

“A MAN WITH NOBLE DESIRES”

I TIMOTHY 3:1-7 [Part 1—vv. 1-2]

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INTRODUCTION

Men, to what do you aspire in life? What is important to you at the end of your life; how do you want your obituary to read? Is your job most important to you? Is having a successful career your main goal? Of getting that degree so that you can get that dream job? Is your goal to amass a great amount of wealth and abundant possessions? Do you want to make a great name for yourself? Is your desire to fill your days and weeks with the enjoyment of sports and entertainment? Is your goal to please yourself and accomplish your own purposes?

In our last passage, we saw that Paul commanded women to receive instruction with complete submissiveness. He forbade women to teach or have authority over men. As his basis for his position, he cited the creation of Adam before Eve, and the deception of Eve and her falling into transgression; men are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the church.

However, as we look about us in contemporary Christianity, we see that many men fail in the area of leadership – especially when it comes to spiritual matters. Quite often ladies take the lead and men sit on the sidelines. This ought not to be brethren! In the Old Testament we have the example of Deborah and Barak. Deborah was judging Israel at the time because there were not godly men doing their jobs. Through her God sent a message to Barak to go and lead soldiers from Israel against the armies of Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army who was oppressing the people of God. Unfortunately Barak refused to go without Deborah; therefore Deborah said that a female would receive the glory for the victory instead of Barak.

How many men aspire to greatness in their walk with God? How many men have as their goal to live their lives for the glory of God and not for themselves? How many men have as their goal to serve God and to serve God’s people? How many young men and older men have as their greatest ambition to be whatever God wants them to be – and if it be God’s will, to be a servant of God and to be in his full-time ministry?

It is true that God does not call everyone to full-time ministry, but **every single one of us should be willing to serve God** if he desires, and it should be our aspiration to serve him if he so chooses. Our goal should be the absolute highest spiritual attainment to which God in his will calls us.

And if our goal is to serve God, we must *meet the spiritual qualifications* that are necessary to serve God. I submit to you that every qualification given for pastors should be a qualification sought by every Christian man who desires to live a godly life and to serve God faithfully.

“This is a true saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.”

MEN YOU MUST ASPIRE TO SERVE GOD!

Now it is true that the primary purpose of this passage is to outline the qualities demanded of a godly pastor. We must ever keep that in mind, while we make application also to every Christian man.

I. THE STATEMENT IS TRUSTWORTHY (3:1)

- One of 5 such statements in the Pastorals—the first at 1:15.

- Some think that it refers to what comes at the end of chapter 2; I am convinced it refers to this statement in 3:1.
- This may not be an especially profound theological statement, but it is very important—because **God wants good and godly men who aspire to spiritual greatness and leadership!**
- These words are reliable and true.

II. SUCH GODLY AMBITION IS APPROPRIATE .

- A. The words used for the aspiration of *men* [note the specific word used means “male” of the species.]
1. The first verb means “long for, stretch out the hand”—earnestly and continually.
 2. The second verb means “desires, set one’s heart upon”—continually.
- B. The Appropriateness of the aspiration
- Paul is not depicting nor approving a carnal desire for *preeminence* nor *inordinate power*.
 - A pure desire for an honorable place of service is pleasing to God.
 - When the desire also focuses on the godly qualities that follow, God is pleased.
 - Service in such an office is not easy work; it is difficult—**hard work when done right**.
 - One would face much opposition of false teachers etc.
 - Generally, persecution and deprivation was involved—esp. in the early Church.

III. THE WORK IS NOBLE AND BEAUTIFUL (3:1).

- A. “Office of Bishop”
- The word is used only here and in Acts 1:20 [there of Judas Iscariot!] for the ‘office of bishop.’
 - The noun ‘bishop occurs in v. 2.
 - The word means “overseer, one who supervises” something or someone.
 - When we compare this passage with Titus 1—characteristics of elders—and with Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; and I Peter 5:1-2 we see that the office of **bishop** is the same as **elder** and **pastor**.
 - The 1st century knew nothing about a bishop who governed a group of pastors; such is not a Biblical pattern.
 - The article in v. 2 does not mean that there was only **one** bishop/elder/pastor for each church; it is a generic article; note the plural for elders in 5:17 and Titus 1:5.
- B. The “work” is **noble, beautiful, a fine work!**
- One must not underemphasize the value and necessity of “good works” in the Christian life and ministry, just because the NT stresses that our **salvation is by grace and not at all through works**.
 - “How beautiful are the feet of those who carry ‘the Gospel of Peace’”!
 - “Full time ministry is significant, important, beautiful, good, and desirable to God; it should be to us also.
 - **FAR TOO FEW MEN—YOUNG OR OLD—ASPIRE TO THIS OFFICE!**

IV. THE QUALITIES ARE IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY FOR A GODLY MAN OR PASTOR

- It is important to note that these qualities for the most part **focus on the man’s character**—not on his abilities, status, talents, popularity, charisma, etc.
- There are a total of 16 (15 if we don’t count “with all gravity—dignity” at end of v. 4) qualities required, 10 positive and 6 negative.
- 15 apply to those within the church; one—v. 7—to those outside the church.

