

1 Timothy 3: 3; "Not Quarrelsome", Sermon # 11 in a series on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 2nd, 2010, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The Dictionary defines a quarrel as, "A rupture of friendly relations; an angry altercation, to dispute or wrangle, or disagree." The King James says, "not a brawler". The word in the original Greek is Plektes. The New American Standard Version translates this "uncontentious". To contend is to assert strongly. To be contentious in the context, here, is to assert too strongly; to assert what you believe, or to contend for what you want, with a view of challenging others who disagree with you; perhaps even to the point of challenging the persons who hold authority in the church. Even if it might lead to strife, a separation, or a division in the church that this person attends, still they feel compelled to be quarrelsome. Proverbs 26: 21 says, "As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife." But Proverbs Chapter 20, verse 3 states, "Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel. (NAS) And so, what this phrase means for a man who would become an elder, is that he must be an honorable man and stay away from strife. There are 2 sides to any coin and this is a coin which you will want to collect. The man who would be a pastor, or the Christian who would be mature, must not only be a person who is not quarrelsome, but they must also be a person who in the positive and right sense, promotes true unity. The two sides of this valuable coin are shown forth in the teaching and example of the elder, and I hope that opening this up will be of great value and benefit to our local church and to all other people who might read or listen to this sermon.

The 1st side of the coin is this: The man who would be an Elder is one who is walking in the truth and humility. He will not be disposed to quarrel and fight.

Now quarreling often starts up when people hold strong convictions about what they desire for themselves. Contention is often related to self-seeking. God is very displeased with such an attitude and such behavior as it leads to. Romans Chapter 2, verse 8 says, "But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who evil." (That is; on the Day of Judgment, if it is not repented of.) The word, "self-seeking" here is translated "contentious" in the King James. Being contentious comes directly, in many cases, from self-seeking. Quarrelsomeness and contention can also take place among the brethren as well. Turn to James Chapter 4 and verse 1 – "Where do wars and fights come from among you?" "Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? "You lust and do not have." "You murder and covet and cannot obtain." "You fight and war." "Yet you do not have because you do not ask." Now,

a man who would be an elder is a man who hopefully has come to see the futility of pursuing the desires of his fleshly heart to always be wanting his own way in things. When he comes into conflict with others, he will not become contentious. He has seen the importance of prayer; and in his prayer, not asking amiss – "Lord bless me in all my fleshly indulgences." But sometimes quarrels happen when other people envy you. But this does not mean that you have to return evil for evil.

Turn with me to Genesis 26, and verse 12. "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him." "The man began to prosper and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants." "So the Philistines envied him." You see that Isaac had done nothing wrong. He was doing everything in the right way and God was blessing him, but the Philistines were not being blessed in this way. So, it says in verse 17, "Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there." "And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham." "He called them by the names which his father had called them." "Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there." "But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, 'The water is ours.'" "So he called the name of the well Esek (Literally – Quarrel), because they quarreled with him." "Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also." "So they called its name Sitnah." (it means Enmity) "And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it." "So he called its name Rehoboth, (Spaciousness), because he said, 'For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.'" Now this is a good illustration of the truth of what we are considering. Instead of contending with these men over the wells that he had dug, Isaac simply moved on to another place to dig another well. He knew, as a believer in God, that God would provide. The Philistines, not knowing the Lord, did not know this. When his servants successfully dug a second well they quarreled with his servants a second time; and he moved a second time. He dug a third well, and it says that they did not quarrel over that one. Notice what Isaac said upon that occasion. "Now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." The Christian man, and especially the pastor will not be looking to quarrel even over the things for which he has worked legitimately for; things which by all rights, he should receive the benefit from, according to his labors. He will be following the principle of truth which the Lord Jesus so clearly taught in the sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5, verse 38. "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'" "But I tell you not to resist an evil person." "But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also." "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two." "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away." In other words, in the words of Isaac, a godly man will pray "for the Lord

to make room for him". He will see everything coming to him, materially, from the hand of God, in the primary sense. When this is the case, it is indeed a good witness to God and to Christ. We see the proof of this in the remarks of Abimelech, the ruler of that land who comes to Isaac in Genesis 26, verse 26, with Phichol the commander of his army. In verse 27 Isaac says, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?" "But they said, 'We have seen that the Lord is with you.'" You can see from this that when the pastor and the people are trusting in the Lord in this way; the Lord's work and His blessing upon a believer will be noticed, even by unbelievers.

