

1 Timothy 3: 3; "Not Violent, but Gentle", Sermon # 10 in a series on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 25th, 2010, In the Afternoon Worship Service.

We have seen that there are 16 qualifications for an Elder, given to us here in 1st Timothy 3 and this afternoon I want to couple together the two qualifications of not being violent, and being gentle. These qualifications, in the list, are separated by the qualification that a man being considered for the eldership is "not greedy for money". But I want to speak to you about that qualification in connection with the last qualification given in verse 3; "not covetous". This afternoon, I would like to show you how the kingdom of God is to be advanced and promoted by a man who would be, or who is, a pastor. I would like us to see what will honor God in the church, and what God Himself will honor, in terms of how the Word is preached, and how the truth is to be propagated. What I believe that God is looking for, is a man who believes in the force of truth; not the force of a man's personality or his opinions. God is looking for men who are not violent but gentle in their approach to how they try to see people come to believe the truth of His Word. The question is: How can Christ's kingdom, then, be best advanced and promoted by the elders of the local church? How will the pastor best bring the truth of God's Word to bear on God's people and others, so that the truth and Christ's work will flourish? The work of Christ's kingdom will flourish the most, when the following 2 statements are believed and lived out in the life of a man who would be a minister.

1st of all – He will not be a man who uses force and severity to accomplish what God has called him to do.

He is "not a striker". This is the literal translation of these words. There are many men who sadly believe that this is the way that disagreements can be settled, that problems can be resolved. They will continue to believe that force is the answer, unless God teaches them differently. You will recall, I am sure, if you know your Bible; the example of Moses in this regard, but let's turn to it to refresh our minds. (Exodus 2: 11-15) "Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens." "And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren." "So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." "And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, 'Why are you striking your companion?' "Then he said, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us?' "Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" "So Moses feared and said, 'Surely this thing is known!' "When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses." "But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well." You can see here that the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt; they were oppressed with hard labor. Moses was raised in Pharaoh's court as the son of Pharaoh's daughter even though he was an Israelite. And one day, when he was grown, he went out to look

the situation over. He beheld something very grievous to him. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. Now, he sensed that one who leads must learn the art of conflict resolution—and so Moses thought that he would give it a try. It's called – kill the opposition. No one seems to be looking, he says, so let me see if I can resolve this. So he kills the Egyptian, strikes him down, and hides his body in the sand. He forgets several things; one, God is watching and secondly – the man who was beaten went back and told others what happened. So, when he goes out to look at his brethren's situation the next day, I think that he thought that everything was resolved and that he would be looked upon as a hero by his people. Instead, he finds two Hebrews fighting, and he says to the one who was doing the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?" The response – "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" "Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Good point. Moses had a very important lesson to learn. If you use force and violence, taking matters of justice into your own hands; being your own authority, then others will take their cue from you. Why should they act any different? You have set the example.

But turn with me, also, over to Acts Chapter 7, and verses 22 to 30. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." "And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian." "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand." "And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' "But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' "Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?" First of all, here, we should notice that Moses doesn't seem to have had any notion that the way that he was going about this thing was wrong. He defended and avenged him who was oppressed by his own action of striking down the oppressor, not realizing that God would not have him to be violent in the resolving of this terrible issue of injustice. He sensed that God was calling him to this work of leading the people, but he was going about it in a fleshly way; in the way of being wise in his own eyes. The lesson that we should learn from this is that if we are to resolve issues related to the oppression of a people, and if we want to learn how to reconcile brethren, we will not be able to do it by force or violence. Neither shall we accomplish it by our own reasoning with people, apart from the wisdom and power of God. This was proved to him later when he was commanded by God to lead the people out. God called Moses to lead and to reason with Pharaoh then, but it was still only the power of God which actually freed them from their oppression and bondage. It was only the power of God which would enable them to come into the land of promise, later, and to take it with a holy violence that God commanded them to use under the Old Covenant dispensation. A minister does not have the Biblical right under the New Covenant dispensation to do what Moses was commanded to do then. Now, the holy violence commanded is seen in its highest form, in our putting

our own sins to death. Now, in this dispensation, the difference is that God is calling sinners from every tribe, tongue, and nation to Jesus in the gospel. Then, Israel was the only Covenant nation on the face of the earth. And thus they were commanded by God to war and kill and exterminate those peoples of the nations around them; people who would turn their hearts away from worshiping the Lord, the only true God. But Moses was 40 years in Midian learning these lessons of meekness and gentleness. They have their righteous applications in both Old and New Testament times. But when God was done teaching Moses, he was known as "the meekest man in all the earth." (Numbers 12, verse 3) In our day there is a great need for meekness and gentleness to be cultivated among the people of God. People are not won to Christ and reconciled to one another in counseling situations, by violent means.

We find this confirmed for us if we turn to Ezekiel 34: 1-10. "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of Man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!' "Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock." "The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them." "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered." "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them." "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 'As I live, says the Lord God, surely because My flock became a prey and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.'" "Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord!" "Thus says the Lord God: "Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." The principle of force and severity in dealing with the problems of spiritually shepherding God's people, is expressly condemned."

