

June 28, 2008

Titus 1:7-8

Alright good morning. I'm glad you are back today – grab your bibles and let's return to Titus chapter 1. If you've been here the past couple of weeks you'll know that in the process of letting God lay out his blueprint for establishing his churches here in the letter of Titus, we are in the midst of learning the qualification for those who lead his church. Whether they are called elders or pastors or overseers in Scripture, all those words are referring to the same office – the same role or person or actually people, if you will. But we've learned quickly that not everyone can be an elder or pastor or overseer. God has laid out qualifications here in Titus as well as in 1 Timothy chapter 3 for this office and as we saw two weeks ago, because an elder – because a pastor – is meant to be a model of spiritual virtue, those qualifications must be evidenced in his life before he is chosen to serve as one. So what must the church be looking for? That's what God is showing us.

In the kind of text we are looking at this morning – one where there is basically a list of character and lifestyle qualities – it is easy to feel like we are back in a vocabulary class as we seek to define and understand these words and we all know how much we loved vocabulary in school. And yet this is really important.

We've seen more than once that **there is more to life in Christ than just KNOWLEDGE but there is not spiritual growth without it.** Unless we know what God requires, how will we know where to aim our own lives? **How can you know who to choose as elders,** as pastors – how can you know if they fit the qualifications **if you don't know and understand what to LOOK for?**

And as we look for those qualifications we have learned and have to know that **the only way anyone is qualified to be an elder is by the GRACE of God.**

Now as we get into the text today, let me remind you that we've talked before about the deal when it comes to the Greek in God's Word. These letters in the New Testament were originally written in Greek – what we hold are translations from that Greek into English. And the primary reason that we spend time together looking at what the Greek words behind the English mean is that sometimes the grammar or use of a Greek word really brings understanding that is missed in the simple English translation. The secondary reason is less scholarly. The truth is it makes us slow down. When we read these verses in English, our mind tells us we know the words so we just fly right through without really thinking about what the words mean. So stopping to talk about the Greek word behind them makes us deal with what God wrote. Many times the same thing could be accomplished if we would just sit down with the English and purposefully think about what it says. So today we'll do some of both – but get ready, there's a lot of it. So finally – let's get started – **Titus chapter 1 verses 7-8.**

Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-- not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

Remember first that this change from elder in verse 5 to overseer in verse 7 is not a different person or office – still talking about the same guys. But right off the bat we have an example of where the translation in the NIV misses something big in the original.

The word '**entrusted**' **there literally means 'a STEWARD.'** The word is oikonomon which is two words combined – the word for law and the word for house. The one who makes the law for the house: a steward who manages the house.

Paul is saying that **the church is a household – it is God's HOUSEHOLD** – He owns it – the children are His children, but the elder, pastor, **overseer's job is to manage it for Him** – all the resources, all the people and their giftedness, feeding the proper diet of truth, correcting and disciplining them, caring for and loving them. He says you are to manage the household of God. Which is why what we saw last week back in **verse 5 of 1 Timothy 3** it made sense for Paul to write

about elders *“If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?”*

This is a serious job. The church does not belong to the pastor. **Acts 20:28** says it belongs to Christ – that he bought it with his own blood. And **Hebrews 13:17** says we will give an account to God for how we watch over His family. So the elder is clearly God’s servant, he is to do God’s work, and he is ultimately accountable to God for his performance. Which is why again – **verse 7 repeats the overarching qualification we saw in verse 5 – the elder must be blameless – and everything else we are going to see today basically DEFINES and connects to it.** So let’s get going.

There are 5 negative and 6 positive qualifications. The first one is he must not be **“over-bearing.”** It means **SELF-willed**, self-loving, arrogant, **so consumed with your own authority that you disregard others.** Which you’d think – well of course not – that guy would make a terrible pastor. But men who fail in this qualification are in leadership in churches all over. In fact I’m going on a pretty serious backpacking trip in July with my brother in law and some of his friends who I don’t know. I’m the newbie to the group – and just so you know, I’m going to die on this trip. But a couple weeks ago I was introduced to the group via email and when one of the guys saw that my email had the words “pastor brett” in them, he started asking questions and the first thing he said was: “I assume Brett is a pastor of some sort. Will he be the straight laced, hell fire and brimstone, stuffy, “You’re all going to hell cause you don’t believe exactly like I do” type or” what?

And my response was “Of course – is there any other type?”

No just kidding. But obviously that mindset towards pastors is out there. In fact this quality is so important to understand because the opposite is the first thing the world looks for – a strong, aggressive, natural leader – which very often is the opposite of the person who ought to lead effectively in the church. Not that he shouldn’t be strong and have convictions, but too often a man is chosen because of his strong natural leadership ability and what drives him is not concern for God and truth but a sense of ego fulfillment – a need to be in charge. And when things don’t go his way, it is frustrating for him and everyone else. So someone dominated by self is not fit for this task. Jesus laid it out in **Matthew 20:25-27** – you can turn there if you’d like – it will be on the screen where it says:

“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave.”

