

**1 Timothy 3: 4; "Ruling over his own House Well", Sermon # 13 in a series on the Eldership", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In our study, thus far, on the qualifications for an elder, we have been looking at qualifications related to the man himself; what he must be like in personal virtue and godliness. We come now today to ask what is he like in his own home, and especially in regard to his own children? For the main indication of whether a man will be able to rule well over the church of God is whether or not he has his children in submission in the home. In Titus 1: 6 it reads, "Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination." "In both the home and the church we find a paternal authority in exercise. We find that both the home and the church are households; people must be provided for, they must be protected, they be taught in relation to spiritual and physical things. They must be led by precept and example. In both the home and the church, there may be people who, at times, may need to be reproved and corrected. What the Apostle is saying is that if a man can not "take care", or "manage", or "rule" his own house; then he will not be able to take of the church of God. The church is God's house, not man's, and his becoming an elder in that church is a stewardship which is entrusted to him by His Lord. To rule over his own house well will indicate the prospective elder's fitness to care for the church. To do so he must have the following abilities and demonstrate them.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – He must exercise an authority which makes it advisable for a child to obey.**

Turn with me to Genesis Chapter 18, verse 17. Here God is wondering whether he should reveal to Abraham what He is about to do to the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. "And the Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?' "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." God is saying here that He knows Abraham. He knows that He has called him and chosen him and has given him great promises, and just before this in verse 10, God had given he and Sarah the promise of a son from his own loins through Sarah. He knows Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and righteousness. He knows that the true knowledge and worship of Himself will be transmitted from Abraham to his children; all of what God had commanded and expected from those who know Him. This importance; of true knowledge and devotion; the difference between right and wrong; the importance of definite

convictions regarding God's Word being treasured in the heart; all of this God knew that Abraham would communicate on to his children. Proverbs 22: 6 – "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Conversely, if you don't train them up to obey the Lord's commandments and show them by your expectations that God has expectations of them, they will depart from the good way. That is what is implied here. This training also involves the exhortations to consider the Lord's word, and to express to them the importance of the Scriptures and faith.

Teach them, parents, the difference between true and false faith. Teach them that faith in Jesus is the true faith; not faith in themselves. Teach them that faith in what Christ has done for God is what satisfied His justice; His rending a perfect obedience to God's holy law, and a perfect sacrifice, paying the penalty of a cruel death as punishment for the sins of all who will believe in Him. Tell them that this is all that God will accept from them; faith in Christ and a broken and contrite heart over their sins. The best of their intentions to live righteously will never live up to what God expects. They shall utterly fail if you only lay the responsibilities and duties of religion upon them, and they do not have faith. But by faith in God they shall learn to do right things in the right way as you guide them. Now, by way of further application, parents; I must ask you, is this something that you are doing with your children? Think of godly Timothy. His mother and his grandmother taught him from his youth about faith and doing what is right being coupled together. It is called in that passage in 2 Timothy 1, verse 5, "a genuine faith"; "an un-hypocritical faith"; "a sincere faith". Remember what your responsibility is. Proverbs 29: 15: "The rod and the reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." Mothers and fathers; do not spare the firm but loving use of the rod, or spanking stick; and do not let your children get away with ignoring your words, your instructions, or your rebukes which you give to them based upon the truth of the word of God. The major source of their learning what is right and wrong, good and evil, will come from you. See to it, that you tell them that there will be certain and definite consequences which you will bring. Let them know that you will hold them accountable in this loving way, lest shame be brought to you for your neglects, and your child never come to the knowledge of the truth; never become useful and profitable to God, and perhaps even perish in their sins.

Now look Deuteronomy 32, verse 44 with me. "So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people." "Moses finished speaking these words to all Israel, and he said to them: 'Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law.'" "For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess." The faithful father will teach his children that these words of God's holy word are something to set their hearts on, having himself set his heart on them. He shall command his

children to observe them because it is their life, because it also will bring long life, and a blessed life. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Ephesians 6: 1) Look also, with me, over at Joshua 24, verses 13-15. Joshua is speaking here on God's behalf, and he says, "I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant." "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt." "Serve the Lord!" "And if it seems good to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." You see, a father has to make a choice. He has to choose whether he will actually serve the true and living God, or whether he will serve the gods of this world. Will he serve the god of his work and making money? Will he serve the god of pleasure? Will he serve the god of self-interest and the accumulation of possessions? Or will he have such a definite conviction in his heart, his mind, and his will, that he will have no other gods before God. A godly man will serve God. He will not serve himself and his own interests, and put those before his serving God. The requirement is stated this way in the book of Titus, Chapter 1, verse 7. The man must not be not self-willed. Rather, he has a definite purpose and resolve which comes from wanting to do and keep God's word, and it leads to definite actions to please God. This is what must be seen in the prospective elder. The firm exercise of his leadership and loving use of authority in his family will lead to definite actions. He will be loving and gently firm. We will serve the Lord. We will together learn to do His good will. We will worship together when others are entertaining themselves on the Lord's Day. We will have regular family devotions and read the Bible and pray, and even sometimes sing together in our worship to the Lord.

