

IV. PAUL’S INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADERS (1 Timothy 3:1-13)

A. The Qualifications of a Bishop (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

1. The nature of the work (1 Timothy 3:1)
  - a. The pursuit of the work—“If a man desire”
    - (1) While not commonly considered as such, one of the first qualifications\* was mentioned twice before exiting the first verse—desire. \*Note: It should also be mentioned, and will be later, that the first qualification set forth was that it be A MAN.
    - (2) Various forms of the word *desire* are found throughout scripture a total of 206 times in 202 verses. The word is used to denote something requested, coveted (not always in a sinful manner), or longed for.
    - (3) In other words, no man should be placed into the office of a bishop who does not first have a longing or desire to do it. On the other hand, desire itself is not enough to qualify a man for the office.
  - b. The uniqueness of the work—“the OFFICE of a bishop”
    - (1) The distinction of an office
      - a) Not a right—There are many things we receive as a birthright from our salvation; however, the offices of the New Testament church do not fall under that category.
      - b) Brings accountability and a higher level of responsibility
    - (2) The clarification on a bishop
      - a) Confusion between elder and bishop
        - i) The elder
          - (a) His age (Genesis 10:21; 1 Timothy 5:1-2)
          - (b) His wisdom (Job 32:4-7)
          - (c) His leadership
            - (i) Old Testament (Numbers 11:14-17)
            - (ii) Gospels (Matthew 21:23)
            - (iii) Jewish church (Acts 15:1-4)
            - (iv) Gentile church (1 Timothy 5:17)
          - (d) Their number in the church—multiple (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17-18; Titus 1:5)
        - ii) The bishop
          - (a) His office (1 Timothy 3:1); *bishop* means *overseer*
          - (b) His duties
            - (i) To work (1 Timothy 3:1)
            - (ii) To teach (1 Timothy 3:2)
            - (iii) To rule (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
            - (iv) To pattern (1 Timothy 3:7 with 1 Peter 5:3)
            - (v) To administrate (Titus 1:7)
            - (vi) To exhort (Titus 1:9)
            - (vii) To convince (Titus 1:9)



- iii) Comparison of elder and bishop
  - (a) Both rule in the church
    - (i) Elder (1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28)
    - (ii) Bishop (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
  - (b) Both can be multiplied in one church
    - (i) Elder (Acts 14:23)
    - (ii) Bishop (Philippians 1:1)
  - (c) Both terms are used synonymously in Titus
    - (i) Elder (Titus 1:5)
    - (ii) Bishop (Titus 1:7)
- iv) Conclusions
  - (a) The term *elder* has a wider range than the term *bishop*.
    - (i) The term *elder* may refer to Old Testament or New Testament offices.
    - (ii) The term may also refer to men of age, experience, and/or wisdom.
    - (iii) The term *bishop* refers to a specific New Testament office.
  - (b) The terms may be used as synonyms of the term *pastor*, but are used to describe different aspects of the same office.
    - (i) Elder emphasizes the person—his experience, wisdom, or spirituality
    - (ii) Bishop emphasizes the office—his duties or rule
- v) Problem: Why do we, unlike the Plymouth Brethren, have a single ruling pastor?
  - (a) The scriptural principle: God always uses a man: Abraham, Moses, David, etc. Multiple rule brings confusion.
  - (b) The example of James in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:17-18)
  - (c) The example of Timothy in the church of Ephesus (1 Timothy 5:17-19; 2 Timothy subscript)
  - (d) The emphasis on a singular bishop ruling the church, and the example of the family (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- b) Overseer (Acts 20:28)
  - i) Only New Testament reference
  - ii) To take the oversight (1 Peter 5:2)
- c) Pastor (Ephesians 4:11)
  - i) Only New Testament reference
  - ii) Means *shepherd* (see also 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- c. The quality of the work—“a good work”
  - (1) Its character—it is GOOD
  - (2) Its labour—it is WORK



