

1 Timothy 3A

- Many times, a proper interpretation of scripture depends on our understanding of the author's times and circumstances
 - This is particularly true in the case of New Testament Epistles
 - These letters are scripture, so of course their message is timeless
 - And the truths they contain are applicable to all believers in all circumstances
 - But our application requires an appreciation for the specific situation concerning which the author was writing
 - Eternal truths don't turn on circumstance, but proper response to those truths often do
 - Last week Paul commanded Timothy to instruct the men and women in certain ways concerning their behavior
 - Paul's advice didn't come out of thin air
 - It wasn't as if the church in Ephesus had no idea how to conduct itself in the congregational meeting
 - Paul spent considerable time in the city during his journeys
 - And he left Timothy behind to lead the church
 - So clearly the church was aware of how to conduct a meeting
 - That's why I concluded last week saying Paul's instructions were intended as an antidote to specific false teaching that was disrupting the congregation
 - Based on Paul's instructions we can surmise what the false teachers were advocating
 - We can also sense the political maneuvering that was taking place in Ephesus in Paul's absence
- As we ended last week, we had reached the point of Paul's instructions to women within the congregational meeting
 - The meeting was a time of teaching for the benefit of the entire church

- In traditional fashion, the teaching would have been conducted by male leaders in the church
- Though a person may have been assigned to teach, it was also common for members of the congregation to stand to offer a teaching
- There might also be discussion among the men in the audience, including questions put to the teacher
- For example, look at Paul's approach as he entered a synagogue in Antioch

[Acts 13:13](#) Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

[Acts 13:14](#) But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

[Acts 13:15](#) After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."

[Acts 13:16](#) Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

- Notice Paul had just arrived in the city, and yet he was welcomed to teach in the synagogue
- So the traditional understanding of a religious gathering was less structured than we know today
- It followed form and decorum, but the entire body was expected to play a part in the teaching rather than just a select one or two
- With that in mind, we saw Paul instructing the men in the church to pray together for the salvation of all men within society
 - The goal was to make the church acceptable and dignified within the culture rather than a pariah
 - This was a departure from traditional Jewish thinking
 - Jews traditionally sought to be separate and haughty, and they gave little consideration to non-Jews
 - Therefore, we concluded last week that Paul's advice was a direct assault against false teaching
 - The false teachers apparently tried to reimpose a sanctimonious attitude among the men in the church

- It seems they taught that one must be a Jew or follow Jewish law in order to be a Christian
- So Paul wanted to break up their monopoly on piety by directing the church to pray openly, in unity and for all peoples
- Then Paul moved to countering the false teaching directed at the women in the church
 - Let's pick up in the text again there

1Tim. 2:11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

1Tim. 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

- We covered the first part of these verses last week, so let's begin with a little reminder of what we learned
 - First, Paul is speaking about a specific situation in the church body
 - The context is the larger gathering of the church, when men and women were gathered together for teaching
 - As I noted last week, this was a departure from traditional Jewish meetings
 - Usually, synagogues were segregated places, with men and women listening to the same teaching
 - But the two groups were separated by a barrier, much like you see at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem today
 - But in the church in Ephesus, men and women congregated together
 - Which was an important development, especially for the women
 - This detail helps us understand Paul's instructions
- He started by asking that women accept teaching with entire submissiveness which also could be translated "whole obedience"
 - Why did Paul single out women to obey the word?
 - Why didn't Paul say all must receive teaching in obedience?
 - Was he suggesting that only women need obey the teaching?

- Clearly not, since all are supposed to submit to leaders and obey the word of God
- Therefore, Paul singled out women in response to some failure among the women in Ephesus to obey their teachers
 - We might assume that the false teachers in the church had managed to gain an audience among the women
 - Perhaps some women in the church had come under the deceptive influence of these teachers
 - As a result, these women were rejecting sound teaching from the elders in the church
- More than that, it appears these women were disrupting the congregational meeting by openly challenging the authority of the men
 - Perhaps they spoke up to defend the teaching of the false teachers
 - Or perhaps they sought to offer their own contrary opinions to the teaching
- In any case, Paul specifically orders that women not teach or exercise authority in the gathering
 - When Paul mentions teaching, he's referring to the normal practice of congregational members offering teaching from their place in the audience as we saw Paul do in Acts
 - It was acceptable for men to challenge male teachers in a respectful fashion from the audience
 - But Paul instructs the women not to do the same
 - A woman should not seek to compete with the male teachers over scripture
 - To do otherwise is to challenge the authority of the teacher and to exercise authority over male leadership
 - As we noted last week, the Greek word Paul uses here for "exercise authority over" is a unique Greek word
 - It occurs only here in the Bible
 - It means to take take authority inappropriately or to domineer