**Now, 2ndly – A man who would be an elder must, in his own family, have the wisdom to make it plain that it is natural and reasonable to obey God.**

This doesn't mean that it will not take grace for the children to obey; but look at Colossians 3: 20 and 21. "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." "Father, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." Children are to obey their parents in all things, but fathers have a very great role in representing to them what God is looking for in terms of their obedience. They are not to provoke their children; that is exasperate them, lest they become discouraged. It is possible that the children have the impression that their father is watching their every move, and trying to simply force them to obedience to himself at every point. But this is not the way that a godly father acts. A godly father will represent God's requirements of obedience as a most reasonable and natural response to what Christ has done for us in purchasing and giving grace to us. I know that there are times of cross-bearing in the Christian

life; times of trouble and difficulty; times when obedience seems like a hard thing; but you fathers ought to try to portray to your children the truth that the Lord's "yoke is easy and his burden is light." You should explain to them that since grace has come to you, that His commandments are not burdensome; that you are joyful in your obedience to Him. And where the child is reluctant, or even when he is inclined not to want to listen, there ought to be not only the exhortation to obey; there ought to be in you the willingness by faith, to beseech them to do what is right. Romans 12: 1 and 2 say, "I beseech you therefore, 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 the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." This is what you are called to do fathers with your children; to beseech them to prove for themselves, by faith in Jesus Christ, the good and perfect and reasonable will and way of God. Are you doing this with them? This is way of the godly father; not to exasperate his children, but to plead with them and to persuade them with reasonable arguments. This is what the prospective candidate for the eldership should be manifesting in his speech and his actions towards his dear children. It is called the father's law. Proverbs 4: 1-7 – "Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." "When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me and said to me: Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live." "Get wisdom!" "Get understanding!" "Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth." "Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you." "Wisdom is the principle thing." This is how the godly man speaks and reasons with his children. He is not demanding, not provoking, not exasperating in the way that he exhorts and pleads for his children to listen to him and to obey him.

**3rdly – A man who would be an elder must show and demonstrate a love that makes it a pleasure to obey.**

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 6: 1-9. "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach , that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." "Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—a land flowing with milk and honey." "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God the Lord is one!" "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart." "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and

when you rise up." "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Let me ask you this question fathers; Do you speak of the Lord's words with your children when you walk in the way? When you sit in your house, when you lie down, and when you rise up? Do your children see and have you demonstrated to them, that kind of love which brings them along into all the interests and pursuits of your life? Or do you leave them behind and God too, in your thoughts and in your speech. No, your speech ought to be seasoned with salt, that is with grace, that it may edify those around you; especially your children. When you do bring them along, then in the time of testing they will follow your lead and obey the Lord. I want to show this from an example in the Scriptures. Turn with me to Genesis 22: 1-12. "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' "And he said, 'Here I am.'" "Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'" So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." "Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off." "And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.'" "So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together." "But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!'" "And he said, 'Here I am, my son.'" "Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'" "And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'" "So the two of them went together." "Then they came to the place of which God had told him." "And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood." "And Abraham stretched out his knife to slay his son." "But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!'" "So he said, 'Here I am.'" "And he said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'"

There are several things that I want you to note from this passage. Abraham here shows and demonstrates a very important principle which I hope will be seen in every parent among us and, I pray, in myself. He loved God pre-eminently. He loved Isaac very deeply, but He loved God more." "This is why Abraham was willing to take Isaac and bind him and to offer him up there on Mt. Moriah. He would not withhold him when God asked for him to be given. His obedience was a ready obedience. He rose early when the command came. He knew that whatever God commanded him, that God would provide the way to keep the command. He believed that God would even raise Isaac from the dead if he went through with

the command. But what is beautiful is to see and to behold, is Isaac's submission and willingness to go along with this. Abraham had been such an example of faith and love to Isaac that the young man knew that it was what God had ordered. When Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, and started to bind Isaac, he didn't yell at him and say – "Dad, you're crazy!" "You must hate me." He didn't run away or fight against what his father was doing to him. He was able to submissively go along with his father, and I believe that he would have willingly died that day. Surely this is a picture of the Father actually taking His only Son and giving Him up as a sacrifice for us all; all who would believe. But I am saying, this is how the parent should lead his children along; this is how the elder must lead as well; loving God pre-eminently; loving his children and the people of God dearly, and ruling his own house well. He will show and demonstrate authority and wisdom and love that makes it advisable, and reasonable, and even a pleasure to obey. Oh may God grant this to each father here.