction over a work that can in no way be classified as the work of "the flock which is among you"? In the second place, the eldership does not have the right to take the money of another congregation and apply it to a foreign field.

*Sponsor* does not mean just to "recommend" as some have contended. It means one who assumes or to whom is delegated responsibility

of a person or thing. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* says of *Sponsor*: "1. One who binds himself to answer for another, and is responsible for his default; a surety. 2. One who, at the baptism of an infant, professes the Christian faith in its name, and guarantees the child's religious education; a godfather or godmother." If a church "sponsors" a preacher in some foreign field, it is taking the responsibility (which entails authority) of a remote work not classed as "the flock which is among you" and is trying to exercise the authority over such. This is unscriptural as a method of evangelizing the world.

Is there any scriptural example or teaching that several churches made contributions through another church to a field separated from both? That is what must be found to prove "sponsored" (centralized) oversight. Some arguments have been made that Acts 11:27-30 is the example. Money was sent from Antioch and several other churches by Paul to the church in Jerusalem and from there to the poor saints in Judea. It is then concluded that if this can be done in benevolence, why not in evangelism? What is wrong with this?

First, several churches did not send to the church in Jerusalem, but to the elders in Judea. Each church had elders and these elders received the money to be used in that local church. There was no middle church to receive funds from some churches and direct to a foreign field.

Second, the church at Antioch did not act as a "sponsoring" church for the churches in Judea, neither did the church in Jerusalem.

Third, no group of elders completely removed from the work in Judea took the "oversight." The church at Antioch sent relief to the elders of the church where it was to be used, but Antioch did not assume "oversight" over the work in Judea.

Some argue that the church at Antioch "sponsored" Paul and Barnabas on their "mission" tours, and exercised oversight in their work. But notice some errors in this argument.

To begin with, no Scripture teaches that the elders of the church at Antioch had, or tried to have, the oversight of the traveling work of Paul or Barnabas.

Next, Paul was an apostle and as such had oversight, not only of one church, but of all the churches. ". . . that which cometh upon me daily, the care" (responsibility—which admits authority) "of ALL the churches." (2 Cor. 11:28). No group of elders exercised the authority of the apostles.

Again, other churches helped support Paul, but did not send money through the elders at Antioch. Other churches gave him wages (2 Cor. 11:8). The church at Philippi helped support him (Phil. 1:5); they sent

to him while he was in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15, 16), but not through a "sponsoring" church such as Antioch. Before this can become a scriptural example of the modern "sponsoring" plan it must be shown that Antioch, or some other church, received finances from other churches and from this accumulated treasure sent support to Paul, or any other preacher, in another area, and retained any degree of control over him.

If there was no "sponsoring" eldership in the time of the apostles, why do we need it now? This amounts to a departure from truth because the eldership of such a church is not respecting the authority delegated to it by Christ, and is presuming to go beyond the realm of its authority.

### *C. The scriptural way to evangelize the world.*

To censure a position without offering a scriptural and constructive plan is a grievous blunder. Your attention is here directed to a method that is both successful and scriptural. The New Testament will completely furnish each of us to every good work. Surely the evangelizing of the world is a good work, and since it is, we may be sure the New Testament will completely furnish us with the method of doing so.

Each church in the New Testament had the responsibility for all the work in its own community to the full extent of its ability. *Community* is defined as "a society of people having common rights and privileges, or common interests, civil, political, or ecclesiastical; or living under the same laws and regulations." In a broad sense the church universal is a community, but as it relates to the eldership the term must be restricted to include only those who come within the scope of congregational activity. Some line of demarcation must be established and maintained between the local church and the church universal, else the limits of congregational rule could never be established. It is here contended that the "flock which is among you" (I Peter 5:2) clearly defines that line of separation. Therefore, the word *community* is to be understood as the local church with its boundary. When one church could not do a necessary work in its own community, other sister congregations helped by sending contributions to the needy congregation to be used only in the realm of its authority. Such help could not be channeled to some work beyond the realm of the local oversight. An example of this is the contributions from the churches in Galatia and in Corinth who sent to the poor saints in Jerusalem. (I Cor. 16:1, 2). This money was sent by several churches to Jerusalem to be used in Jerusalem and not to be sent to some other field completely removed from both Jerusalem and the churches sending the contributions.

No one denies that several churches can co-operate in the same work, but they cannot scripturally do the same work through a centralized controlling board of elders completely removed from both the work and the contributing churches.

When elders send preachers into foreign fields and try to oversee their work by remote control, it is the unscriptural error of one church over another, or of one church trying to exercise authority beyond "the flock which is among you" (I Peter 5:2).

Some may object to the arrangement used by Paul, for each church who wants to help support some preacher in a new field to send directly to him, because the preacher might get rich receiving too much money from too many churches. But the same thing may happen to "sponsoring" churches who receive too much money from contributing churches. Churches may be as dishonest as some men.

The violation of local authority comes when the "sponsoring church," assumes a degree of oversight in handling money of other churches and channeling it to another field beyond the oversight of its elders. Just what relation does the "sponsoring church" sustain to this New Field that the other churches do not sustain? If none, why this arrangement? If some, what is it and where is the Bible authority for this arrangement? What scriptural right has any one congregation to assume and delegate to herself the authority to undertake and oversee a work beyond her own bounds and ability, that is no more related to her than to any other congregation? This is the development of a *Centralized Control* that if carried to its logical end would not be short of Romanism. If it is scriptural for one church to collect and dispense money of several congregations to a work of the church that is foreign to the sphere of that one church, and to direct and oversee this work, it is scriptural for this one church to be THE director of ALL missions of the church the world over, and all other churches can do their work through this one. If not, why not? Who can draw the limit of how much work the "sponsoring church" can oversee?

Let us carry the principle advocated here to its ultimate end. If a church can "sponsor" a preaching program in India and collect money from many congregations to finance the arrangement, and send and oversee ten preachers to India, why cannot this same church "sponsor" ALL preaching to India and have ALL local churches in America send contributions to this "sponsoring church," and the "sponsoring church" oversee ALL preachers in India? And if this be scriptural, ONE church could become the "sponsor" of ALL foreign preaching, and ALL churches could do their work through that one; and why have we opposed the Missionary Society all this time? The Scripture to authorize one will authorize the other in principle.

Furthermore, if this principle proves scriptural with regard to preaching, it is also scriptural with regard to ALL work of the church. One church could become the "sponsoring" agent of ALL benevolence for ALL churches, and they could do ALL benevolences by contributing to the "sponsoring church" and let that one church oversee all the care

of orphans, widows, poor, needy and sick. What is wrong with this arrangement? No informed Christian would agree to this set up, yet the principle that leads to this system is accepted by many in the present *Centralized Oversight* practiced by a number of churches.

We will also notice the care of orphans to demonstrate the principle involved. It should be stated again that this writer is not opposed to the care of orphans—Christians must do this to go to heaven. A smoke screen is sometimes thrown up when this practice is called in question by saying, "He does not believe in caring for orphans." No true Christian could say that it is not the duty of both individual Christians in many instances, and the duty of the church under certain qualified circumstances to care for orphans. This author is not opposed to orphan homes as such, even those owned and operated by his brethren. Most of them are doing a good work. That certainly is not the thing opposed. The only point demonstrated in this is HOW the church is to care for orphans that come under her charge, and how individuals may care for orphans.

When several churches pour their contributions into a *General Treasury*, controlled and governed by either one man, a board of directors, or even one eldership, that becomes a central institution—a human one at that—through which the churches of Christ in many localities work, and that work is no more related to one than the other. This necessarily forms a human institution to combine many churches of Christ in a single work. If the principle be carried to its logical end, (and who will say that one day it will not?) we could have just ONE big institution to which ALL churches could send a weekly or monthly contribution, and ALL orphans could be sent to that one institution and be cared for as a brotherhood project. The only thing to prohibit this would be convenience. It would be more convenient to have several than to have just one, but so far as principle goes there would be no difference: all churches could have just one big orphan home and each church could send a contribution regularly, and orphans from all over the world could be collected and sent there.

But in the realm of benevolence there is more than just caring for orphans. Occasionally undue emphasis is placed upon one thing in the Bible to the neglect of another just because of human emotion and sentiment. The word of God places no more emphasis upon the caring for orphans than it does the caring for any other needy person. The Bible shows that the same obligation rests upon the church to care for the widows as it does for orphans. Why not have big institutions called "Widow Homes" through which all churches could care for the widows? Each one could send just a little contribution each week or month and discharge her duty (?). Also the church is obligated to care for the sick. Why not have "Church Hospitals" through which all churches could



care for the sick? Is this not as much an obligation of the church as the care of orphans? Each church could send a "fifth Sunday contribution" to these hospitals, and the hospitals could collect and care for sick people everywhere. Is not the principle of one the same as the other? If they are not, please show by the Bible where the principle is changed. Again, it is the duty of the church under certain conditions to clothe the naked. Why not, by the same principle of orphan homes, establish some "Clothing Stores" owned and operated by the churches and let each church send a monthly contribution and let that "Clothing Store" find and clothe the naked with that money? Of course these "Hospitals," "Widow Homes," and "Clothing Stores" would be owned and operated by Christians. Is that not the same principle as the Orphan Homes? It is also the obligation of the church, under certain conditions, to provide an education to the ignorant. Why not establish "Christian Schools" and let each church send to that school and let the school collect and educate the ignorant? The principle of one runs through all of them, and if one is scriptural, by the same principle all are Scriptural.

Some inquire: "If these human institutions are all right in and of themselves, how can the church use them in doing her work?" There is not a single Bible principle violated in Christians owning and operating orphan homes, hospitals, widow homes, clothing stores, or schools any more than for them to own any kind of business. The question just asked is the root of the whole issue. Since there is nothing wrong in a home for widows, a home for orphans, a hospital for the sick, a clothing center for the naked, or schools for the ignorant, it would not be wrong for an individual Christian, or one not a Christian for that matter, contributing to or supporting such a human institution. It would not be a violation of any scriptural principle for the church to PURCHASE any service offered in any of these institutions in doing her work anymore than to purchase the services of the water company or light company for the things they offer and the church needs. A congregation may purchase clothes from a clothing store to clothe a naked person falling within the scope of the duty of that church. A congregation may purchase medical service from a doctor or hospital to aid any sick person coming within the scope of the duty of that church. In the same way a congregation may purchase the service of an orphan home in caring for any orphans that come within the scope and ability of that congregation. There is a great difference in *Contributing* to a thing and *Purchasing* the services needed. The same principle that would allow the free contribution to an orphan home to allow that home to do the work of the church, or rather churches, would scripturally allow contributions to Widow Homes, Hospitals, Clothing Stores, and Schools. Surely we can see the difference in *Contributing* to a human institution and *Purchasing* the services of a human institution. That is the scriptural principle that makes *Institutionalism* wrong.

Compare the work of present "sponsoring churches," "Centralized Oversight," and "Institutionalism" in doing evangelism with the *Missionary Society* and you will find that they are the same in principle. The objection offered against one may logically be offered against the other.

It may be objected that, by this principle, if the *Missionary Society* is wrong within itself the *Orphan Home* is wrong and should be abandoned. But they are not the same. The Orphan Home may be the work of individuals or citizens as well as the church. But the Missionary Society stands for one purpose—to preach the gospel. That is solely the duty of the church (I Tim. 3:15). If each church did its duty in preaching the gospel the Missionary Society would die for the lack of a work. But the Orphan Home may live as an individual duty or as a civilian duty apart from the church. In a word it is an individual and civil duty to care for orphans but it is neither an individual nor civil duty to evangelize the world. One must be in the church to scripturally preach the gospel, and not apart from it. That is the difference.

A congregation may send alone to the support of the preacher, sending directly to him and controlling every dime to its purpose. The church at Philippi sent to the support of Paul all by themselves (Phil. 4:15). We know that is scriptural. Since it is, why invent a new method of doing it? Several churches may *Co-operate* by sending directly to this preacher in his field of work (2 Cor. 11:8). Paul took wages (support) from other churches while preaching in Corinth. This principle of several churches helping the same preacher is right and should be encouraged. But in the absence of scriptural evidence we rightly conclude that there was no "sponsoring church" handling all this money sent to support Paul. This method of each church sending to the field of work and to the person being supported is scriptural; why invent another method?

We believe this vital truth is easily seen when men want to "walk by the command of the Lord." We have preached for years that we "speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent." Now let us practice that wonderful principle, which is a Bible principle uttered by Peter. (I Peter 4:11). If we do things just as the Lord commanded, we shall never fall or fail. The greatest method of success in doing the work of the church is the method taught in the New Testament.

## CHAPTER VIII

SCRIPTURAL APPELLATIONS OF THE OVERSIGHT  
OF THE CHURCH

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (I Pet. 4:11). "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." (I Cor. 2:13 R.V.).

The acquisition of proper speech and the proper comprehension of it enables man to easily and completely convey his thoughts and ideas to others. God gave man a language and by it communicated the knowledge of His will to men. This language consists of articulate sounds addressed to the ear, which transports from mind to mind a very definite object, idea, or emotion. The eloquence of one's own vernacular may be a maze of confusion to the ear of one who does not know the meaning of the words used. For this reason, the hearer, as well as the speaker, must have a clear, concinnate and complete understanding of the words used. A confusion of language is the occasion of much misunderstanding and wrangling over matters that would otherwise be easily understood. Proper terminology by the speaker or writer, and a good understanding of the terms employed on the part of the hearer, will go far to ward off the problems that directly arise from misunderstanding. This chapter is devoted to an examination and explanation of the scriptural terms employed by the Holy Spirit in describing the nature and duties of the officers of the church.

Words mean something. They are important. By these vehicles of articulate sounds we transport, bit by bit, our thoughts to others. A clear exegesis of anything must begin with a study of the words used. Words may be studied *etymologically* to get the depth and insight of the meaning of the words as to their origin. They may also be studied *comparatively* to a greater apprehension of their meaning. To compare the use of a word in a plain passage helps us to understand something of its use in a difficult passage. Words can also be studied *historically*, determining their meaning when first used. Words should also be studied *grammatically*, elucidating their meaning by their relation to the other words in the sentence where they are found. This we call the *context* of the word. If we study these words carefully we will have little difficulty in learning what was in the mind of the Holy Spirit as He dictated these words to the writers of the New Testament.

Terms by which we call a person or thing tell us something of the characteristics, relations or work of the person or thing. There are three Greek words that are used to delineate or define the oversight of the

church. These terms are names by which we may scripturally refer to the oversight of the church. Six English words are used in the King James and American Revised versions of the Bible to translate these three Greek names in the original.

It is important that we use scriptural designations to describe proper relations and works of Christianity. Preachers are frequently given titles of distinction that belong to the oversight of the church. Occasionally a preacher is called "Elder" when he is not in the oversight at all. If that term is used in an official capacity, i.e. an official term to denote the preacher as such, it is wrong; but if used with reference to his age and without regard to any official distinction, it may be right. Another preacher is called "Pastor" when he is not in the oversight of the church at all. I have been called "Pastor" by some who were supposed to be my brethren, and who, I suppose, had opportunity to learn better by reason of their years in the church. Such a use of the word is a flagrant misnomer. Sometimes a preacher is called "Bishop." It is possible that a preacher might be rightly called "bishop," but only if he is truly a bishop in the New Testament sense of the word as applied to men. If he is one of the overseers of the church the term would rightly apply to him, otherwise, as a preacher, he should not be so called.

A great many are reluctant to use Bible expressions in designating the oversight of the church because the terms are not generally understood by people to refer to such, but we should not hesitate to use any term as the Bible uses it in referring to any scriptural relationship or description. Most people have an aversion to calling a Christian a *saint* because of the general misunderstanding of that word, yet that is precisely what a Christian is. And the same is true of other words of the New Testament.

We now examine the Greek words that are used in direct reference to the oversight of the church, and their equivalents in English. Neither the Greek nor the English terms are ambiguous as related to the oversight of the church.

## I. PRESBYTERION

The Greek word *Presbyterion* means "an assembly of the elders" i.e. "the eldership" or "elderhood" as in the translation of Acts 22:5 by George Berry in *The Greek New Testament*. The English word *Eldership* does not occur in the English New Testament but the Greek term *Presbyterion* is found three times and could be so translated. *The New Testament In Greek* by Wescott & Hort gives three occurrences of the word: "the Jewish Sanhedrin, Luke, xxii. 66. Acts, xxii. 5; the *council* of the Christian Church, I Tim. iv. 14." In the first two instances the word is translated by "elders" in the English Bible, and in the last by "presbytery." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says of *Presbyterion* "Body

of elders, presbytery, senate, council: of the Jewish elders, Lk. xxii. 66; Acts xxii. 5; of the elders of any body (church) of Christians, I Tim. iv. 14."

Some objections have been offered to the use of the word *eldership* because it is not found in the English version. These objections are without foundation because by the same rule we must object to the use of the word *Bible*; it is not found in the English version. But the word *Elder* is found, and the word *ship* means an office, such as governorship—office of governor.

*Presbuteros*, a deviation of *Presbuterion* but from the same root, is translated a number of times by the English *Elder*. This word is of Hebrew or Patriarchal origin. Literally it means "an old man." Whenever and wherever this word is found in the writings of the New Testament it always carries the idea of age. That is one reason why it is impossible to associate this word in any form to any except "an old man." We freely admit that "old" is a relative term, but by no strain of imagination can it be construed to include "youth" with regard to the oversight of the church. Leadership or rulership requires wisdom, which comes only by age and experience. This Greek word is translated by two English words which we now consider.

A. *Elder*—This word is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means generally "one older" or "an old person." This English word translates five different senses of the basic meaning of *age*, determined by the context of the word. Though the sense in which it may be used differs, yet it always retains its primary meaning of *age*.

1. It means *age* or *seniority* in a comparative sense as used in Luke 15:25. This is a relative term which means "an older" in relation to something else. In this sense "older" may be comparatively young when paralleled to something else.

2. It means one *older*—a *senior* as it relates to the normal life span of man. Anyone advanced in years as compared to the average life span of man, or one in the declining years of life, is an *elder*. (I Tim. 5:1, 2). If we consider the life span of man the "three score and ten years" or at most "four score years," the *senior* would be in the latter part of this, perhaps beyond fifty years of age. I am not to be understood as establishing the exact age of an elder at past fifty.

3. It refers to the Jewish *Elders* as rulers in the Synagogue as in Matthew 15:2; 16:21. The earliest notice of the elders acting as a political body was at the time of the Exodus. The seventy elders mentioned in Exodus and Numbers were a sort of tribunal which later became the seventy elders called the Sanhedrin or Council. It is generally conceded that these men were of the oldest and wisest men of the tribes. Here the word retains the idea of age.

4. It refers to the official *overseers* of the church (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:7). The nature of the qualifications in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 demands that the word carry the idea of advanced age.

5. It refers to the twenty-four members of the heavenly host of John's vision. (Rev. 4:10). These were rulers of some kind as evidenced by the fact that they had crowns, the sign of authority. Since the idea of rulership is associated with age, the idea carries here.

In the word *Elder*, of itself, does not inhere the idea of oversight or official work in the church, but only to the connection with other terms referring to the officers of the church. The association of the term with the oversight has brought a meaning of oversight when used in connection with the church. One might be an *elder* (older) and not be a bishop of the church, but he cannot be a bishop and not be an elder.

The expression *elders*, because it sometimes refers to the aged in the church, does not mean that every old man in the church is an overseer. It certainly takes age and experience to be an overseer, but it also takes much more. The exact age in years is not established in the New Testament but he must be old enough to be classed as an *elder*, and to have the experience of life and the wisdom necessary for the work. He must also have all the other qualifications listed in the New Testament. One may be twenty-five or thirty years of age who has been in the church for ten years, and who knows the word of God above the average, but who has had little of the experience of life. Another may be eighty years of age but only recently converted to Christ and knows little of the word of God, but much of the experience of life. Neither of these would be admissible as an "Elder" in the sense of the oversight of the church. It takes both to qualify the man.

There are some false ideas inadvertently taught about the use of the word *Elder* in the Bible that incarcerate the actual facts stated in the Holy Scriptures.

1. The term always means an older person in the church without regard to an office or any work done. It is true that in a number of instances the term refers only to age without any connotation to the oversight of the church, such as in I Timothy 5:1, 2, but it is equally true that there are other times when the term is used in a technical or official meaning. This is determined by the context and by other expressions in other passages. Many words have both a primary and an official meaning, such as: *Judge* which means "to pass judgment or sentence; to discern; to distinguish"; and also the official meaning of "one who acts as judge in civil courts." The word *Major* means "an important part or issue; greater in number, quality or extent"; but it also has the technical meaning of "a military officer." *Teller* means "one who relates anything," and also has the official meaning of "an officer

of a bank who pays and receives." The technical meaning always exports the idea expressed in the primary meaning of the word. Likewise, the term *Elder* has a primary meaning of "one older; age," but also by New Testament usage has an official meaning of "a ruler or overseer of the church."

To always apply, without discretion, the primary meaning of "older" to the term *Elder* would make all older members of the church the overseers. (I Pet. 5:1, 2). Peter said for the "elders" to take the oversight. If this meant all older people, it would include women as well as men in the oversight, and would disregard all the qualifications of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

2. Some few promote the theory that the term *Elder* is an all inclusive term, including many of the officers of the church in its early days, all of which have passed away since the spiritual gifts passed.

B. H. Burnett of Dallas, Texas, with whom I exchanged a number of letters on the subject of the eldership, said in one letter: "An elder might be a bishop, pastor, ruler, governor, teacher or interpretator, healer, mercy shower, wisdom, knowledge, steward, shepherd, ambassador, etc." The context of this statement was to the effect that the church did not have a group of men called "elders" who had a specific work in overseeing the local church, but that the term might refer to any of these works, and many more, without regard to any perpetuating office at the close of the age of spiritual gifts. He concluded that we cannot have elders today because none can do all these things.

It is true that some of these terms refer to the same person as the word *elder* does, but not to all of them. To illustrate, the word *steward* may refer to the overseers of the church, but not necessarily so. Every Christian is to be a *steward* in the Lord's service but not all Christians are *elders* either in the primary sense or in the technical sense.

Another thought resolutely held is that the scriptural use of the word *Elder* does not have reference to age in years but only to experience in God's work and as an officer in the church. H. E. Winkler, in his book *The Eldership*, page 78, said: "The Scriptures then which refer to elders may, in most instances, be taken as authority for elders, as officials, in God's church and not as references to the age of men in years, their age being in point of experience in the Christian race and not necessarily in point of years.

". . . Therefore the young man who has developed the qualification, set forth in the Scriptures, in early life is as eligible to be appointed to the eldership as an older man. God gave the qualification and he who measures up to it is qualified regardless of age in years." (Winkler believes there is only one Bible qualification to be an elder.)

If the above be strictly true, then the term *Elder* is a misnomer and really has no significance connecting the primary meaning of the word. We ask, How can it be proved that this word has reference only to the "experience in the Christian race and not necessarily in point of years"? Would not this assumption rest entirely upon opinion and not on any rule of hermeneutics? Is it to be understood that a twenty-year-old man can be an *Elder* of the church in the New Testament sense if reared by Christian parents and obeyed the gospel in early life? How can a young man obtain the necessary experience of life in a short few years to lead and rule? The ruling of elders demands more than just a good and sound knowledge of the Bible. They must know HOW to do their work from experience as well as know WHAT to do by the word of God. The elders must have experience and wisdom to rule people as well as the experience in knowledge of God's word. It is impossible to develop all the qualifications of the eldership in early life. The elders of the Old Testament were all in advanced life, and the term was taken from such meaning. Young men can not be qualified in the experience of life to handle the affairs of the church.

B. *Presbytery*—This word is the Angelicization of *Presbuterion*, the Greek term. It means exactly the same as the Anglo-Saxon word *Elder*. We could rightly use the term *presbyter* to express the same meaning as *elder*, and *presbytery* would be exactly the same as *eldership*. We ought not to be hesitant to use such expressions as are used in the Bible to denote Bible things. These two English words translate correctly the Greek *Presbyterion*.

## II. EPISCOPOS

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says of this word: "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent . . . spec. the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church; . . . Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7)." It is a variation of *episcopeo*: "to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for: spoken of the care of the church which rested upon the presbyters, I Pet. v. 2." (*Thayer*). Broken down, this comes from two Greek words: *Epi*: "upon, in the presence of, over" and *skopeo*: "to look at, to consider." *The New Testament in Greek* by Westcott & Hort says of *episcopos*: "an overseer, a superintendent; a guardian, 1 Pet. ii. 25; a bishop, Philipp. i. 1, 1 Tim. iii. 2, Tit. i. 7, Acts, xx. 25."

Having established what authorities say of *Epsicopos*, let us now turn to its counterpart in the English and get the clear connotation of it. This Greek word is translated by two English words which mean much the same thing.

A. *Overseer*—This word is of Greek origin and identifies that class of persons who attend to the guiding and ruling of the church.



In its classical usage it means: (1) Any guardian whatever. (2) A municipal officer, or one who was appointed to oversee and take care of the interests of some particular town or district. (3) A viceroy or magistrate, sent to superintend the affairs of conquered provinces.

Webster defines the word: "One who oversees or overlooks; a superintendent; a supervisor; an inspector; especially, one who superintends a number of slaves or laborers." Inherent in this word are two ideas, which tell us something of the nature of the work enjoined upon the man. First, *over*, which means either to physically be above or to be above in rank and authority. Second, *seer*, which means to look upon or inspect. When these two thoughts are combined the idea of superintendency is involuntary and instant. When some one tries to ridicule the authority over the local church by the elders, we need only to remind him that the Bible term by which they are identified expresses completely the idea of authority over another.

As the word was used by Paul in New Testament times it meant one who superintends the affairs of another; one who looks over the work of others. It is used five times in the New Testament: Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; Tim. 3.2; Titus 1:7; I Peter 2:25). In the New Testament it refers to the officers who have been duly appointed to oversee the congregations of the church. It is perfectly scriptural to refer to the eldership as the *overseers* of the church.

B. *Bishop*—This word means an overseer or one who looks after the affairs of others. *Bishop* is of Anglo-Saxon origin and is the corruption of "epi"—upon or over, and "skopos"—to see. It means exactly the same as is expressed in the word *Overseer*.

The term *episkopee* is rendered once "bishopruck" (Acts 1:20), and once "office of a bishop," (I Tim. 3). Actually "Overseer" is a more correct rendering than "Bishop," but what is expressed in one is expressed in the other. They both come from the same Greek term and mean exactly the same thing. Anyone who does not have the right to oversee the church of God should never be called a "Bishop." On the other hand, we should not hesitate to refer to the overseers of the church as "Bishops."

### III. POIMAN

Like the other two Greek words, this one carries a meaning that suggests something either of the nature or duty of the eldership. Perhaps a more appreciable understanding of the word can come from a definition of some variations of the word by universally recognized Lexicons of Greek language used in the time the New Testament was being written.

*The New Testament In Greek* by Westcott & Hort defines *Poimaino*: "to keep sheep, Luke, xvii, 7; to feed, Joh. xxi. 16. Acts, xx. 28. I Cor.

ix. 7. Jude, 12; *to rule, to govern*, Rev. ii. 27. xii. 5. xix. 15." *Poiman*: "A shepherd, Matt. ix. 36, xxv. 32. xxvi. 31. Joh. x. 2, 12 etc.; a pastor, Ephes. iv. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 25."

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines *Poimaino*: "To feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep . . . to rule, govern . . . to furnish pasturage or food; to nourish." *Poiman*: "b. metaph. the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church, Jn. x. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 25; Heb. xiii. 20, . . . of the overseers of the Christian assemblies."

The basic meaning of this Greek term is that of supervision and feeding. This tells at least two qualities of the work of elders, to wit: in the execution of their duties they supervise and govern, and as they govern they feed or supply what is needful to proper growth. Paul used all three of these Greek words in speaking to the overseers of the church of Ephesus when he called them to Miletus on his way to Jerusalem. (Acts 20). Commencing at verse 17 he "called the *presbyterous* (elders) of the church, and in verse 28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *episcopous* (overseers), *poimainein* (to feed) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The "feeding" is done in the capacity of a guardian or supervisor.

This Greek word is also translated by two English words.

A. *Shepherd*—This word is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means "tending, feeding, guarding," and directly means the care of sheep, according to its primary and literal meaning. But by common usage it means "one who feeds, tends, and guards" the spiritual interests of people in a given locality.

This is a familiar term both in the Old and New Testaments. It is used 103 times in the Old Testament with the following meanings, determined by the context of each passage. Basically the meaning is always "to tend, feed, and guard."

- (1) Keeper of sheep as Abel (Gen. 4:2); Abraham and Lot's herdsmen (Gen. 13:7, 8).
- (2) God Himself as keeper of mankind (Gen. 48:15; Ps. 23:1).
- (3) Christ as caretaker (Ezek. 34:23-37; Zech. 13:7).
- (4) To Moses as the leader and keeper of Israel (Isa. 63:11).
- (5) To the priests and prophets of Israel as feeders of spiritual things (Jer. 3:15; 10:21; 17:16; 23:1, 2; Ezek. 34:5, 7, 8, 9, 10).
- (6) To Cyrus as God's appointed guardian of Israel (Isa. 44:28).
- (7) As intimate companion, one who eats and drinks with another (Prov. 13:20; 28:7; 29:3).

It is used 18 times in the New Testament as follows to denote:

- (1) Keeper of sheep (Lk. 2:8).

(2) The work of Christ (John 10:11, 14, 15; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 2:25).

(3) To the work of the elders of the church (Eph. 4:11).

The verb form *Poimaino*—"to do the work of a shepherd" is found 11 times in the New Testament and applies to:

(1) Christ (Matt. 2:6; Rev. 19:15).

(2) Peter (John 21:16).

(3) Elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:28).

(4) To all elders (I Pet. 5:2).

(5) To all victorious saints (Rev. 2:27).

The word *Shepherd* is significant in that it tells the nature of the work of the overseer. He who is to "tend the flock" must know who they are, and he must LEAD the sheep. (John 10:3). The shepherds are to watch (Acts 20:28-31), and take the oversight. (I Pet. 5:2).

B. *Pastor*—This word is of Latin origin. It is from the verb *pasco* which means "to feed" and corresponds to the Greek *poimaino*—"to feed" and the Anglo-Saxon *shepherd*—"to feed." This word is found only once in the English version: Ephesians 4:11. However, the word *poimeen* and the verb form *poimaino*, which means to do the work of a shepherd, has the same meaning as *pastor*. This is what is meant in Acts 20:28—"to feed the flock of God."

The Latin use of the word *pastor* has come into great use by denominations in referring to the preacher rather than to the oversight. The elders are the pastors because they are given responsibility for tending and feeding the flock of God. They may feed them directly or by employing one or more trained teachers to help them in doing the job. Parents are to educate their children, and they are responsible for the job, but they may enjoy the services of teachers who are trained in the work to help them educate their children.

#### IV. SOME OTHER TERMS DESCRIBING THE DUTY OF ELDERS

Many of the duties of elders may be expressed by terms that come to help identify them. These terms do not always identify the elders themselves, but when used in connection with their work will identify them.

A. *Teacher*—The term indicates a very high honor and authority. It refers to Christ in a sense such as this. (John 3:2). It also refers to rulers of Israel (Nicodemus—John 3:10); also to the elders of the church (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; I Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:9). Not all teachers are overseers, but all overseers are teachers of God's truth in one way or another.

B. *Ruler*—This indicates the exercise of authority in ruling (I Tim. 5:17; I Thess. 5:12). The elders exercise authority in ruling and therefore may be referred to as "rulers." (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

---

C. *Example*—This is a work of the eldership, to set an example or pattern of godliness and righteousness before the church. (I Pet. 5:3).

These terms only denote the eldership when used in a context that identifies them as such. Putting the three Greek words and their six English equivalents together we have :

A—*Presbuterion*

(1) *Elders*—"Age; one older" (Lk. 15:25; I Tim. 5:1, 2; Matt. 15:2; Acts 14:23; Rev. 4:10).

(2) *Presbytery*—The same meaning as *Elders*.

B—*Episcopos*

(1) *Overseer*—"To superintend; to look over" (Acts 20:28).

(2) *Bishop*—Corruption of *episcopos* (I Tim. 3; Phil. 1:1).

C—*Poiman*

(1) *Shepherd*—"To feed; to take care of."

(2) *Pastor*—"To feed."

## CHAPTER IX

**ATTITUDES TOWARD QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS  
AND THE CONSEQUENCES**

"Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5).

A proper attitude toward the study of the qualifications for the eldership must be taken if we are to make "all things according to the pattern" of the church as Christ built it. Presently too many are ignorant of the truth regarding these qualifications, and are too easily led to accept about any explanation given in making void some quality of the eldership.

**I. ERRONEOUS ATTITUDES TOWARD THE QUALIFICATIONS**

One might ask, Why are preachers and church members in general so divided over the standard of God in forming the oversight of the church? To properly answer this question we must remove attention from the standard given in the Bible to the opinions and theories of man, because there lies the all important answer to this question. Man's speculating has always led him to false premises in matters of faith, and certainly this is a subject of faith, and speculating is usually based upon some idea foreign to the plain revelation of God. A great mystery is why one man with great intellect and accomplishment will look at an apparently simple passage of Scripture and draw one conclusion, while another, equally intelligent and accomplished, will look at the same passage and draw an opposite conclusion. This fault can not be attributed to the weakness of the Bible, nor can it be blamed on the inability of the Holy Spirit to adequately express himself; the inefficiency must be charged to the man in spite of his intellect and learning. We are compelled to inquire, What is wrong with the man in his approach to the Bible that makes one interpret a passage one way and another man another way? The answer is inevitable: his attitude toward the passage colors his mind in favor of himself as he approaches it.

Before a proper and thorough study of the qualifications can be successful, it is essential to look for a moment at the various attitudes toward these qualifications that have been exhibited by a number of outstanding preachers and writers of the past one hundred years. It must be said in fairness that not all these positions—for that matter very few of them—are proclaimed in dishonesty. Therefore, this exposition of error in attitude does not reflect on those who hold these positions, as to their integrity, but it is hoped that the proper attitude may be deter-

mined that all may approach the qualifications of the eldership to know the truth. Preconceptions on the part of the exegete always bind him to a thorough and accurate understanding of any passage of Scripture. Attention is now directed to the most prominent attitudes toward the qualifications of bishops that hinder a correct understanding.

A. *No man can qualify today, hence no elders today.* If one approaches the study believing that there are no men who can fully qualify today to be elders, then, of course, he would be unable to find any passage that can be used, in his opinion, to deny his position. In every reference to any qualification of an elder he could find something that would be impossible for man today. But what qualification listed in the Bible can a man not develop? The universal answer almost always comes from those who hold this attitude: "No man can be inspired today." But who said inspiration was an attribute for the eldership? The Bible certainly does not say so. But the argument responds: "Will you deny that elders in the early church were inspired?" Certainly not! But how does this concession help the contender? Neither would I deny that preachers and other Christians were inspired in the New Testament days. Does it follow that there can be no preachers and Christians today because no one can be inspired of God today as then? Until some passage is adduced that establishes this quality as an essential part of the eldership, the argument and contention amounts to nothing. As long as one holds the attitude that no man can qualify today he will never see the truth concerning the matter.

B. *All the Bible qualifications are for the group of elders rather than for one man.*

Perhaps the origin of this attitude was an attempt to escape some essential quality mentioned in the Scripture to allow some esteemed man to enter the oversight. Since the standard was so plainly essential, the only escape was to say that what one man lacked another could supply, hence the position that the qualifications are for the whole group rather than for one man. If this attitude is tolerated it would allow one man to have the ability to teach, another to have a good report from without, another to be kind and patient, another to be the husband of one wife, etc. By this standard about any rascal who may have just one of these qualities, such as having ability to teach, could be appointed to the eldership, and this principle would be definitely contrary to the New Testament. The language of the apostle to both Timothy and Titus tells that these qualities are for *one man*. "If any (man) be . . ." Each man appointed to the eldership must have to a good degree all the qualifications listed.

C. *Only one qualification for the eldership — Blamelessness.* It appears evident that this attitude grew out of the desire to emphasize some quality and minimize the importance of another. We do not attribute to every professor of this theory the motive just mentioned,

but refer only to its origin. This conclusion could be acquired only if the major premise is established that there is only one qualification—blamelessness, and all other qualities mentioned are related to *blameless*. One of the foremost advocates of this attitude in modern times is H. E. Winkler of Nashville, Tennessee. Brother Winkler wrote a large book entitled *The Eldership* in which he produced all the arguments that have been thought of to support this idea. He is consistent in that he refers again and again to "the qualification" of elders, but he says that one must be qualified in all "points of qualification." Just what is the difference in "points" (plural) of qualification, and "qualifications" (plural)? If it be conclusively established that there is just one qualification, namely: BLAMELESSNESS, there are no "points" of the qualification, for one is either blameless or he is not.

On page 89 of *The Eldership* Winkler said: "I come now to notice the qualification of elders. The reader will note that I speak of it as qualification, singular, and the points of qualification, instead of the qualifications, plural. I believe there is only one basic qualification required of an elder, namely, 'Blamelessness.'

"Paul told Titus to appoint elders, 'If any man be blameless.' And to Timothy he said: 'The bishop therefore must be without reproach.' 'Blamelessness' and 'without reproach' express the same thought."

Should not all Christians be without reproach? If so, why would this become a qualification for the eldership only? If blamelessness is not the qualification for the eldership only, but for all Christians, the only logical deduction is that there are actually no qualifications for the bishops, but *blamelessness* is an attribute for all Christians. This conclusion rules out any standard of God for the eldership and is absolutely wrong. Why is this THE qualification for elders when all Christians must also be without reproach? To concinnate this attitude with known truth is an undertaking few, if any, are actually willing to approach.

May we amicably inquire that if this be THE qualification for the elders, why not appoint a *woman* who is "blameless"? There could be no scriptural opposition if *blameless* be the only demand of the Scripture. But if an elder must be a *man*, then we have at least TWO qualifications: (1) a man (2) blameless. This is enough to rule out the idea that there is just one qualification to be an elder. Actually this attitude rests upon the same kind of foundation as the doctrine of "faith only," which is: Find one passage that mentions justification by faith and conclude that it is by faith alone. Blamelessness is a qualification, but since others are mentioned in connection with it, we are compelled to conclude that they, each of them, stand in equal force and importance to that quality of blamelessness.

On page 89 Winkler says further: "Paul says the elder must be

blameless and then proceeds to mention those points in which he must be blameless in order to have the required qualification of blamelessness."

Just how does one, who does not already have this attitude to vindicate, twist and arrange the context of the word *blameless* to draw the conclusion that all other qualities are "points" of blamelessness? I confess I am unable to see it, and I have observed it from every angle possible to my knowledge. Should not all Christians be blameless in those things mentioned by Paul, even to be saved, much less to be in the eldership? *Blameless* has to do with the demeanor of the man in every day living. Again, should the elder be blameless in only those things mentioned, or must he be blameless in his whole life? If the latter, why should Paul mention just a few of the things in which the elder must be blameless and leave other things without a mention?

If *blameless* be the only qualification, would not this whole matter be as complete and much plainer had the Holy Spirit just said, "The bishop must be blameless in all things" and let it go at that? What could be added to the term *blameless* to make it more complete? The fact of the matter is that *blameless* has to do with being free from guilt of any wrong, and one may be blameless in this respect and still not be suited for the eldership. To illustrate: a blameless woman. If we begin to enumerate the "points" in which one must be blameless, where are we to stop short of every point in a man's life and relationship? It is a qualification of every Christian to be blameless. But just to mention a few "points" in which an elder must be blameless is to conclude that he must be blameless in only those things mentioned, and other matters are not important to become bishops. Must an elder be *blameless* in only the "points" mentioned in both Timothy and Titus? or can he be blameworthy in anything not mentioned and still be an elder? Both the grammar and punctuation show that *blameless* is just one of the qualifications in the list and stands equal in importance to all the rest but not above them. Like baptism in the plan of salvation, it is only one of the several qualifications to be an elder.

Again on page 86 Winkler says: "God wants men who possess, each one of them, all the points of qualification as he inspired Paul to give them. I have often stated, and do not now have cause to retract, that if there cannot be found, in the church of Christ today, men who meet Paul's requirements of an elder, we have a very poor set of Christians on earth today and that righteousness has reached a very low ebb."

Brother Winkler cannot express himself without using language that shows he must accept more than just the quality of *blamelessness*. Here he speaks of "points" of qualification. "Points" of qualification would, in every way, equal "qualifications." Qualification means that which suits or makes fit for a use or service. Any "point" that becomes necessary to the qualification is essential and becomes itself a qualification.



He also used the term "requirements" (plural). A requirement is an essential to an end and is by all definitions a "qualification." Just how much difference is there between *qualification* and *requirement*? These requirements, Brother Winkler says men must meet in order to be elders, are really "qualifications" and there is no escape from it.

The normal consequence of this attitude is that any man (and he will not admit that a woman can be an elder, even though she may be blameless) can be an elder whether he be young or old, experienced or not, married or single, just so he is a man and is *blameless*. (This amounts to two qualifications). Notice now in the next quotation where this attitude leads.

Page 193: "I have often stated, both in private and publicly, that there is **NOT ONE SINGLE QUALITY** (Emp. mine—H.E.P.) required of an elder that is not also required of every other member of the church. To this position no one has ever dared, in my presence, to offer one word in contradiction."

I venture to "dare" a contradiction to this statement with Bible proof. Here are some qualities of elders that are not in "every other member of the church."

1. An elder must be a man—Some Christians may be women.
2. An elder must be experienced — Some Christians may be novitiates (babes).
3. An elder must be a man of age—Some Christians may be early teen-age people.
4. An elder must be a husband—Some Christians may be single.
5. An elder must be a father—Some Christians may not be fathers.
6. An elder must be a "meat-eater" of the gospel—Some Christians may take "milk."

Again on page 193: "Does one ask, 'Then why state the qualification of an elder if all the members are required to develop the same characteristics?' The answer is obvious. The Lord knew the members would not all make that forward advance but would be like those to whom Paul speaks in Hebrews 5:12."

It is a great mystery to this scribe how one can see the "obvious" answer in Hebrews 5:12. Why give the *qualification* for elders when every other Christian should have the same one? Winkler replies that the "obvious" answer is that "God knew" that all the members would not try to make that forward advance. But some of them wanted to advance. Does that mean that all who "advanced" are to be elders? And in what must they "advance" beyond blamelessness to be elders, since all Christians must be blameless? Does God have two sets of conduct, one for those who want to advance and another for those who do not want to advance? God gave the qualifications for the elder

and it takes further development in attributes to make the oversight than it would be just to be a member of the church. Those who "advance" go further or obtain something besides the average Christian. Only an approach to this passage with the attitude mentioned here would cause one to conclude, as Winkler, that there is only one qualification for the eldership.

D. *Several qualifications but marriage and family relations are not essential.* It has been taught by several that a man does not have to be married—does not have to be a father—in order to qualify for the eldership. Arbitrarily these advocates select from the list of qualifications those that do not seem to them to be important by their own reasoning and set them aside. Just what rule of exegesis does one follow to set aside a part of a list of things toward a common end and bind others? This is a vital matter and will be dealt with more fully when we consider some of the qualifications that have to do with this matter.

E. *All qualifications are flexible and not absolute.* The detestable effort in this idea is to weaken the standard of God to the extent that the range from side to side is so broad that almost any sort of person may be initiated into the eldership. The final end, with respect to other Bible matters, will not be accepted by its supporters. Are the qualifications for a Christian so flexible that one may believe what he wants to believe, repent after his own notion, confess about anything pertaining to religion, and be baptized in any form and for any purpose that pleases him? The answer comes back an unquestionable No! But if the qualifications of elders are so pliable, why are not the other requirements of God equally flexible? Why not allow the plan of salvation to be curved or reformed for different men in different situations if this be true of the eldership?

After one becomes allied with this proposition there are some other questions that must challenge his attention, and they certainly demand an answer. Just how flexible are the qualifications for the eldership? How far will they stretch? and how far can one shrink them? Who is permitted to do the stretching? It is perfectly consistent with the rules of Bible study to allow every man the same liberty granted to any one. If, then, one be permitted to stretch a point here or there, all others may stretch where they want to. Now who will be in authority to say when the stretching has reached its limits and in what points a man can stretch? But if there is no man who can rightly limit the flexibility of these qualities, what is to hinder someone from stretching them completely out of existence? These are pertinent questions to the issue and, to the honest man, must be fairly answered. But when he undertakes to answer them in the light of Bible truth, the whole structure of this theory falls because there is not one single scriptural stone in its foundation. The whole attitude is contrary to inspiration. The truth of the matter is that there is nothing in all the Bible that pertains to

qualifications for any work of God that is so flexible as to allow man to bend to suit his own purpose.

F. *Once an elder always an elder.* This attitude was planted in the soil of arrogance, cultivated in strife, and nurtured in self-willedness. Its origin can undoubtedly be traced to some unqualified man locked in combat with truth in trying to retain a hold on the oversight. One is an elder by qualifications and appointment. The qualifications are essential in every case and these qualifications must remain, every one of them—though the circumstance of developing the quality may not remain, such as family illness over a period of years may develop the quality of patience which is necessary, and once that quality is developed, the illness need not necessarily continue to keep the man qualified, but the patience, which is a qualification, must remain—if the man is to continue to be in the eldership. When any man ceases to be qualified by the Bible standard he should be deposed as an elder. If one must be a good Christian man to be an elder, if he should stop being a good Christian man, should he still be retained in the eldership? Both Scripture and reason tell us that he should not. It is a Bible doctrine that one can so sin as to be eternally lost after he has become a Christian. This being true, an elder who ceases to live as a godly Christian man ceases to be an elder of the church. This attitude of *Impossible Apostasy* from the eldership is no better in taste to the Christian than the doctrine of *Impossible Apostasy* with regard to Christianity. All lovers of truth detest vehemently the treacherous and contemptible doctrine that once a man is saved nothing he can do, think or say will cause him to be lost. He can murder, steal, lie, get drunk, and commit any sin that can be mentioned and still he is in no danger of being lost. This is offensive to all who know anything about the Bible and the order of God. Yet the attitude of "once an elder always an elder" is of the same caliber and rests upon the same proof for its existence as the doctrine of *Impossible Apostasy*.

## II. THE DISREGARD FOR THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

Any degree of disregard for the Authority of Christ in any matter is more than obnoxious to all who revere God and His word. How anyone can dispassionately dishonor a single requirement of Christ to any end is indeed a wonderful mystery. But we need only to raise the veil from our eyes to see, even among our own brethren, a surprisingly large number who, in one way or another, are following the road that leads from God rather than toward Him. There is little doubt but that the real issue does not lie in ignorance or stupidity of the man, but in an attitude of disregard for any portion of the requirements that do not exactly suit his taste. No man has really obeyed God in any point who does not do those things that may seem unimportant and worthless but nevertheless are commanded by God. Human wisdom and logic have

never been able to detect all the reasons and requirements of God because "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jere. 10:23). If man could direct his own way in all things he would have no need for the direction of God; but since he cannot, he must obey in many respects where he cannot logically devise the reason from human intelligence. Any disrespect for any point of a requirement of God is despicable and results in a disparaging effort to establish a more perfect order. James said, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). This divine principle runs throughout God's word, and he who disregards any one requirement of Christ, in effect, disregards the whole list of requirements.

A most logical question at this point is, "In what way do Christians disregard the qualifications of elders?" Attention is now directed to a brief answer to this question.

A. *Disregard for the authority of Christ.* To regard lightly or totally ignore any of the qualifications laid down by the Holy Spirit for the eldership is the same as disregarding the entire authority of Christ, since he speaks to us through the Holy Spirit (John 16:12, 13; Heb. 1:1, 2). It is not extravagant to say that ninety percent of all church trouble comes directly or indirectly from unqualified men in the eldership. Proper discipline of members and preachers, and righteous direction in all courses of the church by qualified elders would correct the malady. If we ever entertain a hope of eliminating this grievous sin, we must get to the real cause and remove that. The real cause is unqualified men in the oversight. But how did these unqualified men get into the eldership? We confidently answer that they got there because preachers, elders, and members in general so disregarded the authority of Christ concerning the qualifications for the eldership that unqualified men were appointed; and they continue because of leniency on the part of preachers with regard to the qualifications of elders.

Any substitute or deviation from the qualifications of elders opens the flood gate for anything that might suit man. Putting an unqualified man in the eldership does not make him any more an elder than putting a man's name on the church roll makes him a Christian. An elder **MUST** be a certain kind of man and **MUST** do certain things. What right does the man who argues against the doctrine that makes baptism a non-essential to salvation have to contend that some of the requirements stipulated to make elders are not essential? One position stands or falls with the other.

B. *Appointing young men to the Eldership.* There is a great difference between youth and age. It is recognized, however, that this is a relative expression both of youth and age and must be exemplified by

other terms to accurately distinguish between them. Just when is a man an *old man*? The difference may be demonstrated by Rehoboam. After the death of Solomon, Rehoboam was made king of Israel and he sought the counsel first of the old men regarding his method of reign. They told him how to rule, according to their wisdom and experience, but Rehoboam sought next the advice of the young men about his own age because he did not approve of the advice of old men. These young men taught him to rule in a ruthless manner. The result was a divided kingdom.

The term *elder* does not signify the exact age one must be, but common sense would tell us that a twenty-one-year-old man is a *youth* rather than *elder*. The idea of *elder* is one more advanced in both years and experience. A man might be comparatively young, if he were in a group of men above seventy years of age, and yet be an *elder*. The precise age at which one becomes an elder is not given in the Bible, but, understanding that it is a comparative term, we conclude that he must be old enough both in age and in Christian experience to have in high degree all the qualifications listed in the Bible, some of which require him to be of such age as to have reared a Christian family, obtained a good knowledge of the Bible, and developed experience in ruling people. Any man too young for this is not old enough to be an elder.

C. *If one does the work of an elder he is an elder.* Even a careless notice of the list of qualifications would be enough to dethrone that idea. This would eliminate completely a large portion of the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit. Just what is the "work of an elder"? If it consists only in "bossing" and dictating in a tyrannical manner, without regard to anything else, Diotrefes, "who loveth to have the preeminence among them," would certainly have qualified in this respect. But if this "work of an elder" included teaching and directing in the scriptural path of righteousness the worker must surely be qualified to teach and have experience in leading aright, else he could not do the work. The many duties of the eldership essentially demand that he be fully qualified according to the Scriptures.

Before anyone can do any work demanded by the Lord, two requisites are first necessary: (1) He must be properly prepared in character, attitude and relationship. His character must be in harmony with the work to be done; his attitude pure and submissive; his relationship with God intimate and pure. But one may be all of this and still not suited for a given work. (2) He must be properly authorized to do the work. This is where the one who "does the work of an elder" falls short if he is not authorized by Christ to do so. No one who has not developed to acquire all the requirements listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is authorized to take the oversight, and if one does assume this prerogative to "take the oversight" before he is qualified, he does so without authority of Christ and is in error. A woman may usurp the

position and do the work, to an extent, of an elder, but she certainly is no authorized elder. This theory is untenable with Bible truth. Just doing the work does not make one an elder; it is the result of him being an elder.

D. *Appoint the best we have.* The major premise of this contention is that God only requires of man what he is able to do. To the premise we fully agree, but to the conclusion we dissent. Paul said, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (I Cor. 8:12). The context places this statement in relation to contributions toward relief, but we accede that this principle will apply in other things that are similar. It is willingly admitted that God never requires of any man what he cannot do or obtain; however, God does not authorize a man to do a work for which he is not qualified, and that is exactly the conclusion that should be drawn. God does not require a man to be a public proclaimer of the gospel if the man is not qualified to do so. But it does not follow that God will lower His standard just to be convenient for the unqualified man to preach. If the man qualifies God requires it of him; he may do that which he is qualified to do but not that which he is unqualified to do.

The second premise to this conclusion is that we must have someone in the office of the eldership whether qualified or not. To syllogize: (1) God only requires what we have. (2) We must have elders of some sort at all times regardless of conditions. (3) Therefore, we must appoint the best we have even if none have acquired all the qualifications listed by the Holy Spirit. If anything be adduced from this argument, it is the total disregard for the list of qualifications in the Bible. What if the "best we have" does not develop more than half of the requirements listed, should we appoint them? What if the "best we have" at best has only two or three of the attributes? This is an unrighteous and deadly attitude toward the authority of Jesus Christ.

Applying this same principle to the conditions of becoming a Christian, if the "best we have" only believes and repents of sins but is never baptized into Christ, shall we accept him as a Christian on the basis that he is the "best we have"? But if this rule will not work in regard to church membership, why apply it to the office of elders?

H. E. Winkler in *The Eldership*, page 23, says: "So the Lord requires that he who comes nearest to reaching the goal shall be ordained as elder among his fellows. And the writer's contention that the only major difference between an elder and what every Christian ought to be is that the Lord specifies that MEN and not WOMEN shall be elders in His church." But why not godly women? Where does He specify MEN and not WOMEN? If it is found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, other qualifications are also found there. What is to be done with them?

But if this passage really means that MEN and not WOMEN are to be elders, it also means that the other qualifications are essential to be elders.

Winkler claims, as shown before, that there is only *one* qualification for the eldership and that is BLAMELESSNESS. Here he says the only difference is "the Lord specified that MEN and not WOMEN shall be elders of His church." Just what passage says that elders must be men and not women? Does not the same passage specify other qualifications that one must have to be an elder? Then certainly there are other essentials besides being a Christian man who is blameless.

### III. THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE ELDERSHIP

Attitudes exert a powerful influence upon our thinking and action. The proper attitude toward the requirements for a bishop goes far to assist in a correct understanding and application of these qualities to the men whose work it is to oversee the local church of the Lord. Several pages of this book are devoted to that very end. What attitudes should characterize our approach to the study? Let us patiently dwell a little longer on this point.

A. *The qualifications do not demand a perfect, sinless man.* Extremes are frequently the cause of much alarm in any study of the Bible. We want to avoid extremes, but at the same time to be persistent in search for the exact truth. One extreme has been that we can have no elders today because no man is perfect. The opposite extreme is that this standard of God is not absolute and any point may be deleted if no man has acquired it.

All of God's standards are perfect; in fact, all that relates to God is perfect. It could not be otherwise and be of God. But man is imperfect and is never likely to be completely perfect and remain so in this life. The goal for man is to "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48). There are no perfect Christians on earth who do not need the continual cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood, hence there are no perfect men who are elders. If we are looking for perfect men in the eldership we shall utterly fail to find them, though we look in every corner of the earth and in every period of man's existence on earth. They are not to be found.

Most of the qualifications are relative, which may be understood in terms of degrees, but not all of them are relative. Such qualities as: a man, husband, father, etc., are definite and stationary. One is either a man or he is not. There is no degree of this quality. He may be various kinds of a man, but he is either a man or he is not. On the other hand, apt to teach, blameless, holy, just, etc., are relative terms. A "relative" qualification means a quality in degree as related to the standard. An illustration: Each elder must be "apt to teach," but one elder may be

more "apt to teach" than another. But by comparing to the standard both are qualified by being "apt to teach" in contrast to those who are not able to teach. One man may be tall as compared to other men in general, yet another may be taller than he. Every elder must have all the qualifications to a high degree, or above the average degree. One may be a qualified elder and still have room to "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

B. *The qualifications are MUSTS.* In I Timothy 3:2 there are seven MUSTS implied in the mention of the MUST at the beginning of the passage. "A bishop then MUST be . . ." and seven qualities are mentioned in this one verse. Each one of them has the same stress and the same importance. The failure to wisely evaluate the equal importance of all these qualities has caused some to lay too much stress on "must be the husband of one wife" while neglecting the "must be apt to teach."

The Greek word is *dei* which is translated *must* in this passage. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says this word means "necessity in reference to what is required to attain some end," and John 3:7; Acts 9:6; 16:30 are used as passages where this is the meaning. If it means a necessity in reference to these things, why not in reference to the qualifications of the eldership?

The language here in the qualifications is not an "expedient"—to take or leave as a matter to the greatest end. Nor is it a "preference or option"—that we can take what we prefer or leave off what we oppose. The language is a MUST. When Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again," (John 3:7) we understand that he meant to be born again is absolutely essential. The same is the meaning in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7.

C. *All the qualifications are essential.* The most dangerous action any man ever set himself to do is to tamper with God's word in any way, and especially so when he begins to give importance to one thing and makes another unimportant. The Scriptures furnish us to every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). If one is to be furnished completely unto every good work, he must be qualified in all points necessary to that work.

It takes all the qualifications of an elder to make an elder, just as it takes all the qualifications of a Christian to make a Christian. And as one cannot be a Christian without all the qualifications to that end, neither can one be an elder without all the qualifications to that office.

Supposed difficulties do not set aside any single qualification. To conjecture, "What if this be the case, or that be the case?" does not nulify the qualifications given. Such supposed difficulties have been used by denominationalists for a number of years to reduce the command to be baptized for the remission of sins to nothing. The stock argument is:



“What if a boy on the battle field repents of his sins, but cannot be baptized because of the seriousness of an injury, will he not be saved if he believes only?” The fact that the difficulty poses itself to our view does not in the least nulify a single requirement of God, either in the case of salvation or the qualifications of the eldership. There are difficulties in the matter of marriage and divorce but actually the Bible teaching on the subject is so simple that no one should be confused about what is right. The fact that men become involved in difficulties does not erase the standard of God concerning any matter. God knows what man can and cannot do, and has perfectly adapted the Bible to his every need. All of it is important.

*D. Must develop the qualifications before the appointment.* Some do not understand that a man must be qualified BEFORE he is appointed to the eldership. During the period of the restoration of the New Testament church many of the preachers taught that the elders should be put into the office and there develop the qualifications, which process they called “let them first be proved.” This was a complete misunderstanding of the purpose of the qualifications. The office of the bishop is not for the purpose of developing the qualities of an elder, but because he has developed the qualifications he can perform the work of an overseer.

*E. Comparing the qualifications of Titus and Timothy.* A fair and equitable attitude to receive the most from this study would be to approach both the list given to Timothy and the one to Titus with the purpose to harmonize and understand them. Some confusion has resulted from the questions regarding the difference in the two lists. Did Titus in Crete appoint elders who lacked the qualifications mentioned in Timothy and vice versa? By a close comparison of the two lists we find about the same qualifications in both chapters, with perhaps the one additional quality in I Timothy 3 of “desire for the office.” Even then it is unquestionably implied in the letter to Titus.

