

## INTRODUCTION

Do you understand that it is important what man we elect to be the president of these United States? I'm sure most of you do! The man in that position is supposed to lead the federal government to secure our rights. He is entrusted with the authority to use the sword to punish evildoers, so we can live quietly in our daily lives of honesty and in our Lord's Day gatherings for worship, undisturbed by enemies foreign or domestic. But a man elected to that office who does not hold to those truths about the role of government, or whose personal character is so severely flawed that he does not consistently do what is right, such a man can be a curse to us rather than a blessing.

Do you understand that it is important what man a young woman chooses to marry? I'm sure most of you do! A man in the position of a woman's husband is supposed to love her as his own body, nurturing and cherishing her, providing for and protecting her. If they have children, he is supposed to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, not sparing the rod, so the children will obey their parents, and more broadly to fear the Lord and reverence those in authority over them. But a man who becomes a woman's husband and her children's father, who does not hold to those truths about how a man should live, or whose personal character is so severely flawed that he does not consistently do what is right, such a man can be a curse to his wife and children rather than a blessing.

Do you understand that it is important what men a church chooses for its pastors, elders, bishops? I'm sure most of you do, or at least you are learning it now. A man in the position of overseer, or the office of bishop, is placed in that office for the purpose of doing the worthy, good, important, excellent work of shepherding the flock of God. But if a church chooses a man to be a bishop, elder, pastor, who does not hold to the truth about Jesus Christ, as taught us by His apostles in the Bible, who is not committed to doing the work of maintaining sound doctrine in the church, or whose personal character is so severely flawed that he does not consistently do what is right, such a man can be a curse to the church rather than a blessing.

So our Lord Jesus, who loves us, and who shed His own blood to purchase the church for Himself, gave us a rule for how to choose pastors for his churches, so the churches can have pastors that are like good shepherds, can have elders who do the two-fold good work of a shepherd: to feed the sheep sound doctrine, and resist the intrusion of wolfish false teachers. Our Lord Jesus gave us a rule for how to choose pastors for his churches; that rule is: a bishop must be blameless.

## TEXT

1 Timothy 3:1-2a This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. (2) A bishop then must be blameless...

## BODY

### I. Our Lord's Rule for His Churches Is: A Bishop Must Be Blameless

A. Not everyone's Bible says it just like that; so let's see how this is worded in our English Bibles here in 1 Tim 3:2

1. Tyndale: a bisshope must be faultlesse
2. Geneva: A bishop...must be vnreproueable
3. KJV & NKJV: A bishop...must be blameless
4. ESV: an overseer must be above reproach

B. The same rule appears at Titus 1:7

1. the same in each translation as at 1 Tim 3:2

C. How this reads in the Greek

1. G423 *anepileptos*

a) negation + to lay hold of

b) you hear the same root as our medical term "epilepsy"

(1) epilepsy is characterized by "seizures"

(2) seizure in this sense is a condition that seems to seize a person, to take hold of him, until it is over

c) but for a person to be "seized" in a legal sense is for him to be arrested on suspicion of having committed a crime

d) here our Greek word means that a man is not subject to being seized or laid hold of justly

2. G410 *anegkletos* (Titus 1)

a) negation + to call in or to accuse

b) a man who is *anegkletos* could not rightly be called in to be accused of anything

D. So, gathering up those terms, we can say that a bishop must be a man who is

1. faultless or blameless
2. unproveable or irreproachable

E. I'm mostly going to say, "blameless," but now you know the Greek words behind that, and the various ways of saying this in our language

F. Note that this is the standard for deacons, also

1. 1 Timothy 3:10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.
2. interesting that here all our Bibles say, "blameless"

Our Lord's rule for His churches is: a bishop must be blameless

II. We Need to Know In What Sense a Bishop Must Be Blameless

- A. There are some ways in which a person might be said to be blameless, that are true, and beautiful, and edifying, but that are not what the apostle Paul is talking about here
1. Our Lord Jesus is utterly blameless, entirely above reproach. No one can rightly blame Him for anything. No one can rightly reproach Him for anything.
    - a) so utterly blameless is He that He could die on the cross a substitute for us; if He had any sin at all, He would have deserved to die Himself---He could not have died for us; but He was and is completely blameless, so He did not deserve death---He died for us sinners who did deserve it
    - b) the apostle does not mean that the church can ordain a pastor only if a man in the church is completely sinless as Jesus Christ is sinless.
  2. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we, his disciples, are justified in God's sight; He counts us blameless, reckons us above reproach in Jesus Christ.
    - a) the apostle does not mean that the church can ordain a pastor only if a man in the church is justified through faith in Christ. (The whole church is justified through faith in Christ!)
  3. At the resurrection, our Lord Jesus will raise us up and change us, ridding us of all sin and all temptation to sin. We will be blameless and above reproach for all eternity, made into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.
    - a) the apostle does not mean that the church can ordain a pastor only if a man in the church is resurrected and changed to be incorruptible for all eternity.

