

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?

Wayne Coats

Do you believe in the axiom that *"The end justifies the means?"* There are many people in the religious world who would subscribe to that faulty concept without one word of objection. Almighty God has never permitted mankind to set aside, corrupt, substitute or pervert the true way of doing His will by substituting some other way. This prohibition is dealt with in the statement of our Lord when he said, *"But in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrine the commandments of men"* (Matt. 15:9). Jesus is saying, "you do not have the right to change, alter or circumvent what I have declared to be my will and way."

We surely understand what Jesus meant by the word "vain." So much of the work and worship of proud man is vain, empty, useless and void of worth. How desperately we need to study the Bible lest we be found among the multitudes who are condemned because of their vanity.

Mankind can be obsessed and overwhelmed with the spirit of vain-glory. The Bible condemns such an attitude. Every creed, cult, sect and denomination on earth is the result of men assuming to speak and act in the place of Jehovah God.

The history of mankind is woven with so many cases where foolish people decided that the end justified the means. If the end results were great and good, then whatever means were necessary to augment or bring about the good were deemed to be acceptable. Such thinking is downright silly, prepos-

terous and absurd.

We believe Jehovah wanted Cain and Abel to worship Him. Abel utilized the proper means prescribed by the Lord (Heb. 11:4). Did Cain not worship? He did, but his worship was not acceptable. Are we so demented as not to know why Cain was rejected? Did the end justify whatever means popped into the head of Cain?

One of the most preposterous and ungodly activities ever promulgated by proud and vain man is recorded in I Kings 12:26-33. Jeroboam made two calves of gold and set one up in Bethel and the other in Dan. The rightful place to worship God was in Jerusalem. Jeroboam decided to change matters. He wanted the people to worship, but he desired them to accept his way. Should the people have attempted to worship? Indeed so! They had no authority however, to follow after the changes which Jeroboam made. The ultimate end was worship. The evil means were whatever the wicked Jeroboam wanted. The foolish people followed their great change agent. How typical! It matters not how putrid and ungodly a plan and practice might be, gullible people will swallow the plan and chatter like a cage of monkeys as they say, "look at all the good that is being done."

The Israelites were in desperate need of water. God told Moses to, *"speak to the rock"* (Num. 20:8). Moses desperately desired water for the complaining people. He said, *"must we bring water for you out of this rock"* (v.10)? God was displeased

with Moses. The *end* result was to get water. The means was given by Jehovah, but Moses circumvented what Jehovah said. How many millions are doing the same as Moses?

The book of Malachi presents a number of situations wherein the people decided to change the plan, pattern and purposes of Jehovah. We might be able to learn some much needed lessons if we would study the Bible.

We believe in the God who is all-wise and all-powerful. When God purposed the church of Christ, He was not deficient nor limited in His wisdom to purpose, plan and perfect the church to be sufficient for mankind, even to the end of time, *"...throughout all ages, world without end"* (Eph. 3:21). Some modern infidels go so far as to question the perfection of the church as purchased by Christ. Brother F. D. Srygley said such complaints and questionings were "pure infidelity."

Back in 1849, as the result of old D. S. Burnett working so hard to set up a system similar to that which he had left in the Baptist Church, the Missionary Society was started to do the work which God had ordained for the church to do. Division was the result. Fraud, greed, graft, theft and every evil work resulted from the establishment of the man-made society. A gang of reprobates to the truth decided that the end justified the means.

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END Justify MEANS?...



Editorial...

BLESSINGS OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFE

Garland M. Robinson

James 1:17 reads, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”* All our blessings come from God. We cannot attribute anything to ourselves. It is not of our own accomplishment that we have what we have. Those who think otherwise are foolish indeed!

The blessings and rewards of a righteous life — a faithful life with the Lord — is rich indeed.

