

No.

35a.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

1 TIMOTHY 3 & TITUS 1
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RULE IN
AN ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

An Address (revised) at

65, St. Mary Axe.

E. C. 4.

2nd October 1914.

by

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An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

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OUTLINE :-

1. The Word of God is not Ruined.
2. What is an Assembly?
3. Bishops and Deacons.
4. A Godly Home.

I think we shall find it profitable to read the chapter through, somewhat literally,

"Faithful the Word: If any one for oversight yearneth, upon a beautiful work he sets his desire. Therefore it is a necessity that the overseer should be one unimpeachable, (unassailable, one whose character cannot be touched), of one wife a husband; sober, of sound mind; modest, or neat, not loving display, not careless; a lover of hospitality; able to teach; not beside wine, (not having any form of indulgence); not a striker; not with base gain, (It is doubtful whether if this word was here in the original manuscript, however, it comes in the parallel passage, and certainly the faithful servant of God must be without base gain); but yielding, without striving, without love of

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silver; of his own house standing in front beautifully, having children in subjection with all solemnity; but if anyone does not know to have stood in front of his own house, how, over a called-out church of God shall he take care? Not one newly planted, lest having been puffed up he have fallen into a judgment of the devil. But ~~is~~ it is of necessity also to have a beautiful witness from the ones without, lest he should have fallen into a reproach and a snare of the devil. Ministers, (deacons), likewise solemn, (that is to say, it is necessary that they should be solemn) - not double-tongued; not too much wine attached; not base gainers; having the mystery of THE faith in a pure conscience. But let these also go through a period of testing first; then let them keep on ministering, (keep on serving as deacons), being uncharged, (not called in question). Women, likewise, solemn, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things, and among all persons. Let deacons be of one wife ~~and~~ husbands, standing in front of children beautifully, and their own houses. For they that minister beautifully make for themselves, (or obtain for themselves, preserve for themselves) a beautiful step forward and much boldness in faith, the faith that is in Christ Jesus. These things to thee am I writing, hoping to have come to thee the more quickly, (or, with another reading 'quickly'), but if I tarry, if I seem slack, that thou mayest know how it is a necessity in God's house to be behaving, which is of such a nature that it is a church, (a called out church) of a living God, pillar and ground of the truth. And confessedly great is the mystery linked with reverence; God was manifested in the

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flesh, (some) [^]manuscripts read "He Who was manifested" but this refers to the one just named, and thus illustrates that Christ was God), was declared righteous in the Spirit, seen by angels, was heralded among nations, was believed in the world, was received up in glory: - but the Spirit speaketh expressly that in latter times there shall apostatize certain from the faith, being attached to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, in the hypocrisy of those speaking lies, (or, speaking lies in hypocrisy), having been seared with a red hot iron as to their conscience, forbidding to marry, appointing to hold oneself aloof from articles of food which God created with a view to receiving with thanksgiving, (with gratitude for grace), by those who believe and have recognised the Truth.

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We will not read Titus 1, but the passage is somewhat parallel. Believing, and rejoicing to believe, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, we continue our subject of the Lord's arrangement in connection with the oversight of His gathered people. You will recollect how that some weeks ago we considered Ephesians 4, and after the reference to a sevenfold unity, we noticed that our risen Lord, in fulfilment of prophecy and in manifestation of His love, gave gifts to men. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. A definite purpose was in view, even the perfecting of the saints with a view to the work of the ministry, the building up of the body of Christ. In other words gifts were never given for the possessors to display, they were given with a view to God's glory in the edification of fellow-believers. Another Scripture

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speaks of the foundation of apostles and prophets, and we have no prophesy of apostles and prophets in days of ruin. However, SOME out from these four gifts must remain for the passage adds, TILL we all come into the unity of the faith. This has not yet been reached, we have not yet arrived at a perfect man, at the measure of the ^{stature} ~~fulnese~~-of the fulness of Christ. We therefore realise that Ephesians 4 looks backward, and looks forward, but also includes something with respect to the present time. Illustrating this, we discover in ~~two~~ ^{two} of the last epistles Paul wrote, (1 and 2 Timothy) a reference to a true evangelist, and to brethren who could teach, but there is no mention of an apostle, there is no mention of a prophet, apart from the apostle who ~~was~~ himself was then about to die, and apart from the reference to the prophecies which were linked with Timothy's past appointment to the important sphere to which he was called. In Revelation, moreover, we find, in the last view of Scriptural churches, that there were those who said they were apostles and were not. There was moreover ~~Hezebel~~, who called herself a prophetess. In other words, apostles and prophets are both ~~seen~~ shown there in an evil imitation, and no Scripture can be found to suggest a revival of these in the last days. But, thanks be unto God, His Word is not ruined. As I came along here to-day, I passed a book-stall, and just lifted off one book which was dealing in measure with the subject in front of us, and I opened one page which made a remark to the effect that no company of ^{Christians} in the present day could claim to have the arrangements of the early church. I think we must sorrowfully acknowledge that this

