

**Message #10****I Timothy 3:2**

Now when it comes to most occupations, there are several things that seem to qualify one for a particular position: 1) Education; 2) Experience; 3) Accomplishment. There is value in all three of these things, but the one thing God is most concerned with in His church is character.

**IN ORDER FOR GOD’S CHURCH TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, IT MUST HAVE LEADERS WHO HAVE THE BIBLICAL CHARACTER OF A LEADER.**

**OBSERVATION #1** – These qualifications have nothing to do with a man’s pre-conversion character.

What a man was or did prior to being saved has no bearing on whether or not he has the character to be a leader in God’s church after salvation.

**Passage #1** - Ephesians 2:3 – “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

In this passage the Apostle Paul gives a description of his own life prior to being saved by the grace of God.

**Passage #2** - Colossians 1:21-22 – “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”

Paul describes the Colossian’s pre-conversion character as being that of a life filled with evil deeds, yet he describes their post-conversion character as being “holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”

**Passage #3** - I Peter 4:3 – “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts excess of wine, revelings, carousings, and abominable idolatries” (Authorized Version).

The Apostle Peter, who was an elder (5:1), describes his own lifestyle, prior to his salvation, as being that which would have certainly disqualified him from being an elder or deacon if pre-conversion sins were a qualifying factor.

**Passage #4** - I Corinthians 6:9-11 – “Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revelers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

God's classification of one after salvation is completely different than God's classification before salvation, even when sins committed before salvation were abominable.

**Passage #5** – Acts 13:39 – “and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.”

Clearly, once a person believes on Christ, he/she is free, in the mind of God, from “all” sin.

**Passage #6** – II Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

One who believes on Jesus Christ is a new creation in the mind of God and all sin, old sin is passed away. This list is not a character check from pre-conversion days!

**OBSERVATION #2** – These qualifications have to do with a man's post-conversion faithfulness.

Paul refers to himself and to leadership ministry in I Cor. 4:1-2. He writes: “Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”

The word “steward” is a word that refers to a church leader who is a manager and an administrator in the things of God (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 313). The words “found trustworthy” are words that mean one is to have proven himself to be faithful or trustworthy in the things of God and that faithful reliability has been seen by God and by others.

We do not put a man into leadership hoping that will make him faithful, he is to be “found trustworthy” that is he is to have proven himself to be reliable and faithful and then we put him into leadership.

**OBSERVATION #3** – These qualifications are qualitative, not quantitative.

There is no article before any one of the qualifications listed in this section. What this grammatically means is that Paul is talking about the character and quality of a man's life in regard to these qualifications. He is not speaking of isolated moments in a man's life when he may have violated some of the things on the list.

Numerical restriction is not the intent of the author. Quality of life is the intent of the author and should be the intent of those looking for leaders. Now I personally believe that the character and quality of faithfulness which qualifies a man for leadership may still be operative even if there has been a moment of failure after salvation.

David was classified by himself and by God as being blameless, even in the aftermath of his sin with Bathsheba (II Sam. 22:19, 20, 24-26).

Peter also falls into this category. Three times Peter publicly denied the Lord and cursed Him (Matt. 26:69-75). This would seem to be a clear violation of the first qualification, namely, that a leader is to be “above reproach.” Peter denied the Lord as a believer. How do we justify the fact that Peter was not only permitted to be an elder, but an apostle in the aftermath of such a terrible failure? The answer lies in the fact that this list of qualifications is qualitative, not quantitative. In the big picture, Peter was a solid, faithful man of God. That was his character and quality of life.

**OBSERVATION #4** – These qualifications are necessary for leadership.

Twice in the leadership context of I Timothy and once in the leadership context of Titus, the text says these qualifications are a “must” (I Tim. 3:2, 7; Titus 1:7). The word “must” is a Greek word which literally means these qualifications are a must, which is they are a necessity. This particular word has to do with what is a logical necessity (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 99). It is a logical necessity for leaders in a church to be men who consistently meet these qualifications.

The words of Dr. Paul Benware are very sound: “The biblical list presents God’s ideal leader. This is the kind of person God wants to lead His people. No person will ever perfectly fulfill this list of qualities, but this does not mean that the standard can be set aside as an impossibility. It must be maintained in leadership evaluation. It must not be set aside either in theory or in practice” (*Leaders In The Making*, p. 47).

If one desires to serve in the office of leadership, he “must” be one who is continually developing in his own life in these areas.

**OBSERVATION #5** – These qualifications are determined before God by the individual and by leaders and people who are faithful.

One immediate question that comes to mind when considering qualifications for leadership is who is it that determines whether or not a man is qualified to be a leader in God’s church? Since none of the qualifications are met perfectly, who determines whether or not a man is a qualified leader?

We begin to answer this question by suggesting that ultimately God will be in the process and will determine who is qualified. In fact, we have direct revelation from God that specifically says the Holy Spirit actually determines who becomes a leader in one of God’s local churches (Acts 20:28).

We also know from Scripture that from a human perspective, it is the responsibility of faithful, mature, spiritually-minded and biblically wise individuals to be involved in the selection process to determine who is qualified and fit to lead a local church. For example, on the island of Crete, it was Titus’ job to appoint leaders (Titus 1:5). Timothy was given a very serious charge by Paul in the presence of God, Christ Jesus, and the holy angels to be very careful in the selection of church leadership (I Tim. 5:21-22).

We also know from Paul's own selective experience that the leaders of the church of Antioch were involved in selecting Paul and Barnabas for sacred service (Acts 13:1-2). There can be no question that it is the responsibility of leaders in a church to carefully monitor the church and watch for men who are maturing and developing in the things of God who are able to lead the church of God.

We may also observe that when God wants a man in leadership, He may overrule the man's own opinion of himself. For example, Moses did not think he was fit to be a leader over Israel and actually argued with God about this (Ex. 4:1-12). In all reality, God said to Moses your vote doesn't count, you are going to be my leader, like it or not!

We may also observe that the congregation of God's people will collectively be led by the Holy Spirit to select men of leadership. For example, when the apostles were being drawn away from prayer and the ministry of God's Word, they needed help. So the congregation of believers was asked to select seven men who had a good reputation as being men of God (Acts 6:1-6). The congregation did this and then brought the men to the apostles for their final approval.

God still selects leaders through other people. He uses His Spirit, He uses His leadership and He uses His congregation to identify those qualified to be leaders.

If the church is to become the pillar and support of the truth of God, it needs men who have character. It needs women who have character. It needs children who have character and it needs leadership with character.