B. There are examples in the Bible of a person said to be blameless or without reproach, which ARE what the apostle is talking about here

1. 1 Timothy 5:3-8 Honor widows who are really widows. (4) But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. (5) Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. (6) But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. (7) And these things command, that they may be **blameless [ESV without reproach]**. (8) But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
  - a) if the believers did not honor widows who are truly widows, they would not be blameless, without reproach; they could rightly be blamed, be reproached for not honoring widows who are really widows
  - b) if a widows children and other relatives did not care for that widow, they would not be blameless, without reproach; they could rightly be blamed, be reproached for not taking care of their own mother or grandmother
  - c) if a widow who is really, truly a widow, left all alone, were supported by her family or church, then neglected prayer and just sought to live life for what pleasures she could find, she would not be blameless, not be without reproach; she could rightly be blamed, be reproached for such a way of living;
  - d) so Timothy is to command that the church take care of true widows, that children take care of their own widowed mothers, and that widows devote themselves to prayer; then the believers will be **blameless, without reproach!**
  - e) but, to add a very obvious example of someone who would not be blameless, not without reproach, the apostle mentions how disgraceful it would be for a person not to provide for his own relatives, especially his own household
  - f) so, if a Christian acts as is appropriate for his situation in life, who takes care of those for whom he is responsible, he is considered blameless or without reproach

2. 1 Timothy 6:13-14 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, (14) that you keep this commandment without spot, **blameless [GEN unbreakable; ESV free from reproach]** until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,
  - a) 6:14 remembering that God is watching, and that Christ Jesus Himself made the good confession before Pontius Pilate, and so keeping the commandment, Timothy would be blameless, free from reproach
  - b) 6:12 fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life
  - c) 6:11 flee the love of money, greediness; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness
  - d) 6:8 be content with food and clothing
3. 1 Timothy 3:8-10 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; (9) Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. (10) And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found **blameless**.
  - a) it is something that can be perceived by testing
    - (1) not meaning a formal testing
    - (2) but observing how a person lives
  - b) it is set as equivalent with
    - (1) being grave, or reverent, or dignified
    - (2) holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience
  - c) it is set as the opposite of
    - (1) being double-tongued
    - (2) being given to much wine, addicted to much wine
    - (3) being greedy for money, for dishonest gain, for filthy lucre

C. Observations from the places the Bible speaks of a person being blameless in the sense the Bible means when it says a bishop must be blameless

1. meeting all obligations of a person's station or situation or relationships
  - a) e.g. if a woman is a destitute widow, devoting herself to prayer rather than to pleasures
  - b) e.g. if a man is married, being faithful to one wife
  - c) e.g. if a man has children, making sure those children submit to authority
2. holding firmly to the true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ
3. showing all Christian virtues
4. being free from vices
5. being capable of doing the work of the office

D. Comments from the best commentaries

1. Gill:

- a) not without sin, but free from any gross and enormous one
- b) [blameless] not before God, but in the sight of men

2. Calvin:

- a) he must not be marked by any infamy that would lessen his authority. There will be no one found among men that is free from every vice; but it is one thing to be blemished with ordinary vices, which do not hurt the reputation, because they are found in men of the highest excellence, and another thing to have a disgraceful name, or to be stained with any baseness. In order, therefore, that a bishop may not be without authority, he enjoins that there shall be made a selection of one who has a good and honorable reputation, and not chargeable with any remarkable vice.

E. My summary: To be chosen as a church pastor or elder or bishop, a man must be blameless in the sense that

- 1. he must fulfill all obligations in his relationships
- 2. he must be possessed of all Christian graces to an observable degree;
- 3. he must be free of any remarkable vices;
- 4. he must hold firmly to the truths of the faith as taught by the apostles;
- 5. he must be capable of teaching that faith even against opposition

Our Lord's rule for His churches is: a bishop must be blameless

We now know in what sense a bishop must be blameless

What are we going to do, on a practical basis, with our understanding of the rule that a bishop must be blameless?

### III. APPLICATION

- A. Admire the Lord Jesus Christ as utterly blameless
- B. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so be reckoned blameless in the judgment of God
- C. Look forward to the day you will be glorified when the Lord Jesus comes back and makes you blameless for all eternity
- D. Strive to live more and more as blameless in this life, as you wait for that day
- E. Determine in your conscience that the church where you are a member must choose as its pastors only such men as are blameless
  - 1. dismiss all competing ideas in favor of this one
  - 2. dismiss all misconceptions about what it means to be blameless
- F. Devote yourself to the apostles' doctrine on this matter, and to prayer
- G. Pray for blamelessness in Christian men
  - 1. pastors in your church
  - 2. boys and men in your church
  - 3. the boys and men in the other churches
  - 4. the men in the colleges and seminaries

### CONCLUSION

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, the Bishop of our souls, cares for us His flock so much that he gave us an imminently wise rule for how to choose pastors for his churches; that rule is: a bishop must be blameless.

Anna - Prelude (please pick something)

Anna - Trinity 683 "Praise Him! Praise Him!"

Rita - Trinity 125 "My Heart Doth Overflow" (Psalm 45)

~~Allison~~ Anna - Trinity 437 "Christ, of All My Hopes the Ground"

Chris - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Psalm 19:12-14

Roel - Scripture Reading - Psalm 45

Dillon - Congregational Prayer

JRY - Benediction - 1 Thessalonians 5:23