

1st Timothy Ch 3

“Ambitions and Conditions”

An American President by the name of Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, “In order to be a leader a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence the supreme quality of a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, on a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man’s associates find him guilty of phoniness, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose.”

Now in ch 2, Paul deals with “Order in the Church” the way that we’re to conduct ourselves in public places of worship as believers, he speaks about *priority*, that being prayer. and The message of *propitiation*, the fact that there is one Mediator between God and man and that’s the Man Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all. Him we *proclaim*, we preach and we teach, ch 2 deals with *protocol* and *propriety*, finally with *proper order*, and it’s that particular subject that sort of segues Paul into this next section in ch 3 that deals with church order.

He’s made it clear as the God ordained teacher of the gentiles, the one through whom the Holy Spirit would write the holy scriptures that men and women are to maintain the *order* in which God has created us to function in. That neither are greater or lesser, of more or less value, we just simply function in different capacities, complementing one another not competing with one another.

The Word of God tells us that the only place of restriction regarding the ladies is that of having authority over the man in an overseeing position in the church or in the home. It’s not a gender thing in general, nor does it have to do with a relationship of a man and a woman in the secular realm of business or whatever, it has very specific parameters including the home, and the church, God expects the men to function as the spiritual leaders in the body of Christ. But having said that, Paul doesn’t want to leave any confusion as to what kind of man is qualified to be such a leader, no man is qualified to be a leader in the church just because he’s a man.

So ch 3 dedicates the majority of it’s subject matter to the conditions laid out for overseers to meet in order to be recognized for such an office. Having said that I believe that it’s important to preface this whole section with the fact that we’re all a work in progress. and You and I can nitpick anyone and the bible tells us that when we judge another we judge ourselves because we’re guilty of the very thing we accuse them of. So the key word in this passage (I believe) is found in vs 2, and it’s not “sinless” it’s “blameless”. There’s no doubt a higher standard of scrutiny that’s to be applied to those who oversee the body of Christ than to those who don’t. But *being* an overseer doesn’t make us more spiritual, it’s simply a calling that God’s places on some peoples lives, and others He calls to do other things.

If you take notes, 5 words we want to consider here that help us sort of highlight this chapter: #1 Aspirations (Vs1) #2 Qualifications (Vs 2-5) # 3 Condemnation (Vs 6-7). (Now vs 8-13 fall back into *aspirations* and *qualifications* regarding deacons so we'll let those go.) *Our* next word will be #4 Information (Vs14-15) and Finally #5 Foundation (Vs 16) Lets read Vs 1-7 and then we'll begin to look at them a bit more carefully. (Read)

Vs1

Now we're going to spend a little time right here in the 1st vs and we won't go incredibly in depth regarding many of these qualifications because they seem pretty clear, but again regarding the place of the men to be the overseers of the church we need to realize in this vs a key word, and that word is "man." If a "man" desires this, not a "woman" why? Because the place of the spiritual overseers of the church has been reserved for the men, it's simply God's order.

But we see here that if a man "desires" the position of a bishop, he "desires" a good work. So this vs deals with aspirations, ambitions, the *desires* of a man when it comes to spiritual leadership. The word "bishop" here is the Greek word "episcopo" (ep-is-kop-ay'); which is of course where we get our word "Episcopalian." But literally it means "Overseer" not one who's "lording over" or "overbearing" but "Overseeing" and this is a word that's interchanged in the bible with words such as Pastor, elders, overseers, bishops, they're synonymous words. It's simply a reference to pastors and overseers.

So Paul is speaking here about the office of the elders, or of the pastorate, the qualifications are the same and indistinguishable in the scriptures, and this has *nothing* to do with spiritual gifts. You can have the gift of prophecy, or miracles, speaking tongues, and pray for people as they get healed, and not be an elder or a pastor, this has to do with an "office" that God calls certain men into holding to help maintain the order of His church.

We see the word "desire" used twice in this vs but understand that they are 2 different Greek words, neither one of them speak of "wishful thinking." The 1st word used here translated "desires" means "to reach out after," or "to stretch out oneself to grasp something." So that it doesn't deal with internal motives, but it describes the external act. In this case describing someone who is taking practical steps to become an overseer. (When I wanted to get involved in the ministry no one had to ask me, I made it known, talked to the pastor and anyone else necessary so that they would know I was available.) This next word that we see here translated "desires" means "a passionate compulsion," or "to set the heart upon" in this context for good rather than for evil. So that in contrast to the previous verb, this verb refers to the inward feeling of desire. So that when we take them together, the two terms describe the man who outwardly pursues the ministry because of a driving compulsion on the inside.

