

7,30,26 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Outward and Inward Leadership Qualities

Let's start with vs's 1-7, which is Paul's description of what a man in a position of leadership within a local body of believers has to be before he is allowed that position;

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

If I were to take the common approach to this passage, I'd probably list off the qualifications, maybe expand them a little, and move on. That's mostly what I've seen in commentaries. Sometimes some illustrations and stories are mixed in to help with real-life application.

The problem with that approach is that it makes it appear that all of these things are the responsibility of the "bishop" or "elder" to come up with. It turns the whole thing into a business with management qualifications based on the personal, self-achieved accomplishments and character traits of the candidate.

But Paul is talking to Timothy, and Timothy is well aware of how a "novice" becomes a "bishop"; and the way that happens is the exact opposite of the way it happens in a business or organization of this world.

As we saw a few weeks ago, from Major Ian Thomas,

If the Lord Jesus Christ were to appear in the world today under similar circumstances as those He entered 2000 years ago, what church would allow Him to be their pastor? What Bible college or seminary would appoint Him

to their faculty? What missionary organization would invite Him on their board or even send Him to the field?

The reality is this: No matter what our current standards of evaluation may be a man is worth only as much as can be seen of Christ in Him.

What I'm going to do is spend part of our time explaining some of the terms Paul uses, but I *don't* want to just tell you what you already know, and pretend like what I gave you was remarkably educational.

Most of our time is going to be showing how a person like the one Paul describes comes into being – how a Christian reaches a place in his life where he has what Paul says are the required character traits for a leader. And as Thomas pointed out, all worldly enterprises, and most Christian organizations, are looking at the wrong things when they make decisions about pastoral leadership. The Church in the West wouldn't be in the shape it's in if those in leadership were spiritually qualified instead of measured and approved based on worldly standards.

So, for me to discuss what the inward, spiritual qualifications of leadership are, we have to start where the Lord starts – which is at the Cross.

I'll begin with a paraphrase of the list in our passage. I'll leave in the words that match the original well enough to get Paul's point, but I'll change or make some additions to any phrase that needs clarification. A bishop or elder must be;

Above reproach (not perfect, but respected as someone who is committed to doing God's will), one wife, not prone to react with anger as his initial response to conflict, not in this for the money, gentle and patient in conversations, one who has treated his wife with honor and raised his children to also be committed to the Lord, he must not be a new Christian (it takes a lot of time and experience to learn about the true Christian life, and he must, at least in general, have a reputation in his community as someone who is respected, even among those who don't agree with him on some of the things he believes). The nuances of this one are important, because by the time Jesus reached the end of His ministry, most people hated Him, but even many of His enemies could (quote) "find no sin" in Him. Their

accusations, for the most part, had to focus on Who He claimed to be rather than on specific misconduct related to morality or to an anti-social personality.

That is what we could call the “outward life-style” of a qualified leader – Paul is addressing that which is observable and which the other elders could see and agree or disagree about when they make their decision about him.

Now, let’s explore the spiritual qualifications of leadership – the spiritual reality of the candidate in terms of his inward life and relationship with God. These are the things that have shaped the man into someone qualified to lead others; things God has done in him and things he has done through his desire to cooperate with the Lord in his spiritual growth.

We all start out at zero, and after what is usually decades of walking with the Lord, we more fully understand what “zero” really means, and when that happens, we’re getting somewhere. Our need for the Lord in literally every aspect of life is starting to make sense and things like self-sufficiency, pride and personal ambition are fading away and are being replaced by absolute surrender to Christ alone.

It takes time, but for those who move from infancy to maturity, they are going from zero as a concept to zero as a spiritual reality; from knowing that only Christ can save us to deeply understanding that apart from Him, we can do nothing.

As I said earlier, we start at the Cross seen as an event bringing our salvation, to a place where the Cross is something we pick up daily having developed a mindset of complete surrender to, and dependence on, the Lord for everything.

We know that the ultimate purpose for all of us is that the glory of Christ shines through us. If we’re growing, this will partially happen in time and the fullness will happen in eternity. Here are a couple familiar verses to remind us of the way the scriptures put this;

(2 Cor. 4:11) We who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

(John 15:5) I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

And the following, from Sparks, is a good explanation of the kinds of life-experiences that God uses to move us from the Cross as our initial salvation to the Cross as that which takes us into a deeper spiritual life in Christ. Sparks starts with 2 Cor. 1:9; "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead."

