

**STUDY OF ELDERS - #1****INTRODUCTION**

- A. Three words are used to denote an elder. The NT uses the term bishop, elders, and pastor interchangeably.
1. Elder, presbyter - Strong's #4245 πρεσβύτερος [*presbuteros* /pres·boo·ter·os/] adjective; "1 elder, of age,... 2 a term of rank or office." Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 TI 5:1; TS 1:5; HE 11:2; JA 5:14; 1 PE 5:1.
  2. Bishop, overseer – Strong's #1985 ἐπίσκοπος [*episkopos* /ep·is·kop·os/] masculine noun; "1 an overseer. 1A a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent. 1B the superintendent, elder, or overseer of a Christian church." Acts 20:28; PH 1:1; 1 TI 3:2; TS 1:7; 1 PE 2:25.
  3. Pastor, shepherd – Strong's #4166 ποιμήν [*poimen* /poy·mane/] masculine noun; "1 a herdsman, esp. a shepherd. 1A in the parable, he to whose care and control others have committed themselves, and whose precepts they follow. 2 metaph. 2A the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church. 2A1 of the overseers of the Christian assemblies. 2A2 of kings and princes. EP 4:11; HE 13:20; 1 PE 2:25.  
"Feed" – Strong's #4165 ποιμαίνω [*poimaino* /poy·mah·ee·no/] verb; "1A to rule, govern. 1A1 of rulers. 1A2 to furnish pasture for food. 1A3 to nourish. 1A4 to cherish one's body, to serve the body. 1A5 to supply the requisites for the soul's need." Acts 20:28; 1 PE 5:2.
  4. Therefore the word for "bishop" in Acts 20:28 and the word for "elder" in Acts 20:17 are used interchangeable. In 1 PE 5:1-4 "fellow-elder" – is used with "taking the oversight". The "elder" is told to "feed" (shepherd, pastor) flock in 1 PE 5:2; EP 4:11. In Acts 20:28 the "overseers" are told to "feed" (shepherd, pastor) the flock. These terms refer to those who hold the office of an elder. These terms are never used in the Bible in reference to a preacher unless he has been appointed to the office of an elder.
- B. Qualifications of Christians, Elders, and Deacons. One does not have to be married, have faithful children or rule his own house to be a Christian but one does in order to be an elder. To be a deacon one must be married, and rule their children and houses but one can be a Christian without being married or having children.
- C. Scriptural elders are assigned to an important work, ordained of God. They should be highly respected as special servants of God, and should conduct themselves so as to demand proper respect.
- D. Men should strive to prepare themselves for the work of elders. They should be chosen only according to qualifications.
- E. Perfection should not be more so required of elders, insofar as meeting qualifications are concerned, then we would require of other Christians; that is, in the degree to which they might be able to attain toward perfection.

**DISCUSSION – QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS****I. NEGATIVE QUALIFICATIONS.**

- A. Must not be given to wine – 1 TI 3:3.
  1. Not to indulge in the use of strong drink. PR 20:1; EP 5:1.
  2. John the Immerser – LK 1:15; Priests – LE 10:9; 1 PE 2:5.
  3. Allow nothing to unbalance mind and body.
- B. Must not be a striker – 1 TI 3:3; TS 1:7.
  1. Meaning – striker, bruiser, ready with a blow.
  2. Not quarrelsome, pugnacious, nor read to resent.