2. The qualities demanded (1 Timothy 3:2-7)
  - a. He must be a man (1 Timothy 3:1).
    - (1) “If a man” desire the office (1 Timothy 3:1)
    - (2) The husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2)
    - (3) Ruleth well his own house (1 Timothy 3:4)
    - (4) “If a man” know not how to rule (1 Timothy 3:5)
  - b. He must be blameless (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7).
    - (1) Forms of the word *blame*
      - a) *Blame* (Genesis 43:9; Genesis 44:32; 2 Corinthians 8:20; Ephesians 1:4)
      - b) *Blameless* (Genesis 44:10; Joshua 2:17; Judges 15:3; Matthew 12:5; Luke 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 2:15; Philippians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:2, 10; 1 Timothy 5:7; Titus 1:6, 7; 2 Peter 3:14)
      - c) *Blamed* (2 Corinthians 6:3; Galatians 2:11)
      - d) *Unblameable* (Colossians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:13)
      - e) *Unblameably* (1 Thessalonians 2:10)
    - (2) Generally, it is a *guilty responsibility concerning a matter*.
    - (3) We can only be perfectly blameless in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8); therefore, a bishop must be one who is saved.
    - (4) However, there is also a practical side of being blameless. It means to have no fault that others can righteously condemn. A man of God must be one who has done all that can be done to make wrongs right. If he has wronged someone, he has made/is making it right.
  - c. He must be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).
    - (1) The controversy introduced
      - a) Does this mean *only one marriage*?
      - b) Does this mean *only one wife at a time*?
      - c) Does this mean *only one scriptural marriage at a time*?
      - d) Does this mean *a single man does not qualify*?
    - (2) In some circles, this is the most controversial of all the qualifications. Perhaps it is because:
      - a) The phrase is open to multiple interpretations.
      - b) \*The interpretation deeply affects people’s lives.\*
    - (3) Is this qualification an argument against *bigamy*?
      - a) One of the most common interpretations is that the phrase refers to bigamy; that is, a man being married to two wives at the same time.
      - b) In the spirit of transparency, the language of the phrase would allow for this interpretation; however, there are serious problems:
        - i) The problem referred to in 1 Timothy and Titus had to be a common one, because of the prominence given to it in the lists of qualifications.
        - ii) No other verses in the entire New Testament say anything about the sin of bigamy.



- iii) Historical records show that neither the Romans nor the Jews of the time commonly practiced bigamy.
  - (a) Both groups preferred to divorce and remarry.
  - (b) The Romans would have mistresses in addition to a wife, but she was not considered a wife.
- (4) Is this qualification an argument against *divorced pastors*?
  - a) The mention of blamelessness hints to a connection with divorce and remarriage. In both lists, the first qualification is to be blameless and the second is to be the husband of one wife. Very likely, being the husband of one wife is one of the ways to be blameless. Consider the following:
    - i) God speaks of divorce and remarriage (with exception) as committing adultery (Mark 10:9-12).
    - ii) After divorce and remarriage, there is no way to go back and undo the presence of practical blame.
  - b) Pastors are to be “ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3).
    - i) A pastor is to live such a life before his people that it can be used as a pattern for the lives of the saints.
    - ii) One of the most common problem areas in ministry is that of marriage problems. A man who has been divorced and remarried, for whatever reason, will have little credibility when he tells his members that they must remain together in order to be right with God.
  - c) God holds the testimony of those who have married once as more worthy of honour.
    - i) The “widow indeed” in 1 Timothy 5 was a widow who was worthy of support by the church. One of her qualifications was that of “having been the wife of one man” (1 Timothy 5:9).
    - ii) This poses a problem for the bigamist interpretation of “the husband of one wife” phrase. If the restriction given to bishops does not refer to serial marriage, the widow supported by the church was required to have higher standards than the bishop.
  - d. He must be vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2).
    - (1) The word *vigilant* means to stay alert to danger or trouble (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Peter 5:8).
    - (2) This quality is especially important for a pastor who protects the flock from wolves without and traitors within (Acts 20:29-30).
  - e. He must be sober (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).
    - (1) This word and its variations are used only in the New Testament, and means to be *seriously minded*.
    - (2) A pastor has a holy calling, and it cannot be taken lightly.
  - f. He must be of good behaviour (1 Timothy 3:2).
    - (1) The word *behaviour* has to do with a person’s external actions.
    - (2) God uses men with many different personalities, but He expects a pastor to know how to behave himself.