

## THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN OVERSEER --A DESCRIPTION--

1) "Above reproach" (Gr., *anepileptos*, 1 Tim. 3:2; *anengkletos*, Tit. 1:6-7). *Anepileptos* is used here and again in 1 Tim. 5:7; 6:14 in the New Testament. Paul probably used this characteristic as an overarching one for all that followed. He summarized a man of God with the phrase "above reproach" and "filled in the details by listing the specific traits that create this situation."<sup>1</sup>

The word literally means "not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of; hence that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable,"<sup>2</sup> "blameless,"<sup>3</sup> "irreprehensible, unassailable."<sup>4</sup> It bespeaks of irreproachable conduct and it also means "not only of good report but deservedly so!"<sup>5</sup>

The translation "above reproach," found in Tit. 1:6-7, has as its derivation a different Greek word, *anengkletos*. It is used twice in Titus and once in 1 Cor. 1:8, Col. 1:22, and 1 Tim. 3:10. *Anengkletos* means "that cannot be called to account, unprovable, unaccused, blameless"<sup>6</sup> (cf. Acts 6:3; 16:2). These passages do not require sinless perfection. Nevertheless, an elder's life cannot be characterized by serious sin of a habitual nature. It must be characterized by holiness and truth.

2) "The husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7). This phrase has been misunderstood by some as a prohibition of second marriages if the wife died (e.g., Tertullian) or if the first marriage ended in divorce. There are strong prohibitions to divorce and remarriage (cf. Matt. 5:31-32; 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-11) but there are also exceptions. For instance, Paul allowed for remarriage in the case of a spouse's death (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39-40) and when an unbeliever divorced a believer because of their faith (1 Cor. 7:12-16). Jesus allowed for divorce and remarriage in the case of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Therefore, Paul was not addressing the issue of remarriage when he used the phrase, "the husband of one wife."

Instead, this phrase should probably be seen as an enforcement of monogamy as opposed to polygamy. Polygamy was an issue in the first century and Paul forbid

having more than one wife. If Paul was not addressing polygamy specifically, he was certainly saying a spiritual leader in the church must be intimately or sexually related to only one woman (i.e., his wife).<sup>7</sup> If so, the phrase may best be understood as an exclusion of infidelity on the part of the man with regard to sexual activity.

3) “Temperate” (Gr., *nephalios*, 1 Tim. 3:2; cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; and Tit. 2:2). *Nephalios* means “sober...abstaining from wine either entirely...or at least from its immoderate use,”<sup>8</sup> “not self-indulgent,”<sup>9</sup> “well-balanced...careful.”<sup>10</sup>

Such a person lives deeply. His pleasures are not primarily those of the senses, like the pleasures of a drunkard for instance, but those of the soul. He is filled with spiritual and moral earnestness. He is not given to excess (in the use of wine, etc.) but moderate, well balanced, calm, careful, steady, and sane. This pertains to his physical, moral, and mental tastes and habits.<sup>11</sup>

See also 1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8, where the verb form is used (Gr., *nepho*).

4) “Prudent” (Gr., *sophron*, 1 Tim. 3:2) or “sensible” (Tit. 1:8; cf. Tit. 2:2, 5). *Sophron* means: “a) of sound mind, sane, in one’s senses b) curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate.”<sup>12</sup> “The self-controlled or sensible man is the man of sound mind. He is discreet, sane; hence, not swayed by sudden impulses over which he exercises no mastery.”<sup>13</sup>

A prudent man is truly a humble man. He has a proper view of himself, and he is keenly aware of one thing: all that he has (gifts, ability, and possessions, etc.) are from God. Without Him, he is nothing at all.... A prudent man has a proper view of the grace of God. He realizes that he was lost without Christ and that all of his human abilities and achievements were useless in winning any favor with God.<sup>14</sup>

Paul commented in 2 Cor. 5:13, “For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, (‘being prudent’ – Gr., *sophroneo*) it is for you.”

In other words, said Paul, you may think we are bragging and are proud. If so, it is because of what God has wrought in us. We are only glorifying the work of God in our lives. And from your viewpoint, Corinthians, we want you to see us as sober, prudent and sensible men, humbly acknowledging that we are what we are because of God’s marvelous grace (cf. 2 Cor. 11-12).<sup>15</sup>

Cf. Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 5:13; Tit. 2:6; 1 Pet. 4:7 for usage of verb form (Gr., *sophroneo*), and 2 Tim. 1:7; Tit. 2:12 for other important and related usages.