To promote a more succesful study of the two lists, we here observe them paralleled. The reader is encouraged to first read very carefully the two passages: I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and then compare each qualification in one with that in the other. Following will be the fruitful results of the comparison:

#### LIST TO TIMOTHY

1. A man (not a woman)
2. Blameless (without reproach)
3. Husband of one wife
4. Vigilant (temperate—R.V.)
5. Sober
6. Given to hospitality
7. Apt to teach

#### LIST TO TITUS

1. A man (not a woman)
2. Blameless (without reproach)
3. Husband of one wife
4. Temperate (self-governed)
5. Sober
6. Lover of hospitality
7. Hold faithful word to teach

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 8. Not given to wine                        | 8. No brawler (not given to wine—Footnote—R.V.) |
| 9. No striker                               | 9. No striker                                   |
| 10. Not greedy of filthy lucre              | 10. Not greedy of filthy lucre                  |
| 11. Not a brawler                           | 11. Not a brawler                               |
| 12. Rule house well—children in subjection  | 12. Have believing children                     |
| 13. Of good report, good reputation         | 13. Holy, saintly, religious man                |
| 14. Not a novice (puffed up)                | 14. Not self-willed (arrogant, presumptuous)    |
| 15. Not covetous (contentious, quarrelsome) | 15. Not soon angry                              |
| 16. Patient (gentle, lenient)               | 16. Just (upright, justice to all)              |
| 17. Of good behaviour                       | 17. Lover of good men (of good)                 |
| 18. Desire for office                       | 18. (Desire implied from other qualities)       |

It will be readily seen that each list is complete within itself. The reader will then wonder, why do we detail 24 qualifications if each of these two lists is complete and they contain only 18 qualifications? (See the next section). The answer is, because some of them in one list are not expressed in exactly the same way as in the other; and to escape what may appear to be neglect of some qualification, we count them as two instead of one to more nearly exhaust their meaning. In addition to that some of the qualities have a narrow shade of difference in their meaning. We want to try to understand all the Holy Spirit said on this matter.

*F. Divisions of the qualifications.* There are some questions that must be settled by general principles of the Bible, but when specific qualities are required in a man before he can assume certain duties, such as the eldership, no man has the right to devise a *principle* and add and subtract from these qualifications as he wills. An elder must have rare and superior qualifications to perform his duties. There are three different methods of dividing the qualifications into classes for a proper study of them.

1. *Two general divisions.* This is the division according to the POSITIVE and NEGATIVE qualities of an elder. There are some things he MUST BE and some things he MUST NOT BE.

#### POSITIVE

#### NEGATIVE

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. A man               | 1. Not given to wine          |
| 2. Desire the office   | 2. Not a brawler              |
| 3. Blameless           | 3. No striker                 |
| 4. Husband of one wife | 4. Not greedy of filthy lucre |
| 5. Vigilant            | 5. Not a novice               |
| 6. Temperate           | 6. Not covetous               |
| 7. Sober               | 7. Not angry                  |

- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| 8. Lover of hospitality                  | 8. Not self-willed |
| 9. Apt to teach                          |                    |
| 10. Believing children (rule house well) |                    |
| 11. Of good report                       |                    |
| 12. Holy                                 |                    |
| 13. Just                                 |                    |
| 14. Patient                              |                    |
| 15. Good behaviour                       |                    |
| 16. Lover of good men                    |                    |

Some of these qualities are by nature a part of the man and need only be cultivated to reach the degree demanded. Such qualities as kindness, justness, considerate, etc., are in many cases innate in the man.

2. *Divisions according to physical, moral, and spiritual qualifications.*

PHYSICAL	MORAL	SPIRITUAL
1. A man	1. Blameless	1. Desire for the office
2. A husband	2. Of good behaviour	2. Vigilant
3. A father	3. Hospitality	3. Sober
	4. Not given to wine	4. Apt to teach
	5. No striker	5. Not covetous
	6. Patient	6. Not a novice
	7. Not greedy of filthy lucre	7. Of good report
	8. Not a brawler	8. Holy
	9. Not self-willed	
	10. Lover of good men	
	11. Just	
	12. Not soon angry	
	13. Temperate	

It may be doubted by some as to whether the above lists are properly divided as to physical, moral, and spiritual qualities. This is not material to the development of any of them, but we are compelled to accept all these qualities as having some bearing on every phase of the man's life. His physical, moral and spiritual being must be in harmony with truth before he can serve as an elder, and the listing in this order assists only in showing the relation of each quality to this end.

3. *The qualifications fall into six classes: Character, Reputation, Habits, Domestic relations, Experience of life, Ability to teach and rule.*

CHARACTER	REPUTATION	HABITS
1. Desire for the office	1. Blameless	1. Temperate
2. Holy	2. Of good report	2. Not given to wine

- |                      |                         |                    |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 3. Just              | 3. Lover of hospitality | 3. Not soon angry  |
| 4. Patient           | 4. Not a brawler        | 4. Not self-willed |
| 5. Of good behaviour | 5. Not greedy of money  | 5. Sober           |
| 6. Lover of good     | 6. Not covetous         |                    |
|                      | 7. Not a striker        |                    |

### DOMESTIC RELATIONS

### EXPERIENCE

### APT TO TEACH AND RULE

- |                        |                 |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. A man               | 1. Vigilant     | 1. Apt to teach |
| 2. Husband of one wife | 2. Not a novice |                 |
| 3. Believing children  |                 |                 |

One of the greatest mistakes in selecting and appointing men to the eldership is to take lightly these qualifications that must be present in every elder to please the Lord. When men are appointed who possess these qualities in a good measure, the church will be ready to make progress unequaled since the days of the apostles. The Lord's way cannot be improved. In the next chapter we will examine carefully each of these qualifications to determine the significance of each one to the oversight of the church, and to examine religiously every claim presented to denounce them. The object of this portion of our study will be to bare the subject under the light of the gospel and weed out all tares of men.

---

## CHAPTER X

### THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

In the foregoing chapter we observed that the general list of qualifications in both Timothy and Titus are substantially the same; expressed in different terms just as the accounts of the great commission as given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke are expressed differently, yet are basically the same. One would hardly think of laboring to prove that repentance is not a part of the great commission, or that the great commission could be executed without requiring repentance just because neither Matthew nor Mark mentions it. Luke does include it. The qualifications that are given in Timothy but not given in the same words in Titus, and vice versa, are certainly understood to be essential just as repentance is included in the great commission, even though all the gospel writers do not mention it.

We have also seen, with the exception of the "desire for the office," that the same general requirements are given in both Timothy and Titus. By adding together all the qualities given in both passages, we have the full picture of what an elder must be. In one list a more full and complete quality may be given than in the other, yet in either list the general qualifications are complete.

We shall now begin an investigation of each of these qualifications in an effort to ascertain just what its meaning is, not only abstractly, but in connection with its context, and something about the reason for such a qualification. For the sake of clarity we will list in this study twenty-four qualifications in all, minutely dividing into two some of the qualifications similarly listed in both Timothy and Titus. We must keep well in mind that these are the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit, and no man can change them in any form to suit his own notion. The Holy Spirit "makes elders" (overseers) and He does this by setting forth the qualifications to which each person must measure up to be an elder. The reader is admonished to preclude all prejudice as we begin this phase of the study, and justly and studiously approach each quality to determine its obvious import in the context.

#### 1. MUST BE A MAN (I Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:6).

This is not usually listed as a qualification for the eldership simply because it is taken for granted that all bishops must be men. But it is too much to take for granted anything in obedience to God. Millions have fallen into the snare of doom by this sort of reasoning. We must walk by faith and not by sight (granted) (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). If the Holy Spirit does not specify explicitly that only men are to be appointed

bishops, we are not then obligated to restrict the office to men; however, if the Holy Spirit did specify that only men may be appointed bishops, it follows that women cannot be overseers. This would necessarily bind the appointment of men only, and as such would become an essential qualification to the office.

The Greek expression in both Timothy and Titus is *Ei tis*, which has been variously translated, but very generally to refer to the same thing. *Ei* is the conditional "if," and *tis* means, "someone, something; anyone, anything." In the context of these two expressions we essentially determine that the "someone" or "anyone" must be a man because the qualities that must belong to the person seeking the office are impossible for a woman. No woman can be a husband or a father, nor can she scripturally rule the house.

As will be our practice throughout this chapter in dealing with the qualifications of the eldership, we will first give the Greek terms used and their definitions from universally recognized Lexicons, and then the English terms and their definitions in the hope of clarifying the Greek meaning. Let it be remembered that some translations may ambiguously, inadequately or erroneously render the original of certain passages, but the overwhelming majority usually give the English equivalents that show the full meaning of the original. Here *ei tis* is expressed in the English by "If any," or "If any man." The conditional IF shows that the acceptance to the office requires certain qualifications that follow. This makes these qualifications essential to the position.

It will be noted that all translations that distinguish between the male and female always define the man as the subject for the eldership. Something else here before we go to another qualification. "A man" does not mean "a boy." To appoint an immature boy to the eldership is to completely miss the meaning of "man" in the relation to the eldership. An elder **MUST** be a *man*.

## II. MUST DESIRE THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP. (I Tim. 3:1).

The desire for the office is rarely classed as a qualification, yet it would appear strange indeed for it to be mentioned in I Timothy 3:1 and at the same time have no importance whatever toward the qualifying of the man for the office of a bishop. The very fact that Paul said it is a "faithful saying," in connection with the office of a bishop, requires a notice to its importance; and if it is important it is essential, which makes it a qualification.

If we conclude that the desire for the work of a bishop is not essential, then one may be "put into the office" against his wishes, or be "forced" into it by the demand of his fellowmen. It is eminently true that no man will do a job as he should who has been "forced" into it or has had the obligations "put upon him" against his wishes. Therefore,

the bishop must be a man who sincerely desires the office. As a matter of fact, no part of Christianity can scripturally be "forced" upon anyone against his desire. All phases of Christianity apply to the "whosoever will." You have heard some elder say, regarding his work: "There was no one else to do it and they just forced it upon me." The remark may be said in the vein of modesty but it positively indicates, if said sincerely, that that man is unqualified to be a bishop.

Two Greek words are used in this sentence which are translated by the single English word *desire*. These two Greek terms do not mean exactly the same but are so closely related that the same general thought is sufficiently expressed in the English *desire*.

The first word is *oregetai* which Berry's *A New New Testament* translates: "stretches forward to." It means "to stretch one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something; to reach after or desire something." This same expression is used in Hebrews 11:16—"But now they desire a better country. . . ." All these faithful were "stretching out to touch or grasp" this country which was a heavenly land. This word declares a great ambition, a strong yearning for something. It also expresses an effort being made toward that desire or ambition. In fact, this word includes the action toward the goal as well as the desire of the heart.

The second Greek word is *epithumei* which means "to set one's heart upon; to long for, to covet a thing." This word is also used in Acts 20:33—"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel."

This desire *oregetai*—"stretching out to touch or grasp"—must begin early in life because it cannot usually be accomplished in a short time. It takes years to acquire many of the qualifications necessary to be an elder; hence, one must DESIRE the office early enough in life to prepare himself for it. All too often men come to desire the noble office of a bishop too late to qualify in all respects in those requisites that require growth and development in certain lines. Parents should begin early in the lives of their sons to plant within their hearts a desire to develop into the much needed eldership. Young men should be encouraged by the elders of today, and by preachers and all other Christians as well, to "stretch forth toward" the office of a bishop.

This desire leads to the *epithumei* (desire)—"the longing or coveting" of a good work. One should "stretch out to reach" the office of a bishop because he "longs for and covets" a good work. Having this condition of the heart and soul, the other qualities are certain to be developed through the years until the man can be appointed to discharge this good work which he has longed to do.

Any man to become an elder must have an earnest, eager, passionate desire for the holy and responsible position of an overseer before he can be qualified. His desire must not only look to the position of author-

ity but to the grave work that goes with it. This office is not just an honorary one, as the majority seem to opine, but one of tremendous work, dignity, and responsibility. It is the pious longing to do this work that causes the desire to be an elder.

### III. MUST BE BLAMELESS. (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6).

Some dispute has raged in recent times over whether this quality is the one and only essential to the eldership, or whether it stands as only one of several conditions. One of the surest ways to settle the question is to first determine what the original words used signified, and then determine what the English equivalents mean. This, then, is our first objective.

There are two different Greek terms used, one in Timothy and the other in Titus, but they have so nearly the same meaning that the same English word *blameless* in the King James version will correctly translate them both.

The word in I Timothy 3:2 is *anepilamptōn* which means "one against whom no evil charge can be sustained; one who is above an established charge of evil."

*The Greek New Testament*, by George R. Berry, says of the word in I Timothy 3:2, *anepilamptōn*—"adj., never caught doing wrong, irreproachable, I Tim. iii. 2, v. 7, vi. 14."

*The New Testament in Greek*, Westcott & Hort says of *anepilamptos*—"that cannot be censured, without reproach, I Tim. iii. 2. v. 7. vi. 14. (Commonly written *anepilaptos*.)"

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says of *anepilaptos*—"not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of; hence that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable, . . . I Tim. iii. 2; v. 7; vi. 14."

The word translated "blameless" in Titus 1:6 is *anegklatos*, which means: "That which cannot rightfully be caused to answer evil and criminal action." Of this word Greek authorities say:

*The Greek New Testament*, by George Berry—"not open to accusation, unblamable, I Cor. i. 8; Col. i. 22."

*The New Testament in Greek*, Westcott & Hort—"that cannot be accused, irreproachable, blameless, Coloss. i. 22, I Cor. i. 8. I Tim. iii. 10. Tit. i. 6, 7."

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*—"that cannot be called to account, unprovable, unaccused, blameless, I Co. i. 8; Col. i. 22; I Tim. iii. 10; Tit. 6."

It may be adduced from the definitions of these two Greek words that the term in Titus is a little stronger than the one in Timothy.



In Timothy the word appears to mean that the person has lived so that men WILL NOT accuse him of evil, while in Titus the word appears to mean that the person has so lived that men CAN NOT accuse him of evil. Whether this difference is real or not, we leave the reader to judge for himself. However, we can safely say that the words have so nearly the same meaning that the English word *blameless* or *without reproach* will correctly translate them both.

Several English words are used to translate the two Greek words used in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. The English definitions are all from *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*.

1. *Blameless*—"Without fault; innocent; guiltless; not meriting censure; . . . Syn.—Faultless, guiltless, innocent, irreproachable, spotless, unblemished." *Blame*—"1 To censure; to express disapprobation of; to find fault with; opposed to *praise* or *commend*, and applicable most properly to persons, but applied also to things. 2. To bring reproach upon; to blemish; to injure . . . Syn.—Censure, condemn, reprehend, reprove, upbraid." *Blameless* would be the direct opposite of *blame*.

2. *Reproach*—"1. Censure mingled with contempt or derision; contumelious or opprobrious language toward any person; abusive reflections; as, foul-mouthed *reproach*. 2. Shame; infamy; disgrace. 3. An object of contempt, scorn, or derision. 4. That which is the cause of shame or disgrace." *Without reproach* would mean not accused in derision and contempt; or one not the cause of shame or disgrace.

3. *Irreproachable*—"That cannot be justly reproached; free from blame; upright; innocent."

To be *blameless* or *without reproach* means nothing more than to live in such a way that no charge of guilt can be proved against one. There remains no doubt but that the Scriptures demand a clean, honorable, and influential Christian life in every man who enters the eldership.

It is believed by some that the only qualification for the eldership is to be blameless. This is the appropriate time and place to view fairly all arguments adduced to favor this proposition as well as all objections against it. The doctrine says that *blameless* is the one and only qualification and all other conditions mentioned are "points of qualification" to be blameless. In his book, *The Eldership*, H. E. Winkler tells us of this doctrine. On page 89 he says: "Many in speaking and writing of the qualification say, 'must be blameless' is one of the qualifications of an elder. When as a matter of fact that is the only qualification. Paul says the elder must be blameless and then proceeds to mention those points in which he must be blameless in order to have the required qualification of blamelessness."

I offer the following reasons why this statement is not true:

1. The punctuation in both Timothy and Titus shows that the translators understood *blameless* to be just one of a series of qualities for the bishop, all equally related to the same proposition. We realize that the punctuation is not in the Greek text, but certainly the translators used such punctuation marks as would indicate the real and full meaning of the words in their relation to other words in the text.

2. In reference to the "points" in which one must be blameless, all not mentioned would not be binding. If the elder must be unaccusable in all points of his life, why mention some twenty and leave out all the rest? But if he must be guiltless in only these "points" mentioned, may he be blamed in all the others not mentioned and still be an elder? If blameless be the only qualification, and all the things mentioned in this connection are just "points" of qualification, a bishop may be blame-worthy in any "point" not mentioned in this list and fully comply with the scriptural standard of the eldership. This we know is not true.

3. A number of the qualifications listed here would not make a man guilty of any wrong, scripturally or morally, should he not possess them. In a word some of these "points of qualification" to blamelessness do not of themselves make the man blameless or blameworthy. For instance, one would not be reproachable should he be unmarried, or without children who believe, or a novice, or not apt to teach. Yet no one could be an elder without these qualities. Would a man be guilty of some wrong just because he is a novice—a beginner? If so, all who are novices are sinners. But if one may be a novice and still be blameless (not guilty) of any wrong, being a novice is not a "point of qualification" regarding blamelessness.

4. If blameless be the only qualification, any person who is blameless can be an elder. A young man of eighteen years of age who hears, believes, and obeys the gospel and lives in harmony with the word of God is blameless. Can he be an elder? If not, why not? He has the only qualification, according to this theory, that one needs to be an elder. A good Christian woman who is living according to the standard of God is blameless and as such meets the only qualification to be an elder. Why cannot she be appointed? Winkler says, "When as a matter of fact that (blameless) is the only qualification." Then why cannot a blameless woman be an elder, since blamelessness is the only qualification that stands between anyone and the eldership?

In fairness to Brother Winkler let us read one more statement from his pen in answer to this objection. Page 23: "And the writer's contention that the only major difference between an elder and what every Christian ought to be is that the Lord specifies that **MEN** and not **WOMEN** shall be elders in His church." But on page 89 he said, "When

as a matter of fact that is the **ONLY QUALIFICATION.**" (Emp. mine—H.E.P.) As much as he might wish to deny it, one of these statements cannot be true. If blameless is "the only qualification," the specification of men and not women is no qualification; but if "the Lord specifies that **MEN and NOT WOMEN** shall be elders in His church," blamelessness is not "the only qualification." Anyone can see the discrepancy in this. Women may be as blameless as men.

5. "Points of qualification" is just another way of saying "qualifications." *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, unabridged, says of *Qualification*—"1. The act of qualifying; the state of being qualified. 2. Anything that qualifies, (a) any natural endowment or any acquirement which fits a person for a place, office, or employment, or enables him to sustain any character with success; as, the qualifications of a surgeon; (b) any requirement for the exercise of a function or right; legal power or requisite; as, the qualifications of electors; a property qualification."

Would not **EVERY POINT** itself become a qualification if it becomes essential to make the person qualified for the office? The word *Qualify* means to fit or make suitable, and anything that accomplishes this is itself a qualification. One may not be guilty of any transgression of God's law—be perfectly blameless—and still lack a qualification necessary to make him eligible for the eldership. An example: a man who has only been in the church six months or less may be living as nearly perfect as humanly possible, but he has not developed in the knowledge of the Lord to have grown out of novitiate. In this case he would still be a novice, yet be without guilt before God. But the Bible says an elder must "not be a novice." Now if this becomes essential to qualify one for the eldership, it becomes a "qualification" itself with equal importance to "blamelessness." Anything essential to make one suitable for the eldership is itself a **QUALIFICATION**, and we do not change that fact by calling it "points of qualification"—meaning that there is only **ONE** thing essential and all others are incidentals. *Blameless* is just one of these "points" and stands in equal importance to all the rest, yet not above any other.

Blamelessness in the absolute is impossible with man in any period of his history on earth since his fall. However, the word is used in a relative sense meaning that he must not be open to any charges of ungodliness and unrighteousness. He must be a man who is walking in the light of God's word so as to have the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ. (I John 1:7). There may be one point in man's life at which he would be absolutely blameless for a time, and that is when, in obedience to God, he has obtained complete remission of sins; but in time he will again commit some wrong or fail to do some good deed and thereby fall into a state of guilt again. It is only by walking in the light that

the continual efficacy of Christ's blood cleanses us from time to time. Since all Christians must be blameless before God, and it does not mean sinless perfection, so elders must be blameless to the high degree that their maturity would require.

It is neither impossible nor unreasonable to require a man to be blameless in order to qualify for the eldership because the Bible instructs all members of a body to be blameless. Read the following Scriptures where the same words are used as in the passage under consideration here.

(1) I Timothy 3:2—The bishops must be blameless.

(2) I Timothy 3:10—The deacons must be blameless.

(3) I Timothy 6:14—The preacher must be blameless.

(4) I Corinthians 1:8—The Corinthian Christians were to be blameless, and this was written to "all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord." This would embrace all Christians everywhere.

(5) Colossians 1:22—The Colossian Christians were to be blameless.

(6) I Timothy 5:7—The widows were to be blameless.

If blamelessness be the only quality for the eldership, anyone of the above may serve in the eldership because the Bible requires all of them to be blameless. But *blameless* is just one of the many qualifications for the bishop. It is equally important with any of the other qualifications listed by the Holy Spirit.

IV. MUST BE THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE. (I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6).

Various positions have been proclaimed, illustrated, and vigorously maintained over the ages as to the meaning of this statement. It would appear at first reading that there should be no real basis for dissension, but when we hear the arguments that have been made against the simple understanding of the statement, we are made to wonder just what it does mean. An industrious and prayerful effort will be made here to ascertain the meaning of the apostle when he penned these words; and we shall begin by examining the Greek words used and defining the English equivalents used in the translations. Also we shall strive to frankly and fairly consider each position held as to the meaning of this verse. Let us first turn our attention to the Greek terms used and their meaning as determined by accepted authorities.

A clear definition of the words of a sentence often helps clear up what the writer or speaker had in mind. Different meanings may be given to certain words, and consequently entirely different meanings could be given an expression such as "husband of one wife." If we learn

exactly what was the meaning of the Greek words used by the Holy Spirit when Paul wrote them, we will know exactly what English words to use in translating them, and, therefore, know exactly what Paul meant when he penned these words.

The statement of Paul in the Greek as taken from *The Englishman's Greek New Testament: The Emphatic Diaglott: A New New Testament*, by George Ricker Berry; and *The New Testament in Greek*, Westcott & Hort reads as follows:

I Timothy 3:2—"Mias gunaikos andra."

Titus 1:6—"Mias gunaikos anar."

Taking each of these words separately we find the following definitions given by authorities:

### 1. *Mias*

*Interlinear Greek-English* by George Berry—"fem. of eis, one."

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*—Refers us to *beis*: "mia, ben, gen. *benos, mias, benos*, a cardinal numeral, *one*. Used 1. univ. A. in opp. to many; and *a*. added to nouns after the manner of an objective: . . . *the one man*, of whom I have spoken, Ro. v. 15. B. substantively, with a partit. gen.,—to denote *one, whichever it may be* . . . that one is required to be singled out from a certain number." In the genitive case—"of ONE."

*Greek-English Lexicon*, Westcott & Hort—Refers us to *beis*: "mia, en, numer., one."

### 2. *Gunaikos*

*Interlinear Greek-English* by George Berry—" (1) *a woman*, Mat. ix. 20; Ro. vii. 2; (2) *a wife*, Ac. v. 1,7; Ep. v. 28."

*Greek-English Lexicon*, Westcott & Hort—"Gunaikēios, *belonging to a woman, female*. 1 pct. iii. 7. Guna, *a woman*, Matt. ix. 20. xiii. 33; *a wife*, 1 Cor. vii. 3, 10. Ephes. v. 22."

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*—"1. univ. *a woman* of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow . . . 2. *a wife*."

### 3. *Anar (Andra)*

*Interlinear Greek-English Lexicon*, George Berry—" (1) *a man*, in sex and age . . . (2) *a husband* . . . (3) *a person generally*."

*Greek-English Lexicon*, Westcott & Hort—"a man. Acts, viii. 12. xvii. 12; *a husband*, Matt. i. 16. Jon. iv. 17."

*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*—"a man . . . The meanings of this word in the N.T. differ in no respect fr. classic usage; for it is employed

1. with a reference to sex, and so to distinguish a man from a woman; either a. as *a male* . . . or b. as *a husband*: Mt. i. 16; Mk. x. 2; Jn. iv. 16 sqq.; 1 Co. vii. 2 sqq.; Gal. iv. 27; I Tim. iii. 2, 12. Tit. 1: 6, etc.; a betrothed or future husband: Mt. i. 19; Rev. xxi. 2, etc. 2. with a reference to age, and to distinguish an adult man from a boy . . . 3. univ. *any male person, a man.*"

*Mias gunaikos andra* literally means: "Of one wife a husband." This is what Greek scholars tell us is the meaning of each of these words. Now when they begin to tell us what they think the expression *mias gunaikos andra* in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 MEANS, they are out of the realm of their work as lexicographers and are getting into the realm of commentators. All of the SCHOLARS of the Greek language used by the apostles who give the definition of these words as above and then say that it does not mean "husband of one wife," are not in agreement with themselves.

Since we now see what scholars say of the Greek words used by Paul, and the meaning they had then, let us now determine what the English words mean that have been used to translate these Greek words. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* will be used as the authority.

1. *The*—"Used before nouns with a specifying and limiting force; as, THE twelve apostles."

2. *Husband*—"A man joined to a woman by marriage; the correlative of wife. (1. The male head of a household; one who directs the economy of a family.)"

3. *Of*—"A preposition . . . in a general sense, *of* expresses such relations as out of, from, away, proceeding from, forming part of, as from a cause, agent, author, source, material, means."

4. *One*—"Single in number; individual; as, one man . . . The first number of many . . . noting one of two."

5. *Wife*—"A woman who is united to a man in the lawful bonds of wedlock; the correlative of husband."

The statement of Paul here when translated into English means that the bishop must be: THE—a definite, specific—HUSBAND—a married man, joined to a woman by lawful marriage—OF—having the relation of forming a part of, or belonging to—ONE—a single in number; more than none and less than two—WIFE—a woman lawfully joined to a man by the bond of marriage. The bishop cannot be a *husband* of any kind unless he is married. If he could be a *husband* without marriage, he would be an *unmarried husband*, which is ridiculous. It would be as ridiculous as *single wives* or *married bachelors*.

### A. *The doctrine of Unmarried Elders.*

The reader may not be surprised by this time at any suggestion regarding the qualifications of bishops. There are at least four different positions principally advocated regarding the meaning of "husband of one wife."

1. *The bishop must be married.* This is taken to prescribe marriage but does not forbid polygamy.

2. *The bishop must not be a polygamist.* This is understood to prohibit more than one wife but does not forbid the unmarried state.

3. *The bishop must have been married only once.* This prohibits more than one marriage at any time and for any purpose, and it also prohibits the single state.

4. *The bishop must be the husband of one wife.* This is understood to prohibit the unmarried state, and at the same time forbid polygamy.

The best possible success will come from a candid and complete examination of the arguments that have been presented in favor of the positions listed above. If any one of these positions is the true meaning of the Holy Spirit in the two passages under examination, we want to know it; and if marriage is essential to the bishop to qualify him, we have no alternative but to submit to it if we expect to obey God.

Briefly examining the four statements above, it will be noticed immediately in number one that no accepted translation says "The bishop must be married." It would follow that the statement is not in harmony with the Scriptures to begin with. But if some acceptable translation be found that used this expression in giving the meaning of the Greek, we could partially accept it by a rule we use in other passages of the Bible. We could say of "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," that it prescribes faith and baptism, but does not forbid "praying through" at the mourner's bench. Other parts of the New Testament forbid the latter practice either by positive statement or the absence of authority. The same may be said of "The bishop must be married." That may be true in expressing a part of what the Holy Spirit said, but it does not express it all. The passage says, "one wife," or "once married"; and that is something more than "be married."

In the second statement it will also be observed that no translation states the negative: "the bishop must not be a polygamist," even though the idea is in the passage. It is freely accepted that no bishop should be a polygamist, and this passage so teaches, but it is denied that the passage means ONLY the negative. This position ignores half of what the Holy Spirit teaches and over emphasizes, to the extent of forming a doctrine contrary to the Scriptures, the other half. The word of God prohibits

any Christian being a polygamist, and surely it would be understood of elders in the mention of any marriage relation. However, this passage teaches something positive: "must be" married, and only once.

The third statement is untrue in that it makes a requirement that no translation verifies. Paul, the same writer here, and speaking by the same Spirit, said that the wife is bound to the husband as long as he lives—and this would also apply to the husband as long as his wife lives—but if the husband be dead, she is free to marry again and not be guilty of adultery. (Rom. 7:2, 3). This would be true also of elders.

The fourth statement is in harmony with all translations given above, as well as the original language. It prescribes marriage for the bishops, but it also restricts that marriage to one wife and thereby forbids polygamy. It is both positive and negative: positive in that it requires marriage, and negative in that it prohibits polygamous marriages.

### B. *The Evidence For Unmarried Elders.*

A series of nine appeals have been made to support the position of unmarried elders: (1) Evidence of scholars, (2) A restrictive requirement and not a positive one, (3) It only means blameless in the marriage relations, (4) Paul was an elder and was unmarried, (5) Christ was the Chief Bishop and was unmarried, (6) The parallel between II Corinthians 7:2 and I Timothy 3:2, (7) Paul said the unmarried state was preferred in service to God, (8) Bishops can get as much experience without a family, (9) To compel bishops to marry is arbitrary and absurd. To these arguments we now turn attention.

#### 1. *The Evidence of Scholars.*

Many scholars, both in the church and out of the church, have been brought forward as evidence that "the husband of one wife" does not mean that an elder must necessarily be married, but that it means IF he is married he must "be the husband of one wife." The material is of such quantity that all of it cannot be quoted here, but a sufficient amount is given to fairly represent this side of the scholarship of the world.

(1) *Matthew Henry Commentary*: " 'The husband of one wife'—not that ministers must be married; this is not meant; but the husband of one wife may be either not having divorced his wife or married another, or the husband of one wife, that is, at one and the same time, no bigamist . . . Not two or more according to the too common sinful practice of those times . . . from which evil custom our Lord taught a reformation."

(2) *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 21, Professor T. Croskery: "It does not necessarily compel pastors to marry. . . . It does not mean that a



pastor is to avoid a second marriage—as the Greek Fathers generally understood it . . . because the apostle sanctions such marriages. (I Cor. 7:1). A remarrying does not make a pastor more than the husband of one wife. It seems then to mean that the pastor was to be 'the husband of one wife' avoiding polygamy."

(3) George Barlow, in his work on Timothy and Titus (Taken from the *Gospel Advocate*, Sept. 25, 1952, page 623), said: "'The husband of one wife.' The feeling which prevailed among the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, of that age against a second marriage would, on the ground of expediency and conciliation in matters indifferent and not involving compromise of principle, account for Paul's prohibition here in the case of one in so prominent a sphere as a bishop or a deacon."

(4) *Questions Answered*, page 196, David Lipscomb: "I do not understand that a failure to have wife and children disqualified for the work; but as most men have wives and children, they were to be such as had guided them well."

Page 204: "We believe an unmarried or childless man, if otherwise qualified, may be a bishop or a deacon. I think where the Scripture says 'the husband of one wife' it means he must have but one wife and be true to her."

(If this scholarly man's statement here is to be offered as proof of the position of unmarried elders, would not the following statement from the same source be proof that the eldership has no peculiar authority residing in itself?)

Page 197: "The man's becoming an elder authorizes him to perform no act that he was not authorized to do before. It only makes it his business especially to look after the work now. He is to be chosen because he has shown his fitness for the office by doing the work beforehand."

If this statement is scripturally correct, the whole list of qualifications for the eldership amount to nothing, and really the office of a bishop does not exist at all, for all are authorized to do the work before becoming an elder. Very few of those who rely so heavily upon Brother Lipscomb for proof of unmarried elders will accept the conclusion of his statement here. This author makes no pretension to elevate himself to the equal of Brother Lipscomb as a scholar, nor does he design here to demote Lipscomb as such. Brother Lipscomb would be the first to say, "If I follow not Christ, do not follow me."

(5) *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. 4, pp, 111, 113—Newport J. D. White (Taken from the *Gospel Advocate*, Sept. 25, 1952, page 623)—"'*Mias gunaikos andra*,' of course does not mean that the *episcopus* must be, or have been, married. What is here forbidden is

digmy under any circumstances. This view is supported by the general drift of the qualities required here in a bishop; self-control or temperance, in the use of food and drink, possessions, gifts, tempers . . . It would be absurd to suppose that a man otherwise suited for the office of an episcopus would be disqualified because of childlessness. If the episcopus be a married man, he must not be a digmist, if he have children, they must be *'en bypotage.'* ”

In the *Gospel Guardian* of January 1, 1953, page 3—Ralph Edmunson referred to this article in the *Gospel Advocate* of September 25, 1952 by Willis Jernigan who had quoted this scholar, and said of him: “I doubt very seriously if Newport J. D. White, who was one of the scholars quoted, had a correct understanding of the office of the bishop, or of a Christian’s correct attitude toward the scriptures. He speaks at length on Paul’s contradicting himself on the question of the resurrection, as though the Holy Spirit were not guiding him. With his attitude, and the fact that he was an unbeliever, we should be slow to accept his conclusions as the standard.”

(6) *Scheme of Redemption*, pages 328, 329, Robert Milligan said: “‘The husband of one wife.’ These words, considered abstractly, would seem to imply that either celibacy or polygamy disqualifies a man for the office of a Bishop. But there are some reasons which seem to imply that the latter only is intended. And,

“1. Celibacy is not, in itself, an evil. In no part of the Bible is it so regarded, and at least two of the most eminent members of the primitive Church were unmarried men. Hence it is not probable that Paul would condemn in all others what he considered right in his own case. It is unreasonable to suppose that the chief of all the Apostles would lay down as a necessary qualification for inferior officers what is proved, by his own example, to be unnecessary for the superior, and which would, in fact, have rendered both himself and Barnabas ineligible to the Eldership or the Diaconate of any Christian congregation.

“2. But polygamy is an evil. It is a violation of the implied will and purpose of God in man’s creation. ‘In the beginning He made them *a male and a female.*’ Its tendency is also full of evil. It destroys or greatly weakens conjugal affection. It excites envy and jealousy where love and harmony should always reign. And hence its history is a melancholy illustration of the weakness and the follies of fallen human nature.

“It is, therefore, probable that monogamy is here opposed only to polygamy, and that to free the Church, as far as possible, from this then prevalent evil was the benevolent object of the Apostle. On this subject Thomas Scott makes the following judicious remarks: ‘Christ and his Apostles,’ says he, ‘expressly condemned polygamy, as well as divorces,

except for adultery. Yet there was no direct command for a man who had previously taken more wives than one to put the others away when he embraced the Gospel; such a requisition might, in some instances, have produced very bad consequences in domestic life, and increased the opposition of the civil powers to the preaching of Christianity. But the rule that no man, however qualified in other respects, should be admitted into the pastoral office who had more than one wife, or who had put away one and taken another, tended to show the unlawfulness of polygamy and divorces on frivolous pretenses, and their inconsistency with the Christian dispensation, and concurred, with other things, to bring them into total disuse in the Christian Church, yet without violence and confusion.' "

(7) *Church Polity*, page 66, W. L. Hayden said regarding deacons: "Reference is given to married persons having but one wife, but not as excluding those who are unmarried and otherwise qualified, when circumstances demand their service. The nature of the business over which the deacons are placed is to 'serve tables.' "

But on page 59, Hayden took another stand regarding elders: "A bishop must be the husband of one wife. He must be a married man, and his marriage relations must conform to the law of God respecting marriage and divorce." (At which time was he right?)

(8) J. C. McQuiddy, *Gospel Advocate*, October 14, 1920, page 999: "The Bible nowhere says that an elder must be a married man. It does say that he must be 'the husband of one wife,' which means that, if married he must not be the husband of two wives or of three wives, and that he must not be divorced from a number of wives." (Taken from *The Eldership*, page 101, by H. E. Winkler.)

In answer to a question sent from David R. Wells, Mount Olivet, Ky., in the *Gospel Advocate*, January 27, 1921, page 97, J. C. McQuiddy commented on the marriage relation of elders. The question was: "Is it possible for a man to be the husband of ONE wife and not be married?" The answer of Brother McQuiddy was: "Certainly he who is the husband of one wife is a married man, and so is he a married man who is the husband of two wives or of three wives, as the case may be." (Taken from *The Eldership*, page 104, by H. E. Winkler.)

Brother McQuiddy did not face this question squarely. The question was: "Is it POSSIBLE for a man to be the husband of ONE wife and NOT be married?" The question was not: "Is the husband of one wife a married man?" Brother McQuiddy did not really answer this question, and it is as difficult today as then for the advocates of unmarried bishops to give a direct answer to the question.

Again, J. C. McQuiddy, *Gospel Advocate*, July 6, 1922, page 634: "Surely God does not stop his faithful servants from serving him because

a wife or children apostatize and fall away . . . God did not take Eli and Samuel out of the priesthood because they had bad children. Should we demand that a faithful elder resign a duty because his wife or children die? Such action would not be supported by the Bible, common sense, or by custom." (Taken from *The Eldership*, page 105, by H. E. Winkler.)

Although the conclusion may not be far from right, the process of reasoning here is not good. Eli and Samuel are not parallels to the eldership because the qualifications for the priesthood and the eldership are not the same. This is the same type of reasoning adduced by denominations to prove that baptism is not essential to salvation. They argue that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not baptized, yet they were saved; therefore, we do not have to be baptized today to be saved. The former were not required to be baptized to be saved, while people today are. The priesthood did not depend upon the qualifications listed in Timothy and Titus to be appointed to the office; they were such primarily by fleshy lineage.

Some of these accepted scholars, as commentaries, are not reliable as proof of this question because they did not have the correct idea of the office of a bishop to begin with, but instead understood it as an ecclesiastical office. They would not be offered as proof on other scriptural matters. Others of these scholars are men of great reputation and ability, and usually are right on difficult Bible questions, but because they regarded the question as restrictive only and not as a positive requirement they assumed some things that should have been proven.

But if all these scholars are accepted as proof of the subject, what shall we do with the scholars, equally great in ability and reputation, who can be quoted on the other side of this question? Let us view a few quotations from them at this time.

(1) Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. VI, page 595: "He must be *the husband of one wife*. He should be a *married* man, but he should be no *polygamist*; and have only *one wife*, i.e. *one at a time*. It does *not mean* that, if he has been married, and his wife die, he should never marry another . . . It does not appear to have been any part of the apostle's design to prohibit *second* marriages, of which some have made such a serious business."

(2) Alexander Campbell, *Campbell and Purcell Debate*, page 255: "It is essential, in my opinion, that the bishop be a married man. Indeed, the Holy Spirit by Paul has decreed that he should be the husband of one wife. As my opponent is a bachelor, I ought, perhaps to ask his pardon. Did he, indeed, possess all the other qualifications, I should withhold my vote to his becoming a bishop so long as he continued a '*virgin*.'"

Bishop Purcell, a Catholic priest, responded to Campbell with the same argument that many are now offering for unmarried elders, page 262: "'It is essential for a bishop to be a married man.' And the gentleman's vote would be withheld from me, because I am a bachelor. Why, sir, St. Paul does not mean that a bishop *should be* a man of one wife, but that *he should have had but one*—otherwise, as he was himself unmarried, he would have acted against his own rules."

(3) E. G. Sewell, *Questions Answered*, page 204: "The third chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy plainly says of both elders and deacons that they must be husbands of one wife. There are differences of opinion as to whether the apostle meant they must really be married or simply meant to teach that they must not have more than one wife. . . . But we cannot explain away the fact regarding both elders and deacons that they must be the husbands of one wife. Why not conclude, then, that the passage was intended to accomplish both ends at the same time—that they should each have a wife, but only one? I am sure it is safe to so understand and to so apply the passage to both elders and deacons."

(4) J. W. McGarvey, in his book, *The Eldership*, pages 56, 57: "*Domestic Relations*. To Timothy and Titus both, the apostle prescribes that the overseer shall be the husband of one wife. There has been a vast amount of disputation as to whether this requires him to be a married man. It is alleged, in opposition to this idea, that when churches were planted among a people practicing polygamy, men would frequently be immersed who had a plurality of wives, and that the apostle intends only to prohibit such from being made overseers. Undoubtedly the use of the numeral one in the text has this force, and it would be unlawful to place a polygamist or bigamist in the office. But while the expression has this force, we think that candor requires the admission that it also has the effect of requiring a man to be a married man. That he should be the husband of one wife, forbids having less than one as clearly as it forbids having more than one. If it be said that a man owns but one farm, it is just as clearly implied that he owns one as that he owns no more than one. Moreover, the context confirms the conclusion; for the apostle proceeds in both epistles to state how the overseer must govern his household, and especially his children; which statements imply that he is to be a man of family.

"It has been urged as an objection to this conclusion, that it would disqualify Paul himself, and Barnabas and Timothy for the office of Elder although they held offices or positions of much greater responsibility. But this objection can have no force, unless it be made to appear that these brethren were qualified for the Elder's office, or that the qualifications of an Apostle or an Evangelist include those of an elder. Neither of the two, however, can be made to appear, and therefore the

objection has no force whatever. Indeed, it seems most fitting that men whose chief work led them from city to city and nation to nation, through all kinds of danger and hardship, should be freed from the care of a family, and equally fitting that the shepherd, whose work was always at home and in the midst of the families of his flock, should be a man of family. A married man certainly possesses advantages for such 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 a man may have had. If my wife is dead, I am not now her husband."

It is generally conceded that J. W. McGarvey is as great as any scholar of recent times in the church of our Lord. He is accepted on par with David Lipscomb in the broad opinion of most of those in the church. His statement on this subject is felt by all those who quote Brother Lipscomb as proof of unmarried elders, and some will argue that the great difference between McGarvey and Lipscomb is that Lipscomb gave a reason for his position and McGarvey did not. Look again at these quotations and see if McGarvey did not give as much reason for his position as Lipscomb did. But even if the objection be true, it would not take away the logic of McGarvey. These quotations are given to show that there are great men of equal ability and reputation on both sides of the question, and that it cannot be solved by the writings of uninspired men, however worthy they might be. If we settle the question at all, we must prove it by the revelation of inspired men who were moved by the Spirit of God.

## *2. A Restrictive requirement rather than a Positive one.*

One of the most prominent points stressed in proof of an unmarried eldership is that "husband of one wife" is a restriction against more than one wife rather than compelling the elder to be married. IF the bishop is married he must have only ONE wife.

Brother Winkler says on page 18 of his book: "I think my position and discussion of this teaching opens up a field of study that is sorely neglected by my opponents, who by the misuse of 'the husband of one wife,' making it a positive requirement for the elders to be married, fail to see, and teach that Paul and the Holy Spirit were trying to safeguard and protect the church then and through all coming generations against polygamy and all kinds of modern adultery of multiple divorces and remarriages which have become so common that the churches, nearly everywhere, are infested with the abomination."

We concur graciously with the statement that Paul and the Holy Spirit were trying to safeguard the church against all kinds of adultery

and multiple marriages, although all said on the subject is not found in the clause: "husband of one wife." Adultery is restricted by requiring the man who cannot contain himself to have a wife—"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication (or adultery), let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (I Cor. 7:2). Multiple marriages is restricted in the phrase: "One wife." But to the conclusion that the statement: "husband of one wife," is entirely restrictive and not in any way positive, we vehemently dissent. Just how would one read Paul's statement here and conclude, without some help beyond the context and the necessary requirements, that he did not mean the bishop must be the husband of one wife, but that **IF HE IS MARRIED . . .** he must be the husband of one wife?

But if it only restricts with regard to the marriage relation, how are we to limit it with regard to the other qualities? Why not apply the same reasoning to all other qualifications? Why would it be worse for the church to fall into the hands of a polygamist than a drunkard, a greedy person or such like? The idea of restriction without also a positive requirement in this passage is contrary to hermeneutics of the Scriptures, and demands us to do one of two things: (1) either treat all other characteristics in this general context in the same way, or (2) reject the restrictive clause only idea in regard to the marriage of elders.

What is the basis of the assertion that "husband of one wife" is only prohibitive and not positive? Before a fruitful result can be obtained with respect to this subject, we must honestly review the reasons given for the position.

(1) *The statement strikes at Polygamy rather than requiring marriage.* It is argued that I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 forbids polygamy but not celibacy, hence, unmarried men may be elders. It has been said that the number ONE is the important word: that it limits the number of wives rather than making marriage necessary. The reason for this conclusion is that at the time this was written some had been baptized into the church with several wives, and to keep these men out of the eldership, Paul said the man must not have more than one wife if he is married at all.

If the intention of Paul had been just to prevent polygamy in the eldership, why did he not say: "If any man . . . not guilty of polygamy . . ."? This would have stripped the statement of all alleged misunderstanding, if, indeed, he intended only prohibition of a plurality of wives. That would have adequately and concisely expressed exactly what the advocates of unmarried elders claim for this expression. Some excuse might be claimed for the idea if just one English translation gave this expression.

But we ask in reply, could ANY Christian man have more than one wife and remain in the fellowship of the church? If not, polygamy only was of no special consideration in I Timothy 3:2. Polygamy is condemned in all in many passages of the New Testament. Any Christian man may remain single if he pleases, but if he marries he must not be a polygamist, but I Timothy 3:2 is not the passage to prove that. If the Scriptures forbid polygamists to have fellowship with the church, what would be the point of Paul telling Timothy not to appoint them to the eldership? The elders are taken from the membership of the church, and if church membership would not tolerate polygamists, how could this passage under consideration be only a condemnation of polygamy? It is all too foreign to the sense of the passage to conclude that this is only restrictive and not positive at all.

If the numeral ONE is the important word here, there is no escaping the fact that the idea of NONE is not taught. ONE means more than none and less than two. A bachelor has less than one wife and a polygamist has more than one wife, consequently, if ONE is the pivot word of the passage it cannot be just restrictive and not positive. *One* here has the same meaning as the *one* in Ephesians 4:5—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism . . ." That does not mean "NO Lord, NO faith, NO baptism." Neither does "one wife" mean "no wife."

(2) *The statement is not positive.* It is argued that to teach that elders must be married is to teach more than Paul said in this passage.

Again, Winkler said on page 98 of his book: "If 'husband of one wife' is a positive requirement then there is no escape from the teaching that 'having children that believe' is a positive requirement for the elder to have children. But there are good men and women, blameless before God, who are not capable of having children. For about one woman in twenty and one man in fifty are barren."

The appeal to human reason as a means of discounting some requirement of the Holy Spirit is the old stock and trade practice of denominationalists since their origin. No leverage is given to this argument by saying that if it means a positive requirement, it follows that the elder must have believing children, because that too is a qualification, as we shall see later.

The sequence of the argument is formulated in this manner:

1. *Husband of one wife*—forbids polygamy but not celibacy.
2. *Must be married*—forbids celibacy but not polygamy.

Of course the two statements are not the same. The first is in the Bible while the second is not. Actually the first statement forbids both polygamy and celibacy, while the second requires only marriage without the number of wives being detailed. One could not be a husband and



not be married, nor could he have one wife and be a polygamist.

Winkler said again, page 107: "Not long since I gave a series of lessons on the eldership, where I was preaching, and during one of the series I was challenged from the audience regarding my position on Paul's statement, 'the husband of one wife.' After some discussion, by some four or five of the auditors I turned to my challenger and asked this question: 'Had you been writing the epistle to Timothy and Titus and meant for them to understand that the elder *must* be married, how would you have worded the writing?'" Then he relates how he confounded the auditor by repeating the question the third time before receiving the answer: "I don't know!"

Because this auditor could not give the answer it does not follow that the answer cannot be given. If Paul had intended the elder to be married without regard to the number of times, he would have said, "The bishop must be married." That would be easily enough understood. But if Paul had intended the elder to be married, but at the same time no polygamist, he would have said: "The bishop must be . . . the husband of one wife." But if Paul had intended to only forbid more than one marriage, but not positively require marriage to one wife, he would have said: "The bishop must be . . . no polygamist." Now which statement did he use? He used the statement that commands marriage and forbids polygamy, and that is exactly what he meant.

(3) *A positive requirement is absurd.* Scriptural reasoning is now abandoned and the appeal is made from prejudice and human judgment. It is said that if we understand Paul to teach that the elder must not be guilty of having more than one wife, but that he does not necessarily have to have a wife, we do not encounter the absurdities that come with the opposite position. An appropriate case is supposed where a man is qualified (?) without marriage and children and the question is then asked: "Is this qualified man to be deprived of the work of an elder just because he does not have a family?" That is to beg the question. Could we not say the same of the quality of being "apt to teach"? Suppose a case where a man is reasonably qualified in all points except that he is not "apt to teach." Shall we deprive him of the position of elder because of that? One argument is as scriptural as the other.

Then it is said that if an elder's wife dies while he is in office, he is disqualified—if this is a positive requirement—because he is not now the "husband of one wife." There is a wide difference between a bachelor and a widower. Surely we know the difference between the development of experience and the demonstration to others of that ability of one who has been a husband and a father of believing children, and the one who has neither been a husband nor a father. There are qualifying experiences that come to a husband and father that a bachelor

can never obtain, and these experiences are necessary to the duties of the eldership. The circumstances of developing a quality may, in some cases, be absolutely essential to that quality, while in other cases they are incidental. Patience may be developed by extreme hardship or prolonged illness of some member of the family, but the illness need not continue in order to maintain the quality of patience. So in the case of "husband of one wife" and "having faithful children." There is no scriptural way one can get the necessary experience of ruling a family well, and proving to the membership of the church his ability in rearing children in the way of the Lord to become Christians, except by being a husband and a father. But once that experience is obtained and demonstrated to others, he loses none of it in the death of his wife or children. On the other hand, a bachelor has no way of obtaining all the necessary experiences and showing proof to others of his ability in this respect. That mainly is the difference in a bachelor and a widower in this relation.

Some others claim a point from the widows mentioned as objects of the benevolence of the church by Paul in I Timothy 5:9. It is pointed out that since unmarried women may be taken into the church to be cared for just as the widows, then unmarried men may be taken into the eldership the same as the married—that if I Timothy 5:9 may include unmarried women, I Timothy 3:2 may include unmarried men.

The passage referred to in I Timothy 5:9 is talking about **WIDOWS** exclusively, not unmarried women. The passage would certainly **EXCLUDE** any woman from the relief rolls of the church who has not been "the wife of one husband," or else the passage is completely meaningless. That is exactly what it says. Paul was talking about **WIDOWS**, and no other class of women is included in this passage. Any woman who comes into the relief of the church **UNDER THIS PASSAGE** must be a **WIDOW** (must have been married) who has been "the wife of one husband." All those who deserve the relief offered by the church, who are not widows, would come by the authority of some other passage; not this one. So far as this passage is concerned, no person is to be cared for by the church but **WIDOWS** who have been "the wife of one husband."

Now since this passage is compared to I Timothy 3:2 in an effort to prove that bachelors can come into the eldership because some can be relieved by the church who are unmarried, the point falls to the ground because I Timothy 5:9 does not include anyone but **WIDOWS** who have been the "wife of one husband." By the same token I Timothy 3:2 includes only those who are the "husband of one wife," and excludes all others. But if there is some other passage that says unmarried men can be appointed to the eldership, like the passages that include unmarried women in the relief of poverty, the point is made. Try it!

Before we leave this thought the reader is requested to reflect for a moment on the idea that the positive requirement is *absurd*. From a scriptural point of view, absurdity results only from: (1) a position of contradiction, (2) a reduction to non-sense, or (3) a deletion of some essential. Human ideals and prejudices favoring a pet position frequently attribute absurdities to all oppositions. We are not interested in irrelevancies to this issue, or the stigma of "absurd" to any presentation of facts. We will inquire if the demand of Paul for the bishop to be the "husband of one wife" is an absurdity from the scriptural point of view. Does it involve a position of contradiction of any other passage? Until now not one single one has been successfully adduced. Can the position of married elders be reduced to non-sense? There is not a trace of it anywhere, notwithstanding the claims of the opposition. Lastly, does the position delete a single essential required of the Holy Spirit? We confidently claim that even the opposition would not charge this. Consequently, the position that elders must be the "husband of one wife" as a positive requirement as well as a restrictive one, is not absurd.

### 3. *Husband of one wife is only a quality of blameless.*

The contention here is that Paul is stressing a point of the only qualification of an elder — BLAMELESS. When he said "husband of one wife," he meant that in the marriage relationship the elder must be without reproach. If he is married he must be temperate and have only one wife, and if he is single he must be free from the guilt of adultery. In full, he must be free from blame regarding the opposite sex.

In *The Eldership*, page 91, Winkler says: "The term 'must' does not refer to 'the husband of one wife,' but to 'blameless,' 'must be blameless.' And the teaching is evidently this: regarding the institution of marriage and women the elder must be blameless. Therefore the single man who has committed no adultery, and also the married man with only one wife who has kept himself free from other women are both blameless. In either case the elder would be blameless as relating to the other sex and would meet Paul's requirement."

The above, we sincerely believe, well represents this argument made in the defense of unmarried elders. First, if this be the proper interpretation of the passage, Paul certainly did not say what he meant or mean what he said, for the statement he used was with regard to marriage and not the single state. He should have said: "The bishop must be blameless with regard to the opposite sex." That would have been exactly what this argument says he meant. But since Paul did not say that, we must rightly conclude that he did not mean it.

Some problems arise with this application of Paul's language. How would we go about proving that a single person is "blameless" with

regard to the opposite sex? Shall we just ask him if he has ever committed fornication? We can't dismiss this by saying that it is not necessary to know all things in this connection, because this was one of the qualities Paul told Timothy and Titus to look for in the man. If he must be without reproach with regard to the opposite sex, there must be some way by which it is declared to those who appoint the elders. If he had ever committed fornication could he afterward be blameless? All will admit that after one is forgiven of sin he is blameless, else no person at any time, excepting the Lord, could be blameless as opposed to guilty. Besides Jesus also taught that the thought in the heart to lust after a woman is the sin of adultery. How would it be determined that a single man was blameless in this respect? It would be literally impossible to determine whether a single man has always been blameless with respect to the opposite sex. But if this be admitted, and then say that after he repented of the sin God forgave him and he is now blameless, we reply, so is the man who has been married twice and has repented and obtained forgiveness of God. Can the man who has been married twice and then obtained forgiveness from God by leaving these wives and repenting of his sins be blameless to the point of becoming an elder? If so, just what significance does "husband of one wife" have? It could not mean that the man has never committed adultery, either in heart or in overt act, for he may have done so and obtained forgiveness and would be blameless.

Paul is not talking about blamelessness with regard to the opposite sex; he is talking about the essential quality of the proper marriage relation of men for the eldership. He is not qualifying blamelessness with the marriage relation, for the Bible teaches that a man or woman may be blameless (not guilty of unrighteousness) either in the married or single state as they choose, but he is setting the Lord's requirement for the marriage relation of a bishop. The bishop **MUST** be the "husband of one wife"—he must be married but no polygamist.

Due to the fact that blamelessness as the only qualification for a bishop will come up in every one of the qualifications to follow, let us stop and draw a parallel to the language of Paul and see by comparison if **BLAMELESS** is the **ONLY** qualification.

I Timothy 3:2—"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?)"

"This is a true saying, If a man desire to be fully dressed, he desireth a good thing. A man then must have a suit, shirt, shoes, socks, tie, hat, and underclothes; (For if a man does not have these things, how can he be fully dressed?)"

This parallel does not claim an exact resemblance in every point; I am only trying to show that BLAMELESSNESS is an equal qualification for a bishop with the other points listed. For a man to be fully dressed he can not lack any one of the things listed to make him fully dressed. One piece of clothing is not of more importance than any of the others, but all are equally related to the object: to be fully clothed. So all the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3 are equally related to the object: to qualify for a bishop. Blamelessness is essential, but so is "husband of one wife."

Even if it be admitted that "husband of one wife" is qualifying the term BLAMELESS, no one could be blameless unless he complied with the requirement to be the "husband of one wife." This expression requires something as well as forbids something.

4. *Paul was an elder and he was unmarried.*

This is a very precious stone in the foundation of "Bachelor Bishops." One thing in common with nearly all advocates of unmarried elders is that they all use Paul as their example, and if Paul could be an elder, he certainly did not mean that the elders had to be married in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6.

It is illogical to proceed to any conclusion until first the premises are either universally accepted or well proved. These advocates assume that Paul was an elder. But that is the very premise that needs proof before the proposition of unmarried elders is proved. In fact, that is the one and only thing to be proved, for when it is proved, no one can logically or scripturally deny that there was at least one unmarried elder in the early church. For the moment we focus our attention on the reasons offered for Paul being an elder.

*The Eldership* by Winkler, pages 97, 98: "6. As is discussed under another heading, it is hard for me to get away from the idea that Paul was an elder. And if I am correct in the reasoning that he was, then as he was not 'the husband of one wife' shows the positive view of the clause to be erroneous."

Can we logically and scripturally proceed to draw a conclusion from an opinion? Had gospel preachers practiced this method of reasoning through the years of battle with denominational errors that have crowded in upon the church, we would have been buried long ago beneath the rubbish of discarded tradition and superstition. Let us approach this

matter by carefully and scripturally establishing every premise from which we hope to draw the final conclusion. Paul wrote nearly half of the New Testament and told us much about himself, both before and after he became a Christian, yet one thing is conspicuously absent: The idea that he was ever an elder of any congregation at any time. Nor did any other inspired writer ever hint that Paul was an elder of the church. It is a difficult task—indeed, an impossible one—to prove Paul an elder when the Bible is so silent on the matter. The champions of unmarried elders begin a series of deductions to prove that Paul was an elder, and to these we now give attention.

(1) *Paul did the work of an elder*—Since Paul did all that Peter did in the church, and Peter did the work of an elder, Paul must have been an elder. Elders were to exercise oversight and tend the flock. (I Peter 5:1, 2). Paul fed the flock in Corinth. (I Cor. 3:2). Elders are to be examples. (I Peter 5:2). Paul was an example. (I Cor. 11:1). Since Paul did the work of an elder, he must have been an elder.

I would be the last to deny that in many places Paul did the work that elders are required to do, but he did much more. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, as he told us again and again, and as such he exercised an oversight, fed the flock, and was an example. Paul's claim to apostleship in no way implies that he was an elder, which was and is an inferior work to that of an apostle. Most of Paul's work was done in traveling from place to place, while an elder's work and authority are entirely local in nature and limits. Paul could not have scripturally exercised his authority as an elder because it extended over several congregations, and that is contrary to Bible principles. Peter did the work of an elder in the church in Jerusalem in addition to the work of an apostle in other places. Any work suggested that Paul did as an elder, I can successfully prove that he did it as an apostle and not as an elder; and we could begin by saying that Paul said that he was an apostle and he did not say he was an elder.

(2) *Paul was not behind Peter in anything, and Peter was an elder*—This argument states that anything that would exclude Paul from the eldership would necessarily exclude Peter, since Peter, James, and John were elders, and Paul was not a whit behind them. (2 Cor. 11:5).

*The Eldership*, page 187, Winkler says: "It seems absurd to me to think that Paul, a chosen vessel unto the Lord, who was 'not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles' (Peter, James, and John) and who 'labored more abundantly than they all' (I Corinthians 15:13), and had the care of all the churches upon him, was not qualified to be an elder in the Church of the Lord simply because he did not have a wife and children, but preachers and others hoot at the idea that Paul 'an old bachelor' was qualified to be an elder." (No doubt a typographical

error—should be I Corinthians 15:10—H.E.P.)