His motives are pure, and he just can't not do it, he's like Paul who said, "*Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*" 1 Cor 9:16 Or like Jeremiah who even tried to not speak and proclaim the truths of the Word of God because he was so tired of people not responding and he said, "*I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.*" But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not." Jer 20:9 He had to pursue the place in ministry that God had called him to because of driving compulsion of the Holy Spirit inside of him. There are a number of motives that people pursue the ministry because of, be it a power trip, a position that they see as prestigious, maybe someone else has encouraged them, or they went to bible college and so its basically an academic exercise for them. In Ch 6 we'll examine the motive of money and material gain. But the man we're speaking of here has pure motives, he's marked by an inward consuming *passion*, and an outward disciplined *pursuit*.

Finally what needs to be seen in this vs is that the office that you desire, (trusting this describes everyone here), is that you desire a good (and underline this word) "work". Not a good "job", or again a good "salary", or a good "position", the ministry is work. and Anyone who shepherds a flock and feeds the flock rather than fleecing the flock and feeding *on* the flock, has much work on his hands on a continual basis. It's called ministry because it's service, the word "minister" means "servant" it's serving the body, and though for the overseers it's primarily service that's spiritual, nurturing and tending to the bodies spiritual needs, by far it doesn't end there.

You don't hang your hat up when you get home and suddenly become unavailable when there's a need. It's a lifetime of hard work, dedication, and commitment.

Let me read to you from a man named John MacArthur's commentary, "Those looking for an easy time will not find it in the ministry. The ministry is **work**, a demanding, lifelong task. Paul commanded Timothy to "do the *work* of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). He reminded the Thessalonians to "appreciate those who diligently *labor* [from *λαβω*—“to work to the point of exhaustion”] among you, and have charge over you in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:12). Paul told the Colossians, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Col. 1:28–29). The ministry is no nine-to-five occupation that one can walk away from and forget each evening. Its work is never ending and dependent on maximum effort and the power of Christ at work in the man."

So yes the ministry is an absolute *privilege*, but it's also important to count the cost, and soberly consider the fact that the ministry is *work*, and if this is the work that you *desire*, than it's these criteria that are *required* of you, if this is your *ambition*, then these are the *conditions*. Again not by you seeking to fabricate these things, because you can't, neither can I, not for any real length of time. But this is what's bearing witness in you life by the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Vs2

The overarching quality that sort of sets the stage for all the rest is “blamelessness”, this is the characteristic that “qualifies” the rest, because if this one is out of order, than there’s no need to go any further. and We find Paul moving in a very logical order down this list, dealing with the overseers personal life in vs2-3, his family life in vs 4-5, his life as it regards to the church in vs 5-6 and then as it regards to the secular world around him in vs 7.

But 1st of all we see that he must, not should be, or it might be a good idea if he were, these aren’t suggestions they’re commands. God has specific qualifications for leaders in the church, and it has nothing to do with being a “natural born leader” or if one volunteers for the job, it has to do with matching up with these qualities.

We’re talking here about godly character, being a good speaker doesn’t qualify someone for spiritual leadership. Natural or spiritual gifts in and of themselves don’t qualify someone for spiritual leadership. What one gives in money or volunteer time does not qualify them for spiritual leadership. What qualifies a man for spiritual leadership is *godly character* - and godly character established according to these clear criteria. and The 1st criteria that one must meet is that of blamelessness. Which is to say in a more literal sense that there’s to be nothing in your life that people can lay hold of so as to *rightfully* accuse you. People are going to accuse you that much is true, believe me I haven’t been in the ministry all that many years and I’ve already received my fair share of accusations, that is, I’ve been “blamed” for all sorts of things. But what’s important regarding our lives is that the accusations not be true. A man by the name of J. Vernon McGee said, “An elder must be blameless in the sense that he will not be found guilty of anything that he might be accused of.” People are going to point the finger, they’re going to accuse, and they’re going to blame, that’s not what’s in question, but what’s critical for the elder is that there be no credibility to the accusations that are laid upon him. No verifiable proof of what’s being said because it simply doesn’t exist.

“The husband of one wife” doesn’t mean that he must be married, (though I believe that’s the will of God for the majority of men that He calls into such an office for obvious reasons), but literally it means a “one woman man.” Paul is saying, “The overseer of the body of Christ is to be a 1 woman man, devoted solely in heart and in mind to only his wife outside of Christ.”

