

**1 Timothy 3: 6; "Not a Novice", Sermon # 17 in a series on the Eldership
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 25th, 2010,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In our study of the qualifications of an elder, we have gone through 2 lists of 7 qualifications thus far. They show us what kind of a man God is looking for to be a pastor a local church, but they show us also what we are looking for and what we should look for when we consider men for this important office and work. If a man has these character qualities it will mean that there will be something for God to build with and build upon, in the building of Christ's Church. If a man has these qualities it will mean that the church itself; the local congregation of believers, will have someone who they can build with, and upon. They will see in him a man who will teach and shepherd them, but also will also come to see him also as one who wants them to do all that they can for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. He will be a man who brings out the best in them. And this is why we have the last 2 qualifications given to us here in verses 6 and 7. He must not be a novice and he must have a good testimony with those outside. The reasons given for these requirements both relate to the work and activity of the Devil, and his fall into sin. **Let us look this afternoon at the phrase – "Not a Novice".**

The word "novice" in the dictionary means a candidate for admission to a religious order, one new to anything; an inexperienced person; a beginner. The candidate for the ministry must not be, "a new convert", as it says in the New American Standard Translation. In the Greek the word is Neophytos – a new convert. In extra-Biblical Greek the word is used to refer to a newly planted tree. His roots are not deep enough; he is not a firmly planted tree as pictured in Psalm 1, verse 3 and Jeremiah 17: 7 and 8. He needs Christian experience, that which comes from time and trial and being taught practically about what living the Christian life means, as well as having the knowledge of the Word of God only. It does not mean that a man must have all the experience of a pastor to be a pastor. It means that he must have all the experience of a mature Christian to be a pastor. It is very dangerous to put a man into this office as one who is immature in the experience of a Christian. Turn with me to 1st John 2: 12. "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." "I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning." "I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one." "I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father." "I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the Beginning." "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."

We find here three levels of maturity which are referenced to the kind of maturity we find in these titles: 1st – Little children. The one who has come to know the Lord by the forgiveness of their sins is a little child in the faith. They are a babe in Christ, just beginning to learn about what is sinful and what is righteous, and needing to be instructed in these things from the Word of God. John says in Chapter 2, verse 1 of this little Epistle, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin." "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." In verse 3 he explains how a young Christian can know that they know Christ. "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." In Chapter 2, verse 18, he explains to them about the Antichrist who was to come and about false religion. He says, "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." In Chapter 3, verse 1 He tells them about God the Father's love for them. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God!" He tells them of Christ's future Second Coming and how they can be making progress in holiness. Verse 2 says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." In Chapter 4 he warns them about being naïve and gullible; believing what anyone might say, about spiritual things. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." "By this you know the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God." "And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard was coming, and is now already in the world." He goes on to tell them how they might overcome the world and false teachers. "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." "They are of the world." "Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them." There is a very real sense in which all Christians of whatever stage they are in the Christian life are still little children. We always need to have the Lord instruct on various matters of faith and obedience. But there is a sense also in which it will be a tremendous shame if a Christian does not grow up out of the stage of a babe. But John says that even babes can overcome the world and press on to maturity in living their Christian life.

The next level is young men, those who have advanced in their experience to the place where they have "overcome the wicked one." "They are strong," it says, "and the Word of God abides in them." "They are warm and zealous for God," says John Gill, "lively in the exercise of grace, fervent in the discharge of duty, zealous for God, for His cause and interest, for the glory of a Redeemer." "They are active; diligent, and industrious, always abounding the work of the Lord." And

then finally there are fathers. They are "those who have know Him who is from the Beginning." This is mentioned twice which means that they had maturity of both knowledge and experience. They were men who by the real experience of facing temptation and adversity were going to be able to stand in the evil day of Satan's temptations and stand up under the oppressions which he would most certainly try to bring to them to discourage them from continuing in their ministry to Christ. They know God and His ways. They will not look to the world and its ways. They would not be puffed up with pride when they were given an office of more responsibility. Instead, they will fear and mistrust their own wisdom and abilities and will be looking to God alone for strength; to Christ alone for righteousness. They would know and understand that it was grace alone that caused them to differ. Pride in them would be abased, and their own glory would be laid in the dust. This is the proven character of the fathers mentioned here.

Pride is the great danger and sin of a novice. He is enamored by how other men see him. Is he great? Is he godly? Then he is thrilled and fueled to know it. But the one who would be an elder is not fueled by pride, but by the glory of Christ and with doing things to the honor of His name, and the advancement of His Cause. The Devil, in the beginning, was advanced to a great height and responsibility; to watch over the garden of God; to be representing the holiness of God, and His care over all creation; especially His creation Man. But turn with me over to Ezekiel Chapter 28, verses 1-10, and we will talk about pride in the heart of a king and a devil. "The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 'Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Because your heart is lifted up, and you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,' yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel!" "There is no secret that can be hidden from you!" "With your wisdom and your understanding you have gained riches for yourself, and gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; by your great wisdom and your understanding you have gained riches for yourself, and gather gold and silver into your treasuries; by your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches)," "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, the most terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and defile your splendor.'" "They shall throw you down into the Pit, and you shall dies the death of the slain in the midst of the seas." "Will you still say before him who slays you, 'I am a god?" "But you shall be a man, and not a god, in the hand of him who slays you."