3. Calmness.
  - C. Must not be greedy of filthy lucre – 1 TI 3:3.
    1. Not seeking gain through base, or dishonorable means.
    2. No illegitimate business.
  - D. Must not be a brawler – 1 TI 3:3.
    1. Not a wrangler, but quiet and peaceable.
    2. Not a loud, noisy quarreler; one who disagrees, displaying great emotion.
  - E. Must not be covetous – 1 TI 3:3.
    1. Not a lover of money – refers to desire for great amount of material possessions
    2. 1 TI 6:6-10, 17-19; MT 6:24.
    3. Notice where covetousness is catalogued. EP 5:5; CO 3:5.
  - F. Must not be a novice – 1 TI 3:6.
    1. A new convert.
    2. Incapable of responsibility.
    3. Moral and spiritual qualities, aptitude, studiousness, in addition to age determine eldership.
  - G. Must not be self-willed – TS 1:7.
    1. Contentious.
    2. Pleasing one's self – self pleasing – self willed, arrogant.
    3. No respect for wishes or judgment of others.
  - H. Must not be soon angry – TS 1:7.
    1. Prone to anger; inflammable temper; disposed to be incensed on slight provocation.
    2. Not easily irritated or provoked; not wrathful, touchy, nor ill-tempered.
- II. POSITIVE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS.
- A. Must be blameless – 1 TI 3:2; TS 1:5.
    1. Strong's #423 ἀνεπίλημπος [*anepileptos* /an-ep-eel·ape-tos/] adjective; "1 not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of. 2 that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable."
  - B. Must be the husband of one wife – 1 TI 3:2; TS 1:6.
    1. This expression teaches that a bishop must be a one woman man.
    2. If the wife is deceased, she is no longer his wife. RO 7:1-4; 1 CO 7:39.
    3. If they are divorced for the scriptural reason – MT 19:9 – she is no longer his wife.
    4. In either case, if the man remarries, he is only married to one woman. One cannot be married to two women at the same time according to the scripture.
    5. 1 CO 7:2, 9 – marriage is not required to be a Christian – marriage is required of those who cannot contain so as to avoid fornication.
    6. Can a man be the husband of one wife and not be married?
  - C. Must be having faithful children – 1 TI 3:4; TS 1:6.
    1. "Having" – present active participle – Strong's #2192 – "to have, i.e. to hold;...to have i.e. own, possess; ....to hold one's self or find one's self so and so , to be in such or such a condition; ...To hold one's self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to...."
    2. "Subjection" – Strong's #5292 ὑποταγή [*hupotage* /hoop-ot-ag·ay/] "1 the act of subjecting. 2 obedience, subjection." 2 CO 9:12; GA 2:5; 1 TI 2:11; 3:2.
    3. "Children" – plural form of τέκνον – τέκνα – Does this mean more than one child? MT 22:24 – this is a reference to what is called "levirate" marriage

("husband's brother): The word "children" is plural, but it actually has reference to one who does not have a child. If he has one child, this law does not apply. DT 25:5, from which this passage is quotes, actually says, "and have no child." If "having no children" means not having a single child, then having a single child would be "having children." MT 19:29 – plural word for children is used, but what about one who has had to forsake only one child?

