

**1 Timothy 3: 2 – "Of Good Behavior and Hospitable", Sermon # 6
in a series on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on March 14th, 2010, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

There are a variety of words which show up in the various translations of the Bible, for these words, "good behavior". Let me give them to you. In the King James Version of the Bible it also says that an elder must be "of good behavior". But in the marginal note of the Bible that I often use it says, "or modest"; he should be modest. In the American Standard Version of 1901 it says the overseer must be "orderly". In the New American Standard Version and the English Standard Version, it says that he must be "respectable." In Strong's notes it defines the Greek word, "Kosmios" as "orderly" i.e., decorous, of good behavior, modest. Evidently it is a word which encompasses in itself, a number of fine qualities. I think that our New King James translation is a good one. For "good behavior" encompasses the other qualities of being modest, orderly, respectable, and decorous. The word decorous is related to the word decorum which means that a person is exhibiting right and proper and appropriate behavior, having right and good taste in conduct and or appearance; having an orderliness, a decency, a dignity in that person's behavior. This is what we are looking at this afternoon in relation to what a candidate for the eldership must have. This afternoon I want to first of all give an example of what good behavior is like from the Scriptures. Then 2ndly, I want to show you the roots and the fruits of hospitality.

1st of all – Let's look at an example of Good Behavior from the Scriptures.

Good behavior is best seen in a person when they are placed in circumstances where they need to manifest it in front of those who may be opposed to it. This is often times what a Christian is called upon to do. And it is required of a man who would aspire to the eldership that he manifest these actions of good behavior in such times. If you will turn with me over to Luke Chapter 23, I want to show you this in relation to a man named Joseph of Arimathea. In verse 50 of Luke 23, it says this: "Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man." "He had not consented to their decision and deed." (That is the trial of Jesus, its verdict against Him that He was guilty of something; and also the council's then going to Pilate and demanding that he be crucified.) "He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God." "This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus." "Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before." (His own tomb, by the way.) Let us observe Joseph's good behavior in these actions after Jesus died. We should observe, first off, that a man of good behavior will not consent to the plan or action of evil men;

especially when it attempts to destroy Christ's person, His kingdom, or the need for affirming or submitting to His righteousness. Joseph desired to do what he could for Jesus. He deliberately went about to do this, knowing that he could very well be looked down upon by the council of which he was a member, and socially ostracized as a Jew, as result of it. In fact, it could have been worse. The council might have found some way to vote him out of it. It didn't matter. Joseph's highest allegiance was to Christ. Let me ask you now, if you are willing to do things like this? Are you willing to care enough about other Christians who have been rejected by others of your close association, Christians who are despised by others; and yet still deliberately go about to do them acts of kindness and love? This, I am saying, is good behavior. Joseph went courageously to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He laid him in his own new tomb. He took his own resources and provided for the Christ whose cause seemed dead.

Let me ask you if you are willing to do this as well? The cause of Christ is now on the decline in this country of ours, and in the years to come it may come to the place where it may seem to be dead. Will you still support it; will you still care for it, when it is so? Will you still provide for it with your resources even though it seems dead? Will you lovingly bear about in your heart, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be seen in your life's actions, and thus be an example of good behavior before others? (2 Corinthians 6: 9) Joseph was a man of faith, whose faith translated into good and kind deeds. And we should understand that a Christian who would be an elder must also be a man of faith, whose faith must translate into thinking about how he can minister to other people. His mind must be on the kingdom of Christ and what God might do in giving people to minister to. It says here that "he was waiting for the kingdom of God." He was waiting for God to move with power, and he had seen nothing and no one greater in truth and power and love than Jesus Christ. Christ was precious to him and he would do good for Him, out of love to Him. An elder will be a man of good behavior with these kind of desires; desires to do good; desires which lead to deliberate action being taken in relation to Christ's cause and kingdom and what is right according to the Bible. What about you? Do you see more clearly now, what God requires of you? Will you refuse to consent with evil men? Will you be courageous to ask men what they will do with Jesus? Will you see His cause as righteous and worth serving, even when it appears dead? Will you wrap it up in linen? Will you not this day lay Jesus in your own tomb; the tomb of your heart, that He might rise from the dead in you and give you life, so that you will become more like Him? 1 Peter Chapter 3, verse 13 says, "Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?" Well, men may defame us as evil-doers; they may revile our good conduct, but it is better to "suffer for doing good than for doing evil." May it be so in relation to each of us who believes.

Now 2ndly - I want to show you the roots and the fruits of hospitality.

A man whom we would raise up to the eldership must be hospitable. John Brown in his theological dictionary says that hospitality is, "a kind disposition to

entertain and to lodge strangers." He gets that definition from Hebrews 13: 2 where it says, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." But I think that hospitality begins at home, and so verse 1 of Chapter 13 applies to hospitality just as much. "Let brotherly love continue." What are the roots of this hospitality in the life of a man who would be a minister? They are; that he loves God and he loves the brethren. Turn with me to Romans 12, verse 13. We see here, nestled among a list of commands given to all believers, the phrase, "given to hospitality." But in order to understand what the Apostle means by this, we need to go further back up the page and look at the context out of which it comes. It begins in Romans Chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. He says, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." When a person has come to faith in Christ, as Paul has taken great pains to describe before; describing what saving faith is, in the previous chapters of this book; he is now urges young believers and all believers, by the mercies of God, to do something which is quite radical and quite foreign in relation to how a person has lived their life before that. Paul pleads with us, as believers, to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God. This, he says, is the reasonable and rational thing for you to do, since you have been shown such great mercy. Your sins have all been forgiven, and you have been given a new heart and a new life in Christ.