- So Paul is directly that women may not domineer or usurp male authority by rising up to offer contrary teaching
 - Instead, women should remain seated and “quiet” Paul says
 - The Greek word for quiet does not mean complete silence
 - The word means to “settle down” or to remain still
 - Based on Paul’s word choice, I conclude that a woman could respectfully ask a question in the congregation
 - Or perhaps even participate in a group discussion about the teaching
- Nevertheless, the behavior of women in the congregation may not cross the line into disrupting the gathering or challenging male authority publicly
 - In fact, no one has the right to usurp authority in the church
 - We are all called to respect those appointed over us
 - Demonstrating submission may vary slightly from situation to situation
 - Generally, men or women have appropriate ways to challenge teaching, generally privately and under proper authority
 - The key in all cases is to maintain a heart attitude of submission and obedience to authority
- In Ephesus Paul encountered the opposite situation
 - We can safely assume women were openly challenging the men with an intent to undermine proper instruction
 - And knowing what we know about the activities of false teachers in the church, the women appear to have been deceived
 - Perhaps some women were prompted by the false teachers to challenge the teaching of the elders
 - Perhaps the false teachers enlisted willing women to defend their false teaching in front of the congregation
 - If so, it was ironic
 - Because had the women listened to the church’s teaching, they would have been known better

- I believe that's why Paul cites the example of Adam and Eve in the Garden

[1Tim. 2:13](#) For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.

[1Tim. 2:14](#) And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

[1Tim. 2:15](#) But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

- In supporting his decision, Paul makes an appeal to the circumstances of the Fall in the Garden
 - Paul makes two separate but related arguments from the situation in the garden
 - First, Paul reminds us that Adam was created first
 - Following Adam, God made Eve to accompany the man
 - Paul says something similar in 1 Corinthians

[1Cor. 11:8](#) For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;

[1Cor. 11:9](#) for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

- This biblical principle is simple but profound: God made a purposeful choice in the way He went about the creation of mankind
 - God began with Man and later created Woman from Man
 - God's actions reflected a certain point of view
 - He intended that man have authority over woman in family relationships, both in marriage and in the family of God
- Consequently, Eve was not responsible to God for Adam in the same way that Adam was responsible for Eve
 - Man was expected to assume a leadership role in the family and church
 - Leadership includes a responsibility to teach God's Word within the family or at least ensure good teaching happens
- Paul cites a man's God-given leadership role to support his argument that women must take care not to usurp the authority of men in the church

- To do so is rebellion against the order God Himself instituted
 - Perhaps Paul reminded the church of this principle because false teachers had sought to undermine it in Ephesus
 - And as a result of such teaching, women developed rebellious hearts and felt freedom to create disruption in the gathering
 - Worst of all, they permitted deception to gain a foothold in the church
- It's that last point that gives rise to Paul's second argument
 - In v14 Paul says that the Fall of mankind began in a similar way
 - Woman was deceived by the serpent, who we're told was Satan
 - She was misled by Satan's lies and so she followed after such teaching contrary to the Word of God
 - As a result of her mistake, she influenced her husband, who then made his own choice to sin
 - While woman isn't to blame for Adam's sin, her deception certainly played a role in the outcome
 - Paul cites the history of the Fall to illustrate the danger of the present situation in Ephesus
 - Women in the church were being deceived by the false teachers
 - These women had adopted wrong views of the Law and other things
 - And so Paul warns that these women were in danger of repeating the mistake of Woman in the Garden, by becoming a source of corruption
 - Paul is not suggesting that women in general are congenitally predisposed to deception more so than men
 - He was simply using the Garden as an illustration
 - The church should remember the lesson of Woman in the Garden and avoid making the same mistake again
 - "Once before a woman fell under the deception of the enemy and by her deception the enemy led the man into sin..."