As a righteous servant of the Lord, we do not fear the “powers that be” in civil government. Since we “live unto the Lord” (Rom. 14:8), we abide by the laws of the land — that is, unless they conflict with God’s laws — then we obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). We don’t have to run from the law because we’ve stolen someone’s property (Eph. 4:28). We don’t have to be afraid of the IRS because we’ve cheated on our taxes (Rom. 13:6-7). We don’t fear the hatred and malice of another human being because we’ve committed adultery with their wife or husband (I Cor. 6:18; Rom. 13:9).

As a righteous servant of the Lord, we do not fear contracting lung, throat or mouth cancer because we puffed on tobacco or chewed on its leaves. We don’t fear getting aids because of acts of sodomy. We’re not concerned about contracting hepatitis or having deformed children because we’re shared dirty needles of drug users. It never enters our mind of getting drunk and killing someone on the highway because we love the taste of alcohol. A life of righteousness is far removed from all these things. They pose no threat or danger to our lives.

Sleeping with a clear conscience is a blessing. Can you imagine how many people go to bed at night in fear and anguish? They are in continuous turmoil and misery. They are constantly reminded that their

ungodly life may catch up with them and they will be found out and have to pay the price. This is not the case with Christians. We sleep good at night. We are at peace with ourselves and all men. We delight in the joy that is unspeakable.

Being a righteous servant of the Lord brings the confidence and peace that can only come from the Lord. We have no fear of what men may do to us because they cannot harm our soul. Jesus said, *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt. 10:28). The writer of Hebrews declared that if the Lord is our helper, then we should not fear what men can do to us (13:6). Jesus told the church at Smyrna, *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). Paul told the church at Philippi, *“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God”* (Phil. 1:28). He writes the church at Rome saying, *“If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors*

through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31-29).

As a righteous servant of the Lord, our roots sink deep in the love of the Lord, we have the peace that passeth all understanding which shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Oh, what a blessing to be at peace with the Lord!

Being a righteous servant of the Lord brings upon us all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). These are the most precious because they are eternal. No matter what happens to us in this life physically, a faithful Christian enjoys showers of spiritual blessings.

The forgiveness of our sins is one such blessing. When Jesus shed his blood on the cross, it was for all humanity. The Hebrew writer recorded, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Heb. 2:9; cf. Rom. 8:32; II Cor. 5:14-15). Jesus himself said, *“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”* (Matt. 26:28).

Having the remission of sins means we do not have to pay the penalty for our sins. Eternal separation from God is the price to be paid. But, Jesus redeems those who obey him. To the church at Ephesus Paul wrote, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

An eternal home in heaven is a reward that is beyond comprehension. Our loving heavenly Father so richly grants us the ability to be there with him for ever more. *“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (I Peter 1:11).

As a righteous servant of the Lord, our design is to **praise God**. In the Psalms we read: *“Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all*

ye the seed of Israel” (22:23). “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (100:4). “Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD” (135:1). “Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness” (Psalm 150:1-2). Hebrews 13:15 tells us, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

As a righteous servant of the Lord, our design is to bring **glory to God**. At the birth of Jesus, a multitude of the heavenly host was found praising God “...saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,*

good will toward men” (Luke 2:13-14). Only one of the ten lepers that were healed turned back to glorify God (Luke 17:18). Romans 4:20 tells us a strong faith brings glory to God.

We should be aware that our whole life should bring glory to God. “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31). If we don’t do that now in this life, one day we will. But then it will be too late. Philippians 2:11 tells us that “...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Jude writes, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).*

We bring glory to God in the church. “*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end” (Eph. 3:21). This is not done in institutions of human origin. We do not bring glory to God in fraternal organizations or government agencies. Some of these organizations do good works in the community, but that is not where God receives the glory. The church of Christ does its own work so that God receives the glory, not some super organization that man has conceived.*

As Christians, we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. We live lives of righteousness which bring forth fruit in our lives.

Glory, glory, glory! Praise be unto our God. He is the God of all gods — of those who call themselves gods, but are not god.

END Justify MEANS?...

(Continued from page 25)

Alexander Campbell had witnessed the many social efforts which had been tacked on to the denominations and for some years he lifted his pen in opposition to such things. The clarion call of Campbell was to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.” The constant plea of Campbell was to restore “...the ancient order of things.”

