



# NOT A NOVICE



Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. (**I Timothy 3:6**)



Before I get started I would like to make it clear that I am not speaking for any group nor anyone else for that matter but am simply attempting to put forth what I believe the Lord has revealed to me and hopefully continuing to reveal to me. Please do as scripture exhorts and prove (*test*) all things but I implore you that your test be kept strictly with what scripture says and not according to what other men say or have said or what any tradition says. Please see Acts 17:10-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 1 John 4:1. – Tom



This topic has been in the back of my mind for quite a while and my wife and I have discussed it numerous times. I just hadn't been given to put it down on paper for anyone else to view. My hope is that I will be given to convey what I see in Scripture in a way that is true first and foremost, and secondly is backed up from Scripture and thirdly is easily understood.

If we go back to the beginning of this letter we see in verse two that it is addressed “Unto Timothy (1:2)” So, who is this Timothy? He is referred to by Paul as “...my own son” (I Tim. 1:2) and “...my dearly beloved son” (II Tim. 1:2). Paul tells him to “abide still at Ephesus” (I Tim. 1:3). Paul obviously had an affection, a great love and respect for him.

The term “not a novice” is but one of many qualifications for a Bishop (Elder) that Paul was given to provide to Timothy. I have been given to write on all of those qualifications along with the ones Paul was given to provide to Titus for the same thing. If any is interested it is entitled “**QUALIFICATIONS OF BISHOPS (ELDERS) AND DEACONS**”. In that writing I was enabled to go over each of the twenty-four different qualifications. But, with this writing I just want to focus on this one which is “Not a novice” and hopefully elaborate on it more.

In verse two of this same chapter Paul starts his discourse with “A bishop then must be...” If we look at the original Greek the word order is a little different than what we read in the KJV. The order actually is: “Must then the bishop be ...” Essentially it says the same thing but to me with the word “Must” being at the beginning there is an emphasis on this word “must” and it stresses the importance of each of the qualifications that Paul is going to mention.

There are fourteen qualifications that Paul was given to include **before** we get to our verse in question. Then we read “Must then a bishop be not a novice...”

Let’s take a step back and start at the basics. What is a novice? Paul was adamant that a Bishop (Elder) **CANNOT** be one so what does it mean to be a novice? In the Greek it is the word “*neóphytos*” which means “young convert”. In English it is: “someone new to a field or activity.” Please notice that it has nothing to do with age. In this same letter, Paul tells Timothy “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Tim. 4:12) We can take from this that Timothy was considerably younger than those he was ministering to. And yet Paul had enough confidence in him despite his young age to ordain men to be Bishops that meet all the qualifications that he was given to write.

A “novice” can be anyone at any age. Here are three examples from Scripture on what a novice is like:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for

hitherto ye were not able to *bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. (**I Corinthians 3:1-2**)

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. (**Hebrews 5:12-13**)

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. (**I Peter 2:1-3**)

A “novice” is anyone and everyone when they first are given to see themselves for who they truly are and see Jesus Christ for who He truly is. It doesn’t matter how much schooling one has or how much so-called experience someone has. When they first are given to see **THE** truth they are “babes in Christ”.

Paul speaks from his experience. Before Paul was converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 19:1-9) here is how he describes himself;

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” (**Philippians 3:4-6**)

We see from this that Paul was no dummy nor a “novice” in what he knew which was what he was taught. He says he was a Pharisee concerning the law and that he was blameless concerning righteousness and yet he was still a novice when it came to **THE** truth.

We see Paul being taken away by the Lord from everyone and everything he knew. He gives the history of this to the brethren in Galatia:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called *me* by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and

returned again unto Damascus. Then after **three years** I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. **Then fourteen years** after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. (**Galatians 1:15-2:2**) [*bold emphasis added*]

What I see in this is that Paul was taken away from the limelight for seventeen years after his conversion on the road to Damascus. Why? We can only surmise because he doesn't specifically state why. Could it be because he was a "novice"? Whatever the Lord's reasons were they brought about a change in Paul so that he was able to say;

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but dung*, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (**Philippians 3:7-11**)

Quite a few years ago I received an email from someone who claimed to be a "pastor". He shared with me that the Lord had opened his eyes to the truth of God's absolute sovereignty and predestination over ALL things recently. Because of his excitement over this he started to preach this glorious truth from the pulpit and was removed because of it. He couldn't understand why they did this. He was emailing me to ask me if I happened to know of any churches that were looking for a pastor. I didn't and I tried convincing him to take a break and just rest in this new found truth getting a firmer foundation. I don't know why he didn't listen but can only *surmise* that it was because he didn't want to get a real job and thought he was too important to take a break. Either way his actions showed me that he acted that way because he was a "novice".

On the flip side of that, I knew of an elder who was called to serve a church. He was a seasoned preacher and he preached God's absolute sovereignty and predestination. When he was asked to come preach at the church full time the assembly did not realize that he was a strong predestinarian. When he started preaching that way they had a fit about it. They called a special service and everyone in the congregation showed up that Sunday with tape recorders to try and catch him saying something that they didn't agree with so they could kick him out. When he took the pulpit you could hear all of the tape recorders being clicked on. He opened up his bible and started reading in Romans chapter one. He continued reading through the whole book of Romans, closed his Bible and walked out of the church doors to never return again. He was not concerned with finding a new place to preach because he fully believed that if the Lord wanted him preaching that the Lord would provide. This is an excellent example of the importance of not being a novice.

**Why is this not the model?** Why do modern men and men throughout history think they are above or beyond Paul in this area? When one comes to the knowledge of the truth, no matter what position they hold in the church, if any, they are now considered a "novice" of the truth. They may be a fabulous historian, they may be a charismatic new school or modern religion preacher but none of that matters because now they are a "novice" and according to the qualification that the Lord gave to Paul a "novice" **CANNOT** be an elder. And **ALL** of the qualifications, including this one, for a Bishop are given for the safety and as a protection for the local body of believers. The reason for this one is clear because Paul gives us the reason. A "novice" is more likely to be lifted up with pride and thus fall into the condemnation of the devil. Not only is this qualification from the Lord but it is common sense and thus Paul is very clear here why he says that a Bishop (Elder) cannot be a novice.

**This needs to be the model!** If anyone claims to know and believe **THE** truth of God's word then they are to follow what it clearly spells out to do. That includes adhering to ordaining **ONLY** those men who are qualified for the position.

I don't care if a man is already a pastor when he is given to see **THE** truth. No man is that important that he can't take time off and get to know His Lord. He is to be considered a "novice". Will it take seventeen years like it did Paul? I don't know. Everyone is different and you can't put God in a box. It might be less for some and might be more for others. I don't believe the amount of years is a hard and fast rule. But, I do believe that there needs to be a break from what **WAS** until he truly knows what now **IS**. If he is to be appointed as an Bishop, Elder, Overseer or Pastor then it will happen at the appropriate time that the Lord has decreed and appointed.

In hope,  
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Updated: December 2023

\* All Scripture is quoted from the KJV