And then he writes this;

We shall not be able to raise ourselves any more than we can crucify ourselves, but we must recognize that the Lord's dealings with us are with that in view. In order to display the power of His resurrection, He will very often have to let things get well beyond all human power to remedy or save, of allowing things to go so far that there is no other power in all the universe that can do anything whatever to save the situation. He will allow disintegration to work, so that nothing in the universe is of any avail, except the power of His resurrection.

We shall come to the place where Abraham came, who became the great type of faith which moved into resurrection: "He considered his own body now as good as dead" (Rom. 4:19). That is the phrase used by the apostle about Abraham: "as good as dead." And Paul came into that: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9). Whatever else men may be able to do in the realm of creation, they stop short when death has actually taken place; they can do no more. Resurrection is God's act, and God's alone. Men can do very many things when they have life, but when there is no life, it is only God who can do anything. And God will allow His Church and its members to get into such situations as are altogether beyond human help, in order that He may give the display, which is His own display, in which no man has any place to glory.

Sometime (I think near the beginning of last month), I jotted down something in an attempt to give a brief explanation of the great “falling away” of the Church in the last days; trying to describe what that is really all about. The reason I want to share part of that again now is because of what we’ve just seen from the scriptures about our purpose being the forsaking of the self-life in order to make way for the life of Jesus to be manifest through us. We know that’s where God wants to take all of us; (John 3:30), “I must decrease, He must increase. . . “But if I am something, then Christ isn’t everything, and I am convinced that no matter how impressive something may look to the world or to Christians, the only things that have spiritual value in time or eternity are those things that have their source exclusively in Christ.

So, here’s what I wrote earlier;

The final falling away of the Church, in principle, is very simple. Instead of seeing the “life of Jesus” Himself expressed through us, what we see in contemporary Christianity are sincere and often extremely committed Christians using all their ingenuity, compassion and energy to do what they believe the Bible tells us to do. So, what the world sees is not “the life of Jesus”; it sees the lives of committed Christians imitating Jesus to the best of their ability. This is why the Church is “. . . ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth”, because the “Truth” is a Person, not simply a well-developed doctrinal statement fleshed out in the self-generated moral and religious obedience of Christians.

One thing I *didn’t* do during that study (because we were out of time) was add some scriptural justification for *why* I think this is the bottom-line of the final deception of the Church. For example; when Paul talked about this end-time falling away in 2 Tim. 3:5, he wrote; “(The final generation) will have a form of godliness but deny its power.” As we saw in the article by Sparks, he uses the power of Christ’s resurrection as the reality, and the strength of uncrucified flesh as the “form of godliness”.

This comes up again in the last days description of the Church when it’s compared to 1st. century Sardis in Rev. 3:1, “I know your works, that you have a name that you

are alive, but you are dead.” Here’s a clearer paraphrase; “I know your Christian works of serving Me and that in your community, your reputation is that you are a spiritually alive church, but the reality is, spiritually, you are dead.”

I realize that I could be accused of making something complex too simple, but I still believe that it *is* simple and can be boiled down to the difference between Christianity and Christ – between soul and spirit – and the ultimate question of whether the Lord or the church is running things.

The way all of this ties into our study of 1 Tim. is simply that when a person is put in leadership, as important as it is to know what can be known of his “outward, observable life”; it’s equally important to discern spiritually whether the man is crucified, broken – or is he just really good at doing impressive Christian things? Is he an embodiment of at least a glimpse of Christ Himself or does he represent a “form of godliness” that is so convincing that neither him nor the community he lives in would say anything other than “based on his works, this man’s reputation tells us that he is very much alive spiritually”. But when the One with eyes as a flame of fire examines the seven churches and pierces the surface to see the true driving force of their lives, would that divine Person *acknowledge* this man’s *reputation*, but add “however, you are dead”?

So, you can see the problem that both Paul and the churches in Rev. 2 & 3 faced. The Lord was making it very clear that there is more to be considered in each church than outward appearance alone. We’ve already seen how the world and much of the church defines success, but when you look at the Lord’s letters to the churches, it becomes obvious that without spiritual insight and discernment, a church (or those within a church) can easily misinterpret the reality of things. Laodicea claimed to see clearly, but they were told they were blind.

Of those seven churches, only two received no criticism, but all of them thought they were shining examples of true spiritual life. This is just another example and reason why the Berean approach to the examination of anything claiming allegiance to Christ must be done very thoroughly. Not so we can become judges of people and groups, but so we can be safe. The Bereans weren’t criticized for

being hesitant, even with Paul, they were commended as an example we should all follow.

Those seven letters in Rev. portray the essential need for all final decisions to be based on spiritual discernment, not just outward observations.

In 2 Cor. 10:7, when Paul was critiquing the Corinthian method of so-called discernment, Paul simply said, (quote) “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?” We’ve got to be honest, isn’t this the primary way we decide things like pastors, authors, churches, etc.? Paul would argue that we need to go much further and deeper than this.