- The first quality may be considered a kind of summary of them all—**above reproach**.
 - Two qualities relate to **his family**—v. 2 and vv. 4-5; **the family relationship was obviously very important**.
- A. “Above Reproach” (“blameless” in AV): “not able to be taken hold of, beyond reproach—one who is deservedly of good report.
- The word does not mean sinless!
 - There must be no significant problem in his life or character.
- B. A “husband of one-wife”—**literally a ‘man of one woman’**
1. Does not mean that he must be married; such is generally assumed however.
 2. Would include the fact that he cannot be a polygamist or have concubines; but since such was demanded of every Christian, Paul would hardly intend to say that for the bishop.
 3. It **does include** that he must not be divorced, since the first wife in some sense is still regarded as being his if she is alive—Romans 7:3; I Cor. 7:39; Mk. 10:7-12. A pastor must be an example.
 4. **Character** is the key—“**a one-wife-type of man**”; totally faithful in practice and mind.
 5. Many good commentators argue that it means that the pastor **cannot have a second wife**.
 - The OT priest could not marry a widow or a divorced woman. [But, they also could have no physical defects!]
 - Such a practice sets the highest standard for marital fidelity to one woman only.
 - Later practice in the Church took this view [**but not in the first century, and this is not the interpretation of the early church fathers**].
 - Compare the similar statement of a “one-man-kind of woman” for a widow in 5:9; but, later in v. 14 Paul commands young widows to marry. How unjust, if after young women obey Paul, then later Paul forbids them to be put on the list of widows getting support because they had a second husband! Rom. 7:2-3 & I Cor. 7:9 permit a second marriage after the death of one’s partner.
 6. Thus, the main thought here is that this man must be “of unquestioned morality, one who is entirely true and faithful to his one and only wife; one who, being married, does not in pagan fashion enter into an immoral relationship with another woman” (H. 121).
- C. “Temperate” [not really ‘vigilant’]: The original meaning of this adjective is “abstaining from alcohol. Paul makes a wider application here: “one who is clear-headed.” But, that does not cancel out the original meaning! The word is used also of the ladies in v. 11 and in Tit. 2:2 of older men. The man who exhibits this quality: “is filled with spiritual and moral earnestness. He is not given to excess... but moderate, well-balanced, calm, careful, steady, and sane” (H. 122).
- D. “Prudent, thoughtful, and dignified” [or “sober”]—but this does not deal with alcohol, nor does it mean **somber**. A similar form occurs in 2:9, 15 of ladies meaning “discretely, self-restraint.” The same word occurs with reference to elders in Tit. 1:8, of older men in I Tim. 2:2, and of young women in 2:5. The bishop is not swayed by sudden impulses that master his feelings and thoughts, and he will not be swayed by false teachers such as those in Ephesus (see 1:3-7). Wiersbe adds, “He does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior” (39).
- E. “Respectable and Well-Ordered” (same word used for a woman’s clothing in 2:9)—only 2 NT uses. It refers to what is “well ordered, proper, honorable, and respectable.” The person manifesting this quality follows the orderly fulfillment of his duties and has an orderly inner life. **A pastor should also be organized in his preaching and teaching**.
- F. “Given to Hospitality”—“hospitable.” Literally “one who loves strangers.”

- Social welfare was practically unknown.
- Widows and orphans were totally dependent upon relatives and friends.
- Strong persecutions, including imprisonments, were waged against many Christians.
- There was much poverty and hunger.
- Personal messengers had to take messages between individual believers and churches; they would often need lodging.
- Lodging with unbelievers would often be very problematic; and public inns had a “pagan atmosphere and food that had already been offered to idols (cf. I Cor. 8)” (Earle, 364).
- Believers from different areas would get to know each other and build fellowship (III Jn. 5-8).
- Hospitality is still very important today!

G. “Able to Teach”

- This quality does involve ability—without it one must not be a pastor.
- But it also involves the love for teaching, and the earnest desire for it.
- One must have the spiritual power to do an effective job.
- It involves the willingness to **work hard at it**, and the dedication to it when the going gets rough and when one faces the opposition of false teachers etc.
- In order to teach effectively, one must be willing to be taught.
- Wiersbe aptly states that **“the pastor who is lazy in his study is a disgrace in the pulpit”** (40).
- Every man must be a teacher—at very minimum of his own family, co-workers, etc. You can and must strive to communicate God’s word more effectively with others.

CONCLUSION

Men, God wants you to be above reproach, (if married) you need to be a man of one-wife, you must be temperate and clear-headed, thoughtful and dignified, respectful and well-ordered, a lover of hospitality, and an able teacher.

Most men are shallow, worldly, overcome with self-love and pleasure.

It is time for us to **go against the tide of our culture!** We must be different.

Moreover, it is time for you to consider whether God would have you **yield your life to Him for “full-time service” as a pastor; maybe some could aspire to be a deacon, a Sunday School Teacher, a youth worker, a Children’s Church worker.**

All who have children must determine to be a godly leader of your home.

What are your goals and ambitions in life?

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