This argument ignores one prominent thing: Paul's statement in I Corinthians 15 had no reference whatsoever to the eldership. The entire burden of the statement was to the effect that his APOSTLESHIP was as genuine and authentic as that of any of the other apostles despite the fact that he was not numbered among them at first, and had persecuted the church of the Lord. The point that Paul was not a "whit behind the chiefest apostles" does not refer to the eldership because the eldership is an office of inferior position to the apostleship. All elders are behind the apostles. And that Paul "labored more abundantly than they all" has no reference whatsoever to the office of an elder, but rather to his office of an apostle. The comparison is of apostles to apostles and not apostles to elders. The fact that the care of all the churches was upon Paul certainly proves that the eldership is not the point (2 Cor. 11-28). Was Paul doing the work of an elder in traveling all over the country establishing churches and caring for them?

When Paul said that he was behind the apostles in nothing (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11), his subject was not the eldership but his power and authority as an apostle. The very context of these passages shows that Paul had no reference whatsoever to the eldership, nor to his right to be an elder even though unmarried. It is one of the most grievous blunders in exposition, which we harshly condemn in denominational reasoning, to take a statement from its context and connect it to a proposition entirely different, in the hope of substantiating a position that cannot be proved otherwise. That is precisely what is done here. In none of the passages used here is Paul speaking of either the eldership or the marriage relation.

But the argument continues generally in this way: Paul said "in NOTHING am I BEHIND the very chiefest apostles," and this would certainly include the right to be an elder. Since Peter and John were elders, and Paul was behind them in nothing, Paul must have been an elder.

If we find ANYTHING in which Paul was behind Peter, we know that either this passage is not true, or that the "nothing" is limited by the context to refer to the power and authority of an apostle and nothing more. The Bible often uses an absolute term which, when taken in its context, is limited to be in harmony with the entire revelation of God. To illustrate: "Children, obey your parents in all things" (Col. 3:20). "In all things" is absolute and might mean anything whatsoever. "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This limits the obedience to men to be in harmony with obedience to God. Now if a father ordered his child to steal, should the child obey the parent? Universally the answer would

be, NO. But why? The answer is in the context of the statement. The husband and father must be obedient to Christ and this would lead that father to command the right things of the children; therefore the children should obey the parents in all things. In the same sense Paul's statement that "in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles" is restricted by the context to refer to the right and authority of the apostleship; nothing more.

There are at least four things in which Paul rates second to Peter:

(1) Peter preached the first gospel sermon, Paul did not. (Acts 2).

(2) Peter preached first to the Gentiles, Paul did not. (Acts 10; 15:7).

(3) Peter was married, Paul was not. (Matt. 8:14; I Cor. 9:5).

(4) Peter was the first to enter the tomb of Christ, Paul was not. (John 20:1-6).

I submit that these things have no bearing on the qualifications of the eldership except to show that the argument which says that the bishop may be unmarried because Paul was unmarried, and was supposedly an elder, and was behind the other apostles in NOTHING, is without foundation. By showing SOMETHING in which Paul was BEHIND some other apostle, even the chiefest apostles, we show that NOTHING in II Corinthians 11:5; 12:11 is not absolute, but is determined by the context to mean NOTHING relating to the power and authority of an APOSTLE. If I should say: "In nothing am I a whit behind the chiefest Christians," it would not follow that should some Christian be a noted physician that I too must be a physician. I would not be speaking of any relation but that of Christian responsibilities and privileges. Paul said he was behind the other apostles in NOTHING relating to the apostleship, not the eldership.

Some say that to admit that Peter was an elder and deny that Paul was the same is the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Primacy of Peter. Brother Cecil B. Douthitt, *Gospel Guardian* of June 19, 1952, page 9, said: "To admit that Peter was an elder with the right to exercise the oversight and do the rest of the work of an elder, and then to deny that Paul had that right, is to admit the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Primacy of Peter . . . I am not ready to do that."

To hold the position that Paul was not an elder does not deny him any right to exercise the oversight AS AN APOSTLE. Be it remembered that an apostle exercised authority much greater in scope and degree than an elder; and Paul, while doing the work of an apostle, might be doing some of the things an elder does. It is not denying Paul any right as an apostle, nor does it say that Peter was ahead of Paul in authority as an apostle; it just simply says that Peter was something in addition to being an apostle that Paul was not—an elder. The passage



in II Corinthians affirms that no apostle was above another apostle in anything pertaining to authority and power. This is also stated in Matthew 20:25, 26.

But if this be the "Roman Catholic doctrine of the Primacy of Peter," is it any worse than the Roman Catholic doctrine of "Celibacy of the Bishops"? Catholic authorities use this same argument to prove that bishops should not marry. Paul is their proof. They go even further and say that Paul was not only a bishop and unmarried, but that he taught that it would be better not to marry so that the bishop could serve the Lord better. (I Cor. 7:32-34). If this argument of unmarried elders is valid because of Paul's statement in II Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11, it seems to me that it should be carried all the way and forbid elders to marry because of Paul's statement in I Corinthians 7:32-34.

Cardinal Gibbons said in *Faith of Our Fathers*, page 405: "It is also objected that the apostle seems to require that a bishop must be a married man, for the reason already given, that St. Paul himself was never married. The sense of the text, as all tradition testifies, is that no candidate should be elected to the office of Bishop who has been married more than once. It was not possible in those days always to select single men for the Episcopal office. Hence the church was often compelled to choose married persons, but always with this restriction, that they had never contracted nuptials a second time. They were obliged, moreover, to have separated from their wives."

Bishop Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P., *The Question Box*, pages 317, 318: "Does not St. Paul teach that bishops and deacons must be married men (I Tim. iii.2; 12; Titus i.6)?"

"The words of St. Paul do not imply that all bishops and deacons *must* be married men—he himself was not—but that they were not to be ordained if twice married. Bigamy—i.e., more than one marriage—is still an impediment to Holy Orders."

Now who is arguing for Catholic doctrine? Catholics say that the idea that the passage is only restrictive against more than one marriage, and does not require marriage necessarily, is based upon "tradition," and Paul is their example of an unmarried elder. We wonder if the one who holds this view is not running into the arms of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the "Celibacy of the Bishops" while he is fleeing from the Roman Catholic doctrine of "the Primacy of Peter"? Is one worse than the other? The Bible truth is not in agreement with either of these Roman Catholic doctrines. To deny that Paul was an elder is not to deny a single element of his authority and power as an apostle. To undertake to prove by the Scriptures that elders may be bachelors because Paul was unmarried is an impossible task. The main premise that Paul was an elder can not be established, and until it is established, the whole argument completely fails.

(3) *Paul's spiritual gift to Timothy*—This point of the argument is based upon two passages from the pen of Paul: I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6. The position is well stated by H. E. Winkler in his book, therefore, I shall give it in his words.

*The Eldership*, pages 187, 188: "The main reason I believe he was an elder is by deduction from what he said to Timothy about the gift he had: 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery' (I Tim. 4:14). 'For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands' (II Timothy 1:6). My contention being, that Paul was an elder (presbyter) or that Timothy had more than one gift imparted to him by the imposition of hands . . .

"If that be true Timothy is the only one of whom we read in the New Testament who had hands laid on him at two separate times."

Page 189: "I am forced by the above reasoning to conclude that Paul being an apostle had power to impart a gift to Timothy and that he was also an elder and that thus the act of bestowing a gift upon Timothy by an elder or presbyter it is attributed to the presbytery . . .

"And Paul mentions this gift, NOT GIFTS, in each of his letters to the young evangelist. Should Timothy have had two gifts do you think Paul, in speaking of such important a matter, would have mentioned only one of them in his first epistle and wait to mention the other one in the second epistle not knowing he would ever write the second one?"

Page 190: "However, we know it was from the presbytery; but who constituted that particular presbytery or eldership? That presbytery obviously had apostles, or at least, one apostle in the number. But there is no case on record which required a plurality of men, imposing their hands, to impart a single gift. So it is reasonable to conclude that some of the apostles were in the eldership of some congregation and imparted this gift to Timothy by himself alone which is attributed to the presbytery. And as there is not a case on record which clearly shows that any one person received two gifts from different apostles at different times; and that Timothy had two separate gifts, or that one MAY have two different gifts, he (Paul) is the apostle and presbyter who imparted this one gift to Timothy."

Page 191: "If Timothy had only one gift, it was bestowed upon him by the apostle Paul and by an elder (he being the elder) and therefore the task of proving something rests upon the shoulders of those who deny that Paul was an elder."

We believe this ably and clearly sets forth the main points of this argument as they are generally presented. There are several assumptions made here from which to draw the conclusion that Paul was the presbytery who gave the gift to Timothy. If the things assumed are not necessarily true the conclusion is not true. Some of the points made which we want to notice are:

(a) Both gifts must be one and the same to include Paul with the presbytery.

(b) Both gifts are spiritual gifts because they could only be imparted by an apostle, otherwise it would not necessarily include Paul.

(c) If Timothy had two gifts by impartation of hands at two separate times, he is the only one in the New Testament.

(d) Not more than one man can lay on hands to impart a single gift.

(e) The laying on of Paul's hands is attributed to the presbytery.

(f) The task of proving something rests upon the shoulders of those who deny Paul was an elder.

An analysis of these assumptions will help clear away the debris of confusion that hinders a proper understanding of these two passages.

(a) First, we must examine these two passages to determine if the gifts are necessarily the same, and if they are **NECESSARILY** the same, then by "Necessary Inference" we must conclude that an apostle was in that eldership, and since Paul's name is mentioned in one passage, he was that elder. But if it cannot be established, we cannot successfully argue from these gifts that Paul was an elder. Remember, that is the express purpose of the study here.

The fact that both of them are not mentioned in the first letter might imply that the gift referred to in I Timothy was not alluded to in the second epistle, but rather a different one entirely. I am not making that claim here, but only showing the possibility that the second gift mentioned had no reference to the first. It does not follow that both references must refer to the same gift because Paul did not know he would ever write the second epistle. If we were to insert the word *book* in the place of *gift* and make the two statements read in effect: "Neglect not the *book* given thee by the hands of the presbytery" and "wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou read the *book* given thee by my hands," it would not necessarily follow that the same book was referred to. The fact that they came from different sources, and the contexts do not show that the references are to the same one, would seem to imply that different books were referred to. The same is true of the two passages under study.

Several Commentaries and scholars have been consulted on these two verses. The quotations are too long to burden the reader at this point, but we give here a synopsis of their comments and suggest that the reader examine these references for himself.

Albert Barnes believes that the gifts in both passages refer to the qualification and ordination of Timothy to the office of a minister of the gospel. He also says that the gift was not conferred by only one man but the whole presbytery, which included Paul. (*Barnes On The New Testament, Thess-Phil.*)

B. W. Johnson says that I Timothy 4:14 alludes to special spiritual gifts given to prepare Timothy for the work of Evangelist. He says the presbytery ordained him in the ordinary way and the Spirit through the hands of Paul endowed him with spiritual gifts. On II Timothy 1:6 he says the supernatural gift was received by the apostle's hands while the gift or ordination was given at the hands of the presbytery. It would appear that Johnson understands that there are two different gifts: one of ordination by the presbytery and the other a supernatural power given by the apostle Paul. (*New Testament With Notes, Vol. II*).

Conybeare and Howson say the gifts in both passages are the same and that they refer to the ordination of Timothy or to his appointment as superintendent of the church at Ephesus. (*The Life And Epistles of St. Paul*).

David Lipscomb's *Commentary On The New Testament*, Vol. V, edited by J. W. Shepherd, says that the gift of I Timothy 4:14 refers to a spiritual gift qualifying him for the office of an evangelist, which was conferred upon him by the laying on of the hands of the eldership, Paul joining in with them. And of the gift in II Timothy 1:6 he says that it is the exhorting of Timothy to keep alive the means God gave him for doing his work. This refers to the gift spoken of in I Timothy 4:14.

It will immediately appear that this question cannot be decided by a count of Commentaries or scholars because they are at variance with each other. I suggest two methods of determining whether these gifts are the same: (1) a clear definition of the words used, and (2) an understanding of the context of each.

"Gift" in I Timothy 4:14 is from *charismatos* and in II Timothy 1:6 the word is *charisma*. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says of this word: "a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own . . . in the technical Pauline sense . . . denote extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit . . . spec. the sum of those powers requisite for the discharge of the office of an evangelist: I Tim. iv. 14; II Tim. i. 6.)"

George Berry's *Greek-English Lexicon*: "a gift of grace, an undeserved favor from God to man."

*The New Testament in Greek*, Westcott & Hort: "that which is bestowed as a free gift, Rom. v. 15, 16; a gift (of a spiritual kind), Rom. xii. 6. I Cor. xii. 9, 28, 30, etc."

The word means the same in both passages, but we should not jump to the conclusion that because both were *gifts* that it follows they are both of the same nature and are in reality the same gift. "Gift does not tell what the substance of the gift is, who gives it, or when it is given. It may be some ability of the Holy Spirit, or a blessing of opportunity, or even some responsibility. It may be a person. It is, therefore, POSSIBLE that the two references are not the same and were given at different times. These gifts may have been different gifts, especially since one was given with the laying on of the presbytery's hands and the other by the hands of Paul.

The context of I Timothy 4:14 shows that Paul was admonishing Timothy on those things he should do and teach to "be a good minister of Jesus Christ." In the verse immediately preceding this one, Paul told Timothy to "give attendance to reading," which would indicate that this gift was not necessarily one of "inspired prophesying," as someone has suggested; yet, it is in some way connected with his duties and work as an evangelist. Since it is one of the duties of the eldership to appoint an evangelist to proclaim the gospel, and since this was usually done by the laying on of hands in New Testament times, and since Paul's name is not mentioned or implied in this verse as being in the presbytery, we may correctly conclude that this gift was an appointment to a special work in the ministry of Jesus Christ connected directly with his duties as an evangelist.

The context of II Timothy 1:6 shows that Paul was talking about Timothy's faith and his proclamation of the testimony of Christ. He instructs Timothy to stir up or rekindle that gift which had come from God through the laying on of Paul's hands. Whatever the exact nature of this gift was, it differs from that one in I Timothy 4:14 in that this one is of God and came through the laying on of Paul's hands, while the one in I Timothy 4:14 came by prophecy at the time the hands of the presbytery were laid on him. Since the eldership is not mentioned in any way in this context, and since there is no necessary inference that Paul was in any way associated with the eldership at the imparting of the gift in I Timothy 4:14, we conclude that this gift is not NECESSARILY the same as the one in I Timothy 4:14. Consequently, no successful argument can be made from the inference that these two gifts are the same.

(b) It is suggested that both these gifts are "spiritual gifts." We have seen that "gift" does not tell the nature of the thing given. Many things in the Bible are called "gifts"—money, blessings, opportunities, protection, forgiveness of sins, and Christ. How then, shall we determine just what the gifts in I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6 are?

There are two modifying expressions that will help us determine the nature of the gift in II Timothy 1:6: (1) "gift of God" and (2) "by laying on of my (an apostle's) hands." We will do well to spend a moment or two reading other passages that identify the "gift of God."

The giving of the Holy Spirit in the sense of endowing one with supernatural powers is called a *gift*. Peter and John, who were apostles, went from Jerusalem to Samaria after Philip had preached the gospel there for the express purpose of laying their hands on some of the Samaritans and giving them certain powers of the Holy Spirit. This was called a "power" (verse 19). Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was "given" by the "laying on of the apostles' hands" (verse 18). When Simon tried to purchase this power with money, Peter said to him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the *gift of God* may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20). This was a "gift of God" and was received "through the laying on of the apostles' hands." This is exactly the case in II Timothy 1:6.

In speaking of the redemption of the fallen race Paul called the death of Christ "the grace of God, and the gift by grace" (Rom. 5:15). Christ was the *gift of God* (John 3:16), but this gift did not come through the laying on of the apostles' hands.

In contrasting the destiny of the wicked with the righteous, Paul said: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Eternal life is a *gift of God*, but it does not come through the laying on of the apostles' hands.

In speaking of the married and unmarried states of those at Corinth under the "present distress" (I Cor. 7:26), Paul said he wished that all men were as he—unmarried because of the present distress—yet he said every man has "his proper gift of God" (ability to contain himself), "one after this manner, and another after that" (I Cor. 7:7). The ability to control one's self under unusual circumstances is called a *gift of God*, but it does not come by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Paul affirms that salvation is by grace through faith which is "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). This is contrasted with the works of man by which he could boast. Salvation by grace through faith is a *gift of God*, but it is not given by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

In speaking of the privileges offered through the gospel to the Gentiles and Jews alike, Paul terms it "the gifts and calling of God"

(Rom. 11:29). The blessings offered through the gospel are called *gifts of God*, but they do not come through the laying on of the apostles' hands.

In referring to the unity of the faith, Paul says grace is given to us "according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7). Verse 8 says the gifts were given unto men after he ascended, and in verse 11 we learn the gifts were offices or works of properly qualified men to perfect the saints and edify the body of Christ. Although these gifts, as such, were men with endowed abilities to perform the duties given them, and some may have come by the imposition of the apostles' hands. However, those that were abilities of the Holy Spirit that came by the imposition of the apostles' hands are the same as the spiritual gifts of Acts 8:20.

Paul spoke of God's favor in making him a minister to the Gentiles in spite of his former persecution and opposition to Christ, and called it "the gift of the grace of God" (Eph. 3:7). This *gift of God* was not received by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Paul says the blessings of the gospel, including the forgiveness of sins, are the "heavenly gift" (Heb. 6:4). This gift does not come by laying on of the hands of the apostles.

Every good thing that comes from God to us is in reality a "good gift" and "perfect gift" from God above, and may rightly be termed a *gift of God* (James 1:17), but these gifts do not come by the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

Every ability to minister in the things of God are referred to as "the ability which God giveth"—a *gift of God*. (I Peter 4:11). However, this does not ordinarily come by the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

The most natural and surest method of interpreting this *gift of God* in II Timothy 1:6 is to compare it with other similar expressions in the New Testament. By doing this we learn that the only *gift of God* that was given *through the laying on of the hands of an apostle* was the supernatural abilities of the Holy Spirit in the early days of the church to assist in performing the work of edifying the church. This is the *gift of God* that was given Timothy through the laying on of the hands of Paul, an apostle. Any other understanding of it would be forced and unnatural to the common and sensible exegesis of the Scriptures.

Now to examine briefly the "gift" in I Timothy 4:14. This gift was given by prophecy. It is not called the *gift of God*, nor is it said that this gift came by the *laying on of the apostles' hands*. In chapter 1:18 Paul gave Timothy a charge which was "according to the prophecies which went before on thee." When Paul found Timothy in Lystra he

was well reported of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. (Acts 16:2). Perhaps many of these predicted that Timothy would make a good minister, and some have given this meaning to the verse. However, this does not seem to be in exact accord with the trend of thought here. In the early days of the church various men of ability were selected by divine instruction and set in the church. (I. Cor. 12:28). The Holy Spirit directed the prophets at Antioch to "separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). "They fasted, prayed and laid their hands on them and sent them away" (verse 3). Since the ministry of Christ is called a gift (Eph. 3:7), and this ministry of Paul was by prophecy to the prophets at Antioch, and since it was by laying on of hands of the prophets, such a gift may be said to be by prophecy.

But in whatever way this gift is connected to prophecy, there is one thing we know for a certainty: it came with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. We do know that it is a work of the eldership to appoint men to the duty of evangelists, and this gift by prophecy to Timothy concerned correcting false teachers (verse 3), hence we conclude that this gift of I Timothy 4:14 concerned the preaching of the gospel.

Whether the gift by prophecy and the gift of God were given at the same time and on the same occasion or at different times is not material to this issue, because if we agree that they came at the same time it would not prove that Paul was in the eldership. Even if we agree that the gifts were the same and came at the same time it would not prove that Paul was an elder because the gifts were not given in the same way by the presbytery and by Paul. The one in I Timothy 4:14 was given WITH the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, while the one in II Timothy 1:6 was given THROUGH the laying on of Paul's hands.

(c) It is also stated that no person ever received TWO gifts on two different occasions, which would make Timothy have one gift, and since the presbytery gave it and Paul also gave it, Paul would be in the eldership. But this is no proof of the proposition for the New Testament does not have to say a thing twice to make it true, nor do we have to have two identical incidents to make a thing true. But an incident of one person having two spiritual gifts can be shown in the New Testament. Paul talks about spiritual gifts and the use of them in I Corinthians 12. Among these gifts he mentions as separate gifts by the same spirit, the "gift of tongues" and the "gift of interpretation." In I Corinthians 14:13 he says: "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue" (one spiritual gift) "pray that he may interpret" (another spiritual gift). The same person may have two spiritual gifts at the same time or this passage does not mean what it says. Since Paul shows in this statement



that a person may have two spiritual gifts, why would it be impossible for Timothy to have two gifts?

Philip is an example of one having two spiritual gifts at the same time. He went down to the city of Samaria and preached (prophecied) and worked miracles (Acts 8:5-7). Philip had the spiritual gift of prophecy and the spiritual gift of working miracles. To show that they were two different gifts by the same Spirit, read I Corinthians 12:10: "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy."

(d) It is also assumed that not more than one person can lay hands on another to impart a single gift, i.e., if one person receives a gift from a certain one, no one else can impart a gift by the laying on of hands; therefore, since the presbytery laid hands on Timothy, and Paul also laid hands on him, Paul must have been an elder.

The very person in question received the imposition of hands at two different times and for two different reasons. (1) Ananias laying hands on Paul that he might receive his sight and at the same time he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:12, 17). (2) The prophets at Antioch laid hands on Paul and Barnabas in sending them on a work prophesied of by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:3). I am not contending here that the same thing was done for Paul that was done for Timothy, but I am showing that hands might be laid on the same person at two different times and for two different purposes, and thereby showing the possibility of hands being laid on Timothy at different times for different gifts.

The "laying on of hands" did not always mean to impart a spiritual gift, and since this is true, we must determine by the context the nature of the gift and the reason for the laying on of hands as well as whose hands they are. The laying on of hands in the New Testament meant:

1. To arrest (Acts 4:3).
2. To take hold of (Acts 5:18).
3. To impart spiritual gifts (Acts 6:6; 8:17). Only the apostles could do this (Acts 8:18).
4. To appoint or designate to a work or position (Acts 13:3).
5. To heal the sick miraculously (Acts 28:8).

Even in Old Testament times, before the abilities of the Holy Spirit were given, the use of "laying on of hands" was employed as a method of appointing to a work or position. (Gen. 48:13, 14; Deut. 34:9; Num. 8:10; Lev. 16:21).

The most likely purpose in the laying on of the hands of the presbytery would be to appoint or designate to an office or position, since that is in line with their duties; and the laying on of the hands of an apostle would most likely refer to the impartation of some spiritual gift.

(e) The impartation of Paul's hands attributed to the presbytery. It is reasoned that all this shows that Paul was in the eldership. But if the point follows, it as logically follows that Paul was THE eldership, since the presbytery laid hands on Timothy in I Timothy 4:14 and Paul laid hands on him in II Timothy 1:6. Is not the following an honest syllogism?

1. The presbytery gave Timothy a gift (I Tim. 4:14);
2. But Paul gave him the gift (2 Tim. 1:6);
3. Therefore, Paul is the presbytery.

This proves entirely too much. Neither the text nor the context of I Timothy 4:14 indicates that there was an apostle in that eldership connecting the gift imparted to Timothy. Furthermore, the presbytery imparting this gift would consist of only one man, and that an apostle, since only apostles could impart spiritual gifts. As to who constituted this eldership, no one knows, nor does anyone know that it contained an apostle, or that the apostle was Paul. All these things are conjectures from which the conclusion is drawn.

(f) It is argued that the task of proving something falls upon the shoulders of those who deny Paul was an elder. This is not a logical process of reasoning because when an assertion is made concerning a matter, the affirmative must prove the point. The negative has only to disprove the affirmative to be successful. When one asserts that Paul was in a certain eldership he is obligated to prove the point. This places the task of proving something upon the shoulders of the affirmative and not the negative.

(g) An examination of these two passages reveals the following: (1) The gift given with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery was a gift defined only as "by prophecy," while the one given through the laying on of Paul's hands was a gift of God. (2) There is nothing in the context to suggest that the gifts were received at the same time and place (though they may have been), but it would prove nothing to this matter if that could be established. (3) The gift given in I Timothy 4:14 was WITH the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, while that one in II Timothy 1:6 was THROUGH the laying on of the hands of Paul.

*Webster* defines WITH: "A prep. not apart from; accompanying; among; on the side of or in favor of." We notice that it is not the source of or the means of. Of the word THROUGH he says: "A prep.—From end to end or from side to side of; between the sides or walls of; by the agency of; by means of; on account of." The means or agency of the *gift of God* in II Timothy 1:6 was THROUGH Paul's hands. But the

WITH of I Timothy 4:14 means to "accompany" or "go along side of," and does not mean the "agency of."

The original word in I Timothy 4:14 is *meta*. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says of the word: "I. with the GENITIVE . . . *among, with* . . . 1. *amid, among* . . . f. with the gen. of mental feelings desires and emotions, of bodily movements, and of other acts which are so to speak the attendants of what is done or occurs; so that in this way the characteristic of the action or occurrence is described,—which in most cases can be expressed by a cognate adverb or participle . . . I Tim. iv. 14."

The gift to Timothy WITH the laying on of the hands of the presbytery tells the relation of the presbytery's hands to the gift by prophecy. It was "along side of" or "together with," rather than the SOURCE of the gift.

The word in II Timothy 1:6 is *dia*. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*: "A. with the GENITIVE: *through* . . . III. of the Means or Instrument by which anything is effected; because what is done by means of a person or thing seems to pass as it were *through* the same . . . 2. of the instrument used to accomplish a thing, or of the instrumental cause in the stricter sense:—with gen. of pers. *by the service, the intervention of, any one*; with gen. of thing, *by means of, with the help of, any thing* . . . b. in passages in which the author or principal cause is not mentioned, but is easily understood from the nature of the case, or from the context . . . II Tim. i. 6 . . ."

The association of the laying on of the hands of the presbytery to the gift to Timothy in I Timothy 4:14 was *with, along side of, accompanying* the gift, while the laying on of Paul's hands was the *means of, the instrument of, the source of*, the gift to Timothy. Instead of showing that Paul was in the presbytery that gave the gift to Timothy it would tend to prove that Paul was not in the eldership because the purpose of the "laying on of hands" was different in the two cases. But even if we conceded that the gifts of both passages were the same, given at the same time, it still could not be proved that Paul was in the eldership because what the presbytery did and what Paul did in the "laying on of hands" was not for the same purpose, therefore, it cannot be "necessarily inferred" that Paul was an elder from the "gifts" to Timothy.

5. *Christ was not married, therefore, elders need not be married.*

In *The Eldership*, page 97, Winkler says: "The elder is also called a shepherd. Jesus Christ is 'The Chief Shepherd' (I Peter 5:4). He the Chief Shepherd was not married and if the Chief Shepherd was not married on what basis of reasoning would it be necessary for the under, or common, shepherd to be married to be blameless?"

If this argument has any force at all it would demand all shepherds today to be unmarried because Christ was; for if the unmarried state of Christ while on earth is the example for shepherds today, why should not all elders be unmarried? And if one is married he does not follow the example of Christ. This would prove something *positive* rather than *prohibitive*—the elder **MUST** be unmarried because Christ was unmarried.

Christ was not a shepherd in the same sense in which elders today are. He is not a Shepherd over a single congregation to the exclusion of all others, as the elders are today. That indicates that their work is different and does not, in fact, refer to the same office. Christ did not have to be married to know how to meet the problems of married life, but all bishops today must know how to solve these problems, and the only way they can obtain the knowledge is by being husbands and fathers.

But if it be valid to argue on the comparison of the office of the "Chief Shepherd" and the office of a bishop in regard to marriage, Christ has a bride—the church. It is true that there is a difference in a physical marriage and a spiritual marriage, but there is also a difference in the office of "Chief Shepherd" and the "common shepherd." We are married to Christ. (Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2). In the spiritual sense Christ is neither a bachelor nor a polygamist; likewise, in the physical sense bishops today can be neither bachelors nor polygamists.

If one insists that elders may not be married because Christ was not married while in the flesh, why not argue that elders today need not be baptized for the remission of sins because Christ was not so baptized? One is as sensible as the other.

#### 6. *I Corinthians 7:2 and I Timothy 3:2 paralleled.*

The argument is best stated by Brethren Winkler and Douthitt, so we give it in their own words.

In the *Gospel Guardian* of June 19, 1952, page 8, Brother Cecil B. Douthitt says: "The terms 'own wife' in I Cor. 7:2 and 'one wife' in I Tim. 3:2 give the two sentences quite a different significance from what they would have, if the Lord had said 'be married.' For illustration attention is directed to the following sentences:

1. 'Let each man have his own wife' (I Cor. 7:2).
2. Let each man be married.

"These two sentences do not have the same meaning. The first sentence forbids taking the other fellows wife, but it does not forbid celibacy without exception, as all will agree. The second sentence forbids celibacy without exception, but it does not forbid taking the other fellows wife.

"If Paul had used the second sentence, then every man would have to be married to please the Lord. But he did not use the sentence that forbids celibacy, therefore the Lord does not require all Christians to marry. The significance of the word 'own' in I Cor. 7:2 must not be ignored or some one might fall into the danger of legislating where God has not.

"What's been said regarding the two sentences above will apply also to the following sentences:

1. 'The bishop therefore must be . . . the husband of one wife' (I Tim. 3:2).
2. The bishop must be married.

"These two sentences are quite different in their requirements and meaning. The first sentence forbids polygamy, but it does not forbid celibacy without exception. The second sentence forbids celibacy without exception, but it does not forbid polygamy. If the Lord had used the second sentence, every man would have to be married to be a bishop. But he did not use the sentence that forbids celibacy; he used the sentence that forbids polygamy. By ignoring the word 'one' in I Tim. 3:2 some have given the passage the same interpretation as if the Lord had said, 'The bishop must be married,' and therefore have legislated unwittingly where the Lord has not.

"The question is asked frequently, 'How could a man be the husband of ONE wife, if he is not married?' But a similar question based on I Cor. 7:2 ought to clear up that misunderstanding; so I ask, 'How could a man have his OWN wife, if he is not married?' If I Tim. 3:2 forbids celibacy without exception among bishops, it necessarily follows that I Cor. 7:2 forbids celibacy without exception among all Christians."

In the *Gospel Guardian*, August 28, 1952, page 8, he says further: "If all today could be caused to see the significance of the word 'own' in I Cor. 7:2, and the word 'one' in I Tim. 3:2, they would be able to see that as far as marriage is concerned no more is required of elders in I Tim. 3:2 than is required of all Christians in I Cor. 7:2."

H. E. Winkler said in his book *The Eldership*, pages 98, 99: "'Let deacons be husbands of one wife.' If that expresses a positive obligation that the deacon be a married man, 'The husband of one wife' expresses the same thought also of the elder. Then, what about Paul's language in I Corinthians 7:2, 'Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.'

"If 'the husband of one wife' is positive; 'Let deacons be husbands of one wife' is also positive.

“And if that be true there is no escape from the conclusion that ‘Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband’ are also positive, which renders it impossible for an unmarried man or woman to be a Christian.

“According to the two statements I conclude that if unmarried men cannot be elders or deacons, neither can unmarried men and women be Christians.

“If the clause is positive, the apostle by the use of ‘each man’ and ‘each woman’ includes every member of the church and therefore the unmarried man or woman cannot be a Christian and be saved.”

We shall consider this argument under three different points:

(1) *Comparison of the two phrases.*

1. “Let each man have his own wife” (1 Cor. 7:2).
2. Let each man be married.

It is advised that these two sentences do not mean the same, to which we agree. It is further said that the first forbids “taking the other fellow’s wife,” but not celibacy; while the second forbids celibacy without exception, but does not forbid “taking the other fellow’s wife.” Actually the first sentence is not designed primarily to forbid taking the other fellow’s wife, although that is accomplished in the word *own*; the prime object of the statement is to give the means to avoid fornication in those who cannot contain themselves in the unmarried state.

Then the comparison between this and I Timothy 3:2 follows:

1. “The bishop therefore must be . . . the husband of one wife” (I Tim. 3:2).
2. The bishop must be married.

The first forbids polygamy but not celibacy; the second forbids celibacy but not polygamy. But like the passage in I Corinthians 7:2 the first sentence is not primarily designed to prohibit polygamy, although it is accomplished in the word *one*. The prime purpose of the statement is to prescribe something as a condition to an end—qualifying for the eldership.

We acquiesce that the two phrases do not mean the same, however, if both statements were used in the same general context, a very close or identical meaning could result. The reasoning from this illustration completely ignores the contextual setting of each phrase, so in reply I will likewise ignore it for the present. Allow me to add one more phrase to make the comparison more complete.

1. Let each man have his own wife.
2. Let each man be married.
3. Let each man be no polygamist.

The first requires marriage and prohibits polygamy. The second requires marriage but does not forbid polygamy: it does not tell how many times he may be married. The third forbids polygamy but does not require marriage. If Paul, as these arguments teach, had intended only to prohibit polygamy without requiring marriage, why did he not use the language that would be to the point and say: "The bishop therefore must be . . . no polygamist"? Since I Corinthians 7:2 is the parallel passage under study, why did Paul not say: "To avoid fornication, let each man be no polygamist"? That would have completely settled this matter forever. In this passage Paul did not use the statement that would forbid polygamy only; he did not use the statement that commands marriage without regard to polygamy; but he used the statement that commands marriage and at the same time forbids polygamy. Since it is true of I Corinthians 7:2, and I Timothy 3:2 is the parallel, let us frame the phrases in harmony with the latter:

1. A bishop therefore must be . . . the husband of one wife.
2. A bishop therefore must be . . . married.
3. A bishop therefore must . . . not be a polygamist.

The first statement requires marriage and at the same time forbids polygamy. The second statement requires marriage but does not forbid polygamy. The third forbids polygamy but does not require marriage. Paul used the statement that commands marriage and at the same time forbids polygamy. Had he meant something else, I am sure he was capable of saying it.

When isolated, the phrase: "Let each man have his own wife" not only forbids him having another's wife, it compels him to have his "own" wife. If it be said of men going to a ball game: "Let each man have his own ticket," it should not be assumed that men may enter without tickets on the basis that the statement only forbids having the other fellow's ticket, but does not necessarily require a ticket—if he has a ticket it must be his own rather than another's. However, if it be objected that some men may enter the ball game without tickets, I reply that it would either be a violation of the law or a class of men not included in "let each man have his own ticket." The ticket would not qualify the person to be a man; it would qualify him to enter the ball game if he comes in the class of men who must have "his own ticket." Likewise, for one to "have his own wife" does not qualify him to be a Christian, but it qualifies that Christian to avoid fornication who cannot contain himself in the unmarried state. So in I Timothy 3:2 the "husband

of one wife" is not to qualify one for a Christian but for the eldership. Had God intended to prescribe marriage and prohibit polygamy at the same time in the class of people addressed in both I Corinthians 7:2 and I Timothy 3:2, how could it have been better worded than "Let each man have his own wife," and "the bishop therefore must be . . . the husband of one wife"?

To the question: "How could a man be the husband of ONE wife, if he is not married?" the reply is: "How could a man have his OWN wife, if he is not married? If I Tim. 3.2 forbids celibacy without exception among bishops, it necessarily follows that I Cor. 7:2 forbids celibacy without exception among all Christians."

The sagacious attempt to becloud the issue by deflecting attention to something else is cleared away by a direct view to the statements of the Scriptures. The fact is that no man can have *his own wife* without marriage. If he is not married, he does not have ANY wife, much less his OWN. If a man has his OWN wife, he certainly MUST be married. He may be married to another's wife and not have his OWN, but if he is not married at all, he does not have either *his own* or the *other fellow's*.

(2) *The positive and negative aspects.* The entire argument is built upon the negative aspect of these two statements, completely ignoring the positive requirements. We do not deny that the statements in I Timothy 3:2 and I Corinthians 7:2 contain a negative. They both prohibit polygamy by the words *one* and *own*; but it just as well contains the positive requirement to be married for that class of people addressed. In I Corinthians 7:2 Paul says the man must have his own wife to avoid fornication. How would a person avoid fornication if he cannot contain himself? He MUST be married; there is no other way in God's plan for him to avoid fornication if he cannot contain himself. At the same time Paul restricts that marriage to his *own* wife. That is the restrictive phase of it. In the like manner Paul prescribes marriage to the bishop. He also restricts it to *one* wife. In this way both passages contain both a positive and negative aspect: they necessitate marriage, and restrict polygamy.

(3) *The context of each passage.* To take the two statements out of their contexts and build a theory around them to prove a position is a gross violation of the principles of Bible study. It is, in reality, not "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Almost any doctrine could be proved by this method. Let us fairly examine each passage in its context.

In I Corinthians 7 Paul is writing about a matter which the Corinthians had formerly written him about. It concerns marriage. This question is answered in the light of a condition existing at that time which



prompted his statement under study. This condition he calls "the present distress." Of course he was guided in this writing by the Holy Spirit, but it concerned the "present distress" and should not be swelled to take in more than Paul intended. He said: "I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be" (verse 26). In verse one he said: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Whatever else may be said, Paul here encourages the unmarried state for certain Christians "for the present distress." But Paul turns in verse two to a class of people who could not remain unmarried, even for the "present distress," without fornication. Since some could not remain single without becoming guilty of fornication, Paul says: "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Now why *require* marriage? Because some could not contain themselves even for the "present distress" without fornication, and to avoid this Paul said to be married. He said "Let them marry" (verse 9). Not one person in that class of which Paul now speaks (those who cannot contain themselves) can escape fornication without marriage. Furthermore, this marriage must not be polygamous. He must have his OWN wife.

Paul is not giving the qualifications to become a Christian, as the argument runs, but he is addressing a certain class—those who cannot contain themselves to avoid fornication. They **MUST** marry. Anyone who applies this to the qualifications of Christian living in general is very unjust to the word of God.

In I Timothy 3 Paul is talking about a different matter entirely. He is listing the qualities a man must possess to become a bishop. To this class he requires marriage, and at the same time forbids polygamy. Now if there is any parallel at all between these two passages, it is that the class addressed in each one is required without exception to be married, and as rigidly forbidden to engage in a polygamous marriage. Surely all can see that!

In conclusion of this point attention is directed to three reasons why the passage in I Corinthians 7 is not a real parallel to the one in I Timothy 3. (1) The subject matter of the passages is entirely different. (2) The persons addressed are entirely different in the two. (3) The purpose in the marriage connection is entirely different. I Corinthians 7:2 does not prove that I Timothy 3:2 means that the bishop must avoid polygamous marriage only. If it proves anything, it proves that to the classes addressed marriage is required and polygamy is forbidden.

7. *Paul said the unmarried could serve God better than the married.*

The logic is this: Paul said some could better serve the Lord in the unmarried state than in the married state, therefore, some elders can

better serve the Lord as bachelors. Again we let Brethren Douthitt and Winkler state the argument.

*Gospel Guardian*, August 7, 1952, page 3, Cecil B. Douthitt says: "How do you know Paul was not including elders along with other servants in the church when he teaches in I Cor. 7:32-35 that under certain conditions a single person can do better work than a married person? Paul was talking about ALL servants, both men and women, under those specific conditions. If he did not include elders, whom did he include? Was he talking about deacons, preachers, janitors? Please tell what servants he had under consideration and why he did not include elders also. Some do not have the continency to remain single and single, but some do have it, and that is the kind Paul refers to, whether elder, apostle, preacher, deacon or janitor."

*The Eldership*, page 91, H. E. Winkler says: "If Paul teaches here that the elder 'must' be married, then how are we to reconcile this teaching with that of his in I Corinthians 7:32-34 that the unmarried man and woman can serve God better than the married . . ."

Page 97: "There can, and did in Paul's time, arise a condition in the affairs of human life under which a single man and a single woman can serve God better than one with the cares of a married relation (See I Corinthians 7:25-35, especially verses 32-35). And inasmuch as the apostle used the personal pronouns 'he,' 'his,' 'she,' and 'her,' without qualification or limitation it is clear that this may apply to the elder as well as to any other man or woman in the church, which excludes the necessity for the elder to be married."

It seems a weak cause, indeed, that needs such remotely related passages to give it support. Reflect for a moment: Because Paul said in I Corinthians 7:32-35 that under specific circumstances one could better serve the Lord unmarried than if he had a wife, it follows that I Timothy 3:2 means the elder does not have to be "the husband of one wife." Only a weak and failing cause could lead to such reasoning.

The context of I Corinthians 7:32-35 shows that Paul's subject is concerning marriage among the Corinthians, which is in answer to something they had written him about before (Verse 1), as it related to the "present distress" among them (Verse 26). It would be completely out of harmony with the will of God concerning marriage to say that it would ALWAYS be better to be unmarried, because God first instituted marriage. He saw that "it is not good that man should be alone," so He made the woman and brought them together. Paul also said, "Marriage is honorable IN ALL . . ." (Heb. 13:4). In speaking of the younger widows, he says: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children . . ." (I Tim. 5:14). In view of this, it is a flagrant disregard

of Paul's intention in I Corinthians 7:32-35 to say that he means a man and woman can better serve the Lord unmarried than married in circumstances other than are defined in the context.

It may be asked: "Would not this same ruling of Paul apply today if we were in a similar distress today to the one that existed then?" I am very certain of it, but, before we could know just exactly when to apply it and to what extent to apply it, we would have to know just what the distress was.

But it may be asked in return: "Would an unmarried man always be a better servant of God than a married man?" If so, why not teach the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Celibacy of the Bishops? That is their argument for unmarried bishops. If one could always serve the Lord better in the single state than in the married state, then by all means the foremost servants of God should be unmarried!

It is triumphantly asked: "How do we know elders are not included in I Corinthians 7:32-35?" We do not know by a direct reference, but we can reasonably well conclude one of two things: (1) that if elders were included, it was an exception to the rule and cannot be applied to any elder today unless we know what the "present distress" was, and know that the elders now come under that condition; (2) or that if the Corinthians had followed the same instructions that Paul gave to Timothy and Titus in selecting the elders, and I'm sure they did, for the same Spirit guided Paul's teaching to both, every bishop at Corinth was already "the husband of one wife;" and Paul said to those who were already married: "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed" (Verse 27).

Paul did not tell EVERYBODY not to marry in I Corinthians 7:32-35, even for the "present distress." He told some who could not contain themselves to marry, and he told those who were married to remain so. The elders would more easily come in this class than in the unmarried class because of the qualifications in I Timothy 3:2.

It is further asked: "Was Paul talking about deacons, preachers, janitors, etc.?" He was talking about any person who was not otherwise required to be married. He was not including anyone who could not contain themselves, for he said: "Let them marry." He was not talking about elders and deacons because they are required to be the "husband of one wife." He was talking about any single person UNDER THE PRESENT DISTRESS who was not otherwise required to marry.

If the objection be raised that this passage does not make that distinction, I refer to the other statements by this same writer which bind marriage on certain ones. They are certainly exceptions. This particular reference may be paralleled to Acts 17:30: "but now commandeth

ALL MEN everywhere to repent." That is about as general and all inclusive as it could be made, yet we know that there are some not included in the *all men*, i.e., babies and untaught people. We do not get that from this text, but it is taught in others. In the same way, all who are included in the statement of Paul in I Corinthians 7:32-35 are those who can live a chaste life in the unmarried state, or all who are nor otherwise required to be married. The instructions of this passage are also restricted to the "present distress," and until we know what it was, and be in such a distress today, the particular reference does not apply to us anymore than eating meat offered to idols applies to the man who is not bothered with it.

This passage in I Timothy 3 still stands as a positive requirement that the bishop be married, and a prohibitive quality that he be married to only one wife, which prohibits both celibacy and polygamy.

8. *The bishop can get the experience without a family.*

It is argued that a man can get the proper family experience to fit him for the eldership without having a family of his own, and since that is true, a bishop does not need to be married.

This reasoning is not sound because even if one could get a better experience without a family, it remains that the Lord requires the bishop to have a family. This sort of logic could as well do away with several other requirements God has bound upon man.

It is further contended that a man may exercise rule over "his own house" and have "his own children in subjection" without being married, since Lydia, Cornelius, the Jailor and others had "their own houses" and were not married. Just how one found out that they were not married is a mystery.

There is no relationship outside of marriage in which man can get the needed experience of family training, and demonstrate that ability to others. Suppose, however, it be granted that he could get this experience in some other way, shall we leave God's appointed plan and invent another? Would this be accepted in other matters? There are social, physical, financial, and religious experiences of marriage that no man knows who has not been a husband, no matter how much he may have studied. There are problems of being a father that are known only to fathers. One might get some experience by rearing his nephews and nieces or some other person's children, but how would a man get the experience of a husband without being one?

It is certain that the Lord would never have required of a bishop that he be the "husband of one wife" had it been unnecessary and non-essential. There is some reason for all that the Lord requires, and whether we always see it or not, we must submit to His will in all things.

9. *To compel the bishop to marry is arbitrary and absurd.*

*The Eldership*, page 91: "For one to make 'must' refer to 'the husband of one wife,' oftentimes forces him into absurdities."

Page 97: "What is necessary to render a man blameless at the time of his appointment must be maintained throughout his tenure as an elder in order to keep him blameless. So then, if a man **MUST** be the 'husband of one wife' at the time he is appointed to the eldership he **MUST** remain the 'husband of one wife' in order to the maintenance of that blamelessness.

"But if the elder's wife dies he is no longer the 'husband of one wife.' Does that, a thing over which he has no control and for which he is not responsible, render the elder blameworthy?"

Cecil B. Douthitt, *Gospel Guardian*, June 19, 1952, page 9: "God never gave any arbitrary law. Any law that excludes such men as Paul, or David Lipscomb, or M. C. Kurfees from the eldership certainly is arbitrary."

The above are samples of the objections to the positive aspect of "husband of one wife" in I Timothy 3:2. *Arbitrary* means "depending solely on one's own will or discretion; despotic, tyrannical." *Absurd* means "contrary to reason; opposed to common sense." The charge is really this: if the bishop **MUST** be "the husband of one wife," the law requiring it is "depending solely on one's own will or discretion; despotic, tyrannical," and "contrary to reason; opposed to common sense." And since God does not make "arbitrary and absurd" laws, this did not come from Him.

Paul spoke the words of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13); he wrote the commandments of the Lord. (I Cor. 14:37). When he penned the words: "The bishop then must be . . . the husband of one wife," he was writing the commandments of the Lord. He could have said: "The bishop then must be no polygamist;" or "The bishop then must be married;" but he wrote instead: "The bishop then must be . . . the husband of one wife." The sentence he used commands marriage as well as forbids polygamy. Who is to say that this is "absurd" and "arbitrary"? By this same reasoning one could as well say: "Baptism for the remission of sins is arbitrary and absurd" in spite of "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

It has already been shown that "husband of one wife" is not a qualification of **BLAMELESSNESS**. The fact that an elder's wife dies has nothing to do with him being blameless, for his having a wife in the first place did not make him blameless.

But to argue that it is *arbitrary* and *absurd* to require of a bishop any physical quality over which he may not have any control is not true.

If an elder served in a congregation faithfully until he reached the advanced age to be so infirmed in body that he could no longer do any of the work, should he continue to serve as an "honorary bishop"? If so, where is the Bible authority? The office of a bishop is a work, and when one cannot do the work, he cannot fill the office. This is a physical loss over which the man has no control. Is it *arbitrary* and *absurd* to relieve him of his former duties in the eldership? Certainly not!

It is not the endeavor of the above example to show that the death of an elder's wife always disqualifies him, but to show that it is not *arbitrary* and *absurd* to say that a physical loss to the elder, over which he has no control, will disqualify him for the work. If the congregation generally loses confidence in a bishop because they think he is not qualified after his wife dies, he certainly cannot continue to lead them and is thus not able to continue as an elder.

But there is a difference between a physical loss to one who can continue to do the work and one who cannot do the work. After one reaches the qualifications by the experience gathered in ruling his family, he does not lose the ability because he loses his wife. But in the case of advanced age to incapability the elder is no longer able to perform his duty, which disqualifies him for the work.

There are some qualities that can only be reached by experience and growth, but once that experience and growth has been reached, the means of attaining it are not necessarily essential. Blameless has to do with character. The husband of one wife has to do with the family relation and experience. Paul explains in a parenthetical statement the reason for husband-hood and father-hood of the bishop: "(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" Once the experience to rule the house of God has been established and proved to the church, it stays with him even though his wife dies. The point is, according to the plan of God, that the only way the bishop can get this experience and demonstrate it to the church is to be a succesful husband and father.

The argument that says the command to be the "husband of one wife" is arbitrary and absurd because it excludes some great men in the church who are not married is the same sort of fruitless logic used by denominations for many years with regard to baptism for the remission of sins. They argue: "Any command (baptism) that excludes from salvation such men as D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday or Abraham is arbitrary and absurd." One is as effective as the other. Some say that to require a man to be the "husband of one wife" to qualify for the eldership is too technical and legalistic, but the same has been said about baptism for the remission of sins.

One must be married to be a father in the scriptural sense, and he must be a father to get the experience of family rule and to prove his ability as such. If we disregard the obvious intent of this passage, we open the doors to further digressions, and before long it will be proposed that women be appointed to the eldership. If Paul had intended to tell Timothy and Titus that a bishop **MUST** be a married man and **MUST** not be a polygamist, how would he have worded it better than he did?

I ask the pardon of my auditors for the lengthy and tedious discourse on this one qualification. The strong opposition to the requirement of marriage to the bishop necessitates a thorough examination of the subject, which consumes a space out of proportion to the other qualifications. For that reason it seemed essential to dwell on many things which would otherwise just be mentioned in the passing. Most of the other qualifications to follow, not being the objects of vigorous objections; will not consume so much space.

V. **MUST BE THE FATHER OF FAITHFUL CHILDREN.** (I Tim. 3:4; Titus 1.6).

This qualification has brought forth some of the same objections as the former one, however, because of the different nature of some of the arguments, we will have to deal with them separately. We shall follow the same procedure here as in the preceding qualification: first, elicit the meaning of the Greek terms, and second, the English equivalents. We hope to be enlightened at that point to wisely evaluate the proposals to eliminate this as a qualification for the bishop.

There are six Greek terms in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 that deserve special attention in this study. They are: *idiou* (own); *oikou* (house); *proistamenon* (ruling); *tekna* (children); *upotaga* (subjection); and *pista* (believing). The definitions are consolidated from three Greek-English Lexicons: *Thayer's*, *George Berry's*, and *Westcott & Hort*.

(1) *Idiou*—"Pertaining to one's own; what is one's own as opposed to belonging to another; denoting ownership."

(2) *Oikou*—"A house, race, lineage, household; the inmates of a house, all the persons forming a family."

(3) *Proistamenon*—"To set over, to be over, to rule, to superintend; to preside over."

(4) *Tekna*—"Children, offspring, descendants; without regard to sex."

(5) *Upotaga*—"Obedience, subjection."

(6) *Pista*—"Easily persuaded, believing, confiding, trusting, one

who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah; the followers of Christ; having Christian faith.”

The definitions of the English terms are taken from *Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged*.

(1) *Own*—“Belonging to; possessed; peculiar; usually expressing property with emphasis, or in express exclusion of others.”

(2) *House*—“A building intended or used as a habitation or shelter for animals of any kind; but especially, a building or edifice for the habitation of man; a dwelling place; a structure designed to be used by human beings for any purpose. . . . The members of a family living in the same house; a household. A family regarded as consisting of ancestors, descendants, and kindred; a race or persons from the same stock.”

(3) *Ruling*—“To govern; to control the will and actions of; to govern the movements of; to conduct; to manage.”

(4) *Children*—“pl. of *child* . . . A son or a daughter; a male or female descendant, in the first degree; the immediate progeny of parents; applied to the human race, and chiefly to a person when young. In law, a legitimate son or daughter.”

(5) *Obedience*—“The act or habit of obeying; compliance with a command, prohibition, or known law and rule prescribed; submission to authority.”

(6) *Believing*—“To have a persuasion of anything. In theology, to assent to anything; to yield the will and affections, accompanied with humble reliance on Christ for salvation.”

All translations show four things are positively required of a bishop: (1) he must have his OWN family; (2) he must have his family well ordered and under complete control; (3) he must have children; (4) he must have children who are Christians. It is difficult to see how one of these could be deleted without disposing of them all; and if all are unnecessary, by what rule of exegesis could we bind any qualification on the bishop?

### *The No Children Theory.*

The idea has become widespread that having “faithful children” is not a qualification for the office of a bishop; only IF he has children, they must be obedient. The reasoning follows this line: “The bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife (if he has a wife) . . . one that ruleth well his own house (if he has a house), having his children (if he has children) in subjection with all gravity . . .” Various arguments have been raised in the effort to prove that Paul did not bind



father-hood upon the bishop, all of which fall short of establishing the fact. For the moment I wish to notice the more prominent of these arguments.

It has been stated that it was not Paul's object to say that the bishop must show his ability to beget children, and hence to compel the bishop to be the father of children. But he simply taught that if the bishop has children, he must rule them well. Since it is not Paul's doctrine that the bishop must have children, one may qualify without being a father.

It is true that the purpose of the passage is not to show that the man can beget children, but it is true that the object is to obtain the sufficient experience in ruling so that he can rule the church of God. God has specified the *means* of obtaining this experience in requiring the elder to have a family and to rear faithful children. That is God's method of qualifying the man in this respect, and to set it aside in favor of another is disobedience to God. Accordingly, no man by God's plan can obtain the full experience required of him unless he has a family and has reared his children to be Christians. There is a wide difference in the *theory* and the *practice* of family training. A young unmarried preacher may be capable of teaching all that the Bible teaches on the responsibilities of a father, but it is a very different thing to put it into practice.

The Holy Spirit provided this quality for two implied reasons: (1) That the man might gain, by the experience in rearing his own children, the ability to rule the church of God. After saying that his children must be in subjection, he gave the reason: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" The only way the Lord specified for him to KNOW HOW to rule the church is for him to have his own children and house. (2) To demonstrate and prove to all in the church that he has the ability by having reared his own children to be Christians. Bad children of the elder are a bad example to other children, and also it indicates the inability of the man to properly lead in the way of the Lord.

Some have surmised that since Abraham was called into service before he had children (Gen. 18:19), and since Abraham was able to do the work which he was called to do before he had children, the elders need not necessarily have children to be qualified.

All who rely upon this type of reasoning with regard to the eldership vehemently oppose it in denominational preachers who try to use Abraham as an example to eliminate baptism from the plan of salvation. They say that Abraham was not baptized, and was justified, therefore we do not have to be baptized today to be justified. Abraham was not called to be a bishop of the church; the nature of his calling was not

such as required the same experience as a bishop. The two are not parallel at all.

Still another argument is that if children are essential to the elder, it would eliminate Paul.

H. E. Winkler, *The Eldership*, pages 109, 110: "I wonder if they, who contend for the thought that elders *must* have a plurality of children of their own, or even one child as for that matter, would be interested in a search through the annals of ancient history, sacred or profane, striving to determine just how many children elder Paul had?"

Ample evidence has been adduced to show that Paul was not an elder, consequently, Paul can not be an example of an elder without children. This entire proof is based upon the assumption that Paul was an elder, but until that very point is proved, nothing comes of the argument.

When other arguments fail, the appeal to human sentiment is the order. An illustration is given which follows this line: A good man has worked hard to prepare himself for the eldership but has no children. He sincerely wants to be an elder. He is an excellent Christian man. Shall he be deprived of the services because he has no children? Then the dramatic appeal: "I would hesitate a long time before rejecting him as an elder."

Very similar logic has been expressed with regard to the plan of salvation. Some young man wants to be saved from his sins. He has found himself in the physical position where it is impossible to be baptized. Shall he be deprived of salvation just because he cannot be baptized? We have heard scores of men say of someone who has departed this life, and who was not ready to enter eternity: "God's mercy will save him in spite of his sins, because he was a good moral man." Can we really believe that in the light of the Scriptures? Human reasoning cannot see how God would allow one to spend eternity in hell just because he did not do some little thing, as we conceive it, that God required of him, but if the Bible is to be a guide, we know it will be so. Human reasoning may not always properly evaluate God's requirement that a bishop be a father, but we know that is what the Bible says. If we invent some substitute for God's arrangement for the man to get the necessary experience of ruling by having his children in subjection, why cannot we substitute in other things where human reason dictates? Any other method of gaining experience of ruling is in the field of speculation, and when man gets into that field there are no limits to his substitution. With equal authority one might say a man can be an elder without being "apt to teach" as to say he can be an elder without "having believing children." God's plan never fails, and he provided that

bishops must have children who believe in order to know how to rule the church of God.

*Child or Children?*

A question of considerable interest is whether or not a man must have more than one child to meet Paul's requirement. Respected and reputable brethren in the church stand on both sides of this question. We must eliminate all prejudicial statements and irrelevant matter, avoid all extremes, and probe the statement and its context, comparing it with all comparable passages which are not in dispute, and elicit the true meaning from Paul's statement. Such issues as this are not settled by ignoring them, or by pushing aside the subject with "it makes no real difference." These two positions are not equal. To bind the one without sufficient proof is likely to put one in the unenviable position of binding on earth what is not bound in heaven, or to reject on earth what is bound in heaven. If the elder is not required to have but one child, to bind upon him more is legislating where God has not legislated; but if the elder must have more than one child to qualify, the man with only one child is ineligible.

This author has in the past committed himself to the position that a man **MUST** have more than one child to qualify for the eldership. The position in that form I now disown. It is the prerogative of students of the Bible to modify or change a point of belief when the evidence demands it. I do not feel in the least humiliated in admitting this error, because all are subject to mistakes, and the only righteous course to take is to admit them and make corrections as far as possible.

In *Church Officers And Organization*, published in 1948, I presented the position that no man could be qualified under any circumstances unless he had a plurality of children. The nature of this position is such that it will not lead any in the wrong way in the selecting and appointing of elders. It is a safe and sure course that is beyond question. No one will say that a father of several children, otherwise qualified, cannot qualify as an elder. But upon careful and extensive study of the question in an effort to uphold the position of a plurality of children, and I may say against my efforts in the study, I came to the conclusion that Paul did not bind the plural number to the exclusion of the singular. I shall now show the reason for this change. This cannot be construed to mean that if the father of one child is scriptural, the "no child" position follows. There is quite a difference in a father and one who is not a father. The man who has one child or ten children is a father, and the man who has none is not a father.

First, let us notice some arguments that have little or no merit in proving the bishop may be the father of only one child. These are frequently used but they are not convincing.

(1) If a questionnaire is sent to fathers asking: "How many children do you have?" the man with only one child would write "one," and this shows that *children* may mean *child*.

This does not really prove the point. The question asked is: "How many CHILDREN do you have?" Strictly speaking no one could properly answer this question as it stands who did not have two or more children. It is understood to mean: "How many (child or) children do you have?" The man who has only one child takes the part of the question (understood) that applies to him, and answers: "One" (child—understood). Certainly he would be incorrect to answer, "I have ONE children." But the man who has NO children answers the question in the same way as the man with one child, yet he is no father at all. He would say: "NONE" (no child—understood). If such an argument proves ONE child it proves NO child as well. This reasoning would eliminate completely the qualification.