5) "Self-controlled" (Gr., *engkrates*, Tit. 1:8). *Engkrates* means "mastering, ...curbing, restraining, ...controlling one's self, temperate, continent,"<sup>16</sup> "possessing the moral strength to curb or master one's sinful drives and impulses."<sup>17</sup>

6) "Respectable" (Gr., *kosmios*; 1 Tim. 3:2). *Kosmios* is used here and in 1 Tim. 2:9 as an adjective. It means "orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest (akin to *kosmos*, in its primary sense as harmonious arrangement, adornment),"<sup>18</sup> "honorable."<sup>19</sup>

"The word *kosmios*, translated in 1 Tim. 3:2 as being 'of good behavior,' 'well behaved,' or 'respectable,' actually means orderly or well arranged. Thus, it is speaking here of a man who is living a well-ordered life."<sup>20</sup> Cf. Matt. 12:44; 23:29; 25:7; Luke 11:25; 21:5 for interesting usages of the verb form.

7) "Hospitable" (Gr., *philoxenos*, 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). *Philoxenos* is used twice here, and once in 1 Pet. 4:9 as an adjective. It means "hospitable, generous to guests, (given to hospitality)."<sup>21</sup> The use of the noun form (Gr., *philonexia*) is found in Rom. 12:13 and Heb. 13:2. It literally means "love of strangers" (Gr., *philos*, loving; Gr., *xenos*, a stranger). A hospitable person is one who communicates to the necessities of others.<sup>22</sup>

8) "Able to teach" (Gr., *didaktikos*, 1 Tim. 3:2; also used in 2 Tim. 2:24) and "Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Tit. 1:9).

Donald Guthrie believes the phrase "able to teach" describes "mental achievement, for an overseer must certainly have the propensity to pass on advice and doctrine to inquirers."<sup>23</sup> Although it is necessary for an elder to have a sufficient breadth of religious knowledge and doctrine, Paul does not seem to be directly alluding to "mental achievement" in his statement. What is referred to here is the divine ability and quality to impart knowledge in the most profitable way. It requires both the "gift of teaching" (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11) and a quality of life or character.

Getz does not feel that the phrase "able to teach" refers to the "gift of teaching" at all. He believes it bespeaks exclusively of "a quality that every man and woman can

develop, and must develop to be mature.”<sup>24</sup> Although this is an unwarranted conclusion, his emphasis on the importance of character as it influences a man’s manner of teaching contains merit.

To be ‘able to teach’ means that a man must possess certain personal qualities that enable him to communicate with others in a non-threatened, objective manner. He isn’t the kind of person who goes around looking for arguments and actually stirring them up. He is sensitive to people, even those who are confused and even obstinate and bitter. When verbally, or even physically, attacked, he does not reciprocate with cutting words and ‘put downs,’ or knockdowns. In short, he is a man who is not in bondage to himself. He is secure as a person and is in control of his personality.<sup>25</sup>

The way in which a man teaches receives more thorough consideration in the context of Paul’s exhortation to Timothy in his second epistle. In 2 Tim. 2:23-26 we read:

[23] But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. [24] And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, [25] with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, [26] and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

The second phrase (found only in Titus) of “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Tit. 1:9) emphasizes the “mental achievement” and unwavering conviction of the candidate concerning the doctrines of the Christian faith. He must be firmly grounded in the Word so that he may be able to exhort and refute those who contradict.

9) “Not addicted to wine” (Gr., *paroinos*, 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). *Paroinos* literally means “one who sits long at his wine.”<sup>26</sup> A Christian leader cannot be in bondage to an alcoholic beverage. What is true in particular with regard to wine, must also be true in general. A man of God cannot be in bondage to any sinful indulgence of a physical or soulful nature.

10) "Not self-willed" (Gr., *authades*, Tit. 1:7; cf. 2 Pet. 2:10). *Authades* means "self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant,"<sup>27</sup> "stubborn."<sup>28</sup> "In short, a self-willed man builds the world around himself. He is self-centered and wants to 'do as he pleases.'"<sup>29</sup>

11) "Not quick-tempered" (Gr., *orgilos*, Tit. 1:7). *Orgilos* means "prone to anger, irascible, (A.V. soon angry),"<sup>30</sup> "given to outbursts of wrath,"<sup>31</sup> "hot-tempered."<sup>32</sup> Cf. Prov. 22:24f.; Jam. 1:19f.

