

SOUND WORKERS IN THE CHURCH

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

Paul continued to instruct Timothy about the task of building a sound church. In this chapter he told Timothy how to choose sound officers for the church. The requirements for pastors and deacons are given in 3:1-13 with the possibility that deaconesses may be mentioned in v. 11.

Paul dealt with the pastor's office first — 3:1-7. Here the pastor is called a "bishop." This simply means the pastor is an overseer of the church, an administrator, to see that it functions properly and is protected. Although the pastoral office carries with it many responsibilities and sacrifices, it is a good and desirable office. If God should call one into that kind of ministry, he should accept it joyfully. With this encouragement, Paul listed the qualifications of a pastor (bishop).

The deacon's office is discussed next — 3:8-13. The deacons were charged primarily with the temporal and financial responsibilities within the local church (cf. Acts 6). Their qualifications are similar to those of the pastor. There is uncertainty about the women mentioned in v. 11, whether or not they are the deacons' wives or deaconesses - probably they are the deacon's wives. Regardless, the church would greatly benefit if all the women in the church were so characterized. A reward is promised to the deacons who use their offices well (v. 13). Some feel that the original text does not limit the reward to deacons, but also extends it to the "bishops."

Paul gave three reasons for writing this letter — 3:14-16. First, the revelations were great which he had received from God concerning the local church; therefore, he wanted to share these revelations with Timothy by letter, lest he is delayed in his personal visit and they be lost forever (vv. 14-15a). Second, the local church was great and he wanted Timothy to know how to conduct himself in the affairs of the church (v. 15). Third, the gospel of Jesus Christ was great and he wanted Timothy to keep the good news about Jesus Christ foremost in his ministry (v. 16).

I. Requirements for a Bishop — 3:1-7**A. His Pastoral Work — 3:1**

3:1 — "Desire" - This word means "to lust after" in a good sense. The work of a bishop is to be desired for the glory of God and not for selfish reasons.

"Good work" — The work of a bishop is a good work, but it entails much labor and difficulty with great responsibility in making his local church a blessing to God.

The bishop is another name for the pastor in the New Testament churches and not a separate office as it is in some denominations today. Bishop describes his work as an "overseer" to see that the church functions properly. Pastor describes his work as a "shepherd" to feed and tend to the needs of his flock. The work of the bishop-pastor (overseer-shepherd) is clearly described in Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2. It is a difficult work when members in the church sin and disrupt the unity and growth of the church. It is a joyful work when members love each other and worship God in spirit and in truth. Notice how Christ judges the seven bishop-pastors of the churches in Revelation 2-3, where they are called angels (messengers). Two of them are commended, three are rebuked and

two are severely reprimanded for failing to do their duty. There are three other words used for the bishop-pastor: elder, preacher and teacher (1 Pet 5:1; 2 Tim 4:2; Eph 4:11).

B. His Personal Qualifications — 3:2-3

3:2 — "Blameless" - A bishop is to be above reproach. It leads the list of requirements for a pastor.

"The husband of one wife" — Literally, he is a "one-woman man." There are several interpretations concerning this requirement. Here are some:

1. A bishop-pastor must be married. This does not seem to be the proper meaning since it says "one" wife instead of "a" wife.

2. A bishop-pastor cannot be polygamous. However, no believer was to have more than one wife. Also, polygamy was forbidden in the Roman Empire at that time. Therefore, this does not seem to be the proper interpretation.

3. A bishop-pastor cannot remarry if his wife dies. In other Scriptures, however, a partner was free to remarry if the other died (cf. Rom 7:2-3; 1 Tim 5:14), so this view cannot be correct.

4. A bishop-pastor cannot be divorced or be unfaithful in his marriage relationship. If so, it must mean he cannot be divorced after he has been saved. Why? When he received Christ, he was cleansed from all his sins, God remembered his sins no longer and he became a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). Paul called himself the chief of sinners, but he was cleansed and given the office of an Apostle, because he lived a godly life after he was saved. This seems to be the best interpretation. Divorce is not God's plan for anyone, but the pastor of a church needs to be held to the highest standard for marriage after he is saved so that he might be able to lead the church properly by his godly example.