To apply these words in New Testament language; the shepherd is instructed to feed and to defend the flock of God; to bind up the broken. Lives broken by sin are to be mended by gospel truth. Those who have been driven away by the sinful force of ungodly people are to be brought back to the place where they can love and serve God. Those who are sick because of sin and false doctrine are to be healed by the minister's pouring the balm of Christ's grace into their wounds. The man in the ministry is to feed them the bread and the honey, the meat and the milk of God's word so that they will become strong. This was not being done by the shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel's day. Instead they dominated them; they ruled over their faith; they made the people's decisions for them. There was no true shepherding going on;

the people, as a result were scattered and "wandered through the mountains". The people were not being fed or directed into the truth. They kept looking for direction and strength from the nations around them, not seeing righteousness in their own leaders. The same is true in a spiritual sense in New Testament times. If there is force and severity in the leaders of God's people then the people who are under their "authority" will suffer because of it. The people will not come to know the true freedom and liberty in Christ. They will not be taught to think for themselves in accordance with the Word of God; but rather they will be bound to seek their wisdom from men who will be trying to force them to their own conclusions and their own opinions of what is right and wrong, and what is true. This is what leads to the false doctrines and practices of the cults; this is what leads to churches being governed by the doctrines of men being preached, and then believed by the people. This is what leads to spiritual emptiness and desolation. Let us pray that the men who we would see raised up to the ministry will understand and embrace the principle which the Bible so clearly teaches; that it is the force of the truth of the word preached, accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power, which really changes people's lives and brings them to a sweet submission to do His will and to keep His ways. It is not the force of a man's personality or the level of his voice, or even the force of his delivery in preaching that will bring about this sweet submission. It is the power of grace. The Church of Jesus Christ will be built not by human might or power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.

Now the 2nd Statement to be believed and lived out in the life of a minister is this – He will be a man who demonstrates patience and gentleness.

Our text says, "But gentle...." The word can also be translated "patient". The word in the Greek is *epeikace*. It means to be gentle and patient in an appropriate way. And the appropriate way to communicate gentleness to your flock, and to those outside, is to begin by considering the gentleness of Jesus Christ. Turn with me to Matthew 11: 28 and 29. Here Jesus is giving an invitation for weary burdened sinners to come to Him and learn from Him, the way to find forgiveness and rest for their souls. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." One of the ways that sinners are drawn by God Himself, to a consideration of their trusting in Christ, is His promise of their finding Him to be a gentle Savior and a gentle Shepherd. Therefore, if we are to learn from this, we must conclude that whatever gentleness we have in the Christian ministry, will be found in our remembering that this is how people are won to the truth and won to believing in Christ for salvation, and won to follow Him. It is because they are convinced that He will deal gently with them. Therefore we, too, should be gentle. This gentleness is exhibited in tender and thoughtful interaction with people. Jesus instructs everyone who would be saved, and taught the way of salvation and everyone who would be His disciple – they should come to Him. They should take up His yoke; that is, the keeping of His commandments and His Word,

because there will be grace given to them along with every command. And His Spirit will be working with us in His every word. He gives us the reasons why we should not be reluctant. It is because He is gentle and humble of heart. He is approachable; He will be patient with you; His is not going to be a severe taskmaster over you. You may have the false conception that the Christian life is a great burden, but because of grace and His gentleness, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Psalm 68, verse 19 says, "Blessed be the Lord who daily bears our burden (NASV); (who daily loads us with benefits) the God who is our salvation." The law would kill, but the Spirit gives life. Christ sympathizes with the weaknesses of His dear brethren. He is not condemning towards those who come to Him, to those who are burdened by their sin; to those who are mourning over it. Are you one of the Lord's mourners? A man who would be a pastor must be gentle and sympathetic towards such.

Now, it is not as if a pastor does not need to act decisively at times to deal with sins that he might see in the membership, or speak words of reproof to those who are in error. There is a place for sternness and rebuke. But it is not the constant policy of the concerned pastor. You will see this if you will turn with me over to 2 Corinthians 10: 1. "Now I , Paul myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you." "But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold with some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh." "For though we walk in the flesh, we don not war according to the flesh." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." Paul is here speaking about the way that he uses the Word with the Corinthians, or any other church for that matter. He is explaining to them the different approach that he takes with those whom he knows are weak and ignorant, and those who he knows are boasting in their own supposed authority and wisdom in relation to knowing what is true. Paul knows when to act decisively and powerfully to confront and reprove, and he knows when he should be gentle and humble. He knows that he must protect the Corinthian believers from false doctrine and proud men who were walking in doctrinal and practical errors. He knows that he must exercise his authority, but he wants to do it in a way that will win them to the truth of God's Word. He pleads with them, beseeches them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." He reasons this way; that If Christ was this way with him, then he could gentle and meek and urge others to be so as well.

He knows that some may question this approach, but he goes on to say this in defense of himself in verse 7. "Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?" "If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's." "For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—lest I seem to terrify

you by letters." "For his letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." "Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present." He states the principle well, here. When he was away from them, when he personally could not exercise a direct influence upon them, he used weighty and powerful letters. But when he was with them, although he was the same man, his presence and his speech were delivered with gentleness. He seemed weak to them, and his works were contemptible because they seemed to lack the power to truly move and change people to do what they should be doing, according to the Lord's will and His Word. They were looking at things outwardly, he says. He says that such persons should consider that being strong as a Christian, whether a leader or not, is not a matter of appearances, or what is carnally impressive. True Christianity is the power unto godliness; the power to build up and edify God's people, and it is especially powerful when the power is not seen inherently to be in the man who is preaching and leading; that is, in his fleshly strength. The minister is humble and gentle with God's dear people, but he is bold and decisive, in the power of God's Spirit, toward what is false and only worldly wise. May each of us here come to see the real difference between what is of the flesh, and what is of the Spirit. May each of us be not violent, but gentle in the right and appropriate way which has been described for us here.