

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Believing Children

By (Jerry Fite)

Paul writes a letter to Titus shortly after writing his first letter to Timothy in A.D. 62-63. Paul had personally left Titus on the Island of Crete to “*set in order the things that were wanting and appoint elders in every city*” (Titus 1:5). To help complete this charge, Paul sets forth the qualifications of the mature men who would be overseers in the local church throughout the cities on the Island. Among the specified qualifications of the bishop or overseer are that he be “*blameless*” – not called in question regarding wrong doing; “*the husband of one wife*” – not practicing polygamy; and have “*children that believe, who are not accused to riot and unruly*” (Titus 1:6).

“Believing” in this text is an adjective, describing a characteristic of children under consideration. Paul uses this Greek word “pista” to describe those who are “Christians” or “believers” in Jesus. For example, “If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened” (I Timothy 5:16). In the next chapter, we read, “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but let them serve them the rather, because they that partake of the benefit are believing and beloved” (I Timothy 6:2). A woman is distinguished as a believer who has

responsibilities to her own family that other believers, comprising the church, do not directly have. The slave who is a Christian is exhorted to not overlook the responsibilities he has toward his master, who is a believer, for he too is a Christian, especially beloved of the Lord. So, recognizing how Paul uses the word “believing” in I Timothy, it is Scriptural and harmonious with Paul’s teaching to understand “believing children” to be children who are Christians. Why think otherwise?

Paul in setting forth the qualifications for elders earlier to Timothy does not specify that the children of a bishop overseeing the local church be believers – Christians-members of the local church. Recognizing the absence of this specific characteristic of the children, one asks, “Did Timothy have sufficient instructions from Paul’s first letter to appoint qualified men as bishops?” Did Timothy have to wait to read Paul’s letter to Titus before appointing elders? Is it necessary to conclude that the children must be believing Christians in Paul’s revealed characterization: “...*one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.*” (I Timothy 3:4)?

Comparing Paul’s letter to Timothy with his epistle to Titus, we find specificity in Titus that would be necessarily included in I

Timothy. For example, one who oversees a local church must be “*apt to teach*” (I Timothy 3:2). Paul’s letter to Titus is more specific. The elder must be “*holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers*” (Titus 1:9).

Regarding the area of teaching, Paul demands in I Timothy that the man serving as an elder be “apt to teach.” Could Timothy appoint men who were not holding fast the faithful word of God, but were talented in communication skills? In I Timothy 3 Paul only said the bishop must be proficient in teaching. Could Timothy appoint men as spiritual overseers if they were not able to apply the revealed word of God to convict those teaching error?

The broader qualification of an elder being “apt to teach” in I Timothy 3:2 would glaringly be missing if the specifics in Titus 1:9 were lacking. Likewise, a father whose ruling influence in the home produces Christians, his now “*believing children*” (Titus 1:6), who are not wasting themselves in “unrestrained passion,” or “rebellious” against a father’s orders demonstrate to a high degree that the father is “*ruling well his own house*” (I Timothy 3:4).