

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(33)

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.

- 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).

5. (1 Timothy 3:7) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the minister or bishop must meet one very important community qualification.

1 Timothy 3:7 (NASB)

⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

He must have a “good reputation with those outside *the church*”; that is, he must have a good testimony before the world. Of course, there are some in the world who will criticize and slander any person who has failed and run with the world. Many in the world do not recognize conversion nor repentance and forgiveness—the simple fact that Christ can forgive and change a person.

But when a person enters the ministry, he must have experienced such a significant change that it is clearly evident that he is *now following Christ*. The change in his life **must be radical**: a radical turning away from the world and self to Christ. The change must be so radical that even the unbelievers can see it. Then and only then can he ever hope to reach the unbelieving world for Christ.

Note why the minister must have a good testimony before the world: lest he fall into reproach. The unbelievers of the world will **reproach, ridicule, and mock him**; and he will fall into the snare of the devil. That is, he will hesitate to bear testimony for Christ and to fulfill his duties as a minister. He will tend to withdraw and keep silent and to remain unseen as much as possible. The power of his ministry and testimony will be drastically weakened.

1 Timothy 3:7 (NASB)

⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The godly character of an elder must not be manifested only in his personal life, the church, and his home. He must also **have a good reputation with those outside the church.**

Reputation translates *marturia*, from which our English word “**martyr**” derives. The word speaks of a certifying testimony. An elder’s character is to be certified by the testimony of those outside the church. A man chosen to lead the church must maintain a reputation in the community for righteousness, moral character, love, kindness, generosity, and goodness.

All will certainly not agree with his theology, and he will no doubt face antagonism when he takes a stand for God’s truth. Nevertheless, those outside the church must recognize him as a man of impeccable reputation. How can a man have a spiritual impact on his community if that community does not respect him? Such an individual can do nothing but bring **reproach** or disgrace on the cause of Christ.

In **Romans 2:23-24 (NASB)**, Paul delivered a scathing indictment of Israel: “**You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' just as it is written.**” Israel, meant to be a light to the nations, instead caused them to blaspheme.

The Bible expects every believer’s life to be a positive testimony to the watching world, and that is especially true of those in pastoral positions. Paul exhorted the Philippians to “**prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world**” (**Philippians 2:15 (NASB)**).

Colossians 4:5 (NASB) urges believers to “**conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders.**”

Peter wrote, “**Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation**” (**1 Peter 2:12(NASB)**).