

Pastoral Qualifications

Call to Worship: Psalm 9:1-2

1st Scripture: Titus 1:5-9

2nd Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Hymn Insert- *Here I am to Worship*

Hymn #387- *I Love to Tell the Story*

Hymn #80- *How Firm a Foundation*

Introduction:

Moving on then, into Paul's blueprint for life in the local church, Paul will now address the only two biblical offices that are found in the local church, namely, the office of bishop/overseer/elder/pastor (interchangeable titles in Scripture, describing the same office from different vantage points) and the office of deacon. This morning, we will seek to work through the qualifications that Paul lists for the first of these offices, the office of elder.

I. Pastoral Qualifications

You'll notice that the way, in which, this section is set up, Paul basically gives a lengthy checklist of qualifications, up to which, one desiring the office of elder, must be held, to see if he is suited for the position. And so, with that said, we will seek to work through this list, attempting to pull out the meaning of each term, so that we can accurately assess these qualifications in the men who would desire to serve in the pastoral office of our own church.

But first, we begin by briefly considering Paul's introductory statement, "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop ("overseer"), he desires a good work" (vs. 1).

Here, Paul begins by affirming that the work of an overseer is a good work, and it is a good office to desire, because of the work involved in the office. He prefaces this statement with the words, "This is a faithful saying," so as to add weight to the statement, because, it is not an easy office to fill, but, it is a good office, nonetheless, where good work is done in that office, by those who remain faithful in it. [Note the similar preface in 1 Timothy 1:15].

And so, Paul, rather than discourage those who desire the office of elder, encourages them, by informing them that they desire a good work. That said, a desire itself, while good and necessary, is not sufficient to put someone in the office, which is why Paul follows this statement up with a list of necessary qualifications that must be met by those who desire the office, if they

are to assume the position of an elder. This then brings us to consider Paul's checklist of qualifications. "A bishop then must be..."

1) Blameless: The word, "blameless" here, obviously doesn't mean "sinless." If that were the case, then the only Person, who would ever be qualified to be a pastor would be the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. That said, the weighty implication here is that the man must be above reproach or not open to censure. He is a man, who cannot legitimately be accused of any malicious act or gross, flagrant sin. He must exhibit a consistent pattern of godliness, which while imperfect, allows him to be an example to the flock, over which, he has been given charge. The flock must be able to see, in some significant and relevant sense, that the pastor himself is a living testimony to what he preaches. His teachings align with his life. [5:7, 6:14]

I believe that this first qualification is also a summation of the ones that follow, so that we have concrete examples, which provide us with specific areas, where a pastor must be blameless.

2) The Husband of One Wife: The Pastor is to be above reproach by being a "one-woman man." And we can understand this in two primary ways:

A- A pastor must literally have only one wife, barring a polygamous man from entering the ministry under any circumstance. And so, Jacob and David and Solomon...etc, would not be qualified to be a pastor in the New Covenant, because of their multiple wives. [Not a fornicator or adulterer; not sexually immoral, but faithful]

B- A Pastor cannot be one, who, at least, *as a Christian*, has been remarried, after being the initiator of an illegitimate divorce. Such a scandal, for whatever reason (less being the victim of adultery or abandonment) would certainly hinder his effectiveness in ministry, especially among those who are having marital problems.

And so, the pastor must be a "one-woman man," and the success of his marriage (in keeping with having an orderly family) will greatly serve to aid his ministry, where he will definitely be looked to, as a guide for healing broken marriages. He must be blameless in this regard.

