

SERMON OUTLINE

FIRST TIMOTHY

'Faith and Order in the Church of God' - 6

1st Timothy 3 v1 - 7

Key Question - What is an elder?

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OFFICE

Context (3 v14 - 15) - The governing of the church - how the church is to be administered and how the church is to be pastored.

Key Point about how the church is governed - the church is not a democracy, it is a monarchy. The church is ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ who is its King and Head. But in practical terms - how is this done? Answer - through the eldership.

Key Point to remember - the church is God's church. See v5 - "take care of God's church." It's the church for which Christ died, and is therefore His most prized possession. There is no more an important job than this. See v1.

We read about elders all the way through the Bible. See Num 11 v16 - 17 & Acts 14 v21 - 23.

2. THE NATURE OF THE WORK

A. THE ELDERS ARE TO MANAGE THE PEOPLE OF GOD

See v4 - 5. This management (care) is exercised in a very particular way. It's pastoral oversight / pastoral management. See v1 - the elder is an 'overseer'. The titles 'elder' and 'overseer' are used interchangeably in the Bible - they are synonymous. See Acts 20 v28 & 1 Pet 5 v1 - 4.

Note (1 Pet 5 v2) the motive behind the desire for this job - "eager to serve." Not status or power / not influence or money, but the desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ by serving His people. Elders are the 'under-shepherds' of the great Shepherd of the sheep.

B. THE ELDERS ARE TO TEACH THE WORD OF GOD

This is the primary way in which the people of God are to be managed and cared for. See v2 - the elder must be "able to teach". This

is the one gift that every elder must have. See Neh 8 v8.

The elder will also teach as he takes his people to the Bible in answer to any pastoral worry or concern. Remember Jesus' words to Peter - "feed my sheep."

3. THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN

Note the emphasis on personal / spiritual character - not giftedness but godliness. See how the list of qualifications in verses 2 to 7 both begins and ends - the elder must be "above reproach" and must have "a good reputation". He won't be perfect, but there ought not to be anything in his life that will give cause for negative criticism.

A. THE VIRTUES TO BE COMMENDED

See v2 - "the husband of but one wife" is speaking about the elder being a man of unquestioned morality whose word can always be trusted. Note.....

(i) His mastery of himself

See v2 - "temperate, self-controlled, respectable" - in other words, he will be self-disciplined in how he conducts himself.

(ii) His ministry to others

See v2 - "hospitable".

(iii) His maturity in faith

See v6 - "he must not be a recent convert."

B. THE VICIES TO BE AVOIDED

See 3 - "not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money."

4. THE ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION

A. WE MUST SUBMIT TO THE ELDERS

See Heb 13 v17

B. WE MUST PRAY FOR THE ELDERS

Note (Hos 4 v9) - a church rarely rises above the spiritual level of its elders. What a need, therefore, to pray for the elders.

C. WE MUST BE LIKE THE ELDERS

See 1 Cor 11 v1. They are to be our example. See 1 Pet 5 v3