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is true, but we must be very careful to examine what inferences we draw from it. The majority draw the inference that we cannot go back to the Lord's arrangements. Some would seem to prefer to have their own arrangement to His, and are apt to conclude that we have at the present time improvements and developments which are the result of the progress of the 19 centuries, but our hearts are taught by grace to realise that all Scripture is given by ~~in~~ inspiration of God, and that development is not given by inspiration. Development is of the flesh, the world, and the Devil. God has spoken, and development is departure from the Truth. It is particularly indicated in Titus 1 that the man to come into any spiritual prominence must be one who holds fast the faithful word, and beloved friends, if we are in mercy among the called of Jesus Christ we must hold fast the faithful word. It may be that this will bring us into earthly confusion and disorder, into difficulty and problems with respect to men, but it is better to be in confusion and disorder with respect to men than in confusion and disorder with respect to the Lord. Let God be true, but every man a liar. The Word of our God SHALL stand for ever. I do not think that God has left us to choose for ourselves. We have Scripture to suit every circumstance, if only we have eyes to see, and ears to hear. If God was pleased to withdraw any of His gracious workings in days gone by, He was pleased to make some further arrangement that would suit us in the ~~er~~ emergency. That a change came over what we are apt to call the early church is fairly evident from the pages of Scripture read prayerfully.

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In 1 Corinthians 14 we have an assembly of God, and there all the speakers are inspired. In 1 Timothy 3 we have an assembly of God, but there we find no mention of inspiration. The book of Acts closes, as men would say, "abruptly", and it is remarkable that epistles written after the date of Acts never speak of the manifest church on earth in the same way as those epistles written BEFORE the close of Acts. In other words, corporate unity in its manifestation was gone. The epistle to Timothy is the first epistle written in connection with this change of circumstances, and we find in the epistle the Holy Spirit's arrangement for God's people when the supernatural gifts were in measure withdrawn. God is not defeated, God is not ruined, His word still stands. The way in which Scripture fills up the gap and deals with our need is very evident. 1 Corinthians 11 speaks of the Lord's supper, and in chapter 14 of the ministry in an assembly of God. You do not find a further mention in Timothy of the Lord's Supper. Why? It requires no supernatural gifts, and therefore would remain the same when supernatural gifts were withdrawn, or withdrawn in large measure. The wondrous teaching of God is this, that the Lord's people are to show forth their Lord's death till He come, but inasmuch as no longer they had those who could speak with tongues or who could prophesy, (nor have we), it was needful that they should either find a Scripture principle which would apply, or have further instruction from their all gracious Lord. This further instruction is found in 1 Timothy. Chapter-breaks are human, ^{in Greek Scriptures} but sometimes they preserve the true divisions of an epistle.

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1 Timothy 1 should plainly^{ly} read on to the second chapter. The "therefore" implies this. But chapter 3 evidently begins a fresh section, and is summed up in verse 15, "These things were written that Timothy might know how it was necessary to behave in a house of God." 1 Timothy 3 concerns a house of God, but does 1 Timothy 2 speak of a church? Personally, I think not. In the eighth verse we read, "I will that men pray in every PLACE." An (Our) English version by putting in the word "everywhere" has lost the meaning. If there were not sufficient Jews in a town to make a synagogue they had a place of prayer. This language is adopted. Now the Lord Jesus distinctly marked out in Scripture that two or three could not make a church. I do NOT say that we require exactly the same number as Judaism has suggested, the number ten, - but the Lord Jesus made clear an often forgotten thought in Matthew 18, (one of the two mentions of the church in His precious recorded utterances, both occurring in the Gospel of Matthew which has so often been misunderstood in this connection,) - In Matthew 18 the Lord says, "If thy brother sin (against thee), go and tell him his fault, if he does not acknowledge this, take one or two ~~or~~ others, that in the name of two or three witnesses every word may be established. If he will not hear them, tell it to the CHURCH." Thus a church contains more than two or three, but as the offender was in the church, it contains more than three or four. But to say, Tell it to the church, if the church included only about one more, would be entirely inappropriate. We may, therefore, anticipate that a church of God requires a certain number of believers to carry out its necessary arrangements and its plan. It is