(2) The passage says *children* and not *child*, therefore, only the plural will fulfill the Scriptures.

This argument sounds good on the surface, but there is one great weakness: if it has that meaning here it also means the same in other similar passages, which we know is not true. When we are asked: "Of what church are you a member?" we answer: "The church of Christ." Then if we are asked for the scriptural proof we cite Romans 16:16— "The churches of Christ salute you." This is the main passage in the New Testament we use to show the scriptural designation of the church, but it is plural. There is no passage that says *church of Christ*, even though a number of passages describe the church as belonging to Christ. We argue that the plural includes the singular. If so in this case, why not in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6?

(3) It takes at least two children to qualify the man because he can not get enough experience with only one child.

This misses the issue completely. The subject is not whether he needs several children in contrast with one to get the experience he needs. Sometimes it is more difficult to properly rear one child than several. And, too, it would tend to make the man with the most children the best qualified by experience, which is not always the case. The idea is to obtain the experience in ruling and to prove it to others, whether by one or twelve children.

I now list some reasons why *fatherhood* is the qualification to get the experience rather than the number of children. This is unlike the case of ONE wife where the number is specified, for here the number is not stated. Paul said to the Galatians: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal. 4:10). How many days did they observe?

We do not know. But when he said: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" we know how many there are because he stated the number.

1. There are rules of interpretation that must be applied equally to all like cases. It is not necessary here to give all the rules of exegesis, but only a few that have direct bearing upon this study. These rules not only apply to the Bible but to all writings.

(a) *Always interpret according to the known purpose of the writer.* It is unfair to take any man's language in a sense we know he does not use it. It may not always be easy to know the purpose of the writer, so we use methods in ascertaining this. First, the context will help us to know what the writer has in mind. For example, Paul said that by the works of the LAW shall no flesh be justified (Gal. 2:16). What law did he have in mind? The gospel by which we are justified is called a LAW (James 1:25). We know by the context that he meant the law of Moses. Second, the harmony with other inspired writers will help us to know what a certain writer meant by the use of a word. We should always apply the meaning to a word in harmony with its use by other writers. Paul labors in Romans to show that we are not justified by WORKS, yet James tells us that we are not justified without WORKS. Paul tells us what kind of works James refers to in Hebrews 11 when he speaks of the great cloud of witnesses who were justified by faith WHEN THEY OBEYED GOD. Therefore, the kind of works James commends is not what Paul condemns in Romans as works of the law, but the working of faith in obedience. We know what James means by WORKS when we see Paul by the same Spirit defining it. Third, we can learn what a writer means in one place by seeing his use of the word in another place. Again using Paul, he said in Romans 5:1 that we are justified by FAITH. What does he mean by *faith*? It is an obedient faith—one that works to obey God's commands. He said that the gospel was given for that purpose (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). We should always apply the meaning of any word to the known purpose of the writer, rather than give it a meaning that suits our own purpose.

(b) *We must always interpret words by the rules of language.* Words must always be understood in their literal sense in every place unless the text or context demands a figurative use. When there is some doubt as to the literal meaning of a word as the author uses it, it is always proper to apply the author's definition when he defines it either in the text or at some other place. If a word is used in the literal sense in two different passages it carries the same meaning in both places.

(c) *The Bible sometimes uses the plural for the singular and the singular for the plural.* Several examples may be cited. In Genesis 8:4 the ark is said to have rested upon the "mountains" (plural) of Ararat, yet we know that the ark could not have come to rest but upon one

mountain. In Genesis 19:29 it is said that God destroyed the "cities" in which Lot dwelt, but he dwelt in only one—Sodom. In Genesis 21:7 Sarah asked, "Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck?" We know that Sarah had only one child. In Genesis 46:7 Jacob took his family into Egypt, among whom were his "daughters" (plural), yet we know he had only one daughter—Dinah. In Jeremiah 6:16 the prophet speaks of the "old paths" (plural), but we know there is only one way.

Sometimes the singular is put for the plural in the Bible. In Genesis 1:20 the writer speaks of moving creature and fowl (singular) but he has reference to all creatures and fowls that had been created. In Deuteronomy 7:20 the Lord will send the "hornet" (singular) as punishment to certain ones. In Joshua 24:12 he sent the hornet. In referring back to Exodus 23:28 we see that it was "hornets" (plural). So the singular was put for the plural.

(d) *The same rule must be applied alike to all words when they are used in the same way.* The word "baptism" when defined and used in a text that shows it is connected to the remission of sins always means the same thing. The word "faith" when defined in a passage as a working or obedient faith in Christ, always has the same meaning in other passages that speak of an acceptable faith.

Therefore, in applying some of these rules of interpretation to the case of "children" in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 we must do one of two things: (1) Make all other similar passages where the word "children" is found mean only the plural. (2) Make this passage have the same application that we give to other passages where the plural "children" is found.

2. How is the word "children" used in other passages in the Bible? In both the Old and New Testaments the inspired writers used the plural for the singular and the singular for the plural in speaking of the offspring of a person. Since it is so obviously true in several other places, why would it not be true of I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6? What rule of language would we apply to one and not apply to the other?

We know that Sarah had only ONE child, Isaac, yet in Genesis 21:7 we read: "And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck?" The word in the Hebrew for "child" is *ben*. The plural is *banim*. The word in Genesis 21:7 is *banim* (plural) "children," yet we know that Sarah had only one son, and there were no more promised to her. The Greek equivalent of *banim* (children) is *tekna*. The Greek equivalent of *ben* (child) is *teknon*. The word "child" in Genesis 11:30 and "children" in Genesis 16:1 both refer to the same thing.

In Matthew 22:24 we read: "Moses said, If a man die, having no children (*tekna*), his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother." This is a case very similar to I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 in that it gives conditions to a certain goal, and "children" are involved in those conditions. In this one the man who dies without "children" (plural) has no seed and his brother must marry his wife and "raise up seed unto his brother." Now if the plural (children) here forbids the singular (child), the man must have at least two children before he has seed. This we know is not the meaning of "seed" because it was through the "seed" of Abraham that we were to be blessed, and Paul says the "seed" is ONE (Gal. 3:16). A man has "seed" in the sense of offspring when he has any number of children from ONE to as many as possible. The word "children" here is one condition that decides whether a man should marry his brother's wife or not. In like manner the word "children" is one condition that decides whether a man may be a bishop or not. If "children" means plural only in one case, by the same rule it must mean plural only in the other. If bishops must have "children" (meaning more than one) to be qualified, the man who died must have had "children" (meaning more than one) before he had seed, and thus his brother was obligated to marry his wife and raise up seed to his brother unless he had two or more children.

Matthew 22:24 relates that MOSES said that if a man die, having no children, his brother should take his wife. Let us read what Moses said about it and see what "children" means. "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no CHILD, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her" (Deut. 25:5). Here Moses said a CHILD (singular). If the plural forbids the singular and the singular forbids the plural, Matthew was wrong about what Moses said. Matthew and Moses wrote being guided by the same Spirit, and there is no contradiction in what they say. The plural "children" in Matthew 22:24 includes the singular of Deuteronomy 25:5, and the singular "child" of Deuteronomy 25:5, means the same as the plural of Matthew 22:24. So when we turn to read Matthew 22:24 and come to the word "children" are we going to say it forbids just one "child"—must be two or more? But if, as has already been shown, the plural here also means the singular, then by the same rule "children" in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 carries the same meaning. If not what rule will be applied?

Then in Acts 2 when Peter preached the first gospel sermon he answered the inquiry concerning the remission of sins in this way: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38, 39). Peter told the whole multitude the same thing but he put it on an individual basis—speaking to "every one of you." Each one was to repent, each one to be baptized for the remission of sins, each one to receive the Holy Spirit. He explains that the promise was to the same "each one of you" and to each one's children. Now if one of them should have only one child, would that eliminate the promise? Certainly not! Of course the promise would not apply to any children the man did not have. The word "children" means any offspring without regard to specific number. Whether a man has one or twenty children the promise is to those children as well as to the man. Now if the word "children" here means any number from one up, why would it not mean the same in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6? What rules of language would give it one meaning in one passage and another in the other? The obvious meaning in Acts 2:39 is: "For the promise is unto you, and to your (child or) children."

In I Timothy 5 Paul is talking about widows and their qualifications to be taken into the number to be supported by the church, and the word "children" has some connection to one of the qualifications. In verse 4 he says: "But if any widow . . ." This is about the same language as two chapters back when he speaks of the elders: "If a man . . ." In chapter 5:4 he is telling which widow is not to be taken into the number. "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." The widow who has children or nephews is to be cared for by them rather than obligate the church. If the word "children" (plural) in I Timothy 3:4 means only the plural number to the exclusion of the singular, then it has the same meaning in I Timothy 5:4, and the widow who has only one child is not obligated to be cared for by him, but must become a charge to the church if she is otherwise qualified. This we know is not the meaning. It obviously means "if any widow have (a child or) children . . ." Why would not the word "children" have the same meaning in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6?

Furthermore, the widow who is to be taken into the number to be cared for by the church, among other things, must be "well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children . . ." If the word "children" here means the plural only and excludes the singular, the widow who does not have two or more children cannot be taken into the number under this passage. But if it means, "if she have brought up (a child) children . . .," as it obviously does, why would it not have the same meaning in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6?



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 has the same meaning.

3. We commonly use expressions in the English where the singular includes the plural. Only one example is necessary to show that we universally understand and use this form of speech. Not long ago a large manufacturing company offered a gift to every child who was a certain age on the birthday of this company. The advertisement in the newspaper read in part: "Any father who will accompany his child of ten years of age today will receive a valuable gift free." I know of one man who had twins of the age to meet this condition and he carried them both and they each received identical gifts. The company understood and the father understood that the word "child" included the plural as well as the singular. No doubt the wording *child* was used because in most cases parents would have only one child that age on that date, but if they had more than one who qualified, the word "child" included them also.

We also commonly use the plural to include the singular. Almost every year we read in the papers an announcement that follows this style: "Be sure to register your children on next Tuesday for school." This, of course, is addressed to any father or mother with children. It does not apply to any who do not have children. But we all understand that it applies to the father who has only one child. It means: "Be sure to register your (child or) children on next Tuesday for school."

Since such expressions are so generally used and understood in the English language, why would it not have the application in the translation of I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6? This reason by itself would not be conclusive proof of the meaning of the two passages but together with the others given it strengthens the proof.

4. The word for *children* in the passage under consideration, as in so many other passages in the New Testament, is generic like the words: *men, houses, nations, tongues*, etc. In I Corinthians 7:14: ". . . else were your children unclean, but now are they holy" means any child of any number. In Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto man once to die," means any man, all men.

5. All instructions in the New Testament to fathers of "children" apply equally to the fathers of one child. Solomon said: "Train up a child . . ." (Prov. 22:6). To the father of more than one child this

instruction applies as well as to the father of only one child. It includes both one *child* and *children*. Paul said: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath" (Eph.6:4). Does this include the fathers of only one child? Does it follow from this verse that a father with only one child may provoke him to wrath simply because the passage says *children* and not *child*? If we understand this passage to mean any number of children, why not the same thing in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6?

It has been objected that in Ephesians 6:4 the passage says *fathers* (plural) and *children* (plural), which may include a father with one child and a father with two or more children, which would equal *fathers* with *children*. Whereas, it is only one man under consideration in I Timothy 3:4—"If any . . . having faithful children." This would compel ONE bishop to have CHILDREN (plural). This appears to be a forceful argument in favor of the bishop having more than one child to qualify. But let us apply the same logic to some other similar passages and see if it works. In the case of the widow in I Timothy 5 the qualifications are for a single widow just as in the case of the bishop. In verse 4: "But if any widow have children or nephews . . ." The same conclusion must be reached as in the case of the bishops. It would follow then that the widow with only one child or one nephew is not bound by the word of God to be supported by them; she must have more than one before she can be cared for by her children. This is not the case and no one so understands it.

Also in verse 10: "Let not A widow (singular) be taken into the number . . . if she have brought up children" (plural). Now if the above reasoning is applied here the widow who has not brought up CHILDREN (more than one) cannot qualify to be taken into the number to be supported by the church. No one so understands it. If the widow's *children* means one or more; as it obviously does, why should not the same logic be applied to the bishops in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6?

But the Bible shows us in one place that *children* of a man means one or more. In Mark 12:19: "Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die . . ."—this speaks of a man (singular)—"and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children . . ."—this speaks of children (plural)—that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother." Now does it mean that if the man has only one child he does not have seed and his brother should take his wife and raise unto him seed? We know that is not true because we turn to what Moses wrote and see these words: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no *child* . . ." (Deut. 25:5). If Mark 12:19 means one man with a child or children, I Timothy and Titus 1:6 also means a man with a child or children.

6. In view of these arguments we finally ask, How would Paul have worded the statement if he had intended that the bishop may be the father of one child the same as several in qualifying? If it had been the aim of Paul to say that a man whose CHILD or CHILDREN, including both the fathers of a singular child and fathers of a plurality of children, how could he have worded it better than he did? Actually Paul could not have employed better language than the Holy Spirit gave him in expressing this thought. Had Paul said the bishop must have a believing *child*, the argument would have been that the plural number would not do because he said *child* and that means only one.

The Holy Spirit always employed the words that leave no doubt when he intended more than one, and could have done so here. Jesus said: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). This language does not admit only one—it means two or more. Again Christ said: "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" (Matt. 18:16). The "two or three witnesses" will not admit only one—it means more than one. If the Holy Spirit had intended only the plural number of children to be a quality of the bishop, He could have employed language like this that would leave no doubt.

On the other hand, when the Holy Spirit intended us to understand only the singular of a thing he expressed it in a way that left no doubt. Paul said: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:5). This language will not admit more than ONE. But the term *children* may mean any number, and as we have seen in other places in the Bible it means one or more, that is its obvious meaning in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6. This expression in no way includes the man who does not have children for he is not a father in any sense.

There is always a safe course to pursue in every questionable issue of Christianity. We have always contended for that safe course in all matters pertaining to the remission of sins and worship and work in the church. Why not in the question of the qualifications of the eldership? Will anyone say that it is wrong in any sense to appoint men who have a plurality of faithful children, and who are qualified in all other respects? Since this course is always safe we encourage it in all places where the question of a single child prevails. However, we do not want to allow ourselves to be pushed by prejudice into a position of legislation where God has not legislated and bind conditions on earth that have not been bound in heaven.

### *Believing children.*

Does the "faithful children" of Titus 1:6 mean that the man's children must be Christians? or does it mean something else? Some have taught that this expression means that the bishop's children must be Christians IF they are old enough. But if that position be true it defeats the very purpose of the qualification—to obtain and demonstrate his ability to rule and guide in the way of the Lord by having those under his control to be Christians. It is said that there are many preachers and good men whose children are too little to be Christians, but will certainly be so when they are old enough. These men, they say, are definitely qualified. Well, it may be that these children will grow up to be Christians, in fact it is very likely in most cases, but since there are many known cases where preacher's children and other good men's children have developed into everything but Christians, we cannot be sure that a man has the ability to rule the church of God until he has proved it by having his own children faithful in the Lord. Also, in addition to proving to others his ability by having trained his children to be Christians, he needs to obtain the experience of ruling which can come in no other way. This is the reason for this qualification.

It has also been taught that *believing* does not necessarily mean *Christians*. The argument is that "belief" comes before baptism, the point at which one becomes a Christian, and since the children are to be *believers*, it really means that they must believe in God though they do not have to be old enough to have been baptized.

In Titus 1:6 the expression in the Revised Version is "children that believe," while in the King James Version it is "faithful children." *Faithful* means full of faith, and that means the same as "children that believe." When the Bible uses the term *believer* or *believing* without qualifying terms, it always means an obedient believer who has complied with the terms of heaven to be a Christian. That is exactly what the word means here. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30) means obedient faith to the point of becoming a Christian, because verse 34 says, after they were baptized, "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." This is the use of the word here. Some translations render the phrase: ". . . whose children are Christians." The bishop must have demonstrated his ability to train people in the way of Christianity by having reared his children to be Christians.

Others say that the expression means that the children must be obedient to their fathers. This position is without scriptural foundation and is not in harmony with the context. The bishop must be one who has obtained the necessary experience of ruling in the way of the Lord

by having his own children obedient to the gospel of Christ, and by this he can prove to the whole church that he has the ability. Moreover, the elder is one more advanced in age and his children would be old enough to be Christians. The passage positively means that the man who is to be an elder must be a father who has already gained the experience of training others by having trained his own children properly.

*Some related questions considered.*

There are some questions that seem to some to furnish evidence against the fact that the man for the eldership must have children who are Christians. These questions strive to put this position in a dilemma.

(1) H. E. Winkler, *The Eldership*, page 91: "Moreover it is claimed, by some, that the mention of 'children' and 'ruling his own house,' give emphasis to the thought that the elder must be a married man. Some have really claimed, the mention of children means he must have at least two, or a plurality of children, to be an elder.

"Now lets suppose a case, which doubtless has often happened: an elder has two children one of whom dies, leaving him with only one child. Would he be disqualified on the ground that he did not have children (plural)?"

First, let me say that supposing a certain case that seems to defy the qualification and then drawing the conclusion purely from human sentiment and reason does not answer the question. This same sort of reasoning is used by some denominationalists in trying to prove that baptism is not essential to forgiveness of sins. A case is supposed where one is in a predicament so that he cannot obey in baptism, and then conclude from human emotion that that person can be saved even though he was not baptized. But we know that does not prove that baptism is not for the remission of sins. Neither does a case as above prove that the qualification of having faithful children is not essential to the bishop.

But since it has already been shown that the word *children* is generic and means any number of offspring, the answer would be yes, the man who had one living child who was faithful and one who was dead would qualify in this one respect. But the question may be extended to say, What if he had just one child and he died, would he then be qualified? The answer to this question may be found in viewing again the purpose of the qualification. The purpose is not to demonstrate the ability to beget children, nor to keep them alive once he has them. The whole point is to obtain experience in leading in the way of the Lord, and to prove that ability to the church. That reason is given in these words: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how

shall he take care of the church of God?" (I Tim. 3:5). How do we know when a man is able to take care of the church of God? When we see that he knows how to rule his own house. How do we know when he is able to rule his own house? Only when he has done the job. Now after he has done that and proved to the church that he has the ability, the death of the child or children does not take away the experience he has obtained nor the proof of it to the church. That is the difference between the man who has reared children to be Christians and the man who has never had any children. The man who has no children does not have the real experience and cannot prove it, while the man who has reared his children to be Christians and they die, has both the experience and has proved it to the church.

The qualifications listed by Paul for a bishop must be present at the time of his appointment. That is the type of man Paul said to appoint. He left Titus in Crete to ordain elders in every city, and then he began to list the qualifications the man must have to be appointed. If a man had a child who died before he had obtained the necessary experience, and before he had proved it to the church by training that child to be a Christian, he would be no more qualified than the man who has no child. But if the man had obtained the experience by having reared his child to be a Christian, and had proved to the church his ability to do so, and his child died, he would have fulfilled the qualification. There is a big difference in this man and the one who has had no children.

The objection follows: If a man's children die they are no longer his children, thus he has no children and cannot be qualified. There is a big difference in this man, if he has reared his children to be Christians, and the man who has never been a father. The widow of I Timothy 5:9, 10 no longer has a husband, but there is a lot of difference in this widow and a woman who has never been married.

(2) Can a man have children and bring them up to be Christians in one year? In the days of the early church only a short time elapsed before elders were appointed. How could they beget and rear children to be Christians in one year?

The design of this question is to show that a man need not have children to be an elder because he cannot possibly rear children and make them Christians in one year. Of course, as that stands it is impossible to beget and rear to be Christians any child in one year or even five years. The truth is that even in the early church this was not all done in one year. Paul told Timothy and Titus to appoint men who had believing children. It takes time to qualify for the eldership, but nothing is said about all this being done in one year, or even ten years. Several qualifications require many years to acquire. The type of man described

for the eldership is a mature Christian man which takes many years to develop. Some men have developed many of the qualifications before they were converted, such as a good reputation, given to hospitality, self-control, etc., while others must wait until after they become Christians to develop, such as apt to teach the will of God, not a novice and holy. The time elapsing between the establishment of the church in a locality and the appointing of elders in New Testament times was not to allow time for the begetting and rearing of children, but so that his knowledge of truth and ability might be demonstrated. The status of his children, except for being Christians, was already established. It would take only a short time for him to convert his children if he had them properly trained otherwise.

(3) What about the elder who has children who are married and away from his OWN house? The passage says he must rule over "his own house," and all children who have married and have houses of their own are not in HIS house. He is without children "in his own house" if they are married. Is he qualified? If he can be an elder after his children are all married and away from home, and not in "his own house," he can be qualified with NO children. This passage does not include any children who are not in his OWN house.

This question is to prove that an elder need not be a father at all but it fails to do so. If the elder has married children who are Christians he has obtained the experience of ruling a family and has also proved it to the church. His OWN house means his own descendants—his children. *Idiou*—"pertaining to one's own; what is one's own as opposed to belonging to another; denoting ownership." *Oikou*—"A house, race, lineage, household; the inmates of a house, all the persons forming a family." As applied to the eldership, "one's own lineage or offspring." Whether his children are married or not, he still has "children who believe," and is qualified in this respect, whereas the man who has never had children neither has the experience nor has he proved it to others.

(4) If an elder's children, or some of them, go back to the world, does it disqualify him?

The only safe, scriptural answer here appears to many to be arbitrary and unreasonable, but to view it honestly we can come to but one answer. Yes, it does disqualify him. Paul plainly said, "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?)" The man whose children are worldly and sinful, however good the man himself may be, has failed in ruling his own house WELL and is very likely to fail at ruling the church of God. That is the reason he should have faithful children before being

appointed. This qualification is something he HAS done—"having believing children"—not something he might do later on. The man who does not have "believing children" has not qualified, whether it be that his children are not old enough or that he failed to bring them up to be faithful Christians. Paul also said the bishop's children must not be "accused of riot or unruly" in addition to being Christians. This means children of good reputation besides being faithful Christians.

This conclusion is difficult for many, especially those men who are guilty, to accept. Various sorts of excuses are given why children grow up out of the Lord or depart from the faith, all of which fail to dethrone the truth of Solomon's statement: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). The bishop must be a father who has trained his children in the way they should go, else he would not be able to train the church right. If he fails with his own children—those who are nearest him—how could he succeed with the church?

(5) If a man and woman are barren and unable to have children of their own, can they adopt children and fulfill the qualification? If they can, they can also qualify without any children, seeing that they do not have any of their own flesh and blood, which is the meaning of *tekna*.

The work *tekna* (children) is defined by Thayer as meaning natural descendants as in Romans 9:8; in a broader sense, posterity, as in Acts 2:39, including grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc. It also is used to refer to the children of promise (Gal. 4:28), which are the children of God by ADOPTION (Gal. 4:5). Therefore, it does not mean children of the flesh to the exclusion of children by adoption.

When a couple legally adopt a child, that child is as much a part of that family and has the same rights as a child of the flesh. We are adopted children of God, yet we are to be joint-heirs with Christ. (Rom. 8:17). Are we any less the children of God because we are adopted? Any man and woman who adopt a child, so far as the Bible and the laws of the land are concerned, that child is the same as their natural descendants. A man with adopted children, if he has reared them to be Christians, is as qualified as the man who has children by natural birth.

But it is said that if adoption is acceptable the man can qualify without children. Surely, one is not serious to argue in this manner. We all can see the difference in the man who has reared his adopted children as his own to be Christians, and the man who has had no experience in rearing either adopted children or his own flesh and blood. The man who has properly trained adopted children has as much experience as the father who has properly trained his own natural children. There is



no difference in so far as the experience in ruling is concerned, and that is the purpose of the qualification.

But the fact that the father of adopted children is equal to the father of natural children, in so far as this qualification is concerned, does not prove that a man has a father's experience who has been a school teacher or a superintendent of some boys club. Such a man may gain much experience in such work, but there are many other phases of a child's life that truly test a man's ability to rule and guide to be Christians that cannot be obtained in the school room. These are what makes fatherhood essential.

(6) An elder has four children, two are members of the church and two are not, although they are old enough. Is he qualified?

Some questions seem to pose a difficulty either way they are answered, but in this case, if the real purpose of this qualification is understood, the answer seems rather obvious. The man who has failed at rearing a part of his children to be faithful Christians has not proved his ability to rule the church of God. In fact, he has proved that he does not have that essential ability. If he has carefully taught his children the principles of Christianity to the point that they are Christians he has the ability to rule in the church and has demonstrated that ability to all. On the other hand, the man who has failed with some of his children shows that he is likely to fail with respect to some in the church. Since Paul did not directly answer this problem, but gave a very definite rule that the bishop must have reared his children to be Christians, we can only deduce that he meant ALL of his children should be properly trained. Any other conclusion would force us to abandon the fact that this quality is to obtain the ability of ruling well in the way of the Lord and to prove it to others.

(7) Must ALL of the elder's children be Christians even if some of them are not old enough?

The question just considered naturally leads to this one and we should give careful attention to it. The condition here is not exactly like the one above. Let us use the same illustration: the father has, for example, four children, and two of them have reached the general age to become Christians, and have done so. But two of them are too young but have the appearance of becoming Christians. This father certainly has the experience the same as the man who has only two children who are Christians. There are no signs that he has failed in ruling his own children well, as is the case of the preceding condition where the man has failed with some of his children. The logic of this position can be seen in the supposed case where a man has ten children, ranging in ages from two years to 20, and who has all of his children who have reached

the age of accountability obedient to the faith and the others well on their way.

But it may be said in the case of the man who has four children, two Christians and two not yet old enough, that it is not yet known whether he will fail with the two younger ones or not, just as in the case of the man who has two children too small to become Christians. This reasoning is not correct for one reason: the man who has some children who are Christians has gained the experience in ruling in the way of the Lord and he has proved it by having those children obedient to the gospel who are old enough, while the man who has no children who are Christians does not have the experience. In the case of the man who has two children obedient to the gospel and two old enough but not, has not proved that he does not have he ability to rule the church of God well.

Before any man can qualify to be in the eldership he must be a father and must have so trained his children as to have them obedient to the faith.

#### VI. MUST BE VIGILANT (Temperate—R.V.) (I Tim. 3:2).

The idea of exercising *vigilance* in discharging the duties of a bishop is forcefully taught in the New Testament. With this quality so evidently required of the elder in the exercise of his duties, it would be "necessarily implied" as a qualification even if it were not listed. But by being well implied and expressly stated its importance is more certain. What does this term include and what does it exclude?

The word used by Paul in I Timothy 3:2 is *naphaleon*. This word is defined by Greek authorities to mean: "To be sober; to be circumspect; temperate; abstaining from wine."

I have before me 15 English versions which translate *naphaleon* by four different words: *vigilant*, *temperate*, *sober*, and *reserved*. All of these English words will, in a very general way, express the idea of *naphaleon*, but all of them will not express the strict sense of the word. If we take the majority as the authority the word *temperate* would be the correct translation. But the majority rule is never conclusive in Bible matters. The translation in the Douay Version of *reserved* is too vague to really express the meaning given by recognized lexicographers. That leaves three words to consider. But which of these should be used to more correctly translate the original word?

Webster defines these three words as follows:

*Vigilant*—"Watchful; circumspect; attentive to discover and avoid danger or to provide for safety; wary."

*Temperate*—"Moderate; not excessive . . . Moderate in the indulgence of the appetites and passions . . . Cool; calm; not marked with passion; not violent."

*Sober*—"Not intoxicated or overpowered by spiritous liquors; not drunken . . . Not mad or insane; not wild, visionary, or heated with passion; self-possessed; regular; calm; thoughtful . . . Serious; solemn; grave."

Although these three English words can be used to generally express the same idea, they do not mean exactly the same. Sometimes words are used in the Bible interchangeably which do not carry exactly the same meaning in the strictest sense, such as *fornication* and *adultery*. One of these words may be used by an inspired penman in a broad sense to include both terms, but when both words are used in the same text it is understood that there is some difference in the meaning. The difference in the case of *fornication* and *adultery* is not in the act performed but in the persons involved.

From the definitions given above we may observe three distinctions made between them. *Temperate* means the moderation of anything without specific regard for the cause or effect. It means not excessive as regards anything. *Sober* also means moderation, but it includes in addition the cause of such moderation—a self-possessed person who is free from anything that would hinder temperance. *Vigilant* likewise carries the idea of moderation and the cause of such, but it goes further to include also the results of soberness—the ability to watch and discover danger—which essentially involves a moderate, self-possessed man. These differences appear to me to distinguish between these three English words that have been used to translate *naphaleon*, the word used by the Holy Spirit as a qualification for the bishop. How shall we determine which English word is more correct in translating it?

In the case of *fornication* and *adultery* as used in the Bible, when the two are used in the same text, as in Galatians 5:19, some distinction must be made between them. In the same sense where *temperate*, *sober* and *vigilant* are used in the same text some distinction must be made between them. In I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8 three different Greek words are used which may be broadly translated by either of these three English words. The Greek words are:

*Naphaleon*—Sober; to be circumspect; temperate, etc. (See definitions already given.)

*Egkrata*—Self-controlled, continent; having power over, possessed of; mastering, curbing, restraining; temperate. (See definitions under this heading.)

*Sophrona*—To be in sound mind; to practice self-control, temperate, moderate; in one's senses; curbing one's desires and impulses. (See definitions under this heading.)

I Timothy 3:2 has two of these words in the text—*naphaleon* and *sophrona*, one immediately following the other. Of course they do not mean exactly the same. In verse 3 the expression *ma paroinon*, translated "not given to wine," carries the idea of *temperate*; *sophrona* in verse 2 carries the idea of soberness, and *naphaleon* carries the idea of circumspect as the result of soberness and temperance. Also in Titus 1:8 two of those Greek words are found: *sophrona*—"Sober" and *egkrata*—"Temperate."

This being true, we know that the strict sense of these words is intended in the two passages; and *naphaleon* would mean not only a man with sound mind and moderate habits, but one who is circumspect or vigilant as the result of these qualities. Hence, we classify *vigilant* as a separate qualification from *temperate* and *sober*. If these close distinctions are not intended, I do not know why the same idea should be expressed in at least two different words in the same list of qualifications.

No one denies that the bishop must be a man of vigilance, but many do not seem to know what is meant by the term and how it is applied. Some have understood the word to mean the "vision" to imagine "great things." They talk about doing "great things for the Lord" by which they mean an operation on an enormous scale involving large sums of money and people. It is right to do as much as possible in the service of God, but anything that God requires of us is a "great thing," whether it involves few or many. Vision does not allow us to plan and work programs unauthorized by God, or to delete such requirements as have been bound upon us by the word. Men must have the ability to discern the end of a course pursued. It is very unlikely that any people will have vision unless their leaders manifest it before them. The right kind of vision requires a soberness and watchfulness on the part of the elders, without which the church is in great jeopardy. Each christian should be vigilant.

Vigilance does not in itself tell what the elders should watch for in the performance of their duties, but other passages do tell us. The elders should watch themselves and guard against departure from the doctrine. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves . . ." (Acts 20:28). They must watch for the souls of those under their charge to guard them against the evils that would damn their souls in eternity. . . . "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account . . ." (Heb. 13:17). "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). Moreover, the elders must watch for every opportunity to do good and to promote the

kingdom of Christ. All this requires a clear, vigilant mind, unhampered by drunkenness or self-ego. It means the bishop must be a self-controlled, watchful, alert man, having a foresight to know the end of a course being followed; a man who has developed the quality of being able to watch himself and others against sin, and who is able to scripturally take advantage of every opportunity to promote the Cause of Christ. He must have the ability to keep the church from departing from the truth in the course of its mission. Some elders do not have the vigilance against the many false doctrines that have invaded the ranks of the church in the person of teachers and preachers, and in some cases in the eldership. Such doctrines as premillennialism, materialism, modernism, unscriptural institutionalism, formalism, worldliness, and traits of denominationalism are making headway in some churches because this qualification is lacking among the elders. With proper vigilance the bishops can detect and correct these errors in their early stages and save the church over which they are overseers.

It is not impossible to find men who have clear minds and good vigilance in the work of the church. If this qualification is lacking in the eldership, the church will lose ground in spite of the fact that it has talents, money and opportunities to advance the Cause of Christ. Every man appointed to the eldership of God's church must be vigilant before he is acceptable in the sight of God.

## VII. MUST BE TEMPERATE (Titus 1:8).

Since we have already dealt in part with this word under the last section it will not be necessary to be as tedious here. Temperance is a very essential qualification in the eldership. Without it there are no restraints or controlling influences in many matters that would have direct bearing upon the work done by the elders. These men must be well trained in self-control and moderation before they are qualified for the noble work.

The Greek word used here is *egkrata* which authorities define as, "Having the mastery over, having possession of; having control over oneself, self-disciplined; temperate, continent, curbing, restraining." Obviously the exact meaning of the word is to be in good control of one's self to moderation in that which is lawful, and abstaining from all that is unlawful.

The English versions render the Greek term *egkrata* by *self-controlled*, *temperate*, *abstemious*, *self-governed*, and *continent*. It is not difficult to see the sense intended by the translators. The bishop must be a man of advanced ability and power to govern his own conduct to the point of restraining himself from over indulgence. He must be one who has good control of himself and well measured in all circumstances, not

to the extremes or unbalanced. The English equivalent, *temperate* or *self-control*, correctly expresses the original.

It has been said that no man can measure up to this quality to the point of being acceptable in the eldership. But every Christian must be temperate. According to II Peter 1:6 temperance is the fourth step in the growth of a Christian, and how can a mature man develop to the point of being a good, strong Christian without having added this virtue? If one has grown in the grace and knowledge of Christ he is a temperate man and should qualify in this respect for the eldership.

I have known some who profess to be elders who could neither control their tempers nor their tongues. Nothing is farther from a qualified elder than the man who lets himself fly into a rage when things do not go his way. This is one quality that can not be hidden. His speech and actions will show whether he has self-control or not. The church is usually no better than its elders, and if this qualification is lacking in the eldership, it will usually be lacking in the church. There is no reason why this quality should be considered of less importance than any one of the others listed. The bishop **MUST** be a temperate man, otherwise, he can not be scripturally appointed to the work.

#### VIII. MUST BE SOBER (Sober-minded) (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).

This qualification is very closely related to the two immediately preceding in this list. Although it can be generally stated with *vigilant* and *temperate*, the fact that the three words are found in the same list indicates a shade of difference between them, as we have shown in the discussion on the qualification of *vigilant*. *Sober-minded* considers temperance from the standpoint of CAUSE.

The Greek word used in both passages is *sophrone* and is defined by authorities to mean: "Discreet, prudent, moderate, temperate, chaste, sober; of sound mind, sane, in one's senses, curbing one's desires and impulses."

Of the 15 English versions used the word *sophrone* is rendered: *Sober-minded, sensible, prudent, discreet, master of self, sober, of sound mind, reserved, and sedate*.

Although all of these words differ in some respects in meaning, all of them have something in common, and it is here that we find the true expression in the English that is in the original word. Obviously the word *sober-minded* does not just mean one who is not drunk with liquor, though that idea is in the term, but it is much more inclusive and comprehensive than that. It means that quality to be calm, even tempered, cautious, circumspect, and wise in the full use of the mind and body under all circumstances to the point that good sense is shown in all

judgment, reason and understanding. The man who is to be appointed to the eldership must be one of a sound and well-balanced mind, possessing good common sense. He must be free from levity in the discharge of his duties. He can not be easily swayed to follow error. This would essentially require much learning from the experiences of life. Soberness means the opposite of intoxication, whether it be of the body by strong drink, or of the mind by frivolousness and instability.

What a wonderful thought to have good men with this quality directing the work and affairs of the church! The Lord's plan is perfect, and when we begin to see that men with this excellent characteristic are placed in the oversight of the church, we will begin to accomplish things impossible under some present set-ups. Like some of the other qualifications, this one can be easily detected in the man by observing his success in life and his even temper and control in manners and behavior.

One with a sound mind will be able to make good decisions on any matter which will be well grounded in truth and wisdom. The man who can never make up his mind on matters pertaining to his duty, but who must wait until he has obtained the "pulse" of the congregation or the wishes of his wife or someone else, is not a sober-minded person in the sense meant here. On the other hand, the man who is sober-minded is capable of making good decisions by applying his experience and ability to the problems before him. The levity and foolishness which sometimes characterizes the elders' meetings for business are indicative of the lack of this qualification. It will be disastrous to the Cause of Christ wherever it exists. If God is to be obeyed we must never appoint men to the eldership who are not *sober-minded*.

#### IX. MUST BE OF GOOD BEHAVIOR (I Tim. 3:2).

This qualification has not been given the attention it deserves because of the diverse opinions of what constitute behavior. A little investigation here will help us to see another essential qualification that God demands in the bishops of the church.

The Greek word employed by Paul is *kosmion* and is defined by authorities as: "moderate; regular; orderly, well-behaved, modest; well-arranged, of a man living with decorum, a well-ordered life."

The English versions render *kosmion* by *orderly, well behaved, of good behavior, unruffled, dignified, of comely behavior, of good conduct and decorous*. Again we notice a very strong similarity between all the terms used in the translations.

The type of man described here is a well-arranged, dignified, courteous and chaste man in the whole manner of his life. This is very

important to leadership and example. This means that in business the elder must be honest, fair and diligent as a workman. A man with whom all men will want to transact business because of his good, well-ordered life and dealings. Not only that, he must be a man of good behavior in his dress. He should be clean, modest and dignified to the extent of his ability, and not one who does not care how he appears in public. Furthermore, he must be orderly in his language. Jesus said the language portrays the condition of the heart (Matt. 12:34-37). His language should be kind, courteous and polite to all; not sour, gruff, rude, sharp and cutting. Also his habits must be clean and moderate. In short, in all phases of his life he must be a well-behaved person.

The effectiveness of the church depends largely upon the impression she can make on the world, and there are no greater representatives of the church than the elders. How excellent would the church appear to those of the world in general if her elders were men of good behavior? And, too, the members of the church would have good examples in what a Christian should be by observing the overseer. A man in shabby, unkept dress, a filthy, undignified language, and a nasty, ungentlemanly disposition could never qualify for the eldership. Let us see that this type of man is never appointed, and if such should be found in the eldership he should immediately resign because he is not qualified according to God's standard.

#### X. MUST BE GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).

Another qualification necessary to the bishop is the disposition and ability to be hospitable to strangers. The nature of his duties will require this ability. The Greek word in both passages is *philoxenon* and is defined by Greek authorities as: "Hospitable, generous to guests, loving toward guests, given to hospitality."

The English translations used in this study translate the word by *hospitable, given to hospitality*. Webster says of the word *hospitable*: "Receiving and entertaining strangers with kindness and without reward; kind to strangers and guests; disposed to treat guests with generous kindness." Thus it is required of those men who are bishops that they be kind, generous and entertaining to guests and strangers.

This disposition is required of all Christians toward each other. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (I Pet. 4:9). We are also to show kindness toward all men. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10.) "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). A scriptural elder must be one who loves strangers and will



receive them into his home to entertain them and supply their needs generously. He must be a man who has the spirit of the good Samaritan who helped the stranger on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho.

One of the great needs of many congregations is hospitality and friendliness, and who should be more fitted to lead and set the example for this good trait than the overseers? They would be better known and loved if each one would cultivate the habit of warmly greeting all new comers and visitors, as well as the members, to every service. No one makes a stronger impression in this than the bishops of the church. This hospitality means more than just inviting the preacher or some good friend into the home. It means to greet and invite strangers and weak members into the home or the church services with kindness and love.

The man for the eldership must be "given to hospitality"—not just to do it out of a sense of duty, but one who really "loves hospitality"—one who enjoys and delights in helping strangers. One of the warmest and most Christian things that can be said of any congregation is that the members are hospitable and friendly, especially the elders. The man who does not develop this good quality will not make an elder: he is not scripturally qualified.

**XI. MUST BE APT TO TEACH—HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS. (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9).**

The Greek term in I Timothy 3:2 is *didaktikon*, which is defined as: "Apt to teaching, apt and skillful in teaching." The expression means a person who is capable and able as a teacher; one who is qualified by reason of knowledge to teach others. The bishop must have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the Bible in general so as to teach it to others—to convey the principles and work of a Christian to all—either publicly or privately, according to his talents and ability.

This quality is a relative one just as many of the other qualifications are. No two men can claim to have exactly the same ability and knowledge to teach. Some have the talent to teach privately or in small groups, while others can do so before large assemblies. This qualification does not necessarily demand that an elder be a scholarly preacher of the gospel, or that he must do all the public teaching in the discharge of his duty. The contention of those who cry "Pastor System" to those preachers who preach regularly for one congregation is that the elders must do all the preaching and teaching after they are appointed. This is not true. The bishops must be ABLE to teach, but Paul did not say that only the elders are to do the teaching where they serve.

The term "shepherd" or "pastor" indicates that the nature of an elder's work is to "feed" or teach the gospel. The elders may do this in several ways. They may do the teaching personally and publicly themselves. They may do it by demonstrating Christianity in their lives before the congregation, which they must do as elders. They may secure an evangelist or several evangelists to assist them in teaching the word of God. This, of course, does not relieve the elders of the responsibility to supervise ALL the teaching and to do some of the teaching themselves, either privately or publicly. They may train and use any or all Christians who are capable to teach to assist them. The evangelist is to be "apt to teach" as well as the elders (II Tim. 2:24), but he is to work under the elders in doing so (Acts 20:28).

Webster defines *apt* as: "Fit, suitable, appropriate, liable, having a usual tendency, inclined, ready, quick, able." It means one who is qualified to teach in any one or all ways of instruction. The Bible teaches that women must be able to teach (Titus 2:3, 4), but it does not mean that they are to do so publicly before the assembly. One is APT to teach when he has the proper knowledge and by his life and by word of mouth can convey the truth to other people. This statement requires that each elder must have a good knowledge of truth so that error can not creep into the church to destroy it, and that each person under his charge should know his duty to God and man.

The passage in I Timothy does not tell exactly what he must be "apt to teach," though it is clearly inferred. It has been variously translated as "apt to teach," "an apt teacher," "able to teach," "fit to teach," "qualified to teach" and "with a gift for teaching." The passage in Titus 1:9 is generally translated to mean that the bishop must cling or hold fast to the faithful word of God to the end that he may be ABLE to do two things: (1) Exhort and encourage others in the faithful word, and (2) To refute and convict those who may oppose the faithful word of God. This takes ability to teach, which is exactly what is stated in I Timothy 3:2. The idea of holding fast the faithful word is not only true of elders, but also of Christians in general (II Thess. 2:15; I Tim. 6:3), and of preachers of the gospel (II Tim. 1:13). Why is it unreasonable to find men who are apt or capable to teach the word of God to be appointed to the eldership?

Titus 1:9: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be ABLE (apt) by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." This would include all that Christ has required of Christians. First, this passage teaches that he must cling to the truth and not be turned to error. He must hold fast to the faithful word that he may be able to judge between truth and error. He must detect false teachers at once and either correct them or take them out of the position

to teach the error to the church. He must guide the church in the wholesome doctrine that produces spiritual growth. Second, he must be APT or ABLE by his knowledge of truth to convince the gainsayers and put them to silence. Here are at least two reasons why he should be APT to teach. The Bible is to be his only standard of authority in teaching.

So often this qualification is overlooked in searching for men for the eldership. If those are found who have the proper family relations and are good men generally, they are appointed without regard to their aptness to teach the truth of God. This is a very serious matter because the destiny of the church depends upon the proper teaching. Many who are holding the title "Elder" do not know the difference between truth and error on some of the most important questions confronting the church today. How will the church be kept safe against false teachers unless the elders are qualified to distinguish between truth and error? Many men in the oversight today do not know the errors of modernism, materialism, premillennialism, denominationalism, or any other ism that poses a threat to the church. What is to be the destiny of the church under such leadership? How can such men lead the church into a greater service to God? Many are satisfied with philosophical, social and entertaining sermonettes, and they are usually successful in finding men who will tickle their itching ears with their own doctrine. For the safety of the church only those men who know the truth and stand by it body, soul and spirit, and who are qualified in all other respects, should be appointed to the eldership. Then the bishops should demand clear, straight and forceful preaching and teaching of truth, for only that truth will make men free (John 8:32).

Before any man is qualified to hold the work of an elder he must be "apt" to teach the "faithful word as he has been taught" and use that truth to convince those who are in error. No man can uphold that truth unless he is well acquainted with it himself. In some places the eldership makes no attempt to do any of the teaching, either privately or publicly. This is a serious neglect of duty. There are times when only the eldership can be effective in admonishing and teaching some member who needs correction. He must be able to teach in order to perform his duty. The crying need for churches everywhere is men in the oversight who are qualified to see that God's truth is taught.

## XII. MUST BE OF GOOD REPORT OF THEM WHICH ARE WITHOUT (I Tim. 3:7).

The scriptural bishop must be a man with a good report of those who are not members of the church as well as those who are in the church. All too often men are selected and appointed to the eldership without regard for their reputations among those people who are not

Christians. It is important that men begin early enough in preparation for the eldership to obtain a good reputation among all people.

The Greek terms in this passage are: *marturian kalan echein apo ton exothen*, which are defined by authorities as: *Marturian*—"Testimony: testifying concerning one's character"—*Kalan*—"Good, noble, honorable"—*Echein*—"To have: to hold"—*Apo*—"Of, come from"—*Ton*—"Those"—*Exothen*—"From without, outward, those not belonging to the church." Hence, literally, the bishop must be one whose character is good and honorable as held by those who are not members of the church.

The various English translations render this statement thus: *A good report from them that are without; A good reputation of outsiders; Well thought of by outsiders; Good standing with outsiders; Good testimony from those without; Favorable reputation among outsiders; Bear a good character with people outside the church; Honorable testimony from those without.*

Not only must all the members of the church have complete confidence in the bishop, but those out of the church who know him must consider him a good, honest, godly man. He must be right in his dealings with all men. Sometimes personal bitterness on the part of some guilty person will cause him to speak evil of an elder, especially when that elder has tried to correct that person. Such personal attacks are usually known to be without foundation and are thereby not considered to really damage his reputation among all fair minded men. Jesus said, "Beward when all men speak well of you." Those personal enemies will be such because of the truth for which the elder stands, and not because of gross wickedness in his life. Christ and his apostles had many enemies who spoke evil of them, but the charges could not be sustained. So must it be with every man for the eldership. The man who has the reputation for being self-willed, arrogant, contentious, whose word is no good, who cheats and steals in business, a drunkard, etc., can not qualify for this work. Some men appear in some elderships over the country who do not have a good reputation even among their own brethren, much less among those outside the church. Because of this it is little wonder that failures appear in trying to persuade men to obey the gospel of Christ. It is almost an impossible task to make any progress where the men in the eldership have a poor and unfavorable reputation among people in general. This condition must be cleaned up. A man with a wicked and sordid reputation can repent of his sins and live a righteous life and finally be saved, but he can never be an elder of the church as long as he has a black reputation in his past life.

Paul tells why this is an essential quality: "Lest he fall into the reproach and the snare of the devil." The temptations that draw away from the faith are over-whelming to the man whose life has been full

of evil. Outsiders are too ready to accuse the church because of his past evil. The snares of Satan are set to recapture anyone who has suffered an evil reputation, especially when he has not lived in the faith long enough to overcome that evil reputation. In the position of an elder his past would certainly be good bait in wicked hands to do irreparable damage to the church.

We do not affirm that the man to be an elder must have lived all his life without mistakes that would mar a reputation. All of us have done things in the past that would not make a good reputation for a Christian if all men knew them. God forgives sins and they are remembered no more by Him. One might live righteously long enough that his good would blot out the evil of his past in the minds of those who may know of it. Paul is saying that the man whose reputation is bad among outsiders is not fit to be an elder. Reputation can be made good as well as bad, and one with a bad reputation may live in such a way long enough to completely reverse it among outsiders.

The devil uses every sort of trick and device to destroy the work of Christ, and one of his best traps is the glaring reputation of a wicked and unrighteous man in the eldership. Paul says the bishop **MUST** have a **GOOD** reputation among those who are **NOT** members of the church. It is certainly understood that he must also have a good reputation among all those who are members of the church. Let us not overlook this excellent qualification in those men who are to be appointed to the eldership.

### XIII. MUST NOT BE GIVEN TO WINE (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).

Some discussion has been held over whether this statement means that the bishop is not to take **ANY** wine of any kind under any circumstances, or whether it means that he must be very moderate in taking it—not addicted to wine. By searching the definitions of the words used by Paul we hope to clarify this matter.

The Greek is *ma paroinon* in both passages and is defined by authorities to mean: *Ma*—"Not, by no means; never at any time"—*Paroinon*—"Given to wine, drunken with wine; quarrelsome."

It literally means not subject to wine—not drunken. This word occurs only in these two passages. It refers to what takes place over wine; one who is subject to wine. Some call attention to the difference in the language here and in I Timothy 3:8, concerning wine. (See Qualifications of Deacons.) Paul said of the elders that they must not be "given to wine," while saying of the deacons that they must not be "given to **MUCH** wine." It is concluded that the elders may never taste the wine while the deacons may drink a little—not too much. Whether or not

this is the right conclusion will become more evident by comparing this section to that of the qualifications of the deacons.

The English versions translate this phrase in the following ways: *Not given to wine; Not a drunkard; No drunkard; Not addicted to strong drink; Not a wine-drinker; Not a hard drinker; No brawler*—(footnote—not quarrelsome over wine.)

Wine (unfermented grape juice) was used both as a beverage and a medicine in New Testament days. All people used it. But when this juice began to grow old and ferment it would make one drunk, and for this reason those who drank it had to use moderation. It should not be inferred here that the drinking of wine, as it is sometimes used in the New Testament, was absolutely and entirely prohibited; for the word does not properly express that idea. Some wine would make people drunk (Acts 2:13), and drunkenness is strongly forbidden in the Bible among all classes of people (Isa. 5:11; Rom. 13:13; I Cor. 5:11). The punishment for drunkenness is severe (Matt. 12:45, 46; I Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21). From this general teaching we learn that no one—elder, deacon, preacher, or any member—can become a drunkard with the approval of God. But it does not follow from this that wine as a beverage was always and absolutely forbidden. The vows of a Nazarite forbade the drinking of any wine or strong drink—John the Baptist was an example (Lk. 1:15)—but others were not bound to this vow. Evidently Christ himself drank wine (grape juice) as a beverage, because he said the Pharisees accused John the Baptist of having a devil because he did not eat bread and drink wine (Lk. 7:33), but they said Christ was a gluttonous man and a wine bibber because he ate and drank (Lk. 7:34). We could not accuse Christ of doing wrong by drinking this kind of wine. He also made wine out of water at Cana for the marriage feast (John 2:1-10). We could not accuse Christ of contributing to drunkenness and sin by this miracle. This kind of wine was not for the purpose of drunkenness, but was simply grape juice.

Wine was also used as a medicine both internally and externally. Timothy was told to drink a little wine for his stomach's ailments (I Tim. 5:23). The good Samaritan poured oil and wine in the wounds of the half-dead man he found by the way (Lk. 10:34). Obviously such use of wine by those to be elders is not prohibited in the passage under consideration. Therefore, the passage refers to drunkenness and the habits and conduct of one under the intoxicating influence of strong drink.

The man for the eldership must not be subject to wine or other intoxicating liquors of any kind, but abstain completely from the fermented juice of grapes and other berries or fruits that would cause drunkenness. He must not participate in strong drinks so that he becomes

a drunken brawler. His reputation and mind must be free from all influences of evil and intoxication; nothing must unbalance the mind or body. But the kind of wine spoken of in the Bible as not causing intoxication is not forbidden here.

John the Baptist did not drink wine or strong drink (Lk. 1:15). God commanded Aaron and his sons not to drink wine or strong drink when they entered the tabernacle. It meant death to them if they did (Lev. 10:9). If God would not permit those who served in the tabernacle to come under the influence of strong wine, why should we expect that any could use it and serve as overseers of the Lord's church? Paul said at another place: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Instead of having the mind clouded with intoxicating drinks, have the mind enlightened with the Spirit of God.

"What about Paul telling Timothy to drink wine?" (I Tim. 5:23) is a question occasionally asked by some who try to satisfy their consciences in the use of intoxicating liquors. First, Timothy was not an elder and, therefore, has nothing to do with this point. Secondly, Timothy was told to use this wine as a medicine. This is quite a different thing from using it to induce intoxication. Thirdly, Paul told Timothy to use "a little" for his stomach's sake. If one used the type of wine approved for drinking in the New Testament; if he used it for medical purposes and not for intoxication; and if he used A LITTLE, he would at least have a Bible example for his authority. But that is not what Paul is speaking of in the qualifications of a bishop. He is talking about something that produces drunkenness and brawling. Today men can prescribe a much better medicine than wine of any type. The wine purchased in stores is of alcohol content and is for the purpose of intoxication. Leave it alone! It is the snare of the devil to thousands of souls. There is no acceptable use for wine or intoxicating liquors today. Since no Christian ought to be found using wine or strong drink, it is not reasonable to conclude that God would permit the overseers of the church to be subject to wine. The expression: "Not given to wine" simply means that the elder must not be subject to intoxication to any degree, nor to the habits and practices that accompany drunkenness. The bishop must not be given (subject) to wine or strong drink.

#### XIV. MUST NOT BE A STRIKER (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).

This is another quality of the bishop that concerns attitude and conduct toward others. The Greek in both passages is *ma plaktan* and is defined by authorities as: *Ma*—"Not, by no means; never at any time"—*Plaktan*—"Striker, bruiser, ready with a blow; a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person."

The English translations render this variously as, *Not a striker; Not violent; Not pugnacious; Not a fist-fighter; Not given to blows; Not ready to wound; Not a brawler.*

Before going further we want to take notice of the use of the same word here in some translations to render some of the other qualifications. For example, the English word *brawler* is used in the Revised Version to translate the qualification which we dealt with in the last section, while the King James Version uses the same word to translate another of the qualifications. This can be explained by taking the word in one place to mean the CAUSE, such as strong drink, while at another place it is the EFFECT, such as the physical action of a drunkard. Here we are speaking of the physical reaction that results from an angry, over-bearing person.

A *striker* means "one who hits with force, either with the hand or an instrument." *Pugnacious* means "disposed to fight; inclined to fighting; quarrelsome; fighting." *Brawler* means "A noisy fellow; a wrangler."

It was once suggested to me that this word meant "a quitter"—one who goes on a strike. We have many of those kind in some elderships, but that is not what this word means. It means a man who is always ready to fight those who are against him; one who strikes back with a blow.

The man for the eldership must be a peaceable person who is not apt to strike others who may oppose him. He must not be ill-tempered, unable to govern his temper; or one who resents with insults or wrongs, real or otherwise, those who revile him. But he must be patient and kind even to all who insult him; not one who is ready to fight at the slightest provocation.

Many men have been placed in the eldership who have the disposition to fight back against anyone who speaks against him. They will treat others with abusive language in a disorderly manner. This was not the attitude of Christ and the apostles when they were reviled. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." This qualification is important to every man in the eldership. The elder must be firm and steadfast with the truth, but that is a very different thing from fighting back at the personal insults against him and seeking vengeance against all those who may oppose him.

XV. MUST NOT BE GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 5:2).

Greed for money has caused all types of crime known to man, and it involves all kinds of humanity. The rich will lie and cheat to obtain



more money. The lazy will rob even widows for money. The wicked will kill and destroy for money. The hungry and poor will fight and steal for it to provide the necessities of life. All are subject to this hateful greed for money, and it takes a lot of self-control and love for God to resist its power. The New Testament teaches us that no Christian should covet riches above righteousness, and warns the rich of this world to be careful (Matt. 6:33; I Tim. 6:17).

The Greek here is *ma aischrokerdas*, which authorities define as: *Ma*—"Not, by no means, never at any time"—*Aischrokerdas*—"Eager for base gain; sordid." The idea is that the man must not obtain money in a wicked and unlawful manner; not to be greedy to obtain and keep selfishly the wealth of this world.

The English versions render this phrase as, *Not greedy of filthy lucre; Not desirous of filthy gain; No lover of money; Not avaricious; Not addicted to dishonest gain; Not making gain by dishonest methods; Not greedy for dishonest money.*

Some understand this to mean that the man must not use any base or evil methods in making money, while others understand it to mean that the man must not have a strong or extreme desire to obtain money. Actually the statement comprehends both thoughts. The excessive desire to obtain money will usually lead the man to base and wicked methods of obtaining it. Both the excessive desire for wealth, and the ungodly methods of obtaining it are strongly prohibited in this qualification, but the method of base gain is here emphasized.

It is not to be understood that a wealthy man can not be an elder. Wealth as such is nowhere condemned in the Scriptures, but the LOVE and GREED for wealth is everywhere condemned. Abraham was a wealthy man, but he did not allow his money to separate him from his love and duty to God. The rich young man in Matthew 19 turned away sorrowfully from the Lord when he was told to part with his money and follow Christ. His love for his money was greater than his love for Christ. This is the nature of this qualification—the love of money to the extent that one will use sordid methods to obtain and keep it.

Money, though the main object of this qualification, is not the limit of the greed. The principle would include anything considered as wealth, such as property and power. The man for the eldership must be a lover of the church and the souls of men far beyond the love for the wealth of this world. He must never strive to gain personal wealth at the expense of his duties as an elder. He must be one who will not bargain or trade with the unjust for his own gain and prestige. Some men will go to any length to gain the office of a bishop, and then do almost anything to hold it. Not only elders, but everyone professing Christianity, should

not and must not be given to filthy lucre. Christians are commanded to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). "For the love of money is the root of all evil" says the apostle Paul (I Tim. 6:10). Any man who is a devout Christian should have this qualification.

Some elders were supported financially by the church over which they served in New Testament times. This posed a problem then, as it does now, that must be mentioned. Peter said the elder must not seek and serve in the position of overseer just for financial gain (I Pet. 5:2). In principle this would also be wrong in preachers who serve solely for the financial assistance they receive. In all business affairs and means of financial support for the bishops and their families must be above reproach. Paul showed the elders at Ephesus "how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). No man can use base methods of obtaining money and be qualified to be a bishop in the church of Christ.

#### XVI. MUST BE PATIENT (Gentle—R.V.) (I TIM. 3:3).

Patience is an excellent quality to be found in any Christian. It makes us more like Christ who displayed completely this outstanding characteristic. Patience is one of the steps in the development of a mature Christian, stated by Peter in outlining the virtues of Christian growth (II Pet. 1:6). If we could all develop this wonderful Christian trait we would eliminate a great deal of the misunderstanding and quarreling that characterizes some congregations.

The Greek word here is *Epieika*, which authorities define as, "Fitting, suitable, fair, reasonable, kind, mild, equitable and gentle." These describe a gentle and patient man.

The various English translations render this word by *Gentle; Lenient and conciliatory; Man of moderation and peace; Genial; Considerate; Averse to contention; Forebearing; Patient*. The elder must be a very kind and meek character in his relations and considerations of all others, rather than a bitter, unkind, stern and disagreeable person. While the Bible requires the bishop to be patient and kind in all his dealings with others, there is no room for him to be weak and compromising with error and evil. As Christ was strongly and sternly opposed to hypocrisy and worldliness, so must the elders be in their fight against wickedness. But while they oppose the error they must be patient and considerate of the persons entangled in the sin.

