Prayer Study 493
1ST TIMOTHY 3
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry. Georgia USA

1 Timothy 3 Amplified Bible (AMP)

Overseers and Deacons

3 *This is a faithful and trustworthy saying: if any man [eagerly] seeks the office of overseer (bishop, superintendent), he desires an excellent task.* ***2*** *Now an overseer must be blameless and beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,* ***3*** *not addicted to wine, not a bully nor quick-tempered and hot-headed, but gentle and considerate, free from the love of money [not greedy for wealth and its inherent power—financially ethical].* ***4*** *He must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity [keeping them respectful and well-behaved]* ***5*** *(for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?).* ***6*** *and He must not be a new convert, so that he will not [behave stupidly and] become conceited [by appointment to this high office] and fall into the [same] condemnation incurred by the devil [for his arrogance and*

*pride]. **7** And he must have a good reputation and be well thought of by those outside the church, so that he will not be discredited and fall into the devil's trap.*

Two words describe the chief office holder in the early church:

a. *presbuteros,* which is normally translated *elder*- Every synagogue had its elders. These elders gave fatherly oversight, presided over the worship service, and settled disputes.
b. *episkopos,* which is normally translated *bishop, overseer,* or *superintendent*-The bishops, as overseers, regulated the affairs of the local church.

Modern scholars almost unanimously agree that the office of *presbuteros* and *episkopos* are one and the same. Why two words? *Presbuteros* describes the characteristic of the leader, i.e. *older and respected men of the community. Episkopos* describes the function, i.e. *the oversight of the church.* Later in Church history, bishop came to designate the leader of the elders.

These leaderts of the early Church were ordained or set apart in a public ceremony for this role. They had to undergo a period of testing. They were paid for the work which they had to do. They could be reprimanded and were accountable both to God and to those

they presided over. They had a duty to both administrate and instruct the Church. The elder positions were not to be given to recent converts.

The reason for this last qualification for eldership is two fold. First, the Church did not want those who were immature in the faith and not stable. Only those who are mature will stand for Christ when things get tough or when trials come. Secondly, the Church did not want the elders to *"fall into the same condemnation,* [*pride*]*, as the devil did,"* for it was through pride that the devil fell and was expelled from heaven. Appointing an elder before he is ready could lead to pride, because the appointee might become convinced of his own importance.

Paul also takes some time to address some family issues. The first and most important ministry of the elder was management of his own household. Men who could not control their own children or manage his household properly should not be given elderships.

The final qualification for eldership has to do with the elder's relationship to those in the community. He should be a man who is respected by people even outside of the church.

This passage enumerates specific characteristics an elder should possess: He

should have lived a life of such purity that no one could find any “dirt” on him. He is to be married only one time. (Some Jews at this time still practiced polygamy.) The Christian elder must not get drunk. The people in the 1st Century used and drank wine because the water supply was often contaminated. Yet drunkenness was considered a disgrace even in ordinary society of that day, let alone in the Church.

The Christian leader must be prudent. The Greek word translated *prudent* actually means *of sound mind, discreet, prudent, self-controlled, chaste or having complete control over sensual desire.* In addition, the leader must be well-behaved, which comes from a Greek word meaning *orderly, honest, respectful.*

The leader must be hospitable, gladly welcoming guests in his home, especially if those guests are the servants of God. The inns at the time were dirty, expensive, and immoral. In one ancient play Heracles asks his companion which inn they will stay in that night. His companion answers: “Where the fleas are fewest!”

The Christian leader must possess an aptitude for teaching, and the Christian leader must be a peaceful man who does not assault others. We find this last characteristic rather

odd, but Christian leaders of today sometimes assault others with their words.

The Christian leader should not bully, lose his temper, be irritable, or use harsh speech. He must be gentle, peaceable, not inclined to fight, and free from the love of money.

