

“Living For Christ In A Confused and Confusing World”

A Study of Paul’s Letters to Timothy

Sermon #6

“The Central Role of the Pastor !”

1 Timothy 3:1-7

What is a pastor suppose to look like? I have been told on occasion you don’t look like a preacher. I don’t know whether that is an insult or a compliment.

Someone wrote a facetious account called “The Perfect Pastor.”

1. After hundreds of years the perfect pastor’s been found. He is the church elder who’ll please everyone.
2. He preaches exactly 20 minutes and then sits down.
3. He condemns sin, but never steps on anybody’s toes.
4. He works from 8 in the morning to 10 at night, doing everything from preaching sermons to sweeping.
5. He makes \$400 per week, gives \$100 a week to the church, drives a late model car, buys lots of books, wears fine clothes, and has a nice family.
6. He always stands ready to contribute to every other good cause, too, and to help panhandlers who drop by the church on their way to somewhere.
7. He is 36 years old, and has been preaching 40 years.
8. He is tall on the short side, heavy-set in a thin sort of way, and handsome.
9. He has eyes of blue or brown, (to fit the occasion) and wears his hair parted in the middle – the left side, is dark and straight, the right side, is brown and wavy.
10. He has a burning desire to work with the youth, and spends all his time with the senior citizens.
11. He smiles all the time while keeping a straight face, because he has a keen sense of humor that finds him seriously dedicated.

12. He makes 15 calls a day on church members, spends all his time evangelizing non-members, and is always found in his study if he is needed.

Unfortunately he burnt himself out and died at the age of 32. [Source unknown –www.bible.org/illus. - topic- pastoring]

You will remember that Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to work out some issues in that church. Not long after his departure Paul wrote Timothy this letter (1 Timothy). He first dealt with the need for correct doctrine (Ch 1) and the conduct of public worship (Ch 2) [priority of prayer (vv.1-7) & gender roles in worship (vv. 8-12)]. Paul now turns in Chapter three to deal the necessary qualification for church leadership. Anyone can and should serve God. Everyone has the opportunity and the ability to serve God. Every Christian should serve according to their unique gifts and abilities.

But certain positions have specific qualifications. The greater the responsibility the higher the expectations for their ability, conduct and character. In chapter three two positions of leadership in the local church are under consideration, the pastor (vv. 1-7) and then the deacon (vv.8-13).

The Godly Leaders Call (v. 1)

“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

This is the second use of five “faithful sayings” which occur in Paul’s letters (1 Tim 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11, Titus 3:8). You will remember that we have previously said that these “faithful sayings” are the equivalent of when Jesus saying in the Gospels “*Truly, truly or Verily, verily.*” When Jesus used those words he was saying, “*Pay attention this is important!*” That is what Paul is doing here! Each time Paul uses the words “this is a faithful saying” he is underlining a fundamental principle. The principle here is, *The Pastor’s job is a noble calling!*

When Paul says “If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work,” Paul is not condoning a selfish ambition for the position and prestige associated with the pastoral office but he is recognizing that it is a noble task.

The New Testament uses several different words to describe the function of the same office we call, Pastor.

“Pastor” (Gr. *Poimen* – Shepherd) (1 Peter 20:28) places emphasis upon the responsibility of the leadership of the church to shepherd the flock. No shepherd has ever given birth to his sheep. It is the responsibility of those in leadership to do for the sheep what they cannot do for themselves and to make sure that they are in good spiritual condition so that they can do what comes naturally, that is, beget other sheep.

“Bishop” (Gr. Episkopos -overseer) (1 Tim 3:1-2) emphasizes the fact that the leadership is charged with overseeing the local church and as such is responsible for the spiritual well-being of those in the church.

What are the responsibilities of the overseer? They are to manage the church (1 Tim 5:17), to preach and teach (1 Tim 5:17), to pray for the sick (James 5:14), to care for the church (1 Peter 5:1-2) to be examples for others to follow (1 Peter 5:1-2) to lead out in setting church policy (Acts 15:22) and to ordain other leaders (1 Tim 4:14).

“Elder” (*presbuteros*) (1 Tim 5:17) speaks of maturity - which places emphasis upon the authority that the leadership has to teach or rule in the church.

In the church of today these terms are often used to designate different offices, but in the New Testament they emphasize different aspects of the same office. For example Paul sent for the “elders” of the Ephesian Church but in addressing them he called them “bishops” (Acts 20:17, 28). In his letter to Titus Paul instructs him to appoint “elders” adding that a “bishop... must be blameless” (Titus 1:5-7)

The Moral Character of a Godly Leader (vv. 2-3)

People were never given a position in the church because they were popular or influential in the community. Nor were they ever given a position because they gave the most financially or because they might get mad and leave the church if they were not recognized.

So what are the qualifications for a leadership position for the church? What Paul has done in verses 1-7 is bring together in one place characteristics of spiritual maturity that are scattered throughout the New Testament.

This list begins in verse two where we read, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.”

“blameless”

This word literally means “*to take a hold of.*” It means there should be nothing in the life of a leader for Satan or an unsaved world can get a hold one to tear the ministry down.