- a. 1 TI 5:4 – What if a widow has only one child?
  - b. 1 PE 1:14.
  - c. 1 TH 2:11.
  - d. CO 3:20-21.
  - e. EP 6:1, 4.
  - f. 2 CO 12:14 (1<sup>st</sup> word "children").
  - g. 1 CO 7:14.
  - h. Acts 21:21 – Females are not circumcised! Used here to refer to males!
4. "Faithful" – TS 1:6 - Strong's #4103 – adjective – accusative, plural, neuter; "trusty, faithful....easily persuaded...."
  5. "Not accused of riot" – "riot" – noun, dative, singular, feminine – Strong's #810 – "an abandoned, dissolute life....profligacy, prodigality." This could not be said of little children not old enough to be a Christian. Cf. 1 PE 4:4; EP 5:18. "accused" – Strong's #2724 – "accusation, charge."
  6. "Unruly" – adjective, accusative, plural, neuter – Strong's #506 – "not made subject, unsubjected....that cannot be subjected to control, disobedient, unruly, refractory."
- D. Must be vigilant – 1 TI 3:2 – Strong's #3524 νηφαλέος, νηφάλιος [*nephaleos, nephaios* /nay-fal-eh-os/] adjective; "1 sober, temperate....abstaining from wine, ....of things free from all wine, as vessels, offerings."
  - E. Must be sober – 1 TI 3:2; TS 1:8 – Strong's #4998 σώφρων [*sophron* /so-frone/] adjective; "1 of a sound mind, sane, in one's senses. 2 curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate."
  - F. Must be of good behavior – 1 TI 3:2; Cf. 1 TI 3:15 – Strong's #2887 κόσμιος, κοσμίως [*kosmios* /kos-mee-os/] adjective; "1 well arranged, seemly, modest."
  - G. Must be given to hospitality – 1 TI 3:2; TS 1:8 – Strong's #5382 φιλόξενος [*philoxenos* /fil-ox-en-os/] adjective; "1 hospitable, generous to guests."
  - H. Must be apt to teach – 1 TI 3:2. Strong's #1317 διδακτικός [*didaktikos* /did-ak-tik-os/] adjective; "1 apt and skilful in teaching."
  - I. Must be patient – 1 TI 3:3 – Strong's # 1933 ἐπιεικής [*epieikes* /ep-ee-i-kace/] adjective; "1 seemingly, suitable. 2 equitable, fair, mild, gentle."
  - J. Must be rule well his own house – 1 TI 3:4 – "rule" – Strong's #4291 προϊστημι [*proistemi* /pro-is-tay-mee/] verb; present, middle, indicative; "1 to set or place before. 1A to set over. 1B to be over, to superintend, preside over. 1C to be a protector or guardian. 1C1 to give aid. 1D to care for, give attention to. 1D1 profess honest occupations." This is to apply to "his own house" – Strong's #3624 οίκος – "a house...the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household." Cf. EP 5:22-24; 1 PE 3:1-7.
  - K. Must be of good report from without – 1 TI 3:7 – "report" – Strong's #3141 μαρτυρία [*marturia* /mar-too-ree-ah/] noun; "1 a testifying. 1A the office committed to the prophets of testifying concerning future events. 2 what one testifies, testimony, i.e. before a judge." Testimony concerning ones' character.

- L. Must be lover of good men – TS 1:8 – appreciation for all that is good, noble, and benevolent. 1 JN 3:14.
- M. Must be just – TS 1:8 – Strong’s #1342 – dikaios – adjective; “righteous.”
- N. Must be holy – TS 1:8 – Strong’s #3741 – hosios – “undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure holy, pious.”
- O. Must be temperate – TS 1:8 – Strong’s #1468 – “strong, robust, having power over, possessed of (a thing); mastering, controlling, curbing restraining...one’s self.” Control of tongue and temper.
- P. Must be holding fast the faithful word – TS 1:9 – Strong’s #472 antecho - “hold to firmly, cleave to”. Stand fast for truth and right. 2 TH 2:15; EP 6:11-18. Stand for and demand sound doctrine. TS 1:9-11; 2:7-8;

#### CONCLUSION

- A. All of the qualifications suggest the great responsibility of overseers (elders).
- B. Just like one must meet these qualifications to be an elder, there is something that one must do in order to obey the Gospel of the Christ.

#### 5. Syntax and Saul’s Journeys

##### *Tact and Tenses (Acts 15:37)*

For some reason, the Jewish youth had deserted his seniors on the first missionary journey at the moment when they reached its most dangerous stage, about to set off from Perga northwards for a hundred miles through robber-infested uplands to Galatia. So when plans were mooted for the second journey, John Mark’s relative, Barnabas, tentatively expressed the wish that they should take him with them again ([Acts 15:37](#)). The narrative of the Acts of the Apostles represents the ensuing quarrel between friends as very bitter, enough to undermine their plans to travel together (15:39).

