

1Timothy 3:1–2

An Important Doctrine: the Good Works of Graced Men by Which Christ Oversees His Church on Earth

**Thursday, October 20, 2022 • Read 1Timothy 3:1–2**

*Questions from the Scripture text: How does v1 begin? What may a man desire? What type of work is this? What is the first qualification for this good work? What is the second? The third? Of what sort of mind? What behavior? What sixth characteristic? With what skill/aptitude?*

**What should an overseer be?** 1Timothy 3:1–2 looks forward to the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these two verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **overseers must be of such character and attributes as to be ready and equipped for a good work.**

**The qualifications of an elder are an important point of doctrine.** This isn't just a "how-to" for having a nicely running church. v1 begins by telling us that "this is a faithful saying." This is part of that sound theology upon which Timothy must insist if the backsliding in Ephesus is going to be reversed. Because there is so much diversity (not a good thing!) in the organization/authority structure of congregations today, we might foolishly conclude that this is a matter of indifference or tolerance or lack of clarity in Scripture. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

**The position of a bishop is one of beneficial activity.** In that position, one is called to "a good work." He must exert himself in laboring for the good of the flock. The overseer ("bishop") is in a position of authority, but he is to focus upon the purpose and labor that belong to his position. This is why the qualifications are primarily character qualifications and not effectiveness qualifications. There are many ways that a household could be kept in check (cf. v4). The qualified man will be doing so by being a man of certain qualities (v2) and by not being a man of certain defects (v3). Thus, he will demonstrate these qualities in his home (v4–5), in the church (v6), and in the community (v7).

**Blameless.** Above reproach. Nothing in his manner or conduct gives accusers something to latch onto. Such a man might be unfairly slandered, and it would require investigation to clear him. Another man might have a good reputation, but it isn't particularly well-deserved; those who are closer to him have legitimate concerns. The qualified man maintains his integrity.

**A one woman man.** He is committed to monogamous marriage, and especially to his own, if he is married. He is faithful, honors marriage, and is committed to the purity of the marriage bed.

**Temperate.** This is a man who does not indulge his senses in his tastes and habits. He doesn't live for pleasures of the body. He lives for the deeper, lasting, steady joy of the Lord. He is a serious (not the same as "somber") person. Earnest not superficial, and steady not always coming with something new.

**Sober-minded.** The word means that he is controlled by wisdom. He learns and grows. He is a theologically principled man, not a pragmatist who changes with the situations, nor an impulsive man who changes with his feelings or inclinations.

**Of good behavior.** The inner goodness of the man is actually worked out in the things that he does.

**Hospitable.** Literally, a friend of strangers. The sort of person who helps according to his ability in a way that exposes his desire to be a help and refreshment to others.

**Able to teach.** This is someone who has been taught, who doesn't just know truth but has mastered it in its connections and proportions and has skill in building others up in the same. There are some (cf. 5:17) who are better at this than others, but all elders must have this. Teaching is the great part of shepherding, which is the good work that is a function of this office.

Not all are called to be elders, but growing by the grace of Christ and by knowing Christ ought to grow a Christian man in that direction. Indeed, the longer a man is a Christian, the more he ought to be filling out the profile that v2 has begun to sketch. A man who is not has good reason to tremble at the condition of his soul.

What character qualities in this list do you most need to work on? Which ones seem to be most lacking in the churches and in their leadership? How are you praying/laboring to see this improve?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for giving us Christ to be our Chief Overseer and Shepherd. Forgive us for how much our own characters fall short of His. Grant unto us undershepherds that are qualified according to Your Word and good examples to the flock, for we ask it in Jesus's Name, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP1 "How Blessed the Man" or TPH1B "How Blest the Man"

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First Timothy 3 verses 1 and 2. These are God's words. This is a faithful saying If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work, a bishop then must be blameless. The husband of one wife temperate, so reminded of good behavior. Hospitable able to teach So far the reading of God's inspired and inerant word.

There's a lot here and not just because of the list of characteristics in verse 2. First of all, it begins with this is a faithful saying. In other words, this is an important point of doctrine. The gospel and the church are not given to us by God in such a way that there are certain things that you must believe about Jesus in certain things that you must know to do morally in your life.

But the way of of organizing the church and the way of being disciplined the way of accountability and authority in the church, etc, that these are kind of up for grabs or not specified by God. There are many who think that way because there is so much variety in the churches, as far as the way churches are organized are not organized.

And, of course, because the flesh is resistant to the first commandment, and the second commandment, and the third commitment, and the fifth commitment in particular, of course, the flush resists all the commandments, But those commandments, especially are involved in the fact that God is the one who has specified, how to be worshiped and how his churches to be organized and that there is authority in it, but because the flesh resists, the law of God, there are many who are against organized church and they are against authority in the church and ordained teachers in the church and accountability in church discipline.

