

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3: 2a – "The Husband of one Wife", Sermon # 4 in a series of sermons on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010, In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have finished looking at the one over-all requirement which must be seen in the life of a man who would be an Elder; that is, that he would be blameless. Last week we looked at examples of the word blameless so that we could put Biblical faces on what it means to be blameless. We looked at the life of Zacharias in Luke Chapter 1, and we saw that he and his wife Elizabeth were people who were walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. This didn't mean that Zacharias didn't have to work through issues of his faith in relation to what the Lord was doing for him. He didn't believe the message of the angel to him when he came to Zacharias while he was performing his service in the temple to burn incense. And as a result he was struck mute by God until the time of his son John's birth. We saw that he did respond to this chastening well, though, and he learned what the Lord wanted him to know; that nothing is too difficult for the Lord. We also looked at the life of Job last week. We saw that he was man of integrity in many ways and he was boasted of by God in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the book as being blameless. Satan did not like this and so demanded permission of God to be allowed to take away almost everything that gave Job joy and happiness. He did this to see if he would "curse God to his face". This Job did not do. But he did succumb to "justifying himself rather than God" in the trial, and so we saw that no blameless man is ever perfect until glory. But we saw that Job was indeed restored, when he did justify God after being reprovved by Elihu and by God Himself. And so I concluded my message to you last week with this statement. "This is what it means to be blameless, not perfection without sin; but perfection of intent, moving towards righteousness in heart and life."

Now we are in a position to continue down though this list of character qualifications and ministerial qualifications; the marital and the family requirements which we find here listed for the man who would be, or who is, an elder. My desire is for plurality of leadership in this church. We need to see that God's standards are high, but they are not unreasonable or impossible. They are however very personal. If you look into the life of a man who is an elder you are going to find a man who, himself, is being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Whatever good is in him, whatever character qualities you see, have been built into him by the work of God's grace and the power and leading of the Holy Spirit in his life. He strives to be like Christ and to keep His commandments. But he knows that he cannot keep God's commandments without prayer. He realizes that whatever he accomplishes or wants to accomplish must be done by faith in Christ. He is humbled by the thought that he is Christ's steward. He knows that

without Christ; he can do nothing. With Christ he can do all things. There are 4 personal qualifications that are listed here and they are related to the wise and righteous choices that a man makes. He must be the husband of one wife. And he must be temperate, sober-minded, and of good behavior. Let's take the 1<sup>st</sup> personal qualification this afternoon and look at it. It may take us our whole time. If it does not, we will go on to at what it means to be temperate.

### **1<sup>st</sup> of all – What does it mean to be the Husband of one wife?**

Is it not interesting that this requirement is the first qualification that becomes specific? It is apparent that a single man may not be excluded, or else the Apostle Paul would have excluded himself, as he was a single man. "For I wish," he says in 1 Corinthians 7: 7, "that all men were even as myself." "But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that." So it is apparent that a single man could not be excluded from consideration, but that it would be the general expectation, that a man would be married; of that, there can be no doubt. Verse 4 speaks of his household and his children. The Greek word in the text reads, "A one-woman man." The intent of this qualification is to prove the marital faithfulness of the man and to establish his sexual purity in the undefiled and holy estate of marriage. John MacArthur says, "Some may wonder why Paul begins this list with this quality." "He does so because it is in this area above all other, where leaders seem most prone to fall." "The failure to be a one-woman man has put more men out of the ministry than any other sin." "It is thus a matter of grave concern." I believe that he is absolutely right. Turn with me over to 1 Corinthians Chapter 7, verse 1 – "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does." "And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." "But I say this by concession, not as a commandment." "For I wish that all men were even as I myself." "But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that." Verse 2 says that it is because of sexual immorality that each man should have his own wife, each woman her own husband. Some men and women have a gift from God to have the self-control necessary over their passions that they do not need to marry. I would venture to say that most people; the vast majority of people, are not in this camp." "It is very important that the man who would be, or is an elder or pastor, must be hopelessly in love; deeply in love; continuously in love; with his wife. He only has eyes for her, and he is often thinking about her and what she needs. His own sexual needs should be fulfilled in relation to her, and to her alone. They should both realize what each other needs, and not deprive one another of the affection which is due

at the right time and in the right way. The husband must not think of himself as so spiritual, so busy, so pre-occupied with the work of the Lord and the church that he doesn't spend time alone with her or show her affection to her. The same goes for the candidate for the ministry. He must not be so pre-occupied with his job, with his work, with his own interests outside the home, that he neglects to show affection and attention to his wife. He will not mind spending time sitting and speaking with her over many subjects of concern to her or to himself. He cultivates a companionship relationship. And this is one of the real building blocks of a satisfying relationship; sexually, and in every other way.