Campbell knew there was no such thing as a missionary society back during the first century. He reasoned that the church was all-sufficient for all time to do the work God wanted to be done.

In the year 1823, Campbell wrote the preface to “The Christian Baptist,” a paper which Campbell would publish for some years. It is significant to read some of the statements of the editor which we will present. In speaking of the early church, Campbell declared:

“The churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, education societies, nor did they dream of organizing such in the world.”

“They dare not transfer to a missionary society or Bible society, or education

society, a cent or a prayer, lest in doing so they should rob the church of its glory and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God. In their church capacity alone, they moved. The church they considered ‘the pillar and ground of the truth.’ They viewed it as the temple of the Holy Spirit, as the house of the living God. They considered if they did all they could do in this capacity, they have nothing left for any other object of a religious nature.”

“The New Testament teaches us that the association called the church of Jesus Christ is in *propria forma*’ the only institution of God left on earth to illuminate and reform the world...when spiritual men, i.e. men having spiritual gifts, or as termed, miraculous gifts were withdrawn, this institution was left on earth as the grand scheme of Heaven, to enlighten and reform the world.”

“With regard to Bible societies, they are the most specious and plausible of all the institutions of this age. No man who loves the Bible can refrain from rejoicing at

its increasing circulation. But every Christian who understands the nature and design, the excellence and glory of the institution called the Church of Jesus Christ will lament to see its glory transferred to a human corporation. The church is robbed of its character by every institution merely human, that would ape its excellence and substitute itself in its place.”

“The church of the living God is thus independent of all theological schools and colleges for its existence, enlargement, comfort, and perfection; for it is itself put in possession of all the means of education and accomplishments, if these means be wisely used.”

“An individual church or congregation of Christ’s disciples is the only ecclesiastical body recognized in the New Testament. Such a society is the highest court of Christ on earth.”

From the preceding statements, we can see that Campbell rejected the societies and machinations of men which were in abundance among the denominations.

At one time Campbell favored the missionary societies. In 1824 he

wrote, "I did contribute my mite and my effort to the popular missionary cause, until my conscience forbade me from its acquiescence with the abuses of the principle."

A reader of the Christian Baptist wrote Campbell on April 24, 1824 and said, "I regret exceedingly the opposition you have made to the missionary and Bible society cause. It has greatly injured your usefulness, and put into the hands of your paid-Baptist opposers a weapon to break the heads of the Baptists."

For the earnest student of Restoration History, one can see the vacillating, changing, on-again, off-

again, disposition of Campbell with respect to the Missionary Society.

The Missionary Society began in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1849. In 1858, D. S. Burnet wrote, "we now have our bible, Missionary, and tract institutions, and brother Campbell himself has accepted the presidency of one of them."

Every possible ruse which the liberal digressive element could employ was used in an effort to sustain the Society but not one sensible, sober, sane and scriptural argument was ever given. The church was split wide open by foolish men who had no regard whatsoever for the concept of

Bible unity. God planned, purposed and perfected the church of Christ to serve as His missionary agent — even unto the end of the world.

Tell me one thing ordained of God which foolish men have not corrupted. The means given by Jehovah, have never pleased some men. Such has resulted in the curse of denominationalism. For shame!

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND "OTHER DENOMINATIONS"

Roger D. Campbell

Have you ever been asked, "What is the difference between the church of Christ and other denominations?" Many of us have. Or, maybe someone has asked you, "Is it true that the church of Christ does not have music like all the other denominations do?" Perhaps someone has inquired, "Why doesn't the church of Christ celebrate Easter like most other denominations do?"

I always appreciate the opportunity to answer questions that are presented by people that have a genuine desire to learn the truth about the Lord's church or any other Bible topic. That being said, did you notice that each of the three questions stated above involves a misconception? That false idea is revealed in the word "other." When people talk about the church of Christ and "other" denominations, what are they doing? They are speaking of the church as if it were a denomination. They are lumping the Lord's church right in with man-made organizations.