The man who is to be an elder must not be easily provoked; not revengeful; not eager or impetuous. When patience does not reign, gravity can not exist. The impatient man can disrupt and disorganize

the love and purity of the church as quickly as any defect known. Hasty action often causes much suffering and offense.

Haven't you noticed the "hot headed" elder (?) who doesn't have any patience with anyone? He can drive away more visitors and weak members than any other weakness in the church. There is nothing more unlike Christ than an impatient man. If God were as impatient as some of the men in the elderships of the churches today, none of us would ever reach heaven. God is long-suffering and patient toward all of us who are weak and sinful. He does not approve and indorse our sins, but He is patient and long-suffering with us in trying to lead us from the sin. This God-like qualification must be in the man before he is a scriptural elder. A gentle, kind, considerate and loving man can solve almost any problem that may come up in the affairs of the church. Men and women will come to him with their needs and troubles because he is kind and patient with them, and they will support him in his efforts to accomplish the will of God. In line with some of the duties of the bishops, some people will naturally come to them who are weak and frail spiritually and seek their counsel. Others will come who are unpleasant and harsh. The elders must be the kind of men who will be patient and gentle in their dealings with all classes in an effort to encourage and strengthen them in the responsibilities of Christianity. We certainly must have patient men in the eldership if the church is to be successful in her mission.

XVII. MUST NOT BE A BRAWLER (Footnote R.V. — "Not quarrelsome over wine") (I Tim. 3:3).

This qualification is somewhat related to one we have already studied under Section XIII. In the King James Version both of these qualifications are found in the same verse, which would indicate some difference in the meaning. However, this same order of qualifications does not appear in the Revised Version and some others. Perhaps here is a good place to review the order of the qualifications in the King James Version with that of the Revised Version to determine which one more nearly agrees with the Greek text. By consulting *Berry's Greek Testament*, *Westcott & Hort* and the *Englishman's Greek Testament* we find the following order in I Timothy 3:3 as compared with the King James Version and the Revised Version:

(Compare order of lists on next page)

GREEK TESTAMENT	KING JAMES	REVISED
1. Desire	1. Desire	1. Desire
2. Without reproach	2. Blameless	2. Without reproach
3. Husband of one wife	3. Husband of one wife	3. Husband of one wife
4. Temperate (vigilant)	4. Vigilant	4. Temperate
5. Sober-minded	5. Sober	5. Sober-minded
6. Of good behavior	6. Of good behavior	6. Orderly
7. Hospitable	7. Given to hospitality	7. Given to hospitality
8. Apt to teach	8. Apt to teach	8. Apt to teach
9. Not given to wine	9. Not given to wine	9. No brawler (footnote: Not quarrelsome over wine)
10. No striker	10. No striker	10. No striker
11. Not greedy of base gain	11. Not greedy of filthy lucre	11. But gentle
12. Gentle	12. Patient	12. Not contentious
13. Not a brawler	13. Not a brawler	13. No lover of money
14. Not loving money (covetous)	14. Not covetous	14. Rules well own house
15. Ruling own house well	15. Rules well own house	15. Children in subjection
16. Children in subjection	16. Children in subjection	16. Not a novice
17. Not a novice	17. Not a novice	17. Of good testimony
18. Of good report	18. Of good report	

It will be noticed that the order of the list in the King James Version is the same as that in the Greek Testament, while the Revised Version has combined and re-arranged two or three of them. In this respect we prefer the King James Version. Some shade of difference in meaning must exist between these words that are used in the same text. The Revised Version combines the qualification "not given to wine" and *amachon*—"Not a brawler," but the list in the King James Version is in harmony with the Greek.

The Greek term is *amachon* and is defined by authorities to mean, "Without fighting, met., not contentious . . . without battle—with whom no one fights; unconquered: unconquerable. Not having fought. Abstaining from fighting . . . in the N.T. twice metaph. not contentious: I Tim. iii, 3; Tit. iii. 2." The idea of abstaining from battle, whether physical or verbal, is inherent in the word. It is not to be understood that the bishop is to abstain from "contending earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3).

The battle with evil and wickedness must go on continually. The idea here is that the man must not be one to battle and wrangle for opinions and self-interest.

The various English translations render this word by, *Not a brawler; not contentious; not quarrelsome; not avaricious; conciliatory; not pugnacious; averse to contention; and averse to strife.*

As we have already noticed, some few translations have arbitrarily combined the qualification "Not a striker" and "Not a brawler," while the Greek text shows the two words in the same verse. This means that the Holy Spirit intended some shade of difference in their meanings. The word *striker* indicates that one who hits or literally strikes another as the result of either drunkenness or the wrong attitude toward others. The word *brawler*, as here used, indicates the person whose disposition and attitude is such that he wrangles and quarrels even to blows. One strikes at the CAUSE or source while the other condemns the EFFECT or actual fighting.

Webster defines *brawl* as "to quarrel or speak noisily and indecently. To roar, as water; to make a noise . . . uproar; loud or angry contention." A *brawler* is "a noisy fellow; a wrangler." He defines *striker* as "one who or that which strikes." A *brawler* differs from a *striker* in that the first is a quarreling, noisy disturber, while the second is a fighting person, who can not control his temper.

The man for the eldership must not be subject to striking his adversary and contention over his own personal rights. He must be one who can surrender his rights to others to avoid wrangling and fighting over opinions, and he must also be one who contends earnestly for the faith. Paul said to "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:9). "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

The bishop must not be a man who contends and noisily fusses over matters with any one. Many of us can not differ with others without hatred and anger getting the best of us. The elder must be a man who seeks and contributes to peace. The one who is always quarreling and fighting with his family is certainly not qualified for the eldership. The bishop must be able to show the church how to deal with people without contention and strife. There is no place in the family of God for those who will loudly debate and strive over matters with his brethren, and surely there is no place for such in the eldership. The peace of the church can be greatly improved by appointing scriptural men who are not brawlers to the eldership.

It sometimes occurs that the elders will meet to decide some course of work for the church, and during such a meeting one of the elders (?) who is a brawler will demand that his course of action be taken, even though in the judgment of all the others it would not be the best course. It may even be a matter of faith which has already been decided by the word of God. This fellow will noisily quarrel and wrangle with his fellow-elders until he so disrupts the peace that division in the church will result. That is one danger of ignoring this qualification when men are considered for the eldership. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." (I Cor. 14:33). God does not indorse any man who is a brawler to be in the church, must less in the eldership. Let us see that such men are never appointed to the eldership.

### XVIII. MUST NOT BE COVETOUS (I Tim. 3:3).

Covetousness is condemned in many places in both the Old and New Testaments. It is one of the glaring sins in the church today, and must be eliminated if we are to make the progress we should. One of the ten commandments given to Israel was against covetousness. In the New Testament Christ condemned this sin among the Pharisees in the strongest language. In the epistles of Paul the sin is condemned a number of times. How could we expect a covetous man to be in the eldership when it is too plainly condemned of all Christians?

The Greek term is *aphilarguron* and is defined by Greek authorities to mean, "Free from avarice. (It is purely N.T. form). Not covetous. Not loving money, not avaricious; only in the N.T., twice vis. I Tim. iii.3; Heb. xiii.5."

The English versions used in this study translate the Greek word as follows: *No lover of money; not covetous; not loving money; not a lover of money; not avaricious; after no money; not fond of money.* It is plain to see that the idea is not to covet money. The other place where this word is used is Hebrews 13:5, where Christians are admonished to live in a manner not loving money. The elders should be men more mature in attaining this quality.

Under section XV we studied the qualification, "Must Not Be Greedy of Filthy Lucre," and learned that the greed for money that leads to base methods of obtaining it thoroughly disqualifies any man from the eldership. In fact, it disqualifies him as a Christian. The difference in this qualification and the one in section XV is that the former deals with the METHOD of obtaining it, while the latter deals with the LOVE and attitude toward it. Paul says, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (I Tim. 6:10). The love for money leads to the using of base methods to obtain it. No elder (or Christian) is permitted to love

money and be greedy for it. Neither is any Christian permitted to use any dishonest or evil method of obtaining it.

The strong desire for money by some elders explains why the churches are so dead when it comes to performing their mission in the world. They guard the lord's money in such a selfish way that just as little as possible is spent. It is not the intent of the Lord to see how much money the church can accumulate over a period of time. The Lord's money is to be used in spreading the gospel to the world and in providing the essentials for worship and work of the church. Many bishops object to anything and everything that costs money. They will not give liberally themselves to the work of the Lord, and will not encourage others to do so. The church is helplessly chained when it has one or more in the eldership who love money more than the Lord. The rich young ruler walked away from the Lord when he was told to get rid of his money and follow Christ, because he loved his money more than he loved the Lord.

Another extreme should be avoided. Because we have said that the church is paralyzed when men are found in the eldership who will not spend the Lord's money in doing the work of the church, because they love money too much, it is not to be inferred that the elders should unwisely spend the Lord's money at every suggestion of the preacher or some member. They are answerable to God for the way His money is spent, and they must use it wisely in doing the mission of the church. But they must continually guard against the love for money that would disqualify them from the eldership as well as being faithful Christians.

Covetousness is classed with the works of the flesh, and those who are guilty can not enter the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). Paul refers to covetousness as "idolatry" (Col. 3:5). This is a sin that can not be hidden. Sooner or later every covetous person will show his love and greed for money. When we are looking for men to be elders, let us make sure that we do not appoint a greedy man, because he can not be an elder by God's standard.

#### XIX. MUST NOT BE A NOVICE (I Tim. 3:6).

The very nature of oversight and leadership suggests an experienced person. There is no place in the eldership for a man who is a beginner at Christianity, or who does not know by experience the problems he must face as an elder. This qualification should be understood even if it were not listed. Far too much difficulty arises today in the oversight because young, immature men have been placed in the work that demands an older, more mature Christian.

The Greek term is *ma neophuton* and is defined as: *Ma*—"Not, by no means, never at any time"—*Neophuton*—"Newly planted; a neophyte, a novice. A new convert; one who has recently become a Christian."

The various English translations render this expression by: *Not a novice; not a new convert; not a recent convert.*

The meaning is very clear: a bishop can not be a man who is new at Christianity. He must have been in the church long enough to have grown out of baby-hood and know how to behave himself like a man. The man for the eldership must neither be a beginner at Christianity, nor with the common experiences of life. He must be well experienced and prepared to handle the affairs of the church.

The development of Christianity is not attained in a day or even a year. We must all add the Christian virtues to our lives and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, which takes time. It is true that we should always grow in the Lord, but there is a period when we grow out of the class of those who drink the milk of the word and become such as eat meat. These two classes are spoken of in Hebrews in this way: "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" (Heb. 5:12-14).

Notice that the writer says, "For when for the TIME ye ought to be teachers." It takes TIME to accomplish the growth from babes to full age. One who uses milk has no business trying to do the work of one who is to feed others. He must be a "meat eater" before he is capable of feeding others.

It is argued from Acts 13 and 14 that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders "in every church" on their return trip, which was only a matter of months after some of them were established. This is proof, they say, that it does not take long to become elders, therefore, this qualification does not mean "one recently converted."

The time it takes for one to grow out of novitiate varies with the individual. One may be more apt to learn than another, or one may have developed more of some qualities before becoming a Christian than another. Then, too, those men who were appointed by Paul and Barnabas were certainly recognized as men of experience in those traits needed for oversight. It is also inferred that these elders appointed by Paul were given some of the spiritual gifts to enable them to perform their duties of teaching and feeding the flock. They did not have the written New Testament as we have it today. One with a spiritual gift to teach the word did not have to spend months and years studying it as we must do today. That may explain why the time was shorter than



now in developing to the point of being able to teach the word of God. At any rate, whatever amount of time is necessary to grow out of novitiate is necessary to be qualified.

In the first place the elder must be well versed and experienced in the Scriptures so as to be "apt to teach." This requires some time of study and development. Then he must have a well rounded knowledge and experience in dealing with people of various ages so that he can rule well the congregation over which he serves. Also he must be experienced in business so that he can carry out properly the business affairs of the church.

One who is not familiar with the circumstances in which he is placed can not do a good work as a bishop. He must be capable of doing the work assigned to him before he is appointed. The word "Elder" carries with it the meaning of one who is older and more experienced. Of course, the length of time will be determined by the amount of study given to the Bible, the aptness of the man to learn, the moral characteristics he already has, and the amount of talent he has for doing the work of an elder. Some men have been in the church for 20 years and do not know any more about the Bible than some who have been in the church only a few months. Such men are still novices in the work of the church and should not be appointed to the eldership.

This is one qualification that an elder must possess that other Christians do not need to have. There is nothing sinful in being a beginner because all must be such at some time. Men are Christians as soon as they have been baptized into Christ, but they must grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ to be elders. Every Christian must grow out of novitiate as time goes on, and if he acquires the other qualifications, he may be appointed to the eldership. It is impossible for those who have had only a little experience in the way of the Lord to be able to guide others to the way of life.

Paul goes further to tell why a novice should not be appointed to the eldership. "Lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6). This means the condemnation into which the devil fell and was cast out of heaven. The devil's fall resulted from pride. Then, pride should not be characteristic of any man in the eldership. It seems natural for a man who is little experienced to become puffed up when authority is given to him. We do not usually elect men of little or no experience to the high offices of our government because of the serious results that would follow. Irreparable damage will be done to the mission of the church when young, inexperienced men are invested with the authority of leadership as elders. It is not impossible for men to become experienced in the work of the Lord and qualify for the eldership.

## XX. NOT SELF-WILLED (Titus 1:7).

The quality of not being self-willed is a trait we admire in all man. It is one of the most outstanding characteristics we can find in a Christian. To be self-willed is one of the basic causes of discord and war, and for this reason we should not permit it in the oversight of the church.

The Greek term is *ma authada* which is defined by authorities as, *Ma*—"Not, by no means; never at any time"—*Authada*—"Wilful, stubborn, headstrong; self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant."

The various English translations render this by, *not self-willed; not stubborn; not proud; not self-indulgent; not arrogant; not presumptuous; not self-pleasing.*

The kind of man who should never be permitted in the eldership is the person who is presumptuous, arrogant and demanding for selfish reasons; one who wants and demands his own way in all matters regardless of the outcome. One who considers himself before all others.

Peter speaks of such a person in these words: "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" (II Pet. 2:10). These, he says, will be reserved by God unto the judgment to be punished. What sort of reasoning could be used to permit such men in the eldership of the church?

A bishop must hold office jointly with other men, and when he is not of the disposition to yield his own will in matters of judgment, the consequences will be confusion and division within the eldership of the church. When division arises among the elders it is sure to wreck the church in that locality. Since elders must work together, each must be reasonable and considerate of the rights and privileges of all the others. When one man is found among the elders who is self-willed it is next to impossible to accomplish much unless all others surrender to him, which amounts to a one man dictatorship. The wisdom and authority is in the ELDERSHIP (all the elders) and not in any one man. It is no trouble to detect who is self-willed and who is not. Just watch the man in his dealings with others and you can know whether or not he has this ugly trait.

This does not mean that the elders are not to be stern and firm in all matters that are right and scriptural. They all must be against every evil and for every right. The matter of being self-willed applies only to matters of judgment and preference. In all matters of faith God's will must be obeyed completely. The elders must not have stubborn dispositions to contest the decisions and judgments of other elders, especially when all others are in agreement on the matter. No Christian should be self-willed, and surely that would be true of the eldership.

## XXI. MUST NOT BE SOON ANGRY (Titus 1:7).

Here is another condition closely connected with the former one that is plainly forbidden among the elders. And we can have no trouble seeing why God did not want men who are soon to anger to be in the oversight. It can produce serious effects upon the peace and harmony of the congregation.

The Greek term is *ma orgilon* which is defined as, *Ma*—"Not, by no means; never at any time"—*Orgilon*—"irritable; passionate; prone to anger, irascible, soon angry."

The man selected for the eldership must not be hot-headed and quick tempered. God is slow to anger and we are taught to be like Him. The elder must not be easily affected with anger, not easily irritated, provoked, wrathful or resentful, but he should be a man slow to wrath. James says, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). This applies to all Christians, and certainly includes the elders of the church.

In Matthew 5:22 Jesus teaches, "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." One may say, Does this mean that an elder can never be angry at all, over anything? No, for that is not what the passage says, and is not what it means. The passage says, "NOT SOON ANGRY" which means not easily or unjustly angry. God is angry at some things, yet He does not sin. Jesus said here, "Angry . . . without a cause" (King James Version). In the Revised Version the words "without a cause" are left out because many of the ancient manuscripts did not include the words. But surely there is a cause for all anger. It may be an unrighteous cause such as jealousy, envy, or some other such trait, but all anger has a cause. The wording in the King James Version must mean "angry without a RIGHTFUL cause." Christ was angry at times over some things. His angry must have come from a righteous cause because He lived perfectly without sin. "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts . . ." (Mark 3:5). Well, what would be a righteous cause for anger? Righteous anger would grow out of the violation of God's law by those who know better and should do better—in short: the hardness of heart. Paul said, "Be angry, and sin not" (Eph. 4:26). Anger should not be permitted to extend to sin. Do not revile, falsely accuse, mistreat, hate, or any such sin, but control the anger as Christ did.

God is angry with the wicked at all times when they will not repent. Jesus was grieved and angered with the people at the hardening of their hearts. So then, the anger should be toward sin and its effect upon people, rather than the people themselves. An elder must be one who can control himself and his anger.

Apparently the idea is widespread that the elders must burst into angry rages at times, just like some foremen and superintendents do toward their workmen, in order to show their authority and command attention. This is about the farthest idea one could have regarding the position of elders. Anger destroys the love and affection men may have for you, and hinders rather than helps the overseer. Some elders seem to think they can have their way by shouting and demanding in angry tones, but such is not the work of scriptural elders.

An elder must be one who can control himself and his anger. A man who is easily offended and gets angry at the drop of a hat can not be an elder of the church. There are some elders (?) assuming this work who do not have this qualification. Every true Christian who loves the cause of Christ can train himself to possess this quality. The elder must NOT be easily provoked to anger.

## XXII. MUST BE A LOVER OF GOOD MEN (Titus 1:8).

Good is contrasted with evil. What is not good is evil, and what is evil is not good. To love good will help to form good habits and characters, but to love and seek those things that are not good will corrupt the person and cause him to grow more and more like the evil he loves. The elders of the church must be men who love and promote good things rather than evil.

The Greek term is *philagathon* which is defined by authorities to mean, "Loving goodness." Though this definition is simple, it involves a great many things we read about in the Bible.

The various English translations render this word by, *A lover of good men; a lover of good; a lover of goodness; a friend to goodness; in love with what is good; a lover of what is good; gentle.*

By the definition and translations above, we see that the man must be devoted to all that is good and helpful to others. All good men love good people and deeds. They that are in the light of truth love the light, but they that are in darkness love the dark. One who has affection for evil deeds and people can not be an elder. John said to all Christians, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). To love good brethren is to love good, and to encourage righteous deeds among them.

The bishop must love the good character of men who are following Christ, and encourage them to do even greater works. When a man has a good characteristic it should be brought out and polished as much as possible by the elders. The brighter the stones shine in the church the more influence for Christ and his word it will have in the community. But it is sad to say that we have a few men claiming to be elders today

who try to discourage young men in their good deeds by not allowing them to take any of the duties that they are capable and ready to do, such as teaching certain classes or serving in some public performance of worship. There are many good boys who would make good elders of the church in the years to come if they were given the encouragement they deserve from the elders. The start of many good gospel preachers can be traced to the encouragement given to them by some good elders who had this qualification.

Not only young men, but all members of the church who do good will be encouraged by qualified elders because they love the good that can be done. Those men who love goodness will manifest it in their daily lives. Attendance to all services of the church is good, and those who love good will be faithful in this respect. Righteous living is good, and all those who love goodness will be as righteous as possible. This is a necessary qualification for any man who desires the office of an elder. He must love all good people and deeds.

### XXIII. MUST BE JUST (Titus 1:8).

We all need to be more just in our dealings with each other. We need to learn to treat all our brethren with proper respect, rendering to each man his due in a just and equal manner. This is very important among the elders.

The Greek word here is *dikaion* which is defined to mean, "Justly, as is right; observant of right, righteous, just, equal, even, strict, exact; rendering to each his due; passing just judgment on others."

The English translations render this word by, *Just; a just man; upright; fair.*

Thayer says that the sense of the word in Titus 1:8 is, "rendering to each his due; passing just judgment on others." If this be true, as we believe it is, no man who is not just can properly exercise the work of an elder in the church. But we also see that the word means "to be just; upright." No man can be just as God is just, but we can attain this attribute to an above-the-average measure. The elder of God's household must do nothing by partiality, but always strive to render a just and upright decision in all matters. No doubt many congregations have been divided assunder because some men in the oversight lacked this qualification. Decisions were rendered in favor of a few to whom they were partial, and against some whom they did not love as they should.

The man to be an elder must be upright, fair and honest in all his dealings with other people, rendering to each man his due without partiality. He must be proper and exact in his actions. It is a difficult thing sometimes to act without partiality, but every Christian must strive

to do all things equally toward all men—"doing nothing but partiality" (I Tim. 5:21).

Suppose Christ should deal with us in the judgment without justice and pass judgment upon us as some men do? What would be our destiny? I am sure we would find no hope if we were poor in material wealth, or unlearned in the social manners of the times as some of us are. But our judgment will be just because the Judge is just. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). The elders of the church must be men of upright and even judgment toward all men. There is a realm of judicial function in the local church that the elders are responsible for. Certain disciplinary action must be taken from time to time, and the elders are directly responsible for it. If they are not qualified to exercise fair, honest and equal dealings without prejudice, they will make some serious and damaging mistakes. Any man who loves the church and the souls of men and women will not show partiality in the oversight. May God give us JUST men to be the overseers of the church.

#### XXIV. MUST BE HOLY (Titus 1:8).

The Greek word used by the Holy Spirit here is *hosion* and is defined to mean, "Holy; holiness, pious, devout, religious; the pious toward God, God's pious worshippers."

The English translations render this word by, *Holy; a religious man; of holy life; saintly; kind; of pure life.*

The word indicates one who is undefiled by sin, free from wickedness and wrong; one who religiously observes every obligation in his relation to God and man. The man who is to become an elder must be a holy man because he is entering a holy work.

All Christians are required to be holy. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3:17). "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5) "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). It is very obvious from these passages that God expects all Christians to live a holy life before Him.

A holy man is one who has grown into the likeness of Christ because of his having followed his commands and became free from the

guilt of sin. It means one who is undefiled by evil or wickedness; a consecrated, godly man, free from sinful affections. He is a man who is devout and pure in spirit and in actions.

We are not to understand this to mean that the man is one who never sins. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). All sins are dangerous and unhealthy to the soul. No man can practice sin and claim the wonderful promises of God in eternity. But, on the other hand, no man can claim perfection in this life surrounded by sin and temptations.

An elder must be one who will not let sin reign in his body (Rom. 6:12), but a man who will continue faithfully in prayer and a study of God's word. When a man follows such a course he will not be long in sin, but will soon develop into a holy man, showing forth the praises of Christ (I Pet. 2:9). We certainly need more pious, godly men in the oversight of the church, and get rid of those men who do not measure up to God's righteous standard. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). A person who will not do good when he knows to do it, or who will go against the law of God and commit sin, is not even a Christian, much less an elder. It is important that the bishops be holy men in order to properly serve in the office. We must select and appoint those men who have this qualification, as well as all the rest of the qualifications listed, if we are to please God. The church will grow and prosper if we will do as we have been commanded.

We now close this chapter on the study of the qualifications of an elder. It will be greatly evident as we go into the next chapter to study the duties of the elders why God wanted men who were qualified by the standard He gave. Most every duty of the elder will require the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit to properly perform it. We pray that men will open their eyes and ears and bow in submission to God's will in selecting and appointing men to the oversight of the church.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DUTIES OF THE ELDERSHIP

We now turn our attention to the responsibilities of the bishops toward the church. These responsibilities are so grave<sup>o</sup> that it requires the very strongest of Christian men to fill the office. No man who does not understand the nature of these responsibilities should be placed in that office. There is no need for anyone to plead ignorance to these duties because they are very clearly stated in the New Testament. Much of the weakness in the church today can be traced to the inefficiency of the elders in performing their duties. On the other hand, the good success of the church depends largely upon their qualifications and efficiency.

This office of bishop is a matter of prophecy. To Israel the prophet Jeremiah said, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jere. 3:15). This is the same kind of work the elders are to perform today. The same prophet later said, "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 faithful 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" (Jere. 23:3, 4). It is God's will that the church should have elders, but it is also His will that these elders should perform a certain function which no other can do by the authority of God. They must do the work to fill the office. They can not complain and excuse themselves from the duties and remain bishops in the sight of the Almighty.

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. The sooner bishops can realize their duties and respond to them, the sooner the church will begin to grow spiritually and numerically in every city of this great country. 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. If preachers would refuse to accept a responsibility that belongs exclusively to the elders, many of these men would soon begin to realize their duties and act accordingly. It is not all the fault of elders that some preachers are trying to do an elder's work, because many preachers want to be THE eldership. 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. By the authority of the New Testament a preacher, as such, can no more take the duties of the elders than my wife can take my duties of publicly preaching the gospel. I can not delegate to her my responsibilities of preaching. Likewise, no elder can delegate his responsibilities to the preacher, regardless of how much he is paid.

The "Office" of a bishop is a good work. It requires much time and serious thought as well as a great love of the Cause of Christ. The office is only filled when the work is done, because the "office" means a "work." All members of the church do not have the same office. "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" (Rom. 12:4, 5). The office of bishop is not the same as the office of deacon, preacher, song leader, etc. Since "office" means a work, this passage teaches that all members of the church do not have the same work. There is one work of bishops, another of deacons, another of preachers, etc. The peculiar work assigned to the elders by the Lord can not be scripturally performed by any other member.

All phases of activity of the church must be under the oversight of the elders. This work must be done without forming all sorts of organizations within and without the church to do it. If such arrangements had been necessary to the elders in performing their duties, it is certain the Lord would have provided for them, seeing that He gave us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," and the scriptures "furnish us completely unto every good work." Such organizations as have been invented by man to assume the work of the Lord assigned to the elders, and to them alone, are innovations in disobedience to God.

Many are under the impression that the deacons are on par in authority with the elders. This is not true and never has been. The elders have the oversight of all the work of the congregation where they serve, including all the members, deacons and preachers.

Furthermore, there are no presiding elders in the church—one elder presiding over the other elders. All have equal authority. The fact that there is to be a plurality of elders in every church shows the gravity of the work. It is far too much for one man to handle by himself. The qualifications and duties suggest mature men, entitled to the respect and honor of all in the church. An essential part of their duties is the method of doing a thing, if that method is taught in the Bible. They are not left to decide just what and how to do all things, but must be subject to the word of God in everything. Where God has specified the method of doing their work, or where He has given certain principles to govern the selection of a method, that becomes law and the elders must obey all God's laws in discharging their responsibilities.

As we study the duties of an elder we can see the Divine Wisdom in setting a standard of qualifications for the man in order to become an elder. His duties depend upon his qualifications. He must have every qualification in the list we have studied in order to perform every duty as an elder before God. These duties can not be taken lightly, as some have done, but they must be taken with the same seriousness that all other commands of Christ are taken. It means the difference in salvation and damnation to those responsible.

The duties of the elders may be divided into different classes, although we will not regard such divisions in our study of them. They may be divided into these three classes: (1) His duties to God, which concern his qualifications and obedience to the word. (2) His duties to self, which have to do with viewing his own heart and examining himself in the light of God's truth. (3) His duties to the church, which include all for which he is responsible in overseeing the flock. This last division may be further divided into six parts: (1) Shepherd (2) Overseer (3) Ruler (4) Steward (5) Leader (6) Example.

The terms used to denote those we call "elders" tell us something of the nature of their duties. Before undertaking the study of the various duties let us consider for a moment the implications of the terms designating the elders and see something about the nature of their function in the church.

The word *Elder*, when used in connection with an office in the church, suggests one of experience and dignity such as age would confer. The more important decisions and functions of leadership would naturally fall to such men.

The word *Shepherd* carries the idea of feeding and tending a flock. The word was used in Palestine to denote one who cared for sheep by leading them to pasture and water, and guarding them against dangerous animals that would devour them. To those men in the church it denotes the work of teaching and guiding into safe paths.

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."

The word *Example* signifies that the elder is to be a model or pattern of Christianity for all others in the church to follow. It is therefore concluded that a part of the function of an elder is to go before and set the example of what one should be in the church.

The word *Steward* implies that the elder must tend the property and possessions of another as a part of his work. It is properly understood of an elder to be one who takes care of the house of God.

We now begin a study of the duties of the elders as we find them in the word of God. Some of these duties may be closely related to the qualifications already studied, but we will view them again in the effort to bring out that part in line with the work.

### I. TAKE HEED TO THEMSELVES (Acts 20:28).

Paul spoke to the elders of the church of Ephesus and instructed them in these words, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves . . ." (Acts 20:28). Since the elder's duties concern the souls of men, it is in perfect order to first inspect himself to see how he stands in his relation to God. He must be very careful with his own life. Paul writes to "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?" (II Cor. 13:5). In the examination of himself he must make sure that he is walking in the faith before he tries to lead others right. He must make sure that he does not desire the position of an elder for personal ambition. He must see first that he is able to take care of his own house before he undertakes to rule the house of God (I Tim. 3:4, 5). He should inquire of himself: "Am I able to keep this congregation in the faith?" "Am I capable of performing my duties in the eldership in a manner to please God?" "Am I able to act impartially toward each member of this congregation?" To answer these questions honestly will help him to perform his work in an acceptable manner.

It is certainly a dangerous thing for the church when an elder fails to see his own faults and weaknesses. He is liable to impose some false doctrine upon the church, or cause division among the flock, unless his mistakes and weaknesses are before him. Inasmuch as the elders are to oversee the flock, they are not qualified unless they can oversee themselves. If a man can not govern himself, how shall he govern the house of God? It is an embarrassing situation when one has to condemn himself, but it is even more embarrassing for one to be condemned by others because he is not able to correct self.

The elders are required to always keep themselves under observation in order that they may not be led astray by false doctrines and become deceivers themselves. It is so easy to measure others by one standard and ourselves by another. The elders must place their own lives beside the same standard they use on others. If the elders try to measure their own lives by the lives of some other men, or even themselves, they fall into the same pit as any other deceiver. The Holy Spirit spoke of this in these words: "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" (II Cor. 10:12). The only measurement that really tells what a man should be is the word of God. Let the elders take heed to

themselves in the light of eternal truth. One of the best rules in successfully doing this is to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17).

II. TO BE GUIDED BY THE WORD OF GOD (Acts 20:32; Titus 1:9).

This duty is closely related to the qualification: "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" (Titus 1:9). Although we have studied it as a qualification, it is no less a duty to continue to be guided in all his responsibilities by the word of God. He must hold fast to that word to be qualified. But, after being appointed, he must continue to be guided by the word or he becomes disqualified. His duty, then, is to be careful to always be led by the word rather than his own personal desires. This will determine the difference between a successful elder and an unsuccessful elder.

In the great work of the church most of the things to be done are matters of faith, and the only guide in such matters must be held steadfastly. Even those things that are matters of judgment are to be followed according to the principles of truth given in the word of God. The bishop must not be governed by the "whims" of worldly men, or the doctrines of their own theories, but by the New Testament only. Gullible men will not qualify as elders, neither will they discharge their duties scripturally. A thing is not right just because the elders say it is; nor is it right because some preacher says so. These overseers are to constantly study God's word to be able to guide the church safely through all trends and departures from the faith. This is an extremely important duty of the eldership if we are to keep the church safe.

III. BE ENSAMPLES TO THE FLOCK (I Peter 5:3).

The good elder must be a pattern for the church to follow. This is one of his duties. He can not "lord" it over the church as a "boss," but he must lead the way for the others to follow. Instead of giving strict commands to others in trying to drive them to service, he must set the example and beckon the others to follow.

Example is a part of his duty in ruling. It is the opposite of "lording" it over the flock. A shepherd sets the example for the sheep to follow. He goes before them and leads rather than drives. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4). Jesus is here putting his followers as sheep and says they follow him as the shepherd. The voice of the shepherd never leads in a way that the shepherd himself does not tread.

The elders are not to be "lords" in their rule, as a dictator or pope. Sometimes some try to drive a decision without proper consideration for

the congregation. In some things certain men of the congregation may be more experienced and their judgment might be of great value to the elders in making their decision of a course. It does not mean that these men whose counsel is considered become the rulers, but their wisdom should be used whenever possible. The elders try to "lord" it over the flock when they give commands and restrictions without due respect to the congregation and the Bible—when they make laws that are not in harmony with the Bible or for the welfare of the congregation.

The Lord did not intend that the elders should do the thinking for each member of the church. Some think because the elders are to rule over the local church that no member should do anything without the permission of the eldership. That is a mistaken idea. The matter of Christian conduct and the work of the church are all that come under the authority of the elders. When they try to step beyond this limit they are trying to "lord" it over the flock. The most effective way of leading people is to be an example to them. That was the course that Christ and his apostles took. Example has a powerful drawing element. The right example will make his work easier.

I'd rather see a sermon  
    Than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one should walk with me  
    Than merely show the way.

The eye's a better pupil  
    And more willing than the ear;  
Fine counsel is confusing,  
    But example's always clear.

And the best of all the preachers (or elders)  
    Are the ones who live their creeds,  
For to see good put into action,  
    Is what everyone needs.

I soon can learn to do it,  
    If you let me see it done;  
I can watch your hands in action,  
    But your tongue too fast may run.

And the sermon you deliver  
    May be very wise and true,  
But I'd rather get my lesson  
    By observing what you do.

For I might misunderstand you  
 And the high advice you give;  
 But there's no misunderstanding  
 How you act and how you live.

—Selected

The elders must always live clean, pure lives that they may be examples to the church. We are taught that every Christian should be as a "light set on a hill that can not be hid, and all who see it will glorify God." If all Christians are to be examples of good, why should not an elder be an example to the flock? Every elder must live before the church in such a way as not to discredit the gospel of Christ. For an elder to neglect this duty is to be eternally lost and to take many with him.

The importance of the bishops being good examples is further emphasized by a charge to the church. "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" (Heb. 13:7). It would be a very dangerous thing to imitate the faith of some who are called elders because their manner of life, both public and private, is such that the flock would be led astray rather than into righteousness. The work of the presbytery is to lead, not drive, the flock of God into a more consecrated, godly service to God. If the elders so lead, and the flock will follow, we can be sure that the church will be stronger and more secure against error.

Let us briefly notice some of the important ways in which the elders can be examples to the flock.

1. *An elder should be a good example of Fatherhood.* He should have the full respect of all his children; they should be subject to his rule in the home. They should be an example of his ability to teach and guide in the way of righteousness. It is difficult to see how he could have much influence on the church—to prove how a Christian father should conduct himself toward his children—unless he is a good example of fatherhood. He needs to be a father to give this good example.

2. *An elder should be a good example of a Husband.* A man whose wife is not in subjection to him, and does not reflect Christian traits, can not prove to be a good example to the world, much less to the church. By the examples of love, kindness, patience, wisdom and judgment he is able to get and hold the proper respect and devotion of a good wife. Proof by experience makes it possible for the church to determine whether or not a man is a good example of a husband even before it is appointed to the eldership. By the selection of good husbands for the eldership, the church can be safe to follow them in this respect.

3. *An elder should be a good example of a Neighbor.* We need to learn again the lesson of the "good Samaritan." The art of loving and doing good to those around us seems to have been lost in the confusion of war, greed and hate. But with a presbytery of men who are good, living examples of being a good neighbor, the church can be led in the way of obedience. A man whose neighbors love and respect him is good proof that he is a good neighbor.

4. *An elder should be a good example of a Teacher.* He should be one who is qualified to impart knowledge of truth to others, either publicly or privately. But not only that, he should know HOW to teach the truth. Paul said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). Situations sometimes arise that demand a teacher who not only knows the truth, but who has the skilful ability to know HOW to do the job. We need such men in the eldership. If young Bible teachers have a good example to follow in the elders, and if the elders will carefully follow Christ, the Master Teacher, the church will make progress as it never has before.

5. *An elder should be a good example of Faithfulness to the Church.* In some parts of the country I have found men in the eldership who never attend a service on Wednesday evening, and, sometimes, not on Sunday evening. With such examples among the elders, it is nearly impossible to persuade some members of the church to be faithful in all their responsibilities in public worship. Every elder ought to attend every service of the church for a number of reasons. He must be there to take his place in the oversight and guard the flock against error. He should be there to learn and grow himself. He must be there to serve as an example of faithfulness. To be the right kind of example for the flock to follow the elders must be always faithful in their worship to God.

6. *An elder should be a good example of a Businessman.* When we have to explain the conduct of some of our brethren to the world, it is important to look around for an example to which to point them. Too often we assume that since we must provide for our own in order not to deny the faith (I Tim. 5:8), it follows that any kind of business that will make money is all right. This attitude is even among the elders in some places. An elder should, first of all, be in a business that is recognized as an honorable one. Secondly, he should be the kind of businessman that his word and reputation would be above reproach even to those of the world. It is a poor example to the flock when one or more of the elders are called in question, either by the church or the world. We need good examples of businessmen in the eldership.

7. *An elder should be a good example of the right kind of Recreation and Entertainment.* This is the place where many of the young

people of today stumble because of the bad examples set before them by some of the elders of the church. When elders engage in questionable forms of entertainment, or go to places for their recreation where Christians should not be, someone is sure to see them and follow their steps. But on the other hand, if the elders show a good example in their recreation and entertainment, most of those in the church will imitate their conduct.

8. *An elder should be a good example of a Peacemaker.* If there is any one thing we need today in the church it is real peacemakers. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). When disturbances and misunderstandings arise among brethren in any locality, as they often do, the elders should be among the first to try to make peace; and not only should they lead in making peace, but they should so conduct themselves at all times as to insure peace among themselves. They should be examples of peacemakers and peacekeepers. It is not always possible to be at peace with all men, but in most cases if one will strive to be at peace with men there will be no discord. Neither elders nor other members of the church should be at peace with sin and error, but where it is possible to initiate peace the elders should do it as examples for the church.

9. *An elder should be a good example as a Worker in the kingdom.* In some localities the elders do about all the work that is done. But there are other places where little or none of the work is done by those who are called elders. Neither of these is a healthy condition. Where the elders do practically no work it is a poor example of Christianity to the church. The bishops not only should be good examples as workers themselves, but they should carefully outline and plan the work for others of the church so that all will be workers. Vigilance along this line will go far to exercise each member of the church to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The elders must be good models of workers in the church.

#### IV. TAKE THE OVERSIGHT (I Peter 5:2).

Another duty of the elders is to take the oversight of the flock where they serve. "Taking" the oversight does not imply that it is to be done as if by force. Some seem to have that understanding about it. The term simply means that the elder must accept the responsibilities of his charge. He must take the oversight willingly, not having to be compelled to take it.

I have heard some men serving as elders make this remark about their work: "They just forced the eldership upon me; I just had to take



it." This attitude would disqualify him to begin with, and he should be relieved of the responsibility "forced" upon him, and wait until he can "take" it willingly. But again, he must not take the office for the payment he may receive from it, but be ready to do his duty unto God without question. It seems that some will never learn that where there is authority there is responsibility. Let me illustrate this duty of an elder in this way:

The happiness of a family of five is interrupted when the mother becomes ill. The father must be away during the day to provide the substance for the family. Bobby is fourteen years old, Jane is eight, and little Roy is five. The father selects Bobby to oversee his little sister and brother. Now it is not the duty of Bobby to beat them or make new laws that his father has not commanded and force them upon his sister and brother, but instead he must watch out for their safety, see that they obey the instructions of their father, and to set the proper example of obedience before them. All this he must do willingly as his father has instructed him. When his little brother strays out into the street where there is danger, Bobby is watchful and will lead him back to safety. He is to do this willingly and in love for his little brother and his safety. He is to exercise whatever discipline over him that the father has commanded. Bobby has been given authority by his father, but with this authority comes responsibility also. Bobby is responsible for them and their safety. He is to "take" this oversight with a willing mind.

The duty of an elder in taking the oversight is to be as a "big" brother to the church. All Christians are in the family of God. When some begin to stray from the truth into the path of sin, the elders are to gently lead them back to the fold of the Lord. They must accept this grave responsibility willingly if they are to please God.

The term *Overseer* implies that he is to superintend or look over all phases of the church. The worship comes under his inspection. He must see that the singing is scriptural, and that the songs used are scriptural. He must make sure that the proper person directs the singing. He must make sure that those who direct the prayers are righteous men and that they lead scriptural prayers. He must see that the giving of prosperity is according to the word of God. He must make sure that the gospel is preached and taught in all Bible classes. All teachers of classes must be honored Christian men and women. He must see that the Lord's supper is observed in an orderly and scriptural manner, and that those who serve at the Lord's table are righteous men. The literature used, either as tracts or for Bible classes, should be carefully inspected by the elders to make sure it conforms to the scriptures. The program of evangelistic and benevolent work is under the elders and they should make sure that it is done in truth and to the full extent of the ability of

the church. Every activity of the church is under the oversight of the elders, and as overseer they must carefully watch over all of it.

Peter also said, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage." Some have interpreted this in a way that takes all authority away from the bishops. They cry, "Lording it over the flock," whenever the elders perform some of their duties that do not agree with the ideas of some. They think this means that the elders are not to exercise any authority in discipline that does not agree with the majority rule. It is often quoted by those who do not approve some judgment or action of the elders and in trying to overrule them in some point of discipline. This is not right. The expression, "Lording it over the flock," means "to bring under one's power, to subject to one's self, to subdue, master . . . To hold in subjection, to be master of, exercise lordship over." As long as the elders are exercising their God-given authority in the oversight of the church, in the manner taught in the Bible, they are not being lords (masters) over the church. When they begin to deprive the church of being loyal to Christ by giving statutes and commands that are not in agreement with the New Testament, or in depriving each member of his liberty under Christ, they are "lording" it over the flock. In a word, when the elders go beyond their delegated authority in exercising the oversight, they are "lording" it over the flock. But as long as they exercise oversight in rule and discipline that is according to the doctrine of Christ, they are not "lording" it over the church.

The duty of the elders to plan the work of the church, to oversee the worship and mission of the church in general, to properly discipline any member in error, even to withdrawing fellowship, is perfectly in line with their delegated authority and is not "lording" it over the flock. On the other hand, when the elders begin to pry into the personal matters of members that have nothing to do with their Christian conduct or the work of the church, they are getting into the forbidden area of "lording." It is the business and duty of the elders where I worship to know where I live, where I work, how I entertain myself, the company I keep, etc., **ONLY** when and where it affects my Christian conduct and worship. For example: It is the elders' business to discipline me if I work in a gambling house or a liquor store because it is in violation of Bible principles to engage in such work. They are not "lording" it over me to properly and scripturally deal with me if I will not repent. But whether I work in a clothing store, grocery store, service station, it is none of the elders' business because either place is in harmony with Bible principles. If the elders begin to try to decide which place I should work and try to bind it upon me as a rule, they are going beyond their authority and are trying to "lord" it over me. That is what Peter meant by saying, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage."

## V. TAKE HEED TO THE FLOCK (Acts 20:28).

It is not enough for an elder to look out for his own conduct. He must constantly look out for the conduct of each member of the church. This requires a skillful eye to detect the slightest danger that might come upon any member of the church.

The relationship of a shepherd to his flock is a wonderful and beautiful picture of the relationship of the elders to the church. Through the prophet Ezekiel God pronounced a woe upon those shepherds who neglected their flocks (Ezek. 34). A woe is spoken through Jeremiah upon those shepherds who scattered and destroyed the sheep. "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 faithful 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" (Jer. 23: 1-4).

The elders must first know the flock. They must be acquainted with each member and know his spiritual needs in order to properly take heed to the flock. The bishops are the stewards of God and must answer to God for what goes on within the church under their care, and how can they do this unless they are acquainted with each one? As a father he has learned that all children can not be handled alike. One will be more subject to training and discipline than another. One will be more apt to learn than another. This experience will help him to understand that all members of the church can not be dealt with alike. Some need more attention in teaching them the fundamentals of the gospel, while others will require deeper study and training. Some will be more active and interested than some others. Some will need little discipline in correction, while others will need much. He must know the church over which he rules to be able to perform his other duties.

Taking HEED to the flock implies also that he must WATCH them. It is not enough to just know who they are and what they particularly need, he must watch both from within and from without for certain things. As he takes heed to himself as to conduct, he must also watch the conduct of the flock. He must watch for dangers of false doctrines. He must watch for parties and divisions among different ones and clear the matter before it becomes serious. In short, he must watch the conduct of the whole flock to be sure that they all obey God in all their relations: at work, at play, or at worship. The elders should constantly study the needs of the church and supply them with wisdom.

## VI. RULE WELL (I Tim. 5:17).

This is certainly a duty well worth consideration. Every organization must have some form of authority and rule, and this is true with the local churches. First, the elders must be RULERS. This is denied by many, so we will read some statements from Paul to show that they are RULERS. (1) The elders are to rule—"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (I Tim. 5:17). (2) The elders must know how to rule—" (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (I Tim. 3:5). (3) Christians are to remember these rulers and follow them—"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" (Heb. 13:7). (4) Christians are to obey their rule—"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). These passages show that the elders are the rulers in the local church.

Second, they must rule WELL. There is a difference in RULING and in RULING WELL. In order to rule well the elders must observe certain rules and restrictions given in the New Testament. They must not rule in a way of "lording it over the flock" (I Pet. 5:1-3). They must not rule as a Diotrephes (2 John 9), being arrogant and domineering. They do not rule as a legislative body in making laws, but as executives of the will of the only law giver—Jesus Christ (James 4:12). They must rule by setting good examples before the flock. Some contend that the elders are to rule ONLY in this way. If so, all Christians are rulers for they all must be examples for good (Matt. 5:16). Ruling by example is just one characteristic of the elders' rule. They must rule according to the will of God (Titus 1:9). They must rule with diligence (Rom. 12:8). They must agree in their rule and not be divided among themselves.

An elder must have the respect of all the church if he is to rule well. He must rule as a father in his own house—with love and patience. Paul instructs the fathers: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The elders should not provoke members of the congregation to wrath in their rule, but guide them in keeping with righteousness. This should be done in love for the church and for truth. With such rule, the church will come to love, appreciate and honor the elders for their restraint and correction. They must see that things are done decently and orderly (I Cor. 14:40).

There is necessarily attached to the government of the church a strict discipline for those who rebel against the word of God. The elders

must justly enforce the laws of Christ without partiality, fearing God. "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). A mark must be placed upon those who are continually causing trouble in the church, and, under the elders' rule, the church must turn away from them except they repent (Luke 13:5).

But the elders must not always rule from the negative standpoint, which tends to destroy, but must rule in the positive sense as well. The positive rule rebuilds upon the foundation of Christ and the apostles after the negative rule has destroyed the doctrines of sectarianism. The elders must give a careful study to God's word that they may be able to rule in righteousness.

## VII. FEED THE FLOCK (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1, 2)

The expression "flock" refers to the figure "sheep" which describes Christians in relationship to the "shepherd." The figure is taken from the Jewish shepherd who had a very responsible work in his relationship to his flock of sheep. These shepherds were to pasture the sheep throughout the year, guide them from place to place where they could find good pasture and water in safety, keep an alert and watchful eye upon them at all times to see that none strayed into dangerous territory, protect them from the dangerous wolves and other wild animals that would destroy the flock, and to be a companion to them at all times. These shepherds stayed with their flocks continually to see after their welfare. They would handle the young tenderly and deal sternly with the unruly. These shepherds must know where they were going and how to lead in order to successfully feed and tend the flocks. The 23rd Psalm is a beautiful description of the relationship of a shepherd to his flock, and this description of Christ over his sheep tells how the elders should feed the flock.

The idea of "feeding the flock of God" is the same as to "pastor" them. Many elders seem to think that this only calls for assembling the flock twice or three times a week and give them the regular supply of spiritual food, which is often only the husks without the vital elements of spiritual growth. Such feeding is very often repetitious, entertaining little sermonettes without any real food for thought. It is the duty of the shepherds to feed the flock throughout the year, and this feeding must consist of the kind of food and in the amount that would result in strong, healthy sheep.

The elders, as "pastors" over the flock of God, have a threefold duty. First, they must keep each member from straying from the church and becoming lost. This requires watchfulness over each one of them. The bishop must be able to detect the slightest loss of interest and yielding

to temptation. Jesus showed an interest in ONE sheep that strayed, and so must it be with the elders. If one is missing from the worship the elders should be concerned to the point of learning why he was absent. Not only must they search for the lost sheep, but they must prevent the loss when possible. In some cases the one is determined to leave the flock and go on his own. In this event there is nothing the elders can do but let him go. But they should protect the rest of the flock by severing all relations with the deserter.

Second, the shepherds must protect the flock from dangerous wolves. This refers to the false teachers that come disguised as sheep themselves to devour the sheep at the slightest opportunity. All too often the elders do not know the wolves from the sheep. Some preacher comes along and the elders allow him to mingle with the flock and teach them without knowing whether he is faithful to the word or not. Some of these wolves may even get into the eldership. Paul says of these: "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" (Acts 20:29, 30). The elders should know each man who preaches or teaches in the church. Furthermore, they should keep out all faction from among themselves. A small wolf can scatter a large flock of sheep.

Third, the shepherds are to water and feed the sheep. They must keep close watch and contact with each member of the flock to know what he needs in the way of spiritual food. They must see that each member of the church has his proper portion of food. This food is only the word of God. In class work the elders must supply good teachers, proper equipment for teaching, good scriptural literature, a good system of study, and proper personal teaching. They must take advantage of every opportunity to enlighten others of their duty. They must feed the young the sincere milk of the word, and the strongest members the strong meat. They must know each member to know what and how to feed him.

Any child not fed will soon perish. Spiritual food is as essential to our souls as the food we eat is essential to the growth of our mortal bodies. Parents do not permit their children to eat out of garbage cans. They know that the impure and poisoned food will make them sick, even unto death. The same thing will happen to Christians who are not fed the spiritual food, unmixed with the contaminating doctrines of men. The elders are to make sure that the spiritual food is pure, and see that each gets his portion. This is a serious responsibility and should be considered as such. The elder who fails to divide to each member a good portion of this food completely fails in his duty.

## VIII. WATCH FOR GRIEVOUS WOLVES (Acts 20:29-30).

As we have already seen, the shepherds of the flock are to continually watch against evil, and for good. To "watch and remember" is their charge. An elder who is not watchful is playing right into the hands of Satan. To watch for grievous wolves is to watch for the persons claiming to be teachers of God, who, in reality, are teachers of evil doctrines. Their vigilance will enable them to see the first signs of coming trouble so that they can attack it while it is weak. Trouble in its early stages is easier to destroy if wisdom is used. The elders also must remember the admonition given by the apostle. Remember how Paul "ceased not to admonish everyone day and night with tears." Many religious groups today, who were once the church of the Lord, have departed from the faith because some elders have not watched for the grievous wolves who have entered and deceived many and led them from the fold. How extremely cautious every elder should be to guard the flock against any innovations coming into the church by the ungodly men who try to push them upon the people of God. The elders must brand and avoid these false teachers (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10, 11; I John 4:1).

## IX. STOP THE MOUTHS OF VAIN TALKERS (Titus 1:11).

The elders must discipline the unruly in a firm manner. They can not do this as "lords" over the flock (I Pet. 5:2), but on the other hand they can not leave them alone just because of fear that they might make some angry. We have established that the elders are to rule in the congregation (I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17; I Tim. 3:5), and in doing so, it sometimes falls upon them, when all other measures have failed, to withdraw fellowship from "every brother" who does not obey the truth (2 Thess. 3:6). In some cases, when they have performed this duty in a scriptural way, some preacher or member will start a campaign to create a rebellion against the elders to have the brother "restored" without repentance. When this happens the elders should brand the preacher and those who follow him with the sinful person who has been disciplined. In some cases other congregations will not respect the discipline by the elders on vain talkers. God will deal with everyone who does not respect His rule and discipline according to His word. The elders must admonish, reprove, rebuke, correct, chasten and encourage in love and without respect to persons. Many elders do not perform this duty because they are afraid of the results, but they fall into disobedience when they do not do so.

It is an accepted fact that in every congregation of any size there are some who will not respond to the sound teaching of the gospel. They will not submit themselves to the rule of the eldership in harmony with the word of God, nor the duties of individual membership. They will pride themselves as being righteous men and women, having much

freedom in the church. They never do any constructive work in the congregation, but are always trying to destroy every endeavor of faithful workers. By such conduct they deceive a great many who would otherwise be good servants of the Lord. Such characters must be dealt with in a very stern and scriptural manner. Their mouths must be stopped; their unruly attitudes must be exposed. This is a duty of the elders. By using their vigilance, wisdom, patience, justness and temperance they must expose before all the plans of the unruly to destroy the church. They can not pass this duty to some other person to do.

Paul shows why such deceivers must be exposed. "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" (Acts 20:30). Paul directed these instructions to the elders of the church at Ephesus. By continually watching for deception, and remembering their charge, they were to keep the church clean. Today the church is in the same danger of vain talkers as it was in the days when Paul wrote.

Not all vain talkers are in the pews. Some of them are in the pulpits and even in the elderships. Elders should stop the mouths of the vain talkers immediately before the whole church is led away. They must be governed by the word of God and not by the doctrines of men in determining the deceivers. Some elders themselves are false teachers and should be rebuked publicly, and if they will not repent, take them out of the office.

#### X. DECIDE DIFFERENCES IN THE CHURCH (Acts 15:6).

Frequently differences in matters of opinion, or even on matters of faith, arise between members of a congregation. This condition can not be ignored because it often gets larger and more serious as it progresses. Some one must settle these difficulties in harmony with the New Testament. Who should be more fitted to do this than the overseers whose qualifications and work are outstanding?

It is a great responsibility enjoined upon mortal man to assist in settling the difficulties arising among the people of God. Moses found this task very difficult and harkened to his father-in-law to choose men who were righteous to assist him (Ex. 18). The elders must combine their efforts in stamping out all trouble arising in the local church where they rule. By exercising their wisdom and prudence it is certain that little of the present troubles will go unsolved. By their vigilance they can soon detect the differences before they grow to great proportions and cause division.

Some brother may take advantage of another brother in a business transaction and cheat and swindle him. This must be properly settled.



Two brethren may begin to argue over some point of Scripture and let it get out of hand until they are bitter enemies. This must be properly settled. Some brother calls in question the integrity of another, or some sister tattles and gossips about another. The friction becomes sharper until serious division threatens. This must be properly settled. Who should be better qualified to settle these troubles than the bishops of the church?

We find in Acts 15 a great controversy on the matter of circumcision arising in one of the early churches. The apostles were then living and had a part in deciding the matter. We now have their writings which will serve the same purpose for us today. These apostles and elders were called upon to decide in the matter of circumcision. "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter" (Acts 15:6). From this pattern we learn that the elders should come together today, with the writings of the apostles (the New Testament), and put straight all matters of misunderstanding that arise in the church over which they rule. Just about every qualification the elder must have must be used in this duty—his patience, wisdom, gravity, experience, justness, ability to rule, soberness, vigilance, love for the truth, temperance, etc. Every member of the church must respect the judgment and teaching of scripturally qualified elders.

One word of caution to the elders before we leave this duty. When such a responsibility as we are now considering arises the elders must make sure that they do not act with partiality or prejudice in settling the disturbance. For them to act in bias or prejudice or partiality just makes the problem greater. It is so easy to forget the matter of dissention and focus attention upon self or one person in preference to another. When all evidence is in, and all scriptural principles touching the matter are carefully considered, the elders should make a decision based entirely upon these and nothing else. Their decision should be in agreement among themselves. It is a terrible disallusion to find the elders themselves divided in trying to settle a matter involving others. All members of the church must respect the judgment and decision of qualified elders. The elders must make and keep peace in the church.

## XI. ADMONISH THE CHURCH (I Thess. 5:12).

A duty of the elders is to teach and admonish church members to observe all that Jesus has commanded them (Matt. 28:20). This admonition must be in the spirit of love and based upon a continual observation of the whole congregation. This work is an essential duty of an elder (I Tim. 3:2; II Tim. 2:24; Titus 1:9).

There are three ways in which the elders can admonish the flock: (1) By the good example of their lives. (2) Personal instruction to each

member. (3) By the selection of sound teachers and preachers to publicly instruct. The church is in continual need of gentle but firm admonition to prevent straying from the truth of God. The growth of some congregations is seriously hindered because of the lack of godly admonition that should be supplied by the eldership. Sometimes personal and private admonition is far more effective than public. At other times it is necessary to do this in a public manner. The elders must accept this responsibility or decline the honor of being called elders.

## XII. SUPPORT THE WEAK (Acts 20:35).

It is the duty of all Christians to help care for the weak and needy, but it is especially the duty of the elders. They must lead and direct in this work. Just as a father must care and provide for those in his own family who are not able to provide for themselves, the elders must care for those in God's family who are not able to care for themselves. We know that God is able to provide for His own, and He promised to do so, but He does so through human agency. One of His ways of doing this is through the eldership. This specific duty has reference to the caring for God's poor, and it requires the elders to labor with their hands that they may be able to "help the weak." Paul's own words to the elders at Ephesus were: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:33, 34). Then Paul quotes from the Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The elders should lead the church in looking after the necessities of the poor and needy. It is never a disgrace to labor with the hands for those who can not do for themselves. The elders must watch for any in the congregation who are in need of help, and supply it.

In another way we may refer this to those who are spiritually weak. To them the elders must supply the spiritual needs, and to the physically weak the physical needs. It is not humanly possible for them to always do this alone, but they must see that it is done to the full ability of the church.

## XIII. PRAY FOR THE SICK AND ADMINISTER TO THEIR NEEDS (James 5:14).

This is another one of those duties enjoined upon all Christians, but James specifically states that the elders are to be called and perform this duty. "The effectual feverent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Every elder must be a righteous man, therefore, his prayers will have a great power for the sick. This bit of instruction carries with it much more than just the idea of praying alone. The elders must do something for the sick man's benefit. Pure religion includes the visiting of the afflicted. Some seem to think that the church "hires" a preacher

to do all the visiting for the whole church, including the eldership. They expect him to be on the move all day while the elders give him the orders. What a strange conception of church government and Christianity!

Christianity is an individual matter. Each person must do the things required of him to become a Christian; no one else can do them for him. Neither can one person worship or live a Christian life for another. Each individual must give an account of his own actions in the body. Certainly the preacher must visit the sick, but as a Christian duty and not in the official capacity or "Pastoral Calls" in substitute for the eldership. Usually the preacher has more time to visit the sick than the elders because of their work, and the Lord requires of a man what he can do. But the point is that neither the preacher nor any other member can visit the sick for the elders. James said, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the ELDERS of the church" (James 5:14). Why are the elders to be called? They are to pray for him that he might be healed. This, of course, does not forbid the prayers of all saints for a sick brother or sister, but the elders, as overseers, are to administer to the needs of the sick while praying for him.