They're very autonomous and individualistic but they don't realize that they are rebelling against God and rebelling against Christ. The phrase. This is a faithful saying

at the beginning of first Timothy 3 teaches us that this is an important point of doctrine. It is a theologically important and necessary. Truth that the church is to be governed by elders and it's got to be governed by elders.

Who have these characteristics. Now in the New Testament, Bishop Elder, Pastor are all interchangeable words. We'll see this. Especially when we get to Acts chapter 20 and they're all used of the same set of people and the same work. He selects the word bishop here, because bishop means an overseer or a ruler.

And there are some who want to be in control, but watch out for the ones who want to be in control. Well, part of this faithful saying part of this theological teaching of the Lord Jesus, by his apostle of how the churches to be organized. Is that the one who is in the position of Bishop?

Who does have oversight and rule needs to desire. Not to have oversight and rule but to work and to do a good work. He needs to seek to be beneficial to those who are under his service. He needs to seek to display the character of the Lord Jesus Christ and godly character as an example to the flock, which of course, is what Peter in a complimentary passage.

In First, Peter 5 emphasizes in the work of an undershepherd under shepherds and overseers. Of course, as we have just said, being the same group of people. So he says, if a man desires the position of Bishop, that's what he is positionally. He desires a good work. He should see it to the same way as self-sacrifice to serve someone else or help them or give charitably.

Think. For instance, about the good Samaritan, You know, this classic good work in which you love, even your enemy, taking your time, making your effort, taking a risk for yourself. Expending your own money. Just as the Lord Jesus says the masters of the Gentiles lorded. It over them. But Jesus was among us as one, who serves Now, there's no question that Jesus is the king, and Jesus is the ruler, and Jesus is in authority and over us.

It's one of the reasons why we're not allowed to be autonomous. We're not allowed to be independent Christian agents, we must be church members. We must be under the authority that Christ has established. But Jesus, even though it's obvious, that his authority was infinite that he is in control and that all must answer to him.

The way he conducted himself is a servant, he has a servant of and he, he not only is he among us as one who serves, but he says, the one who wants to be chief among you, let him be the servant of all. And so immediately, your understanding that the bishop is not going to be the one who's, um, always domineering over others.

He is going to be the one who is so obvious in his own character and his own conduct that he often will not have to speak apart from teaching the scripture, which, which we'll get to in a moment. His character will be instructive because he's a man of good works.

And then when it comes to his ministry of oversight and of shepherding, he approaches that as doing charitable work service. This is the what the word minister actually means. The word. Minister is from a root. That means servant So it's very important the ministry. He's when we say minister, we're especially talking about minister of the word servant of the Word.

So first main thing here is that the eldership of the church and the organization of the eldership and who is qualified to be an elder that this is an important point of doctrine. We may not pick for ourselves, whatever elders. We want anymore. We may pick to have no elders at all.

No, they must be the ones in whom Christ, who has given us. These qualifications has done the work by his spirit to produce the qualifications in the man. And that's one of the things that we see as we consider this as a point of doctrine is that men do not achieve unto the eldership but we recognize because of the work that Jesus does, which men Jesus has selected.

Now this can be very difficult if you're coming into an existing church situation and you start to learn about the eldership and then people start scratching their heads because we've never studied this before. And So application can be very difficult, but it's worth it because Jesus is the one who has given us this as an important point of doctrine.

And it's Jesus, who is working in his church. He's the one who worked in those men when we recognize them. We don't say, congratulations. You achieved to be an elder, we say praise Jesus. He who has told us, which kinds of men he will have be overseers among us has also produced those qualifications in men.

He is the one who's given us therefore those particular men and we trust him to work through them. Always always, always not not under the man primarily but under the Christ who has established this in his church, not trusting in the man or hoping getting our good, hope from the qualifications of the man but trusting in Christ and getting our, a good hope from the qualifications of Christ.

Who has produced certain qualities in men. We see this also again in that complementary passage and first, Peter 5, where he describes what elders are supposed to do and what those who are elderred whom he calls in that passage of the youngsters are supposed to do, and then he talks about both of them.

Humbling yourselves not under one another's. Mortal hands, but humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God and not casting your cares upon proper execution of the system, Anybody who gets so married to the system that they, that they're always talking about or thinking about proper procedure. Proper policy. Proper follow through are forgetting that the reason we care about procedure and policy and follow through is because we're casting our cares upon Christ and there is a devotion to procedure that can compete in our hearts with devotion to Christ.