Ok, now, let’s drop back to our discussion of how a Christian becomes a genuine product of the Holy Spirit’s shaping; the part God plays and the part we play in this process.

I’m going to do something I rarely do with this. I often quote other people, but it’s usually brief and is just an excerpt from a larger writing, like an article or a book. But I came across an explanation by Andrew Murray on the principle we’re looking at tonight (God’s part and our part). I can’t promise it will have the same impact on everyone that it did for me; I can’t count the times I’ve read something by a certain author and got very little out of it until one day, I look at it again and for whatever reason, the Lord decides that this is the time He will allow this to make sense to me.

It’s a similar experience to the one I had when I read Hudson Taylor’s decision that rather than trying to find ways to increase his faith and mostly failing to do so, he decided instead to rest in the faithfulness of Christ with whatever faith he had, however small. Because he knew that he would always fall short, but he also knew that Christ would always be faithful, so Hudson decided to give it all to the Lord and get his desperate pursuit for increased personal faith off his own shoulders and onto Christ’s. For Hudson, that was a breakthrough and for the first time, the whole idea of “resting in Christ” became real for him. It’s never an issue of struggling harder to believe; it’s looking away from what we can or can’t do, and looking at Jesus and then deciding if this is a Man you can trust.

The most important thing in this life is not me working for Christ, but Christ working through me. One is Christianity; the other is Christ manifest. One is fully rejected at the Bema Seat, the other is gold, a gold which lasts forever. At the risk of repetition: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” It was no longer a question of ‘how much faith I have’, it became, ‘is Christ trustworthy?’

It might just be me, but I’ve always wanted to understand this well enough to put it into action. I became a Christian at 21 and I’ll be 74 this summer, and of all the things I personally wanted to get a grip on, the whole issue of “His part versus Our Part” definitely ranks near the top and has been kind of an obsession of mine for a very long time. Every time I think something I read makes sense, then something else comes along and confuses me.

So, anyway, this is a little longer than some quotes I’ve given, but I believe for some people it might be extremely helpful, so, here’s what Murray wrote;

We have heard it before, but we need to hear it very definitely—the one condition of God’s blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands. Praise God! If our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us, and to the blessing God will bestow.

Absolute surrender—let me tell you where I got those words. I used them myself often. In Scotland once I was in a company where we were talking about the condition of the Church, and what the great need of the Church and of believers is; and there was in our company a godly worker who has much to do in training workers, and I asked him what he would say was the greatest need of the Church, and the message that ought to be preached. He answered very quietly and simply and determinedly: “Absolute surrender to God is the one thing.”

The words struck me as never before. And that man began to tell how, in the workers with whom he had to deal, he finds that if they are sound on that point, even though they be backward, they are willing to be taught and helped, they always improve; whereas others who are not sound there very

often go back and leave the work. The condition for obtaining God's full blessing is absolute surrender to Him.

And now, I desire by God's grace to give to you this message—that your God in Heaven answers the prayers which you have offered for blessing on yourselves and for blessing on those around you by this one demand: Are you willing to surrender yourselves absolutely into His hands? What is our answer to be? God knows there are hundreds of hearts who have said it, and there are hundreds more who long to say it but hardly dare to do so. And there are hearts who have said it, but who have yet miserably failed, and who feel themselves condemned because they did not find the secret of the power to live that life.

You know in daily life what absolute surrender is. You know that everything has to be given up to its special, definite object and service. I have a pen in my pocket, and that pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and that pen must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write properly with it. If another holds part of the pen with me, I cannot write properly. This coat is absolutely given up to me to cover my body. This building is entirely given up to religious services. And now, do you expect that in your immortal being, in the divine nature that you have received by regeneration, God can work His work, every day and every hour, unless you are entirely given up to Him? God cannot. The Temple of Solomon was absolutely surrendered to God when it was dedicated to Him. And every one of us is a temple of God, in which God will dwell and work mightily on one condition—absolute surrender to Him. God claims it, God is worthy of it, and without it, God cannot work His blessed work in us.

I come to you with a message, a fearful and anxious one. God does not ask you to give this perfect surrender in *your* strength, or by the power of *your* will; God is willing to work it in you. Do we not read: "It is God that works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13)? And that is what we should seek for—to fall on our faces before God, until our hearts learn to believe that the everlasting God Himself will come in to remove what is

wrong, to conquer what is evil, and to work what is well-pleasing in His blessed sight. God Himself will work it in you.

