



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

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When Brethren Reject the Truth #3

Bryan Garlock

Truth is rejected when men oppose that which is truthful. Biblical truth is rejected when men oppose righteousness by their ungodliness.

The world has rejected the truth. Paul testified of this in his letter to the Romans when he showed that when one does not glorify or acknowledge God, is unthankful to Him and exchanges truth for a lie, etc. his suppression of truth has led to rejection (Romans 1:18-32).

Unfortunately, even some brethren reject the truth. In this series of articles, we want to examine many ways in which Christians have rejected and thereby hinder God's truth.

Consider the following easy-to-understand passage: "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you..." (Titus 1:5)

We find throughout the early beginnings of the church that Paul was engaged in appointing elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Not only did he do this himself, but he also charged Timothy and Titus, both evangelists, to select men worthy of the office. This is because each local church was instructed by God to select qualified men to oversee the work (see Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

Paul delivered to Timothy and Titus qualifications that must be met by two or more men to establish an eldership (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Sometimes there are simply no men qualified for the work. However, first century churches realized that qualifying men for the eldership was part of the work of the local church. Consequently if any churches were without elders, they were not without them for very long! Any local church that ceases to train men has ceased to obey Jesus and thereby rejected truth. Thus a question that should be *constantly* in the forefront of each individual's mind is: "What are we doing to prepare men for the office?"

It is both unfortunate and sinful that many churches have no leadership because many qualified men simply refuse to serve. Often times when asked to serve, "Moses-like" excuses are given, ranging from valid to foolishness. All the while these men make their excuses, the church is left wanting. Obviously a man who does not desire the office may not be given the office (1 Tim. 3:1). One such excuse that this writer finds foolish is, "Until this church is united, I'm not going to become an elder." If one rereads this excuse a few times slowly, he will find the flaws associated. First, this man apparently does not realize that the church will remain in disunity until it appoints qualified men as elders. Second, if he loves the brethren, he will do everything in his power to fix what is seemingly broken. This raises the elephant-in-the-room question: "Why would any faithful qualified man desire that the church remain incomplete?"

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Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us.
- Call or email Bryan to add announcements, thanks.
- We need volunteers for door knocking. Please see Bryan.
- We need volunteers for picking folks up. Please see Bryan.

Five Day A Week Reading Plan

Mon: Exodus 1-5
Tues: Exodus 6-10
Wed: Exodus 11-15
Thurs: Exodus 16-20
Fri: Exodus 20-25

While it is true that Jesus gave us pastors for the building up of the body, men must be appointed to that office for Jesus' purposes to be fulfilled. We need men who want what Jesus wants. If one is not qualified he should desire to be qualified. Obviously not every man can meet all the qualifications but they can certainly strive for such a worthy goal.

Many churches do not have elderships because they are looking for sinless men. Since no one is sinless, a sinless eldership cannot exist! However a man who is qualified is blameless because he deals appropriately with his sins, as any Christian ought to, by repenting of and confessing his faults. Therefore this should not be a reason for not appointing men; it is unfortunate that such is often the case. The reader may respond: "How is this a rejection of truth?" Such may not be a rejection of truth per se, but it is certainly a stumbling block to obeying Jesus. The leadership may have flaws but so do those whom they lead.

Another way brethren reject the truth concerning elders is by brethren appointing men who are not qualified. Many churches want an eldership badly enough that they are willing to eliminate or minimize some scriptural qualifications for the office. When such is done, qualifications such as, "able to teach," "not quarrelsome," "must be well thought of by outsiders," "[not] arrogant or quick-tempered," "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it," "having faithful children," etc. are conveniently ignored or blatantly disregarded. Appointing men who have little to no Bible knowledge and who have never preached or even taught a Bible class does more harm to the church than having no elders at all! When we appoint or allow unqualified men as shepherds, we ought not to recoil in shock and horror when said unqualified men act as novices, have ill intentions or are unable to instruct others! Far too many Christian men will never become qualified for the eldership simply because they are not mature Christians.

Other times family members are put forth. A loving and awesome father or husband is often suggested because of his character. Yet those qualities do not necessarily qualify a man. This writer has also heard of men being appointed because "They are great! They'll do anything for you!" or "If you need something fixed at 3 am, he is your man!" Again, these qualities do not necessarily qualify a man. If all qualifications cannot be met as found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, a man is unqualified. It is sinful for the church to appoint such a man and likewise sinful for that man to agree to oversee. Simply put, there are many men who are in office or who have been in office who are not qualified. May we put aside our personal love for our family and friends and truly examine these would be elders in light of Scripture.

Finally, many times brethren reject the truth about elders because they will not be submissive to their leadership. Power-hungry and disobedient Christians are a grief to the pastors and a disgrace to God. No wonder some men do not desire the office! Christians ought not harass or deliberately disobey men who have been appointed by the authority of the Holy Spirit. It becomes an issue of men not wanting to serve because the church does not want to be led. Unfortunately there are even some sisters who will not obey any men with the exception of their husbands. This is not the way they learned Christ, if they learned Him at all. Jesus commands that we (both male and female), "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls..." (Heb. 13.17) and "...respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thess. 5.12). It is sad that so many do not follow their leaders because they have no respect for authority. If only they knew that when they obey the leaders, they obey Jesus. Likewise, to disobey the church's shepherds is to disobey the Chief Shepherd!

Have we rejected the truth about elders? The only scriptural reason for a church to not have elders is because there are no men qualified. If men are not qualified the church ought to prepare by training our men to be godly elders, our women to be godly elders' wives and all others to submit themselves to the eldership. If men are qualified the church ought to appoint them. Otherwise, it is a rejection of the truth. We will not find perfect men, but we will find faithful men. This writer's prayer is that we will not reject God's truth regarding elders. BG