Some have registered this objection against applying this passage to present day conditions: "We do not have elders in this age who can perform miracles."

Who said this meant the elders must perform a miracle? There is nothing in this passage that indicates the need for miraculous powers on the part of the elders in performing their duty. This example which James gives points out the fact that the elders of the church were expected to visit those in need and administer to their needs, either physically or spiritually. The possession of miraculous powers was not a requirement for the performance of this duty of visitation and ministrations. If James had intended the elders to perform a miracle, why did he tell them to use "oil"? Would not their prayers be sufficient to cause a miracle? The mention of *oil* in this passage has caused the "miracle workers" of the day to use olive oil in their campaigns of healing, which some call "miracle oil." All Bible miracles performed where an element was used show that the element was not even closely connected with its natural use. Naaman was told to use the waters of Jordan by dipping seven times to heal his leprosy. But what man would ordinarily use water to cure leprosy? Jesus made a spittle of clay to heal a blind man. But who would ordinarily apply such to the blind to heal them. James said to anoint the sick with oil. Oil was normally used for a medicine and would not indicate a miracle in the use of it here anymore than the ordinary mention of the river Jordan would indicate a miracle. To pray for the sick does not imply a miracle. All are taught

to pray for the sick but there is no promise that a miracle must be performed to answer that prayer.

“Oil” was used in the Bible in six different ways:

- (1) To appoint to a high office or position, as Samuel anointed David with oil to be the king of Israel (I Sam. 16:12, 13).
- (2) To make the bread for the tabernacle under the law (Ex. 29:2).
- (3) For food—in preparing bread (I Kings 17:12).
- (4) As a cosmetic for the face (Ps. 104:15).
- (5) For a light—to burn in lamps (Ex. 27:20).
- (6) As a medicine of healing (Luke 10:34).

If James had intended the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord to indicate a miracle being performed, it is the only place in all the Bible where it is so used, and there is nothing in the context that indicates that it was used in connection with a miracle here. There is absolutely no evidence to connect the use of oil with a miracle in this or any other passage.

Oil was used in Bible times as a medicine (Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34). Oil had a healing power, and still does. The good Samaritan poured in “oil” and wine when he found the man beaten and half dead on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. As the elders pray for the recovery of the sick, they are to administer the things necessary to his recovery. The principle taught here is that the elders should first pray that God will forgive and restore health and strength to the man, and that they should use “oil,” or supply medical treatment as is necessary to the sick man’s recovery. The most natural use of oil in this context is that of medicine. This does not mean that the elders are to be physicians, but they must provide either doctors or medicine that is needed.

It is a false doctrine that says the elders must be miracle workers to perform this duty. When Paul gave Timothy and Titus the instructions to appoint elders, he knew that neither could convey the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit to others. The only way any of these elders could have received this power of healing was from one of the apostles. When they were appointed there is no evidence that an apostle was present, but to the contrary. We conclude, therefore, that those elders could not have had a spiritual gift of healing. The elders must be called when needed, and they must pray and administer to the needs of the sick.

#### XIV. ESTABLISH CHURCHES WHEN NEEDED (Help in such work—Acts 16:4, 5).

This is not a specific duty of the elders to the exclusion of all others, but it certainly comes within the scope of their duties to see that the gospel is spread to the establishing of other churches. No elder should be content unless the gospel is being preached in all the community in which he lives. All evidence points to a great deal of neglect on the part of some elders in doing their duty. Elders are to lead the church in evangelizing the world by seeing that each person near them has the opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ—God's power to save. They should not rest until they have made every effort to preach the gospel to EVERY person in the community where they live. During Paul's lifetime the gospel was preached "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23). With the serious efforts of elders today it can be done again. This work can be successfully accomplished by the selection of good preachers and sending them into fields "white unto harvest," which is a part of the work of elders. Thousands are dying in a lost and undone condition while some bishops are asleep, failing to recognize the fate of those who have never heard the saving gospel. They have the power of salvation in the gospel of Christ and will not give it to others. Every child of God should and must be a messenger of the Good News, but the elders must see that this good work is done.

I once heard an elder (?) remark: "The church is here and everyone in the city knows about it. If the people do not come to hear the gospel, it is their own fault and not mine." Such an ugly, impudent attitude! No insurance company relies for progress upon the public's knowledge of its existence. They send salesmen out to teach the public about the insurance and the need for it, then they try to persuade them to take a share in their company. Very few go to the insurance office to buy insurance, yet most people have it. Why? Salesmen have carried it into their homes, communities and into all the world. That is what the church MUST do with the gospel under the leadership of the elders. The elders must set the course. Jesus did not just say "preach the gospel," he said, "GO" preach the gospel. The elders have the oversight in this matter and should see to it.

#### XV. WATCH FOR THE SOULS OF THE CHURCH (Heb. 13:17).

One of the greatest duties ever delivered to mortal man is that of watching after the souls of others. This is one of the duties of the elders. They must so love the flock that they, like the Master, would lay down their lives, if necessary, to protect them. The soul of a man is his most precious possession. Those who have been given the respon-

sibility of watching for a man's soul is watching for the thing that is most important to him. As watchmen the elders must give an account of their trust to God (Ezek. 33:7-9; Heb. 13:17). They must watch all phases of the church and guard against apostasy. They should see that the preaching is what it should be and that the preacher conducts himself at all times as he should. They should also see that each member is orderly in deportment, both in the assembly and out of the assembly.

To think of having to give an account of all the souls in the congregation over which he rules is the most serious thought one could have. No greater charge has ever been given to any man. What a tremendous responsibility! Little wonder that God wanted the strongest men in the church to be the overseers of His flock. The elders have the responsibility for the spiritual condition of each member of the church where they serve. How strange and confusing it is that some think men can care for this great work without the given qualifications. EVERY qualification is necessary for him to fulfil this great duty.

The words, "WATCH FOR YOUR SOULS," stand out in illuminous letters in this text. Throughout the New Testament the word "WATCH" is enjoined upon every Christian. "Watch" for yourselves; "Watch" for the devil; "Watch" for false teachers; "Watch" for every opportunity to do good; "Watch" for the second coming of Christ. But upon the eldership is placed this charge: "WATCH" for every soul in the congregation. Why watch? Because YOU (the elders) must answer for their conduct in the judgment. This is the real purpose for which God ordained that elders be in every church: that each member would be watched and nurtured in such a way as to bring him into the judgment as a faithful child of God.

As I close this chapter, I only wish I had adequate words to forcefully impress this responsibility upon the heart of every elder of the church. When the elders face the judgment bar of Christ, they must give an account of all those who have drifted away from the church because of the lack of teaching; of those who are indifferent and cold because the right example was not set before them, or because they were not properly taught the seriousness of their duty as Christians; of those who did not obey the gospel because they were not given attention, or because the gospel was not carried to them; of those who were mistreated by the church because they were poor; of those who were led astray by false teachers because the elders were asleep or did not realize the religious error. Can you picture a greater responsibility on earth than this? Just as a sinner who dies in his sins will account for the deeds done in the body, each elder will face the Master and account for his conduct in watching over the flock. With this great responsibility certainly comes authority from God. The elders are in more danger of

condemnation than any other child of God, because of the great responsibility of all the souls they must watch after in addition to their own. This is no little job and no little man can do it. It requires the very strongest in the church to accomplish the task. It requires an active, constant watch over each member of the church. It requires constant advising and teaching and praying for every Christian in their charge.

But when the elders have done all that God requires and they come into the judgment successful, for the most part, in their work, what a great reward to receive eternal life with the Chief Shepherd, and the knowledge that many others also will receive eternal life because of the constant effort of the elders in performing their duties acceptably before God. The accomplishments and rewards are so great that it fills the heart with a joy unspeakable and stimulates the bishops with new determination to fulfil their work in saving as many souls as possible. The office of a bishop is indeed the greatest work in the church, but it carries also a great reward to those who are successful.

## CHAPTER XII

**DUTIES OF THE CHURCH TOWARD THE ELDERS**

All too often the church assumes no responsibility for the progress of the church, casting all blame for failures upon the elders in neglecting their duties. The very fact that God has placed certain responsibilities upon the elders toward the church implies certain obligations of the church toward the elders. God never experiments. All His workings are known to Him from the beginning. When all elders perform their duties properly, and each member performs his duty toward the elders, there will never be a failure. But when the elders or the church fail in their duties toward each other, the results will be disastrous. These duties of the church toward the elders are no less important than the duties of the elders to the church. The punishment for one will be as great as the punishment for the other in failure. The church owes something to the elders.

The relationship between the elders and the members of a congregation must be understood and agreed upon by both parties. Unless the members agree to submit to the elders, the elders will not be able to perform all their functions. The elders are to feed the flock—the flock must eat; the elders are to lead—the flock must follow; the elders are to set the example—the church must imitate them; the elders are to teach—the church must learn; the elders are to rule—the church must submit to them. All along the way the duties of the church must be performed before the work of elders is effective.

When a member moves from one congregation to another he should inform the elders of his plans and get their recommendation to the elders of the congregation where he is moving; otherwise, proper discipline and fellowship would be impossible. The practice of sending and receiving recommendations of members going from one place to another is taught in the New Testament. "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" (Rom. 16:1, 2). This is a good pattern for a letter of fellowship from one church to another. "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren" (I Cor. 16:10, 11). This action protects the church from erring members and false teachers coming or going from one place to another. It is important that new members moving from one community



to another should identify themselves with the church under the elders in order to accomplish a better work. Some hesitate to separate themselves from the old home congregation for sentimental reasons, even though moving to a new locality. In such cases how shall they properly work with the elders? Who shall look after their souls and help guide them in the paths of righteousness? The elders of the old home congregation can not do it if those members live in another city, because their authority extends only to the "flock which is among you." The elders in the city where these members have moved can not do it unless they will place themselves under these elders' watchcare, which is the same as "placing membership." Each member must accept his responsibility before the elders can be successful in their duties. Since this relationship is an agreement between the *overseers* and the *overseen*, there must be some way by which it is expressed. Whether this should be called "placing membership" or not, the idea is there. Until one becomes a member of the "flock which is among" them, the elders can not properly discharge their responsibilities toward that person in the full sense of the word. There is a degree of discipline the elders may exercise over anyone in the assembly. As long as he is in the public assembly the elders have authority over his conduct, but that is the limit of it. That is true of any person, member or not.

There are two ways in which the membership of a congregation places itself under the eldership. (1) When one is baptized into Christ at a certain place and meets with the congregation there, he is thereby placing himself under the eldership of that congregation. (2) When one moves from one place to another and takes with him a statement of fellowship from the elders where he formerly worshipped to the place where he is moving, or when he expresses in some way to the elders where he is moving his desire to worship and work with that congregation, he thereby places himself under the eldership there. In moving from one place to another the member should be asked by the elders where he is moving for a statement of his fellowship, which releases the eldership of his former residence from the oversight of his soul.

Each congregation should be taught how to conduct itself toward the eldership. Some members, however, are not always willing to listen to the Holy Spirit when they are told to submit themselves to the eldership. Where this attitude continues the rebellious are certain to become the objects of severe discipline, if the elders do their duty. On the other hand, many are ready and willing to know their duty toward the elders that they may please God. To please the eldership is only a secondary matter—God must be pleased.

No organization can fulfill its mission unless every part works in its own place. All units must work together in their own habitation in order to accomplish God's purpose in the church. We have studied the duties of the eldership, now we turn attention to the local church and find her duties to the elders. These duties are bound upon every member of the church alike. If we are to have a peaceful and effective working church, each one must know and do his duty as God has bound it. The church **MUST**—

### I. KNOW THE ELDERS (I Thess. 5:12).

Paul teaches, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you" (I Thess. 5:12). We have already learned that the elders are those who are over the "flock which is among you." They are also to admonish the flock. It is obvious that the elders are included in this text. The phrase, "are over you" is translated from the Greek *proistamenous*. Thayer says of this word: "*to be over, to superintend, preside over, (A. V. rule) . . . 1 Tim. v.17; with a gen. of the pers. or thing over which one presides, 1 Th. v.12 . . .*" The same word is found in Romans 12:8 and is translated, "he that ruleth."

It is the duty of each member of the church to be very well acquainted with those men who have the rule over him. Each member should know them by the lives they live and by the truth they advocate. Each member should feel free at any time to go to the elders with any personal problem and for any personal advice and instruction.

I have seen the pathetic condition where a congregation did not know the elders. This was due in some measure to the unfaithfulness of the elders. They were not present at every service, and when they were present they came in late and sat near the rear of the building so they could leave as early as possible after the service was finished. But this is not always the case when the church does not know the eldership. Many times the elders really try to know each member of the congregation and perform their duties well, but some members will not respond to their love and interest. They try to shun them and refuse to co-operate with them in the work. When a congregation fails in its duty to know the elders, the work is impossible; and every member who so lives will have to account to God for his sin. The church must know and love the elders as a child knows and loves his father. This duty makes every Christian responsible for the growth and welfare of the congregation where he is a member.

"To know" the elders implies much more than just to be acquainted with them. True, each member should know each elder by name and face, but that is not enough. The Greek word used here is *eidēnai*,

and is defined by Thayer as: "3. Hebraistically, *to have regard for one, cherish, pay attention to*: 1 Th. v.12." It means to "know" their instructions in the word and respect them.

No member of the church should be cold and distant toward the elders, or treat them as strangers and ignore their wants. But each member should "Salute all them that have the rule over you" (Heb. 13:24). This duty "to know" the elders means to recognize their authority; to respect and highly regard their leadership. Everyone in the congregation should be able to point out and tell the names and decisions of the eldership to any visitor or new member who may move into the community. How can one follow the leadership of the bishops unless he knows their wishes? How can he "know" them in any sense unless he knows their names, lives and rule? There is no greater mark of success in any local church than for the elders to know each member and each member to know the elders and respect their work and instructions in the Lord. Unless we are acquainted with the elders and their rule we are neglecting our duty as Christians.

## II. ESTEEM THE ELDERS HIGHLY IN LOVE (I Thess. 5:13).

In the very verse of the passage we have been studying we find these words: "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (I Thess. 5:13). Since this is a continuation of the thought in verse 12, and concerns the same class of people—the rulers or elders—the object of esteem here is the eldership.

There is no higher honor bestowed upon any man than that of an elder. Those who have been entrusted with the care of the souls of the church deserve great honor and respect. This is also due the elders because of the qualifications of the men and the dignity of the office.

Four thoughts are worthy of consideration under this duty of the church toward the elders. First, the apostle said "to esteem them." What does this mean? The Greek term is *hageisthai*, which has the basic meaning "to lead; to go before; to be a leader; to rule, command; to have authority over." Thayer says the word in I Thessalonians 5:13 means, "2. *to consider, deem, account, think . . . to esteem one exceedingly*, 1 Th. v.13." This means that the church should consider the elders as leaders and rulers: to have the authority. Unless the church so considers the elders, they can hardly render a worthy work.

Second, the church should consider them "very highly." The estimation of the elders in the eyes of all the church should be in the highest degree. It is not enough just to casually think of them as the leaders, but they must be held in the very highest esteem.

Third, this should be done "in love." Nothing really counts in Christianity unless it is done in love (I Cor. 13). When elders love the church and their work, and when the church esteems the elders very highly in love, there is bound to be a great success in the work of God. The right kind of peace depends upon love.

Fourth, this is to be done "for their work's sake." The degree of honor and respect due the elders is because of their noble work. A special tribute is paid to the president of the United States because of the office he holds. The same is true of a governor, judge or any other high officer of authority. The elders are to be considered as men and not gods; they are subject to weakness and mistakes, but the respect and honor to be given them is because of the great office they hold.

All scriptural elders, carefully performing their duties, deserve more than just the mere respect by word of mouth. All Christians must esteem them abundantly in love for their work's sake. Men delight in serving those whom they abundantly love. Christian men and women can not do too much for those who are watching for their souls. When we think of that awful responsibility that the elders have taken upon themselves for us, esteeming them highly in love is a small way to show appreciation. Let us learn to love them as fathers, and see that they want for neither the necessities nor the conveniences of life. Let us look upon them as righteous men of God, for that is what they must be to be scriptural elders, and in every way let our love increase for them and their work. Most of us have no way of knowing the hours that these men have spent in praying to God for the church; the many times their good old hearts have bled because of the indifference on the part of some to the church; the sleepless hours they have spent rolling upon their beds because some are only lukewarm to Christianity. As a good father is interested in his children, so are the righteous elders interested in every member of the church. If each one would esteem them highly in love, there would be much more harmony and co-operation between the congregation and the elders in the Lord's work.

### III. BE SUBMISSIVE TO THE ELDERS (Heb. 13:17).

"To submit" means to give in to; to be in subjection to the wishes of the elders; to let their decisions prevail over ours. We must submit ourselves to the scriptural elders and follow their leadership.

The Greek term here is *hupēikete*, of which Thayer says: "To resist no longer, but to give way, yield; metaph. to yield to authority and admonition, to submit: Heb. xiii.17."

This means more than just to obey. It means to have the attitude of mind to subject one's judgment and will to another. It means to desire to obey. Unless one is submissive to authority his obedience is of little

value. Some who are in prisons *obey* the authorities, but it can not be said that they are really submissive. The members of the church who do not truly submit to the elders will hardly obey their righteous rule.

Some decisions of the elders may not always be in agreement with the judgment of some of the members who do not have knowledge and experience in scriptural matters, but where no conflict of faith is involved they must submit. The elders are not to rule arrogantly and in an overbearing way, and sometimes they would do well to carefully consider the judgments of others in the congregation before making decisions. This statement does not imply that a general vote of the congregation should be taken and the majority rule should decide the course. It simply means that the elders should use all the experience and resources in the congregation to help in making wise decisions. But the members of the church must submit to the decisions of the elders once their judgment has been passed, with only this exception, that their judgment does not violate any command of God.

Submission differs slightly from obedience in that *obey* means to comply or carry out a command or request without necessarily meaning to desire to obey, while to *submit* means to yield to the decision or judgment of another, both as to attitude and action. It is possible for one to obey and not submit in spirit. To submit denotes the willingness to yield to proper authority and to obey. When one becomes a member of a congregation he automatically expresses in the action his willingness to submit to the elders, and all should understand it.

Great care should be taken to select righteous men to whom all the members of the church can scripturally submit. This is one place where a great danger lies in appointing unqualified men to the eldership. Those who are not elders after the pattern of God can not be followed without treading on dangerous ground. As the elders are submissive to God and His word, so let the church be submissive to the elders. Each one in the church must respect the highly ordained office of eldership without murmuring against God.

This Scripture, however, does not permit the submission to the unscriptural opinions and absurd suggestions of unqualified men. Do not get the idea that if a man is called an elder, all the church must submit to him, right or wrong. The highest calling of every Christian is to submit to the word of God. Now if the elders are submitting themselves to the word of God, a Christian can not submit to God without submitting to the eldership. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that we must submit ourselves to the eldership, but he is certainly not speaking of unqualified men.

"Submitting" to others is not a conflicting idea to the Bible. Several passages place this duty upon every member of the church. "Submit

yourselves therefore to God" (Jas. 4:7). "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph. 5:24). "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (I Pet. 2:13). "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another . . ." (I Pet. 5:5). Since Christians must submit to each other, to the civil powers, to God, is it a terrible thing if they be required to submit to the rule of scriptural elders? Every child of God must submit himself to the true elders and not be contentious over every matter that comes up in the affairs of the church. The elders must be considerate for the welfare of the church in his rule. His decisions in all matters must be for the benefit of the church. This inspired instruction is as much for preachers as any other Christian.

Sometimes the elders, for some reason or other, will decide that some change should be made in the song director or a teacher of some Bible class. Their reasons may be honorable and good and right, but the person who has been leading the songs or teaching the class may oppose the judgment and revolt against the elders, and even try to get others to rebel. This is an unscriptural action. All can not lead the singing or teach a class, and those whose work it is to see that these things are done for the best possible good of the church must make the decisions as to who should do them. If the elders believe a change is necessary, it is not always a reflection on the person who has been doing the job. It may be the judgment of the elders that the services of a preacher be terminated. It does not always mean that the preacher is not doing his work well. Whatever decisions the righteous elders make every member of the church should submit to them and help to the fullest of his ability to carry out the decision. Only in matters that lead to disobedience to God are the members of the church to refuse to submit to the elders. This is God's requirement and not man's. The elders did not put the church in subjection to them; God did it. And when one fails to obey this responsibility he is disobeying God. If the church will obey God in submitting to the elders, we may be sure that there will be peace and progress in the church as never before in this generation.

#### IV. BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES (I Thess. 5:13).

Not often is this considered as a duty of the church toward the elders, but I see not how it could be thought of otherwise, seeing that it is taken in the same text that indicates a relationship of the church to those who have the rule. Even if this were not shown to be in connection with the elders it would certainly be implied by the nature of the relationship of elders to the church and the church to the elders.

The effectiveness of the mission of the church depends in a great amount upon the peace and harmony among its members. Besides, the elders' work can only be successful when there is peace among the brethren.

One of the greatest joys in the work of the Lord is to find a church working at peace among themselves. The writer here says, "And be at peace among yourselves." Peace is an attribute of God. It is also the effect of God's work with man. The kind of peace that really counts comes from God. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33). This peace that comes from God is bound upon His children by commandment. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (II Cor. 13:11). "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15). The result of this peace is a real blessing. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19). "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

One of the greatest rewards in becoming a Christian is that peace with God, all men, and self. A thing so characteristic of all Christians must be a duty in their relationship to the overseers of the church. David said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1). It is the responsibility of every member of the church to contribute as much as possible to a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere in all activities of the church where he is a member. Jesus said, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to the man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. 18:7).

But while we talk about peace in the church, it is not to be understood from this that the Bible permits Christians to be at peace at any cost. Sometimes it is impossible to be at peace with some. Even Jesus, who is the real source of the peace we are speaking of, said he came to bring the sword rather than peace in some instances. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). When it is a matter of right and wrong there

can be no peace or compromise with them. Jesus came to make war and not peace with evil. Paul said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). This statement implies that in some cases, and with some men, it is not possible to be at peace. But just as far as possible Christians ought to strive to have peace, but not to the point of compromising with any evil or false doctrine. This peace must be "among yourselves." A very important duty of the church toward the elders is to "be at peace among yourselves."

#### V. OBEY THE ELDERS (Heb. 13:17).

To "obey" those that rule (the elders) is implied in the command to "submit" to them. One of the duties of the elders is to rule the congregation, but they can not do this unless the members will obey them. Any church member will be condemned by God just as much for not obeying the elders in the Lord as the elders will be condemned for not ruling. These elders have a hard job and Christians should co-operate with them to the fullest of their ability to accomplish the mission of the church. Of course, they are to be obeyed only if they are qualified and are ruling well.

Paul said, "Let the elders that rule well . . ." (I Tim. 5:17). They can not rule well unless the members of the church will submit to that rule in obedience. Often the elders are not able to rule as they should because of some rebellious members in the church. Some churches will not appoint elders, not because they do not have qualified men, but because they do not want to yield obedience to an eldership. Therefore, they continue in a democratic, majority rule form of government, which is in disobedience to God's plan.

Others voice an objection to obeying the elders, that we are not to obey any man in religious matters today. It is true that we have no law makers in the church today, and thus have no man to whom we should yield obedience. But there are some whose judgment and spiritual instructions we must obey in harmony with the law that Christ gave. We can only obey Christ by obeying those who have been placed over us in the Lord. Christ instructs us to obey the civil authorities, and we can not obey Him unless we obey them in things that are right (Rom. 13:1, 2). Children are told to obey their parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1, 2). Wives are to obey their husbands in the Lord (Eph. 5:23, 24). One can not obey Christ without obeying these whom he has placed over us. The elders have been placed over us in the local church and we must obey them to obey Christ.

Some seem to be of the opinion that unless everything goes as they want it, the elders are always wrong. Just remember this: Many will be lost in eternity because they thought God did not do things as



He should. Naaman thought God should have healed him in his (Naaman's) way, and just because things did not go as he wanted them, he did not intend to obey God. He later submitted to the command and was healed, but he had to obey God. When I was a small boy I often thought my father was wrong in his correction, but I had to obey him. Since then I have learned that it was right and all for my good. The church member must learn that he must obey the elders who rule well or he is in rebellion against God. I speak of qualified elders here. Just because they do not decide everything to suit each member, which is impossible to begin with, is no excuse for disobedience. This is a duty of the church to the eldership.

Many cry, "Lording it over the flock" when the elders set a course that some of the members disapprove. The eldership is not "lording it over the flock" just because they might make some decisions that are not approved by all. The point at which the elders begin to make laws contrary to the New Testament and demand the membership to obey them, is the point at which they begin lording it over the flock. But in matters of human judgment that are in accord with the law of Christ the elders are not lording it over the flock, even if some do not agree with these decisions.

#### VI. REBUKE NOT AN ELDER, BUT ENTREAT HIM AS A FATHER (I Tim. 5:1).

The language of this passage is directed to a preacher, but Paul also told him, "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" (II Tim. 2:2). Then this would embrace all Christians, as well as preachers, as a duty in their relationship to the elders.

No Christian should reprimand or censure an elder carelessly and without ample proof. The word *elder* in this verse applies to those in years rather than just the eldership of the church, but the eldership would necessarily come in this group; they are included. No Christian should ever approach an elder as if he were inferior or mean, but always respect his age and position. Never bitterly oppose him, but, if he has done wrong (and this is possible), implore him as you would a father to correct his ways. This attitude should prevail in every congregation of the Lord's church. If every child of God acted under this divine instruction of the apostle, there would be less trouble in the church today. Some elders need rebuking, and if this be the case, do it in a Christian way, not as if he were a child. Of course, all scriptural elders will delight that Christians take enough interest in them to help correct their weaknesses and faults, and will gladly profit by truth, whatever its source may be. The elders are to rule the congregation and

they should be respected in that manner even when rebuked. They make mistakes the same as others, but if they are the kind of elders they should be they need only to be told of their errors to correct them. Approach them with respect at all times.

VII. RECEIVE NOT AN ACCUSATION AGAINST AN ELDER EXCEPT IN THE MOUTH OF TWO OF THREE WITNESSES (I Tim. 5:19).

The word *elder* is used here in the official sense. Christians must be very cautious of receiving evil reports against the overseer. Evil men are always ready to charge an elder with some misdeed or sin. Any such criticism should be regarded as idle gossip unless sustained by two or three unimpeachable witnesses. No personal grudge should be considered as a basis for an accusation against an elder unless that elder is at fault and it has been established by two or three witnesses. Hasty charges and action against any Christian is wrong. Anyone whose business it is to correct and lead others will always have enemies of one kind or another; therefore, everyone should be very careful how he accuses any one of the elders.

When, however, there are accusations brought against an elder by two or three good witnesses, and he is found guilty, he should be rebuked before all. This instruction is directed to a preacher of the gospel—Timothy. Paul said to withdraw from all who do not obey the righteous will of God, whether he be an elder or otherwise (II Thess. 3:6; I Cor. 5:1 - 5). The church must protect herself against unqualified leadership. The erring elder who will not repent should be taken out of the eldership because God does not recognize a sinful, inpenitent man as an elder. The elders are as liable to temptation and sin as anyone else. If and when they do sin, they must repent and pray God for forgiveness. Each elder must take heed to himself—watch his own conduct at all times. He may sin in performing his duty, or fall subject to temptation, and when he does and has been shown his error, and he refuses to repent, the only course the church has is to dispose of him as the Scriptures teach. The church must be just and considerate with all accusations brought against the elders.

There are many who are always finding something wrong with what the elders do. The Pharisees found something wrong with Jesus, in their wicked opinions, but they failed to prove it. Unless church members are able to prove by the word of God that an elder has sinned, they should all keep silent. Those who will not behave under such conditions should be rebuked by the elders. Any elder who sins and refuses to repent should be relieved of his position as elder, because he has become disqualified by his conduct. This should be done openly and before all so that all others may fear the same fate should they fall

into the same condemnation. The church must be careful about accusing any elder of sin unless he is proved guilty by two or three witnesses. This is a duty of the church to the elders.

#### VIII. REMEMBER AND IMITATE THE ELDERS (Heb. 13:7).

Members of the church should remember the elders and their faith. Some commentaries have interpreted this verse to include only those apostles and inspired men who first spoke the gospel, but that seems too limited for this passage. Of the Greek word, translated *remember*, Thayer says: "To be mindful of, to remember, to call to mind." This is the meaning of the word in Acts 20:35— ". . . and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." The Greek term *hagoimenon*, translated "rule over you," is defined by Thayer as, "*To lead, i.e. a. to go before; b. to be a leader; to rule, command; to have authority over . . . with gen. of the pers. over whom one rules, so of the overseers or leaders of Christian churches: Heb. xiii.7,17,24.*" This certainly shows that the writer in this passage intended to include the elders, who are the overseers of the church, as "them which have the rule over you."

To remember the rulers means to be mindful of their instructions in righteousness, their personal counsel, and their example of Christianity. Not only to call these things to mind, but also to IMITATE them in life. Each member of the church must be faithful to the word of God as the elders are faithful. Since the elders are to be examples, Christians must follow their examples as long as they follow Christ (I Cor. 11:1; I Pet. 5:2, 3). The qualifications are essential to make the elders a good example to follow, and with these high qualifications they are worthy of imitating.

If every member of the church would imitate the faith of godly, scriptural elders, it would not be long until Christianity would cover the globe. We expect many things of these men, such as attending every service of the church, and being faithful in all duties of Christianity. Now if everyone imitated them as he should, the attendance would be 100 percent and every good work would be carried out to completeness. If we refuse to imitate the righteous faith of qualified elders we sin against God. We are not to imitate anyone who does not himself imitate Christ in all things.

Some few spend more time in criticizing the leaders of the church than in trying to imitate their faith. How can elders be successful as good examples to the flock when the flock will not follow their pattern? It is obvious that they can not perform their duties here unless the church performs its duty. This is another reason why qualified men should be appointed to the office of bishop: so the church will not be in danger

in remembering their faith and in imitating them. Jesus said, "And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). It is a duty of the church to remember and imitate the faith of those who are their rulers—the elders.

#### IX. COUNT THE ELDERS WORTHY OF DOUBLE HONOUR (I Tim. 5:17, 18).

The Greek word translated "honour" is *Timas*, and is defined by Thayer: "1. a valuing by which the price is fixed; hence the price itself . . . 2. honor which belongs or is shown to one: the honor of one who outranks others, pre-eminence . . . the honor which one has by reason of the rank and state of the office which he holds, Heb. v.4 . . . deference, reverence, Ro. xii.10; xiii.7; 1. Tim. v.17; vi.1."

The elders that rule well should be counted worthy of DOUBLE (twofold) honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine. Besides the natural *honor* due one in such an office, another *honor* is due those who rule well, especially in teaching and preaching.

Two positions have been presented on the words "double honor." (1) Those elders who rule well in word and doctrine are to be given a double portion of the honor given the other elders. (2) Those elders who rule well in word and doctrine are to be given another kind of honor in addition to the normal honor given to all elders. Both positions can not be simultaneously taught in the same passage. The apostle meant one or the other, but not both at once.

The first position is not true because the word *diplax* does not mean "twice as much," or "two portions of the same." It means, *twofold*, *double*. The Scriptures no where infer that one elder is to receive more honor of the office than another. All are equal in responsibility of oversight and in rank, and thus the honor of the office should be given to all equally. The elder who does not rule well is deserving of NO honor because he is in disobedience to God. On the other hand, the elder who rules well is deserving of the honor due the office, and on equality with all other elders who rule well.

The second position is true because that one who "labors in word and doctrine" (preaching and teaching) deserves an additional honor to that of his rank and position. Some elders may rule well and not labor in preaching and public teaching. Basically the word *honor* means "to fix the value or price upon." In verse 18 the writer refers to the Old Testament to show what one honor is: "For the scripture saith, Thou shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." It follows that one honor has to do with financial support. The same reference is used in I Corinthians 9:9 with respect to the support of preachers.

The elders who rule well in word and doctrine—who carry burdens of oversight and spend time in preaching and teaching—are worthy of the honor and respect of the office he holds, and in addition the honor of financial support for his work. The connection of verse 18 shows this to be the meaning of the apostle.

The work of elders is local in scope and must be considered in each individual case. In New Testament times some elders were supported by the congregation for their labors, especially when they preached the gospel. In many cases the work of preaching is too much for one man to do by himself, and one or more of the elders may devote their full time to the work of the church. In such cases where he takes his time wholly from any secular work he should be supported by the church. Of course, this does not relieve the other elders from their responsibilities, but only applies to those who devote their full time to caring for the church.

The Bible teaches this obligation of the church toward those elders who labor in word and doctrine. It is inferred in I Peter 5:1-3 that elders may be paid for their services if they give full time because they are told not to seek the office for the money, showing that some were supported. The principle of paying those who labor in the gospel is laid down in I Corinthians 9:1-14. In verse 14 Paul concludes: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." If an elder preaches and labors full time in word and doctrine, he should be supported by the church.

Some objections have been raised against supporting the elders who devote additional time to preaching and leave secular means of support. We notice some of them here.

(1) *There is no New Testament example of elders being paid.* No, there is no direct statement that elders were paid, but the principle that they were supported by the church is exactly what is taught in I Timothy 5:17, 18 and implied in I Peter 5:2, 3. If such had not been the case, these passages would have little or no meaning.

(2) *This would have a tendency to create a head or presiding elder.* It is inferred here that the elder who is financially supported would be over the others, but such is not true. Does the fact that preachers are supported by the church make them over any one? Being financially supported by the church has nothing to do with making one over the other. That would be an abuse of the principle if it did happen, but would not affect the principle. It is impossible for the church to have a scriptural organization with one elder over the others, whether supported or not.

(3) *Some unqualified men would seek the office as an easy position.* If this objection be valid, we should go all the way to abolish the office entirely, for many unqualified men seek the office without pay. This is no real objection to elders being supported by the church because this would be wrong whether he is paid or not. If the church would follow the instructions of Paul in selecting the eldership, this would easily be eliminated. There are unqualified men seeking the office for other reasons, but that does not make it wrong to appoint qualified men. The fact that unqualified men would seek the office for money does not make supporting the qualified elders wrong. Some preachers seek a pulpit for the money, but that does not make it wrong to support and honor a righteous preacher of the gospel. This is no objection at all.

(4) *All elders might think they should be paid.* There is no scriptural reason why they all should not be supported if they all devote their time to the word and doctrine so that they are not able to do secular work for a living, and if the congregation is financially able to support them. However, if all men were qualified they would not be seeking anything for selfish reasons and this would eliminate all such supposed conditions. There will be no envy and jealousy among qualified elders, and the one best qualified to do the work of preaching and devoting his full time to the duties of an elder would be easily selected by the elders to do the job.

(5) *Some might think they should be paid for any work done in the church.* It is agreed that many would think they should be paid for any work done, but that in itself does not make it wrong to support an elder. It just means that somebody does not understand his duty. Most all understand that if a man has a means of maintaining the support of himself and his family he should not require payment for services in the church. On the other hand, the man who gives up his business or job and sacrifices his source of income in order to do the work of the Lord should be supported by the church which he serves just as the Scriptures teach in I Corinthians 9:1-14.

(6) *Some elders might think the elder who is paid should do all the work.* This may very well be true but it does not make the supporting of an elder wrong any more than it makes the supporting of a preacher wrong. Many have the idea that a preacher is to do all the work because the church supports him, but that is not right. The preacher's work is limited and restricted by the Bible and no amount of money paid to him can take the responsibility from others in the church. Neither can a paid elder assume all or any of the work of the other elders. He is just freed from secular work to give more time to the work of preaching and teaching. Each of the other elders is obligated to his portion of the oversight and responsibilities.

But on the other hand there are some advantages in having some elders who can be supported and who can devote full time to the work of pastoring the flock. We list some of them here.

(1) It would create a greater zeal in some congregations because a closer check could be given to each member.

(2) It would eliminate a lot of indifference and worldliness in the church because the supported elders would have more time to deal with the unruly.

(3) It would free the preacher, in some cases, to do more of his work and give him more time for study and preparing lessons for the pulpit and class room, and to teach those who are not Christians. Many preachers have their hands tied today by having to do some of the work of the elders.

(4) Each individual member could receive more attention and instruction from the elders because they would have more time to devote to this work.

(5) This would take away the tendency toward the evangelist rule that is now corrupting the church in many sections. The supported elders would have more time to take a more active rule in the church and a greater vision of the work to be done would follow.

(6) This would free the evangelist to establish new congregations and preach in new fields because in his absence the elder or elders, as the case may be, who are supported by the church could preach and teach in his place and care for his duties while he is away. In this way the church could do more preaching at home and in new fields.

The honor of supporting the elders who labor in word and doctrine, in addition to the honor of respect for all the elders, is a duty of the church toward the elders, according to the ability of the church. The "double honor" is the financial support in addition to the respect to be paid those who "labor in word and doctrine."

#### X. CALL THE ELDERS WHEN IN NEED (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." This duty of Christians toward the elders has been the occasion of much discussion. Various theories and positions have been taken on various parts of this verse, each conflicting with the others. Evidently there is some reason why this is so. With some it is the basis for the use of olive oil in miraculous healing; with others it is the verse that proves we can not have elders today because none can do this kind of healing; with others it has reference to the spiritually sick and not the

physically sick; and with others it has no particular reference to anything in the church today. Every one of these ideas fail to take into account the principle involved and the context of the verses. By a careful analysis of the verse, and the application as a responsibility of the church today, we hope to clear up the misunderstanding.

Six Greek words are used here which should be defined to help us get the true meaning of the writer.

(1) *Asthenei*, translated "sick"—"*to be feeble, sick.*"

(2) *Proskalesastho*, translated "let him call"—"*to call to one's self; to bid to come to one's self.*"

(3) *Presbuteros*, translated "elders"—"*B. among Christians, those who preside over the assemblies (or churches).*"

(4) *Proseuxasthosan*, translated "let them pray"—"*to offer prayers, to pray . . . over one, i.e. with hands extended over him, Jas. v.14.*"

(5) *Aleipsantes*, translated "anointing"—"*to anoint.*"

(6) *Elaipts*, translated "with oil"—"*Olive-oil; used for feeding lamps, Mt. xxv. 3 sq.8; for healing the sick, Mk. vi.13; Lk. x.34; Jas. v.14.*"

From these definitions we see that James has reference to the feeble, infirmed and sick in body. Besides the raising up from the sick bed, James says, "And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (verse 15). This takes care of the spiritual part. The physically sick are those intended in verse 14.

Also the sick are obligated to "call for the elders"—more exact, "to bid them to come to him." James says to CALL for the elders when one is sick and in need of them. Now where does the large part of blame lie today when elders do not go to help some sick people? This places the responsibility squarely upon the members of the church until they have informed the elders of their needs, and then if the elders do nothing about it, God will hold them accountable. No sick man ever blames a doctor for not administering to his illness unless he has been notified. Many church members today seem to delight in keeping such matters from the elders and then charging them with neglect of duty when they do not visit some sick people. This is the basis of hypocrisy. Such people really deserve to suffer and be in want. The neglect of duty lies with the church member until he has called for the elders, if he needs them and their prayers.

The average church member thinks there is nothing for the elders to do but to go from place to place looking for some sick person, either spiritually or physically. James 5:14 puts the obligation for the first move



on the member who is sick. A few think when they have a cold, headache, sore toe, or something else, they should have the complete attention of the elders, and if they do not voluntarily come daily, they have committed the "unpardonable sin." Some will say, "I have been sick for a week and the elders did not come to see me." When informed that it was not known that they were sick, they reply, "Well, didn't you miss me at service?" The truth of the matter is, this type of church member is hardly ever missed because he hardly ever comes. If you are sick and need the elders, **CALL FOR THEM.** They will either come and administer to your needs, or see that it is done.

Yes, the scriptural elder eagerly awaits your call for his services. Most of this weakness in the ministration to the sick is due to the neglect of the members rather than the elders. Some are afraid to call the elders because they fear criticism or rejection of their needs. This is very seldom the case. If you will let the elders know of your needs, you will find that you have better and more efficient elders than you thought.

The ones who should be called are the "Elders" or overseers of the church. James makes it clear that the reference is to the bishops rather than just the older people of the congregation. Sometimes in the case of physical need the elders have arrangements made with the deacons to administer such. Just let the elders know and whatever way has been arranged, they will see that action is taken immediately.

The elders are to offer prayers in behalf of the one who is sick. The verses following clearly indicate that these prayers are not meant to effect a miraculous cure. The reference to Elias is that he prayed for rain and it came in the natural way—no miracle (I Kings 18). The elders are to pray that God's will be done in all things. But because they are righteous men, and the prayers of a righteous man availeth much, the elders should be called to pray for the sick. It may not always be necessary for the elders to come into the sick room to do the praying; in some few cases it may even have a bad reaction on the patient. God hears prayers of the righteous anywhere, and they may pray for the sick in the assembly as well as at the home of the sick person.

The anointing with oil means nothing more than to administer whatever medicine or treatment necessary to effect the cure. This does not mean that the elders are to be medical doctors. Some medicines and treatments may be administered by anyone. The principle involved here is that the elders, in addition to praying for the sick person, are to provide and administer whatever the sick person needs and to assist in his recovery. Olive oil was used as a medicine in the days of the apostles, and the elders were simply to use it in that way.

An effort has been made to clearly show the duties of the bishops to the church and the duties of the church to the bishops. The cooperation of both is essential to a peaceful mission of the church. Scriptural references have been given whereby the reader can check each statement made with the word of God.

When the duties of the eldership are examined, the need for every qualification is very evident. We can not treat this matter lightly. We do not quibble about baptism as a condition of salvation; we know that we must obey it if we are to be saved. Now why should we show less respect for the duties we owe to the elders than to any other command of God? Until we return to the Lord's way we can never be successful in anything we undertake in the kingdom.

## CHAPTER XIII

## ORDAINING OF ELDERS

The question of selecting and appointing elders and deacons has provided an abundance of material for speculation and argumentation. It seems that questions of this sort will never stay down. They continually arise in one form or another and create, in many places, a great deal of trouble. It will become more apparent as we progress in this study that the principles of the New Testament that govern the procedure of putting elders and deacons in the office are very clearly outlined. As long as these principles are all observed in the selecting and appointing, there will be no trouble. But if some one principle is exalted while others are minimized or completely forgotten trouble will ensue.

Carelessness in the selection and appointment of elders may paralyze the church in a community for years to come, so far as its influence and work is concerned. The church is seriously hindered in every place where men are placed in the position of elders who either can not or will not do the work they should. Caution should always be exercised in the selection and appointment of these men to the office of either elder or deacon, because much trouble and discord can arise from the improper procedure and conduct.

## I. OBJECTIONS TO THE APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS.

Before we can study anything about the principles that govern the appointment of elders and deacons, it must be shown that such is a Bible doctrine. This, like some other points concerning the eldership, has been the occasion of numerous objections, and we must consider these objections before going further.

1. Some have offered the objection that to appoint elders today is absurd because the relationship of elders to the church makes it impossible. By mixing some figures of speech and literally applying others that describe the relationship of the elders to the church, advocates of this objection ask: "Who ever heard of *sheep* appointing the *shepherd*?" Really, this is not a valid objection because it is based upon a misunderstanding of the figures used. In speaking of "sheep" and "shepherd" the inspired writer never intended that the figures should be taken beyond the idea of *pastoring* and *tending* as a part of the work of the eldership toward the church.

We could take similar expressions concerning the church and Christ and reduce them to equal absurdity by perverting the figures. Christ is

spoken of as the "foundation" of the church. Who ever heard of the foundation building the house that rests upon it? Such is impossible. Yet the mixing of figures here is as reasonable as in this objection. Christ is spoken of as the "head" of the church. Who ever heard of the head dying to save the body? The church is referred to as the "bride" of Christ. Christ is called the foundation or rock upon which the church is built. If we mix these figures we would come up with this absurdity: "Christ is the *foundation of the bride.*" All this is not worthy of more consideration. The relationship of *shepherd* and *sheep* only concerns the duties of the elders toward the church, and to carry it further is to destroy the figure and make nonsense. To argue that elders can not be appointed to the office today because "Who ever heard of the sheep appointing the shepherd" is about equal to arguing that we can not have the church today because "Who ever heard of the foundation building the church?"

2. Another objection to the appointment of elders is that if such be the case of "elders," why not with all others in the church in the same way? The objection says that there are four classes spoken of in Titus 2:2-6—(1) aged men, (2) aged women, (3) Young women, (4) young men. Each class has a work to do. The young men are to be examples (I Tim. 4:12); the young women are to keep the home (Titus 2:5); the older women are to teach the young women (Titus 2:4); and the older men are to tend the flock (I Pet. 5:1-2). Now if the old men (elders) are to be appointed before they can tend the flock, why not with each of the other classes?

This objection is easily cleared away when one learns the difference between the older men (elders) and the overseers (elders). In the case of older men, they are in that class because of their age. In the case of elders as overseers, their age does not appoint them to be overseers, but steps must be taken to do this as the New Testament instructs, whether we see any human reason in it or not. The other classes mentioned are appointed to the works outlined by reason of the obligations imposed upon them in these passages. Others are to be examples besides the young men. The rearing of children and keeping of the home is not a part of the work of the church, therefore, it has no reference to an office in the church. The same could be said for old women teaching the young women to care for their children, to love their husbands, etc. As for the old men tending the flock in I Peter 5:2, there is not a word about "old men" in the passage. It says ELDERS. If the word meant the "older" only, then women are as much included as the men. But obviously the passage has reference to those men who meet the qualifications outlined in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which would mean the overseers of the church. This position is not at all like those mentioning the young men and women and the old men and women of Titus 2:2-6. This refers to all Christians, young and old,

men and women, taking their respective places in Christian living, and does not refer in any way to the oversight of the church.

3. Another objection is to the effect that since we do not have a definite order or method of appointing shown in the New Testament, it follows that we can not appoint elders and deacons today, seeing that the Bible furnishes us unto every good work.

To many this sounds like solid truth. However, if we examine other things by the same rule we would have to cast out many things now considered indispensable to worship and Christian living. For example, where is the "method" of GOING in the great commission? The accounts show definitely that we must GO preach the gospel, but where is the passage that tells exactly HOW we are to go? Remember, the New Testament furnishes us unto every good work, and certainly it is a good work to GO preach the gospel. The point is that GO is important, but the method of going is left to the judgment of the one who goes, of course, being guided by all principles of the New Testament touching the matter.

Furthermore, what method shall be used in distributing the emblems of the Lord's Supper to the disciples gathered on the Lord's day? Shall it be passed to all, one at a time? or shall each one come to the table and take his part? Certainly it is to be done "decently and in order," but who is to say that either of these is not so? In a group of eight or ten disciples it would be as orderly to assemble around the table literally as to take the emblems from the table and pass them to each one. Now which "method" is the scriptural one? Since the exact method is not given in any passage, shall we conclude that we are not to partake of the Supper? Absolutely not! The thing to be done is well described, but the exact procedure is left to human judgment, governed by all Bible principles that touch the matter. The same could be said for singing or any other expression of worship. This is not a valid argument against the appointment of elders and deacons to their offices in the church.

## II. DEFINITION OF "SELECT" "ORDAIN" AND "APPOINT."

Before an accurate understanding can be obtained on this subject we must first ascertain the true meaning of the terms, *select*, *ordain* and *appoint*. The appointment of elders is the beginning of an agreement between the elders and the church—it is the point at which the agreement begins to operate. The elders agree to do their work of tending the flock; the church agrees to perform its duties toward the elders. This must be thoroughly understood by both parties before the appointment is really scriptural.

1. *The Selection*—The English word *select* is not found in the King James Version of the Bible, but the idea is there in the words: "look out among you," "choose," "chosen," etc. This is an act entirely different from the appointment or ordination. It is an act performed by the church, but not as a matter of human judgment. Just any person can not be selected to be an elder. The Holy Spirit has outlined carefully and at length the certain qualifications the person **MUST** have before he can be selected. The selection simply amounts to the choosing out from the number those who have attained the qualifications, so that actually what the church does is really what the Holy Spirit is doing. If one should be selected who does not measure to the standard of God, appointment would make him nothing in the sight of God. The qualifications determine whether a man may be appointed to the eldership or not; the church simply looks out those men who have the qualifications.

"Voting" has become a horrible word to many Christians, especially in connection with matters concerning the church. Scriptural "voting" is not the matter of real concern, but the **METHOD** of voting is. "Voting" usually means the majority rule, which is scripturally wrong in the church. Webster defines *voting* as, "1. A suffrage; the expression of a wish, will, preference, or choice, in regard to any measure proposed, in which the person voting has an interest in common with others, either in electing a person to office or in passing laws, rules, regulations, and the like. 2. That by which will or preference is expressed in elections or in deciding propositions; a ballot; a ticket; a word spoken, as yea or nay; as, a final *vote*."

From the beginning to the end of Christianity every Christian exercises his choice or preference in many matters, and it amounts to nothing short of "voting." He chooses to serve Christ rather than the devil, which is voting. He chooses to obey God in all things, one of these things being to "look out among you" those men who have attained the qualifications listed to be elders. This is *voting* because that is what the word means. But when voting is used to decide issues and decisions in church matters of human judgment, on a majority rule basis, it is wrong because it turns the church into a democratic form of government. Or when voting is used in any sense in matters of faith, it is wrong because the Law-maker has already made such decisions in the New Testament. I mean by this, for example, that voting would in no way change the law for the penitent believer to be baptized for the remission of sins. That is a matter of law. Now the individual must make a choice between obeying this command or rejecting it, which amounts to "voting." "Voting" in religious matters decides nothing more than that the individual will adopt or reject the prescribed course laid out by the Head of the church—Christ.

We want to thoroughly define these words so that there will be no misunderstanding as to their meanings when used by the apostles. Greek authorities give the following definitions to the Greek terms from which we get the translation, *choose, chosen, look out*, etc.:

(1) *Ekleptomai*—"to choose out for one's self, to elect, Lu. x.42; Ac. vi.5, xii.17; I Cor. i.27, 28." (*Berry's Interlinear Greek-English*). "to choose, to select, Joh. vi.70. xiii.18, Acts, vi.5." (*Westcott & Hort*). "to pick out, single out;—Med. to choose out for oneself, choose." (*Liddell & Scott*). "to pick out, choose . . . to pick or choose out for one's self: Lk x.42; xiv.7; one from among many (of Jesus choosing his disciples). Jn. vi.70; xiii.18, xv.16; Acts i.2 . . . used of choosing one for an office, Acts vi. 5" (*Thayer*).

(2) *Aireomai*—"(*aireo*) to take, only in mid, in N.T., to choose, prefer, Phil. i.22; 2 Th. ii.13; Heb. xi.25." (*Berry*). "(*airoumai*) to choose, 2 Thess. ii.13. Philipp. i.22. Hebr. xi. 25." (*Westcott & Hort*). "II. a taking for one self, choosing, choice." (*Liddell & Scott*). "2 (fr. *aireomai*), choosing, choice, very often in prof. writ.: Sept. Lev. xxii.18; 1 Macc. viii.30." (*Thayer*).

(3) *Epilego*—"in pass., to be named, Jn. v.2; mid., to choose, Ac. xv.40." (*Berry*). "to call by a second name, Joh. v.2; mid., to choose, Acts, xv. 40." (*Westcott & Hort*). "II. to choose, pick out, select." (*Liddell & Scott*). "2. to choose for (Hdt. et eqq; Sept.); mid. to choose for one's self, Acts xv.40 . . ." (*Thayer*).

(4) *Episkepsasthe*—"(*skepsomai*) dep., to look upon, to visit, as Ac. vii.23; Mat. xxv.36,43; of God, Ac. xv.14: to look out, to select, Ac. vi.3." (*Berry*). "to inspect; to visit, Acts, vii.23. xv.36. Matt. xxv.36. James i.27; to look upon, to have a care for, Acts, xv.14. Luke i.68,78; to look out, to select, Acts vi.3." (*Westcott & Hort*). "a looking at, inspection. 2. consideration, reflexions, inquiry." (*Liddell & Scott*). "C. to look (about) for, look out (one to choose, employ ,etc.): Acts vi.3." (*Thayer*).

These four terms express the idea of choosing or selecting. In some cases law must determine the choice, while in other cases it is a matter of human judgment. In the case of elders and deacons it is plainly a matter of law. The New Testament tells us what qualifications a man must possess before being appointed to the office, and the "choosing out" simply indicates the selection of such men as are qualified. The law of Christ prohibits the selection of any other than those qualified.

2. *Ordain*—The word *ordain* signifies a subsequent action to the selection of those qualified men to be elders or deacons. Some unnecessary confusion has resulted from some ideas on this word and the word

*appoint*. For that reason we wish to devote some space to a thorough study of the Greek terms used from which this word is translated.

For the moment, confining ourselves to the King James Version of the New Testament, let us list every passage where the English *ordain* and *ordained* are used and see what Greek terms are used in the passages. We shall use *Young's Analytical Concordance* in this phase of the study.

- (1) *Diatasso*—"To arrange throughout" (I Cor. 7:17; 9:14; Gal. 3:19).
- (2) *Kathistami*—"To place or set down" (Tit. 1:5; Heb. 5:1; 8:3).
- (3) *Kataskeuazo*—"To prepare fully" (Heb. 9:6).
- (4) *Krino*—"To judge" (Acts 16:4).
- (5) *Horizo*—"To mark out or off" (Acts 10:42; 17:31).
- (6) *Poieo*—"To do, make" (Mark 3:14).
- (7) *Proorizo*—"To mark out publicly or before" (I Cor. 2:7).
- (8) *Tasso*—"To arrange, set in array" (Acts 13:48; Rom. 13:1).
- (9) *Tithemi*—"To put, place, set" (John 15:16; I Tim. 2:7).
- (10) *Cheirotoneo*—"To elect by stretching out the hand" (Acts 14:23).
- (11) *Prographo*—"To write or describe before" (Jude 4).
- (12) *Proetoimazo*—"To make ready before" (Eph. 2:10).
- (13) *Ginomai*—"To become" (Acts 1:22).

Not all of these words are used in connection with a person being ordained to an office, hence we will devote our time to only those that have some connection to our subject. In the following passages reference is made to some person being *ordained* to some work:

(1) "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and *ordain* (R.V. appoint) elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). *Ordain* here is from the Greek *katastasis* (Thayer—*kathistami*), which is defined by Thayer as, "to appoint one to administer an office (cf. Germ. *bestellen*): presbuterous, Tit. i.5 . . ."

(2) "For every high priest taken from among men is *ordained* (R.V. appointed) for men in things pertaining to God . . ." (Heb. 5:1). The Greek word here is *kathistantai* (*kathistami*), which has the same meaning as above.

(3) "For every high priest is *ordained* (R.V. appointed) to offer gifts and sacrifices . . ." (Heb. 8:3). The Greek word is the same as above.



(4) "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was *ordained* (R.V. ordained) of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10:42). This speaks of Christ being ordained by God to be the Judge of the world. The Greek term is *horismenos* (*horizo*), which is defined by Thayer as, "1. *to mark out the boundaries or limits* (of place or thing): . . . 2. *to determine, appoint*: with an acc. of the thing, *hameran*, Heb. iv.7; . . . *that which hath been determined, acc. to appointment, decree*, Lk. xxii.22 . . . *to ordain, determine, appoint*, Acts x.42."

(5) "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath *ordained* (R.V. ordained) . . ." (Acts 17:31). Again this speaks of Christ being ordained by God to be the judge of the world, and the Greek is *horisen*, and is defined as above.

(6) "And he *ordained* (R.V. appointed) twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mk. 3:14). This refers to Christ ordaining the apostles. The Greek term here is *epoiasen* (*poieo*), of which Thayer says, "1. *to make* (Lat. *efficio*), a. with the names of the things made, *to produce, construct, form, fashion*, etc. . . ."

(7) "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and *ordained* (R.V. appointed) you . . ." (John 15:16). This speaks of Christ ordaining the apostles for the work they were to do, and the word is *ethaka* (*tithami*), of which Thayer says, "1. *to set, put, place* . . . 2. *to make* . . . Mid. *to appoint for one's use* . . . Jn. xv.16."

(8) "Whereunto I am *ordained* (R.V. appointed) a preacher . . ." (I Tim. 2:7). This speaks of Paul being made a preacher of the gospel by Christ. The Greek term is *etethan* (*tithami*), which Thayer defines as, "*to make.*" (Same as above).

(9) "And when they had *ordained* (R.V. appointed) them elders in every church . . ." (Acts 14:23). This speaks of Paul and Barnabas ordaining elders in the churches established on their first preaching journey. The Greek here is *cheirotonasantes* (*cheirotoneo*), which Thayer defines as, "A. prop. *to vote by stretching out the hand* . . . B. *to create or appoint by vote*: *tina*, one to have charge of some office or duty, pass. 2 Co. viii.19, and in the spurious subscriptions in II Tim. iv.23; Tit. iii.15. C. with the loss of the notion of extending the hand, *to elect, appoint, create*: *tina*, Acts xiv.23."

(10) "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be *ordained* (R.V. become) to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). This speaks of filling the vacancy in the apostleship left by the death of Judas Iscariot.

Prophecy had foretold that one should be ordained to take his place. The Greek term here is *genesthai* (*ginomai*), which Thayer defines as, "1. to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being: ansol., Jn. i.15,30 . . . 2. to become i.q. to come to pass, happen, of events; a. univ.: Mt. v.18; xxiv. 6,20,34; Lk. i.20; xii.54; xxi.28; Jn. i.28 xiii.19 . . . 3. to arise, appear in history, come upon the stage: of men appearing in public, Mk. i.4 Jn. 1:6 . . . 4. to be made, done, finished: *ta erga*, Heb. iv.3 . . . 5. to become, be made."

Of the Greek terms studied so far only two have any reference to the elders or deacons being *ordained* to their offices: *katastasas*—"to appoint one to administer an office" (Titus 1:5), and *cheirotonasantes*—"to vote by stretching out the hand . . . with the loss of the notion of extending the hand, to elect, appoint, create" (Acts 14:23). It is obvious that this action must be taken by someone in setting into the office those men who have qualified and have been selected.

3. *Appoint*—We shall study this word in the same manner as we did the word *ordain*. The main purpose in this is to ascertain whether or not *ordain* and *appoint* mean the same thing. Listing every passage in the New Testament where the word *appoint* occurs, the following are taken from *Young's Analytical Concordance*:

- (1) *Anadeiknumi*—"To shew, point out" (Lk. 10:1).
- (2) *Apokeimai*—"To be laid off or aside" (Heb. 9:27).
- (3) *Diatasso*—"To arrange throughout" (Lk. 3:13; Acts 7:44; 20:13; Tit. 1:5).
- (4) *Diatithemi*—"To put throughout" (Lk. 22:29).
- (5) *Histemi*—"To put, place" (Acts 1:23; 17:31).
- (6) *Kathistemi*—"To set down" (Acts 6:3).
- (7) *Poieo*—"To do, make" (Heb. 3:2).
- (8) *Suntasso*—"To arrange together" (Matt. 26:19; 27:10).
- (9) *Tasso*—"To arrange, set in order" (Matt. 28:16; Acts 22:10; 28:23).
- (10) *Tithemi*—"To put, place" (Matt. 24:51; Lk. 12:40; I Thess. 5:9; 2 Tim. 1:11; Heb. 1:2; I Pet. 2:8).
- (11) *Protassomai*—"To arrange before hand" (Acts 17:26).
- (12) *Keimai*—"To be laid" (I Thess. 3:3).

