

1 Timothy 3: 2; "Temperate, Sober-minded; of Good Behavior",
Sermon # 5 in the series on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul
Rendall, on March 7th, 2010, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

There are 16 qualifications for an elder which are listed here for us in these seven verses. It is the most extensive of the lists of requirements in the Word of God. There are also instructions and exhortations given to elders found in 1 Peter 5: 1-4, and another parallel passage of requirements to this one, which are listed in Titus Chapter 1, verses 6-9. In this first section of 7 qualifications which we have looked at; desire was the first one. There must be great desire to serve the Lord and the Lord's people in caring for them as a flock. Next, we spent time looking at the one over-all qualification – Blameless. To be blameless a man has to be a man of integrity. He is not perfect in the sinless sense, but he is a man who will fear God and turn away from evil, and he will receive the correction of the Lord and learn the lessons which the Lord would want him to learn, in relation to his faith. A charge of some sin or neglect in his life should not be able to be laid at his doorstep. He is a man who loves God and consciously tries to keep all of God's commandments. He loves the brethren, and loves to share the gospel with people who do not know the Lord. This qualification encompasses all the rest of the personal and ministerial qualifications that follow. Now today we want to look at the other 3 personal qualifications that are listed here. He is to be temperate, sober-minded, and of good behavior. In Titus chapter 1, verse 7, it says that the elder must be blameless as a steward of God. He is a steward of God, having been appointed by God through the means of congregational examination and approval; to oversee God's household, the church. He must be faithful to give to each one their portion; to give them counsel, direction, and encouragement through the wise application of the Word of God; that they may be built up and become active in their devotion, service, and obedience to Christ Himself in all areas of their lives. This, on the elder's part, requires these 3 personal qualities we find listed in verse 2 –Temperate, sober-minded, and of good behavior. Let us remember as we proceed to look at these qualities, that these things are things which are commanded of all Christians, not just those who aspire to the eldership.

1st of all, Let's think about what it means for a person to be temperate.

It means that a good exercise of the stewardship of God's grace is taking place in regard to that person's will. They know when to partake and when to abstain from partaking of food and drink; and of everything other good gift of God which has been given to them. As I think of the word temperate in relation to people in the Bible, the first person that I think of is the Apostle Paul himself. He was a temperate man as we shall see in just a few minutes. The word for temperate here in this verse that we are studying is Nephaleos (nay-fal'ee-os). It is taken from another word "enph", which means "sober" in the sense of abstaining from wine.

But the King James translates it "vigilant", which is closer to being watchful. The word means to be on your guard against sin in any form. A person who is temperate knows how to look at things and how to use things. He is clear-headed in regard to right and wrong, but it is even more than that. "He must," as John MacArthur says, "possess the inner strength to refrain from any excess that would dull his alertness." (I think that he means the man's alertness in relation to spiritual things and to the needs of people around him.) Turn with me to 1 Corinthians Chapter 9, and verse 24. "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?" "Run in such a way that you may obtain it." "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things." "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty." "Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air." "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." The Apostle Paul conceives of the Christian life and ministry as a race. He states that there is a sort of competition involved in it; a holy competition in which we all strive to become what Christ would have us to become in the time we have allotted to us. The goal that we set our sights upon is that we would become holy and useful in service to Him. The object of running is that we would be found faithful to what God would have us to do in a humble but diligent way. A further objective, flowing out of this, is that we would be able to exercise self-control in the way that we use the good things of this life so that we will be able to run the race faster and better; in the sense of learning our Lord's will, and doing it to His glory. Our life after we become a Christian is a race, not only to become holy, but also to see if we can win others to Christ, as well. In order to attain to this goal, we must discipline ourselves; we must train our senses in right discernment and right living. And we must learn to abound in the work of the Lord. In running this race, therefore we must be temperate in all things; self-denying and self-controlled. The one who would be an elder should indeed, at times, buffet his body and make it his slave if his appetites for food and drink and the pampering of the flesh threaten to take him over. The word translated temperate, here, is a different word from the one that Paul used in 1 Timothy 3: 2. It is the word, "egkrateumai". (eng-krat-yoo'-om-ah-ee). It means "to exercise self-restraint in regard to diet and chastity". So Paul is saying here, that we are to focus on bringing our body to a place where we are not ruled by its desires; sinful or otherwise. An elder is to also take heed to himself; to be vigilant; and to pay attention to his teaching, and what is sound doctrine. If he perseveres in these things he will do much good. In 1 Timothy 4: 16 Paul says, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine." "Continue in them, for in doing this you will save yourself and those who hear you." As it also says in Philippians 2: 12 – He is to, "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in him." He studies, as all Christians should study; to obey God not only when they are around other people, but also when they are alone. We are never really alone when we realize that the Lord is always watching over us. He, by His grace, will indeed make any man over, who will presents his

body to him as a living sacrifice. He will make him over into a man who is temperate in all things; alert to spiritual truth, and moderate in the use of the good things that God gives to him day by day. It is to be remembered that the congregation will take the pastor to be a role model in relation to everything that he does, whether he likes it or not. So in eating and drinking and anything which requires moderation in regard to the body; the man who is a candidate for the eldership should consider himself, and deny himself if necessary, to set a good standard. Moderation requires balance as well. Ecclesiastes 7: 16 says, "Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself?" It is good if a man can see the balance that is required in relation to these things of food and drink. Gluttony is a sin, but self-denial that starves the body simply to look more spiritual to others will accomplish nothing. The man who would be an elder will consider all of those things.

The 2nd Personal quality requisite in an elder is that he is to be sober-minded.