But, you say to me, "What about contending for the faith that was once delivered to the saints?" Well, it does say in Jude, verse 3, that you and I are to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." But this is a holy contending for the truth, which might be lost, if not contended for. That is what is being spoken of there. It is not a sinful quarrel being picked, but a desire to see the truth of God's word established in the minds and hearts of many. It is not self-seeking, but it is contending in a righteous way; that God's truth may prevail, advance, and be victorious in the lives of many people. There is a vast deal of difference between the two. When holy men dispute with each other over doctrine, or when a godly man disputes with someone whom he believes is in error; he follows all the principles of the Word of God which govern the kind of situation in which he finds himself. The Apostles and elders had to come together in the days of the early church to discuss and debate the issue of whether it was necessary to circumcise new converts to the faith. It says in Acts 15: 7 – "After much dispute (that is much discussion and much deliberation, no doubt delivered with great conviction) Peter rose, and it says that he demonstrated to them from the Scriptures that it would not be necessary to circumcise the new believers. That was contending for the faith in a holy way. That council was conducted in a way which showed mutual respect for those who had come, concerned to know the truth; but there was no deference paid to any person who might be holding an error in regard to this important truth of justification by faith alone.

But what about those people, even within Christ's visible churches who we think have been deceived into believing what is false; doctrines of demons and such? Well turn with me to 2 Timothy Chapter 2 and verse 22. Here the Apostle Paul shows us how to deal with such. "Flee youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those (with all) who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 'But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.' (They engender quarrels) "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle (kind to all), able to teach, patient (when wronged; it says in the NAS), in humility (in gentleness) correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." This gives us the perfect description of what a man who would be an elder; what a Christian who would be wise; should be like in such

situations. Only God can grant repentance, but He may very well use the kindness and gentleness of a godly person's instruction, counsel, and exhortation to do it. This is the way that God approves; not quarrelsomeness and contention.

2ndly – The person who would be an elder; the person who is walking in the truth, will be disposed to promote true unity.

Turn with me to Ephesians 4, verse 1. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Here we see Paul beseeching the Ephesian believers to endeavor, that is to try hard, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This implies that there already exists, presently, in the local church of which you are a part (that local church being a local expression of the larger one true body of all true Christians) a spiritual unity which has been created by the Holy Spirit and His good work, His work which is common to all believers; His having been given to each and every believer based upon Christ's work; there exists a real unity which we should all strive to maintain. We should endeavor to keep it in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, and one hope to which we are all, as Christians, called to. There is one baptism (the baptism of the Holy Spirit given to each believer when they first trust in Christ). There is one Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ; there is one faith; that faith in Jesus Christ and His Word the Bible. There is one God and Father who we worship, who is above all and through all, and in you all. But we are called upon, remembering these doctrinal and spiritual realities, to maintain this unity which already exists in the Church. If each of us is endeavoring to do this; then by the labors of the faithful minister, saints in any given local church, are not only being equipped in knowledge, but they will also be striving, endeavoring to be united around the truth of God's Word. This will translate into a mutual determination to grow up into Christ; to better and better resemble Him. This is the kind of understanding and unity which a man who would be a pastor will want to promote. How will this work itself out?

Turn over to Colossians 3, verses 12-15. "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." "But above all these things put on love which the bond of perfection." "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful." This is how true unity is promoted; by putting on these things that have been read to you. A Christian who is mature does not simply want to quarrel about truth and get people to become reformed, or believe the doctrines of grace. He wants to learn to convey the truth in a Christ-like manner. A man who is a minister, or who desires the work of the ministry, wants to see people in their congregation doing

the same. Childish Christians will always want to quarrel. Have you ever noticed how much children tend to quarrel with each other? But I am hoping that the grace of Christ will make you and I more mature than that. We will not be quarrelsome when Christ's grace is at work in us. I like what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14: 20 – "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in your thinking be mature."