

## The Preacher's Family

According to Timothy and Titus, God has placed strict requirements on the pastor.

Most of you who are reading this article would know the "rules," but here is a brief summary before I deal with the power of God.

1 Timothy 3:2 "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"

vs. 3 "Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;"

vs. 4 "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;"

vs. 5 "(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"

vs. 6 "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

vs. 7 "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

For the sake of space and keeping to the subject, I will only point out the words that apply to the matter at hand -- the wife and children:

*blameless*

*one wife*

*no striker*

*patient*

*rule his house (children)*

Actually, more words could apply to the home, but these are more than enough for the moment.

*Blameless* -- (*Blameless* is an important word) one who so lives that he might be falsely accused, but no one would believe it, nor could it be proven. *Blameless* does **not** mean guilty but got-away-with-it due-to-technicalities.

I know of men who failed morally and went back into the ministry. That is not my persuasion, nor is it normal. Independent Baptist churches allow each church to make the choice. Personally, I feel a serious moral spot on one's life eliminates the option of pastoring, but that is my belief.

When a man is divorced or has been unfaithful to his wife, he will lower the standard of holiness in his preaching and, as such, do harm to the families in his church.

"*One wife*" -- One at a time or one period? One, and if she died, you do not remarry? Most people believe that this is speaking about one wife, never divorced, and certainly not more than one at a time (which has been common in many parts of the world over the centuries).

I believe one wife means one wife, never divorced. Today, some men pastor with a divorce behind them and whatever else happens, the Bible is preached. I am not in favor of this, but every church is free to make their own decision, and every man will face God and give an account of himself.

*“NO striker” and patient* -- These two words are together for the sake of time and space, but a man with anger issues should not pastor a church. Home, among family, is a place where the truth is brought out dramatically, and a church can also be a serious test of a man's ability to control his attitude and words.

The pastor is to represent Christ; as an under-shepherd, he is to respond in a way that reflects our Lord, and uncontrolled anger is certainly not a part of Christlikeness. Saying something in the moment of anger that perhaps is not appropriate, certainly does not disqualify a man from the ministry; if it did, Paul and Barnabas would have been disqualified, for their contention was so sharp that they parted company for the rest of their ministries. A man with a tendency to anger, violence, or cruel treatment of his wife, children, or church members are more likely disqualifying factors.

*“Ruling his house”* — To be the man who sets the course for the home is vital for the pastor. In every society, you will find many ladies who simply run things; this cannot be so of the pastor's wife. The pastor must rule. The thousands of decisions of the day may be passed along to the wife, but the course, the plans, the security, and the standards of the home must lie in the hands of the husband. This has nothing to do with the foolish 50/50 talk in American equality lectures. The man is to RULE. Like the president, like the superintendent, like the ship's captain who has many in authority under him; ultimately, his word is law. That philosophy would be politically incorrect, and that would make many a person angry, but God says that the pastor is to rule his own house and the church.

## **Children**

1 Timothy 3:4 “...having his children in subjection with all gravity;”

Titus 1:6 “If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.”

When my wife and I started the ministry, we made the decision that if our children were accused of being unruly, I would resign. This does not mean my children would never break a rule, but if they were corrected, they would respond well, honoring the authority. They would have a submissive spirit when they crossed a line. If they were not in subjection, if they were defiant, or if they would not do as they were told, we would have to resign. I could not defile the ministry by staying in leadership with children in violation to the commands of God. Once the children were out of our house, we felt our responsibility for their behavior was removed.

What about all those who pastor and yet have serious weaknesses in one or more of these areas? Remember the first-century churches are the ones who turned the world

upside down without a complete Bible, and there was little or no knowledge of their message; yet the power of God was so evident that the Gospel changed the world, even to the point of our calendar being based upon the Saviour. That kind of power is missing in most of our world. That kind of power and dramatic effect on lives is hindered to the extreme by a lack of holiness. I would not say that a man cannot be a pastor if he is weak in one of these areas. I will say that for every hole in the bucket, the bucket gets increasingly difficult to keep filled. For every area of sin or violation of holiness in the life of the pastor, he will find the power of God less evident and the work of God more difficult to accomplish.

Hebrews 1:8-9 tells us that because Christ loved righteousness and hated iniquity, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit above all others. To excuse unrighteousness and to fall short of each area of scripturally-explained righteousness destines us to spiritual inadequacy.

The work of God is limited by our failure to stand true to our job description.

Remember, God continued to bless Samson as he drifted farther away from right. A tragic end was inevitable if something dramatic did not occur to bring him back to **righteousness**. Saul was used as he drifted, but he, too, finally crossed a line where God could not longer use him in any way. I, for one, do not want to be used while on my way to ruin. I want to be blessable!

1 Corinthians 9:27 "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

There is a point for the pastor when he may be set aside and placed on the shelf, unusable. Between being a yielded powerful man of God and a castaway, there are probably a few stops, but I would rather stay doing things the way God asks. The church deserves better. The families in our churches deserve better. Our own wives and children deserve better. We are not in danger of being too holy.

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