We are not surprised to hear denominational people speak of the Lord's church as if it were a denomination. It is disappointing, though, sometimes frustrating to no end, to hear members of the church speak of "the church of Christ and other denominations." Brethren, leave off the word "other" and the statements are fine. Leave off the word "other" and it makes a clear distinction between the Lord's body and those institutions that men began.

Biblically speaking, the church that Jesus built is not a denomination (Matt. 16:18). Why, no, it is not part of the whole family of God: the church of Christ IS the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is not part of the saved, it IS the saved (Eph. 5:23). The church which Jesus bought with His own blood (Acts 20:28) is not a denomination, it is not a part of a denomination, it is not made up of denominations, and it has no fellowship with denominations.

When people make false statements or imply false things about the church, I try to pick my spots in showing them that their terminology or reasoning is not accurate. But, when we speak, brethren, let us make certain that we speak correctly. Please, it is not "the church of Christ and other denominations." Leave off the word "other" and you will have it right: "the church of Christ and denominations."

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ELDERS, MEN OF SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

Bill Jackson, deceased

If one reads in Acts 2, with the establishment of the church, and reads the New Testament in order, he will learn of the existence of the leadership, of their work and responsibilities, and of their being over the saints in the work of the Lord. He will be missing the details as to the life and character qualities God expects, until he comes to the epistles of Timothy and Titus. It is not our purpose to examine each qualification and give a treatment of it [see I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 for the specific qualifications]. Rather, we want to see the character God envisions, in the overall. Regarding the qualifications:

1) *There is but one Christian character.* All who belong to God are to be of that character, whether male or female, young or old. We have stated the express words in I Timothy and Titus and when men notice that the I Timothy list is slightly longer, they dare not assume “contradiction.” In fact, in the fullest defining of some of the character qualities, there would be an overlapping. But since there is the one Christian character, we can know that the men who are vigilant, of good behavior, patient, controlled, with proper view of this world’s goods, experienced in the faith and with a good report from non-members (I Tim.), would also be the men who are just, holy, temperate, loving good, not self-willed and not soon angry (Titus). Our point is further made in realizing that in the definitions of some of the words, as “vigilant” (I Tim.), we find the word “temperate,” which is also used in Titus 1. Likewise, when one reads the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5), and then the graces for the Christian’s life (II Peter 1), there is some variance in the wording between the two, but there is no contradiction. One who has the graces of II Peter 1 will bear the fruit of Galatians 5, and vice versa.

2) *Focusing on the men, the elements of Christian character stated for an elder are to be in all Christian men.* Notice we said, “elements of character,” for it is clear that a faith-

ful Christian man may be single, may be a new convert, and, due to his newness in the faith, have as yet no skills in teaching. There is one point of emphasis here: A man in the church may not possess the elements of Christian character due to his just beginning in the faith, or due to carelessness and neglect, or due to outright sin in his life — but an elder MUST have these qualities in life, else he cannot serve as an elder!

3) *Blamelessness* — Clearly, the Lord is not stating that for one to become an elder, he must be some kind of “super-human,” never making a mistake. Whoever is selected has made mistakes, and will make some in the future. The word refers to the examining of one’s life, and finding no cause for reproach, there being no glaring character defect. Surely most of God’s children are blameless in life, and indeed, it is required of each and every child of God (Phil. 2:15). Once more, any member of the church, through their own fault, might not be blameless, but an elder MUST be!

4) *A word on “desire”* — Actually, to “reach for, try to gain” something. No man should be appointed who has no desire to serve, but that’s true concerning an elder, deacon, preacher, or Bible class teacher. We should have a desire to serve in whatever capacity we undertake. We hasten to point out that through growth, understanding of the work of the kingdom and the eldership, encouragement given to men, etc., proper desire is developed within one. It is far, far better to have that desire thus developed by growth, encouragement and urging of faithful brethren, than for a man to have “desire” on his own and then begin “running for the office.”