Indeed, there ought to be a healthy display of affection between a husband and his wife at many points, in their times together, in an appropriate way. It ought to be noticeable to others around them; their children, and at times even by others in the congregation of the church. I am not suggesting that a man and his wife be showing this affection during the services of worship in the church when attention and glory and praise ought to be paid to God alone. But at other times, this general affection ought to be quite evident to others around them. We even have a Biblical example of this given to us in Genesis Chapter 26, verses 6-9, if you will turn there with me. Verse 6 says, "So Isaac dwelt in Gerar." "And the men of the place asked about his wife." "And he said, 'She is my sister'; for he was afraid to say, 'She is my wife,' because he thought, 'lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." (But notice; even though he was afraid; even these circumstances did not stop Isaac from eventually trying to show Rebekah the affection that he felt for her.) "Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to his wife." "Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, 'Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, 'she is my sister'?" "Isaac said to him, 'Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.'" The NASB translates the words "showing endearment" as "caressing his wife." And some bold puritan translator of the King James translation really hit the original on the head. It says, "behold, Isaac was sporting with his wife". I think that the puritans are slandered greatly when they are spoken of as prudish in relation to sex within marriage. He was sporting with his wife. It was pretty obvious to Abimelech that Rebekah was Isaac's wife, not his sister. All other Christian women; a Christian man ought to treat as sisters; but his wife; she more than just a sister; she is the one whom he sports with. Ephesians Chapter 5, verse 28 says, "So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies; He who loves his wife, loves himself." "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church." Verse 32b says, "...and the two shall become one flesh." "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Is there mystery in your marriage? Do you understand everything about your spouse? No, you say, I gave that up years ago. I would say, "Why?" That is the glorious thing about marriage that makes a man a "one-woman man." It is that the husband never stops learning something new

about his wife. No, it is true in good marriages. You may have been married 30 years or 50 years, but men; you will not stop learning something new about your wife; the way that she thinks and the way that she feels. Courtship and holy dating are only the beginning. There were 3 things that were too wonderful for Agur, the son of Jakeh in Proverbs 30, verse 19, "four which he did not understand." "The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid."

You say to me; well my wife and I have never been able to have children, and I have grown very discouraged about this. Well, you should rest in the love of God and Christ, together, and pray that He would give you children. Listen to Genesis 25, verse 21. Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived." Ah, how great is our God. It is the Lord who opens the womb and shuts the womb, and if he shuts, he has good reasons too. Remember Hannah in 1 Samuel Chapter 1? Even though she could not have children, her husband still loved her greatly and tried to make it up to her in the way that he treated her. Verse 5 says, "But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb." And in verse 8 it says that he said to her, "Am I not better to you than 10 sons?" I am aware that Elkanah was not a one-woman man, but in this one respect; in respect of the way that he treated his wife Hannah, he was a true model of how a one-woman man should act. This is how the one-woman man should be; providing generously for his wife; and caring for her in every way; nourishing her and cherishing her; giving himself for her; laying out his money, his time, and his resources so that she will be truly happy and satisfied. He should inquire of her if she is truly happy, and ask her why, if she evidently is not. He will take the time to do this. He will not dismiss her concerns and then go off to spend more time with his male friends after he gets married, than he does with his wife. He doesn't leave her behind when he goes places, but he takes her with him if he can. If she is a homebody, he learns to stay at home with her when he is not working. He learns to please her, and not to simply please himself. And men; do not compare your relationship with your wife, with some other man's relationship with his wife. You have no right to do so. The woman whom God has given to you is unique, and it is for you to find out what will truly satisfy her, and please her, and make her happy.

The one final thing that I should mention in relation to the one-woman man is that the Christian man, who would want to eventually become an elder, should study to find a woman to be his wife, who is a woman of faith; a woman who will follow his lead. This is a very desirable quality in a pastor or elder. This is a very good quality in the woman whom you will marry, if you are presently single. I want you to turn to Genesis Chapter 24 with me. This is the beautiful story of how Abraham found a wife for his son Isaac. He knew that as a godly man, he should seek for a wife for his son who would be a woman of faith. He knew that he should not take a wife for his son, from the daughters of the Canaanites where he dwelt.

They did not know the Lord. If you desire to be an Elder someday, or if you don't, still this principle is true for the Christian man. Seek a wife who is a converted woman; a woman of faith, and a woman who will follow your lead. Listen to verse 2. "So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, 'Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.'" "And the servant said to him, 'Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land.'" "Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?" "But Abraham said to him, 'Beware that you do not take my son back there.'" "The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.'" Watch this now – "And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from my oath; only do not take my son back there." "So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter." Well, perhaps you know the story. But what happened was that the servant sent to Haran and he prayed as he approached the place, as it is recorded in verse 12 – "O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham." "Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water." "Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please give me a drink, and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac." "And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." And it happened just as he prayed. Do you pray for a wife for your son? Do you pray for a wife or a husband for yourself? This you ought to do if you desire a godly wife or husband. What is wonderful is that she didn't follow the servant because she was forced to. She was a woman of faith and wanted to do what the Lord would have her to do. When Abraham's servant did not want to stay the extra 10 days which Rebekah's relatives were hoping that he would, they said in verse 57, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." "Then they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?'" "And she said, 'I will go.'" They were the three words which changed her life forever.

How good and blessed a thing it is to find a godly wife, a prudent wife, a woman who will follow your lead if you desire to become an elder. This is a good and blessed thing even if you never become an elder. But if a man is being called to leave the city which he has resided in for many years and to take up the work of the ministry in a city which he is unfamiliar with; how blessed a thing it is if he has a wife who is content to be with him; to work and labor together for the kingdom with him; a woman who will follow his lead, and still be satisfied though trials and difficulties may come. Their love for Christ, their love for the people whom they will minister to; and their love for each other will sustain them. May the Lord give

godly wives to all of our young men in this congregation. May the Lord give godly husbands to the single women here; men who are not only willing, but desirous, to be a one-woman man. Let us pray to God that it may be so, that His kingdom and His glory would be promoted in our midst.