

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

A Survey of 1 Timothy

Study #3 Leadership and Service (1 Timothy 3:1-16)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are examining, survey-style, the book of 1 Timothy. Because we are doing a survey rather than a study, there are several things to bear in mind.
 1. Many things that could be said will *not* be said.
 2. Many points that could be explained will *not* be explained.
 3. We will emphasize chapter divisions more than is, strictly speaking, proper.
- B. It is vital when looking into God's Word together, to remember an important principle: We are trying to *change our minds*. We want to allow God's Word to change our thinking. This means we must not allow our thinking to change God's Word. This is often difficult, and might be in the passage before us tonight.
- C. The key verse of the entire letter is 3:15. Here we see that Paul's intent in the letter is to explain to Timothy how the body of Christ is to conduct itself, corporately, as the household of God. Therefore, if we are to function properly as a body, we must allow God to teach us how.
- D. Tonight we will examine Chapter 3, from which we will derive four basic principles: the desire to lead; the qualifications for overseers; the qualifications for deacon[esse]s; and, the nature of the church.

II. PRINCIPLE ONE: THE DESIRE TO LEAD (3:1)

A. Preface: The Titles of Leadership

1. In the New Testament, church leadership is to be provided by one specific group of men. Each church is to have one of these groups of men to lead it. But the men comprising that groups are given three interchangeable, synonymous titles in the Scripture: *elders*, *overseers* (or *bishops*), and *shepherds* (or *pastors*). They are different titles for the same men. There are several passages that demonstrate this reality:
 - a. *Titus 1:5, 7* = In verse 5, Paul calls these men *elders* (presbuteros), and then in verse 7, speaking of the same men, he calls them *overseers* (episkopos).
 - b. *Acts 20:17, 28* = Here, verse 17 tells us that Paul is speaking to the Ephesian *elders* (presbuteros). In verse 28, Paul tells them that the Holy Spirit has made them *overseers* (episkopos), to *shepherd* (poimenas) the church.
 - c. *1 Peter 5:1-2* = Peter exhorts the *elders* (presbuteros) to *shepherd* (poimenas) the flock, to exercise *oversight* (episkopos).
2. So these three titles describe different facets of the same office. The *elder* is to be an older, wiser man. He is to exercise *oversight*, by having his eyes on the ministry as a whole, to keep it safe and moving in the right direction. He is also to *shepherd* the flock, keeping it well-fed and watered, and safe from predators. The word *shepherd* (poimenas) is translated *pastor* in Ephesians 4:11 (NASB), which is from the English word *pasture*, which meant to bring a flock to a green place where it could be well-fed.
3. Incidentally, the Greek word for *elder* (presbuteros) is the word from which the Presbyterians derive their affiliated name (they have an *elder* form of church government); and the Greek word for *overseer* (episkopos = literally *to watch over*), is the word from which the Episcopalians derive their affiliated name.

B. The Drive to Lead

1. *1 Timothy 3:1* = Some men, we are told, will have an *aspiration* to the office of elder. They will desire it, will wish to function that way in the body. There are three related points given in this verse:
 - a. The desire to lead is not bad in itself, unless it is driven by selfish ambition or pride. Rather, God has put in some the desire to lead. This is a good thing, for otherwise there would be no leaders.
 - b. Eldership (oversight, shepherding) is a “fine work.” The word “fine” here is *kalos*. It means beautiful, good, or worthy. In other words, the work of an overseer is a beautiful, worthy and worthwhile work.
 - c. Oversight involves *work*. It requires a great expenditure of time, resources, and energy. No slackers need apply (cf. *5:17*)

