

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(13)

1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, 1 Timothy 2:1-3:13

The Overseers of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:1-7

(1 Timothy 3:1-7) Introduction: the office of *bishop* is probably the same office as elder or presbyter or minister in the New Testament. All three words refer to the same person, to the minister of the gospel and of the church (see below Deeper Study #1, Elder—Titus 1:5-9 for more discussion).

- 1) What are the qualifications of the minister?
- 2) Who should be preaching the gospel and filling the pulpits of the Lord's church?
- 3) Who should be considering the ministry—what kind of person?

Before discussing the individual qualifications against which all pastors are to be measured, however, Paul gives some helpful insight into the call to spiritual leadership.

1. The office of minister or bishop (v.1).
2. Personal qualifications (v.2-3).
3. Family qualifications: the minister or bishop must rule his own home (v.4-5).
4. Spiritual qualifications (v.6).
5. Community qualifications (v.7).

2. (1 Timothy 3:2-3) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the minister or bishop of God must be qualified; he must meet some personal qualifications; he must be a person of great Christian character.

1 Timothy 3:2-3 (NASB)

² An overseer, then, **must be above reproach**, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

The Overarching Requirement of a Godly Leader

Those lists, and many others like them, contain qualities every church overseer should possess. But pastoring God's people demands far more because the issue is not just leadership, but moral and spiritual example. Summing up that realm of requirement, Paul demands that **an overseer** in the church of Jesus Christ **must be above reproach**. The Greek particle *de* (**must**) emphasizes that this is an absolute necessity. **A life without blame is the overarching requirement for leadership in the church.**

Few have stated that truth as eloquently as the godly **Richard Baxter**, a pastor in the **Puritan movement of seventeenth-century England**:

“Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling-blocks before the blind, as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues; and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labours..... One proud, surly, lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action, may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing.

Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of that which daily you condemn. Will you make it your work to magnify God, and, when you have done, dishonour him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ’s governing power, and yet contemn it, and rebel yourselves? Will you preach his laws, and willfully break them? If sin be evil, why do you live in it? If it be not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it? If it be not, why do you tell men so? If God’s threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? If they be false, why do you needlessly trouble men with them, and put them into such frights without a cause? Do you 'know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death;' and yet will you do them? 'Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery,' or be drunk, or covetous, art thou such thyself? 'Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?' What! Shall the same tongue speak evil that speakest against evil? Shall those lips censure, and slander, and backbite your neighbour, that cry down these and the like things in others? Take heed to yourselves, lest you cry down sin, and yet do not overcome it; lest, while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow to it, and become its slaves yourselves: 'For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.' 'To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.' O brethren! it is easier to chide at sin, than to overcome it.” (*The Reformed Pastor* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979], 63, 67-68)

Anepilēptos (above reproach) means “not able to be held.” The man who is above reproach cannot be arrested and held as if he were a criminal; there is nothing for which to accuse him.