5) *The “faithful” children* — Remember, as we have seen, that an elder is one who is older, has been in the faith for such time as to have manifest Christian character in all of its qualities, and has such abilities as to teach through exhorting the flock and convicting the gainsayer of his sin. The word “faithful” in Titus 1:6 is used throughout the New Testament

to refer to those “faithful in Christ.” There is no doubt, in view of the above, that God desired men who had demonstrated in their own homes, and in their own children, the ability to teach and lead them into the Christ, and thus the “faithful children” are those who are obedient to the Gospel.

6) *Wives and children* — We do not believe that it is an accident that, in the context wherein elders and deacons are mentioned, a word is given concerning “wives.” A point has already been made concerning elders’ children. The Bible does not teach a double-standard — indeed, there is but one Christian character. However, wives and children should live their lives with an awareness of their husband/father’s position, and not desiring to adversely reflect upon the husband and/or father should help motivate one in godly living. Would we not expect the same, even in secular matters? The mayor’s wife and children have the same citizenship standard before them as does everyone else, but I would expect the mayor’s family of all people, to understand what is involved and to conduct themselves respectful of his position. The chief of police’s family come under the same obligation to be law-abiding as does everyone else, but I would expect his family, of all people, to live in accord with the law, being mindful of his position. Should we expect less in God’s Kingdom, of the families of elders and deacons?

One other word: there is no New Testament office of “elder’s wife.” He must have a wife, but she remains just that: his wife. The godly woman recognizes this, and would neither have an “officious” [meddlesome] air, nor would she find herself speaking “for” her husband. Her role remains that of an helpmeet to him, and especially supportive in view of the added responsibility he now has.

[Elders — Those Who Watch over Souls, pp.13-17]

QUESTIONS ABOUT ELDERS AND DEACONS

#1 What Is the Nature of Elders and Their Work?

We need to identify the men, and from a perspective of what the New Testament says about their work. These are offered as observations:

1) *Elders occupy an office in the*

New Testament church. The office is established by God, with both the work and the nature of the men set forth plainly in the New Testament. In re-visiting the congregations established in an initial visit, Paul, on his first missionary journey, saw to it that

“...they...ordained them elders in every church” (Acts 14:23). Pointing young preachers to the work before them, Paul stresses the qualifications and some of the work to be embraced by elders (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11). The apostle pointed out that the selecting of elders would be a “setting in order” a matter that was lacking (Titus 1:5).

2) *Elders are to be spiritual men.*

Our emphasis is on the word “spiritual,” and it must be. Far too many congregations have rushed to select men, all the while noting the points of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, but with little emphasis on the spirituality of the men. All qualifications are given in the word, and must be noted, but it should not be the case that the man’s marital status and having believing children — topped off with his being “good in money matters” — virtually assures his selection. CHARACTER qualities are most vital, and many congregations have learned to their sorrow that trouble came, not as regards whether the man had a wife or children, nor as to his business like manner, but in behavior completely contrary to the character qualities God sets forth.

3) *Elders are to do a spiritual work.*

Once more, the men are to be of spiritual quality because theirs is to be a spiritual work. The meaning is that the men must be selected in view of the work that is before them. They need to know what that work is, and the congregation needs to know the same. The points we’re now making all come together in this: Men who are non-spiritual will not be able to do the spiritual work God gives them to do!

[Bill Jackson, Elders: Those Who Watch over Souls, pp.9,10].

THE ELDERSHIP, THE QUALIFICATIONS

H. Leo Boles, deceased

The weighty responsibilities that rest upon the eldership necessarily imply high qualifications of character. Any group of men who are vested with the authority to oversee a congregation of saints must be qualified in heart and life to perform such responsible work. Too little attention has been given to the qualifications of elders. The elders themselves have neglected these qualifications and the congregations have oftentimes ignored them. Self-seeking men who desired prominence and preeminence in the church have pushed themselves, with the help of a few politicians, into the position of elders. Only evil can result when such a course has been followed. The time has come when there should be a reformation in the eldership of the congregation. The qualifications as given in the New Testament must not be ignored.