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blessedly true that wherever two or three are gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus He is in the midst of them, and there is a preciousness of the Lord's fellow~~sh~~ - ship even when we are alone, - the Island of Patmos illustrates that, but there are additional responsibilities and manifestations of the Lord ~~Jesus~~ Jesus Christ which are only possible as there is a GATHERING TOGETHER of devoted believers. Several times in the book of Acts we find hints of this. We read, for example, as to one town that the apostles were privileged to disciple "sufficient". Sufficient for what purpose? AV (Our) version ^{omits ^ and} covers the meaning by saying "many". Sufficient for some object. If you read the context, I think you will draw the inference, if in mercy held back from any prejudice, that the idea is, sufficient for an arrangement of an assembly of God in that place. Where a very few believed at Athens we are not told there was a church. Scripture is so definite in its use of words. Words are not everything, but words are used to-day by Satan to mislead. Let us seek in the power of God to keep to the words of Scripture. And thus we have " a place" brought before us in 1 Timothy 2, hence you will notice in that chapter there is no mention of anyone in special authority from God. There is no mention of a teacher. We simply read, I will that the males pray in every place. I take it, therefore, that even if there were several males THAT would not justify a church.

And so we come to the deeply important question, What is an assembly? What is a church? The word is misused to-day, (as a Concordance will quickly show), when we find it applied to

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a structure of made of earthly material. It is likewise misused when it is applied to a province or a country. Scripture uses the plural then, the churchES of Galatia, but the church of Galatia, but on the other hand Scripture does not speak of the churchES of a town, but of the church. If there exist churchES in a town there is a departure from the primitive simplicity that the Lord appointed. Scripture never warrants such a use of the word. Houses in a town, but parts of one church. So we find in Ephesus the apostles went along the houses, and the church in Jerusalem was breaking bread "per house". Sometimes the whole church met in a house, when it was not a ~~w~~very large assembly. "Gaius mine host and of the whole church". The church of Colosse, it would seem, gathered in the house of an individual; we read as to the Laodicean assembly in Colossians 4, - "Salute the saints which are in Laodicia, and Nymphas and the church which is in their house, We have no Scripture for the church BEING a literal house, but being a spiritual house that often ~~met~~ met in a literal house, having no grander structure, but mindful of the fact that He Who is the Gathering Centre, appointed the breaking of bread when in an upper room. Beloved friends, the Lord's people are strangers and pilgrims, and it is not for them to imitate the world's display. Simplicity befits a child of God, in his dress, in his manner, in his assembly arrangements. We cannot be too unworldly, provided this unworldliness is associated with an attraction and devotedness to Christ our Lord. Our natural tendency is all the other way. The things that are seen are

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temporal, but they are near, and they seem to grasp hold of us, but if with unveiled face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, there is His magnetic power, and looking off unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of faith, we are enabled to run with patience the race that is set before us. But what is an assembly? The apostle describes it in 1 Timothy 3, He says, "A church of a living God is a house of God, and it is a pillar and ground of the truth. Not simply a pillar and ground of truth, but a pillar and ground of THE truth. At once we should feel a considerable hesitating in applying the term "church" to any gathering which did not hold the Truth. But THE truth is a definite term. A pillar and ground of the truth, for there is not the thought of a variable uncertainty. A company of young Christians may be very earnest, they may really want to please the Lord, but if there is a church of God there must be a PILLAR AND GROUND of the Truth. A fixity and a reality combined. The Spirit of God lays a stress on this, and you will notice that in a chapter which speaks of a "place" we have no overseers, but in the chapter that speaks of a church we have the mention of overseers and deacons as desirable. Other Scriptures seem to imply that wherever there was an assembly there was spiritual discipline, and, if elders, a PLURALITY of elders. I do not know a Scripture that indicates anything otherwise. The fact that the singular is used in 1 Timothy 3, does not war against this, for undoubtedly the ~~elars~~ elders needed an individual test that there might be an acquaintance with the will of God, but at once the thought suggests itself, Can an assembly of God exist without overseers and deacons?