3) Temperate: This word literally means sober, or clear minded in the "drunk/high" free sense. He must not be one whose mind comes under the influence of excess alcohol, strong drink or mind altering drugs. And so, the pastor must be above reproach by being seen as one

who is sober-minded and not a "boozier" in any sense, whatsoever. He needs to be on his feet, self-controlled, vigilant, watchful and ready to handle whatever comes his way, in a God-honoring way, especially as a watchman over Christ's flock. [Level headed]

4) Sober-minded: Here, in addition to the previous qualification, we find that the pastor must be of a sound mind. He must be sane, in control of his senses and in his right mind. And so, one with uncontrolled, mind altering illnesses would not be able to fill the office of a pastor, which requires focus, attention to detail, wise judgment and decision making, and a proper exposition of the Scriptures. While this particular qualification doesn't deal with a scandalous matter, we can appreciate the importance of it. [Sometimes, when a pastor gets older-- Alzheimer's, dementia...etc]

5) Of Good Behavior: The pastor must be above reproach in his behavior. He must be modest and humble in all of his conduct, not flashy, arrogant, careless or proud. He must have a godly disposition, full of graces, exhibiting a life of godliness and holiness in the fear of God. All in all, his behavior must be that which is commendable, again, serving as an example to the flock. People ought to see Christ in him.

6) Hospitable: He must have an evident love and concern for others, an outstretched hand, willing to welcome others into his home, to feed them, to care for them, to listen to and counsel them. He must be generous, exhibiting by his treatment of others, that this world has no ultimate grip on him. He must not be distant, but rather, he must be willing to be among the sheep, putting their needs on par with his own needs. He must reflect the servant heart of Christ, who washed His own disciples feet, though He was Lord over them.

7) Able to Teach: A pastor must also be able to teach. Notice, this doesn't mean that a pastor must have the gift of *preaching*. But rather, the main point is that he must have a good handle on the Word of God, and he must be able to teach others, from out of the resources of his own understanding of God's Word. He doesn't necessarily have to go to a Bible college or a seminary, but he must have a good and broad understanding of God's Word, so that he can rightly divide it, as that primary means, which God uses to sanctify and grow His people.

And so, the qualification here assumes two things: First, that he has the resources and experience to teach, and second, that he is able to teach out of those resources in a clear and

cogent way, such that the people of God can benefit and learn from him. Teaching settings can include Bible studies, counseling, and of course, preaching. Nonetheless, he must be able to teach in some regard. [See also Titus 1:9]

8) Not Given to Much Wine: In many ways, being temperate assumes this of course, but it bears mention, nonetheless. The pastor cannot be given over to an addiction of any sort, which would bring reproach upon him and his ministry. While he is not forbidden from having an occasional alcoholic beverage (although, even there, he would do well to be careful, lest he harm another man's conscience), it would be scandalous for him to get drunk or to service any kind of an addiction.

9) Not Violent: A pastor must not be short-fused or ready to call for blows. He must have thick skin, not easily provoked, striving to exercise the patience of Christ, when offenses are thrown at him. He cannot have a short temper, which would lead others to feel the need to walk on egg shells around him, rather than have the freedom to be open and honest with him. He cannot bully or threaten the people of God into following his will, but rather, he must patiently teach the Word of God, and rely on the Holy Spirit to convict and change His people in accordance with *God's* will. He must see himself as an ambassador of Christ, and not of his own selfish ambitions. He is a shepherd, not a dictator.

10) Not Greedy for Money: Sadly, here's a qualification that ought to sink many pastors. A pastor is not to be driven by a desire for monetary/material gain. Indeed, if he is to be hospitable, generous and having an outstretched hand, he cannot be clinging to the mighty dollar. Christ must be the pastor's passion and portion, even as God was the portion of the Levites. The pastor's back must be to the world. He cannot possibly take a sincere interest in the people of God, if he is swept away by the pangs of material hunger, nor can he convince others to fix their eyes on the kingdom of God, if his heart is set on gold. If the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, what kind of evil will sprout out of a church that is led by money driven pastors?