12) "Pugnacious" (lit. "not a striker," Gr., *plektes*, 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). *Plektes* means a "bruise, ready with a blow; a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person."<sup>33</sup> "A mature man of God is not to be a "striker" – one who physically strikes out at others. Pugnaciousness then is really anger out of control, not just verbally, but physically."<sup>34</sup>

13) "Gentle" (Gr., *epieikes*, 1 Tim. 3:3). *Epieikes* is used here and in Phil. 4:5; Tit. 3:2; Jam. 3:17; and 1 Pet. 2:18. In contradistinction to a man who is verbally or physically a "striker," a man of God was to be gentle, meek, forbearing, kind,<sup>35</sup> "equitable, fair, mild."<sup>36</sup>

"The qualities of yieldedness, fairness, sweet reasonableness, gentleness, helpfulness, and generosity are combined in this conciliatory, considerate, genial, better than debonair, individual."<sup>37</sup> "Simpson gives us its English approximation 'gracious, kindly, forbearing, considerate, magnanimous, genial.'"<sup>38</sup>

14) "Peaceable" (Gr., *amachos*, 1 Tim. 3:3; cf. Tit. 3:2). The requirement "uncontentious" (NAS) or "peaceable (NASU), literally "averse to fighting," probes even deeper than "not given to blows."<sup>39</sup> "A person might not be eager to come to blows, but being disputatious,...he would still be lacking one of those characteristics which are needed by an overseer."<sup>40</sup>

Very often a contentious person "cannot feel 'security' unless he always wins and is the center of everything. He must win every argument, must have the final word, must have his ideas accepted."<sup>41</sup>

15) "Free from the love of money" (Gr., *aphilarguros*, 1 Tim. 3:3) and "not fond of sordid gain" (Gr., *aischrokerdes*, Tit. 1:7). The former word is also used in Heb. 13:5 and the latter word in 1 Tim. 3:8 when speaking of deacons. *Aischrokerdes* literally means

“fond of dishonest gain.”<sup>42</sup> An overseer must be just the opposite. He must be a man of integrity and not vulnerable to dishonesty.

16) “He must be one who manages (Gr., *proistemi*) his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 4:4-5). *Proistemi* means, “a. to be over, to superintend, preside over (A.V. - rule); b. to be a protector or guardian; to give aid; c. to care for, give attention to.”<sup>43</sup>

Now this ability to manage or govern well his own family becomes evident when the father keeps his offspring in submission...the so-called “progressive” idea of permitting the child to do as he pleases finds no support in Scripture. But though authority must be exercised, this must be done ‘with true dignity,’ that is, it must be done in such a manner that the father’s firmness makes it advisable for a child to obey, that his wisdom makes it natural for a child to obey, and that his love makes it a pleasure for the child to obey.<sup>44</sup>

“Any man unable to govern his children graciously and gravely by maintaining good discipline, is no man for government in the church.”<sup>45</sup>

Paul’s epistle to Titus reiterates this same point by stating that an overseer must be one “having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion” (Tit. 1:6). The New International Version translates the same verse as “a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.” The English Standard reads, “and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.”

This phrase is understood by William Hendriksen to mean “having children who share the Christian faith of their fathers and who adorn that faith with a godly conduct. A man whose children are still pagans or behave as pagans must not be appointed elder.”<sup>46</sup> Guthrie holds that “the children must be ‘believing’ (as faithful must here be understood), and must not lay themselves open to the charge of prodigality or insubordination.”<sup>47</sup>

The text seems to require not only obedient children but children who have believed in the Gospel. Salvation of the entire family is implied. Like any Christian father, an elder had to bring his children up “in the discipline and instruction of the

Lord" (Eph. 6:4) and give them "the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

These passages do not teach that a man had to be married to be an elder although this was commonly the case. Neither do they imply that a man had to have children before becoming an elder. Singleness was a virtue esteemed by the early church (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7-8, 11, 26-27, 34).

17) "Not a new convert (Gr., *neophutos*), lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). It is significant to note that this particular requirement is omitted from the qualifications listed for the Cretan church (Tit. 1:5-9), "whose more recent establishment no doubt rendered it inappropriate"<sup>48</sup> (cf. Acts 14:23).

