

# 1 Timothy

## Chapter Three

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Now Paul discusses the qualifications of the church leaders. In verses 1-7 he discusses the qualifications of overseers and in verses 8-13 he discusses the qualifications of deacons. He does not clarify their roles in the church except briefly in the abilities mentioned for each. Most churches today focus too much on duties and not enough on qualifications.

*1Tim 3:1-7 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. <sup>2</sup>An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. <sup>4</sup>He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity <sup>5</sup>(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); <sup>6</sup>and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. <sup>7</sup>And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

The Greek word is “episkopos” and means “overseer”. Also in the NT it is translated as “bishop” (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25). Titus 1: 6, 7 suggests that “elder” (presbyteros) and “bishop” (episkopos) were the same person. In Acts 20:17 Paul states that he sent for the “elders”(presbyterous) of the church at Ephesus but in verse 28 he calls them “overseers” (episkopous). Overseer, bishop, and elder are then the same office. There were several bishop-elders in each local church. Because of the use of the word “bishop” in church systems today that is very different than that in the NT, most interpreters prefer to call this office overseer.

Paul gives ten (or fifteen, depending upon how one counts them) qualifications for the pastorate. Aspiring to the office does not mean a selfish ambition but rather yielding to a calling from God. The overseer must be beyond reproach in his observable conduct. Of course no human being can be totally beyond reproach. “The husband of one wife” is an expression that has been widely discussed and debated. There are five possible people that Paul may have been excluding from this office. One is a person who has never been married. However Paul expects pastors to be married as were the apostles (1 Cor 9:5). But Paul is not intending to disqualify those who are single. Both Paul and Jesus maintained that some people were intended to be single (Matt 19:10-11; 1 Cor 7:7). The second interpretation is that Paul was excluding polygamists. Thirdly some maintain that he is excluding those who have been divorced and remarried and this seems a reasonable conclusion for high standards are expected of pastors. The fourth possible meaning is

that Paul is excluding those who have been widowed and remarried. The remarrying of widows and widowers is specifically permitted in the NT (Rom 7:1; 1 Cor 7:39) although Paul expressed an opinion that it would be better that they remain single as he was (1 Cor 7:8, 25, 40) but his reason was practical rather than moral. The fifth possibility is that Paul is excluding those guilty of being unfaithful to his wife. This last case seems to fit the context best so that a pastor is expected to have a perfect record regarding sex and marriage.

The next three words may be taken together. Temperate means sober, self-controlled means sensible or disciplined in all his actions, respectable is the outward manifestation of an inner self-control. One of the gifts of the Spirit is self-control (Gal 5:22-23) and a pastor may spend a lot of time alone and must be always self-controlled. Hospitality is literally a love of strangers and in the NT times there were pastors and teachers traveling who needed a place to stay temporarily and the pastor was expected to accommodate them. Today also there are traveling Christians who may be in need of such hospitality. Paul then mentions a professional qualification that the pastor must be able to teach. The church then cannot ordain someone to this post who is not called by God and gifted by God as a teacher. Addiction to alcoholic beverages is a serious concern and indicates a personality that has severe problems. Paul did not require them to be total abstainers although there are strong social arguments for such. The next two qualifications may be taken together. They must not have a violent temperament but must be gentle and uncontentious.

He must also be free from the love of money (6:10 also). The false teachers were not free from this love of material things (1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:2). In the OT Micah became upset about judges who took bribes, the priests taught for a price, and prophets told fortunes for cash (Micah 3:11). In the NT Peter wanted the pastors to be “not greedy for money, but eager to serve” (1 Peter 5:2). Paul earned his own way to prove his motives were pure (1 Cor 9:4). Paul did require pastors to be paid (1 Tim 5:17).

The pastor must manage his own family well. If he cannot manage his family properly then he should not be allowed to be in charge of God’s family. Eli is a bad example since he did not restrain them properly and they were immoral and greedy (1 Sam 3:13). Pastors will be required to oversee church discipline and their handling of their family should show that they are able to do that properly. Those responsible for interviewing prospective pastors must include the family in the analysis of the prospect. The pastor’s children must also be Christians as is clarified in: *Titus 1:5-6 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, <sup>6</sup>namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.*

Next Paul discusses the spiritual maturity of the pastor in verse 6. Probably most pastors were called elders in the early church because they were senior in age and mature in belief. The main

danger for new converts being given such positions is pride as they become conceited and then receive the judgment given the devil for his pride. Humility before God and man is then a requirement that is properly developed as people mature.

Finally in verse 7 Paul states that pastors must have a good reputation outside of the church membership. The world is watching the church and all need to be wise in their behavior toward those in the community who are not in the church. The devil works to discredit the gospel and those who minister it and those pastors who are not careful in their behavior can easily fall into the devil's snare. Over the years the church has seen many pastors fall into sin and be ridiculed by the world for their sinfulness. The devil loves this result and will unceasingly work to trap Christians in some public manner to discredit the church before the world. I know that most of you can name some famous pastors who have been so discredited for their love of money or being caught in some sin such as sexual sin.