11) But Gentle: A pastor must be compassionate and patient. He must not be harsh or abrasive; again, not roughly forcing his will on the people. He must lead tenderly and graciously, persevering with the brethren, trusting that the Holy Spirit will do His work. He must be a spiritual farmer, sowing seed and waiting for God to bring fruit in due season. He must be

willing to tell someone the same thing a thousand times if necessary, remembering that the sheep are still sheep, in need of a tender shepherd, who properly represents the Good Shepherd, who was beyond gentle and patient with His disciples. He must remember that the flock which he tends is Christ's flock, and they are the apple of His eye. He must be willing to work with repentant sinners, tenderly leading them to the healing fountains of Christ's grace. Yes, he must be ready to exercise discipline, but he is slow to chide and quick to show compassion, forgiveness, restoration and grace. He aims to lead the sheep, not beat them into submission.

12) Not Quarrelsome: A pastor must be peaceful and not divisive, contentious or quarrelsome. He cannot be easily provoked. He cannot be quickly moved to wrath.

13) Not Covetous: Similar to not greedy for money, but further, not jealous and desirous of what others have. He must be content with what he has, and not hungry for material gain. [Hebrews 13:5]

14) One Who Rules His Own House Well: "having his children in submission with all reverence." His house must be in order and not given over to chaos. His children must respect him and not blatantly reject his authority. He must have control over his own home. In Titus 1:6, Paul states that an overseer's children must be "faithful, not accused of dissipation/debauchery (immoral/worldly behavior) or insubordination/incorrigibility/being unmanageable or unruly" (not able to be corrected or changed...hardened because of lack of discipline). The implication here would seem to especially include teenagers, whom, having not been corrected when they were younger are now beyond correction, as it were (though older, Eli's sons would be a good example-- the high priests sons defiling the sacrifices, eating the fat, threatening people, sleeping with temple prostitutes...etc). [1 Samuel 2:22-25; 27-36; 3:11-15]

Back to our text in 1 Timothy then, Paul moves on to elaborate further on this qualification, explaining why it is important: "for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" Clearly, Paul is avowing that the leadership required to lead/oversee Christ's church is reflective of the type of leadership that is required for a man to lead/oversee his own home, only, the responsibility is larger and greater. And so, if he cannot maintain order in his house (in that smaller, difficult and yet, less complicated sphere), how can he possibly maintain order in the church (a much larger and broader sphere, where there

are many more souls at stake). And so, Paul makes this clear connection, clarifying why it is important for an overseer to properly oversee his own home first, if he is to be suited to oversee the people of God.

15) Not a Novice: Not a new convert or believer. And here, once again, Paul elaborates further, explaining why this is the case. "Lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (vs. 6).

While, it certainly begins at conversion, humility is something that develops over time, through trials and experience in the Christian life. Here, Paul reveals the danger of putting a new convert in office, because, lacking the longevity of walking with the Lord, makes them prone to becoming proud, if they are advanced before their time. It takes time, and much self-abasement to develop the kind of heart that will be very patient, humble, slow to judge and quick to extend compassion. One can read a thousand theological books; the finest of all puritan works, in a very short period of time, gaining much head knowledge and understanding of biblical truths, but that theology must be rubbed into the soul; it must be experienced, so that it is used wisely and not as a means of flaunting one's knowledge. And so, a novice, no matter how brilliant he might be, is not suited to be an overseer. Putting it another way, one must spend enough time under the shoe of God's discipline before they will be well prepared to lead others with a Christ-like dependence and demeanor.

Notice, here we are given an insight into the devil's ultimate fall here. This is one of those texts which reveals how the devil, who once being innocent and pure like all of God's creatures, fell, because he became puffed up with pride. He wasn't content to be the glorious creature that he was made to be. He wanted more. He wanted to be God. And so, he fell. Well, here, Paul warns that redeemed sinners still have that tendency, and especially when they are advanced too quickly, not being given enough time to mature. Putting them in a leadership position as a novice will make them susceptible to becoming puffed up, filled with pride, leading them to fall into the same condemnation as the devil. And so, a new convert is not to be put into the office of overseer, no matter how mature and qualified he may seem to be otherwise.