8 *Deacons likewise must be men worthy of respect [honorable, financially ethical, of good character], not double-tongued [speakers of half-truths], not addicted to wine, not greedy for dishonest gain,* ***9*** *but upholding and fully understanding the mystery [that is, the true doctrine] of the [Christian] faith with a clear conscience [resulting from behavior consistent with spiritual maturity].* ***10*** *These men must first be tested; then if they are found to be blameless and beyond reproach [in their Christian lives], let them serve as deacons.* ***11*** *Women must likewise be worthy of respect, not malicious gossips, but self-controlled, [thoroughly] trustworthy in all things.* ***12*** *Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.*

The deacons were leaders whose primary function was to help and serve others in a practical way. In spite of all of its faults, no nation, other than perhaps the United States, has emphasized helping the poor as much as

the Jews had. They discouraged giving by individuals to individuals but preferred that the help come through the synagogue. Every Friday in every community, official from the synagogue visited the market and every household to collect donations for the poor. The truly poor were given enough food for fourteen meals or for two meals a day for a week. This fund was called the *Kuppah* or *basket.* There also was money collected daily to cover emergencies for those in dire need.

The qualification for deacons, even though they were in a lesser role than elders, was similar to that of the elders. There was one other qualification added specifically for deacons. They had to be people who were consistent, honest, and direct in what they said. If they did a good job, they could eventually be promoted to the office of elder.

Verse 11 deals with women who are deaconesses. The deaconesses had the important role of instructing female converts and being there when women were being baptized. These deaconesses were warned not to repeat slanderous gossip. While Christianity liberated women, it also, as in this verse, gave specific guidelines as to how women should conduct themselves.

13 *For those who have served well as deacons*

gain a high standing [having a good reputation among the congregation], and great confidence in the faith which is [founded on and centered] in Christ Jesus.
14 *I hope to come to you before long, but I am writing these instructions to you* ***15*** *in case I am delayed, so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

Paul, and the others who wrote the pastoral epistles, wrote to instruct the people how they should behave in Church. Paul believed the Church was a family, a band of brothers and sisters. The word used for the Church was *ekklesia.* The *ekklesia* were *the called out ones*, and the job of the *ekklesia* was to hold up truth in such a way that all may see it.

16 And great, we confess, is the mystery [the hidden truth] of godliness:

He (Jesus Christ) who was revealed in human flesh,
Was justified *and* vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.

Verse 3:16 is really a fragment of one of the hymns of the 1st Century Church. The hymn

tells us that Jesus came in the flesh as a man, although He was God. When He was accused by the scribes and Pharisees of bringing forth curses by the power of the devil, he responded in Matthew 12:28: *"If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you."* In other words, Jesus and what He did on earth was vindicated by the Spirit. The Spirit is the Power Who proved Jesus was what and who He claimed to be.

Jesus was seen by angels. This could be saying that before He came to earth, He was in heaven with the angels, or it could be an allusion to the demons and angels, on earth, He could see through His Spirit eyes.

Jesus had been preached among the nations. This means that Jesus was not just the Messiah for the Jews but was the Savior for the whole world. Men all over the known world had believed, and in 70 years the Gospel had spread from Galilee to the ends of the earth.

Jesus was taken up in glory. The story of Jesus begins and ends in heaven. Barclay writes: "He lived as a servant; he was branded as a criminal; he was crucified on the cross; he arose with the nail prints still upon him; but the end is glory!"

Lyrics to Through It All
<u>Verse 1</u>

I've had many tears and sorrows,
I've had questions for tomorrow,
there's been times I didn't know right from wrong.
But in every situation,
God gave me blessed consulation,
that my trials come to only make me strong.

Verse 2

I've been to lots of places,
I've seen a lot of faces,
there's been times I felt so all alone.
But in my lonely hours,
yes, those precious lonely hours,
Jesus lets me know that I was His own

Verse 3

I thank God for the mountains,
and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.
For if I'd never had a problem,
I wouldn't know God could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could do

Chorus

Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word.