And so it is reasonable for you to expect, therefore, that your mind and your thinking about many things is going to change, as you are renewed and you are being renewed day by day. When you present your body to God as a living sacrifice; it is an act of consecration and holiness. You are saying that you are willing to prove that what God has commanded you in the Scriptures is good and acceptable and perfect. You are saying that you are willing to do with your body, what He commands; not just so you and He can see it; but so that other people might see it also, and know the good effects of it personally coming to them. What does it mean in practical, everyday life to have a renewed mind? It means that we are to think humbly and to think soberly about what we can do to promote Christ's kingdom both inside and outside the local church. Each one who believes has been given a measure of faith. Some will do more than others. Each one of us is part of the body of Christ as a member of that body. And each of us has a gift or gifts which we are to minister to one another. But the root of all doing for Christ, and doing for others is love. This is the root of hospitality. You see this in verse 9 of Romans 12. "Let love be without hypocrisy." Our love for the souls of people around us much be a real and sincere and genuine love. If we say that we are a Christian and love God, then we must love our brother also. (1 John 4: 21) It is because we are kindly affectionate to one another in brotherly love, (verse 10) that we will, in honor, give preference to one another. (verse 10b) It is the reason that

we will show hospitality to other Christians; why we will be looking out for the needs of the saints. (verse 13) We need desperately to see this in our day. This is where the root of hospitality lies.

Now let's look at the fruits of hospitality. Turn with me to 1 Peter 4: 7-10. The first fruit of hospitality may only be seen by God and your closest acquaintances. "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." To be hospitable to other Christians is evidence of a good and gracious spirit; a spirit which has been changed by the grace of Christ to want to be a help and encouragement to others. Verse 9 says that we are to be hospitable without grumbling. God sees our attitudes and hears our words. Can you imagine what God must think when he hears us grumbling about having to show hospitality to other Christians? A person who is prayerful and has a fervent love of the brethren; his hospitality will glorify the Father in heaven. Do you deliberately spend time with other believers; invite other believers over to your house to have a meal together with you? Do you invite them to stay the night with you if it is inconvenient for them to travel home that night? Turn with me to Acts Chapter 16 and you will see an example of this. In verse 13 we find Paul looking for a place to preach. It says, "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there." Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us." "She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God." "The Lord opened her heart to respond to heed the things spoken by Paul." "And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.'" "So she persuaded us." Here is an excellent example of hospitality and one that is evidence immediately after Lydia's conversion. After she and her household were baptized, she begs them to come to her house and stay. When was the last time that you begged another Christian to stay at your house for the night, when you perceived their need? She persuades them to do it. If we are to be hospitable we must beg and persuade those who stand in need of our help; that is, if we would be effective in this holy good work. People do not usually want to impose, and so they might be too reluctant to stay. This is one of the major components of hospitality, however, opening your house to needy saints. Where there is an open heart, there will be an open home. If you always sit in isolation in your home and never have anyone over, and do not desire to do so; or are fearful to do so; there is a problem in your Christian life. It may be a sinful problem which you need to repent of. You must ask yourself; where is my love? Do I really have brotherly-kindness and affection?

The second fruit of being hospitable is the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Turn over to 3rd John, verse 5 with me. "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before

the church." "If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of the God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles." "We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth." The verses show us how we help forward the kingdom of God by being hospitable. We open our homes to the brethren who need housing or food. Men who preach the gospel, brethren who have come to our church to visit; relatives and friends of brethren who come to visit and to stay with one of our families in the church, but their house is too small. I am saying that we should look out for, and help one another to show hospitality. If you turn over to Romans chapter 16, verse 23, you will find an excellent example of hospitality. "Gaius, my host and the host of the church, greets you." Are you a gracious host or hostess when people come over to your house to visit, or to stay? Do you ask them whether you can get them anything to eat or drink, or help them in any way while they are with you? Do you listen carefully to learn about your guests, so that you might be able to share spiritual things with them as you get to know them? This is true hospitality. Turn to Philemon verse 17. Paul is writing to Philemon that he might receive Onesimus his slave back. Paul had won him to Christ in his imprisonment. (Verse 10) He says in verse 17, "If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me." "But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account." "I, Paul, am writing with my own hand." "I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides." "Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord." You can see from these words how hospitable Paul and Philemon were to each other; how gracious they are with each other. If a person engages in hospitality it will bring refreshment and strength to God's people. It will be a great help and strength to those preaching the gospel, and it will demonstrate the love of Christ in the gospel in a tangible way. We need to ask ourselves –is this me, or am I neglecting this commandment?

The elder must be hospitable because possibly more than anyone else in the church he represents the church, because he perhaps is the most widely known and recognized person. And he is a shepherd of God's dear people. What we need to see from all this is that a church will be showing love which results in hospitality if the pastor sets the tenor for it himself. If the pastor is an isolationist or spends time only with his family and other—the church will not grow, and Christ's kingdom cannot advance. All the teaching and preaching in the world will not accomplish what is required in spreading the gospel if there is no love which translates itself into hospitality. Will you not join me, then, in promoting this most holy work? It may be one of the primary means to reach this community, and the communities that we represent, for Christ.