- "...so let's be on guard against the enemy pulling that trick on us again."
- It's interesting to consider why the false teachers targeted the women in this way
 - Perhaps the false teachers targeted specific women known to be impressionable and thus easily influenced
 - Perhaps the false teachers felt they were less likely to persuade the men since they felt more pressure to remain loyal to the elders
 - But then we could ask the same question of Satan in the Garden...why did he target the woman over the man?
 - It seems he knew that one could be a means to bring down the other
- Then Paul ends the chapter with instructions for women
 - Presumably, the church (including the women) did not want to repeat Eve's mistake by becoming victims of Satan's deception
 - So in v.15 Paul says "but women will be preserved..."
 - Paul was offering the church a way to avoid such a fate
 - The Greek word translated "preserved" means to be saved
 - Paul means "saved" in the sense of protected from such an outcome
 - He's not speaking of being saved spiritual in an eternal sense, for that's not the topic under discussion
 - Based on the context, we must conclude Paul's speaking of women avoiding deception and corruption
- So turning to the solution, Paul says women should bear children continuing in faith, love and sanctity with self-restraint
 - Paul's recipe is four parts, though it's the first part that gets the most attention
 - First, Paul says a woman seeking to avoid the mistakes of Eve should bear children

- At first reading, this solution seems both antiquated and illogical
- Women bear children by God's design (it's not as though there is another option), so how does it solve any problem?
- And what are we to say about women who don't marry or have children...are they sinning by acting contrary to Paul's command?
- Once again, the answer is found in an understanding of the context and circumstances of the letter
 - Paul was writing to contend with false teachers who were stirring up improper behavior among the women
 - Their corrupting influence led women to usurp male authority in the gathering
 - Later in the letter we learn that in some cases women young and old were also engaging in scandalous behavior outside the home
- So into that situation, Paul tells women to bear children, which is a euphemism for fulfilling their unique and God-appointed role
 - God endowed women with the privilege of bearing children
 - Women alone possess this ability
 - With childbearing comes certain associated roles in the home
 - So Paul's referring to the whole lifestyle of attending to a woman's unique responsibilities
 - Finding contentment and purpose in fulfilling this role was step one to avoiding the deceptions of the enemy
 - How would this preserve the woman?
 - The enemy's success in deceiving the women depended upon stirring up discontent
 - In the Garden, the enemy convinced Eve that by not eating of the tree, she was missing out on something she had right to know
 - And in Ephesus, the false teachers had convinced the women they should want for the role God gave men in church

- Had the women been content serving in their God-given role, they wouldn't have been as susceptible to such schemes
- Obviously, Paul's words don't require every woman to bear children or even that working outside the home wasn't godly
 - Remember, bearing children represents the unique, God-given role of a woman in contrast to the role God assigned men
 - So a woman without children or a woman working outside the home must still meet the same expectation of heart
 - She must find contentment in the role God assigned women both in the home and in the church while respecting the role God assigned men
 - Don't let the world tell you that you must have something beyond what God assigned
 - Because discontent is the devil's playground
- Paul adds finally that women should continue in faith, love and sanctity with self respect
 - Each of these expectations is mostly self-explanatory
 - Faith refers to trust in God's wisdom and judgment
 - God assigned the roles, and we do well to continue in faith that God got it right in the first place
 - Love (agape) means honoring others above ourself, including respecting the leadership of those in authority
 - Sanctity with self-respect refers to living in holiness and self-control
 - Because ultimately the problems in this church stem from a lack of these things
 - The enemy can come against us anytime and we can't do much about that except pray
 - But he can only gain a foot hold *inside* us if we decide to give him that ground
 - Paul was asking the women not to give the enemy a chance
- So what's the proper application of Paul's teaching in our circumstances today?

- First, everything Paul says is broadly applicable today
 - Women may not publicly challenge the authority of men who lead
 - And since teaching is an implied expression of authority, women may not challenge the teaching of men in public
 - For the same reason, women may not teach men in a congregational gathering of any size
- But we can also set reasonable limits on Paul's instructions
 - For example, a woman could challenge a teacher or even a leader of the church privately assuming she does so respectfully
 - And a woman could teach a man privately, as when a wife teaches her husband or when a woman author teaches a male student through a website or book
 - And women could teach young men who are not deemed of age to join the adult men
 - Perhaps other exceptions could be found as well
 - In all these cases, a woman is not usurping male leadership nor is she disrupting the church
- Now we move into chapter 3, and with it a different but related topic