or, should we only regard it as a "place" till there be such raised up? In passing I would remind you that the HOUSE of God was the chosen "place" in the EARLIER Scriptures and that both words are precious. To be a PLACE of God is delightful, and to realise that in every place where He records His Name among us, He comes to us and blesses us, is indeed an unspeakable privilege. But have we Scripture for speaking of an assembly of God if it be without overseers and deacons? Acts 14 helps us in this matter;- and let me say in passing that the GIFTS were for the whole assembly, never local. God speaks of the apostles and the prophets, the evangelists and the pastors and teachers with regard to saints everywhere, but overseers and deacons were local. You do not have the prophet of a church but you do have the elder of a church. There is a vast difference between "in" and "of". The elders were "of" and the responsibility was local. In Acts 14 we find that the Lord graciously impressed ~~was~~ upon His servants to visit some towns more than once. On the second occasion, in the 22nd verse, they were confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and showing that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God, and then we read "When they had (ordained) them elders in every church", not churches for the elders, but elders for the churches. A church therefore existed before elders, 1 Timothy implies the same. The silence of Matthew 18, as to elders is illustrative. Undoubtedly the elders are desirable in a church, but there must be a church of God first in which to "behave" as such in connection with their coming into responsibility.

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It is delightful when the Lord raises up those who can look after others, but it is possible for believers to be a church before they have elders. Nevertheless this would be unusual as a continued position. Our difficulty is this, that in days of weakness, without a prophet, parallel with those days of which the books of Ezra and Nehemiah speak, when Israel were uncertain what to do ~~to~~ till there rose up a priest with Urim and Thummim, - in those days one desires to exercise the true deference to all the Scriptures, the true absence of self or assembly exaltation, and yet the true affection which desires to embrace whatever God means in some of those precious words like the word "church". Yes, we desire, though without apostles and prophets, to say, "What is a church?" and to have this to God's glory. The Holy Spirit is not bound, and Scripture is not lost, but we falter so much, and one of the difficulties of the last days is that we must move slowly, not in personal obedience, but with respect to any matters which would tend to become assumptions. Pride will come in by a back door if it is shut out from the front, and we cannot be too careful that we might exalt the Lord and the Lord ONLY. No man is Scripturally entitled to a title. HE alone is the Titled One, and HE alone the Exalted One. Our gathering is not to a man, creed or system, but to Christ Himself, or we gather in vain. But though it be possible for an assembly of God to exist without overseers, without deacons, I do not see Scripture for an assembly of God without a brother receiving some gift from the Lord with respect to the establishment of that assembly. The Christians, (should I call them Christians, at the period to which I

allude? They were in Divine intention, and the name was about to be given them,) - the believers at Antioch were not called a church till after Barnabas had come to see the work of God, and to arrange it to the Lord's glory. In like manner in Acts 14, we find that Paul and Barnabas were privileged to look after a church of God. An elder did not plant a church of God, an overseer did not plant it. The Scripture used is, How shall he take care over a church of God? implying that it existed before he has charge of it; - but Timothy was instructed to do the work of an evangelist, FOR, says the apostle, I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. This implies that Timothy would continue the work of Paul. The evangelist going on with the work of an apostle. This would involve, I suppose, the planting of assemblies. Certainly we find assemblies were planted in the very district where Timothy was, for Revelation 2 and 3 refer to the same place, though we find that the "replanted" assemblies had once more, in several cases, proved unfaithful. We might notice in this connection the last view of assemblies in Scripture is in those chapters, and we do not find elders and deacons. The absence of suitable men seems suggestive. There was an angel of each church, a representative. The term is a Jewish one, and is a shortening of the word "evangelist". I am almost inclined to view it as suggestive of a certain parallel with evangelists, with curtailed powers, and as a local office rather than a gift for the whole church. Whereas we never find one elder by himself in an assembly, we never find two angels or two evangelists in an assembly. These points are worthy of prayerful consideration, even if we cannot at first fully see to what they tend. I know of no Scripture which implies that a man

