

The Qualifications of Leadership – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs the church through Timothy about the qualifications of elders and deacons
2. aim – to cause us to seek out and support proper biblical leadership in the church
3. passage – 1 Timothy 3:1-13

b. outline

1. The Realities of Church Leadership
2. The Qualifications of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7)
3. The Qualifications of Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

c. opening

1. the **continued thought** of Paul re: the health of the church (at Ephesus)
 - a. in **chap. 1**, Paul outlines the main problem at the church: the teaching of heterodoxy
 1. his **indicative**: the church is *defined* by its doctrinal boundaries – any teaching or practice “outside” of the apostolic and orthodox message of the gospel threatens to “undo” the church
 - b. in **chap. 2**, Paul notes the first thing that needs to be done: lead the church to be praying for opportunity to preach the gospel to every class of people, without losing track of the role each person in the church plays in that mission
 - c. (**now**) in **chap. 3**, Paul extends this message: establish the proper *role* of leadership
 2. his **next imperative**: **the church is to be led by men who are properly qualified and utterly committed to the on-going health and mission of the church**

II. The Qualifications of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Content

a. he “desires a noble task” (v. 1)

1. “the saying is trustworthy” (**cf. 1:15**) = an axiom worth listening to; *hear me on this ...*
 - a. **observation #1**: it is okay to “aspire” to this position in the church – God will (**IMO**) put within some men both the *gifts of eldership* (**see below**) and the **passion** to do the job
 - b. **observation #2**: it is *not okay* to desire the office of elder just because it is good to be in power – eldership is a “noble” task that requires all of the characteristics Paul will go on to list (**see below**)
 - c. **observation #3**: it is *not okay* for the eldership to be made up only of an “inner circle” of men, clutching their power and “holding at bay” some who God leads into that role

b. he must be “above reproach” (v. 2a)

1. *anepilēptos* (*aneklētos*, Titus) = free from accusation; having a good reputation; lit. blameless
 - a. **not sinless** – “blameless” can *imply* perfection, thus some translations use “above reproach”
 1. obviously: there is *no* sinless person, thus Paul cannot be assuming such here
 2. and, Paul *himself* would have been disqualified (given his admission in **Romans 7**)
 - b. rather, it is being a man of such good reputation that his character flaws and sins (albeit many) do not cast any sort of **disparagement** upon *himself*, his *position*, his *message*, or the *church*
 1. people see *him* as trustworthy and reliable; his *public* persona is one of “good character”
 2. people see *no contradiction* between his life and his message; he “walks the walk”
 3. people see him as a leader and *willingly* follow his example; he is no *hypocrite*
 4. people see him as one who *builds up* the church rather than making it the object of scorn
 - a. **i.e.** the reputation *of the church* does not suffer because of the reputation *of the man*
 - c. unfortunately, *unregenerate* men are (virtually) incapable of knowing the difference between a “good” reputation and a “bad” one – since they love their sin and encourage others to sin as they do, it is difficult for them to be a fair judge of character
 1. however, those born-again have the Spirit who acts as a *witness* (**1 Thess. 2:9-10**)

“For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.”
 2. thus, the **primary arbiters** of who qualifies in this way is *the church itself*
2. **point: an elder must be a man of impeccable reputation, particularly within the church**

c. he must be “the husband of one wife” (v. 2b)

1. note the *difficulty* of translating this phrase from the Greek
 - a. the nouns for “husband” and “wife” are words which can also mean “man” and “woman”
 1. e.g. *anēr* = occurs 214 times in the N.T.; translated “man/men” 138 times; “husband” 53 times
 - a. it is *not* the primary word for male gender in the N.T. (*anthrōpos*)
 2. e.g. part of **Matthew 1:16** could be rendered “Joseph the man of Mary” (i.e. her husband)
 - b. a *better* translation of this phrase is either: “a one-woman man” or “a one-wifed husband”
 2. **question:** is Paul insisting that an elder must be married?
 - a. **answer #1:** given the *context* and *Greek-construction*, it is very likely that Paul is only referring here to the reputation of the man as it is seen in one of the most-significant human relationships
 1. **principle: one of the best ways to determine whether a man truly is above reproach is to examine his most-significant and visible human relationship – his marriage**
 2. the context (of “above reproach”) seems to continue into this phrase *and the list that immediately follows it (see below)*
 3. the construction of the Greek emphasizes the word “one” rather than “husband” or “man”
 - a. **LOW:** the *fidelity* of a man to his wife (i.e. his *oneness* with her) is a great “thermometer” into whether a man is capable of *spiritually guiding* a church
 - b. if he struggles in marriage, or is unfaithful as a husband, he will (probably) carry those same weaknesses into his office as an elder
 - c. Paul instructs Timothy to use marriage as a “lens” through which to determine reputation
 - b. **answer #2:** given Paul’s *larger theology* (as seen throughout his letters) it is very unlikely that Paul is insisting here that an elder must be married (it is not his *main point*)
 1. because, this would *contradict* Paul’s own teaching in **1 Corinthians 7:7, 32-35**
 - a. **axiom: never build your theology around one verse of Scripture!**
 - b. **remember:** Timothy certainly would have been *very familiar* with Paul’s views on singleness and marriage, given how much time they had spent together *at Corinth*
 - c. Paul regarded singleness (like himself!) **as a blessing**; the single man can concentrate all of his energies on the things of the Lord, and not have to worry about taking care of a wife
 1. for Paul to insist that *an elder* must be married, but not *an apostle*, is highly inconsistent
 - d. however, Paul also understood the *inherent desire* of people to be married, a desire rooted in the very *Imago Dei*, and he gives instructions on marriage because of its importance
 2. Paul includes this statement because he knows that the *vast majority* of men who would serve as elders would be married – they would be “older” and more “mature” – so the church could look to their marriages as **evidence** of the depth of their *self-sacrificial* nature
 - a. given the *self-sacrificial nature* of a husband as described in **Ephesians 5:25-33**
 3. **point: an elder must be a man whose marriage demonstrates his impeccable reputation**