1Tim. 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

1Tim. 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

1Tim. 3:3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

1Tim. 3:4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

1Tim. 3:5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

1Tim. 3:6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

1Tim. 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- Paul pivots off his discussion of women's roles in the assembly to that of the male leadership of the church
 - It's a logical progression
 - Paul taught the women to respect the role of men in leadership over the church
 - So now he's explaining the qualifications for men to fill those roles
 - But once more, Paul is positioning his teaching as a rebuke of the false teachers
 - In this passage, Paul describes the ideal overseer to guide the church properly, especially in the face of false teachers or other threats
 - Paul's list is long (a total of 16 requirements)
 - We'll touch on all of them in turn, though some items deserve a longer discussion
 - Following this list is another list describing the qualifications of a deacon
 - The list of deacon requirements is quite different and less stringent than that of overseer
- And the mere fact that two offices are mentioned in this chapter begs the question, how many offices exist in the church and how do they relate?
 - In our English Bibles, we find a variety of titles used, but in Greek there are only three words used for positions of authority in the church
 - The Greek word for overseer is *episkopos* (sometimes translated bishop)
 - The Greek word for deacon is *diakonos*
 - And a third word for leadership is that of elder, which is *presbuteros* in Greek, which is literally gray haired
 - In another of the pastoral epistles, Titus, Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every city
 - Analysis shows the way these three terms are used in the New Testament reveals their relationship

- First, an *episkopos* (overseer) is anyone who leads the church in any capacity
- The word is never used to describe a specific title or position
- Therefore, an overseer could be a pastor or an elder or even another position we invent in the future
- Anyone who has oversight responsibilities in the church is an overseer
- Therefore all elders meet Paul's requirements in this passage
- An elder (*presbuteros*) is a specific kind of overseer with responsibility to ensure proper teaching, order and discipline of God's people
 - In the absence of apostles, elders are the highest authority in the church
 - Churches should be led by a plurality of elders, not merely one
 - This serves to protect the many from the one and the one from himself
- Also, elder is a role that comes alongside whatever spiritual gift or function a person performs in the body otherwise
 - So an elder could also serve the body with a teaching or pastoral or service gift but not necessarily
 - Conversely, a certain spiritual gift does not automatically bestow authority upon a person
 - For example, someone with a pastoral gift or who operates in a pastoral (i.e., shepherding) role is *not* automatically an overseer
 - The only exception to this rule would be in cases where a church uses the term "pastor" to mean overseer or elder
- Finally, the word deacon (*diakonos*) "one who serves in ministry" or more generally, "servant"
 - The word appears 29 times in the New Testament
 - Of those 29 times, it is translated (by the NASB) as "deacon" three times, as "minister" seven times, and as "servant" 19 times

- Consequently, the best definition of the duties of a *diakonos* is one who ministers to the church through their service
- They are mature members of the body assigned certain service responsibilities by the elders or other overseers
- Deacons, therefore, are not overseers themselves
 - They carry no authority over the body apart from managing their own service and that of those working under their direction
 - In some church traditions, however, the governing group over the church are called “deacons”
 - In such cases, the deacons are effectively operating as overseers and should be thought of as elders despite their title
 - We’ll look at their qualifications later
- Turning back to the overseers, Paul opens in v.1 with an intriguing statement
 - Paul mentions those aspiring to the role probably because this was the desire of the false teachers
 - Or perhaps some of the false teachers were already in that role
 - So Paul says such aspiration is good, because it leads to a fine work
 - The fine work is the preparation of our character so that we might meet the tests of overseer
 - For example, if someone aspires to be a Nobel Prize winner, they are desiring a good work
 - They are desiring to work hard, to pursue excellence
 - They are seeking to distinguish themselves among their peers, to advance the body of knowledge in their field
 - And this is a fine work
 - Similarly, a person who desires to be an overseer is saying they desire to pursue godly character, a deep knowledge of scripture, and a testimony of faithfulness
 - These are the right things to pursue