The following passages have the word *appoint* in the King James Version in reference to a person being appointed to some work:

- (1) "After these things the Lord *appointed* (R.V. appointed) other seventy also . . ." (Lk. 10:1). This refers to those sent on the limited commission of preaching the coming of the kingdom to the

Jews. The Greek term is *anedeixen* (*anadeiknumi*), which Thayer defines as, "A point out, public showing forth . . . a proclaiming, announcing, inaugurating, of such as are elected to office."

(2) "And they *appointed* (R.V. put forward) two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias" (Acts 1:23). This speaks of the two who were put forth by the apostles, from whom was to be selected the successor to Judas Iscariot. The Greek term is *bestasan* (*histami*), and is defined by Thayer as, "to cause to make to stand; to place, put, set." (Acts 1:23; 6:13).

(3) "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may *appoint* (R.V. appoint) over this business" (Acts 6:3). This speaks of the work of ministration to the neglected widows in Jerusalem. The apostles were to appoint those selected over the work. The Greek term is *katastasomen* (*kathistami*), which is defined as, "(prop. *to set down, put down*), *to set, place, puts A. tina epi tinos*, to set one over a thing (in charge of it), Mt. xxiv.45; xxv. 21,23; Lk. xii.42; Acts vi.3 . . ."

(4) "Who was faithful to him that *appointed* (R.V. appointed) him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3:2.) This speaks of Christ being appointed by God to be High Priest. The Greek term is *poiasanti* (*poieo*), which is defined by Thayer as, "I *to make* (Lat. *efficio*), 1. *ti*, a with the names of the things made, *to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc.*: *anthrakian*, Jn. xvii.18; *eikona*, Rev. xiii.14 . . . 2. With additions to the accusative which define or limit the idea of making: a. *ti ek tinos* (gen. of material), *to make a thing out of something*, Jn. ii.15; ix.6; Ro. ix.21."

(5) "Whereunto I am *appointed* (R.V. appointed) a preacher . . ." (II Tim. 1:11). This speaks of Paul being made a preacher of the gospel. The Greek is *etethan* (*tithami*), which Thayer defines as, "1. *to set, put, place*, i.e. accusative of *keisthai*: hence a. *to place or lay* . . . b. *to put down, lay down* . . . 2. *to make* . . . Lk. xx.43; Acts ii.35; Heb. 1:13; x.13 . . . I Tim. ii.7; II Tim. i.11 . . . 3. *to set, fix, establish*." (This is the same word as in II Timothy 2:7 translated *ordained*).

Only one of these words is used to refer to the elders or deacons. In Acts 6:3 the word *katastasomen* is translated "appoint" in connection with the deacons in Jerusalem. This was something the apostles were to do for those selected by the number. But this same word is translated *ordain* in the King James Version of the elders in Titus 1:5. It is obvious that either *ordain* or *appoint* will correctly translate the action expressed in the Greek terms in connection with the elders and deacons.

This phase of the study would not be complete unless we understood the meaning of the English words *ordain* and *appoint*. *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary* gives the following definitions to the words:

ORDAIN—"1. To set in order; to arrange; to prepare (Obs). 2. To decree; to give order or directions for; to appoint; often used of the decrees of Providence or fate. 3. To establish; to institute; as, to *ordain* a feast or a holiday. 4. To set apart for an office; to appoint. 5. To invest with ministerial or sacerdotal functions; to introduce and establish or settle in the pastoral office with the customary forms and solemnities; as, to *ordain* a minister of the gospel."

APPOINT—"1. To fix ;to settle; to establish; to constitute, ordain, or fix by decree or decision; as, to *appoint* a holiday. 2. To allot or assign; to designate by authority; as, to *appoint* a committee; to *appoint* a guardian; to *appoint* a time for the meeting. 3. To ordain, command, or order. 4. To equip; to furnish; to provide; as, his person and house are well *appointed*. 5. To point out by way of censure, or correction; to blame. (Abs). 6. In law, (a) to designate, or nominate, as an executor, administer, or guardian; (b) to allot or divide, by virtue of a clause contained in a conveyance, conferring a power on some person to do so."

Both the Greek and English terms are used interchangeably and have the same meaning. We conclude, therefore, that there is no merit in the argument that distinguishes between these word in connection with the elders that God does one act and man does the other..

### III. VARIOUS DOCTRINES OF CHOOSING AND APPOINTING ELDERS.

There are a number of varying doctrines concerning the METHOD of selecting and appointing and WHO is to do the appointing, ranging from one extreme to the other. To show how the extremes on this subject differ, three related preachers of a few years ago held these positions: William Lipscomb said there were no elders today, thus no appointment. David Lipscomb said that there were elders today in the church, but no Bible way to appoint them. Granville Lipscomb said that there were elders today and that there is a Bible way to appoint them. There are a number of positions taught between these.

How does the church choose and appoint the elders and deacons? Is there any METHOD taught in the Scriptures? Some say yes and others say no. At this point in our study let me list several methods that have been taught.

However, before we observe these different methods of selecting and appointing elders and deacons in the church, we will notice that

**SELECTION** and **APPOINTMENT** are two different actions. Selection is the choosing out or determining certain ones from the church, and does not constitute the appointing, which is the "setting in" of those who are chosen. The selection must precede the appointment. The choosing out is determined by the qualifications outlined in the New Testament, while the appointment is the designating to the office of those selected. The difference in these two will be made even plainer as we study the scriptural method of setting men in the office.

1. *Majority Election*—This is perhaps the most popular method of setting men into the eldership. It is based upon the argument that since there is no definite method given for appointing elders, the voice of the church is the best way of choosing and appointing them. This method combines the choosing and appointing into one action. Those chosen by the majority vote are automatically appointed to the office. This method amounts to a majority rule "election"—"Vox populi, vox dei"—the voice of the people is the voice of God. The Bible does not say that elders are to be "elected" by any process, as we understand the word *elected*. They are to be selected and appointed, and there is a difference. Voting in matters of faith has no place in the church of the Lord. It is all right in matters of human judgment and in civil affairs, but not in the church. I speak of popular vote by which the majority rules. The church is not a republic or democracy but a monarchy with only one ruler or law giver—Jesus Christ (James 4:12).

The simplest procedure in this method is to have nominations of men and then have the whole church write on a sheet of paper their choices of those nominated, and the ones who get a good majority will be appointed automatically. This permits whoever is in the majority to rule, whether children, unlearned, worldly-minded, etc. If the majority of the membership of the congregation should be worldly-minded people, and they should nominate a worldly-minded man for the eldership, it means that the rule is taken from Christ and placed in the hands of those worldly-minded who are in the majority. It completely disregards the qualifications and permits the majority to decide who will be and who will not be the elders. The results are "man-made" elders and not "Holy Spirit made" elders. This method is not in harmony with the Scriptural principles that govern the subject.

2. *Preacher Selection and Appointment*—This perhaps is the second most popular method of setting the elders and deacons in the office. A. L. Deveny, in his book, *The Church And Its Elders*, suggests this method on pages 90-92. "Please remember that in the Island of Crete Titus, and Titus alone, understood just the kind of men required for the office of elder. Likewise, in Ephesus, Timothy alone was advised as to the requirements. Paul had not only furnished these young ministers with

instructions in a letter, but each had been with him and had observed over a long period of time just how Paul had done the same thing.

“In view of these concrete illustrations it must be very plain, therefore, that the work of selecting and ordaining elders must have been in the hands of ministers or evangelists. The Scriptures do not teach that a minister or an evangelist should perform this necessary task haughtily and alone. Humility on his part would require the enlistment of assistance on the part of good men in the congregation as he goes about the serious task of finding those men in the congregation who approximate most nearly the character and reputation prerequisite to ordination to the elderhood. . . . In the fullness of time, or after a tentative selection has been made by the minister and his advisers, the selection must be submitted to the congregation with the suggestion that if any know of any valid reason why these men or any of them should not be ordained to the elderhood the same should be made known in conference with the evangelist, or whoever may be in charge, prior to the time of ordination.”

At first reading this has the appearance of being a harmless and orderly procedure, but there are some things wrong with it. In the first place it does not follow from the concrete examples (?) of Titus and Timothy that “the work of selecting and ordaining elders must have been in the hands of ministers and evangelists. If so, it is as much follows from the example of Acts 6:3 that the church and the apostles are to do the selecting and appointing of deacons.

Furthermore, the work of selecting and appointing does not belong in the same category. On page 90 the writer had this to say, “It would be illogical to infer that the membership of a new congregation should be charged with the necessity of selecting a spiritual leadership even when some of the members of the new organization had been Christian for a long time. How much less qualified to select their leaders may the congregation be considered when every one of its members are new converts?” If examples are to serve us in arriving at a scriptural method of putting elders in their office, the occasion in Jerusalem when the apostles told the number to “look out among you” the qualified and “we” (apostles) will appoint them to the work, shows an obligation of the church in the selection. The church in Jerusalem was not too old at the time this was done. Surely men and women can follow the Bible in selecting those men who have attained a certain height in Christian development. Besides, not a word is said to either Timothy or Titus about “selecting and ordaining” elders. They are told to “ordain” (appoint) elders. We may infer from a combination of these two examples that the number of disciples were to “look out” the qualified and the preachers should appoint them.

Often a traveling evangelist goes to a place to preach in a meeting and before he leaves he has selected certain men and appointed them to the office of elder and deacon. It is not possible that this man can know the lives and abilities of the men there as well as the church knows them. He may know God's standard for an elder—indeed, he must know them—but he could hardly know the men in a matter of a few days. The church knows the lives and abilities of the individual members better than a stranger. Preachers are to preach on the qualifications of elders and deacons, and make sure the church knows God's will on the subject, but the church is to "look out" from among them such men as meet those qualifications. An obvious danger in the preacher doing the selecting is that he will, or may, act out of prejudice and preference. He may not know much about one of the best men for the work, while the church may know him well. This method does not conform fully to the Bible standard because it assigns more responsibility and power to the evangelist than he should have. Following Bible principles and examples, the preachers may designate or "ordain" those who are approved by God's standard and have been "selected" by the church over which they are to rule.

3. *God Appoints and Man Ordains*—It is said that God "appoints" men to the eldership by giving certain qualifications to which men must measure to be in the office. Man can not set this standard. When a man meets these qualifications God has thereby appointed him to the duties and responsibilities of the elders and deacons, and God requires an account of their actions. But man can only select and "ordain" these men to a local work. The Scriptural proof is Acts 20:28 and Acts 14:23. In the first the Holy Spirit MADE (appointed) the overseers, and in the second Paul ORDAINED them.

There are many good things said on this position, but it fails to conform to all the principles of the Scripture touching the subject. It is right that only God can set the standard, and that God approves only those who are qualified. It is also true that man can select only those who are approved by that standard of God. But to make a distinction between "appoint" and "ordain" is not scripturally right. These words are often used interchangeably, as we have seen in our study of them. What is done by man in obedience to God is done by God Himself. The apostles had power to bind and loose on earth with the assurance that the same would be done in heaven (Matt. 16:19). This was done by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12, 13). When Paul "ordained them elders in every city" (Acts 14:23), it was the same as God ordaining them elders because Paul was under obedience to the Holy Spirit which was sent from God. The apostles recorded this word which was delivered to them for us and when we follow what they bound and loosed, we have the assurance that it is done in

heaven. An example of this principle is the withdrawing of fellowship from the disorderly in the church (II Thess. 3:6). Paul commanded that it be done, and when we scripturally withdraw from the ungodly, we may be sure that it is ratified in heaven because of the revelation to the apostles. God is cutting them off from fellowship through those who obey Him in the action.

Peter and Paul bound and loosed conditions and restrictions regarding the appointment of elders and deacons. When we scripturally select and ordain elders and deacons in the church today, we can be certain that they are ordained by God. This question is to the point: If man is to *ordain* elders in the church now, and God is to *appoint* them, what happens if man does not *ordain* certain qualified men? Does God *appoint* them anyway? If no, then God can not *appoint* anyone whom man will not *ordain*. If yes, God may appoint some who have not been *ordained* by man. How shall we know whom God has appointed? Again, if some are *ordained* in the church by man, and God *appoints* them, then later those men are "unordained," does it compel God to "dis-appoint" them?

The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). He was guiding Paul in truth when he gave the qualifications for the elders and required him to ordain them in every church, therefore, the Holy Spirit "made" the elders. Without the qualifications (any one of them) the man is not "made" by the Holy Spirit, and is not suitable to be in the oversight of the church. But the Holy Spirit did NOT make elders, as in Acts 20:28, without human agency. The human agency is necessary in making Christians (I Cor. 1:21; 12:13; Mark 16:15, 16), but the Holy Spirit does not do the baptizing. Christ baptized (John 4:1), yet he did not actually do the work himself (verse 2). What he did through the apostles is attributed to him. Man appoints the elders, yet the Holy Spirit appoints them by giving the command and instructions to do so.

The Lord does not select certain individuals for elders, but He gives the standard and all who measure up to it are qualified men, then the selection and appointment by men puts them into the service. This is the Lord's work even though actually performed by men under his authority. Anything that Christians do by the authority of Christ (and we should do all in the name of the Lord—Col. 3:17), it may be said that Christ is doing that thing, just as in the case of Christ baptizing. He baptized, yet he baptized not with his own hands, but through his apostles. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, makes—ordains—appoints—elders and deacons in the church today, but He does it through the agency of Christians who obey his commands in doing so.



4. *Elders Are Self-Appointed*—In some places it has been known that the elders in office took full charge of selecting and appointing those who were to serve with them, or in appointing themselves to the work. Many objections may be offered to this method. To begin with there is no Bible teaching that shows any elder had charge of his own appointment to the office, or that he so acted to appoint another. This would prove to be an unwise procedure because it would tend to form a clique in the oversight. Elders may select some who are deficient in one or more qualifications simply because they could be more easily controlled. Some elders might try to arrange to get men in the oversight who would agree with something shady and unscriptural, and if the elders did the selecting and appointing it would serve to form a kind of oversight that would be biased. The eldership is not self-appointed as is shown in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5.

Some have offered as proof of this proposition the case of the apostles "selecting" a replacement for Judas. This is used as an example of elders "selecting" others to be elders. This is not true because the very nature of an apostle's calling forbids the selecting by men. Paul again and again said he was not *called* (selected) by men, but by the Lord Jesus Christ. On this occasion Peter said that according to prophecy one must be "ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). They looked upon two men who met the necessary qualifications to be an apostle, and the apostles prayed for the Lord, "which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen" (Acts 1:24). The Lord, not the apostles, chose (selected) Matthias to be one of the number.

This method does not conform to the principles of the Bible because it places the obligation of choosing the elders and deacons on a few men, whereas the only example we have places the duty of selecting on the number of disciples (Acts 6:3). As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the selecting depends entirely upon the qualifications listed by the Holy Spirit, and not upon the personal choice and ambitions of a few men. Choosing other men to be elders or deacons does not fall in the class of the elders' duty. It is neither their duty to decide when men should be appointed as elders, nor who shall be appointed.

5. *Elders Grow Into The Eldership*—Some maintain that the elders gradually grow into the eldership and are not directly selected and appointed. The point is made that when one begins to do the work of an elder, he is then and there appointed to the office without any aid or interference of men. This, of course, is a gradual process of growth.

This method is not in harmony with any Bible principle dealing with the subject. We need only to ask a few questions to see the utter disregard for the facts this position holds. For instance, Paul said to

“know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord” (I Thess. 5:12). How does one know when a man has grown into the eldership? Just when should the church “know” him as an elder? The answer may come: When he does the work of an elder. Well, what about a *woman* doing the work of an elder? Some women have assumed the duties of elders in some places, even though it is wrong. Does that make the women elders? Again, what about a new convert assuming the duties of an elder? If one recently baptized begins to do the work of an elder, is he thereby appointed to the eldership? How will the church “know” who the elders are? If one man decides a certain person has “grown into the eldership” and another man decides that he has not, what standard is to be used to settle this difference? Who sets the standard of when one has grown into the eldership? This is indispensable; someone must do it. At just what point in the spiritual growth of a man does he become “appointed” so that the church may “know” him?

The writer of Hebrews said, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves” (Heb. 13:17). If there is not some definite time when a man becomes an elder, how shall the congregation know whom to obey and when? This is easily answered when we follow the Bible principles of selecting qualified men and appointing them to the office. We know exactly when a man becomes an elder. But this position is definitely wrong because it totally ignores the qualifications and the Bible procedure in establishing the men in the office.

6. *Eldership of Another Church Does The Selecting And Appointing*—A few claim that the proper method of setting men in the eldership is to contact the eldership of some other congregation and have them come over and do the selecting and appointing. This method is not as widely advocated as some of the others, but a few very strongly affirm it.

The first objection to this method is that it interlocks the affairs and work of one church with another, which is an unscriptural procedure. The extent of authority and responsibility of any eldership is “the flock which is among you.” They have no business beyond this boundary line. They have no business trying to attend to the affairs of another church, even if solicited. Of course, as men they may advise and help others, but even here they may not act for the other congregation in selecting and appointing elders.

Another objection is that there is no Bible authority or example of such a method in appointing elders, but rather is in conflict with Bible principles governing the matter. The elders of the congregation desiring more elders have no authority or responsibility, as elders, in selecting and appoint these men. Since this is true, what authority could be cited to prove that elders of one congregation can go to another and select and appoint elders for them?

It may also be opposed on the basis that men from another congregation seldom know the lives and needs of the congregation seeking elders. If men had the qualifications the eldership of another church would not likely know it. There are situations and needs of every congregation that others know little or nothing about. The proper method must include the "look (ing) out among yourselves" and not looking out among others.

7. *Annual Election of Elders*—This theory is based upon the practice of clubs, lodges and other civic organizations. It is completely without scriptural foundation. It has been argued that it is as scriptural to appoint an elder for one year as it is for 50 years, and much safer. This way, they say, we could let the term run out and not repeat the appointment if the men were not desired. But why should they not be wanted? If they were qualified in the first place, and continue to be so, why should they not continue to be elders? If they have ceased to be qualified, "re-election" would not make them elders in God's sight. Our duty is not to please the people, but God. Sometimes only one godly elder stands in truth against all errors in the church. Such a position as is suggested here would not keep the church safe for more than one year, for if the majority did not want to abide in truth they certainly would not "re-elect" him for another year. No such practice of yearly "election" of elders is taught in the Bible at any place.

This whole method rests upon the "majority rule" principle, which we have seen is contrary to the nature of the church. If elections are held once each year, or for any number of years, it makes the occupant of the office subject to the will of the church and not subject to the standard of God. When a qualified man is appointed in some locality, as long as he remains qualified and performs the functions of the office he should remain in the office.

8. *Trial Service Appointment*—This method of setting elders into the office is not very popular now, but it was a common practice a number of years ago. It is based upon the statement in I Timothy 3:10 which says, "let these also first be proved." This speaks of the deacons, but the word "also" suggests that the elders are included. The argument says that the elders and deacons should FIRST be proved by setting them in the office, meaning to let them serve for a time in the office to see if they prove to be suitable in the work.

There is no question but that the elders and deacons must first be proved before being set in the office, but the meaning of I Timothy 3:10 does not indicate that they should serve before being appointed. It has to do with proving their qualifications and character before the appointment rather than the work to be done. They are to be proved FIRST before they use the office. If it meant to set them in the office

before the appointment, who would be the judge of whether they proved themselves or not? Only the Bible can be a guide. The truth is that both elders and deacons should FIRST be proved as to qualifications THEN let them use the office properly. It has nothing to do with "trial service."

9. *Appointment By Laying On Of Hands With Prayer And Fasting*—Some insist that elders can only be appointed by literally laying hands on their heads and fasting and praying. This is taken from Acts 6:6 and Acts 13:3. The laying on of hands does not always indicate the actual placing of the hands on the person's head. It has a number of meanings in the New Testament. Prophets and teachers laid hands on some (Acts 13:1-3); elders laid on hands (I Tim. 4:14); the evangelists laid on hands (I Tim. 5:22; Titus 1:15). But besides these the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Roman authorities also laid on hands (Acts 4:1-4; Matt. 21:46). Sometimes this meant one thing and sometimes another. The context must indicate what is meant in each case.

But while this physical action was usually practiced in the days of the apostles, it meant nothing more than a means of designating one to a service, when used in such a reference. The action is not absolutely necessary to the appointment of elders and deacons. When Paul was appointed to be a preacher (I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11), there is no evidence that Christ did so by laying his hands on his head.

Fasting, as practiced by the early Christians, was depriving the body of pleasure and necessity in giving service to God. It was a form of self-denial in honor to God. Praying is always right in any and all service and obedience to God. There is no significance attached to the act of literally placing the hands on one's head, and literally starving one's self for a number of days in the act of appointing elders and deacons. The "laying on of hands" with prayer and fasting is simply signifying or designating in a worshipful manner those who have been selected by the congregation for such offices.

10. *Once Appointed, Always Appointed*—Although not properly in line with the various ideas of the method of appointing, this is included here because of its connection to the matter. Some say that when one is once appointed to the eldership he can never resign or put off the office. Some advocates of this position put it this way: "An elder can no more resign his eldership than a mule can resign his muleship." There is quite a difference in the character of "eldership" and "muleship." One is inherent and natural, the other is spiritual and developed. Is a Christian always a Christian regardless of his conduct? Judas fell by transgression (Acts 1:17, 25). He lost the position he once held. Some may argue, "I do not know of a Scripture that says an elder ever resigned." But where is the passage for one serving who is unfit? Judas resigned by hanging himself. (Matt. 27:3-5; Acts 1:20). "Bishoprick" here is the same as "office of a bishop" (I Tim. 3:1).

There are three ways that an elder may cease to be an elder: (1) Resign his work because of moving into a new locality, or some other valid reason. Some teach that if one is appointed at one place, wherever he may go he is still an elder there. This is not true for many reasons, one being that he can only be an elder in the "flock which is among you." That limits it to one locality. (2) Become disqualified by wrong attitude, influence or conduct. One may as easily turn from righteousness to sin as to turn from sin to righteousness. If a sinner is made a Christian by turning from his sin in obedience to God, why is not a Christian made a sinner by turning to sin in obedience to Satan? It is as possible for an elder to commit sin as for any other Christian. (3) By death. The qualifications make one suitable and acceptable to God for the eldership. If he loses them he ceases to be an elder.

Let us observe that there are some good points in most of the methods we have mentioned, but they all fall short in one or more of the Bible principles that govern the selection and appointment of elders and deacons. We must make sure that all things are in accord with the pattern we have in the New Testament.

#### IV. A SCRIPTURAL METHOD OF SELECTING AND APPOINTING ELDERS.

This chapter would be incomplete unless we gave a method of appointing that would conform to all the Bible principles controlling the subject. It is easier to find fault with a method than it is to construct one. I believe the following plan is both scriptural and logically.

By "scriptural" method I mean a method that is in harmony with the New Testament in all points. I do not want to be understood to say that there is a detailed procedure, point for point, given in the Bible for the selection and appointment of elders. The Bible is a book of principles. It contains motives, general laws and regulations, and divine examples which must govern such actions as this. We learn by three well defined methods: (1) Positive commandments and orders. (2) Divinely approved examples. (3) Necessary inferences. We know of no other way of learning God's will. When God tells us HOW to do a thing, that becomes a part of the command, such as baptism by a burial. He commanded us to be baptized and then told us that it was a burial. The burying becomes as essential as the command itself in obedience. But when God tells us to do a thing, but does not tell us HOW to do it, we are left to human judgment, only to do that thing consistent with all principles of the Scriptures that would touch the matter. We must obey in applying scriptural principles when we obey any command of God.

How can a congregation select and appoint elders and deacons and apply all the Bible principles? First, we must ascertain what princi-

ples are to be applied. By commandment we have these four principles: (1) Put the church in order (Titus 1:5). This requires the evangelist to teach and preach faithfully on the subject and lead in getting the church properly organized. (2) Appoint elders (plural) in every church (Titus 1:5). Paul said to "ordain elders in every city." Just one overseer in a congregation does not fulfil this principle. (3) Do all things decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40). All procedures must be in a decent and well arranged manner. (4) Do nothing by partiality. Paul charged Timothy to do "these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (I Tim. 5:21). Any method that would influence partiality would not conform to this principle.

By searching the divinely approved examples we learn of four principles: (1) A plurality of elders in every city (Acts 14:23). (2) Every church to have elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). No congregation is scripturally organized unless it has elders and deacons. (3) The number of disciples in the congregation to select the qualified men for the office (Acts 6:3). This is a case of deacons but it would also apply in the case of elders. (4) The evangelist should appoint the qualified men who have been selected.

In the realm of necessary inference we have three principles: (1) Qualified men only can be appointed. We learn this from the fact that the Holy Spirit gave a list of qualities each man must have before serving in the office. It is necessarily inferred from this that only such men can be appointed to be elders and deacons. (2) Some orderly and decent method must be employed in selecting and appointing these men. Since they are to be appointed, and decency and order must characterize the action, it follows that a METHOD of doing this must be employed. (3) We must please God rather than man. This is a vital matter for Paul says if we do seek to please men we can not be a servant of God (Gal. 1:10). In far too many matters we seek to please our fellowman rather than God.

The things to avoid in the matter of selection and appointment of elders are the violations of passages where principles are given. Such methods as "majority rule," "ecclesiastical control," and "unscriptural organizations" are violations of these Bible principles.

There are three definite and separate steps to be taken in setting these men into the office: (1) Qualifications determined. (2) Selecting from among the number. (3) Appointing these to the office. Not only are these three steps necessary, but they must be taken in the order given.

1. *Qualifications Determined*—The first thing to be done is to determine exactly what qualifications the men must have because selection depends entirely upon whether or not he has them. A great deal of

study should be given this matter. The preacher should spend some time in teaching exactly what the Holy Spirit says about the qualifications. He makes elders just as he makes Christians—by teaching. What the Holy Spirit has taught about the qualifications of the elders must be clearly understood by every member of the church. They could not wisely select qualified men unless they knew what the qualifications were and what they meant. Only in this way can the Holy Spirit have any part in making the elders. This standard is God's and no man has the right to change or modify it in any way. Scriptural principles forbid the selection of any person for either elder or deacon who does not meet the qualifications outlined in the Scriptures. Therefore, the first thing to do is teach and learn exactly what God wants in those men to be in the oversight.

2. *Selection From Among The Number*—The selection depends entirely upon the qualifications of the man. If not qualified there can be no selection by anyone; but if qualified, someone must do the selecting before they are set in the work. Only five possible persons could do the selecting: (1) God (2) the person himself (3) the other elders (4) the evangelist (5) the church. God does not actually select any person for a work any more than He selects the persons to be Christians. He calls them or selects them by qualifications. Christians, for example, are chosen by God through conditions to which they submit. Though God designates the individuals who should be elders by the qualifications, the actual selecting of the persons must be by some one else according to the standard of God. The person can not select himself to be an elder. This would certainly not be in accord with scriptural principles. Even Christ did not select himself as high priest, but was called (selected) by God as was Aaron (Heb. 5:4). There is no passage or indication that any evangelist as such ever selected the elders or deacons. Even the apostles did not choose certain servants for work, but turned this to the people who were to be served (Acts 6:1-6). Neither is there any harmony in the Scripture with the idea that the elders did the selection of others to be elders. That leaves only one group: the church.

By applying one of the methods of learning from the Bible—divine example—we learn that the church is to do the choosing of its own overseers, keeping in mind that the qualifications are absolutely necessary in the men to be chosen. Such an example is found in the case of the church at Jerusalem selecting certain ones for service in the nature of deacons (and the method of selecting deacons would be the method of selecting elders). The apostles said: "Look YE out AMONG YOU . . ." (Acts 6:3). This places the responsibility of selecting upon the disciples (church). Then the twelve said: "that we may appoint." The selection was one thing and the appointing was another. The church was to do one and the apostles the other. Also in Acts 13:1-3;

I Corinthian 16:3; II Corinthians 8:18, 19, 23 there are examples of the church selecting certain men for certain duties. This principle would apply to the selection of elders and deacons without violation of any Scripture.

3. *Appointing These To The Office*—By example and statement in the New Testament we learn that preachers or evangelists did the appointing of these qualified men selected by the church. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every city where they had preached (Acts 14:23). Also Paul left Titus in Crete to "ordain" (R.V. appoint) elders in every city there (Titus 1:5). The evangelists may appoint those qualified men selected by the church to be elders and deacons. This appointing is simply the designating them to that work. The method of doing so may vary from place to place and time to time, but it must conform to the standard of God's word.

We close this chapter with a suggested method of selecting and appointing of the elders and deacons that we believe would conform in all respects to the principles of the New Testament. A school teacher must first be qualified, then selected by the trustees or those in charge and be appointed to the work by the superintendent before legally performing the duties. This teacher can not serve until appointed, and can not be appointed until selected according to the standard of qualifications established. After the truth has been thoroughly taught on the subject of the qualifications of elders and deacons, some method of getting the church to express themselves on the men they believe meet the qualifications must be employed, remembering that all things are to be done without partiality. Those selected will be named by most or all of the congregation. Any orderly method of doing this will be successful. It may be suggested that each member name those men he believes to be qualified, either on paper or verbally. To stop here would be "majority vote rule." After the names of those who have been suggested are given, each member should have the opportunity to voice any scriptural objection against any name. If any objection is scripturally valid, that person can not be appointed no matter how many want him; he is not qualified by God's standard. The selection depends upon the qualifications. If any man is contentious about being an elder even though valid scriptural objections are lodged against him, he is displaying the trait of self-willedness and is disqualified on that count.

Some time should be allowed between the selection and the appointment to determine if the men are really qualified. Personal bitterness should be at once discarded. All members may not know of the unfitness of a certain one, and if he is hastily appointed he will be in the eldership before his wrong is known to all, and much trouble will follow. The one who may know of his sin or fault may be absent at



the time his name was suggested, and may be absent for a good reason. Sufficient time should be allowed for all such to be considered by all as to their fitness for the office. After a sufficient time has elapsed from the time of the selection, the preacher may appoint them in a very solemn manner to impress the seriousness of the responsibility of both elders and the church. No secret balloting should be used because too many evil things can be covered up. In whatever method is used to secure the names of those qualified, be sure that it conforms in all respects to the principles of the New Testament.

If a man has the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, nearly every adult member of the church who is faithful will know it, and if he is not qualified they will know it. If each one is taught to act without bias and prejudice, and to try to please God rather than self, there will be little or no difficulty in this matter of selecting and appointing elders and deacons to the office.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE OFFICE OF DEACON

We come to study another class of *officers* in the church who are called DEACONS. No congregation is fully organized after the New Testament order until it has qualified men appointed to serve in this office. Much of the same indifference and disregard for Bible authority exists in connection with the qualifications and work of deacons as in the case of elders in the church. Many have either completely ignored this office in preaching and teaching, or gone to the other extreme and made the deacons the ruling element in the congregation. Both the qualifications and the nature of the work are clearly outlined in God's Holy Word, and to disregard them in this point is to become guilty of all (James 2:10).

The first question pertinent to this subject is: Is there such an office as *Deacon*? The New Testament being our authority, we turn to it and read: "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" (I Tim. 3:13). The Revised Version says: "For they that have served well as deacons . . ." Like that of the bishop, the *office* of deacon is a work. Unless the work is done the office is not filled. This is an *office* (work) that is distinguished from other *offices* (works) performed by other members of the body. Paul said, "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" (Rom. 12:4, 5). He compares the physical body to the church, and at this point he is showing that the different members of the church do not all have the same work (office) to fill. There is an OFFICE of deacon that is different from other offices in the church, but to determine just what this office is must wait until we study the work to be done.

Another question of considerable interest is: Must one be a deacon to perform the functions of the office? The inference drawn from this question is that if one may do the work of a deacon, who is not himself a deacon, why is it necessary to have such an office? But if one must be a deacon to do the work of a deacon, what is the nature of his work that others can not do it?

Like that of elders, it is not always a matter of human ability but of authority. Some may do certain things that a deacon does which are not exclusively the work of deacons, such as rendering some general service to the needy. That is the business of each Christian in some cases. Just as in the case of elders, some members of the church may do some

work that belongs to elders also—such as teaching. It is the work of the elders to teach, and it is also the work of evangelists. In this respect some members of the church may do some work that deacons also do, but it does not mean that they are filling the office of a deacon any more than evangelists are filling the office of a bishop because they teach.

But we have said that it is not always a matter of human ability in performing the work, but a matter of divine authority. The work particularly assigned to the office of deacon can not be scripturally done with authority by one who is not a deacon, otherwise the qualifications and office amount to nothing. Why consider certain qualifications and appointment of certain men to a work that any and all can do? It is a matter of divine authority. Any man can physically eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine on the Lord's table, but he can not scripturally do it unless he is properly qualified and appointed by the Lord to do so. Only children of God are scripturally qualified to partake of the Supper. Likewise, only the qualified deacons can do the work peculiarly assigned to them by the authority of Christ.

The office of deacon is distinguished from that of bishops and ordinary members of the body of Christ by Paul's letter to the Philippians. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). Here four classes are mentioned: (1) SERVANTS of Jesus Christ; (2) SAINTS in Christ Jesus (3) with the BISHOPS; (4) and DEACONS. This amounts to evangelists, saints, bishops and deacons, all different offices in the one body.

The word *deacon* has a very ordinary meaning in the New Testament. The Greek term from which this English word comes is used some 30 times in the New Testament, but only five times is it translated *Deacon*. There are two different senses in which the Greek term is used, and translated by different English words. It is first used in a general or common sense and translated by the English *Servant* or *Minister*. In the second sense it is used in a special or official meaning and translated by the term *Deacon*. In the general use of the word it means nothing more than "a waiter, attendant, servant, minister."

Two Greek words are used in the gospels and epistles that have been translated by the English *Servant*: *doulos* and *diakonos*. The first, *Doulos*, is defined as: "1. a slave, bondman, man of servile condition." Such passages as I Corinthians 7:21; Galatians 3:28; I Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:9 are examples of this use of the word. It is used of the apostles (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; II Tim. 2:24; Tit. 1:1; Jas. 1:1; II Pet. 1:1); of preachers (Col. 4:12; II Tim. 2:24); of true worshippers of Christ (Acts 10:36; Eph. 6:6); and of Moses (Rev. 15:3).

The word *Doulos* generally means a bond servant or slave. Paul speaks of himself as a *Doulos* (bond slave of Christ), but it does not imply that he was such without choice on his part. Yet the relationship was as binding as if he were such without choice. He was a bond servant in Christ because he had been bought with a price—the blood of Christ. He was not his own.

The other Greek word, *Diakonos*, is defined as: “one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant, attendant, minister; I. univ.: of the servant of a king, Mt. xxii.13; with gen. of the pers. served, Mt. xx.26; xxiii.11; Mk. ix.35; x.43 . . . those through whom God carries on his administration on earth, as magistrates, Ro. xiii.4; teachers of the Christian religion, 1 Co. iii.5; 2 Co. vi.4; I Th.iii.2 . . . 2. a *deacon*, one who, by virtue of the office assigned him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use . . . Phil. i.1; I Tim. iii.8, 12, cf. Acts vi.3 sqq.; a *deaconess* . . . a woman to whom the care of either poor or sick women was entrusted, Ro. xvi.1 . . . 3. a *waiter*, one who serves food and drink: Jn. ii.5, 9 . . .”

The Greek *Diakonia* is defined: “Service, ministering, esp. of those who execute the commands of others; 1 univ.: 2 Tim. iv.11; Heb. 1:14. 2. of those who by the command of God proclaim and promote religion among men; a. of the office of Moses: . . . b. of the office of the apostles and its administration: Acts i.17, 25; xx.24; xxi.19; Ro.xi.13; 2 Co. iv.1; vi.3; 1 Tim. i.12 . . . 3. the *ministration of those who render to others the offices of Christian affection*: 1 Co. xvi.15; Rev. ii.19, esp. of those who succor need by either collecting or bestowing benefactions (Acts xii.25); the care of the poor, the supplying or distributing of charities . . . Acts vi.1; 2 Co. ix.13 . . . 4. the office of deacon in the primitive church . . . 5. the service of those who prepare and present food: Lk. x.40.”

We see by these definitions that the Greek *Diakonos* or *Diakonia* has a general or common meaning and an official or peculiar meaning. The context must help us decide the sense of the word. In the King James Version and the Revised Version the word is usually translated by “minister” or “servant” when it carries the general meaning, and “deacon”, when it has the official or peculiar meaning.

This word *Diakonos* in its general meaning includes several classes of workers in the church. It refers to:

1. Christ (servant) (Rom. 15:8).
2. The apostles (servants) (II Cor. 3:6).
3. Evangelists (ministers) (I Tim. 4:6).
4. Any and all faithful Christians (servants) (John 12:26).

5. Civil authorities (ministers) (Rom. 13:4).
6. Satan's servants (ministers) (II Cor. 11:15).
7. Women servants of the church (servants) (Rom. 16:1).
8. Waiters at feasts (servants) (Matt. 22:13).

In the general use of the word there is no set of qualifications required to make one a "diakonos" other than those of any Christian. Each servant must be qualified for the particular kind of service required.

But there is the special sense in which the word is used to suggest an office different from the general servants. In the special use of the word it distinguishes those men of special qualifications with special duties, from other servants of the church. This is what many call the "official servant" of the church. It has to do with the "office" or work of the *deacon*. Paul said in I 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." The Scriptures tell us that the women can not usurp the authority over the man. We know from this that no woman can hold an official appointment in what may be termed the leadership of the church. One can be selected to do a special work without being an officer in the sense we generally understand it; and this was the case of Phebe. But in the case of the "office of a deacon" the work is assigned to the OFFICE and when one is placed in the office (work) his duties are stated.

The English *Deacon* is an Anglicized word given by the translators to distinguish between that work of certain qualified men and the general servants of the church. This distinction is clearly indicated in Philipians 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." Here we see the saints (Christians) classified in one group, the servants (preachers) classified in another, the bishops classified in still another, and the deacons classified separately from the others. There is a difference in "servants" and "deacons" in this passage (they are from different Greek terms), but both Greek words mean "to serve or minister." We must keep in mind that there is a special sense in which *Diakonos* is used, and there is a general sense in which it is used.

## CHAPTER XV

**THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS**

The same attitude and strictness should characterize our study of the qualifications of the deacons as in the case of the elders. It is just as important to obey Christ in one respect as in another, and the church is in as grave danger of suffering apostasy in one case as in the other. The reason we say this is because much of the trouble today comes either directly or indirectly from corruption among the deacons.

Many questions arise about the qualifications of the deacons. The first thing we notice about this list of qualifications is that they are not as rigid as those for the eldership. This means that the nature of the work of a deacon is not the same as that of an elder, and that it does not require the maturity and advancement in experience for the deacons as it requires for the elders.

A practice in some places is to appoint deacons to take the power of control when no one is qualified for the eldership. Such was not the scriptural practice of the early church. There is no record of a New Testament church having deacons without elders, and that is primarily due to the fact that generally the work of deacons must be directed by the elders. We would say in the absence of such information, and the lack of necessary inference, we should not appoint deacons today when we have no elders. And especially is this true if we intend to have the deacons take the place of the elders.

We also understand from the qualifications of deacons that they do not have to be as old in years and experience as the elders. Some have taught that the "young men" who carried out the bodies of Annias and Sapphira were deacons. Whether they were or not does not really pertain to the issue. But the idea of younger, less mature and experienced men in the deaconship than in the eldership is found in the qualifications and duties.

The word "likewise" is significant in that it attaches the qualifications to follow to the ones that have preceded in importance and necessity. The Revised Version says: "Deacons in like manner . . ." The meaning is the same as in Matthew 21:30 where Jesus is giving the parable of the two sons who were told to go into the vineyard and work. He said to the first: "Son, go work to-day in the vineyard." He then said in verse 30: "And he came to the second, and said LIKEWISE." That is, he said the same to the second son that he did to the first. This is the same word that is used in I Timothy 3:8, and means that as the bishops must be certain qualified men, "in like manner" must

the deacons be qualified in all respects mentioned. It does not mean that the deacons must be qualified in all respects and qualities of a bishop, otherwise, there would be no need to mention all these qualities again. But wherein the qualifications are repeated for the deacons, they are in the same manner.

We want to follow the same general method in our study here as in the case of the elders. We will first define the Greek terms used; second, give the English translations; and third, the application of these qualities to the men for the office. It will not be necessary to go as much in detail on some of these items because we have already studied them in dealing with the elders. We now give attention to the qualifications of the deacon.

### I. MUST BE GRAVE (I Tim. 3:8).

Gravity has been emphasized in all phases of the work of the Lord, and it is no less important in qualifying the deacons for their work. One could hardly think of taking upon himself any work of the Lord without gravity.

The Greek term here is *Semnous*, which is defined by Greek authorities as: "*August, venerable, reverend; to be venerated for character, honorable.*" The character of the deacon must be such that he is respected and honored by men in general.

The various English translations render this word by: *Grave; Serious; Honorable; Serious demeanour; Dignified.*

The obvious meaning is that the man for the office of deacon must be a grave, serious man, whose life is such that he would be dependable and trustworthy in the work. He must be of sedate and dignified conduct. A person who is not apt to this characteristic incumbent on every child of God is not qualified to perform the work placed upon the deacon. It would be extremely unwise to select a frivolous person to the office of deacon, even if the Holy Spirit did not forbid it. Often younger men are prone to be light hearted and irresponsible in certain duties given to them. The man for this office must be aware of his influence and reputation and strive to be zealous and serious in his manner of life. This is a **MUST** for this office. In fact, every one of the qualifications, just as in the case of the bishops, is prefixed by the word **MUST**. This means that every quality mentioned is a necessity. All Christians must be grave, and it is here stated as a must for the deacons.

### II. MUST NOT BE DOUBLE-TONGUED (I Tim. 3:8).

A deacon must not be double-tongued or two-faced. The trait of being unstable and unreliable in conversation is inconsistent with the

general principles of Christianity. Truth is never contradictory. If one speaks the truth he always speaks the same thing on any given subject. But when one tells different accounts of the same matter to two different people it is certain that one or both accounts are untrue.

The Greek is *Ma dilogous*, which is defined as: *Ma*—"Not, by no means; never at any time"—*Dilogous*—"2. double-tongued, double in speech, saying one thing with one person, another with another (with intent to deceive): 1 Tim. iii.8."

The English translations render this expression by: *Not double-tongued* (10 times); *Not tale-bearers*; *Straight-forward men*; *Not deceitful in speech*; *No gossips*; *Sincere in their talk*. Obviously the best English rendering is *Not double-tongued*.

All Christians must be given to straight-forward, truthful speech. Each one must answer to God in the judgment for the language he uses, especially in speaking the truth in all matters (Matt. 12:34-37). This must be true of deacons because sometimes their work in reporting certain cases to the elders all the facts must be presented in order to determine the proper action to be taken. If they are unreliable in their reports the whole work of caring for some needy will be hindered. The deacons must not speak anything but the truth in all matters and to all people.

Double-tongued means to have a double language; one who speaks two different things. Speaking one thing to one person, and another thing to another, on the same subject. This is pure deception. A double-tongued person can not be a respectable citizen of any nation on earth. Someone has well classed the double-tongued as "canibal tongues" because they kill and devour one another. It may be done with the tongue as well as the teeth. Paul speaks of those who "bite" and "devour" one another (Gal. 5:15). It is possible to completely destroy a man's influence by backbiting and evil speaking. Such an unchristian spirit is impossible to maintain and tolerate in the church, much less in the deaconship.

We should strive toward perfection, and James says that one who can control his tongue is a perfect man (James 3:2). The tongue is a little member of the body, but it can cause a great deal of sorrow and heartache if not controlled. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). No man can be a deacon unless he is a Christian, and he can not be a Christian while being a double-tongued person. This is the equivalent to a "two-faced" person, which all men despise.



### III. MUST NOT BE GIVEN TO MUCH WINE (I Tim. 3:8).

This qualification is partly discussed under one of the qualifications of the elders. (See page 170). The general use of wine in Bible times and now is quite different. Now it is primarily a drink for intoxication. Judging from Bible principles we know that drunkenness is not permitted in any Christian man or woman, and certainly that would apply to both the elders and deacons of the church. The main question is the difference in WINE and MUCH WINE.

The Greek expression here is *Ma oino pollo prosechontas*, and is defined as: *Ma*—"not, by no means; never at any time"—*Oino*—"Wine"—*Pollo*—"abundant, plenteous, much"—*Prosechontas*—"to be given or addicted to." Literally the expression means "Not to be addicted to much wine."

The English translations render this expression by: *Not given to much wine; Not addicted to drink; Not addicted to much wine; Not addicted to wine; Not giving themselves to much wine; Not being addicted to much wine; Not addicted to strong drink.*

It is often contended that in the case of elders wine is strictly forbidden in any form or in any degree, while in the case of deacons they may drink a little, but not MUCH. We have seen in the case of elders that the meaning is not to be addicted to wine so as to be under its influence. It has reference to strong or intoxicating drink and not to wine as it was sometimes used in the Scripture. This is the case of both elders and deacons, as well as all Christians.

It has been argued that deacons do not have the responsible work that elders have and therefore may drink a little wine while the elders are completely forbidden. This seems incompatible with Christian principles. We know that drunkenness is forbidden in any form. The idea appears to be in the case of deacons not to indulge in wine in any form to become addicted to it, while in speaking of the elders Paul stresses the complete abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. Paul does not permit the deacons to engage in a little intoxicating drink any more than he does the elders. He instructs Timothy to "drink a little wine" for his stomach's sake, but that is not the same as telling him to drink intoxicating drink, just so he does not become drunk.

We are aware that the Bible does not literally forbid the drinking of any intoxicating drink, but the principles of Christianity do forbid it. The same is true of gambling. When the Holy Spirit forbids drunkenness, the appearance of evil, causing a weak brother to stumble, and many other things contrary to the effects of strong drink, we may be sure that the use of such intoxicating drinks is contrary to the principles

of God's word. Deacons should no more be subject to wine and strong drink than the elders.

Much of the work of deacons requires an alert, sober mind, and to be given (addicted) to strong drink would hinder the performance of that work. To "drink a little wine" does not imply that they can drink intoxicating liquors in moderation. It does mean that the deacon may drink a little of the wine that is permitted under Christian principles. As in all other permissible things, they must exercise moderation.

#### IV. MUST NOT BE GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE (I Tim. 3:8).

This qualification of a deacon is exactly the same as in the case of elders (See page 173). All Christians are forbidden to be greedy for base gain, and it is so well implied of both elders and deacons that a lengthy discussion is not necessary. What is said as a qualification for the bishop is repeated by the Holy Spirit as a necessary qualification for the deacon.

The deacon must not use base or unjustifiable methods to raise and increase his income. He must not be guilty of dealing dishonestly for self-gain in the office of a deacon. The lust for money has caused many to sell their souls to the devil. There is no excuse for the deacon to play the part of a holy and pious man in order to gain money for himself. There are many warnings in the New Testament against the love for money.

This passage does not mean that a deacon can not have any money or property, as some have supposed, but it simply demands that he must not use dishonest means to obtain it. Christians are taught to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). A true Christian will be greedy for the water of life, the word of God, rather than filthy lucre.

If a man is so desirous of filthy lucre that he spends most of his time trying to get possession of it, so that he has absolutely no time for the service that belongs to the office of a deacon, he is not qualified. His desire for filthy lucre prohibits him being of service to the church. Any man appointed to the office of a deacon must be willing to do his duty when called upon and not sacrifice it in the search for money.

#### V. MUST HOLD THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH IN A PURE CONSCIENCE (I Tim. 3:9).

Not only must the elders hold fast to the faith, but deacons also must do so in a pure conscience. Holding the faith implies stability in that which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

There are five Greek words in this verse which we wish to define: *Echontas*, *mustarion*, *pisteos*, *kathara*, *suneidasei*. Thayer defines these words as: *Echontas*—"d. to hold fast, keep"—*Mustarion*—"a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will . . . In the N. T., God's plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed"—*Pisteos*—"Conviction of the truth of anything, belief . . . b. in reference to Christ, it denotes a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God"—*Kathara*—c. "free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt"—*Suneidasei*— b. the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other; conscience."

The English Versions render this expression: *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; Holding fast the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; They must maintain the divine truth of the faith with a pure conscience; Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience; Holding the divine truth of the faith with a clear conscience; Holding fast the secret of the faith with a pure conscience; Holding the secret of the faith with a pure conscience; But with a pure conscience keeping hold on the hidden truth of the faith; But holding the mysterious truths of the faith with a clear conscience; Holding the sacred secret of the faith in a pure conscience; Continue to hold the open secret of, faith with a clear conscience; But holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.*

First, the conscience of every Christian should be pure. Conscience means to know one's self; to have a knowledge with one's self of right and wrong. Conscience does not set the standard of right and wrong, but only witnesses with the person whether he is doing what he has accepted as right and wrong. The apostle Paul had a good conscience while he was doing wrong (Acts 23:1; 26:9). He was doing the thing he sincerely believed to be right, but later learned he was wrong. "I verily thought WITH myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). This was the conscience functioning with the person—a joint-knowledge with himself. The deacons must have a pure or undefiled conscience.

Second, that pure conscience must be educated by the faith. The faith is that system of truth that was delivered by the apostles to the saints "once for all" times (Jude 3). No other standard but the New Testament can be used to govern the conscience in religious and moral matters.

Third, this standard of faith must be continually held. It is not enough to accept the New Testament as the standard of faith, but one must steadfastly hold on to it all through life. The qualification of the

deacon considered here is that he must be unmovable in his hold on sound doctrine. He must hold to the ancient faith without yielding, and never violate his conscience in doing or saying a thing that conflicts with that faith. This type of man is always valuable in the work of the church. No man should ever be appointed to the office of deacon who is not steadfast in the faith once delivered.

## VI. MUST FIRST BE PROVED (I Tim. 3:10).

The word *also* in this verse implies that someone before mentioned was to first be proved. This we know by the context refers to the elders. Just as the elders must be proved before being placed in the work, so must the deacons be proved. This may appear to be something other than a qualification, but since *qualification* means that which fits or makes suitable, and one is not made suitable for the work until he has proved himself, it follows that the proving is a quality that determines whether the man may or may not be a deacon.

There are three Greek terms in this passage that deserve notice: *De*, *Dokimadzo* (*dokimadzesthosan*), and *proton*. These words are defined as: *De*—"also, moreover also"—*Dokimadzo*—"To test, examine, prove, scrutinize"—*Proton*—"First, at the first; in order of time." In the same way that bishops must be proved, the deacons must also be tested and proved to be fit for the work BEFORE or first, then they may use the office well. This clearly shows that no unqualified man is to be given the office either of bishop or deacon.

The English Versions render this thusly: *Let these also first be proved; And let these also first be proved; And let these be proved first; They too must be put on probation; after that; And let them also be tested first; They should first be tested; But let these also be first proved; But let these also be proved first; They should first be put on probation; And these, too, must undergo probation; And let them first be tried.*

It was the belief and practice among many pioneer preachers that this passage taught that men should first be put into the office of bishop and deacon and let them develop and prove themselves there. But a careful examination of the passage will show that before the work is performed the men must be proved as to qualifications and ability. They must not be novices in the faith. In fact this passage plainly states that the proving comes before the office is to be filled. "And let these also FIRST be proved; THEN let them use the office of a deacon . . ." The word *first* tells the rank or order of time of the proving. It comes before the use of the office. The word *then* tells when the office may be filled by the man.

The fact that the deacons, as well as the elders, must be first proved, implies that someone must prove them. It is the responsibility of the elders and deacons to be able to stand the test, but someone else must do the proving. It is obviously the church in which these men are to serve. The standard of this proving is not human opinion, but the word of God. Members of the church are to take the perfect standard—the New Testament—and learn what these men must be and do. Then they find the men who have the qualifications and have shown by their lives the ability to do what is required of them. This must be done before they are appointed to the work.

#### VII. MUST BE BLAMELESS (I Tim. 3:10).

This qualification has the exact same meaning as the one with reference to the elders. (See page 93). The deacons must be men against whom no evil report can be sustained.

#### VIII. MUST BE HUSBANDS OF ONE WIFE (I Tim. 3:12).

In like manner, this qualification has the same meaning as the one studied under the qualifications of the elders. (See page 97). H. E. Winkler said in his book, *The Eldership*, page 106: "I believe 'husband of one wife,' conveys the same thought with regard to the deacon that it does to the elder.

"It is impossible for me to accept any position of reasoning on the Word of God, as being tenable, which would bar the apostle Paul from being even a deacon (servant) in the church of our Lord on the ground of *unfitness*."

There is no doubt but that the reference to deacons being "husbands of one wife" carries the same idea as that of elders. Brother Winkler's statement here expresses, I believe, the sentiment of all others who hold this position. This sort of reasoning resembles strongly the attitude existing at Corinth of loyalty to men, which Paul condemns in these words: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (I Cor. 1:12). Does not that type of reasoning try to make Paul fit into everything we read about in the Bible? Does it not try to make the New Testament standard conform to Paul's life and actions? Paul could not be a scriptural father because he was not married. Are we to suppose that all instructions to fathers in the New Testament must be understood in a light to include Paul as a father? This sort of reasoning would be incoherent and untrue, yet it is the same as the argument just made. Paul wrote to fathers: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Would it be effective to argue: "It is impossible for me to accept any position of reasoning of the Word of God, as being tenable, which would bar the

apostle Paul from being even a father in the church of our Lord on the ground of unfitness—unmarried.” We realize that there is a difference in being a father and being an elder or deacon, but that is not the point. I am simply saying that we can not argue away passages of Scripture because we can’t fit Paul into it.

A “servant” is a general term and does not describe the nature of the work to be done. The local churches had “deacons” (servants) in a special or official sense, while in the general sense all Christians, young and old, men or women, were servants. But *deacon* occupies a work different from others, thus an official distinction from general service. These men were to be qualified in the marriage relations just as were the elders. Paul could not meet the standard of Christ given through him for this office any more than he could be an elder. However, his work as a *servant* was in the capacity of an APOSTLE—a work very different from that of either an elder or a deacon. This office he filled was much greater in authority and scope than either an elder or a deacon. Paul distinguishes himself and Timothy from the bishops and deacons in writing to the church at Philippi: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1).

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, but it does not follow that he must be an elder or deacon to do his work. The standard given through him by the Holy Spirit listed qualifications that Paul could not himself have, yet the qualifications of an apostle did not require these qualifications. Why not be content to leave Paul in the office of an apostle and not try to fit him into every position mentioned in the church?

#### IX. MUST RULE CHILDREN AND HOUSES WELL (I Tim. 3:12).

The *houses* here mean families. The reason *children* are mentioned separately from *houses* is that sometimes one may have a family without children. Usually, however, we think of a man’s house (family) as including children. The obvious meaning in this passage is that the deacon must rule well both his wife and children.

He must be a father to qualify for this office. The meaning here is very similar to that of an elder. (See page 140). One difference, however, we note in the language of I Timothy 3:12. The deacons are not required to have *believing children*. The reason for this is clear: The work of elders is to rule, lead and teach in the way of the Lord, and he must have proved this ability by having his children in subjection and believers in Christ. He must also have the experience necessary to this work. On the other hand, the deacons’ work is that of service in ways that do not necessitate such experience. His children do not need to

be as old and advanced as those of elders. But these children of deacons must be well behaved and under his rule. Usually deacons are younger men than elders and naturally their children would be younger. Deacons must have children in the same sense that elders have children before he can be "proved" to occupy this office.

#### X. MUST BE OF HONEST REPORT (Acts 6:3).

It is generally conceded that those selected and appointed to the work of ministration in Acts 6 were deacons. If so, these qualifications are listed by the apostles as essential to those who serve. The meaning is about the same as that of elders—"A Good Report of Them That Are Without." Here the expression "of them that are without" is not given, but is understood. No man who has an evil report, either within the church or without, will make a good deacon. (See page 168). The deacon must have a good record as a Christian man.

#### XI. MUST BE FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 6:3).

This does not mean that he must have the miraculous abilities of the Spirit as some had in the early days of the church, but it means the same as in Ephesians 5:18—"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." All Christians are to be filled with the Spirit in that they are guided by the Spirit of God and have the indwelling of that Spirit. They must possess the fruits of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22, 23. This Spirit will fill the man with the kind of zeal and eagerness of the work he is to do that will make him a great success. No man lacking in the Spirit of God is qualified for this office of deacon.

#### XII. MUST BE FILLED WITH WISDOM (Acts 6:3).

Wisdom is a necessary qualification for any successful work in the church. All preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, and any servant of God must have the wisdom to do whatever work is assigned to him. This wisdom comes from God. James said: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). When we ask of God we do not expect Him to fill our minds miraculously because we know how and where this wisdom comes. We go to His Holy Word and there find all things that pertain unto life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3).

A deacon must be one who is well acquainted with the word of God. He must have studied it so that he is able to perform his work in harmony with the principles of the New Testament that govern that work. All too often today men are filled with zeal but have no knowledge of God's word touching the work to be done. Consequently, they "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish

---

their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). It is not enough to be filled with zeal; one must have the wisdom from God to direct that zeal to submit to the righteousness of God.

We have covered the qualifications listed in the New Testament for those who are to be placed in the work of deacons. The man who does not measure to this standard can not be a deacon, regardless of the actions of some men. If the church is to be kept pure from corruption, and if effective progress is to be made, we must have scripturally qualified men appointed to use the office of deacon in a manner to please God.

Some have suggested that deacons naturally grow into elders. The reasons given for this are:

1. The qualifications of deacons are very similar to those of elders. This is not altogether true, for, though some of the qualifications are the same, the deacons do not have as many as the elders. In many cases deacons develop into elders later in years, but not necessarily so.

2. The duties of deacons are to assist the elders. This is true, but it does not always follow that the deacons are to be elders. Wives are to assist their husbands—be helpmeets—but it does not follow that they will become the heads of the families.

3. The statement of Paul that "they purchase to themselves a good degree," which is understood by some to mean the eldership. That seems far fetched. The good degree has reference to the reward for a service well done. The eternal joys and rewards will be great. It may be that deacons will become elders, but it is not to be assumed that it will always be the case. The qualifications and duties are quite different in many respects.



## CHAPTER XVI

## DUTIES OF DEACONS AND THE CHURCH

In this chapter we wish to consider the duties of the deacons and the obligations of the church to the deacons. The exact duties of the deacons are not as clearly outlined in the New Testament as in the case of elders. This is due largely to the fact that the work of the deacons is outlined by the elders and may vary with the conditions existing in the congregation. Generally the work of the deacons is assigned by the elders.