There are very few qualifications listed for the elders which do not belong to all Christians. This shows that the standard for elders is not higher than that for Christians. Sometimes it is argued that no man can attain to the high standard as described by the Holy Spirit in giving the qualifications. The Holy Spirit has never required of man anything that man could not do. God encourages man to measure up to this high standard. It ought to be the goal of every Christian to attain unto such a standard as is described herein. Men were found in New Testament times who met with these requirements. Men who were converted to Christianity from heathenism were soon developed into material for elders; they soon measured up to the high standard outlined by these qualifications. If men converted from idolatry then could attain unto the standard that the Holy Spirit gave for elders, why cannot men who were reared in Christian homes by Christian parents and taught the word of God from their youth up soon develop into elders now? We must conclude that there were men who met these qualifications then, or else the Holy Spirit would not have listed these qualifications and instructed Timothy and Titus to appoint such men as elders. The fact that the eldership was to continue, that it was a permanent feature of the New Testament church, is proof positive that men can attain unto the high standard of the eldership in the church today.

Some have been discouraged when they understood the high standard of qualifications of elders and have refused to serve as elders. Such should not be discouraged, but should strive the harder to measure up to these qualifications. Others have argued that these qualifications cannot be found in any brother today and that there should be a number of elders selected, who, combining all the elders, may have all the qualifications. But the qualifications mentioned should belong to each man. Why should not a brother have a good report from those who are without the church? Why should he not so live that even those who do not accept the Christian religion would see merit in his character? Why should he not be apt to teach, temperate, blameless, holy, just, a lover of good, patient, given to hospitality, sober, vigilant, and a good husband and father? Why should not every brother control his temper, yield his judgment to others, be a man of peace, refrain from covetousness, and be free from strong drink? There are no impossible qualifications for elders.

[The Eldership of the Churches of Christ, pp.21-24]

#2 How May Elders Lord It over the Flock? (I Peter 5:3)

Peter admonished the elders, one of whom he was, to serve with “a ready mind, neither as lording it over the charge allotted to” them, but “as ensamples to the flock.” Verse 2 of this context forbids elders to perform their duties from base and sordid motives of avarice and greed, and verse 3 warns them of unseemly ambition and abuse of powers. The words, “lording it over,” translate a Greek word which means *to rule*

highhandedly and autocratically and from an arrogant and domineering spirit. Men in positions of power are often tempted to do this, an example of which will be seen in III John 9. The “charge allotted” was the congregation where the elders served. Instead of exhibiting a spirit of arrogance in their work, they were to be “ensamples” (patterns of conduct) for the rest, even as they seek to follow the pattern of Christ, the “chief Shepherd” (I Peter 5:4).

What is forbidden in the foregoing text is the abuse of authority, and not the proper use thereof. To cite this passage, as some today do, as proof that elders are without any authority in directing the affairs of the congregation, is utterly to misapprehend the apostle’s teaching. To deny to elders the proper exercise of oversight in the congregation is as much a perversion of New Testament teaching as it is for elders to abuse their rights and privileges through improper seizure of authority (Heb. 13:7,17). There are tendencies in the church today toward both extremes, each of which ought to be strictly curbed. Peter by no means forbade the oversight every congregation must have in order to properly discharge its responsibilities and the consequent exercise of authority such oversight entails. He sought to restrain the excesses and abuses which may, and often do, result from such; and he directed attention to the fact that the power of a good example in the congregation is much more effective than the mere show of authority, and that to exhibit it in life is the best guarantee against abuses.

[Guy N. Woods,
Questions and Answers, Vol. II,
pp.155,156]

#3 | Timothy 3:3,8 — “Not Given to Wine,” and Not Given to Much Wine”

In listing the qualifications of elders and deacons, Paul states that an elder is not to be “given to wine” (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7), and that deacons are not to be “given to much wine” (I Tim. 3:8).

