

**BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE  
TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION**

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

**The Qualifications of the Elders**

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:1-7

- I. The qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are actually a revelation of what the indwelling Christ as the resurrection life can do in us—cf. 1:4, 16; 3:16; 6:12, 19:**
- A. This is like the constitution of the kingdom in Matthew 5—7, which not only indicates what the kingdom requires but also proves and testifies how much the resurrection life can do in us.
  - B. Like the qualifications of an elder, the requirements of the kingdom of the heavens are the highest demand, and the divine life of the Father, the resurrection life, is the highest supply to meet that demand; this demand opens up our inner being, showing us that we are able to attain to such a high level and to have such a high living—Matt. 5:48.
  - C. Our flesh, old man, and natural life have been crucified on the cross, and it is now Christ who lives in us; we need to cooperate with Him by having a desire and a willingness and by praying much—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:13.
- II. “Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work”—1 Tim. 3:1:**
- A. An overseer in a local church is an elder; *elder* denotes a person of maturity, and *overseer* denotes the function of an elder—Acts 20:17, 28:
    - 1. To be an elder is not a matter of ability or gift but a matter of life, a matter of what we are—Heb. 13:7.
    - 2. Being an elder is a matter of our character, disposition, conduct, and being.
    - 3. Aspiration to be an overseer, an elder, with a pure motive differs from ambition with an impure motive.
  - B. The elders must exercise their spirit to be one with the Lord in watching over the saints' souls (v. 17); our Lord, as the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our real person (1 Pet. 2:25).
- III. “The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach”—1 Tim. 3:2:**
- A. To be without reproach does not mean to be perfect or blameless in the eyes of God; rather, it means to be irreproachable in the eyes of man.
  - B. To be the husband of one wife implies the restraining of the flesh, which is highly required of an elder; it keeps an elder in a simple and pure married life, free from the tangle of a complicated and confused marriage.
  - C. The word *temperate* denotes “moderate, not going to extremes, balanced, and self-controlled.”

- D. To have a sober mind means to be not only keen but also discreet in the understanding of matters; to be of a sober mind means to think clearly and to have a pure and clear discernment—cf. Eph. 4:23:
  - 1. In order to receive light from the Word of God, our mind must be pure, clean, and straight, without any peculiar thinking.
  - 2. In order to be an overseer in a local church, a brother needs such a mind so that he can accurately understand the situation of the church and of the individual saints.
  - 3. The overseers' thinking must be practical, based in reality, pure, clean, and straight, because they are responsible for keeping strange, polluted, and damaging things out of the church—Acts 20:28.
- E. To be orderly is to be decorous, to have behavior that always fits the situation:
  - 1. This means that the leading ones work together with God by a life (not by any gift) that is all-sufficient and all-mature.
  - 2. Such a life is able to fit all situations, that is, able to endure any kind of treatment, to accept any kind of environment, to work in any kind of condition, and to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of the leading ones' ministry, the ministry of reconciliation—2 Cor. 5:18—6:1.
- F. To be hospitable requires love, care for people, and endurance:
  - 1. The elders must realize that most Christians are weak—weak in their soul and even weaker in their spirit; therefore, the elders need to help the saints find rest by listening to their stories.
  - 2. Just as an on-call physician must be available to provide medical care at any time, an elder must always be available to help the saints.
  - 3. Being hospitable is not a matter of ability but of willingness to give and even be troubled, bothered, and exhausted in order to take care of others—cf. Psa. 51:12.
  - 4. In a local church, besides those who are disorderly and need admonishing, those who are little-souled and need consoling, and those who are weak and need sustaining, all the members may be a problem in some way and need us to be long-suffering toward them—1 Thes. 5:14.
- G. An elder must be apt to teach; the word *apt* means “tending, inclined, likely”:
  - 1. Teaching here is similar to parents' teaching of their children.
  - 2. An elder must be apt to render this kind of home teaching to the members of a local church.
  - 3. An elder's gift or ability to teach is of secondary importance; primarily, he must be concerned for the saints' learning the truth and must build up a willingness and a habit to teach the saints.

**IV. “Not an excessive drinker; not a striker, but gentle; not contentious; not fond of money”—1 Tim. 3:3:**

- A. It is quite difficult for people to control themselves once they have been drinking; therefore, in order to control ourselves, it is best not to drink at all.
- B. Not being a striker means that an elder has a strong restraining of his temper.
- C. Being gentle means that an elder is yielding, approachable, mild, reasonable, and considerate in dealing with others, without strictness—cf. Phil. 4:5.

- D. Not being contentious means that an elder must not be quarrelsome but peaceable.
  - E. An elder must not be fond of money; money is a test to all men, and an elder must be pure in matters related to money, especially since the church fund is under the elders' management—Acts 11:30; cf. John 12:4-6; 2 Kings 5:14-27.
- V. “One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (but if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?)”—1 Tim. 3:4-5:**
- A. A father's leadership in his family should not be based on his ruling with authority but should instead be based on the pattern of his daily living.
  - B. God's ordained principle is that a father must live a life that is a pattern, an example, to his children; nevertheless, we must realize that the way our children turn out ultimately depends on the Lord's mercy.
  - C. Therefore, we must do our duty to live a proper life as an example to our children, but we should not be discouraged or proud because of how our children turn out; Jacob and Esau were twins, but Romans 9:10-13 shows that their destiny depended on God's selection.
  - D. The best and most proper way to be a parent is to live as an example to our children and pray for the Lord's mercy.
  - E. If our living establishes a proper standard, we are not liable if our children behave badly; however, if we do not live as a pattern, our children's bad behavior is our responsibility.
  - F. In order to be a good example, we must love the Lord and His Word, deal with sins, hate the self, and learn the lessons of the cross; this will be an example not only to our children but also to all the saints.
  - G. We must reject the concept that the elders “run” the church; even the Lord Jesus took the way of setting up an example for us to follow—John 13:15; Matt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21.
- VI. “Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment suffered by the devil”—1 Tim. 3:6:**
- A. The Greek word rendered “blinded” literally means “beclouded with smoke”; pride here is likened to smoke that beclouds the mind, making it blind, besotted with the self-conceit of pride.
  - B. Pride makes us blind, and if an elder becomes proud, he will suffer the same judgment as the devil, who was proud of his high position—Ezek. 28:13-19; Isa. 14:12-15; Jude 9.
  - C. Those who are taking the lead in the churches must be in fear and trembling, praying that the Lord will preserve them from any kind of pride.
- VII. “And he also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”—1 Tim. 3:7:**
- A. To have a good testimony is to have a walk and living that issue from living out Christ and expressing Christ and are appreciated and praised by others.

- B. An elder must be right with himself, with his family, with the church, and with those outside—the society; and, according to the context, an elder must be right in intention, in motive, in character, in attitude, in word, and in deed.
- C. Falling into the judgment suffered by the devil is due to the pride of the elder himself; falling into the snare of the devil is occasioned by the reproach of the outsiders; an elder should be alert not to be proud, on the one hand, and not to be reproachable, on the other, that he may avoid the devil's entanglement.
- D. The elders must pray, "Lord, deliver me from any temptation, and keep me from the evil one and evil things"; Paul's word reveals that there is a battle regarding the eldership because the devil seeks to ruin every elder.