Next we see “Temperate” or maybe your bible says, “Vigilant” it means “watchful”, or “clearheaded.” Men who understand the times, who know what needs to be done and are willing to do it, like the sons of Issachar in 1 Chron 12:32. Men who aren’t stuck in the past or looking so far into the future that they’re no good for the present, but they understand the times to which God has committed their trust and they know what needs to be done.

“Sober-minded,” one who’s of sound mind, takes situations seriously, and possesses self-control, doesn’t do things to hasty, but uses wisdom in decisions, thinks thing through. Doesn’t mean he doesn’t have a sense of humor, or that he can’t be light hearted in life. But when it comes to the ministry and the things of God, he’s incredibly serious and seeks to take great measures to handle issues that deal with God’s priorities delicately and with sincerity of heart. The sober-minded man is well disciplined and knows how to correctly order his priorities.

“Of good behavior” would be better understood as “Orderly” it’s the same word that was translated “modest” in vs 9 of ch 2 for the ladies, so it carries the idea of being proper, or in order, whether it be in his thinking, and living, or his teaching and preaching, the elder, or the pastor is to be well disciplined, and well organized.

“Hospitable” literally means “generous to guests”, or “loving the stranger” Heb 13:2 says, *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”* We’re to be kind to strangers, when someone new walks into the church, make sure they’re welcomed, encourage your ushers to extend themselves and you lead the way in what that means. We’re to be hospitable to strangers, especially those who are leaders of the body, we’re to be examples in the body of hospitality.

“Able to teach” and not that the others aren’t important, but this is a big one, the primary task of an elder, outside of prayer, is to teach the word of God. Notice it doesn’t say, “Able to *preach*” but rather, “Able to teach” we *preach* to the non-believer, but we’re to *teach* the believer. and The elder, or the pastor, needs to be able to communicate clearly, and concisely, the solid doctrines of the Word of God.

Now this seems a bit out of place being wrapped up right in the middle of this list that deals with the moral fiber of a man. But the reason this is here is because effective teaching is woven directly into the moral character of the teacher. You can’t divorce the 2, it goes back to the integrity issue, if it’s not demonstrated in your life, then people won’t listen to what you have to say. The ability to teach here isn’t a natural ability, it’s speaking of the supernatural gifting of the Holy Spirit in a persons life, anointing him to articulate the word of God to the people of God for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. Now that’s not to say that there’s not much study and preparation that goes on, on his part concerning his teaching. A man named Phillips Brooks said concerning this ability to teach, “It is not something to which one comes by accident or by any sudden burst of fiery zeal.” Warren Wiersbe said here, “A pastor must be a careful student of the Word of God, and of all that assists him in knowing and teaching that Word. The pastor who is lazy in his study is a disgrace in the pulpit.” So meticulous study, and a love for Gods Word, being able to defend its doctrines and proclaim its precepts clearly is a must. (Now we get into some negative commands).

“Not given to wine” not a drunkard, not one who drinks alcohol, it’s simply not for the overseer of the body of Christ.

“Not violent” one who’s level headed, and reacts to situations calmly and collectedly.

“Not greedy for money” unfortunately this one has been violated over and over again. and It shows by the stigma that’s blighted the church regarding money. Now the laborer is worthy of his wage, but often times the ministry simply isn’t a high paying call, if God chooses to bless that’s fine, but if money is your motive, you’re setting yourself up for the snare of the wicked one. We’re not to be greedy for money, and Paul will talk more on that in ch 5-6.

“Gentle”, or “patient” able to let others serve with out having to dictate their every move, yet being careful to maintain godly convictions. Able to take criticism with out lashing back (and that’s hard for any of us) but we’re to bear it patiently.

“Not quarrelsome” one has said, “Short tempers don’t make for long ministries” we’re to be peacemakers not troublemakers, this doesn’t mean compromising godly convictions, but not looking for a fight, some people just look for things to argue about, Paul is saying, “not the overseer” he’s looking to make peace.

“Not covetous” whether it be over money, or another mans ministry, or material possessions, popularity, or fame in the ministry, we’re to be content with such things as we have. Not coveting what God has given someone else.

