

Message #19

I Timothy 3:7

“A Good Reputation with Those Outside”

There is a verse in Proverbs that says there is something much more valuable than great riches, something much better than silver and gold; it is a good name (Prov. 22:1). A good name is not easily earned, but once a good name is earned, it can be easily lost.

When you really think about it, this list of qualifications is about earning, having and keeping a good name. For one who is a leader, it is not a suggestion; it is a “must.”

QUALIFICATION #1 – The elder must be “above reproach.” He must have earned for himself a good name in the church, one that is not continually being called into accountability for some sin.

QUALIFICATION #2 – The elder must be the “husband of one wife.” He must be a man devoted to one woman, not a flirtatious womanizer.

QUALIFICATION #3 – The elder must be “temperate.” He must be one who can remain clear-headed and controlled and can carefully think through Scriptures in any given situation.

QUALIFICATION #4 – The elder must be “prudent.” He must have a mind that is sober, sound and self-controlled; one highly disciplined physically, mentally and spiritually.

QUALIFICATION #5 – The elder must be “respectable.” He must have an orderly dignity, decency and modesty; a life of continual organization, not confusion.

QUALIFICATION #6 – The elder must be “hospitable.” He must be willing to open up his heart and home to strangers. He must help people with what he has and with what God has given him.

QUALIFICATION #7 – The elder must be “able to teach.” He must know God’s truth and doctrines and be able to communicate and defend them.

QUALIFICATION #8 – The elder must not be “addicted to wine.” He must not be one who continually drinks to the point of getting drunk.

QUALIFICATION #9 – The elder must not be “pugnacious.” He must not be one who always wants to fight and settle things with his fists.

QUALIFICATION #10 – The elder must be “gentle.” He must be fair and calm, showing a sympathetic equality to all. Not one who is partial.

QUALIFICATION #11 – The elder must be “uncontentious.” He cannot be a man who goes around secretly and quietly stirring up trouble. He must be a non-combatant type.

QUALIFICATION #12 – The elder must be “free from the love of money.” Money cannot be the primary love and passion of his life. God must always come first and he must think Biblically concerning money.

QUALIFICATION #13 – The elder must “manage his own household well.” As a God-ordained leader, he must have his wife and children under control, raising them in the faith, seeing that they are submissive to authority.

QUALIFICATION #14 – The elder must “not be a new convert.” He cannot be one who is recently planted in the faith.

The elder will be developing a good reputation both in and outside of the church.

IF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, IT MUST HAVE ELDERS WHO HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION WITH THOSE OUTSIDE.

An elder must have a good reputation in places outside the church. Places of business, banking, employment, residency and play, should all be places that can testify of an elder’s good character.

QUESTION #1 – What does it mean to have a good reputation with those outside?

The Apostle Paul was always interested in how those outside the faith and the church viewed him:

- 1) He was concerned about it when he wrote to the Corinthians: “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks”... (I Cor. 10:32).
- 2) He was concerned about it when he wrote to the Colossians: “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (Col. 4:5).
- 3) He was concerned about it when he wrote to the Thessalonians: “...so that you may behave properly toward outsiders...” (I Thess. 4:5).

The actual words “good reputation” literally mean that the testimony or witness of outsiders will be that the leader’s life has a form to it that is good as a representative of Jesus Christ.

The form of a leader's life must be such that outsiders see a good demonstration of his faith. The man who leads in God's church must prove that he is godly to those outside by his consistent walk in the faith.

The word "outside" literally refers to those "without" faith. This naturally would also mean they are outside the church. What Paul had in mind was that those who are outside of the faith and outside of the church must be able to give testimony and witness to the fact that this man truly demonstrates his faith in a good way.

H. A. Ironside said men who are leaders "are to be of such character that even the people of the world can look to them and see in them what Christians ought to be." Heathen people, religious people, non-religious people, moral people, and non-moral people should all be able to testify that there is a good man. Not one of these people should be able to say the man wronged me. John Calvin said all infidels should be able to testify of the integrity of the leader being a good man, committed to God (p. 84).

Now there will always be false allegations leveled against those who are faithful. The truth is most of those allegations will come from those religious in the religious system. For example, Christ was called a drunk and accused of being a man who maintained friendships with those of questionable character (Luke 7:34; 15:1-2). Those who called Him these things were highly religious Jewish leaders who were trying to discredit Him. There will always be things said about one faithful to God, and there is no way of stopping that.

However, the leader in God's church cannot have a bad reputation with those outside the faith and outside the church. There is no question that the world will hate the righteous Christian, because it hated Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (Rom. 15:3; Heb. 13:12-13). If we stand for truth and righteousness, we will bear some reproach because of our stand for Him.

QUESTION #2 – Why is it so important that a man have a good reputation with those outside the church?

Reason #1 - Because of the assignment of evangelism.

We have been given the assignment to reach the world for Jesus Christ. It is our job to tell those without faith about Jesus Christ. If our reputation is bad, we cannot possibly reach them; in fact, they will laugh at us.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said, "True evangelism begins with a cleansed priest..." (*True Evangelism*, p. 95). If the priest is not clean, his evangelistic ability will be stifled. Certainly a leader in God's church must have a good reputation for he is a representative of God's church. If his character is questionable, he cannot fulfill his evangelistic assignment; he cannot even invite people to church because they will scoff at him.

Reason #2 - Because of the attack of the evil one. **3:7b**

The Apostle Peter said that our adversary, the devil, “prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Pet. 5:8). A prime target for satanic attack is a leader in God’s church. One who leads in God’s church can expect satanic attack. If he does not have a good reputation with those outside, there are at least two things that will happen:

1) He will fall into the reproach of the devil.

The word “fall” is a Greek word that refers to one who is standing strong and who falls to the point of being prostrate in ruin and destruction (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 361). Satan wants to take a person who is standing strong and tall in the things of God and ruin him to the point that he has fallen before lost humanity.

The word “reproach” adds further insight as to what Satan wants, for it is a Greek word that refers to some matter for which one may be blamed or disgraced (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 318).

The devil is looking for any opportunity to disgrace a Christian. The leader must have a good reputation so that the devil cannot disgrace him. The devil is out to topple the man of God and if a man does not have a good reputation with those outside the church, he will topple him. J. Vernon McGee said if a man does not have a good reputation on the outside, he would actually be a much better representative for the devil than he would for Jesus Christ (Vol. 5, p. 443).

2) He will fall into the snare of the devil.

The word “snare” is a word that refers to a trap or snare that was used to catch birds or animals. The devil is out to trap or snare the believer. The devil is out to ruin your name. A leader must have a good reputation or his name can be ruined. Satan wants to disgrace God’s work. He loves to trap a believer in sin so the whole world can see it and laugh at it.

A leader must be one who has achieved and maintained a good reputation before unbelievers.

We have been talking about a qualification for an elder. But this passage should cause every one of us to ask what our reputation is among the lost. What do your co-workers think of you? What do your classmates think of you? What do your lost neighbors think of you? What do your lost family members think of you?

Are we a better representative for Jesus Christ, or the devil?