

View

A Publication of the Folsom Point church of Christ. 900 E. Natoma, Folsom, CA

March 23, 2008

J. W. McGarvey on the Eldership

Part 2

4. Character. The traits of character prescribed for an Elder are numerous, and when considered as a whole they present a very rare combination. The first of these in logical order, and the first mentioned in both of the epistles which treat of the subject, is blamelessness. When it is, said that an overseer must be blameless, we must of necessity understand the term in a comparative, not in an absolute sense. This necessity arises from the fact acknowledged and insisted upon by the apostles, that no man is entirely blameless when his character stands a fair comparison with the characters of other good men. The apostle seems, to have his eye upon the counterpart of the good reputation which we have already mentioned. If a man possessing a good repute among them who are without, is known to have a character corresponding to this, he is blameless in the only sense in which men in the flesh can be blameless. We may remark further, that this qualification, from the very fact of its being comparative, must admit of different degrees, and that some qualified Elders may be more blameless than others. The degree which is requisite to eligibility in any given case, must be determined by those who are immediately concerned in the selection and ordination of the Elder. [58]

To be blameless, is merely to be free from faults. Not content with this general prohibition, the apostle proceeds to specify some faults which it is especially important for the overseer to avoid. He must not be covetous. We have already spoken of the importance of this prohibition, while treating of the example which the Elders should set before their brethren. A covetous Eldership will make a covetous

church, and a covetous church is a dead church.

As the Elder must not be covetous, so, according to the reading of our common version, he must not be “greedy of filthy lucre.” The Greek adjective, of which this expression is the rendering, is *aischrokerdos*, compounded of *aischros*, base, and *kerdos*, gain. There is a slight difference of opinion as to its meaning. Some critics render it “greedy of gain,” and some, “making money by base means.” The latter understand the apostle as prohibiting any disreputable business; and the former, as prohibiting the greed for gain which would lead to such a business. By either rendering, a disreputable occupation is prohibited — such, for example, as dealing in intoxicating liquors, jockey trading, rearing sporting stock, renting property for improper uses, and such like, in none of which can a man engage unless his greed for gain overrides his regard for the welfare of the community. Any other course of life by which a man betrays an excessive greed for gain is undoubtedly prohibited.

The apostle also specifies among prohibited faults, self-will. The Elder must not be self-willed. No man is fit to hold office jointly with other men, who is not content to often yield his own will to that of his compeers. Neither is any man capable of [59] exercising moral sway over a community, who, possesses an iron will that never bends to the wishes of others. We speak now of matters which are lawfully subject to the will of man, not of those in which God’s will has been declared. Within the limits of the latter there is no room for the human will to play—it has only to submit.

In the third place, the overseer is to avoid everything that would disturb the peace of the church. He is not to be a “striker,” nor a “brawler,” nor even “soon angry,” but in opposition to all these, he is to be “temperate” and “patient.” He will have frequent occasions for the trial of his patience, if he makes vigorous efforts to discharge his duties; and unless he is well supplied with it, though he may not fall to brawling and striking, he will become ill-tempered and discouraged. Nothing is more wisely said, than that he must be patient

Besides the negative qualifications, or traits of character which an overseer must not possess, the apostle names a number of positive elements of character. He must be “just,” for he is a judicial functionary of the church; he must be “sober,” that is sober minded, for levity, which sobriety forbids, argues a want of piety; he must be a “lover of hospitality,” for otherwise he is devoid of that sympathy which is necessary in order to secure the affection of others; he must be “a lover of good men,” for all good men love one another; he must be “holy,” for he is set apart to a holy office, and his official acts concern the most holy relations which bind mere to one another and to their God.

5. *Habits.* A man’s habits grow out of his character, but they also react upon his character, [60] tending constantly to make it either better or worse. A habit of vigilance, or watchfulness, is enjoined upon the Elder, because without it many things most deleterious to the congregation would escape his notice. A want of this habit is a very common fault. While the overseer should be far better informed as to the condition of the members of the church than any other person in it or outside of it, it is often the case that through mere want of watchfulness he is the last to learn what is going on. A habit of watchfulness in matters of business is apt to follow a man into the office of overseer; hence the importance of requiring it as a condition of eligibility.

It is not more important for the overseer to be watchful, than that he should avoid the only other habits mentioned by the apostle, and not implied in the qualifications already discussed. He must not be “given to much wine.” It is not merely drunkenness that is here prohibited; if it was, we would doubtless have the word which is appropriated to the expression of that idea. Neither is the idea of *much* in the original. The term is *paroinon, by wine*, and means simply, *given to wine*. It doubtless contemplates a man who is given to a freer use of

wine than was customary among strictly sober people even though he might never become intoxicated.

We have now glanced rapidly at the rare combination of moral traits and habits which must characterize the overseer, and will next discuss the intellectual qualifications which are necessary to his usefulness as a teacher.

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Study

7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged at your
convenience.

For more information,
visit our web site at:

www.folsomchurch.com

Agenda

The Lord's Day, March 23, 2008

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching
Sermon: TBA

◆ Preaching: David Posey

5:00 PM: Lord's Supper, Singing, Preaching

◆ Sermon: David Posey

5:30 PM: Bible Classes for ages 18 mos., & up

Auditorium: What Jesus Wants to Know (various teachers)

Room 11-12: The Parables (David Byrd)

Room 8: Seed-Sowers (Dennis Wade & Cameron Carrozza)

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

10 AM, Bible class will resume March 26, 2008.

7:30 PM, Bible Classes for ages 18 mos. and up

Auditorium: The Sayings of Jesus (Rich Mowrer)

Room 11-12: Parenting by the Book (David Posey & Dennis Wade)

Notes

Sermons and Power Point charts are available online on our website (www.folsomchurch.com) or on CD (see a deacon)

“Are There Few Who Are Saved?”

by Steve Klein

And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?”

(Luke 13:22-23).

There are not many people in this world who could give the correct answer to the question Jesus was asked on this occasion. I doubt that very many know the answer Jesus gave, and many of those who know it won't accept it.

Of course, Jesus knew the right answer to the question. After all, He is not only the Savior, He is also the Judge who will sit on His throne and determine who will be saved and who will be lost (Mt 25:31-33). So, He is best qualified to answer whether or not there are few who are saved.

What was His answer? He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24). Elsewhere He said, “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14). And on more than one occasion He declared that “many are called but few are chosen” (Mt 20:16; 22:14). Clearly, few will be saved.

How many does it take to make up “a few”? In Noah's day, “a few, that is, eight souls, were save through water” (1 Peter 3:20). That's not many. It's not most. It's certainly not all.

It is false comfort to go through life believing that everyone we know — all our friends, neighbors and relatives and all of their friends, neighbors and relatives, along with our favorite celebrities, politicians and football coaches — will be saved. We wish they would be. So does God. He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4). But it is not going to happen.

Accepting the fact that there are few who are saved will help us in a couple of important ways.

· First, we will make a better effort to be among the few who are saved. Jesus commanded us to strive to enter through the narrow gate. When we see just how narrow it is, and perceive just how few will find it, we will give even more diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

· Second, we will be more fervent in persuading others to obey the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 5:11 the apostle Paul said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” If few are saved, many are lost. Only the gospel can save them. We must share it!