- And in fact, everyone in the body of Christ is supposed to pursue them
- No one is excused from these goals, but only some make a point of pursuing them because they aspire to leadership
- On the other hand, if a person merely desires the power and prestige of overseer without desiring the character that must accompany the role, they do not do well
 - Such was the case of the false teachers it appears, which may explain why Paul opens with this comment
 - The false teachers were like Pharisees, trying to enter the fold by climbing over the wall instead of entering through the door
 - They were seeking control for selfish illegitimate reasons
 - Too often today the church makes the mistake of looking past these qualifications
 - We prematurely elevate men into oversight roles, whether elder or pastor or whatever title
 - We select men who haven't had time or opportunity to develop the proper knowledge, character or testimony
 - Or even worse, we may overlook disqualifying factors
 - This trend is obviously dangerous for the church
 - Our leaders guard all of us from ungodliness, deception and disunity
 - But if they are unable to guard even themselves from these things, then what will become of those under their care?
 - Furthermore, the role of overseer includes serving as a role model to the rest of the congregation
 - Our leaders should be men who we aspire to emulate
 - Just as Paul called the church to follow him as he followed Christ
- So clearly, the church should hold the role of overseer in high regard and assign such authority carefully

- And in v.1 Paul gives the first requirement for overseer: the person must be a man
 - Notice Paul begins with the word man and throughout the passage he repeats male pronouns
 - We know this is more than simply a generalization, as in mankind, for two reasons
- First, the previous passage made clear that women cannot exercise authority over men
 - Secondly, in the next passage on deacons Paul includes a specific discussion of women serving as deacons
 - Therefore, we must conclude that the absence of any discussion of women as overseers was intentional
- Then in v.2 Paul moves forward in his list of personal qualifications beginning with being above reproach
 - This one standard sounds impossibly high, but in reality it's Paul's concession to the fact that only Christ could meet this list perfectly
 - The word in Greek means to be blameless
 - Blamelessness is not sinlessness
 - Rather, it means that the person's life and words give no cause for public accusation
 - Paul is acknowledging that perfection is not the expectation
 - Nevertheless, we must seek men who are blameless
 - And we shouldn't elevate men into leadership if they come with moral baggage
 - A bad track record should give us reason for concern
 - It could mean they are not who they seem to be
 - And even if they have reformed their ways, their past mistakes may follow them in unhelpful ways
 - At the very least, their checkered past would be an unhealthy and unnecessary distraction for the church

- We must select leaders whose life does not give cause for accusations
- In the end, this is a judgment call
- Next, the final point for this lesson, Paul says the man must be husband of one wife
 - You could look at Paul's words in a variety of ways
 - First, we could conclude Paul was requiring overseers to be married
 - This was a Jewish requirements for rabbis in the synagogue
 - Secondly, we could conclude that an overseer must have been married only one time
 - This argument takes Paul's words hyper-literally
 - This is the most unlikely interpretation, since it doesn't relate to any other biblical standard
 - For example, scripture clearly allows remarriage in cases of the death of a spouse
 - So this interpretation is likely wrong
 - Thirdly, Paul may have been insisting that overseers be monogamous (married to one woman at a time)
 - In some eastern cultures, polygamy was common
 - So as a man with multiple wives became a believer and entered the church, he entered with multiple wives
 - But he could never be an overseer, since his marriage was not the godly way to practice marriage
 - Therefore, this view says Paul was teaching that church leaders must model the correct form of marriage
- Finally, we could interpret Paul to be teaching that the man must operate morally in marriage
 - He must honor marriage as God intended in all respects
 - For example, if he is unmarried, he is morally upright and does not engage in fornication

- If he is married he does not commit adultery or take multiple wives (which is adultery)
- He does not divorce or marry a divorced person
- This final view is my view, and therefore I believe Paul is teaching that as with all areas of life, we want overseers to model the ideal practices of the faith
 - We aren't saying that those men who fail this test are less godly necessarily
 - Nor are we saying that such men are stand guilty or condemned
 - Paul is simply saying we want our leaders to stand as models of what's best and true and right
 - Marriage is so important to the health of the family and the church that we shouldn't elevate men whose testimony does not exemplify the idea standard
- This requirement also raises the question of how much accountability we place on someone prior to coming to faith
 - Some say life prior to faith is not relevant to the question of qualifications, since we all behaved in godless ways prior to faith
 - After all, Paul was a murderer before he took charge
 - Others would argue that certain sins follow us in unhelpful ways, which could compromise our ability to serve as a role model (divorce)
- There is no simple answer on this question, so we must trust the Holy Spirit to lead us in each church decision
 - However, we know the present life of a man must comport with these expectations
 - While we may excuse certain choices prior to faith, if those same behaviors continue after faith, they should be cause for alarm