III. PRINCIPLE TWO: THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP (3:2-7)

- A. *1 Timothy 3:1* = The first three “qualifications” are these: the candidate must be male (this is derived from the fact that none of the descriptors include the possibility of a female candidate); the candidate must not be a young man (the word *elder* by its definition means an older man); the candidate must have the desire to lead. These may not be, specifically, “qualifications” so much as “prerequisites.”
- B. **BUT**...not all older males who desire to lead will be qualified to do so. Paul addresses specific qualifications in two passages (the one before us in *1 Timothy 3* and also in *Titus 1*).
- C. Before we examine these qualifications, some related points should be made:
 1. *Not Lifetime Qualifications*. None of these are *lifetime* qualifications. In other words, the fact that qualifications exist does **not** mean that the candidate must have met them all of his life. If this were the case, there would be no qualified candidates, because all men are sinners.
 2. *Perfection Is Not a Qualification*. These qualifications are not meant to indicate that a man must have reached absolute perfection in each area mentioned. Again, this would disqualify *any* man from serving.
 3. *Reasonable Maturity Over a Reasonable Time*. Instead, the idea of these qualifications is that a willing or desirous candidate must have exhibited reasonable and consistent maturity in these areas over a span of time sufficient to demonstrate that such maturity is his habit, his practice, his manner of life.
- D. *1 Timothy 3:2-7* = Between the two relevant passages (here and in *Titus*), there are basically twenty-one character qualifications. Since we are doing a survey rather than a study, we will just mention each qualification so that we get a general idea of the kind of men Paul says qualify for eldership. Here are the twenty-one qualifications: the elder must be **1)** above reproach, **2)** a one-woman man, **3)** temperate and self-controlled, **4)** prudent and sensible, **5)** respectable, **6)** hospitable, **7)** able to teach and also to refute contradictors, **8)** not an alcoholic, **9)** not a brawler, **10)** gentle and patient, **11)** peaceable, **12)** free from the love of money, **13)** ruling his household well, **14)** controlling his children with dignity, **15)** not a new convert, **16)** of good reputation with unbelievers, **17)** not self-willed, **18)** not quick-tempered, **19)** loving what is good, **20)** just, and **21)** devout.
 1. *The Goal*. The goal of these qualifications is not legalistic adherence to external principles. Rather the goal is to find men who are willing to lead, feed and protect the flock. In doing so, it is vital that we appoint men who have all three: the desire to lead, the ability to lead and the constitution to lead.

IV. PRINCIPLE THREE: THE PURPOSE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS AND DEACONESSES (3:8-13)

A. Preface Material

1. **Terminology**. The Greek word *diakonos* is a masculine noun that literally refers to a waiter, or table server. *Acts 6:1-6* gives us the account of the appointment of the first deacons of the early church. There were seven of them, and their responsibility was to serve the food at the daily love feasts.

2. **Deacons Are Not Leaders.** The office of *deacon* is an official church position. They are officially appointed, are accountable to uphold their responsibilities, and will give an account to God for their performance and service. However, the office is **not** one of leadership. The deacons of a church do not provide ministry direction or make decisions for the protection or spiritual feeding of the flock. In fact, these officers are specifically appointed to serve in *other areas*, in order to free up the time for those who *are* leading and teaching.
 3. **Deacons May Be Male or Female.** Many churches teach that deacons, as leaders, must be male. There are several reasons why I have changed my mind on this issue, however.
 - a. In the first place, according to the biblical record, deacons are *not* leaders. They are servants. And women are certainly allowed to serve in the church...in fact it is *expected* of them (cf. *Acts 9:36*).
 - b. Further, our passage in *1 Timothy 3* is the only account anywhere in the Scripture that gives us explicit instruction regarding the appointment and qualification of deacons. And right in the middle of the relevant paragraph, Paul gives instruction for the qualification of *women*. Either Paul changes topic in the middle of the paragraph, only to return to it again a moment later...or (as a natural, normal reading implies), the *women* Paul is referring to are those who are serving as deaconesses.
 - c. And finally, in *Romans 16:1*, Paul explicitly calls Phoebe a deaconess of the church in Cenchræa. This passage, in fact, demonstrates an interesting reality. First, Phoebe is a feminine name in Greek. Second, Paul describes her as a *sister*, the feminine form of the word for *brother*. Clearly Paul is referring to a woman here. And yet Paul calls her a *deacon*, using the masculine noun. Why would he refer to a woman by a masculine noun? It is simple enough to understand. At the time there *was no word* for a *female* deacon. And therefore the question becomes (in our passage to Timothy), if Paul had meant to explain qualifications for female deacons, how could he have said it? Just the way he did, and only the way he did.
 - B. **Qualifications of Deacons.** Paul essentially lists sixteen specific character qualifications for deacons (three of them from the description in *Acts 6*). They are remarkably similar to the qualifications for elders, and four of the qualifications are given specifically for female deacons. Here they are: deacons must be **1)** of good reputation (*Acts*), **2)** full of the Spirit (*Acts*), **3)** full of wisdom (*Acts*), **4)** dignified, **5)** not double-tongued, **6)** not alcoholics, **7)** not fond of sordid gain, **8)** holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, **9)** first tested, **10)** beyond reproach, **11)** not malicious gossips, **12)** temperate, **13)** faithful in all things, **14)** showing fidelity to their spouse, **15)** managing their children well, and **16)** managing their households well.
 - C. **The Benefits of Serving as a Deacon[ess].** Paul gives two benefits that derive from serving as a deacon[ess], assuming that one serves well in that capacity. First, the deacon[ess] obtains high standing. It is a prestigious thing to serve the body in this way (cf. *Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:24-26*). Second, the deacon[ess] obtains great confidence in the faith. When one serves well in the capacity in which one is called to serve, it produces great and godly confidence.
- V. PRINCIPLE FOUR: THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH (3:14-16)
- A. *1 Timothy 3:14* = Paul was hoping to come to Ephesus soon and see Timothy. But since he wasn't sure whether he would be able to do so, and since what he had to say was so important it couldn't wait, he sent this letter. What Paul says in these few verses is the key to the entire letter, its purpose and drive.
 - B. *1 Timothy 3:15a* = There is something here that Paul wants Timothy to **know**: that is, how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God. In order that Timothy might **know** this, Paul sent the letter. Through church history, the Holy Spirit has preserved this letter for us, so that we might read it as well, and **know**, as Timothy did, how we ought to conduct ourselves in the household of God. And this is why we are surveying the letter. We want to **know** what God expects of us, regarding our conduct in His household.
 - C. *1 Timothy 3:15b* = Paul identifies the church in four ways here. In two ways, it is related to God. In two ways, it is related to the truth of God (His Word). These two entities go hand in hand (remember *Acts 20:32*, when Paul commended this very church to two things: God, and His Word).