Godly leaders must strive remain above reproach for several reasons: (1) because they are special targets of Satan (2) their fall has a great potential for harm to the cause of Christ (3) their greater knowledge brings greater accountability and (4) their fall is more hypocritical having preached against the very things they commit.

One general application may be, “How do you react to criticism?” We are not to fly into a rage, not to threaten to leave the church, not to answer back, but first to see if there is any truth to the accusation.

“the husband of one wife” A more literal meaning of the phrase is “*a one woman man.*” There are several possibilities as to the meaning of the phrase. (1) He could be excluding those who are not married. (2) He could be excluding those who have more than one wife (polygamists). (3) He could be excluding those who have divorced and remarried. (*This is the most universally accepted explanation!*) (4) He could have been making a general stipulation that a leader must be faithful to his one wife. Of course no one would argue that this applies. A one woman man is devoted in his heart and mind to the woman who is his wife.

“temperate” This means he must be a man who is in control of himself. The church leader should be one who can be counted on to give sensible, sober judgments.

“soberminded” This means he must possess a serious attitude and must be serious about his work. This does not mean that he cannot possess a sense of humor. In my opinion a man cannot remain a pastor for long if he does not have a sense of humor.

“of good behavior”

As an old black preacher was once purported to have said, “*There be two sides to the Gospel; there’s the believing side and there’s the behaving side.*”

However quaint it may sound it certainly is true!

“hospitable” The Pastor should be a man with an open door. His people should know that he is never too busy to help them.

“able to teach” This seems to be the only professional qualifications mentioned and means he is to be capable or competent to teach.

The list continues in verse three, “not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrel-some, not covetous;

“not given to wine” (v. 3)

Barnes says, “The way in which the apostle mentions the subject of wine here would lead us fairly to suppose that he did not mean to commend its use in any sense; that he regarded its use as dangerous, and that he would wish ministers to avoid it altogether. A minister will do no injury to himself or others by letting it entirely alone; he may do injury by indulging in it.” [Albert Barnes. Notes On the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical. Thess.-Philemon. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) p. 144]

Some might argue but what about where Paul tells Timothy to “drink a little wine for his stomachs sake” (1 Tim 5:23).

John MacArthur writes in his commentary on 1 Timothy, "In ancient times most people consumed wine, since it was the staple liquid to drink. The water was impure, and mixing the wine with the water not only significantly diluted the alcohol content, but it purified the water. A mixture of eight parts water to one part wine was common, so as to avoid any dissipating effects. Timothy was even reluctant to take mixed wine, so as to not set an example that could cause someone to stumble. Thus, he was committed to abstinence, and Paul had to tell him "no longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" (5:23). Drinking only water was contributing to his poor health." [John MacArthur. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy. (Chicago: Moody, 1995) pp. 110-111]

"not violent" (v. 3) The KJV says "no striker" and the term describes a man who is not always looking for a fight. The godly leader is to be the opposite of the man who is always looking to settle arguments with his fists.

"not greedy for money" (v. 3) The Pastor should not use the ministry as a means of enriching himself. It is right and proper for a church to provide for their pastor. Paul later will point out that anything less is sinful. But the Pastor should stay away from shady deals and get rich quick schemes.

"but gentle" (v. 3) also translated "patient" and "forbearing."

"not quarrelsome" (v. 3) not contentious. Interestingly the Greek word is (*amachos*) from which we derive the word macho. Leaders are not to be macho characters running rough shod over others.

"not covetous" (v. 3) – not a lover of money

The Home Life of A Godly Leader

(vv. 4-5) "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (5) (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?"

Mark Hatfield, a Christian senator from Oregon was interviewed in book on Leaders and commented on family life. Hatfield said, "The home is the toughest environment of all for leaders. Why is it that the ones we love most are the ones we are most impatient with? My wife has often said to me, "I wish you were as patient with your children as you are with your constituents." She's right. She reminds me that I'm accountable to God and to my family, and I'm grateful for that." [Paul Borthwick. Leading the Way (Navpress, 1989) p. 55]

The pastor is called to leadership on two fronts, in his own family and in God's family. The first is to be the training ground for the second.

The Spiritual Maturity of a Godly Leader (v. 6) “not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

“not a novice” literally means “newly planted” It means that one who is a new Christian should not be thrust into a leadership position.

“Being puffed up” is very expressive it means “filled with smoke” or “full of hot air.” It suggest that one who is placed in a leadership position to soon may be tempted and carried away by pride.

The Public Reputation of a Godly Leader (v. 7) “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Paul expects every believer’s life to be a positive testimony to a watching world and this especially true of those in leadership positions in the church.

In Colossians 4:5 Paul says “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside.”

The goal being according to 1 Corinthians 10:32 to, “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.”

Paul’s ultimate goal as presented in Phil 2:15, was “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”

It was pride that brought Satan down. He was not content to be the highest ranking angel but he sought to elevate himself to the same level as God (Ezek 28:11-19, Isa. 14:12-14). What happened to Satan can happen to anyone who allows pride to get the upper hand.

I think that Paul may have been was afraid that Timothy and any potential leaders would read this list and be so overcome a sense of inadequacy that they would think, “*What is the use, I can never measure up to those standards.*” For that reason he ends the section (v. 16) by turning their eyes from themselves to Christ who is alone sufficient for the task.