d. he must be “sober-minded, self-controlled” (v. 2c)

1. “sober-minded” = prudent; moderate; lit. safe in mind
2. “self-controlled” (*sōphrōn*) is different from **Galatians 5:23** (*enkrateia*) (only **1 Timothy** and **Titus**)
 - a. in **Galatians 5**, the term means “the ability to control ones passions and temptations”
 1. a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the regenerate (**contra Galatians 5:19-21**)
 - b. but (here), Paul is thinking of a *different* kind of self-control, namely **mind-control**
 1. thus the inclusion of “sober-minded” in the pair – sober-mindedness; *safe in mind*
3. **question:** what is the primary tool of the elder? **answer:** the Scriptures *as run through his mind*
 - a. today, many believe that the primary tool of the preacher is the **humorous illustration**
 - b. but, to *understand* the Bible takes a great deal of **mental energy** – exegesis takes *thought*
 - c. and, how to *apply* that Word to varying levels of spiritual maturity takes *thought*
4. **point: the elder who is sober-minded thinks about the Word of God and how it applies to his people, especially how to make the “hard stuff” understandable**

e. he must be “respectable, hospitable” (v. 2d)

1. “respectable” = orderly; modest; proper; lit. decorous (polite and restrained)
2. “hospitable” = welcoming; friendly; showing warmth, particularly to strangers; open
 - a. only used three (3) times in the N.T.; here, **Titus 1:8**, and **1 Peter 4:9**
 - b. Paul is probably (given the context) *not* using this term in the sense of someone who:
 1. is good at throwing dinner parties or welcoming guests (i.e. as a good host)
 - c. generally, the word is associated with taking care of the **needs** of others
 1. our word “hospital” comes from a similar root: taking care of *bodily* needs
 2. used from the Mediterranean culture of welcoming strangers and *feeding them*

- d. but, Paul is probably (given the context) using this term as to meeting **actual** (real) needs
 - 1. **example:** going to the hospital for chest pains, only to walk out with a leg cast
 - 2. far too many elders (and churches) are focused on the **temporal** needs of people rather than on their **eternal** needs (**i.e.** in the *welcoming* sense, but not in the *needs* sense)
- 3. **point: the truly hospitable elder is one who welcomes people (and puts them at ease), but is more concerned about their real needs than their perceived needs**
 - a. **note:** the danger of avoiding *offense* in preaching
- f. **he must be “able to teach” (v. 2e)**
 - 1. “able to teach” (*didaktikon*) = skillful at instructing; having an *aptitude* of applied scholarship; able to take concepts and make them understandable by others so that they *learn*
 - a. having an aptitude for *learning*, understanding deep concepts, *communicating* those concepts – **patience** being the *key* virtue of teaching – **lit.** the art of *repetition*
 - 2. **question:** what do churches today want their elders (pastor!!) to be?
 - a. good administrators, good comforters, good counselors (both privately and publicly), good sympathizers, and good speakers (not necessarily good *preachers*)
 - b. all of these are *certainly* good, but there is an axiom that is important over all this:
 - 1. **never let the good crowd out the best** - there are many things that are *good*, and we should consider them important, *but never at the expense of what is best for us*
 - 3. **point: the primary job of an elder is to teach – all other functions of his job (albeit important) pale beside the awesome responsibility he has to teach his people “the whole counsel of God”**
 - a. even though his people will (often) **chafe** against it (**remember 1 Timothy 1 and heterodoxy?**)
 - 4. **the true reputation of a pastor is not determined by his community relationships or the strength of his marriage, but by his *unwavering passion* to advance the *spiritual well-being* of his flock through the God-ordained means of *teaching* – these “other” personal matters are important, but a good reputation in the eyes of God is a commitment to the teaching office**