1) Those who insist there is nothing wrong with social drinking use (I should say misuse) these verses to support their contention. Why should the apostle say not to be given to wine, or not to be given to much wine if even small amounts would be sinful? To these, the condemnation of excessive drinking is justification for drinking moderate (?) amounts. “Don’t get

drunk!” means it is perfectly alright to drink a little bit.

2) Argument refuted: To be consistent, those advocates would have you to affirm: “Be not over much wicked” (Eccl. 7:17), means it is alright to be moderately wicked! “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Rom. 6:12) means there is nothing wrong with sin, so long as it does not take control of one’s life! “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2) means that worldliness in moderate amounts is alright, but it would be wrong for one to be completely conformed to this world!

If drinking any amount of alcoholic beverages is wrong, then why did not Paul say that elders and deacons should not drink wine at all? Because such would most certainly have been misunderstood — the word wine meaning what it does in the Bible. Paul did not intend to prohibit drinking wine; but, remember that wine in the Bible is simply the juice of the grape. Under the law of Moses, the Nazarite could not drink wine (grape juice) at all. In fact, he could not eat grapes, even if they were dried (Num. 6:3). This is not what Paul was enjoining upon elders and deacons in the Lord’s church. That is why he did not forbid drinking wine, period.

The expression, “not given to wine in I Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:7 in the King James version, translates the Greek word *paroinos*, which means literally “by or beside wine.” A marginal note says, “ready to quarrel, and offer wrong, as one in wine.” The American Standard Version renders the word, “no brawler,” instead of “not given to wine.” The use of this particular Greek word lends absolutely no support to the idea that drinking alcoholic beverages in small amounts is acceptable.

The expressions, “not given to wine,” and “not given to much wine,” differ more in the Greek than they do in the English. The former seems to be, in the Greek, a reference to the brawling disposition which results from drinking alcoholic beverages; the latter seems to refer to the hold which alcohol has on those who have imbibed it freely. The distinction between the two expressions is certainly not a distinction between the amounts of alcoholic beverages to which elders and deacons respectively can be addicted.

One other observation with reference to these verses is in order. If the social drinker’s argument is any good,

then what he has proved is not merely that one can drink moderately, but that he can be moderately addicted. If “not given to much wine” means one can drink a little bit, then it also means one can be a little bit addicted. Is the social drinker ready to accept this logical conclusion of his argument? What proves too much proves nothing.

[Bobby Duncan,
Difficult Texts of the
New Testament Explained,
Wendell Winkler, editor, pp.51-53]

#4 | What Does It Mean To Be A “Blameless”? (Titus 1:6)

In New Testament parlance, a bishop is the same as an elder. Observe that Titus was to appoint “elders” in Crete (1:5), and that as “bishops” these men should be blameless (1:7). Circle the two terms and connect them with a line. As a cross-reference write: see Acts 20:17,28. The term “elder” suggests an older, mature man, while the word “bishop” means to oversee, and so suggests the supervisory capacity of the responsibility.

But what does “blameless” denote? Well it obviously does not demand spiritual/moral perfection, for then no man would ever qualify for this divinely ordained role. Rather, the word is employed in a relative sense. The elder must be a godly man against whom no known breach of fidelity can be charged. He will have faults. He may even sin publicly occasionally — see I Tim. 5:19,20 — and if he does, he is to be rebuked. Overall, however, the elder will be an exceptionally spiritual man to whom the church can look for leadership and example. His qualifications are not only set forth in Titus 1, but also in parallel section of I Timothy chapter 3. Underline “blameless” and marginally note: Not perfect, but spiritually mature.

[Wayne Jackson,
Notes from the Margin of My
Bible, Vol. II, p.136]

“The qualifications for the office of an elder are all prescribed by the apostle Paul in the third chapter of 1st Timothy and the first chapter of Titus. They are distributable into six natural divisions. ... They are distinguished as they relate respectively to Experience, Reputation, Domestic Relations, Character, Habits, and Ability to Teach and Rule.”

[J. W. McGarvey, *A Treatise on the Eldership, p.53]*



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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in **Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12.** All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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