"Vigilant" — Temperate: literally, it means to abstain from wine completely, but it also had a metaphorical sense of soberness in judgment, discreet, alert, which seems to be the sense here. The bishop-pastor needed to be alert and watch out for sin and compromise in his own life and in his congregation.

"Sober" — He is to be sound-minded, earnest, sensible, and serious. He can have a sense of humor, but he does not engage in "practical jokes" or being a clown.

"Of good behavior" — He is organized in all areas of his life; composed; "modest" in 2:9; honorable.

"Given to hospitality" — He is a lover of strangers; willing to take Christian travelers into his home, or give lodging to those fleeing from persecution (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2-3; III Jn. 5-8).

"Apt to teach" — He has the ability and willingness to teach others. He has the spiritual power to teach God's Word.

3:3 — "Not given to wine" - It literally means "not beside wine." Wine was not his companion. He was not a social drinker, and may not have drunk wine at all. Much wine often led to quarrelsomeness. He could use wine for medicine (5:23).

"No striker" — He does not lose his temper and strike out with his fists.

"Not greedy of filthy lucre" — This qualification is not found in the best manuscripts but it is the same as "not covetous."

"Patient" — He is gentle, peaceable; considers the feelings and needs of others.

"Not a brawler" — He is not contentious or quarrelsome; rather, he is a peacemaker. However, this does not mean he compromises to keep peace.

"Not covetous" — He is not a lover of money; not stingy. This qualification may include coveting other things like a large ministry or popularity, but primarily it refers to money (6:9-10).

C. His Domestic Qualification — 3:4-5

3:4 — "Rules well his own house" — The requirement he must rule (manage) his own house well. To do this he must teach his children to obey him "with all gravity" or in a dignified way.

3:5 — The reason: A man who cannot manage his own home will not be able to manage a church properly. A man's home is a public testimony of his pastoral leadership.

D. His Spiritual Qualification — 3:6

3:6 — "Not a novice" - The requirement: he must not be a new convert, but must have some spiritual maturity.

The reasons: (1) a new convert might be filled with pride if he is elevated to the position of a pastor, and (2) being filled with pride might cause him to fall into the same condemnation which Satan experienced when he became proud.

E. His Community Qualification — 3:7

3:7 — "Must have a good report of them which are without" — The requirement: he must have a good testimony before unbelievers by living a pure life, pays his bills and keeps his promises. Unbelievers can trust him.

The Reasons: (1) he must not allow himself to be ensnared by Satan, and (2) he must not bring reproach upon the church.

II. Requirements for a Deacon — 3:8-12

A. Personal Qualifications — 3:8

3:8 — "Grave" — He is dignified; serious-minded; worthy of respect.

"Not double-tongued" — He is not one who would spread conflicting stories as he visits various people. He is dependable; sincere.

"Not given to much wine" — He is not self-indulgent, but is self-controlled with wine (see v. 3).

"Not greedy of filthy lucre" — He will not use his office for personal gain. As men who distributed money to those in need (cf. Acts 6:1-6), they had opportunity to take some for themselves. Therefore, it was important to choose men who refused to let money become their god.

B. Spiritual Qualifications — 3:9-10

3:9 — "Holding the mystery of the faith" — A mystery in Scripture was a truth which had been previously hidden but was now revealed. "The faith" refers to the truths of Scripture (cf. v. 16). A deacon must hold the truths of Scripture by knowing and practicing them with a pure conscience (a pure life). A man, who does not know the Word of God, cannot practice it, so he should not be a deacon. He is not spiritually qualified to assist the pastor(s) in the church.

3:10 — "First be proved" — His conduct and character must be tested and observed over a period of time and if he is found "blameless" (spotless), he may be appointed to serve. A man should never be asked to serve as a deacon to get him more active in the church.