***1Tim 3:8-13*** Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, <sup>9</sup>but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience <sup>10</sup>And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach <sup>11</sup>Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things <sup>12</sup>Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. <sup>13</sup>For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

It is not certain that the seven people called to serve in Acts 6:3 were actually the first deacons for the word “diakonos” is not used there. The word is first used in Phil 1:1 and there it is stated that they supervised material concerns of the church. The title for their function means a server for practical administration like the distribution of funds, food and clothing to those in need so that the Apostles could concentrate on teaching the gospel message. Many of the qualifications for these deacons are the same as for the overseers so they will not be repeated in detail. They are to be men of dignity or respect and not double-tongued or insincere. Being double-tongued means saying one thing to one person and something else to someone else regarding the same topic. Usually people act this way hoping to gain respect of everyone but such a person ends up not having the respect of anyone once his actions are known. Not addicted to much wine is a stronger statement than for overseers. They are also stated as not being fond of dishonest gain. The Greek word “kerdos” means a gain of some sort and it can be psychological or material.

Deacons must also have orthodox convictions concerning the “mystery of the faith”, which is the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The Biblical meaning of mystery is truth that is revealed. They must have a clear conscience unlike the false teachers who rejected their conscience (1:19) and suffered shipwreck regarding their faith. People desiring to be deacons must be tested and approved. The Greek word translated tested is “dokimazo” and it has three stages: test, prove by

testing, and approve as the result of testing. These men had to prove themselves before the congregation and that usually meant serving in a probationary period. Only if they passed these tests could they be allowed to serve the congregation as deacons.

Verse eleven has been the subject of much debate and commentators are still divided on the issue of women deacons. Some translations start verse eleven with “In the same way, their wives ....”. But there is no definite article or possessive in the Greek before “women” even though the NIV and the KJ versions have unwarrantably added the word “their”. The Greek language uses “gyne” for both “woman” and “wife”. Phoebe seems to have been a deaconess (Rom 16:1) and there were women deacons in later centuries but it is debatable that there were deaconesses in the first century. Whether these women were wives of deacons or deaconesses Paul states that they must be dignified or worthy of respect. They must not have lost control of their tongue, temperate or sober and faithful in all that they do.

In verse twelve Paul clearly is speaking of the wives of the deacons and since women would not have wives it seems that this verse is clearly stating that deacons would be men and verse eleven would then be requirements for the wives of deacons. The same discussion above for overseers concerning “husbands of one wife” applies here. Just for overseers, deacons are also to manage their children and households well. Those who serve well as deacons would gain two things: a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. High standing probably means respect in the eyes of the church and before God.

Jesus Christ is also referred to with the words episkopos and diakonos as Peter called Him “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:25). So such church servants have the great example of our Lord.

*1Tim 3:14-16 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; <sup>15</sup>but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. <sup>16</sup>And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.*

Paul now turns his attention to the church in which the pastorate serves. Paul states twice (3:14; 4:13) that he hopes to visit Timothy in Ephesus but he seems to sense that he might be delayed so he writes instructions that have survived almost 2000 years for our benefit also. He uses three expressions for the church: the household of God, the church of the living God, and the pillar and support of the truth. If he had said the house of God people might think that he is speaking of a building as, unfortunately, many people think of the church. The household of God is the family of God as, through Jesus Christ, all Christians are adopted into God’s family and are brothers and

sisters in the faith. The love and devotion of Christians for each other should be evident to the entire world in obedience to the prayer of our Lord: *John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.* The discord and enmity among members of the visible church is certainly no such witness and should be avoided except for clear orthodox reasons. When he writes the “church of the living God” he could be writing in contrast to the lifeless idols that permeated the heathen communities. The Christian church (body of Christ) should be even more aware of the presence of God than the OT Jewish community when His presence profoundly affected their daily lives (Jos 3:10; Deut 6:15; Ex 25:8; 29:45; Lev 26:12; Ps 114:2; Ezek 37:27). Christians are the temple of the living God (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16), a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit (Eph 2:22), and Jesus is present when the church is gathered for worship. But when people think of “the church” as the building where the visible church gathers for Sunday morning worship then there is not the intense awareness of the presence of the indwelling Spirit when they walk away into the world. The world would be a very different place if those who come together for Sunday worship were all truly indwelt by the Spirit and kept that awareness throughout their life. That the church is also the pillar and support of the truth is also profound. Being the pillar and support of the truth, it should be constantly aware of its responsibility to guard against false teaching and to discipline all members properly (Matt 28:19, 20). Pillars hold up a building but are not to be seen and so the church is to lift high the Gospel message and not advertise itself. The church depends upon the truth and the truth needs the church to uphold it properly.

Verse sixteen concludes this section with a praise of the foundation stone, Jesus Christ. Remember that mystery means something that was concealed but is now revealed. The great mystery of godliness is the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This creed is a six-line hymn:

*He who was revealed in the flesh  
Was vindicated in the Spirit  
Beheld by angels  
Proclaimed among the nations  
Believed on in the world  
Taken up in glory*

One way to understand this hymn is to consider it chronologically with His incarnation, His affirmation by the Holy Spirit with miracles, His accompanying by angels (Luke 2:13; Mark 1:13, Eph 3:10, etc), His Word being spread among all people, the belief of Him by people in the world, and His ascension.

Another explanation is that the hymn consists of three couplets with each showing an antithesis between body and spirit. The first refers to His revelation in the world. The second refers to the witnesses of Christ, and the third refers to His reception in the world and in heaven.