

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 that 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 opening, 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, a 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 is 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 1Corinthians

[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 was Satan we're told
 - 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 impressionable 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 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
 - 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 ourselves, 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 foothold *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 of 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 to 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
 - An analysis of 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 oversees, 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 repeat 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 impossible 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 gives 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 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 overseers 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
 - Other 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