

## The Bishop #2

"Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1).

Our study of Paul's comment of the above cited scripture was general; introductory in its purpose. Because of the importance of such men in God's doctrine of His church and redemption, it is fitting that the study of such men should be more detailed. Accordingly, in the next few articles our pace will be slower in order to give proper attention to those who shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2). Our study will draw from both Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus, for while both were in different places, an imminent part of their mission (in Ephesus and Crete) was the same: to see to the proper appointing of overseers for God's children.

A study of these men fall naturally into three categories: those who desire the office of a bishop are to be examined from three different stand points: their personal character; qualifications about their families and the spiritual maturity these men have attained.

We will first consider the elder's personal character. In this letter and in the letter to Titus, Paul lists 18 personal traits of a prospective elder -- that is as one studies from the KJV. These traits list 11 things the elder must be; 7 things he must not be. Some of these qualifications are very close in meaning and the one which heads the list (without reproach) is considered by many to be simply a general requirement which encompasses the whole character of the man. An elder must be "*vigilant*" (1 Tim. 3:2; KJV). This word is the word *nephalios* (translated "*sober*" in other places) and akin to the word *neoito* which means to be free from the influence of intoxicants (Vines, Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, Vol. 4, p. 50). The ASV translates the word as "*temperate*." An elder must test "liquor free"!

He is also to be sober, a word which tells us he is to soberminded; self-controlled, the opposite of "*not soon angry*." One "*soon angry*" loses his judgment and his loss of self-control may see him saying harsh, bitter things, or in some occasions, he may use profanity. Such a blemish in his "make up" makes him unsuited to serve in the sometime trying and vexing trials which will come to him. The bishop also be given to hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2). He must be "reachable;" one to whom brethren in distress can talk with, his home must be a place where brethren are welcomed and are frequently guests in.

The bishop is to be "*patient*" (KJV), rendered "*gentle*" in the ASV. Vine defines it as "equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law, it expresses that consideration that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of the case" (Vines, Vol. 2, p. 144f). The bishop must have "*a good report from that which are without*" (1 Tim. 3:2). Those "*without*" describes those who are not Christians (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:2; Colossians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:12). The intent is clear as Titus 2:8 shows "*sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*"

Moreover, the bishop is to be a "*lover of good men*" (Titus 1:8), translated as "*a lover of good*" in the ASV. It must be the ambition of elders to love good and hate evil; as should be the same practice of all who wear the name Christian. To be continued ...

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