C. Domestic Qualifications — 3:11-12

3:11 — "Wives" - The women mentioned here could be a reference to deacons' wives or to deaconesses. They are designated only as "women," not as "wives" as the KJV translates.

There were deaconesses in the early church as found in Rom 16:1. Phebe was a "servant" or, literally, a "deaconess." However, the following qualifications would be good for the wives of deacons as well as for deaconesses.

"Grave" — They are dignified (see v. 8).

"Not slanderers" — They are not to be like Satan who slanders and falsely accuses Christians. Women must guard their tongues against gossip.

"Sober" — They are temperate (see v. 2 where this word is translated, "vigilant").

"Faithful in all things" — They are trustworthy in their homes as well as in the church.

3:12 — "Husbands of one wife" - This seems to be a requirement for a deacon after he is saved. After he has been cleansed of all sin at the time of salvation, he must not be divorced and remarried. He must have a high regard for marriage.

"Ruling . . . his own house well" — He must be one who rules his own house and children well (cf. vv. 4-5).

III. Rewards for Good Service — 3:13

3:13 — "They" - The limitation of these rewards to deacons does not seem warranted from the original text. It would be more accurate to translate it, "the ones having served well." It applies to bishop-pastors and deacons (and to deaconesses, if they are regarded as officers in v. 11).

"A good degree" — They receive a good standing or respect.

"Boldness" — Also, as they faithfully serve God, they receive confidence and do their spiritual work with greater boldness.

IV. Reasons for the Letter — 3:14-16

A. The Delay of Paul — 3:14-15a

3:14-15a — Paul was delayed in Macedonia from coming immediately to Ephesus and so he wrote to Timothy to instruct him on how to carry out his responsibilities in the local church at Ephesus (cf 1:3).

B. The Dispensation of the Church — 3:15b

3:15b — "The house of God" - The house of God refers to the members of the church, the household of God, not to the church building (cf. 2:19-22).

"Pillar and ground" — This refers to the church members who uphold and support the truth of the Gospel before the world. It makes the truth of God's Word sure and certain in the community.

C. The Dynamic of the Gospel — 3:16

3:16 — "Without controversy" - Believers are to openly confess the great truths of Jesus Christ and the Gospel with absolute confidence.

"Mystery" — The truth revealed in Jesus Christ produces a great change in those who trust in Him that was previously unknown (cf 2 Cor 5:17).

"Godliness" — Six truths are revealed in Jesus Christ that reveal how His godliness affects

believers.

1. "God was manifest in the flesh" — This phrase speaks of the incarnation of Christ (cf. Jn 1:1, 14, 18). He lived a godly life in the flesh, so He could be our Savior.

2. "Justified in the Spirit" — This phrase speaks primarily of His resurrection when His claims to deity were justified or vindicated. Believers are able to live godly lives by the power of His resurrection. This also may have reference to His baptism (Mt 3:16-17) and to His transfiguration (Mt 17:5), when God claimed Him as His Son Who pleased Him greatly. This gives believers confidence that their faith in His Son will also please Him greatly.

3. "Seen of angels" — The sight of angels occurred at His birth (Lk 2:8-14); after His temptations (Mt 4:11); in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:43); and during His post-resurrection appearances (Mt 28:2-7; Acts 1:10-11). Angels helped Jesus and now they help us to live a godly life (Heb 2:14).

4. "Preached unto the Gentiles" — Cf. Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Gal 1:16. Gentile "dogs" can now become God's children by Jesus Christ.

5. "Believed on in the world" — Cf. Rom 10:17. Anyone can be saved by faith in Jesus Christ and live a godly life.

6. "Received up into glory" — His ascension (Acts 1:9-11). This was the climax of the work He was sent to do which provided salvation for us. Now Jesus Christ is our great high priest to help us live godly lives (Heb 4:14-16).