

LESSON 9 - WHO IS QUALIFIED?

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(1 Tim. 3:1) - Paul now gives the qualifications for men who desire the office of elder or deacon. **“Bishop”** means overseer, one who is entrusted with the care of the church. **“He desireth a good work”** – It is not simply a desire for an office, a title of honor, or place of profit, but the man called of God desires and delights in a **“good work,”** an excellent, useful, and honorable labor. It involves complete dedication because of the nature of the work in caring for the souls and spiritual needs of the church in preaching and teaching the Gospel and encouraging them in the faith (Titus 1:9ff.; 1 Tim. 1:3ff.).

(1 Tim. 3:2) - **“A bishop then must be blameless”** - This does not mean sinlessly perfect, else no one would qualify. We know that every believer is blameless judicially and objectively before God as we stand in Christ, washed in His blood and with His righteousness imputed. None of us are sinlessly perfect in ourselves. **“Blameless”** literally means “unreproachable.” An elder should be a man of good reputation and known for moral and responsible character and conduct. He must be a man of honesty, integrity, and upright conversation, not a law breaker. **“The husband of one wife”** – It is not required that he be married, but he is to have one wife at a time. He should be dedicated to one woman, his wife, and not divided in his love towards different or several women as one who is a polygamist or a philanderer. Many believe this disqualifies any man who has been divorced and remarried at any time for any reason, but that is not what Paul is teaching here. **“Vigilant”** – Watchful (alert, aware) over himself and the souls of those whom he leads. **“Sober”** – Clear thinking, discerning, and temperate in eating, drinking, and all things pertaining to the flesh. **“Of good behavior”** – “Discreet” and modest, considerate, humble, and kind. **“Given to hospitality”** – Their hearts and hands and homes must be open to people, especially the household of faith. **“Apt to teach”** – One who has considerable knowledge, discernment, and is able to explain, illustrate, and communicate the truth of the Gospel, one who can refute error. A teacher should have the gift of public speaking.

(1 Tim. 3:3) - **“Not given to wine”** - An elder is not to be a drunkard who cannot control the use of such things. **“No striker”** - He is not to be one who strikes out at others, either with his hands or his tongue, neither a bully nor a harsh person, but gentle and considerate. **“Not greedy of filthy lucre”** - Not one who is in the ministry for money and seeks to feed his greed. **“Patient,”** or “forebearing” (cf. Phil. 4:5) – An elder is to have a forbearing, humble, unselfish, gentle, considerate, and forgiving spirit. He is to be able to put up with insults and offenses bearing them patiently and forgivingly as he has been forgiven in Christ. He must bear trials, reproaches, and injuries patiently, rather than quarrel and contend with men. He must be gentle in his rebuke, reproofs, and corrections of those who fail and falter. **“Not a brawler”** - Not contentious. He must not be always ready to fight. **“Not covetous”** - He must not be covetous of the praise and acclaim of men. Coveting the praise of men always leads to compromise or denying the Gospel and God’s Word (cf. John 5:40-44; 12:42-43).

(1 Tim. 3:4-5) - An elder must have the will, courage, and determination to rule over his own household (his wife and children). This does not mean that he must have a perfect marriage or perfect children. If this were the case, there would be no man qualified for this office.

(1 Tim. 3:6) - He must not be a new convert, a babe in Christ. A person who desires this office must have time to grow and mature in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He must have time to acquire wisdom both in the Scriptures and in dealing with people. **“Being lifted up with pride”** means to be blinded by pride. Falling **“into the condemnation of the devil”** does not mean to be condemned as is the devil. It means to fall under the accusation of the devil. The devil is called the accuser of the brethren, and we should take great pains not to give him reasons to accuse us.

(1 Tim. 3:7) - An elder must have a good reputation outside the church, for though they despise what we preach, we must not give them occasion to blaspheme our Gospel because of our own inconsistent and hypocritical conduct (cf., 1 Pet. 3:14ff.).

(1 Tim. 3:8) - Deacons are men who are called to use their special gifts in the physical needs of the church body. A deacon must be **“grave,”** or serious about his office and duties. He must not take the office and duties lightly as if they were not important. **“Not doubletongued”** – Not saying one thing and meaning another and not making promises he does not intend to keep. **“Not given to much wine”** – Not a drunkard. **“Not greedy of filthy lucre,”** or not in it for monetary gain and greed.

(1 Tim. 3:9) - **“The mystery of the faith”** is the Gospel that has been revealed to us by God. A deacon is to be a believer, and the **“pure conscience”** is the conscience and heart purified by faith in Christ, knowing that our hope, our righteousness, and our eternal life is in and by HIM. The **“pure conscience”** is one free from guilt based on the blood and imputed righteousness of Christ.

(1 Tim. 3:10) -- **“Proved”** means tested and found faithful, similar to “not a novice,” but it also has a reference to the general judgment and assessment of the community of believers as to whether or not a person fulfills the qualifications as stated. **“Blameless”** means the same here as with elders as stated above.

(1 Tim. 3:11) - A deacon’s wife should not hinder him in the duties of his office. She should be **“grave,”** serious about the office her husband holds, knowing the responsibility he has and supporting him in it. **“Not slanderers,”** or a gossip who destroys people with her tongue. **“Sober,”** or clear thinking, discerning, and temperate in eating, drinking, hobbies and all things pertaining to the flesh. **“Faithful in all things”** – faithful to the church, and faithful to her husband.

(1 Tim. 3:12) - The **“deacons”** should be men dedicated and loyal to one woman, and they should be the head of their homes in the same way as elders.

(1 Tim. 3:13) - To use **“the office of a deacon well”** is to use it for the glory of God in Christ and the edification of the brethren. **“Purchase”** here is not a good translation because of the modern usage of this word. Here it does not mean to buy or bargain. It means to acquire or obtain something. To acquire **“to themselves a good degree”** means to obtain a position of trust, respect, and influence in the church. This would lead to **“great boldness in the faith”** – free and bold speaking. Those who use this office well have nothing of which to be ashamed.