Look at the men in the Old Testament, like Abraham. Do you think it was by accident that God found that man, the father of the faithful and the Friend of God, and that it was Abraham himself, apart from God, who had such faith and such obedience and such devotion? You know it is not so. God raised him up and prepared him as an instrument for His glory.

I want you to cast away every fear. Come with that feeble desire; and if there is the fear which says: "My desire is not strong enough, I am not willing for everything that may come to me, I do not feel bold enough to say I can conquer everything"—I pray you, learn to know and trust your God now. Say: "My Lord, I am willing that Thou shouldst make me willing." If there is anything holding you back, or any sacrifice you are afraid of making, come to God now, and prove how gracious your God is, and be not afraid that He will command from you what He will not bestow.

God comes and offers to work this absolute surrender in you. All these searchings and hungerings and longings that are in your heart, I tell you they are the drawings of the divine magnet, Christ Jesus. He lived a life of absolute surrender; He has possession of you; He is living in your heart by His Holy Spirit. You have hindered and hindered Him terribly, but He desires to help you get hold of Him entirely. And He comes and draws you now by His message and words. Will you not come and trust God to work in you that absolute surrender to Himself? Yes, blessed be God, He can do it, and He will do it.

God works it in the secret of our heart, God urges us by the hidden power of His Holy Spirit to come and speak it out, and we have to bring and to yield to Him that absolute surrender. But remember, when you come and bring God that absolute surrender, as far as your feelings or your consciousness go, you may doubt and hesitate and say: "Is it *absolute*?" But, remember there was once a man to whom Christ had said:

“If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” (Mark 9:23).

And his heart was afraid, and he cried out:

“Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

That was a faith that triumphed over the Devil, and the evil spirit was cast out. And if you come and say: “Lord, I yield myself in absolute surrender to my God,” even though it be with a trembling heart and with the consciousness: “I do not feel the power, I do not feel the determination, I do not feel the assurance,” still, it will succeed. Be not afraid, but come just as you are, and even in the midst of your trembling, the power of the Holy Spirit will work.

Have you never yet learned the lesson that the Holy Spirit works with mighty power, while on the human side everything appears feeble and looks impossible? Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. We read that He, “through the *eternal Spirit*” (Heb. 9:14), offered Himself a sacrifice unto God. The Almighty Spirit of God was enabling Him to do it. And yet what agony and fear and exceeding sorrow came over Him, and how He prayed! Externally, you can see no sign of the mighty power of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God was there. And even so, while you are feeble and fighting and trembling, in faith in the hidden work of God’s Spirit do not fear, but yield yourself.

And when you do yield yourself in absolute surrender, let it be in the faith that God does accept it. That is the great point, and that is what we so often miss—that believers should be thus occupied with God in this matter of surrender. I pray you, be occupied with God. We want to get help, every one of us, so that in our daily life God shall be clearer to us, God shall have the right place, and be “all in all.” And if we are to have that throughout life, let us begin now and look away from ourselves, and look up to God. Let each believe—while I, a poor worm on earth and a trembling child of God, full of failure and sin and fear, bow here, and no one knows what passes through

my heart, and while I in simplicity say, O God, I accept Thy terms; I have pleaded for blessing on myself and others, I have accepted Thy terms of absolute surrender. While your heart says that in deep silence, remember there is a God present that takes note of it, and writes it down in His book, and there is a God present who at that very moment takes possession of you. You may not feel it, you may not realize it, but God takes possession if you will trust Him.

That is the great difficulty with many. People say: "I have often been inspired at a meeting, or at a convention, and I have consecrated myself to God, but it has passed away. I know it may last for a week or for a month, but away it fades, and after a time it is all gone."

But listen! It is because you do not believe what I am now going to tell you and remind you of. When God has begun the work of absolute surrender in you, and when God has accepted your surrender, then God holds Himself bound to care for it and to keep it. Will you believe that?

In this matter of surrender there are two: God and I—I a worm, God the everlasting and omnipotent Lord. Will you be afraid to trust yourself to this mighty God? God is willing. Do you not believe that He can keep you continually, day by day, and moment by moment?

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love; moment by moment I've life from above.

A life of absolute surrender has its difficulties. I do not deny that. Yes, it has something far more than difficulties: it is a life that with men is absolutely impossible. But by the grace of God, by the power of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, it is a life to which we are destined, and a life that is possible for us. Let us believe that God will maintain it.

Some of you have read the words of that aged saint who, on his ninetieth birthday, told of all God's goodness to him—I mean George Muller. What did he say he believed to be the secret of his happiness, and of all the blessing which God had given him? He said he believed there were two reasons. The

one was that he had been enabled by grace to maintain a good conscience before God day by day (1 Jn. 1:9 as needed); the other was, that he was a lover of God's Word. A good conscience is complete obedience to God day by day, and fellowship with God every day in His Word, and prayer—that is a life of absolute surrender.