So the Christian leader – **the elder** should not be self willed – **should be sensitive to use his authority in a way that truly promotes GOD’S work and not any personal agenda.**

Now go back to Titus chapter 1 with me. Next is a word that goes along with it – **“not quick-tempered.”** It comes from the word for anger and it referring to a smoldering kind of anger that **RESIDES under the surface.** Now, everyone is going to lose it now and then a little bit – get upset about something. That can happen. But this is talking about a person that has that temper always under the surface and at given points it just erupts. It is this constant and lasting nurtured hostility maintained in the heart.

And **James 1:20** says that kind of anger doesn’t bring about the righteousness of God. An elder has to be a man who can take a ‘no’ – who can let another man’s decision pre-empt his – who can turn things over to other people who might do things that aren’t how he would do it and he can deal with that with joy and gratitude and patience. Here’s how John Macarthur put it: **“the elder is a man who can allow people around him to fail until they learn to succeed because he doesn’t tie his EGO up in everything they do.”**

Next we go to a phrase that says an elder must be a man **“who is not given to drunkenness.”** The word in Greek is another combination of two words – the word for wine and the word for alongside. **Not being ALONGSIDE wine.** Now what does he mean by that?

The intent here is about **a person who has some kind of addiction or some kind of need to indulge himself in this to some degree of INCAPACITATION.** He's not just quenching his thirst. He is talking about how most wine or other alcohol is used today – to one degree or another to make you feel different. He is saying that anyone who is a spiritual leader can't be involved in this kind of behavior – any kind of addiction – of being alongside the wine – the implication is that you're hanging around it not because you are thirsty but it is a part of your life and has an impact on your thinking.

Paul is not laying out a policy for us to interpret about all use of fermented liquids – he is communicating a qualification for spiritual leadership. And you can elevate it more by going to **Leviticus 10:9** where God instructs Aaron and all the high priests to stay away from any alcoholic beverage and then to **Proverbs 31:4-5** where we are told that alcoholic beverages were not for anyone who is a king or prince or a ruler. Basically anyone who is in a position where they are making significant decisions that have implications for a wide range of people – you don't want them operating without full comprehension. So you avoid choosing elders who can't avoid that which intoxicates them.

Then you move to **“not violent.”** The word here in Greek is only used here and in 1 Timothy and has **the idea of someone who HITS you.** A giver of blows if you will. That was obviously how conflict was solved in ancient times, not so much today – we are more subtle in our vengeance usually. But – to quote MacArthur again and this is just funny – “anybody who goes around punching people doesn't belong in spiritual ministry, obviously.”

But **the spirit in this word is that of just LASHING out.** And certainly it would not be incorrect to understand this as not only being the fist, but the spirit of the pugnacious person. Sometimes words hit harder than flesh. **An elder is to RESOLVE conflict peacefully, biblically in a godly gentle and humble manner even when communicated in strength.**

The last of the five negatives is **“not pursuing dishonest gain.”** It comes again from two Greek words – the word for shameful and the word for gain – **someone who is after personal gain SHAMEFULLY.** That is to say he lacks integrity – **he doesn't care how he amasses material things.**

This has nothing to do with paying or not paying elders, pastors, overseers. God addresses that elsewhere and even says in many cases they should be, but they don't do it for money. They can be remunerated, but it isn't because they want the money. Where Titus was in Crete and most other places Paul battled this problem, there were false teachers who absolutely did for the money. They sought dishonest gain.

Paul addresses this well in **1 Timothy 6:9-11.** Listen to that or you can turn a few pages to the left in your Bible and read it with me.

“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

But you, man of God, flee from all this.”

“Man of God” there in that context is a technical term for a pastor or elder in the church – someone who preaches God's Word. If you are one of those, flee the love of money. The man who is in spiritual leadership is not to be greedy or indulgent because he can be so easily corrupted. He handles God's money. If you've got someone who is selfish and greedy and you put him in charge of the money in the church, you've got a volatile situation.

Alright, now we turn to the positive side – and these are a little easier to zip through and understand. Verse 8 says **“Rather he must be hospitable.”**

Comes from two words again in Greek – the word for love and the word for stranger – **to LOVE STRANGERS is what it means.** It is used all through the New Testament as a typical Christian quality. And its general and basic meaning is **the idea of opening your life and resources to people you don't know.** That's basically it. Hospitality is not ‘having your friends over

for dinner.’ That’s not hospitality in a biblical sense here. It’s nice to do that and Nicole and I are always open for a good meal – but like Jesus talked about in Luke 14, when you have a dinner, don’t invite your friends, invite people you don’t know – people who may not be able to return the favor so to speak.

That attitude should characterize this kind of man. He is open and giving and welcoming to those in need. So this is pretty much the opposite of the last one – of pursuing dishonest gain. Instead he sees whatever he has a means to meet the needs of those he doesn’t even know.