The term *deacon* has become an honorary title in many congregations rather than a work to be done. Committees have been formed to do the work that should be done by the deacons. Some congregations have sent their needy away to some institution to be cared for because men are not qualified or do not do the work of deacons. In Acts 6 the apostles did not send the widows among them to some institution to be cared for, but appointed certain qualified men to do the work. That is the way it should be done today.

## I. DUTIES OF DEACONS.

Deacons have not been appointed in the church without a purpose. Although the exact duties are not definitely stated in the New Testament, the nature of their work is given. We can better understand this by learning what is not the work of deacons.

1. It is not the work of the deacons to preach, although some deacons may be preachers also. Philip was one of the seven selected in Jerusalem to fill the office there (Acts 6:5). In performing his work as a deacon he did not preach. Later, after the church was scattered from Jerusalem (and his work as deacon in that congregation ceased), we find him going down to the city of Samaria and preaching to the people (Acts 8:4, 5). When preaching he was doing the work of an evangelist and not the work of a deacon. "And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him" (Acts 21:8). He was an evangelist after his work ceased in Jerusalem. This does not mean that a deacon can not preach; it means that preaching is not a part of the work that belongs to the OFFICE of deacon.

2. It is not the work of deacons to rule or oversee the congregation. In no instance in the New Testament do we find deacons doing this kind of work. The oversight of the congregation belongs only to the eldership. In many cases deacons are given the responsibilities of deciding the whole plan of work with the elders, taking equal responsibility of

oversight with them. This is neither scriptural nor wise. The standard for the deacons does not qualify them to perform the duties of the elders. It is usually good for the deacons to meet with the elders in planning the work of the church, but only to advise with them and learn what they should do in performing their part of the work. They should be there only in the same capacity that the evangelist would meet with them. In finally deciding a course of action for the church the elders only have been given that duty.

3. It is not the work of deacons to organize and promote schemes and organizations unknown in the New Testament. Many of the super and inter-congregational committees and organizations in the churches today are the results of over zealous deacons, thinking it is their duty to do this. They should do the work assigned to them in the same simple and orderly way that it was done in the early church. Some of the schemes and plans of the day are not the work of any person in the church.

What exactly is the nature of the work of deacons? *It is to administer to the physical needs of the church.* It is generally agreed that the seven men chosen from the number of disciples at Jerusalem, under the directions of the apostles, were deacons. It is clear from a study of Acts 6:1-4 that the deacons are to attend to the secular necessities of the church. In this passage it had to do with the care of widows. The prime purpose of the office is to care for the sick and needy of the congregation. This would relieve the elders and preachers from "serving tables" that they may attend to the spiritual needs of the church. The language of Acts 6 is clear as to the nature of the work. "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" (Acts 6:1-4). We learn from this that the deacons were to:

1. *Serve tables.* This service had direct reference to the care for the neglected widows. This tells us that the work of deacons in the church today is to care for those who are in need. This, of course, must be directed by the elders, and must be according to the particular needs of the congregation.

2. *Relieve the apostles (and elders and preachers today) to attend to the ministry of the word.* Such physical ministration that absorbs so much time and thought should not occupy the time of those who are

serving in the spiritual needs of the church. The deacons should take this work and relieve the preachers and elders to attend to their duties. It is in this way that the deacons are assistants to the elders. The physical needs of the church should be cared for by the deacons, under the oversight of the elders.

Specifically, the common needs of most congregations are pretty well known. There are always some poor or needy who need attention. It is not to be understood that the deacons are to solicit the country side for such people. The obligation of the church is to those of her own number. In Acts 6 this concerned the *widows of the number*, and there is no intimation that it covered a wider range. This caring for the poor should be given to the deacons to handle. They should do this with utmost care, for the Lord's money is involved. It is wise for the deacons to investigate every appeal for help and determine if the person is really in need. Many beggars and tramps work their way into the relief of the church when they are not deserving. Qualified deacons will be able to separate the trash from the worthy and administer help.

Some have assigned the caring for the church treasury to the deacons. This is usually a good plan, for the nature of their work involves such. Much of the expenditure of the money falls in the line of work of deacons. This, of course, must always be directed by the elders, for they are responsible for the use of the Lord's money.

The administration to the physical needs of the church goes further than just to the looking after the widows, orphans and poor. Constant service is needed at every worship service. Ushers are needed. The preparation of the building and all elements of the worship, such as the emblems for the Lord's Supper, the distribution of song books, distribution of tracts, etc., must be done. This is directly the work of the deacons. The preparation of the building—heating or ventilating—must be done. The general care of the grounds and buildings comes directly in line with the nature of the work of the deacons. Preparation for baptizing believers is also a part of the work of deacons. In general, the nature of the work done by deacons is easily determined, but the specific duties are assigned by the elders.

## II. DUTIES OF THE CHURCH TO THE DEACONS.

The church must recognize qualified deacons as faithful and willing servants of the church and good examples of Christianity. They should be esteemed highly in love for their work's sake. Too often the church neglects the deacons, and does not show the appreciation and cooperation it should. At times the elders impose upon the deacons by trying to shift their own burdens upon them. As the deacons labor in caring for the physical needs of the church, let us co-operate willingly with them to the fullest of our ability.

Many times the deacons must exercise certain decisions in performing their duties. They are usually successful business men and we should respect their judgment and help them accomplish their goal. We should express appreciation to the deacons for a job well done. Many times they labor far into the night, or take time from their work to attend to some of their duties to the church. This deserves our appreciation and thanks. Human nature is such that appreciation and expression of love goes far to repay for the labors rendered.

We should love the elders and deacons and do all within our power to show that love for them. Hold them close to our hearts and work together with them for the advancement of the kingdom of heaven. The qualified deacon is an excellent example of Christianity and we should commend and encourage them rather than criticize and rebuke them. All too often the members are ready to find fault with some work of the deacons, but never quite willing to commend and encourage them for a job well done. The duty of the church to the deacons is to love, respect and co-operate with them in their duties, and thereby contribute to the greatest cause on earth—the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven.

## CHAPTER XVII

## CONCERNING WIVES OF OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

In I Timothy 3:11 we find this language: "Even so must their wives be . . ." There are certain qualifications that the wives of church officers must possess before their husbands can be qualified to serve in the office. The bad conduct of a woman can disqualify her husband from the office of either elder or deacon.

## I. THE OFFICE OF DEACONESS.

Quite a bit of discussion has taken place over what some call "the office of a deaconess" in addition to the office of deacon. The difference in these two words is that one refers to a man and the other to a woman. The basis for the position is from Paul's statement in I Timothy 3:11. This is understood to mean *women officers* rather than the wives of the deacons or elders. To this is added the statement in Romans 16:1—"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a *servant* of the church which is at Cenchrea." The footnote in the American Revised Version has *deaconess* for *servant* in the text. The position deserves attention to determine whether or not it is accurate according to the word.

The Greek term in Romans 16:1 is *diakonon*, of which Thayer says: "*a deaconess, a woman to whom the care of either poor or sick women was entrusted.*" That Phebe was such a servant leaves no doubt. The question is: Does this mean that she held an official position on par with deacons in the church at Cenchrea, or does it mean that she was a servant in the general sense like that of preachers, Christians, or any other service appointed in the church? Also, does this position that Phebe held require the qualifications mentioned in I Timothy 3:11, or do these qualities speak of the wives of those men mentioned in the chapter who occupied an "office" in a special sense of the word?

It is quite obvious that when the Greek words *diakonos* and *diakoneo* are translated *Deacon*, they always embrace an office of a MAN. If they mean "to minister" or "to serve" in the general sense of the word, they are translated *Servant*. The word "Deacon" in our English Bible means a selected man who is to assist the bishops in their work by being appointed *servants* of the church in a special sense. Paul speaks of the qualifications of this "office" in I Timothy 3:8-13.

1. *Arguments to favor an officer called "Deaconess."*

A. Some have contended that the qualifications given in I Timothy 3:11 prove the official position for women as strongly as it proves an official position for either bishops or deacons.

We may observe first that the basis for this argument is an assumption that needs to be proved. It is assumed that these qualifications refer to an office for women. Until it is shown that the teaching of the Holy Spirit in this passage refers to women officers equal to the deacons, the argument is of little value.

H. E. Winkler said on page 169 of his book, *The Eldership*: "Now concerning this qualification of the deaconess a careful study of the brief statement by Paul will portray a high specimen of womanhood is here contemplated for appointment to serve in God's kingdom in an official capacity." On page 171 he told of the need for such an office: "That there are many needs in most every congregation of disciples of Christ for the service of a deaconess may not easily be denied."

It is not stated that these qualifications are for "deaconesses." Rather, Paul says: "Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things." (A.S.V.) The King James Version says: "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." We shall determine just a little later to which women he refers.

The question has been asked: Why did Paul stop in the middle of the qualifications of deacons to discuss women in general if he was not giving qualifications for officers called *deaconesses*? And why should Paul mention the wives of deacons and not the wives of the elders? It is said that Paul was discussing deacons, and turned to the counterpart—deaconesses.

But the question may be turned to ask: Why should Paul stop in the middle of one class of officers to mention another class? Did Paul turn aside to discuss women in general and then turn again to the deacons? This passage can only refer to one of the following: (1) All women in general in the church; (2) Special women officers in the church; (3) The wives of these officers he was discussing in this chapter; (4) Only to the wives of the deacons.

In the Greek the word may apply to any one of the classes. It simply means women. But by reasonable deduction from the context and scriptural principles in general we may eliminate the first. The context seems to be against a discussion of women in general in the midst of the qualifications of the officers of the church. By the same token we may eliminate the second on the count that, first, no idea of women officers in the church is taught in the New Testament. Second, there must be some connection of the women mentioned here with these men being considered. That leaves the last two alternatives. This passage is either talking about the women of the officers mentioned in the whole chapter—their wives—or the wives of the deacons, immediately con-

sidered. I must accept the position that Paul is speaking of the wives of all the officers of the church mentioned, because the family relation of both is important. I see not how it would be more important for the wives of the deacons to grave, sober, faithful in all things, than it would be for the elders. I conclude, therefore, by necessary inference that these qualities should be in the wives of both the elders and deacons.

B. Others have argued that since women often can do better jobs than men in some cases, and that they have more time to do this work, such an office should be filled by women. Such work as attending to the sick women, attending to baptisms of women—their dressing, helping delinquent girls, and teaching women, can better be done by women than men. Because of this it is concluded that women deacons (deaconesses) are better qualified to attend to women than men.

All this work of women we admit to be true. There are some cases and circumstances that demand the services of women rather than men, but that in no way suggests that an official position should be created and filled by women. There is a difference in assigning women to do a certain work in the church, which they are capable of doing, and in putting them into an office to do the kind of work assigned to deacons. Often the elders have business meetings where the deacons are consulted on matters pertaining to the leadership. It does not mean that deacons occupy a position of oversight and rule, but their office carries with it a connection with the elders that the general work of members does not carry. If women have an office equal to deacons, and that is what is suggested in the idea, they should have as much place in such meetings for business as the deacons. The position of elders and deacons in the church is of an official nature, and there is some degree of leadership and administration connected to both. Should a woman assume an office of the same nature as a deacon?

The women who are appointed to do such work as they are best capable of doing may be referred to as *Deaconesses* if we do not imply by the term an official or special sense as in the case of elders and deacons. Such a work as they would do could not be in the leadership of the church.

C. It has also been argued that such an office exists because Phebe is the example that proves it. It has been said that she held an official position in the church at Cenchrea called "Deaconess."

It is assumed that because some service was performed by a woman, an office should be established which is to be filled with women officials. The above lacks evidence to show that Phebe was an official in the church at Cenchrea. Phebe was a *servant* of the church in the same sense that any other person who is given a work to do is a servant. We see

nothing in either the text or the context to suggest that her work was of a special nature that required certain qualifications more than any Christian woman.

## 2. *Reasons Why Deaconess is not an official position in the church.*

A. There are no specific qualifications for such an office. Moreover, there is no such office in the special sense mentioned in the New Testament. I am aware that many refer us to I Timothy 3:11 and say this refers to deaconesses, but that needs proof. The idea of church officers in any special sense is not in this verse.

B. The meaning of *Deaconess* does not imply an office equal to the deacons. If the word *diakonon* (servant) in Romans 16:1 constitutes an office of women, then whenever the word occurs in connection with other servants, it would constitute an office of whatever class is mentioned. Let us try some:

(1) The apostles—II Corinthians 6:4—"God's (diakonoi) servants." This would constitute an office of "apostle deacons."

(2) Evangelists—I Thessalonians 3:2—"Timothy our brother and (daikonon) servant of God." This would constitute an office of "Evangelist deacons." Timothy—"Thou shalt be a good (diakonos) servant of Jesus Christ." (I Tim. 4:6).

(3) All faithful Christians—John 12:26—"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant (diakonos) be . . ." This would constitute an office of "Christian deacons"—meaning all faithful Christians.

Where shall we stop? But In Philippians 1:1 we have the distinction between the ordinary use of the word "servant" and the official use. Any duty given to a woman will make her a servant, and there would be no objection to the term "deaconess" unless it implies the position of leadership and administration that generally goes with the work of a deacon as described in the New Testament.

A word may sometimes have a dual meaning. The word *elder* is an example. In the general or ordinary sense it means "one elder," whether man or woman. But in the official sense, both to the Hebrews and in the Greek language, it meant a ruler or overseer. Take the word *minister*. In the general or ordinary sense it means anyone, man or woman, who ministers or serves in any capacity whatever, divine or civil. The Devil has ministers (II Cor. 11:15). The Greek word here is *diakonoi* (deacons). But the word also denotes a special class of servants—those who preach the gospel of Christ (I Tim. 4:6). In this sense a woman could not be a minister. The same is true of *Diakonos*—servants. In the general meaning it implies any service whatever without



a special office included. But in the official or limited sense it means an office (work) of a special nature in the church that carries certain qualifications.

Paul spoke of some women helping him, but it is not to be inferred that they occupy a position equal to him. To the Philippians he wrote to help "those women that laboured with me." No doubt there were many women who assisted the early preachers in their work, but it does not follow that they were officers of the church. Women may teach, help the sick and afflicted, care for the needy, train children, etc. This they should do, both as individual Christians and in any way designated by the elders. But it does not constitute a position in the church in the same sense that elders and deacons have.

## II. QUALIFICATIONS FOR WIVES OF THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.

Since, as I have already stated, the text of I Timothy 3:11 appears to indicate the wives of those officers discussed in this portion of the epistle, I shall consider these qualifications in that light. The elders and deacons of the church must have good wives who are faithful in all respects. A bad woman can have an evil influence upon any man, and especially would that be true of those men who are before the church in much of their work. These qualities are important to the wife of every elder and deacon.

### 1. GRAVE

This qualification is enjoined upon every child of God. The business of Christianity is too important to be otherwise. The word here means the same as with reference to the elders and deacons. It means to be prudent, dignified, quiet, of sound judgment; not giddy. These women must be grave in all their attitudes and duties both toward their husbands and the church. A grave individual is one that is admired by all. These women must not be foolish, unconcerned and indifferent to the work of their husbands, but rather a good helper and companion.

She must be grave in her dress. Paul said: "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" (I Tim. 2:9, 10). This applies to any Christian woman, and especially would it be true of the wives of the elders and deacons. The lack of gravity is often portrayed in the dress of the woman. She must be modest in her dress and manners. One who dresses otherwise and acts without gravity will destroy the work and influence of her husband.

## 2. NOT SLANDERERS.

No form of slandering is pleasing to God. Much of the trouble in the church today is generated by women talking too much. The person who can control his tongue is a perfect man (James 3:5; I Pet. 3:10). This means to be able to control the tongue and not be busybodies or tale-bearers of idle gossip. Those wives who slander people will disqualify their husbands as elders or deacons in the church. Besides disqualifying their husbands they injure the character of others by their idle talk.

Backbiters and tale-bearers are dangerous both to themselves and to the church. Hardly a congregation of any size exists that does not have some who are guilty of this evil and malicious crime. This ought to be stopped because of the damage done to the church. The doctor asks to see the patient's tongue, and thereby he is able to judge some of the conditions of the body. To observe one's tongue (his speech) is to learn the real condition of the person's heart. Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Again one said: "Thy speech betrayeth thee." Jesus also said that men would be judged by their words. "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:34-37).

Paul speaks of this evil in these words: "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (I Tim. 5:13). This is speaking of widows specifically, but it applies to any woman, and certainly includes the wives of the men in such important positions as elders and deacons. These women should not wander about with idle gossip, slandering first one person and then another. In this they disqualify their husbands.

## 3. SOBER

The wives of the officers of the church, as well as the officers themselves, must be sober persons. They must be sound in their thinking. This means to be temperate, self-controlled; self-possessed. It has to do with the condition of the mind and attitude. Wives of elders and deacons must be calm, and even tempered.

The lack of soberness on the part of the women will be a bad influence upon the children in that home. Paul said, "The aged women

likewise . . . that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:3, 4). If the aged women are to teach the young women to be sober, it stands to reason that the aged women **MUST** be sober to be able to teach it to others.

Let me emphasize the importance of soberness of God's word. All Christians must possess it in order to do their work well. The bishop must be sober (Titus 1:8). The wives must be sober (Titus 2:4, 6). Women in general must be sober (I Tim. 2:9). If God requires this godly characteristic in all Christians, where is the place for unstable, frivolous and giddy leaders and their wives in the church? These women must be soberminded before their husbands are really qualified to serve in their positions.

#### 4. FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS.

This certainly means faithfulness in the work of the Lord. Many duties are given to the women of the church, and they must be discharged with a faithful attitude. This means to be trustworthy in all things: in every phase of their lives.

When God created the woman for the man, he made her suitable as a helpmeet. It is therefore the woman's place to be a help to her husband in whatever duty is bound upon him. The record says, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). If the woman lives and acts in such a way as to destroy the effective work of her husband, she is completely failing in her God given duty.

The wives of officers of the church must be faithful to God in all relations as Christians. She must be faithful in worship; faithful in Christian living; faithful in fulfilling her place in the church. As useful as Christian women are in the church, Jesus Christ does not want a woman to be a pulpit preacher. In fact, any woman who does pulpit preaching is openly disobeying the Bible. "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" (I Cor. 14:34). This was speaking of "your women" (wives), the wives of prophets and teachers at Corinth, but it sets forth the principle as it was under the law. But more: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, **NOR TO USURP AUTHORITY OVER THE MAN**, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12). This does not mean that women are not to teach at all, but it means not to usurp the authority of men; not to teach over man publicly. On the other hand, women are commanded to teach God's word under certain conditions. "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" (Titus 2:3, 4). Women are to teach women and children, but never to usurp the authority over the man.

The wives of church officers must be faithful in worship to God. They must perform every duty in public worship that is required of them in a humble and godly manner. They must do what personal teaching and encouragement that they are able to do.

They must also be faithful to their husbands. Many times the elder or deacon will confide in his wife to seek help and encouragement and she must not betray that confidence. Often an elder's wife will publicly circulate a decision or problem with which her husband has been dealing in the church. This premature relating of the problem will cause trouble because she may not be fully aware of the circumstances, and her gossiping about it will hinder rather than help. She should always let him make known his decision when he is ready. She should keep his confidence.

The wives of the officers should follow the instruction of the Lord to be submissive to their husbands (Eph. 5:22, 23; Titus 2:5). The church does not need women rulers. These women must keep in subjection to their husbands or they will disqualify them for the office. The husband is the head of the wife and the elders' and deacons' wives must obey the Lord in this respect.

These women must be faithful to their children. They owe them the proper training and instruction in the Lord. (Titus 2:3, 5). The most influential person in the life of every child is usually the mother, because she is with him most of the time in his early and formative life. These women must be faithful in this work.

The wives of the officers of the church must be faithful to all others in the church. They should hold the respect of every member of the church. They must do every duty with the most faithful attention. Women are to visit the sick and care for the needy (Matt. 25:34-40). Good personal work can and should be done at all times by the women as well as men. The wives must be faithful in all things. No man should be allowed to serve in the office unless he has such a wife.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON CHURCH OFFICERS

Questions and answers often make a position clear. In spite of the tedious manner in which we have dealt with some of the subjects considered in this work, questions will still be asked and must be answered. During the past ten years I have received many questions, some sincere and some otherwise, on the subject of elders and deacons in the church. Many of these questions grew out of certain practices that are questionable; others in an effort to justify some theory. The questions that are to be answered in this chapter have been put in my own words for obvious reasons. Some of them were asked orally and I can not recall the exact words used by the inquirer. Others were too lengthy to put in this book. By rewording the questions I can list as one several that touch the subject from various view points occupying too much space and dealing with irrelevant material.

I do not suppose myself as one who "knows all the answers." The subject with which I have dealt is, in many respects, complicated and profound. I am reasonably certain of the principles of God's word that touch this subject, but I may lack the wisdom to apply these principles to specific cases and circumstances. Where the questions demand such an answer, I shall do my best to take the safe course in answering. I am very reluctant to try to answer questions that are not taught, either directly or by necessary inference, in the New Testament. Sometimes questions are asked for the purpose of trapping the person to whom they are directed. Such questions do not deserve much notice. However, for the sake of those who may be sincere in asking, I have tried to give the scriptural answer.

The answers that will be found to the following questions may not be just as the querist expects or desires them to be, but that I can not help. I want to speak to please God, not man. I have found people in this life who were so mixed up in the web of sin that any scriptural answer to their questions would condemn them. But the answers to such questions must be in harmony with God's word if they are to be of help.

1. *Can an elder be a Mason and please God?*

Ans.—One would have to know something about the Masonic Lodge, as well as Christianity to really know the answer. All I know about the Masonic Lodge is from two sources: (1) what Masons themselves have told me; (2) what their writings teach. I have read several books written by Masons and from these I have a fair understanding of what the Masonic Lodge stands for.

It is strange that Christians will become entangled with "secret orders" and devote more time to them than to the church. It is doubtful that Christians have much time for such Lodges if they are really working at the job of Christianity. Certainly an elder is far too busy with his work of the Lord for the affairs of Masonry or any other such lodge.

Many Masons believe that they can obtain salvation through the Lodge, and hence spend little or no time with Christianity. I am aware that all Masons do not believe this; but the fact that some do is enough to tell of its aims. Many Masons hold that there are certain religious aspects in their doctrines that will justify the man who keeps them. It is rather definite that there are religious formulas in Masonry because of the titles given to their officers—"Worshipful Master" and "Junior Deacon." What the Masonic Lodge does in the way influencing men to rely on Masonry for salvation is contrary to Christianity.

No Christian needs more than the church to glorify God. No elder has time for such Lodges if he intends to do his full duty at overseeing the flock of God. He must be an example to the church (I Pet. 5:3), and it is enough for him to be just a Christian. The forms of initiating from one degree to another is purely pagan religious rites revised a little. No sincere Christian man, much less an elder of the church, should be engaged in any such false worship. No, an elder of the church will not please God as a Mason. He can not be a good Christian and a good Mason at the same time.

*2. Must an elder have every qualification himself? Or can all the elders together have all the qualifications, such as: one elder have believing children and another elder have the ability to teach?*

Ans.—The question can be easily answered by reading I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. These qualifications are for A MAN, not for a group of men. Yes, each man must possess all the qualifications. Each person must comply with every condition listed to be a Christian. If he lacks even one, he is not a Christian. The same is true in principle with the elders and deacons.

*3. Why did not Paul give the same qualifications to both Timothy and Titus?*

Ans.—The question assumes two things: (1) that the same qualifications were not given to both Timothy and Titus; (2) the passages must be worded exactly alike to be the same. As to the first, the same qualifications were given in both passages. Check the comparative lists on page 86. As to the second, the two passages do not have to be worded alike to be the same. The commission of Christ to his apostles is an example of this. Neither of the four gospels use the same words in giving the commission, yet we know that all teach the same truth.

4. *How many elders should each congregation have?*

Ans.—The Bible does not give the exact number. The only limit is that there must be a plurality of elders in each congregation. I am sure that it is scriptural to appoint as many elders as there are men qualified. The more qualified men, the more work can be done.

5. *If a congregation has three elders and two of them die, can not the one elder continue to oversee that congregation?*

Ans.—No, for then the congregation would have only one elder, which is nowhere taught in the New Testament. If it is right for one man to serve as elder in this case, it would be the same in principle if he alone were appointed to begin with. There are two possible courses to take under this improbable, but possible, circumstance: (1) Either appoint more elders to take the places of those who have died, if such are qualified. (2) Or the one remaining resign and consider the church without elders. It is better to have a congregation that is scripturally unorganized than to have an unscriptural organization of one elder. This is one reason why much teaching and training should be done in churches to prepare men for the eldership. The elders now serving will not live forever and someone must prepare to take their places.

6. *Could not a bachelor be an elder if he has had experience with children, such as a school teacher?*

Ans.—No, for the simple reason that Paul required one to be a father before he is qualified for the office. There is no substitute for God's plan. The man must have children who are Christians in order to obtain the experience and to prove it to the church according to God's plan. No variations are taught in the New Testament.

7. *Can a congregation have deacons and not have elders, if none are qualified for the eldership?*

Ans.—Who would direct the deacons in their work? We have no example of a congregation in New Testament times having deacons without elders. However, if such did exist, be it remembered that the deacons have no ruling powers at all. They can not do the work of elders. The work of the deacons must be directed by elders, and in the absence of elders we would wonder who would direct them. The safe and scriptural policy is to have both elders and deacons in the church.

8. *Do the deacons have an equal voice in the oversight with the elders?*

Ans.—Certainly not! The deacons have no more "voice" in the oversight than any other member of the church. The work of deacons is to "serve tables," which does not include the oversight of the flock.

9. *Does not a preacher become an elder when he begins work with a congregation, since he does the work of an elder?*

Ans.—Absolutely not! When a preacher moves to a certain locality or a protracted service he is nothing more than a servant of God under the elders. He may be an elder if he is qualified and appointed with the other elders, but the fact that he teaches and preaches at some place regularly does not make him an elder. Each Christian should teach as he has opportunity and ability, but that does not constitute him an elder. Let the preachers preach with all authority of God's word, and let the elders do their work of overseeing the flock.

10. *Does the eldership have any authority over the members when they are not in the public assembly?*

Ans.—Yes. Christianity does not stop when the public worship ends. It is the daily conduct of the children of God. It begins with the new birth and closes when death stills the acts of the body. It is the business of the eldership of the church to know the conduct of Christians under their charge at all times. All things that have to do with the influence of the church or the persons under their charge are under the authority of the elders whether in the assembly or not.

11. *Can a preacher appoint anyone he wishes to be an elder?*

Ans.—No. The qualifications of the New Testament determine who is and who is not to be in the office. The plan of the New Testament indicates that the church should select out from among themselves those who are qualified, then the evangelist may appoint them to the office. Preachers can only appoint those who have been selected by the congregation, and the congregation can only select those who are qualified.

12. *Can an elder serve a congregation as he should when he preaches at some other place on Sundays?*

Ans.—No. His work as an elder is limited to the "flock which is among you." Preaching is a wonderful work. Certainly an elder who can preach should do so, but if he performs his work as an elder he must work with the church where he serves.

13. *Is one fit to be an elder or deacon when his business keeps him away from the services on Sunday morning?*

Ans.—Absolutely not! This also includes those whose business keeps them away from services constantly on Sunday or Wednesday evenings. No man ought to allow anything to keep him from attending every service except his inability to go. Providential hindrance is excusable, but



business, political or social affairs do not come under this heading. Occasionally matters may deprive one of attending a service, but if this becomes regular he is not qualified for either office.

14. *Must deacons have the same qualifications as the elders?*

Ans.—No. The deacons have a different responsibility. The word *likewise* in I Timothy 3:8 does not mean that the deacons must have every qualification mentioned for the elders. Some qualifications are the same for both groups, but not all of them.

15. *Are the elders today required to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil?*

Ans.—Yes, but not exactly as some teach. The elders are to pray for the sick when called, and administer to their needs to restore their health. The passage does not require a miracle. See page 207.

16. *Can one be an elder who has been in the church only one year?*

Ans.—It is possible, but not very probable. Sometimes an aged man comes into the church after years of teaching. He may have the other physical and moral qualifications to a high degree. With long hours of study he may develop to the point to know more than many who have been in the church for 20 years. However, it is seldom the case that one qualifies for the eldership within the period of one year after becoming a Christian. Some of the qualifications take a lifetime to acquire.

17. *How long does it take to prove the deacons?*

Ans.—Different people under different circumstances require different periods of time to prove them. The time element is not the important thing. Ordinarily men may be known well enough in a year or two to know whether or not they are qualified to serve as deacons. But they must be proved whatever length of time is necessary.

18. *Is an elder qualified who believes in Premillennialism but does not teach it?*

Ans.—No. Premillennialism is of such a nature that one can not believe it and still believe much of the gospel. Regardless of the efforts of some to reconcile Premillennialism and Christianity it can not be done. The doctrine materializes the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and makes Christ a King only in promise and not in fact. It makes many of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ and His kingdom untrue. One might as well believe that baptism is not essential to salvation as to believe the doctrine of Premillennialism. No, an elder who believes in this doctrine is not qualified. He is not "apt to teach" the truth of God.

19. *Is one qualified to be a deacon who sells beer and wine?*

Ans.—He surely is not. Serving beer and wine is an evil and no Christian should have anything to do with such work. If Christians are forbidden to engage in the liquor traffic, certainly the elders and deacons are.

20. *Where can a man be found today who meets all the qualifications for an elder?*

Ans.—This question implies that it is impossible to obey I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These qualifications do not demand a sinless, perfect man. If that were true there could never be found a man to qualify. Many of the qualifications are relative and leave plenty of room for growth in the Lord. Men with all the qualifications may be found in many congregations today.

21. *Can a 25-year-old man be an elder?*

Ans.—No. He is neither old enough in years nor in experience. Some of the qualifications would be impossible for him to possess at that age.

22. *Did the elders mentioned in the Old Testament have the same qualifications as those today?*

Ans.—No. The elders in Old Testament times were, in a sense, officers of the tribes of Israel, but they were such because they were fathers and not by a standard of qualifications as listed in the New Testament. The term often refers to the older in years rather than an officer in Israel.

23. *Can a very rich man be an elder of the church?*

Ans.—Yes, if he loves the Lord more than his money. However, like so many members of the church, rich elders seek the power of their money rather than the power of God. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:23). From this statement of Jesus it appears very unlikely that a very rich man would be qualified, but it is possible.

24. *Did the elders of the early church have the same powers as the apostles?*

Ans.—No. In some cases the elders had some spiritual gifts, but not in the same sense as the apostles. The apostles had authority over all churches, while the elders were only over one congregation.

25. *Can many elderships pool their resources together in one big project?*

Ans.—No. Such a practice was unknown in New Testament times. This would form an organization or work larger than the local church,

which is a principle feature of denominationalism. Each eldership should direct its own affairs and exercise its own delegated authority in the congregation. Had the Lord intended the church to have a giant organization of any kind, He would certainly have provided for it. This practice has led to apostasy every time it was started.

26. *Who were the first elders over the early church?*

Ans. — Jerusalem was the first congregation. I do not know how many elders this congregation had, nor does anyone else. However, from Acts 15 we learn that "the apostles and elders came together" to consider a matter of false teaching. Whether the reference to "pillars" in Galatians 2:9 refers to the elders or not, I do not know. If it does, we are assured that there were at least three. "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Peter and John were both elders as well as apostles as indicated in the epistles written by them. (I Pet. 5:1; II John 1; III John 1). We learn from the New Testament usage of the words "elder" and "apostle," that they do not refer to the same work, but one man can occupy both works. Whether Peter and John were *elders* in Jerusalem, or whether "pillars" in Galatians refers to elders and includes James, I do not know. At present I believe they were. It is not a matter of importance who the elders were in Jerusalem or the Lord would have revealed it to us.

27. *Seeing that times and circumstances have changed since the early church in Jerusalem, do the elders today have the same responsibilities as then?*

Ans.—Yes, the work and responsibilities of elders are the same today as then. The passing of centuries and the changes of circumstances never affect the divine principles of God's work. The church still needs guiding in truth and protecting from evil. That is the work of elders.

28. *Is a man qualified for the eldership whose daughter attends dances?*

Ans.—He certainly is not. The modern dance is sinful. No amount of arguing will make it otherwise. It is sinful because it appeals to the lust of the flesh, and causes spiritual death to those who participate in it. An elder must be a man who knows the difference between right and wrong. If he does not know the sin of the dance, he is not qualified. If he does know its evil and does not restrain and teach his children, he does not have them under proper control. If he can not keep his children from lustful sin, how can he keep the church from sin? No man has any business teaching and directing the affairs of the church who does not strongly oppose all such lustful evil as the modern dance.

29. *Is a congregation scriptural with only one deacon?*

Ans.—No. All scriptural information we have on the deacons always indicates that a plurality were appointed in each congregation. If Acts 6:1-6 is any proof of the work of deacons, and I believe it is, at least seven were appointed in Jerusalem. The number may vary according to the size of the congregation and the needs, but I know of no scriptural principle that would permit only one.

30. *If an elder becomes physically unable to do the work should he remain in the office?*

Ans.—Since the "office" is a work, and since one must do the work to fill the office, I do not see how we could imagine that one who is physically unable to do the work can remain in the office. This, of course, refers to permanent disability. If one of the elders should be ill or injured for a period of time, it does not mean that he should resign his position as elder. A man could not continue to hold the position as preacher if he becomes permanently unable to preach. This work of an elder must be performed or the office is not filled.

31. *What should be done with an elder who refuses to pray and sing because he doesn't get his way about everything?*

Ans.—He should be relieved of the position in the eldership. How does a spoiled baby like this ever get into the eldership? and why does he stay in the office? Any man is sinning who refuses to pray and sing because he does not get his way about everything. Pouting and sulking is the conduct of a spoiled baby, and no baby belongs in the eldership.

32. *Should the elders have business meetings in which the whole membership is invited to attend?*

Ans.—No, not for the purpose of deciding the course or program of the church. It is well for the elders to frequently have meetings of the church at which time they inform the membership of various decisions that have been made, and solicit their help. This may be called by some a "business meeting." But the course of actions and the program of the church is the responsibility of the eldership and not the whole membership.

33. *What about the elders permitting an organ to be brought into the church building for a wedding?*

Ans.—Scripturally there is nothing wrong with instrumental music in itself anywhere outside the worship to God. The sin is not in the instrument, or in the playing of it, but in adding it to the public or private worship. A wedding is not public or private worship. It follows that using the instrument in a wedding is not sinful. The building is

not sacred in and of itself. To have a wedding in the church building is not wrong. If the instrument is brought in just for the wedding and then taken out, I see no scriptural principle violated. But many times the elders act very wisely in not permitting an instrument to be brought into the building because it causes weak members to want it in the worship, or else it creates a turmoil among those who do not know the difference in a wedding and worship. This is a matter of human judgment and should be classed with eating meats.

*34. Can an elder be engaged in politics and be a good elder of the church?*

Ans.—I doubt it. It may be possible, but as politics are today, it would be doubtful whether he would be successful in both works. The contrast between politics and the church is too great. I have never heard of a good elder being a good politician.

*35. Should one elder take it upon himself to make changes without consulting the other elders?*

Ans.—No. The oversight does not belong to one man; it belongs to the eldership. The elders must agree in their work, and one should not take upon himself the position of chief shepherd.

*36. How does an elder "labour in word and doctrine"?*

Ans.—By preaching and teaching. There are some elders who are preachers also, and spend their whole time in the work. They should be financially supported when doing this.

*37. Is it right to pay an elder for his services?*

Ans.—Certainly it is, if he devotes his entire time to the work and has no other means of support. "The labourer is worthy of his reward" (I Tim. 5:18).

*38. How long should an elder serve over a congregation?*

Ans.—Just as long as he remains qualified and does the work. There is no such idea as a rotation system or yearly election of elders taught in the New Testament.

*39. What should be done when a congregation wants to do mission work and the elders are against it?*

Ans.—It depends upon what it meant by "mission work." If the congregation wants to do a lot of things now classed as "mission work," the elders are often right in opposing it. However, if the congregation wants to preach the gospel to all within its ability, the elders are wrong to oppose it. "Mission work" is anything that the church is obligated

to do. Men who oppose the mission of the church are not elders and should not be considered as such.

40. *Should the elders and deacons let the congregation know where the money goes?*

Ans.—Yes, they should keep the congregation informed about what work is being done. It is a poor eldership that does not let the congregation know about what work is done and where the money goes. The appropriation of the Lord's money should be as He has directed. The elders often make serious mistakes by keeping these matters secret. This does not mean that the church should dictate to the elders on how to use the Lord's money.

41. *What about an elder who has been caught in several lies, but always confesses them before the church?*

Ans.—An elder can not be a liar. Even if he repents and confesses this sin over and over again, he is not qualified for the office because his reputation as a liar would debar him. His weakness is such that no one could have confidence in his word.

42. *What about elders going to the movies?*

Ans.—What about anyone going to the movies? The elders have as much right to go to a place of entertainment as anyone else. The nature of most modern movies is wrong, and both Christian and elder should avoid such influence. However, there is nothing wrong with a moving picture as such. The wrong is in **WHAT** one sees. It is not sinful to drink — it is **WHAT** one drinks that makes it evil. It is wrong to go to any indecent and immoral movie, but is it not wrong to see a decent and respectable picture. It would depend entirely upon what the picture was.

43. *Can the elders refuse to allow the congregation to appoint other qualified men to the eldership?*

Ans.—No. It is not the business of the elders to select those who are to be appointed elders or to refuse to allow it. It is a matter for the church to select those qualified men to be in the eldership. The elders can neither allow nor refuse the appointment of any qualified man.

44. *What should the church do when the elders insist upon joining denominations in a city wide meeting?*

Ans.—The church should dismiss these elders from the office and refuse to follow them into sin. They are not qualified and are not considered elders in the sight of God. The New Testament does not permit fellowship of the saints with false teachers under any circumstances.

45. *If it is scriptural to have one congregation without elders today, why have them in any congregation?*

Ans.—It is scriptural not to have elders only when there are none qualified. As soon as men develop the qualities necessary to the office, they should be appointed. The fact that a new congregation may exist for a time without elders does not prove that all churches should be without elders. Is it scriptural for a congregation to exist without having a preacher? If so, why should there be any preachers? A congregation may meet on the Lord's day and worship without someone preaching, as we consider preaching today, but that does not prove that it is right for all churches to dispose of preaching. All congregations should be scripturally organized as soon as men are qualified. But until such men are qualified the congregation must remain scripturally unorganized. The whole question is a matter of development. Until the congregation has elders it is not adequately developed to be as efficient as it should be in performing its God given mission.

46. *Where in the New Testament do you find an elder resigning?*

Ans.—I do not know of a case in the New Testament where an elder resigned, but the principles are clear that if a man ceases to be qualified he can not assume the position. If one ceases to be a Christian as Demms did (II Tim. 4:10), he certainly ceases to be an elder. "Resign" means to give up, to quit. If one gives up the Christian faith he is giving up the work of Christianity, including the eldership.

47. *Is it scriptural to have Leaders over a congregation when there are no men qualified for the eldership?*

Ans.—No, not if the ruling element is meant by "Leaders." There is no such office known in the New Testament. Naturally some person or persons will have to take the lead in the worship and work of the congregation, but they do not constitute an office of oversight in substitute for the eldership, and no such office should be created.

48. *Is it wrong for a member of the church to correct an elder in privacy for some mistake he has made?*

Ans.—Certainly not. This is the way all Christians should treat each other. All righteous elders will appreciate the help of others. They are men and make mistakes. Correction by the word of God and in the spirit of love will do us all good.

49. *Isn't it wrong to appoint a man to the office of a deacon just to keep him and his wife attending services?*

Ans.—Yes, it certainly is. The only scriptural reason for appointing deacons is that they may serve in the office well. He should be appointed BECAUSE he is faithful and not in order to make him so.

50. *Did not the elders of the early church have miraculous power to heal the sick, raise the dead, etc.?*

Ans.—Some of them did, but there is no Bible evidence that they all had this power. Preachers also had such power, at least some of them, but we should not jump to the conclusion that it is necessary now to their work.

51. *Where is the Bible authority for the elders expelling a preacher because he does not preach what they want him to?*

Ans.—There is no Bible authority for elders “expelling” a preacher because he does not preach what they want him to. There may be those who have “itching ears” for a false doctrine. If so, there is no Bible authority for dismissing him because he preaches the truth. But if the elders want the truth preached, and the preacher does not do it, the Bible authority for dismissing him is Acts 20:28-31 and Romans 16:17, 18.

52. *Do the elders of one congregation have the right to discipline a member of another congregation in the same city?*

Ans.—No. The elders of any one congregation have absolutely no jurisdiction beyond the “flock which is among you.” As individuals they may inform the elders of the congregation where the erring member worships of his sin.

53. *Should the elders consult with the congregation when they employ a new minister?*

Ans.—Yes, as a matter of expediency. However, it is a matter that must finally be decided by the eldership, because that falls within the scope of their duty. They must see that the preacher is sound in the faith. It is not a matter of popular vote of the congregation.

54. *Can a man continue to serve as an elder after his wife dies?*

Ans.—I believe so. I believe also that it would be improper to appoint a man who does not have a wife. Paul said he must be the husband of one wife. We understand that the reason for this is that he must obtain and prove his experience in ruling his family, and he must have a family to do this. The death of his wife, after gaining and proving his experience, would not take away any of it. There is a difference in having had a wife and never being married.

55. *Is it wrong for one elder to take authority over the other elders if they give it to him?*

Ans.—Yes. All elders have equal authority and responsibility. They do not have the power to transfer that authority and responsibility to the others. There are no head bishops in the church of Christ.



56. *How do the elders stop the mouths of vain talkers?*

Ans.—By the sword of the Spirit. They can not use physical force or violence. They simply present the truth and keep false teachers out of the position to destroy the flock. They put them to silence by exposing their deceit and false doctrines.

57. *Does one have to be an old man to be an elder?*

Ans.—Yes, but that is a relative term and does not tell how old. He must be old enough to have gained the necessary experience of life to rule the church in the way of righteousness, and to have believing children. The term "Elder" implies age in relation to the normal span of life.

58. *What did Peter mean by "Neither as being lords over God's heritage"?*

Ans.—He simply meant not to impose or be over-bearing in their rule. They must not go beyond their delegated authority and presume to dictate laws unknown to the New Testament.

59. *Where is the Bible authority for the elders judging another man's teaching?*

Ans.—This authority is necessarily inferred by the nature of their work. The elders are to feed the flock and take the oversight. They must protect the church from false teachers. They do this by holding fast to the faithful word. It follows that they must judge the preaching by the perfect standard—the Bible. If the man does not speak the truth he is to be corrected if possible, and if not, he is to be branded as a false teacher. The Bible authority is "Watch for grievous wolves" (Acts 20:28).

60. *Is an elder qualified when he is always saying he wished someone else would take his place?*

Ans.—No. He does not desire the office, which is one of the qualifications.

61. *Should the elders of several congregations be called together and decide an issue in one congregation?*

Ans.—The elders of one congregation have no oversight over another, nor should several elderships meet and confer on the solution to matters pertaining to one congregation. The elders of a given congregation may invite and get the individual advice and help of any individual they choose, but this is far different from having elderships meet to solve some congregational problem. Each congregation is autonomous and should always remain so.

A certain matter of discipline might involve two congregations in the same city, and the elderships of the two might meet to correct the matter. But such a problem should never involve disinterested congregations. The meeting of several elderships is nothing more than a church conference or association which we condemn in denominationalism.

*62. If a man has been withdrawn from by one congregation should he be appointed to the eldership of another?*

Ans.—Certainly not if the discipline was justified. He may repent and be restored to fellowship and live righteously long enough to overshadow his poor reputation and be appointed. But he should never be appointed as long as there is any question about his qualifications.

*63. Are the elders right to refuse to employ a regular preacher?*

Ans.—Yes, if they can not financially support one, or if they believe it best under a given circumstance. But if they refuse because of some hobby they are wrong. They are to see that preaching is done, whether they do it or employ someone else to do it.

*64. Do the elders have any authority over non-Christians who attend services?*

Ans.—Yes, as long as they are in the assembly. The elders must see that all things are decently and orderly in the worship, and if a non-member causes disturbance they have the right to correct him. They have no control over him beyond the assembly.

*65. Can a man whose wife is a member of a denomination be an elder?*

Ans.—No, his wife is not faithful to the word. A man who can not influence his wife to be a Christian would hardly be successful in directing the church in the way of truth.

THE END

# SCRIPTURE INDEX

## OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS	PAGE
2:18 .....	280
4:2 .....	71
8:4 .....	146
11:30 .....	147
13:7, 8 .....	71
16:1 .....	147
18:19 .....	142
19:29 .....	147
21:7 .....	147
46:7 .....	147
48:13, 14 .....	126
48:15 .....	71
<b>EXODUS</b>	
18 .....	205
23:28 .....	147
27:20 .....	28, 209
29:2 .....	28, 209
<b>LEVITICUS</b>	
10:9 .....	172
16:21 .....	126
22:18 .....	236
<b>NUMBERS</b>	
8:10 .....	126
12:9, 10 .....	45
16:21 .....	46
16:31 .....	46
<b>DEUTERONOMY</b>	
7:20 .....	147
25:5 .....	148
34:9 .....	126
<b>JOSHUA</b>	
24:12 .....	147

**I SAMUEL**

15:17 .....	46
15:23 .....	46
16:12, 13 .....	28, 209

**I KINGS**

17:12 .....	209
18 .....	230
18: 44, 45 .....	28

**PSALMS**

23 .....	202
23:1 .....	71
104:15 .....	28, 209
133: 1 .....	220

**PROVERBS**

13:20 .....	71
22:6 .....	150, 157
28:7 .....	71
29:3 .....	71
29:18 .....	161

**ISAIAH**

5:11 .....	171
44:28 .....	71
55:8 .....	81
63:11 .....	71

**JEREMIAH**

3:15 .....	71, 189
6:16 .....	147
10:21 .....	71
10:23 .....	81
17:16 .....	71
23:1-4 .....	71, 189, 200

**EZEKIEL**

33:7-9 .....	211
34 .....	200
34:5-10 .....	71
34:23-37 .....	71

**ZECHARIAH**

13:7 .....	71
------------	----

## NEW TESTAMENT

## MATTHEW

1:16	98, 99
1:19	99
2:6	72
5:9	197, 220
5:16	201
5:18	239
5:22	184
5:48	84
6:33	174, 175, 263
7:13, 14	1
7:20	27
7:29	13, 15
8:14	117
9:20	98
9:36	71
10:1-5	32
10:2	31
10:34	220
10:40	13, 16
12:34-37	165, 261, 279
13:33	98
15:2	66, 73
15:14	225
15:36	236
15:43	236
16:18	11, 13
16:19	31, 33, 244
16:21	66
17:5	13, 14, 23
18:7	220
18:16	152
18:18	31
18:20	152
19:28	33
20:25, 26	13, 16, 21, 118, 257
21:30	259
21:46	249
22:13	257, 258
22:24	148
23:11	257
24:6	239
24:20	239

24:34	239
24:45	240
24:51	239
25:3	229
25:21, 23	240
25:32	71
25:34-40	281
25:36	236
26:9	239
26:31	71
26:32	32
27:3-5	249
27:10	239
28:7	32
28:16	239
28:18	13, 14, 15, 44, 45
28:20	206

## MARK

1:4	239
3:5	184
3:14	237, 238
6:13	209, 229
9:35	257
10:2	99
10:23	287
10:35-45	21
10:43	257
12:19	151
12:45, 46	171
16:15, 16	245
16:16	138

## LUKE

1:15	171, 172
1:20	239
1:68	236
1:78	236
2:8	71
3:13	239
7:33, 34	171
7:54	239
10:1	239
10:34	28, 171, 209, 229
10:40	257

10:42	236
12:40	239
12:42	240
13:5	202
14:7	236
15:25	66, 73
17:7	70
20:43	240
21:28	239
22:22	238
22:29	239
22:66	65, 66
24:49	33

## JOHN

1:6	239
1:15	239
1:28	239
1:30	239
2:1-10	171
2:15	240
3:2	72
3:5	257
3:7	85
3:9	257
3:10	72
3:16	25, 123
4:1	245
4:16	99
4:17	98
5:2	236
6:70	236
8:32	168
9:6	240
10:2	71
10:3	72
10:4	193
10:11	72
10:12	71
10:14	72
10:15	72
10:16	71
12:26	257, 277
12:49, 50	13, 14
13:18	236

13:19	239
14:25, 26	13, 16
14:26	33
14:27	220
15:16	235, 237, 238
15:26, 27	32
16:11	244
16:12, 13	13, 16, 81
16:13	33, 244, 245
17:8	13, 16
17:18	13, 16, 240
18:36	13, 15
20:1-6	117
21:16	70, 72

## ACTS

1:1, 2	13, 16
1:2	32, 236
1:8	32
1:17	249, 257
1:20	70, 249
1:22	237, 238, 246
1:23	239, 240
1:24	32, 246
1:25	249, 257
2:1-4	33
2:13	171
2:30, 31	33
2:32	32
2:32-36	14
2:35	249
2:38, 39	149
2:39	157
3:22	23
4:1-4	249
4:3	27, 126
5:1	98
5:7	98
5:18	27, 126
5:29	116
6:1	257
6:1-4	271
6:1-6	252
6:3	151, 236, 240, 243, 246, 252, 268
6:5	236, 270



6:6	27, 126
6:13	239, 240
7:23	236
7:44	239
8:4, 5	270
8:5-7	126
8:12	98
8:14-18	23
8:17	126
8:17, 18	27
8:18	27, 126
8:20	123, 124
9:6	85
9:12	126
9:17	126
9:26	214
10:34	187
10:36	256
10:42	237, 238
11:27-30	58
11:29, 30	42, 48, 53
12:2	288
12:17	236
12:25	257
13:1-3	54, 249, 252
13:2	125
13:3	27, 29, 126
13:48	3, 237
14:23	12, 13, 17, 30, 42, 45, 54, 67, 73, 237, 238, 239, 244, 246, 251, 253
14:26-28	54
15:1-6	33
15:4	42
15:6	205, 206
15:7	117
15:14	236
15:40	236
16:2	125
16:4	237
16:4, 5	210
16:30	85, 153
16:34	153
17:12	98
17:26	239
17:30	136

17:31	237, 238, 239
20:13	239
20:17	42, 67, 71
20:24	257
20:25	69
20:27, 28	24
20:28	17, 36, 39, 45, 69, 70, 72, 73, 161, 167, 192, 200, 202, 244, 245, 294
20:28-31	72, 293
20:29, 30	24, 203, 204
20:30	26, 205
20:32	26, 193
20:33	92
20:33, 34	207
20:35	175, 207, 224
21:8	270
21:9	25
21:19	257
22:5	65, 66
22:10	239
23:1	264
26:9	264
28:8	27, 126
28:23	239

## ROMANS

1:1	256
1:5	156
2:28	33
3:23	188
5:1	146
5:15	98, 123
5:15, 16	122
6:12	188
6:23	123
7:2	98
7:2, 3	101
7:4	129
8:17	29, 157
9:6	33
9:8	157
9:21	240
10:3	269
10:13-15	210
10:17	90

11:13	257
11:29	124
12:1	187
12:4, 5	11, 13, 20, 31, 190, 255
12:6	122
12:8	47, 201, 215
12:10	225
12:18	197, 220, 221
13:1	3, 237
13:1, 2	221
13:4	257
13:6	258
13:7	225
13:13	171
14:19	220
15:8	257
16:1	257, 258, 274, 277
16:1, 2	213
16:16	145
16:17	202, 204
16:17, 18	293
16:26	146

## I CORINTHIANS

1:8	93, 97
1:12	266
1:21	245
1:27	10
1:27, 28	236
2:7	237
2:13	64, 138
3:2	36, 115
3:5	257
3:17	187
4:6	17, 40
5:1-5	223
5:11	171
6:10	171
7:1	102
7:2	99, 108, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134
7:3	98
7:7	123
7:9	134
7:10	98
7:14	150

7:17	237
7:21	256
7:25-35	135
7:26	123, 134
7:32-35	118, 136, 137
8:12	83
9:1-14	226, 227
9:5	117
9:7	71
9:9	225
9:14	237
10:11	45
11:1	115, 224
11:34	3
12:1-13	24, 25
12:9	122
12:10	126
12:12, 13	11
12:13	245
12:28	24, 48, 72, 122, 125
12:30	122
13:8-10	24
14:13	125
14:23	49
14:33	179, 220
14:34	280
14:34, 35	48
14:37	13, 16, 138
14:40	3, 201, 251
15:8	32
15:10	116
15:13	115
15:24-26	13, 15
15:27, 28	13, 14, 44
15:34	14
16:1, 2	59
16:3	253
16:10, 11	213
16:15	257

## II CORINTHIANS

3:6	257
4:1	257
5:7	90
5:20	32

6:3	257
6:4	257, 277
7:2	101
8:12	53
8:18, 19	253
8:19	238
8:23	253
9:13	257
10:12	192
11:2	129
11:5	115, 116, 117, 118
11:8	58, 63
11:15	258, 277
11:28	17, 31, 58, 116
12:11	116, 117, 118
13:5	192
13:11	221

## GALATIANS

1:2	11, 13
1:8, 9	33
1:10	251, 256
1:22	11, 13
2:9	288
2:11	27
2:16	146
3:16	148
3:19	237
3:28, 29	33, 256
4:5	157
4:10	145
4:27	99
4:28	157
5:15	261
5:19	160
5:19-21	180
5:21	171
5:22, 23	220, 268
6:10	165
6:15	33

## EPHESIANS

1:4	187
1:20-23	13, 15
1:21-23	11, 13, 14, 43

2:8	123
2:10	237
2:21	3
3:7	124, 125
3:10	11, 13
4:3	220
4:4	11
4:5	109, 152
4:7	124
4:11	48, 71, 72
4:11-13	24, 25
4:13	25
4:16	3
4:26	184
5:1	29
5:8	29
5:18	172, 268
5:21	219
5:22	98
5:22, 23	281
5:23	13, 15
5:23, 24	21, 221
5:24	11, 13, 219
5:28	98
6:1, 2	221
6:4	151, 266
6:6	256

## PHILIPPIANS

1:1	42, 69, 70, 73, 256, 257, 267, 277
1:5	58
1:22	236
4:7	220
4:15	63
4:15, 16	59

## COLOSSIANS

1:13	11
1:17, 18	13, 15
1:18	14, 44
1:22	93, 97
1:23	210
3:5	180
3:15	220
3:20	116

3:17	245
4:6	196
4:12	256

## I THESSALONIANS

3:2	257, 277
3:3	239
5:9	239
5:12	72, 206, 215, 216, 247
5:13	216, 219
5:17	193, 215, 221

## II THESSALONIANS

2:7	39
2:13	236
2:15	167
3:6	204, 223, 245

## I TIMOTHY

1:6	98
1:12	257
1:18	124
2:7	237, 238, 240, 249
2:9	280
2:12	280
2:9, 10	278
3:1	19, 90, 91, 249
3:1-7	86, 283
3:2	69, 70, 85, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 101, 108, 109, 111, 113, 114, 118, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 136, 138, 159, 160, 161, 163, 164, 165, 166, 179, 206
3:3	170, 172, 173, 175, 176, 177
3:4	140, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152
3:4, 5	192
3:5	155, 201, 204
3:6	180, 182
3:7	168
3:8	170, 257, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 286
3:8-11	263
3:10	48, 93, 97, 265, 266
3:10-13	19, 20
3:11	277, 278
3:12	99, 118, 257, 266, 267, 274
3:13	255, 258

3:15	11, 63
4:1	39
4:6	257, 277
4:12	233
4:13	27
4:14	27, 28, 29, 42, 65, 66, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128, 249
5:1	222
5:1, 2	66, 67, 73
5:4	149, 151
5:7	93, 97
5:8	196
5:9	111
5:9, 10	155
5:10	151
5:13	279
5:14	135
5:17	22, 24, 34, 42, 45, 50, 72, 201, 204
5:17, 18	225, 226
5:18	290
5:19	223
5:21	2, 187, 251
5:22	27, 249
5:23	171, 172
6:1	225, 256
6:3	167
6:10	175, 179
6:14	93, 97
6:17	174

## II TIMOTHY

1:6	27, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128 239, 240, 249
1:11	167
1:13	2, 26, 56, 222
2:2	240
2:7	26, 133
2:15	167, 206, 256
2:24	26
3:14, 15	3, 17, 33, 85
3:16, 17	39
4:6	292
4:10	257
4:11	238
4:23	



## TITUS

1:1	256
1:5	3, 12, 13, 17, 42, 237, 239, 240, 251, 253
1:5-9	86, 283
1:6	90, 93, 94, 99, 108, 114, 118, 140, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153
1:7	67, 69, 70, 85, 170, 172, 173, 183, 184, 246
1:8	160, 161, 162, 163, 165, 185, 186, 187
1:9	24, 39, 50, 72, 166, 167, 193, 201, 206
1:11	204
1:15	249
2:2-6	233
2:3	280
2:3, 4	167, 281
2:4	35, 280
2:5	281
2:6	280
2:9	256
2:15	37, 56
3:2	177
3:9	178
3:10, 11	204
3:15	238

## HEBREWS

1:1, 2	13, 14, 81
1:2	239
1:13	240
1:14	257
3:2	239, 240
4:3	239
4:7	238
5:1	237
5:4	225, 252
5:12	73
5:12-14	181
5:17	24
6:4	124
8:3	237
8:4	5
8:5	5, 74
9:6	237
9:27	150, 239
10:13	240

11:16	92
11:25	236
12:14	187
13:2	165
13:4	135
13:5	179
13:7	24, 48, 50, 72, 195, 201, 204, 224
13:17	20, 22, 45, 48, 50, 72 161, 201, 204, 210, 211, 217, 221, 224, 247
13:20	71, 72
13:24	72, 216, 224

## JAMES

1:1	256
1:5	268
1:17	124
1:19	184, 261
1:25	46, 146
1:27	236
2:10	40, 81, 255
3:2	261
3:5	279
3:16	178
4:7	219
4:12	14, 46, 201, 242
4:17	188
5:14	42, 207, 208, 228, 229
5:14, 15	28
5:15	229
5:17, 18	28

## I PETER

1:1	31
2:8	239
2:9	188
2:13	219
2:25	67, 70, 71, 72
3:5	73
3:7	98
3:10	279
4:9	165
4:11	52, 63, 64, 124
5:1	288
5:1-3	201, 266

5:2	17, 20, 31, 42, 45, 52, 53, 59, 60, 67, 68, 72, 115, 173, 175, 187, 202, 204, 233
5:2, 3	224
5:3	48, 193, 283
5:4	128
5:5	219
5:9	197

## II PETER

1:1	256
1:3	3, 33, 268
1:6	163, 175
2:10	183

## I JOHN

1:7	96
2:1	29
3:14	185
4:1	30, 204

## II JOHN

1	288
9	201

## III JOHN

1	288
---	-----

## JUDE

3	33, 177, 263, 264
4	237
12	71
17	33

## REVELATION

2:19	257
2:27	71, 72
4:10	67, 73
12:5	71
13:14	240
15:3	256
19:15	71, 72
21:2	99