It must be borne in mind that the church of Ephesus would have been established for about nine or ten years by the time Paul writes to Timothy and the advice not to appoint novices would not be entirely without meaning in such a church. In primitive communities the choice of officials is necessarily strictly limited in the opening stages of the work, but in a church the size of Ephesus, where Paul had himself worked for three years, it must have been an injunction of practical significance that no novice be appointed to office.<sup>49</sup>

A new convert was not to be appointed because he would easily become conceited (Gr., *tuphoo*; lit. means "to raise a smoke, to wrap in a mist,"<sup>50</sup> fig. "to make proud, puff up with pride, render insolent"<sup>51</sup> or "to blind with pride or conceit, to render foolish or stupid"<sup>52</sup> and "fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil." The phrase "into the condemnation incurred by the devil" most likely means "the condemnation reserved for the devil, i.e., the judgment meted out for the sin of pride."<sup>53</sup>

18) "He must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach (Gr., *oneidismos*) and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7). This "injunction was essential to protect the Church from unnecessary abuse, for the non-Christian world has generally respected the noble ideals of Christian character, but has persistently condemned professing Christians particularly ministers and leaders, whose practice is at variance with profession...no minister will achieve success who has not first gained the confidence of his fellows."<sup>54</sup>

Additional qualifications to the above eighteen, although not listed in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, do receive attention in Tit. 1:7-9.

19) "Loving what is good" (Gr., *philagathos*, Tit. 1:8). *Philagathos* means "loving that which is good,"<sup>55</sup> "loving goodness, virtuous, ready to do what is beneficial to others."<sup>56</sup> "Loving what is good" includes loving good persons and good things. "To 'love what is good' means to desire to do good, not evil."<sup>57</sup>

The New Testament word translated "good" (Gr., *agathos*) means that which is "of a useful constitution of nature: ...salutary, ...pleasant, agreeable, ...excellent, ...upright, honorable."<sup>58</sup>

20) "Just" (Gr., *dikaios*, Tit. 1:8). *Dikaios*, used eighty-one times in the New Testament, means in the broad sense: "upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God."<sup>59</sup> Here, and in the narrower sense, it means "rendering to each his due; and that in a judicial sense, passing just judgments on others, whether expressed in words or shown by the manner of dealing with them,"<sup>60</sup> being fair in "performing one's duty toward man."<sup>61</sup>

21) "Devout" (Gr., *hosios*, Tit. 1:8; cf. Acts 2:27; 13:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 7:26; Rev. 15:4; 16:5). *Hosios* means "undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure, holy, pious."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gene A. Getz, *A Measure of a Man* (Glendale, California: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1974, reprint ed., 1975), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977; reprint ed., 1978), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, gen. ed., *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1957; reprint ed., 1973), *The Pastoral Epistles*, by Donald Guthrie, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Tasker, *loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>9</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 613.

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- <sup>13</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
- <sup>14</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- <sup>17</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 349.
- <sup>18</sup> W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, for. W. Graham Scroggie and F. F. Bruce, 4 vols. (Old Tappan, New Jersey; Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940; reprint ed., 1966), Section 3, p. 79.
- <sup>19</sup> William F. Arndt and Wilbur F. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 446.
- <sup>20</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- <sup>21</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
- <sup>22</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
- <sup>23</sup> Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
- <sup>24</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- <sup>26</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 490.
- <sup>27</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
- <sup>28</sup> Arndt, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
- <sup>29</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
- <sup>30</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 452.
- <sup>31</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 347.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516.
- <sup>34</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- <sup>36</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
- <sup>37</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
- <sup>38</sup> Tasker, *loc. cit.*
- <sup>39</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- <sup>42</sup> Tasker, *loc. cit.*
- <sup>43</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 539.
- <sup>44</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.
- <sup>45</sup> Tasker, *loc. cit.*
- <sup>46</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 347.
- <sup>47</sup> Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- <sup>49</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Tyndale Press, 3rd ed. revised, 1970; reprint ed., Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1978), pp. 600-601.
- <sup>50</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 633.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Tasker, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- <sup>55</sup> Vine, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- <sup>56</sup> Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 348.
- <sup>57</sup> Getz, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
- <sup>58</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

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<sup>61</sup> Hendriksen, *loc. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 456.