

CHURCH OFFICERS

I Timothy 3:1-16

I. The Major Office. 3:1-7.

The office of a bishop definitely affords a man of God an excellent or noble work. The manner in which some of the men in the church at Ephesus conducted themselves in the sacred office, and their willingness to suffer innumerable hardships for the cause of Christ, justified the saying, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

1. The duties of this office.

The godly desire for the responsible task of overseership, if controlled by the Holy Spirit, may deepen into a sacred conviction. Desire for this task merely for the prestige or honor involved is not praiseworthy, but if longed for in the will of God is to be commended. Among the duties of the overseer are the following:

- (1) Feeding the flock of God. I Peter 5:2.
- (2) Being an example to the flock. I Peter 5:3.
- (3) Protecting the flock from enemies. Acts 20:29-31.
- (4) Visiting those in need.

This office provides work and plenty of it.

2. The qualifications for this office.

In the light of all the heavy responsibilities of this office, what are the qualifications of the man who is to serve in it?

(1) He must be above reproach.

"Blameless" means without reproach. His character and life must be such that no one can lay hold upon anything in his life which would be of such a nature as to cast reproach upon the cause of Christ. Of course, there will always be irresponsible persons who will abuse the best of men. Enemies may bring all manner of accusations, but the life must be such that these charges will prove to be empty whenever fair methods of investigation are applied. The point to determine is whether it is just criticism or not. If the accusation is true, then amend it; if not, then ignore it.

(2) He must be a one-woman man.

This means the husband of one wife.

(3) He must be vigilant.

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). This means that he must exercise self-control.

(4) He must be discreet.

This means "sober-minded". It pictures a man of calm, collected, unexcitable and well--composed mind. He will be a man of sound judgment, master of himself and of his situation.

- (5) He must be circumspect.
He should be a man of good behavior, practicing what he preaches. There must not be any inconsistency between what he says and what he does. The ministry of his life should back up that of his lips. He should conduct himself with a sense of dignity.
- (6) He must be hospitable.
In Paul's day the cleavage between the Christian and the heathen manner of life was so deep that a believer in Christ who was traveling had extreme difficulty in finding a place to spend the night. Therefore, it was essential that disciples of Christ should go out of their way to care for each other when the need should arise.
- (7) He must be apt to teach.
If he is going to impart knowledge to others, he must be qualified to teach. Instruction is certainly one of the most important phases of the work of a minister.
- (8) He must not linger over the wine.
If he should do so, he would become intoxicated and quarrelsome.
- (9) He must not be given to blows.
He is not to be a violent, combative or pugnacious man. He must keep his temper under control.
- (10) He must not be a lover of money.
There is an old Latin proverb to the effect that "He who wishes to become rich also wishes to become rich soon." He must not make the acquisition of earthly treasures his chief goal in life.
- (11) He must be patient.
This is a quality of mind and heart that makes allowances for the slowness of people.
- (12) He must be a peace-maker.
"Not a brawler". He must not be contentious and stirring up strife.
- (13) He must govern his own household well.
The way in which he controls his own household reveals his capacity for the leadership and oversight of a church. There are times when firmness is needed in both places. A minister proves his ability to shepherd others by the way in which he rules his own household.
- (14) He must not be a recent convert.
Sudden elevation has inflated many people with pride, which resulted in their fall. Maturity in the faith is essential. The position calls for a man of experience, of the truth he teaches, of the life he expounds, of the warfare he wages and with the people he leads.

- (15) He must have a good reputation.

He must have a good reputation among non-Christians. They generally respect the noble ideals of Christian character, even though they persist in condemning professing Christians whose practice is at variance with their professions. Unbelievers are frequently shrewd judges of character, and they are ready observers of insincerity and inconsistency.

II. The Minor Office. 3:8-13.

Like preachers the deacons must be men of sterling qualities. What a deacon should be:

- (1) A man of Christian character.
He must have had an experience of grace and been saved.
- (2) A man of good reputation.
"Man of honest report" - his conduct must be such as to command respect.
- (3) A man of genuine piety.
"Full of the Holy Spirit."
- (4) A man of wisdom.
"Full of wisdom." He must be filled with that divine wisdom which gives a peculiar insight and understanding.
- (5) A man of sound judgment.
He will need the ability to understand conditions, meet emergencies and solve problems.
- (6) A man of exemplary deportment.
He is obligated to set a worthy example for other church members.
 - a. Serious-minded.
"Be grave." He should be serious-minded and not frivolous.
 - b. Truthful.
"Not double-tongued." He must not say one thing and mean another. He must not make different representations to different people about the same thing. He must not be two-faced.
 - c. Sober.
"Not given to much wine." If he is going to represent Christ and lead his church aright, he must be a total abstainer.
 - d. Not covetous.
"Not greedy of filthy lucre." Stinginess disqualifies any man for a deacon.
 - e. Orthodox.
"Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." He should be rooted and grounded in the faith. He must believe right or he cannot live right and do right.
 - f. Not a polygamist.
"Husband of one wife."

(7) A man of tact.

This means that he will use sanctified common sense in dealing with the various problems that arise.

(8) A man of vision.

He should take a long look into the future and help plan a challenging program.

Those who serve faithfully and well as deacons will receive a good standing or an appropriate reward for their excellent work. They will earn promotion in the service of their Lord.