There's a dependence upon procedure that can compete in our hearts, with dependence upon Christ. And those you know, those things sound fuzzy and and not easily or clearly definable, but the more we grow depending upon and being devoted to Christ the more we can tell when when we are not doing that and even when someone else is not doing that.

But when somebody else doesn't do that, what do we do? We depend upon Christ follow the way that he says to do it as well as we are able within the Providence that he's given us. But we trust him that he will do perfectly. What, what he has promised even as men are doing imperfectly, or even failing to do, or to be what they have failed to do or to be.

So the faithful saying, a desires, a good work. And now the qualifications a bishop must be If his calling is not just to have power but to do good work, he needs to be a man who's fit for that good work. This is as it were a description of the sort of man who is well suited to the good work to which the overseer or the elder or the shepherd is called.

And the next several verses are organizable or laid out. Hmm, almost entirely. There's a little bit of overlap but the overseer is to be a man of certain qualities in verse 2 and he must not then in verse 3 have a certain set of defects and then there are three places where the presence of these qualities and the absence of these defects are going to be borne out in which he will live this way.

And so it's not just a portrait of himself that he is trying to present or that others are trying to recognize. But there's also a resume here. And these three places are first in his home in verses 4 and 5. Second in the church in verse 6 and third in the community in verse 7.

But just for today. So there's certain qualities that he has certain defects, he doesn't have and then the three places where those things are borne out for this week. For today, we're just looking at verse 2 because the qualities that he is to have are several here. The first one is blameless that is to say that he is above reproach, nothing in his manner or conduct gives accusers something to latch onto.

So this isn't that no one will blame him, You can still be naboth and have worked worthless men, whether or not they're inspired by a Jezebel to come and make accusation against you. So this isn't someone who's never been blamed, but it's someone who's character and conduct doesn't give grounds for blame.

Watch out for those Therefore who who conduct themselves in a in temperate or non-saber-minded, or non hospital, someone who is not kind and gentle and reserved and wise, and they'll say, well that's just, that's just my personality. Well, if the way you conduct yourself the way you are gives people places where they where there is.

There are things that they may latch onto in order to cast flame. Then you're not blameless. You may be able to.

Olympic You may be able to, to present a defense for how you have acted or how you have spoken. But it doesn't, you know, whether or not you can present a defense, doesn't take away from the fact that you could have conducted yourself with greater wisdom, greater godliness, a character that more composed, according to the picture here, and you weren't blameless you did in your character, in your conduct, give accusers, something that they could latch on to.

Now such a man may be unfairly slandered and it might even require an investigation to clear him, but part of that investigation will be not just that he had not committed a sin, but they had conducted himself wisely Christianly. Godly is a blameless man above reproach. You may also have a man who has a good reputation but it's not particularly well deserved.

His wife, his children, his employee, his co-worker, his business, someone who just had to deal with him in business. Someone who's had been under his authority in another context. Knows that he's not actually above reproach even if he has a reputation for being. So, okay, so this isn't just

So, this isn't just a reputation question. This is a character question and the second place is a one woman, man, He's committed to monogamous marriage and especially to his own marriage. If he is married, he is faithful. He honors, the marriages of others. His committed to the purity of the marriage bed.

He doesn't take marital unfaithfulness or marital conflict lightly, here's devoted. Even to the point of self-sacrifice loving, his wife maintaining devotion to her alone. Use a one woman, man. This is important because the church is the bride of Christ. As Paul has taught Timothy and taught us by way of Timothy.

Timothy, of course was pastor and Ephesus and Ephesians 5 opens up the devotion of Christ to the church and the complete devotion of the church to Christ and understanding marriage as imaging that and treating marriages imaging, that will say a lot. Both about the man's principles in the Covenant of marriage.

And how we can expect him to, to lead the that congregation of the bride of Christ, and how he sees Christ, as head of the church and not himself as head of the church. So there's a lot there a lot more there than just that he's not sexually. Immoral.

Sexual immorality is ultimately a forgetting of God in marriage. And there are many, who forget God in the church, That flows. Well then into this next word in in the verse which is translated in our English translation, temperate describes a man who does not indulge his senses in his tastes or his habits.

That is the things that he prefers are not always the ones or not determined by how good it physically. Feels He doesn't live for amusement or or physical pleasure of the body. He lives for the deep lasting steady. Joy of the Lord even in in earthly pleasures and recreations.

He's choosing those that that our most fit for enjoying the goodness of God's creation and enjoying God's goodness to him. And when he enjoys them his heart and mind are on the Lord and, and being a good servant to the Lord, This is, this is a guy who is serious?