However, if the author understood Barnabas correctly, his suggestion to take John Mark was but a tentative one, at first. That must be the significance of the imperfect tense (15:37) where normally the aorist would serve. “Barnabas wanted” must mean “Barnabas was desirous”; or better still, “Barnabas had half a mind to.” It is a frequent use of the imperfect.

The tenses are very important, for what Barnabas actually wanted to do is now reported in the aorist tense and not the present. He had half a mind “to take John Mark with them.” That is, Barnabas refrained from assuming that John would stay with them all the time; the present infinitive would have implied it. All was tactfully broached, and Paul’s reply was equally mild, as can be seen by the tense he used. The imperfect, ἐξίου, means that Paul merely “requested,” and not even pressingly; many instances in the New Testament illustrate that a demand which expects fulfillment needs the aorist tense. He set out in full the reasons for his hesitant request: John Mark had “departed from us in Pamphylia and did not go with us to the work.” The request itself follows. “Do not let us have this man with us all the time.” Although he used the same verb as Barnabas, he deliberately altered the tense from aorist to present [BDG - variant in Greek text - Aorist in Majority Text and present in Nestle/Aland, USB], because he envisaged that John Mark might continuously or regularly travel with them, which was the very thing he wished to avoid. Perhaps it was his intention to give the young man a rest and take him on a subsequent journey. No other explanation adequately accounts for the conspicuous change to present infinitive in 15:38. The change is slight, involving the insertion of very few letters: *sumparalabein* into *sumparalambanein*. The subtlety may well have escaped Barnabas. At any rate, what seems at first to have been a reasonable and hesitant difference of opinion eventually flared up into a “paroxysm” (Greek *paroxusmos*), so violent that old friends parted. The outburst is usually thought to agree perfectly with St. Paul’s quixotic temperament and his point of view is condemned as unforgiving and mistaken. If we are to take grammar seriously the whole position must be reviewed and credit given to St. Paul for at least as great a weight of tact and restraint as St. Barnabas, who, apparently, without waiting for the

church's blessing, sailed off home to Cyprus at once with John, while the supposedly hasty man made choice of another helper and did not leave until he had been commended to the grace of the Lord by the Christian brethren. This much must be said in the interests of justice and grammatical truth.

Turner, N. (1966). *Grammatical insights into the New Testament*. (94). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

The Aorist Infinitive differs in meaning from the Present Infinitive just in the same way as the Aorist Imperative differs in meaning from the Present Imperative.

Its use denotes that the action denoted by the verb is to be regarded simply as an action happening at some time not defined, without any regard to its continuance or frequency.

The use of the Present Infinitive denotes that the action denoted by the verb is to be regarded as continuous or repeated.

Nunn, H. P. V., & Nunn, H. P. V. (2003). *The elements of New Testament Greek* (49). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

This is a Present Infinitive - same as HE 5:12 "to be"

Passages with "dei....eivai" - LK 2:49; [1 CO 11:19](#).

"It is well to notice particularly the difference between the aorist and present infinitive. The aorist infinitive denotes that which is eventual or particular, while the present infinitive indicates a condition or process." (Dana & Mantey p. 199) [They give the following example. Pisteusai - aorist = is to exercise faith on a given occasion, while pisteuein - present = is to be a believer.] Didaxai - aorist = is to teach; didaskein - present is to be a teacher. Therefore, the usage of the present tense infinitive denotes the act of being a teacher by teaching.

It is generally agreed among commentators that the "if" clause used here is not really conditional in meaning. Paul assumes that he will survive the ordeal of the trial. "To live" in Greek is a present infinitive, signifying a continuous process of living, as in the preceding verse.

Loh, I., & Nida, E. A. (1995), c1977). *A handbook on Paul's letter to the Philippians*. Originally published: A translators handbook on Paul's letter to the Philippians, c1977. UBS Helps for translators; UBS handbook series (32). New York: United Bible Societies.

Both believing and suffering are present infinitives in Greek, thus indicating that the privilege of believing Christ and suffering for him is not a once for all action but is continuous.