Such a life has two sides—on the one side, absolute surrender to work what God wants you to do; on the other side, to let God work what He wants to do.

First, to do what God wants *you* to do.

Give up yourselves absolutely to the will of God. You know something of that will; not enough, far from all. But say absolutely to the Lord God: "By Thy grace I desire to do Thy will in everything, every moment of every day." Say: "Lord God, not a word upon my tongue but for Thy glory, not a movement of my temperament, but for Thy glory, not an affection of love or hate in my heart but for Thy glory, and according to Thy blessed will."

Someone says: "Do you think that possible?"

I ask, what has God promised you, and what can God do to fill a vessel absolutely surrendered to Him? God wants to bless you in a way beyond what you expect. From the beginning, ear hath not heard, neither hath the eye seen, what God hath prepared for them that wait for Him (1 Cor. 2:9). God has prepared unheard-of things, blessings much more wonderful than you can imagine, more mighty than you can conceive. They are divine blessings. So, say now: "I give myself absolutely to God, to His will, to do *only* what God wants." It is God who will enable you to carry out the surrender.

And, on the other side, come and say: "I give myself absolutely to God, to let Him work in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, as He has promised to do."

Yes, the living God wants to work in His children in a way that we cannot understand, but that God's Word has revealed, and He wants to work in us

every moment of the day. God is willing to maintain our life. Only let our absolute surrender be one of simple, childlike, and unbounded trust.

So, as Murray shows us- as important as the outward is (because it's what people will see), the inward and life-long shaping of the inner man, his breaking, his surrender, his deepening understanding of the ways of God, all of that is equally important. His doctrine is important; his spiritual life is equally important.

The idea that we if genuinely desire to do God's will and fully commit to His will with the belief that God will help us do it, this is a plan that is guaranteed to fail. It puts us in a false position before God because that is not what God has promised to do, or desires to do.

(Phil. 2:13) It is God who works in you both to will *and to do* of His good pleasure.

(Gal. 2:20) It is no longer I who live; *Christ* lives in me.

We can be told that we can't live this life- only Christ can live it. And we can believe this is true, but we haven't learned it until we experience our own complete *inability*. Peter's revelation of this came following his three denials; Paul explains his realization of this in Romans 7. Each of us has to have our own crisis, which is normally an extended crisis of trying and failing, before absolute, desperate surrender takes place.

For God to have the freedom in us to 'will *and to do*' we have to believe that this is His desire; that this is what He wants to do, according to His own purpose, but also because of His love. It allows us to rest in Him and to cease trying to do something the Lord never expected us to be able to do – we are not under the demands of a "law", including Christian "law", we are under grace, which means the Lord is willing to take the responsibility of our lives if we will stop imposing our will, our Christianity (however well intentioned), and surrender to His will and then believe in Him in the same way we did at salvation when we trusted Him to save us, knowing that we could never save ourselves.

It's the same faith, the same realization of our inability, that we are to now live every moment of every day as we walk with Him trusting Him to do what He said is His desire to do – continually work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Which is why Abraham is set forth as the ultimate example of effectual faith – it took a lifetime, but he eventually came into a mindset of complete surrender and faith – he believed that in spite of his own body being as good as dead, God was able to do what He promised, so Abraham ‘wavered not’ and Isaac was conceived.

It appears that the secret of the spiritual life is realizing that I can’t live it, I’ll never be able to – but Christ can and promised He would if we’d acknowledge our inability and His willingness to do what we can’t do. In that sense, faith always implies inability.

When we talk about of “total abandonment”, it’s just another way of saying, “Pick up your cross daily”.

See if these comments by Watchman Nee help;

Surrender is not a promising God to do His will, nor is it making covenant with God to do what cannot be done. To surrender is for me to take my hands off my own life. When we come to God we say to Him, “I hand over to You all my good and bad, my likes and dislikes, my willing and not willing, my do’s and do not’s.” It is our responsibility to hand over our defeated selves. God is ever ready, waiting for you and me to do this one thing, to be willing to hand over these selves of ours.

It has always worked that way, Old and New Testament. Those who surrender absolutely to God’s will and purpose, as that purpose is revealed for *their* dispensation, and who trust in the Lord to do what is impossible for man to do, those are the ones who experience God’s faithfulness in accomplishing in them what He has wanted from the beginning – Christ formed in each one of us. (1 Thess. 5:24) “Faithful is He who has called you, Who will also do it.”