

**1 Timothy 3: 2; "Able to Teach", Sermon # 7 in a series on the Eldership,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 21st, 2010,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

As we approach this particular qualification for an elder we should note that this is the one qualification which sets the candidate for elder apart from the candidate who wishes to become a deacon. The difference is not in character qualification; it is in giftedness and call." "And since the primary duty of the elder is to preach and teach the Word of God; being gifted for that purpose is crucial. The words, "able to teach, or apt to teach, (the word is Didaktikos in the Greek) It occurs only here, and in 2 Timothy 2: 24 in the New Testament. That is; the candidate for the eldership must be capable of conveying the truth of God's Word in such a way as that the people of God are instructed and guided in knowledge and obedience. The people of God must be able to see that they will be edified, or built up, by his instruction. He must, as an under-shepherd Of Christ, have the desire not only to teach and preach publicly, but also interact privately with people as individuals, and in smaller groups – to be able to counsel, rebuke if necessary, and to encourage people to consider and to heed God's Word. He will be a man who longs to teach Christ's Word as being the teaching which other believers live their lives by. He will point men on to Him, for he longs to see them submitting to Christ, trusting in Him for all that pertains to life and godliness. So this afternoon we want to ask – What are the criteria that will identify a man as a skilled teacher of God's Holy Word? I want to lay before you 7 marks of identification; things which will show him truly to be a man who is able to teach. (In doing this I want you to know that I am using John MacArthur's main points on this, but I will be filling those points in with material of my own) We will only take 4 of the seven points this afternoon.

1st – He must have the gift of Teaching.

The teaching of the Word of God is not simply a matter of public speaking or taking speech classes. A person may have a natural gift or may have been taught speech as a course in school; all of which may be helpful, but beyond this he must have a gift given to him by the Holy Spirit of God if he would be a pastor. With the gift of the Holy Spirit's insight and enablement, he will better be able to draw out the true meaning of the Bible text or passage, and set it forth and apply it in a way that will spiritually feed the people of God." I want to show you the need of this gift from the Scripture. Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 4, verse 7. "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." "Therefore He says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.' (Now this, 'He ascended'—What does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?" "He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)" "And He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the

equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (or service), for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ." We see here that because Christ was victorious over sin and death, on behalf of all of God's Elect; because He purchased redemption for them; the buying of them back from the slave-market of sin; that when He was raised from the dead and ascended up into heaven to sit on the right hand of God; He began the building of His Church by the sending of the Holy Spirit would give the means to His Church of their being instructed and built up in their faith by those who are listed here, to whom gifts were given.

The first three of these gifts were given especially to the early Church to be used in the days before the written Word of God was canonized. I am speaking now of the gifts of Apostles, prophets, and evangelists. In these gifts was found a revelatory component. I mean that God spoke directly to, and through, those men who had the gift of Apostle or Prophet. The Word of God came to them, and was eventually written down by them or by a helper listening to them. When they spoke and wrote, they did so infallibly. They were so guided by the Holy Spirit that God's exact Word was spoken. And then when it was written down, it would then become a more sure word of prophecy to those in later generations. Even the gift of Evangelist had a revelatory component to it, because we find Mark and Luke writing two of the gospels. Mark and Luke were not apostles or prophets, but they were Evangelists. The Evangelists of the early Church were given a gift by Christ which was usually used in relation to directly helping the ministry of the Apostles. They were not like the evangelists of our day who are men with the gift of preaching and teaching, and not tied down to a particular church or location. The gift that was given to Timothy was a gift to go to the churches which had been planted by the Apostle Paul and to be there with them for a time as his representative. Timothy would faithfully represent the teaching and instructing of the Apostle in relation to doctrine which was sound, and behavior which was right, and God honoring, in the worship and practice of the members of the church. He might help the Church in relation to dozens of questions which they might have. This gift was given in connection with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. If you will turn with me over to 1 Timothy Chapter 4, verses 12-14, you will see this. "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership (or the presbytery), that is; those prophets and teachers who were in the church where Timothy was ordained; the Apostle Paul also being among them. For he says in 2 Timothy Chapter 1, verse 6, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which in you through the laying on of my hands." In other words, Timothy must

stir up the ministerial gift that he had been given, by reading, by meditation, and by prayer.

But the thing that I want you to see from this passage in Ephesians is that Christ also gave the gift of pastors and teachers to the Church, and that gift has continued down to this day. It does not have the revelatory component in its bestowal any more, even if it did have it in the early Church. But the gift is none-the-less essential to the building of Christ's Church and the proclamation of the Gospel, and the forward progress of Christ's kingdom. We are living in a day when the office of the pastor-teacher is not seen as being as important as the Word of God portrays it to be. But it is through the instrumentality of the godly use of this gift, it says here in this passage in Ephesians 4, that Christ's Church is built up, that greater unity of the Church comes, and that the saints grow up into Christ. It is through the equipping ministry of the preaching of the Word that this takes place. Such is the importance of the ministry of the man called to teach and preach the Word of God, that if it is neglected by either the man himself, or the congregation; the believers in that church will be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, they might be tricked by men who would teach false doctrine, and the body of Christ might not even be able to speak the truth in love to one another. The growing up of the body into Christ-likeness will might not take place to any great degree at all. That is what these verses are implying. If there are men who will hold fast and hold forth the Word of God, then all of the good things of growing up into Christ and loving one another and coming to greater unity, and being more Christ-like, will take place. The application? You should pray that the one who preaches the Word to you would be able to so use the gift that God has given to him, that all of these things will be taking place, and that in receiving the good teaching of the Word, the people of this church would work together to so live out the truth that is preached to them that it will cause growth in this local expression of His body, for the edifying of itself in love. In this regard you should also pray that the Lord will raise up other men in this local church to be elders so that this good ministry would expand. (verse 16)

Secondly – A Candidate for the eldership must have a deep understanding of doctrine.