1. The Church in Its Relationship to God

- a. *It Is the Household of God.* First, we are called God's household. This means, essentially, that we are a family. We have one Father (one *paterfamilias*), and we have been adopted into that Father's household as His children and heirs. We are all brothers and sisters. This truth defines the way we deal with one another, even in times of conflict (cf. *1 Timothy 5:1-2*). It also defines the way we relate to God. We approach Him as our loving Father, giving Him the love and affection, but also the honor and respect, that is due to Him.
- b. *It Is the Church of the Living God.* The word church in Greek is *ekklesia*. It means an assembly, or a gathering together of those called to the assembly. Its root is from the word that means "to call out." In other words, it is the *assembly of the called-out ones*. So we have been called to assemble, as a congregation. And as an assembly, as a congregation, we are *owned* by the living God. Because He is a *living* God, His assembly is made up of those who are *living* as well (as oppose to those who are *dead in their sins*). And we are, collectively, therefore, a living entity (cf. *1 Peter 2:4-5*).

2. The Church in Its Relationship to God's Word

- a. *It Is the Pillar of the Truth.* In other words, it holds the truth up. A pillar is a structural device on top of which some other structure sits. It holds that other structure up, raises it above other structures, and makes it visible. That is how the church functions in relation to God's word. We hold it up, raise it above the world around us, and make it visible (cf. *Proverbs 1:20-21*). We magnify it, exalt it, proclaim it. In a world bombarded by all manner of beckoning voices, all of which are announcing deceit and falsehood, the church is the *one entity on Earth* proclaiming and magnifying *truth*. We do this by what we say...and we do this by *how we live*.
 - b. *It Is the Support of the Truth.* The idea of this picture is one of stability, security, and structural integrity. When you build a building, you recognize that for the building to last, it must be built to withstand the onslaught of hostile elements. A weak building will fall at the merest hint of wind. A strongest structure, however, can withstand raging winds, lashing rains, pounding waves and even earthquakes. But these strong buildings have been constructed with such contingencies in mind, and have therefore been enforced with certain structural supports intended to provide integrity during such events. The truth of God's Word, in this picture, is like the building. Having been placed in a hostile environment, it will undergo certain attacks. The church is to function as its structural support, to provide the building with strong integrity so that it does not collapse under the weight of such hostility. This is why the ministry of God's Word is absolutely *central* to the work of the church.
- D. *1 Timothy 3:16* = Paul expresses, in hymn form, the doctrine of Christ upon which the early church was founded. In other words, what was this *truth* the church was built to support? It centers around the person of Christ, and specifically six facets of this doctrine (arranged in couplets of two contrasting statements).
1. **He Was Revealed in the Flesh, but Vindicated in the Spirit.** That is, He was fully human...and also fully God. The theological term for this truth is the *theanthropic union*.
 2. **He Was Seen by Angels, but Proclaimed Among the Nations.** This couplet emphasizes, firstly, the visibility He had in two different arenas. The angels of heaven saw Him, and He was also visibly manifested, and proclaimed, to humanity as well. The second implication of this is that He existed in spirit form in the realm of heaven, before He existed in physical form on earth. The contrast, therefore, is between eternal preexistence, and temporal earthly existence in time and space.
 3. **He Was Believed on in the World, and Taken Up in Glory.** This couplet emphasizes two contrasts as well. First, He was humble *but also* exalted, both servant *and* king. Second, He is Savior *and* Lord.
- These contrasts, these dichotomies of Christ's person, are part of the mysterious truth the church has been entrusted to protect and proclaim.

VI. PRAYER