

## Lesson 4

March 02, 2023

### Qualifications of Elders

The last lesson, we learned what kinds of Elders there are and how they differ from one another.

We also learned a little background about what was being tasked to Titus by the Apostle Paul.

We learned the purpose of keeping Titus on in Crete and the challenges for him staying there.

Paul had given Titus these instructions, as he had with Timothy, but especially in the challenge of dealing with the Cretan churches. The challenge of finding qualified men to fill the Pastoral role of the newly founded churches was to be handled by Titus. Of course, these men would have been given the gift of Pastor-teacher by God.

*So, what qualifications are the elders to have?*

Titus 1:6 namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

**Above Reproach** - The dictionary defines reproach as "shame or disgrace or that which brings rebuke or censure upon a person." The Bible speaks of being "above reproach" or "blameless" as one of the distinctive marks of those who aspire to the office of elder within the church. Their work for the church, as well as their interactions with others, are to be of such moral quality that they do not bring shame or in any way disgrace the body of Christ or the name of Jesus. This holds true not only within the church but outside it as well.

Above reproach, however, does not mean "without sin." No Christian lives an entirely sinless life, nor will we until we reach the glorified state in heaven. Above reproach means that the Pastor's life is free from sinful habits or behaviors that would impede his setting the highest Christian standard and model for the church to emulate.

But what happens if you fall beyond reproach or lose your reputation? How do you get back to above reproach or regain our reputation?

If this is a sin against someone:

1. Pray to God for help.

2. 1 John 1:9 Acknowledge the sin to God. He will immediately forgive you for the sin.

3. You may ask the person you offended to forgive you.

They may or may not forgive you but if they don't, the problem becomes theirs as you have done all you can.

By not forgiving you, this becomes a sin for them.

Sometimes a Pastor may lose his reputation to those who disagree with God's word. The Presbuteros has to make decisions that are right before God, for example when he stands against tyrannical government and we are being told to comply. If it is not constitutional or abusive, we are not to comply. This might cause a Pastor to lose his reputation. We are to stand for righteousness and not comply with evil.

Heb. 13:7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct (leaders lead by example), imitate their faith. (written to those being lead)

Heb. 13:11-12 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12) so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

1 Pet 5:3 and not as lording it over those under your care, but being examples for the flock

Similarly, the Pastor must not give cause for those outside the church to impugn its reputation. Being above reproach means that no one can honestly bring a charge or accusation against him.

Acts 25:7-27

7) After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove, 8) while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

9) But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these

charges?" 10) But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. 11) "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar." 12) Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go." 13) Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. 14) While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix;

15) and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. 16) "I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an

opportunity to make his defense against the charges. 17) "So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me. 18) "When the accusers stood up, they began bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, 19) but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. 20) "Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters. 21) "But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar."

22) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

23) So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and

the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24) Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.

25) "But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.

26) "Yet I (**Festus**) have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore, I have brought him before you all and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

27) "For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."

Paul is permitted to plead his case. He explains that he had lived his whole life as a Pharisee. He testified how he had punished and killed Christians before his experience on the Damascus road. He said he had been hostile toward Jesus of Nazareth. After Christ

confronted him on the Damascus road, Paul said he had become a minister of God and been given a purpose to open the eyes of the Jew and Gentile alike, so they may receive forgiveness of sins and a promise of inheritance by those who had been sanctified in Christ.

Acts 26:30-32 The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,

31) and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment."

32) And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

1 Pet 3:16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

The church's Pastor must be a man whose character is unimpeachable, who are esteemed highly within their community. Such men are known for their wholesome



life and untarnished integrity. Pastors are to be men of good character and reputation. Though Paul, in his letters to Timothy and Titus, was addressing the distinguishing characteristics of those who desired to be church leaders, it certainly did not diminish the need for all Christians to aspire to the same qualities. Being above reproach should be an ongoing aim of all believers.

Col. 3:7-10 and in them (**your sins**) you also once walked, when you were living in them (**your sins**). 8) But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9) Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside (**past tense**) the old self with its evil practices, 10) and have put on the new self (**law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus**) who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.

**Husband of one wife** - This condemned polygamy which was rampant at the time. It referred to a one man, one woman, marriage at a time. This verse is not referring to a divorced man. Divorce in the Bible is named in

Hebrew and Greek. The words are כְּרִיתוּת (kerithuth) and ἀποστάσιον (apostasion), and are both nouns. Both words translate as "certificate of divorce." Our verse refers to a single man/single woman marriage. Neither of the terms of divorce mentioned above are words used in Titus 1:6.

**having children who believe (faithful or trustworthy) -**  
Who are trustworthy, who have been taught the word of God and believed.

**Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.**

**not accused of dissipation or rebellion -**

**Dissipation** - Deceptive desires leading to a lifestyle without discipline resulting in the dizzy hangovers of drunkenness.

The Bible speaks against living a life without God, whereas the Greeks used the term to mean a wasteful or luxurious life. The Bible teaches believers to avoid both lifestyles.

**Rebellious** - The child of a Pastor should not be rebelling against authority or living their lives like an unbeliever.

We all go through a period of time when we leave home and do what we want, defying everything we've been taught, but this requirement means that the kids have been properly taught.

Once the kids move out on their own, their spiritual life falls on them, not the parents.

**Titus 1:7 For the overseer (ἐπίσκοπος) "Episcopos" (Pastor-Teacher) must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,**

**Above reproach as God's steward** - Again, being blameless, an overseer is a protector of the flock and of the truths of God's word. Calling out false and silly teachings. Refuting false doctrine.

**Steward** - manager of a household, or a flock.

Two Greek words describe a steward; "oikos" which means "house," and "nomos" which means "law."

A steward is one who has to do with God's house laws. We might say he is a house-ruler of God. A good manager of the things God puts under his authority.

**Self willed** - To do something arbitrarily without divine permission; to act on one's own decision rather than considering the needs of others and the will of God. To be determined to base your actions on your own decisions. (meaning to be stubborn or arrogant) This is a characteristic of a **worldly man**. This world view makes us think we have control over our environment. Only God knows the future we will face. A foolish man plans his future apart from God. A wise man trusts God in everything, releasing control to God for all things.

Apart from God, what can WE really control? If you are honest in answering that question, your answer will be "**nothing**". What we do have control over is our volition. God allows us to respond or react to Him as well as the circumstances of life.

**Quick tempered** - Pastors should be slow to anger, having a sound mind when dealing with others and circumstances they can't control.

**Proverbs 29:11** A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.

**Not addicted to wine** - A Pastor should not be a drunkard. (alcoholic) He should not go to the bottle to drown out his problems or rely on alcohol to get him through the tough times. Drinking is not a sin, but drunkenness is.

For a Pastor, others look at him in a different way. So Pastors should refrain from drinking in certain circumstances so that unbelievers or weak believers will not wrongly judge him.

**Pugnacious** - having a quarrelsome or combative nature, wanting to start an argument or fight, or expressing an argument or opinion very forcefully.

**This is not the same as being dogmatic or confident in what you are teaching.**

**Fond of sordid gain** - shamelessly greedy, excessively acquisitive especially in seeking to hoard riches, a seeker of gain in disgraceful ways.

**1 Tim 6:10 For the "love of money" is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

Titus 1:8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

**Hospitable** - 1 Peter 4:9 says we are to show hospitality to one another without grumbling. If we grumble or complain while giving food or lodging to someone, we have not truly shown biblical hospitality. This is because hospitality is the gracious and welcome reception of the stranger.

**Loving what is good** - A man's heart is revealed by what he loves. Whatever a man loves becomes his passion, the thing to which he ascribes great value, from which he derives great pleasure, and for which he will labor long and hard. Such will dominate his thoughts and motivations and will determine his priorities.

**Sensible** - wisely keeping self-control over one's passions and desires. A Pastor should use divine view in making decisions. It's common sense.

**Just** - upright (**right or fair**) treatment toward other people, treating others fairly.

**Devout** - devotion to God, sincerity, earnest, having or showing deep religious feeling or commitment.

Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996).devout, pious, pleasing to God, holy.

**Self-controlled** - having control over one's emotions, impulses, or having desires under control, self-controlled, disciplined.

**(The Pastor should not be ruled by emotions)**

**Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**

Remember that men in Paul's day wrote the word of God by divine inspiration. People today in many churches and denominations have been taught false doctrine from the start. They need to be brought to a true knowledge of God's word and renounce the false doctrines they have received. Yet in that day, what had been taught by God's apostles was what was correct, and those who were not holding fast to it were those who were being led astray. Of course, an overseer needs to be one who holds fast to the truth. We always desire leaders who teach the truth as we

understand it. God goes on to explain why this is important. A leader needs to hold fast to the truth so he can use sound doctrine (or teaching) to exhort the believers and convict those who contradict. There are many like this today. They are always ready to question and contradict any truth that anyone will bring forward. To them, any truth that they have not heard before or that is not taught by one of their favorite teachers is something that they simply cannot accept. No matter how much Biblical evidence one might present, they seem to be dead-set on opposing anything they do not like, and refuse to change their minds simply because they have taken a stand and will not back down from it. Such people need to be convicted that their contrary spirit keeps them from learning the truth. Yet it is necessary that one knows sound doctrine in order to oppose them, lest they lead others astray by their contradictions. Thus knowledge of the faithful word is crucial to a leader.

By Precepts author - Nathan C. Johnson

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