We see here in this passage, as well as the one we will turn to, in a minute, God addressing the King of Tyre, and in Isaiah 14, He is addressing the King of Babylon. And in both of these addresses, we find a very graphic description of the thoughts and motives of men of pride. But we will find also the history of Satan woven into these passages as well, for these kings are following in the footsteps of their father the Devil. Pride has laid hold of them. "Their heart was lifted up."

They have been elevated to a high position in the sight of men. Satan has given them a demonic worldly wisdom so that they know the secret things of how gain riches and gather treasures. They feel as though they are on top of the world. But God promises them that He would, "defile their splendor" by bringing the most terrible of nations against them who would "draw their swords against the beauty of their wisdom." Would they then still say that they are a god? Pride is a sin of the heart and mind that makes a man feel like he is someone very great, when he is actually seen as sinfully insignificant and self-deceived in the eyes of God. When a man's heart is lifted up, or puffed up (clouded with the smoke of pride), he thinks himself someone great, but God still sees him only as a man who is dependent upon him for everything; life, breath, food, clothing, house, riches, blessing, and honor. But pride robs a man of all of the good things that God would bestow, freely by His grace. Jesus was resolved to go to the cross and die, for the sins of the world and Peter would keep Him from it. "Get thee behind Me Satan," was the response from his Lord. Peter was not Satan, but Peter's thoughts and motives and words were being used by Satan to accomplish his self-exalting purposes. Jesus would humble himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Satan, through his pride, would rob us every good thing.

Here in Ezekiel 28, we find God's description of Satan's pride woven into the prophecy against the King of Tyre. Verse 11 says, "Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, take up a lamentation for the King of Tyre, and say to him, "Thus say the Lord God": "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold." "The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day that you were created." "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones." "You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you." (By the way; this could be said of no man, for all men are born in sin) "By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones." "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor..." Then follows the judgment upon the King of Tyre from verse 17 – 19. But it was the pride of Satan in the beginning, while he had responsibility to "guard the garden of God" that led to his fall, and his proud attempts to establish his own splendor. O seek not your own glory, for your pride will destroy your soul and take you down to the Pit. Satan was once beautiful, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. He was once given a high position, but he was so impressed by himself that he corrupted his own wisdom. God had established this beautiful and powerful and privileged angel on the holy mountain of God. But when he became familiar with the plans and purposes of God to exalt man;

perhaps eventually over the angels, he was filled with violence within against God's good purposes in regard to His creation man. He thought it was not right that Man should be raised up to become someday, greater than he. And so he crept into the garden as a serpent after he cultivated these proud thoughts of himself, and he tried to destroy God's purposes and His handiwork. Except for Christ, He would have succeeded. But now, he shall never succeed. The evil one has been overcome by our Lord Jesus at the cross!

Look at his fall once again, and stand in fear of this awful sin! Isaiah 14: 12. "How you are fallen, Lucifer, son of the morning!" "How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!" "For you have said in your heart; 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High,' yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit."

Let's see if we can apply this to what we are studying. The novice who becomes enamored with all the attention that comes to him because of the ministry, and thus becomes proud, inadvertently falls into the hands of the Devil, and comes into the same condemnation as the Devil. Pride is a sin which is quite contrary to the lowliness of mind we find in Christ. He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Himself the form of a servant, even though the Son of God. Now, we who have become sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus must learn to do the same thing. The work of the elder is humble service to God, not so much the notoriety of being a world-class preacher. Maturity will evidence this truth to the man himself, and to all whom he ministers to. When we think of a man being raised up to the eldership, let us look for a humble man, a man who has the holy ambition to bring glory to God, and not to himself. Let us look for a man who can pray the poem-prayer of Amy Carmichael. This is what she wrote. "From fear that asks I may be, sheltered from winds which beat on Thee; from fearing when I should aspire, from faltering when I should climb higher; from silken self, O Captain free, Thy soldier who would follow Thee." "From subtle love of softening things, from easy choices; weakenings." "Not thus are spirits fortified; not this way went the crucified." "From all that dims Thy Calvary; O Lamb of God deliver me!" "Give me the love that leads the way; the faith that nothing can dismay; the hope no disappointments tire; the passion that will burn like fire; let me not sink to be a clod, make me Thy fuel, O Flame of God!"