Vs4-5

So having dealt with the mans person, now Paul begins to deal with the mans family. and He’s to be one who “rules”, that is “manages” as the spiritual leader, his own house, or his own home well. Which means having his children in submission with all reverence, and the point that Paul is making here is that Christian leadership begins in the home, because if there’s not godly order to home then how is he going to *take care* (that is nurture and tend to the needs of) the church of God, notice vs 5 (read).

You see part of the overseers responsibilities lies in what? Leading people to the Lord, leading people to holiness, exhorting them unto to obedience, and since resolving conflict, building unity, maintaining love, and serving each other are essentials to *church life* that are *also* challenges in the home. If he succeeds in his family, he is likely to succeed in God’s family. If not, he is disqualified.

Vs6

Segueing out of the family into the church, not a new believer, or a “novice” (literally not one who is *newly* planted) he’s to be someone of proven maturity, and this falls somewhat to the discernment of the people who appoint the elders because we’re to watch out for people’s spiritual well being, not just placing them in an office so that you have people in that office. Because if the authority goes to their head and they’re puffed up with pride, then they could fall into the condemnation of the devil, pride’s what got him kicked out of heaven. Or demoted from a high position because of the sin of pride in his heart never to be restored to it again, so not a new believer.

Vs7

So not only of good report in the body, but known as a man of integrity even by the non-believing society around him, we’ve talked about *aspirations* and *qualifications*, but here we’re talking about his *reputation*. How is it that people outside the body of Christ see him? Does he pay his bills, do people delight in doing business with him, is he a good employee, does he keep his word, or can he not be trusted? The bible admonishes the believer to be careful to maintain a positive testimony to the world that’s looking in on his life.

Paul the apostle told the Corinthians, “*We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.*” 2 Cor 6:3 To the Philippians he wrote, “*Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.*” Phil 2:14-15 Col 4:5 says, “*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.*” We’re to be careful to maintain a good testimony, that is, a good *reputation* among those who are outside of the body of Christ, lest we fall into reproach, or justified criticism, and the snare; that is, the trap of the devil.

Vs8-13

So having dealt with the office of the elders/pastors, Paul now turns to the qualifications of the deacon. and We do well to understand that the standard for the deacon is in no way inferior to that which is required of the elders. Though the practical areas in which the elders and the deacons may be different, the *spiritual* qualifications are essentially identical, with the exception of “the ability to teach.” and Though it’s true that the deacons are the hands on laborers of the church, getting done the things that need to be done, implementing the teachings of the Pastor and the overseers as examples to the body of what it means to live out practically the precepts of the word of God. *1st and foremost* the office that’s held by a deacon is spiritual not physical, he’s not to serve in the practical office of a deacon unless his life is 1st and foremost of the utmost of spiritual integrity, meeting these standards. So even though the “duties” of a deacon deals primarily with material/physical responsibilities, the “office” of the deacon is primarily spiritual.

Something else that I believe is worth mentioning is that it is possible for these various callings to somewhat overlap, a deacon may do some teaching occasionally, and an elder isn’t

above taking care of the grounds, or doing some of the hands on labor of the church. But the primary calling on each of their lives should be recognized appropriately, and *once* a deacon, not necessarily *always* a deacon. God can bring a deacon into the office of an elder if He should so choose, but that doesn't mean that an elders position is more spiritual, more accountable, yes. But not more spiritual, they're simply different callings that God places on our lives for the order of the church.

So *Likewise* (that is to say as well as with overseers) deacons must be "reverent" Which is to say a man of dignity, and honesty, the vines Greek dictionary reads this word like this, "good, admirable, becoming," has also the ethical meaning of what is "fair, right, honorable, of such conduct as deserves esteem." Again the primary emphasis being placed upon his integrity. "Not double-tongued" not someone who says one thing to this person, but when he's in a different surrounding he'll say something totally different about the same situation to another person. Not praising the Lord in the sanctuary and then putting down the pastor over lunch, he's to be a man who says what he means, and means what he says. Deacons aren't to be hypocritical in their speech, they should be characterized by integrity, honesty, and consistency, their yes should be yes, and their no should be no.