Secondly – on the positive side – we have that he is to be characterized as “**one who loves what is good.**”

That’s a pretty simple thing. Take a look at his life – what does he surround himself with – what does he love to do – who does he call ‘friends’ – what is precious to him? A good explanation of this would come from **Philippians 4:8**:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.”

He should be a love of all such things. **Devoted to what is RIGHT – to praiseworthy people – to praiseworthy ACTIONS – he responds to what is excellent.**

Third in the NIV is the English word “**self-controlled**” but how we understand self-controlled fits more with the last of the qualifications than here. The New American Standard translation has a better word here – it uses “**sensible.**” The word in Greek is a combination of the words that mean ‘mind’ and ‘save’ – that he has literally ‘saving thoughts.’ That he is right-minded. That he is in control of his mind and his thoughts are appropriately redeemed.

In 1 Timothy the same word is translated in the NAS as **PRUDENT** and that’s what it communicates – that **his mind is not caught up in the trivial and frivolous – instead he is careful in judgment, thoughtful, wise – he has a disciplined WISDOM.**

The next characteristic is simply “**upright**” or just – from the New Testament word for ‘righteous.’ This describes a life of conduct that meets God’s standard. His life is approved by God, if you will. So on that level this quality kind of covers everything else, but at its core it means **he is known as a man whom God approves because he lives according to DIVINE STANDARDS** – that’s why the translation “upright” – he judges and therefore acts according to what God says is right.

The next to last description is the word “**holy.**” Now this is not the normal word used in Greek for holy – which is *hagios* – but this is *hosios* – which also means holy in that it means **pure, unpolluted, free from any STAIN of SIN. So we are back to the idea of being blameless or above reproach again.** In every area of life – everywhere you look – their life is exemplary.

You’re probably thinking what? Are there people like this? There aren’t *any* people who when you look closely at their lives you don’t find sin. True – no one is free from sin but in this case it is sin that is committed, sin that is confessed, sin that is dealt with and sin that doesn’t bring reproach and disqualify him as a model. Yes we can live like that by God’s grace and mercy and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then finally, you have the word I referred to earlier. The NIV uses “**disciplined.**” And this is the one that has the idea of **self-controlled** in it – in fact that is the word used in the NAS. It means literally **RESTRAINED.** He is a man who is in control of his life.

You know we talk a lot about accountability. And there is no question we need friends and partners and co-workers who rub up against us and help us walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. But what this word is getting to is **that if a man can’t control his life in righteousness and holiness when he is all ALONE and by himself, he doesn’t qualify to be an elder.** Again, to quote from MacArthur on this one: “If he is the kind of person that has to have a committee walking around

hanging on his clothes, he doesn't belong in the pastorate. If the man is controlled from the outside, he is unqualified if he's not controlled from the inside."

What he's saying is that if there isn't a commitment to godliness on the inside that holds my life in check, then it is fruitless to try and control me from the outside. If it isn't in his heart to be holy, it doesn't matter what you do on the outside of the man, it isn't going to keep him from failing. The character comes from the inside – the discipline.

Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-- not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

Now maybe having dealt with all these qualifications you are thinking the typical objection that comes up here. No one is able to fulfill all those. And since no one can, we need to back off of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and be realistic. Since no one can fulfill them then we are free – not to really ignore them – but to just get the best guys we can, right?

No. The qualifications are there to qualify. And to quote Pastor Terry Johnson, "**No one is able perfectly to fulfill the qualification except Jesus. We understand this. Still, there are those officers who fulfill them, though they do so imperfectly. We insist that there is a difference between fulfilling the qualifications imperfectly and not fulfilling them at all. There is a difference and we are able to recognize that difference and we are able to speak meaningfully of that difference.**"

So yes the standards are high for the general character of an elder here. Why? Because that's how God wants you to live. You're getting that right?

The standards for an elder, pastor, overseer are high because that is how God wants YOU to live.

God wants you to not be overbearing

- to not be quick-tempered or given to drunkenness
- to not be violent or to pursue dishonest gain.
- God wants you to be hospitable
- to love what is good
- to be self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

That's why God wants your leaders – His under-shepherds – to be that way because how are you going to get to that point if you don't have somebody else to follow.

So once again – **it isn't that elders are to be different than everybody else, they just have to be what everybody else is supposed to be.** That's what leadership is.

So again – in application today – you are used to this one by now.

1) You need to know what God EXPECTS in order to follow his plan as his church when you choose your leaders.

But personally – **2) what you EXPECT of your leaders, are you seeking to follow yourself?** How well do these 11 characteristics describe you? Which is your strongest – which is your weakest – what are you doing about it?

And finally – Men – God's churches need you. They need you to be these kind of men. But so do your homes. So do your businesses. So do your schools and your teams and your friendships and your world in general.

Just make it real practical today. **3) Men -If Fairway were nominating elders today, would you be QUALIFIED?**

If Fairway does in the future, what will you do NOW to be qualified then?

Let's pray.