The man must not only have a gift, but also be able to distinguish and organize the truth that he preaches and teaches. Pastor Albert Martin, in his 75 tape series on the Christian Ministry has used an illustration which I think is a very good one. He used to say, if you take a man and put him in a room with a good number of pieces of furniture in it and you tell him to organize it so that it is presentable and fit to be lived in and enjoyed, and you give him a certain length of time in order to do this; say 45 minutes or so; if you come back after that time and the man is confused about what to do with the furniture; where it should go so that it could be presentable and useful and enjoyable to everyone who enters to look at it or to use the room; then you would really wonder about that man's ability to organize many other things, let alone the spiritual truth of the Word of God. If a person comes to a passage or a text and he cannot organize it into a form in which it can be presented to the people of God,

then he probably should not be called to be an elder or a pastor. You can see this truth of this in 2 Timothy Chapter 2, verse 11. "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." "Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers." "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." You can see here just a sample of the doctrines that need to be understood by the candidate for the ministry. He needs to know what it means that we have died with Christ. He needs to know that there is perseverance needed to live the Christian life. He needs to know what it means to live with Christ. He needs to know and preach the faithfulness of God and Christ by being able to show them all the promises which have been made by God, upon which our salvation rests. He needs to be able to remind the people of these things that are so important; patiently teaching foundational truths over and over again. He needs to be able to urge them not to be those who argue over words, but to receive the Word with all meekness. And he himself, therefore, needs to be a workman in the Word of God who needs not be ashamed of the time that it will take in study of the Word to become a workman who does not need to be ashamed. It takes study to be one who rightly divides the Word of Truth. This a candidate for the eldership should not need to be persuaded of; he will already be doing it.

Then, 3rdly, you will know that a man is a fit candidate for the ministry when he has an attitude of humility.

Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." "It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher and a servant like his master." (Matthew 10: 24, 25) You do realize that those who would really teach, would really serve. A man who knows the doctrines of God's grace may be as proud as a peacock, and he may actually assume a superior attitude in his teaching; but this is not the Spirit of God working in him. The person who desires to be a pastor should understand that he is going to have to take up the basin and the towel to serve the people whom he would teach, not only in his imparting to them knowledge, but also in his interaction with the people on the other days of the week when they are not together in church. If he is humble, he will do this; if he is proud he will only do it when he has to. Turn with me to 2 Timothy 2: 24 – "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." You can see from these verses that a proud man will love to quarrel, love to show superiority of knowledge, but a true servant as it says here, will be kind and gentle to all, and able to teach in that way. He is not interested in showing off his knowledge, but rather in leading people into the truth for Christ's sake, and for righteousness sake. He studies to see how he might reach men's hearts with his words, not to impress their minds with his great

ability. He is patient with people whom he is giving God's truth to; because he understands that it may take time for people to understand; to implement and to work through the truth that they have received. When people are opposed to what is being taught he corrects them with gentleness realizing that it takes grace to repent, grace to change their thinking and to come to their senses. It takes God's grace and enablement through Christ's Spirit to escape the snare of the devil when once people are taken captive by him to do his will. This is the servant's mentality, the true humility and gentleness which must characterize the elder or pastor.

4thly – A skilled teacher must have a life marked by holiness.

Holiness will not be simply something that he teaches didactically; a subject to be studied and taught objectively in relation to what the Bible says. It will be a lifestyle as well. He knows that his own life must be a life of constantly turning away from sin and pursuing righteousness by being separate from darkness, idolatry, and uncleanness. And his constant appeal will be for those who he is teaching to do the same. You can see that this was the constant appeal of the Apostle Paul if you will turn with me to 2 Corinthians 6: 11. "O Corinthians!" (Look how he pleads with them in this regard.) "We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open." "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections." "Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open." "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." "For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" "And what communion has light with darkness?" "And what accord has Christ with Belial?" "Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? "For you are the temple of the living God." "As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them.' "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord." "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." To become holy, you must come to understand how devastating it is to holiness to have fellowship with the works of darkness, idolatry, lawlessness, and uncleanness. If you are serious about holiness, you will take action, and separate yourself from those things that will defile your soul. How can a person be holy when he will allow himself to be around these things for any length of time? It cannot be. Instead, a person who wants to be holy, especially one who would teach about what it means to be holy, will focus on the promises of God; that if you will separate yourself from such things, and not have fellowship with them; if you will not touch what is unclean and come out from among those who participate in such things, then God promises that he will dwell among the people of that church; both teacher and the rest of the believers. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will dwell in us and walk among us. These verses are specifically speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will stand in the midst of His people to do them good and the Father who will draw near and bless them with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.

Each person who would be holy, must learn to separate the precious from the vile in their thoughts as well as in their outward actions. In Jeremiah 15: 19, God was speaking to Jeremiah when he was discouraged and unbelieving about any good effects coming from his ministry. God says to him, "If you return, (that is; back to the attitude of faith in Me) then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me; if you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth." "Let them return to you, but you must not return to them." You see, this is what Biblical separation is; which leads to holiness. It is preserving and establishing everything that is spiritually precious in thoughts, words and deeds. It is cleansing and purging our hearts and our fleshly actions from all filthiness and defilement. There is much painful work here, and yet much joyful work here as well; for God will be with us. The skilled teacher; the man who is able to teach, will lead the congregation into the way of holiness and into the paths of peace. We will have more to say about this the next time I speak to you from this text. We will speak about three more things which characterize the candidate for the ministry in relation to his ability to teach. He will be a diligent student of the Scriptures; he will be a man who studies to avoid error. And he will be a man who hold strong and consistent convictions.