"Not give to much wine," I believe that Paul would've taught that there's never a good reason to consume alcohol for a social or entertainment type of a reason. Now there are medications that contain alcohol, so in isolated cases it can be a needed thing, Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomachs sake and frequent infirmities. But how important it is that we be careful to maintain the law of Love over liberty, and love tells us to avoid doing those things that will cause our brother or our sister to stumble. Let's look at Rom Ch 14 (Vs 13-21). (Time permitting)

So when it comes to our liberty vs love, the bible tells us to be careful to allow love to rule the situation, use wisdom, and exercise love when it comes to your decisions. and My encouragement is to avoid it all together. and More on this next one in ch 6 "Not greedy for money"

Vs9

The mystery of the faith is in essence the apostle's doctrines, that which was concealed in the OT which is revealed in the NT. Things such as the incarnation of Christ, Christ living in the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel itself, the unity of Jews and gentiles in Christ, and the rapture of the church. So the revealed content of NT truth is to be held by the deacon with a pure conscience, that is, he's to be committed to these truths. Not simply believe them, but live his life according to them so that like Paul he can say, "*For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God.*" 2 Cor 1:12

Vs10

How is a deacon to be tested, simply by the way he lives his life outside of an official “office.” Are these qualities on display in his life around the church, is he involved in the ministry, actively serving, a man of integrity, honesty, and contentment, someone who knows the word of God and leads his life according the convictions of it? Then let them serve in such a capacity if in fact they’re blameless men, men whose lives are above reproach.

Vs11

So wives, be it of the deacons or the elders, it’s important that they be women of integrity as well.

“Reverent” just like their husbands, women of honesty, and integrity, “not slanderers” or “false accusers” you remember Satan is the “Accuser of the brethren” and this is a word that’s used to describe the devil, so literally we could understand this “Not a she-devil” or a “malicious gossip” though I’m not certain there’s any other kind.

“Temperate” or “sober” again one who abstains from wine, and is clear headed, and the fact is, alcohol can distort your judgment, you remember when Aaron’s sons offered profane fire to the Lord and fire went out from the Lord and consumed them. and Immediately following that whole event God told Aaron “*Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die.*” Lev 10:9 The implication being that Aarons sons had probably been drinking and they were distorted in their judgment and it influenced their service to the Lord. and So God says when it comes to the ministry, you’re to be sober, temperate. and “Faithful in all things” when something’s committed to your trust follow through, be faithful and trustworthy.

Vs12-13

Look in the book of Acts at Philip and Stephen the 1st martyr, they were both deacons, and yet look at the boldness that they showed and how God used their lives.

Vs14-15

We’ve talked about “Aspirations”, “qualifications”, “condemnation”, and “reputations”, vs 14-15 deal with “information”, that is; the reason that Paul is writing, the information that he wants to impart to Timothy. “So that we might know how to conduct ourselves in the house of God”, (in regards to our relationship with one another), not in a structure of some form, but in our relationships to one another as the church, that is “the called out ones” called out of the world. Remember Peter said that we as “living stones” are being built up a *spiritual* house. Which is the church of the living God, the Pillar (#1), and ground (#2) of the truth.

Vs16

With out controversy great is the “mystery” of godliness, or God likeness. You see he’s spent all this time talking about godly character, and as he closes his thoughts regarding it, he realizes “Man, what an overwhelming sense of godliness is demanded of such men, how can one live up to such standards?” and The *revelation* as to how to lead a godly life was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ and that’s his illustration here, you see all these qualities that Paul mentions are simply personify Jesus Christ We’re to represent Jesus to the people around us, He’s the Chief Overseer, Blameless, The Husband of one wife (what?) Yeah, you, the church we’re His bride, and He’s faithful, temperate, Sober-minded, hospitable, not violent, or greedy, or covetous, able to teach and on and on it goes, we’re to be like Christ.

Here we see 6 things that Paul brings up regarding the person of Jesus Christ The mystery of godliness is solved in Him for He was “God manifested in the flesh” and this is a clear declaration of the fact that Jesus is God, Again John ch 1, when was God manifested in the flesh? In the person of Jesus Christ “Justified in the Spirit” From conception, to His baptism, to His miracles, but primarily via the resurrection Jesus was Justified, not in the sense of justification from sin, but in authenticity. He was vindicated, or proved righteous by the witness of the Holy Spirit in His life. “Seen by angels” Again primarily a reference to the witness of the resurrection, though seen by angels on several occasions throughout His ministry. “Preached among gentiles”, “Believed on in the world” and “Received up in glory” at His ascension. So the mystery of godliness revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ God coming to the earth, dying for the sin of the world, testified righteous by the Holy Spirit, Him we preach, Him we teach, and having been received up in glory, He’s sent us the Holy Spirit that we might lead a life after His own that we might keep godly order to His church, and represent Him accurately to the world.

AMEN? AMEN.