Other synonyms for sober-minded are sensible, discreet, and prudent. A person, if they are sober-minded is exercising a good stewardship of God's grace in relation to the thoughts in his mind. In 2 Timothy 1, verse 6, Paul tells the young man Timothy, who is in the ministry next to him as an Evangelist, a helper; "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." He is sane in his thinking; not always troubled, nor given to rash and hasty judgments. He is willing to be taught if he needs to be. A good example of this is found in Acts Chapter 18, verses 24-28. Turn there with me. "Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus." "This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John." "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue." "When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." "And when he desired to cross over to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ."

You can see from what I have read to you, that this man Apollos had a very great gift of preaching and teaching, and a gift of oratory to go along with it. He was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures; he was fervent in spirit and he had been instructed in the way of the Lord. He taught accurately what he did know, even though he knew only the baptism of John. John's doctrine and his baptism were related to repentance from dead ceremonial works and John's pointing people on to Christ and their not resting satisfied with just an outward reformation of their life and manners. Apollos, it appears, did not know much about Christ's propitiatory work on the cross, His resurrection, or of the sending of the Holy

Spirit into the life of the believer so that he would be taught and led into all the truth. Aquila and Priscilla saw this deficiency when they heard him preach so powerfully; and instead of publicly humiliating him with his lack of knowledge in these things; they took him aside and completed what was lacking in his faith. By the way, I hope that you see a very important truth which is brought out in these verses. It is this; that it is not wrong for a woman, when she is under the authority of her husband's headship, to help him to teach and to instruct others in private. She is not permitted to teach and preach publicly or to exercise authority over any man in the church, but it is her solemn obligation to contribute to the knowledge of others around her, in private, and in a discreet and submissive way. This is what Priscilla was doing in conjunction with her husband, and I believe that she had the blessing of God to do so. She did not fail to use the gift that God had given her, in that holy way; under the headship of her husband who was present with her; also helping to impart further knowledge to Apollos, who would go on to use what Priscilla and her husband had taught him to great advantage and success in his preaching. But what I want you to see primarily; is that Apollos had these great gifts related to the ministry, and yet he was willing to be instructed by others who were further along, in knowledge, and wisdom, and experience than he was. To be sober means that you are alert to consider the things which you do not understand, as well as the things which you do understand. A sober person is willing to be taught further where they need it. When you are sober, you are watchful over yourself to see what might be lacking in your knowledge and experience. And you are teachable where you need to be. To be sober and to be humble go hand in hand. Usually a proud person is not sober.

To be sober-minded is to be filled with the idea of the importance of spiritual truth; of living that out in the light of eternity; so much so, that everything that is done or said is considered in the light of whether it will really honor God, or whether it will build up and strengthen other believers; or whether it might save other men. To be sober-minded is thinking seriously about what you have been called to do as a Christian, and whether or not you have fulfilled your ministry. A pastor is a "watcher" over other men's souls. Turn with me to Acts Chapter 20, verse 18 and you will see how the Apostle Paul spoke words of sober truth to the elders of Ephesus for the last time; and how he bore witness to his sobriety before them. "And when they had come to him, he said to them: 'You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me, by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jew, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'" "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me." "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry

which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more." "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men." "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, (there is the exhortation to sobriety) among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Why do the elders need to be sober? Listen to how he continues. "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified." Paul conducted his ministry in a sober way, and he used words of sober truth to convince the elders of Ephesus of their responsibility toward the flock that they pastored. If a man is always laughing and light-hearted who is being considered for the ministry, there is a problem. And the problem is that he would never be able to deliver words like Paul just spoke here and have anyone believe him. Because he never was this way from the beginning of their getting to know him. But Paul was sober with them while he was with them. He taught them, cried over them, prayed for them, warned them, and guarded them; all because he was a sober-minded man. It was the grace of the Spirit working strongly in his mind, that convinced him that this was necessary for the truth and Christ's kingdom to go forward.

Paul's preaching before King Agrippa, Bernice, and the governor Festus about the need which all men have to repent, and the need for all men to believe in Christ; led Festus to say to him in Acts 26: 24 – "Paul, your great learning is driving you mad!" "But he said, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.'" The American Standard Bible says, "I speak the words of truth and soberness." The New American Standard says, "I utter words of sober truth." So we see here, that an elder is one who thinks soberly of the outcome of men's lives; and his own life, he looks at, first.

Then 3rdly, and lastly, the 3rd personal quality requisite in a candidate for the eldership is that he should be a man of good behavior.

He is "respectable" it says in the NAS. James Chapter 3, and verse 13 says, "Who among you is wise and understanding?" "Let him show by his good behavior (his good conduct), his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom." Wisdom and understanding come from Jesus Christ Himself, and His Word, and they translate into the good behavior of the one who possesses them. Matthew 5: 16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." In other words, you are to let true knowledge, discernment, and understanding, coupled with the power of the grace of Christ; be seen in your life

in a winsome and attractive way. You will strive to do this so that the people who are recipients of your help, will know that your good works are coming forth from heart that has been changed by the grace of Christ to consider them, and help them . If you have light and you are living according to it; you will do good works because you have a sincere love and concern for people around you. You will show forth this good behavior; and other people will be able to rejoice in it. The prospective elder must have this quality being evidenced in their life.

The example we will look at in this regard is Joseph of Arimathea. But I want to save this until next time. The next time that we are together around this passage I will attempt to couple the truth of good behavior with the next qualification which is listed; which is hospitality. I just want to close by saying that good behavior can be taught by parents and learned by children who will submit to them. But it takes grace to exhibit good behavior to the glory of God. We will look more at this next time.