Loh, I., & Nida, E. A. (1995), c1977). *A handbook on Paul's letter to the Philippians*. Originally published: A translators handbook on Paul's letter to the Philippians, c1977. UBS Helps for translators; UBS handbook series (43). New York: United Bible Societies.

The Present Infinitive refers to action in progress usually shown by the context to be contemporaneous with the action of the principal verb.

Burton, E. D. W. (1898). *Syntax of the moods and tenses in New Testament Greek* (3rd ed.) (50). Edinburg: T. & T. Clark.

To teach" is a present infinitive in the Greek text, and thus durative in action, "to be teaching," emphasizing, not the fact of teaching, but the process.

Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* ([Mk 4:1](#)). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

The verbal form "to question" is a present infinitive, showing continuous action.

Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* ([Mk 8:10](#)). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

"To will" is *thelō* (θελω), in the present infinitive, literally, "the being constantly desirous." That is, Paul was constantly desirous of doing God's will.

Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* ([Ro 7:16](#)). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

To walk" is a present infinitive in the Greek text emphasizing habitual, continuous action. The Christ-like life here admonished must be the continuous, habitual, moment by moment experience of the believer, no spasmodic, infrequent sort of thing.

Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* ([1 Jn 2:6](#)). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

The infinitive in the present tense in Greek always speaks of continuous, habitual action, never the mere fact of the action, since the aorist infinitive which refers to the fact of the action, may be used at will if the writer wishes to speak of the mere fact without reference to details.

Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* ([1 Jn 3:9](#)). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Mounce in his *Basics of Biblical Greek* states on page 300 that a present tense infinitive has "continuous" aspect and gives a translation "to continually study." On page 301 he states, "The *present* ("continuous") infinitive is built on the present tense stem." Also he notes that the "present infinitive of *eimi* is *einai*, "to be." It has no aorist form." On page 302, "The infinitive built on the present stem indicates a continuous action." "To help enforce the significance of the aspect in your mind, you may at first want to use "continue" in your translation of the present infinitive."

QUESTION: May a widower serve as an elder? Or, if an elder's wife dies, can the elder still serve as an elder?

Note what [1 TI 3:2](#) says - see also the ASV.

What does "must be" mean? "Must" - Thayer, p. 131, "*to bind, tie, fasten.*" It is in the imperative mood - which indicates a commandment or obligation. "Be" - Thayer, p. 175, "has the force of a predicate (i.e. is the substantive verb): *to be*, i. e. 1. *to exist...*" That which follows "must be" is a list of things that a bishop (overseer) "must be." If any of these can be set aside than all of them can be set aside. Since a bishop "must be blameless", how may he remain "blameless?" By having the following qualifications. The word "must" is in the present tense and imperative mood. Summers on p. 112 states, "the present imperative has to do with action which is in progress....the aorist imperative has to do with action which has not yet started." What does this mean? It means that the bishop must be in the progress of being these things.

The word "be" is in the present tense. Davis, p. 25, states, "Only in the indicative mode in Greek do the tenses show time absolutely. The main idea of tense is the '*kind of action*,' the state of action. Even in the indicative time is a secondary idea. Continued action, or a state of incompleteness, is denoted by the present tense; - this kind of action is called *durative* or *linear*. The action of the verb is shown in progress, as *going on*."

Therefore, since the present tense is found in both words - "must" and "be" - indicates continued actions which is also called according to Davis, p. 25, "durative" or "linear." What does this mean? It means that the bishop must continue to be the husband of one wife.

This is also true of TS 1:6.

Some argue that when an elder's wife dies that he is still the "husband of one wife." According to MT 22:23-33, Jesus points out that there is no marriage after we die. See RO 7:1-3. If an elder's wife dies and he's still the "husband of one wife," then, if he marries he is now the husband of two wives, therefore polygamy! Death of his wife makes him to be no longer married to her. He is no longer the "husband of one wife."