That doesn't mean the same as somber. Someone who's somber is always sad, someone who's serious is always treating things. As significant, he is the kind of guy that an unbeliever someone who is just very superficial in life is always trying to get to lighten up. Now, someone who's always joking with people is not fit to be an elder.

He's not temperate, he's not a serious person. Has joys are not serious enough. And, and his living is not serious enough. He's an earnest man. Not a superficial man. He's also temperate in that he is steady because he is a theologically driven man's spiritually driven man, pursuing the principles of heaven in his life on earth.

He's not always coming with something new and keeping people off balance. Now this is a temperate, steady sober, not somber, man. That, of course, leads into the next one, which is translated in our texts. So remind it and it means someone who's controlled by wisdom. He's steady but he's also learning and growing has mind is instructable by the scriptures and his theologically principled.

He's not a pragmatist who keeps changing how to do things because he's figured out a new way to manipulate this situation know when there's development, it's theological development development. He is making more robust application of of who Christ is. And how Christ says he does. What he does, and who the Spirit is, and what the Spirit does.

In our lives, as he learns in his understanding of these things. From the scripture. He is a scripturally. Theologically principally. Controlled man. Not an impulsive man. Who changes based on feelings or, or impulses. Now, these are his internals and we've been talking a little bit about application temperate, sober-minded, our internal type things, even though we've mentioned some applications, but then he moves on here to of good behavior.

In other words, the inner goodness of the man, it is displayed in outer, goodness of works. And those works, of course, are defined as good. Not because people think they're good but because the Lord says that they are good and the inequality of the man has worked out and the things that he does This is of course not just true with those to whom he is close.

But even those whom he does not know who have no claim on him. If it's coming out of as internal character and not, whether he thinks they have some kind of potential to pop up his pride or to benefit him increases reputation before others or in some sort of way some.

But if his good treatment of them is coming from the inner principle, then this will be true even with people. He doesn't know. And that comes out in the word that is behind this one. That's translated hospitable which literally means a friend of strangers. And so one of the one of the ways we'll know that the good behavior is coming out of a good character, is that he is a sort of person who helps according to his ability in a way that exposes that he desires to be a benefit to everyone for

the sake of God, who has called him to it and and there's conforming him to the image of Christ.

Not just those whom he is personally invested in. So you know, very simple application for myself. One of the places where I ask myself. These questions is. Am I different towards people who have the potential to become a member of Hopewell? Do I feel differently towards them as my desire to serve them differently?

Now I do have you know particular obligations to mommy that are greater than the obligations to your children. I have obligations to this family that are greater than my obligations to or higher priority than my obligations to the congregation. And I have obligations to the congregation those who are members, not just attenders, but we've covenanted together.

I know that these are the ones that Hebrews 13:17 are talking about. Shepherding them as one who will give account have higher priority obligation to them than I do to those who are just attenders and those who are in other churches and then those who are in this community and then those who are beyond this this community.

And so there's this, there's this difference in obligation but the way that I think about them the the care or the inclination for care or principle of care or attitude of care that I have towards them. If the Lord, if the Lord presents me with someone who is in front of me and is needy and, you know, apart from the question of, Is it right?

Within, Is it correct within the proportions of assigned responsibility to me? Am I as inclined to do him? Good, even though he's a stranger, as I am someone that I know, or loves me, or would be able to benefit me, and some way, a mile lover of strangers, my friend of strangers.

That's what that word hospitable means. Someone who as a friend of strangers is glad to be a help and refreshment to others. And then the final characteristic or quality, the end of verse 2 is able to teach versus someone who has been taught, who doesn't just know truth, but has mastered how the truth fits together.

This is not just going to be someone who is able to recite their catechism or use certain words from systematic theology. And he has some that they like better than others. And this is someone who understands the scripture. As a whole, when they are explaining to you passages, they are explaining to you passages, not just in the local context, which is important and necessary, but in the context of the Bible as a whole and then when you think about theological context, the Bible as a whole is, proclaiming God to us.

And so I have the, they are bringing the doctrine of the Trinity and a right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in its implications to everything else that they talk about and God has declared himself to us especially in Christ. And so they whatever it is that they are teaching, they are teaching Christ from all the scriptures.

There's a lot here in this phrase able to teach because it's presuming that. You understand the theology and the approach to scripture and theology that the book of Acts presents to us, It's assuming that we understand things. Like, the, the way, the eternal plan of God, Ephesians chapter 1 is worked out.

And then the implications of it by the time you get to Ephesians chapter 5. Its chapter 6 for ordinary life. Church life. Family life work life and that that's coming out of this union with Christ apt to teach is not just they can give a TED talk. No, it's it's apt to teach the entire system of doctrine, even to the point of recognizing as we just talked about.