16) Finally, He Must Have a Good Testimony Among those who are Outside: What he is, in the church, is essential, but the church is called to be a light to the world. The church's goal is

to bring in new converts from the outside. And so, if a man has a poor reputation on the outside, that will serve to hinder the effectiveness of his ministry, and the overall effectiveness of the ministry of the church. And so, he must not only guard his heart among the brethren, but he must guard his heart in all quarters. There must be a consistent pursuit of holiness in the whole of his life, such that, those on the outside (unbelievers within the community and beyond) cannot find a legitimate accusation against his person, which would bring reproach to the gospel, and the Christ of the gospel.

Notice, once again, Paul adds an explanation to this, "lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." The devil is cunning and crafty, and he has a way of setting things up, gradually, over time, seeking to build a man up for the purpose of tearing him down, and the church and the gospel along with him. He will also allow a man to look Holy for a time; he will let a man shine for awhile, and just when the roots are settled in, and his attachment is firm to the gospel and the church, he will expose his scandal (his reproach), leading not only to the man's own uprooting, but to the uprooting of many other precious souls as well, inside and outside of the church.

And so, brethren, this ends our consideration of the qualifications for overseer that Paul presents to Timothy, as a blueprint for the church.

II. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Having worked through our main text brethren, let us now conclude our time by considering a few closing thoughts and applications:

Recognize brethren, the responsibility that we have as a church to guard these qualifications as we seek to bring men into the office of overseer/pastor. To be sure, we ought always to desire more leadership, if the Lord would so desire to provide us with more leadership. It is a good office, and those who desire it, desire a good thing, but it must also be guarded as well, with the accompaniment of prayer and fasting. That said, let me give you a few basic principles to help guide us in our pursuit of godly leadership:

1) First, again, pray for God to raise up faithful laborers that would meet these qualifications. God knows the hearts of all men, and His resources are immeasurable. He can provide us with such men, but let us ask and plead toward these ends.

2) Let us keep in mind that while an overseer must be able to teach, that teaching is only one of the many qualifications listed here. The tendency of Reformers and those who cherish sound doctrine is to be mesmerized by good preaching/teaching, without considering the importance of these other shepherding qualifications. Christ taught better than anyone, but He was also a tender shepherd, who loved and lived among the sheep. Some of the greatest teachers in this world are not qualified to be overseers, and would be better suited to work in a seminary setting than shepherd Christ's precious fold.

3) Let us also be realistic, recognizing that while a man must meet these qualifications, no one will ever meet them perfectly. These are general principles, and all of them must be pursued and evident (in some respect) by all who would be put into the office of overseer, but they cannot and ought not to be used as a standard for perfection, which no overseer can possibly meet. The best of pastors (less Jesus Himself) will fall short in many of these areas, but, the general qualifications must be met by all who would be put into the office. They must be habitually met. ["a one woman man vs. dealing with a disobedient child"]

4) Pray for your present pastors. We might be stronger in some of these qualifications over others. [Ex: Given over to excess wine vs. coveting material gain]. We need grace and we need prayer. We may begin and continue well for a time, but our tendency is to gradually drift.

5) All in all, brethren, while we must be realistic; while there is only One Good Shepherd (in the perfect sense) and that is Christ, an overseer must strive to be like Christ. He must be one who evidences the kind of life that is willing to lay down his own life for the sheep. He cannot have his heart in this world. Heaven must be his home, and he must evidence that by the way in which he lives. Christ must be His reward and ultimate possession, and this ought to be reflected in the tender, sacrificial way, in which, he cares for Christ's sheep.

Finally, Let me just close by stating, brethren, that the moral aspects of all of these qualifications ought to be pursued by all Christians. In other words, we don't want to look at these as general laypeople and say, "Whew, glad I don't have to strive after those standards.

That's for pastor's." No, (less teaching) all of these qualifications involve Christian virtues, which every Christian should strive after, out of love for Christ, and a sincere desire to see Him glorified in the prosperity of His church. To be sure, they are necessary qualifications for the office of overseer, but they are good and virtuous qualifications, which ought to be pursued by all of Christ's people.

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25