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may appoint himself an overseer, or that an assembly of God can name, whether by vote or otherwise, one who shall be an overseer. Doubtless there was an APPROVAL of the assemblies; we find that certain ones who had a measure of deaconship were picked out by the assemblies and approved by the apostles in Acts 6. In like manner in 1 Corinthians 16 we read of certain who addicted themselves to the deaconship of the saints, but in neither case is there the mention of elders. It is possible to say that 1 Timothy 3 implies that those who filled the office of a deacon well obtained for themselves much progress, and thus became elders, and I think that is the hint of the passage. But I do not know that that would be sufficient to exclude the thought that there must be a Scriptural appointment if there are elders, and when we come to consider the qualifications for bishops and deacons, we find those qualifications are very high. Beloved friends, how many there are who even adopt without Scriptural warrant the TITLE "elder", who could not answer to those descriptions? A bishop must be one not called in question, unimpeachable, whose character is above suspicion. He must be a married man, "the husband of one wife" is decisive. Moreover he must be one who is vigilant, sober, one who is modest and gracious in his manner, given to hospitality, and able to teach. The qualifications of teaching is apparently not demanded in the younger "deacons", but it is necessary in the older "elder". He is not to be covetous, and then among the final descriptions in this somewhat lengthy list which, be it noticed, may imply no supernatural gifts at all, - one of the final qualifications is, one that ruleth well his own house, I rendered that repeated word "well" as "beautifully" when we read

through the chapter. It means "MANIFESTLY well" and by the term "beautiful" we have a little of the stress on that which the Holy Spirit suggests, that there is a beautiful character in godly living. Oh that we might know what it is to act beautifully to the glory of God. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. If one has children who are unbelievers, this disqualifies. If one has children who are not solemn, this disqualifies. If one is without children, this apparently disqualifies, even though it be no dishonour. I know it is sometimes said, "IF he has children" but where God puts no "if" it is dangerous for us to insert an "if" without a definite warrant, the more so as further on in this chapter we find that when referring to the deacon, the Holy Spirit speaks otherwise. There is no statement in verse 12 literally, ruleth THEIR children, but ruling children, and their houses well. This would imply the deacons MIGHT not have children. He must be married, - that is all we know, but if he has not children he must rule his own house well and stand well in front of children. (The deacon, it may be, was in certain cases the assembly's school-master, but this thought opens up a FURTHER point, albeit of deep importance to children of God in these days). Apparently the overseers were required to be able to teach other believers. They were elder men who had the responsibility of taking care for a church of God. Yet they would not take a lead in teaching, if, for example, Timothy was present, for the words were uttered to him, "Till I come, give attention to the reading, the exhortation, the doctrine", but if he were away (an evangelist usually ministered mainly in a DISTRICT) they would naturally look after the Lord's people and would look after the

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various gatherings which might be in various houses. The deacons, younger men, would assist, not only in the financial arrangements, but in various parts of the Lord's work. Titus 1 has the same stress on the high standard of the elders, and we have already noticed in reading through 1 Timothy 3 that there were deaconesses. Our English version says "Their wives" but there is no "Their" in the original Scripture. The word simply indicates "women" though it may include wives. And we again find that none were allowed into ANY office unless they were godly in true adornment, flippancy, frivolity, self-pleasing, disqualified, and though the one who desired to be an elder might be an aged man, if he were not newly planted, if he were a young Christian without spiritual maturity, he was disqualified. Indeed there are so many hedges about this privilege that if one looks around with godly care one must ask the question, Where are men who can be Scriptural elders and deacons? Personally, beloved friends, I would with sorrow give the answer, I do not agree with the usual idea that there are many such. The standard is so much higher than we are apt to acknowledge. What shall we do? Shall we lower the standard or rather wait on our God? The second alternative is the only one that befits the people of the Lord.

A stress in closing on a godly home. The home was to be the miniature of the assembly, and it becomes us, if we belong to the Lord, in our homes to please HIM. Christian parents have a grave responsibility they cannot realise it too much. When a young man takes upon himself the deeply important position of a husband he little realises oftentimes what is involved therein. There is a need for grave spiritual concern, before one takes any step in such matters. Oh that it may be ours while looking sorrowfully around upon the lack of godliness in the home

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to cry unto our God that He Who raises up teachers after His own heart may also grant if it please Him elders although in His own mercy He can work without them. The Word of God is not bound. The grace of God is not frustrated. The Spirit of God is not failing, and our beloved Lord says, Because I live, yeshall live also. His people can rejoice in an eternal life and in eternal security, in eternal salvation, but surely their desire must be to GLORIFY Him in their pilgrim life, and whatsoever they do to do all not according to the will of men, not according to the customs of the world, not according to the actions of others, but according to the will of their LORD.

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