In the previous verse that the theology of the eldership in the church, what we call ecclesiology that this is tied to union with Christ. And so this is an instructed man who is able to communicate to others. The instruction that he has received. Now, there are some who are called to more of this than others.

Let's see that in a couple of chapters and chapter 5 and verse 17, when he says the elders, let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word indoctrinate. So there are some whose life labor who's day job as it is, is in the word and indoctrinate, but all of the elders should be guys who get it.

And who are able to communicate. It teaching is the great part of shepherding as we remember, of course, from Ephesians chapter 4, where the shepherd is actually called the shepherd teacher and his shepherding in the body. So that the hole gets built up into Christ is especially a doctrinal ministry, keeping people from being tossed to and fro by every wind and and wave of doctrine.

So as you hear about all these things, even when we talk about able to teach, you also should be seeking to grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures and how to understand, any particular passage both within its local context and in its relation to the rest of the Bible, as a whole, You also should be desiring that as you as you grow in your understanding of the system of doctrine that the Lord gives us in the Bible, you're especially understanding how it relates to God, himself the triune God within himself.

How it relates especially to Jesus Christ. The god man, the one in whom God has displayed himself. The one and whom God redeems us and the work of the Spirit. Of course, this too has tied triunely, but even apt to teach is describing something that every Christian should be growing in a good, you know, the entire list doing good works.

No, not necessarily the good work of the eldership. Especially for you, ladies who will never be an elder in a church, or at least a church that is obeying Jesus. And you boys may or may may not be view. Seems to think that in his day, faithful ministers were so rare that every parent should aim first at the ministry with every boy until they are disqualified.

And then if they're disqualified, they can do some lesser thing, like ruling a nation or inventing culture. Transforming technology or something like that, But considering the number of ministers that were expelled in the great ejection. If they were needed, then how much more now? But even if you're not going to be an elder, You should be seeking to be blameless to be committed to the honorableness of marriage and the purity of the marriage bed, to being a temperate person who doesn't live for pleasure.

But has more profound joy and who lives a serious life finding joy in the Lord and purpose and serving the Lord. You should be seeking to be someone who is sober-minded controlled by wisdom controlled by theology. Not not unstable, and changing, according to feelings, or impulses. And of course, all of these things are things that we all feel that we fall much short in I, especially some of these.

You should be someone who seeks that your good behavior would be an expression of the inner work that the Lord is doing in you. And so, And so, when you recognize the need for more, good behavior, you go to the Lord for that inner work or when you are learning more and growing in your understanding of the Lord, and hopefully, in your character, you're seeking to express that and how you live, You also should be a lover of strangers, or a friend of strangers desiring, always to be a help and to refreshment to whomever the Lord.

Puts you puts around you because you get to image the Lord in doing good to others And yes that works itself out even in such things as leaving every room better

than you found it. But also leaving every person better than you found them when the Lord brings them into intersection in your life living as someone who is serving God by serving everyone that you run into, you know.

So that governs things like evangelism and means that you know, you receive the cashier at the grocery store and you know the other kid at the park or whatever it is as an assignment from God. And for God, you children should be seeking to grow and all of these things.

But then when it comes time for recognizing whom, the Lord is calling and qualifying to be an elder in the church. It's a man in whom the Lord has done an exemplary work. A standout work of producing these qualities in them. Because it's Jesus, it's Jesus who governs us, and shepherds us, and the church, and it's Jesus, who's going to use this, those under shepherds.

And so it's Jesus. Who is produced the character in them and so it's Jesus whom we trust as we pursue this approach to recognizing, and having elders, let us ask him to help us.

Oh, Lord. We want all of these characteristics in every one of us. It's one of the reasons why we worship you according to your word because we trust you and we know that you do it through your word. And we do it by means of your word, especially worship as a household, which you have commanded worship in the congregation, but you have commanded, we come to you desiring that we would be blameless and pure and temperate and say reminded good.

Behaved hospitable understanding of your word. And so we ask that you would help us that you would help our elders that we have to grow in each of these a characteristics. Lord grow me, not just for my sick and for this family's sake. But for your congregations sick, and in this place, make me holding make me more of each of these things.

And then Lord, we pray that you would use the elders that you have given us, in your work of producing each of these characteristics. In each of us, we thank you that we can commit all into your care that it is under your mighty hand, that we submit ourselves and that it is upon you, that we cast our cares.

And so we blessed your name. Even as we look to you with hope and confidence that you've done a good work, we'll bring it to completion, be glorified as you do. So we ask and Jesus name, Amen.