

Introduction:

1. With this series of lessons dealing with the eldership, and specifically the qualifications, we have been seeing how almost every qualification listed for an elder is also something Christians are commanded to have as well.
 - a. All Christians are to be sober and vigilant (I Peter 5:8).
 - b. All Christians are to be hospitable (Hebrews 13:2).
 - c. All Christians are to be “apt to teach” (II Timothy 2:24).
 - d. All Christians are to be just (Matthew 13:49) and holy (I Peter 1:15).
 - e. Etc...
 2. Tonight we are going to look at some more characteristics all Christians should have, but that elders especially ought to show forth in their lives.
 - a. Temperate
 - b. Not covetous
 - c. Not greedy of filthy lucre
- I. An Elder Must be Temperate (Titus 1:8).
- A. What does “temperate” mean?
 1. Most newer translations (including Hugo McCord’s) says “self-control.”
 - a. Some others (ESV) say “disciplined.”
 2. The idea is that this person does not over-indulge in things.
 - a. He can control his appetite so that his appetite does not control him.
 - b. He has the ability to deny himself of things.
 3. The word literally means strong, or having power over something.
 - a. In this case, the temperate person has power over himself.
 4. Have you met someone who “cannot control” their eating?
 - a. That is not temperance.
 5. Some people jump headlong into anything that interests them.
 - a. My grandfather was this way.
 - b. He got interested in classic cars, then spent thousands of dollars buying and restoring some cars.
 - c. Then he got into stamps (cars were forgotten), and spent thousands of dollars building up a stamp collection and going to stamp shows.
 - d. He let his hobbies control him instead of the other way around.
 - e. Some people call this an “addictive” personality, where the person basically becomes addicted to whatever hobby happens to come along.
 - B. What “temperance” does NOT mean.
 1. Temperance does not mean completely avoiding certain things, but instead not letting them control you.
 - a. Take food for instance; you can’t just cut it out altogether!
 - b. In the 1800s and early 1900s, there were “temperance” societies which advocated the complete annihilation of alcohol.

- 1) Alcohol is a completely other topic that will be dealt with in a week or two.
 - 2) But temperance simply means not letting something else control you.
 - 3) There are good uses of alcohol (medicine, specifically) which should not be thrown out with the bathwater.
2. Temperance does not mean you cannot have a hobby you enjoy.
- a. Ask any preacher's wife (Jesse and Jolene included) if their husbands are addicted to books.
 - 1) This does not mean they are not temperate (unless they get to the point where they are putting the family in financial danger by continuing to buy them).
 - 2) God wants us to study the word of God, and many books are helpful.
 - b. Some people enjoy garage sales, but they don't spend obscene amounts of time thinking about them and using all of their money on them.
 - c. It is okay to watch the television, but you must not (as some do), just sit in front of the television all day, every day, when there are things which need doing (in your house, for your family, and most importantly for the Lord).
- C. How can you tell if a man is temperate?
1. Is he able to control his appetite?
 - a. I have heard it said by some that it is a disgrace for a fat man to be a preacher because it shows that it is ok to let your appetite control you.
 - 1) There is a big difference between what the government calls "overweight" and someone who is gluttonous.
 - 2) I fit one category, but not the other.
 - b. If a man is addicted to eating, then he shows that he cares more about filling his stomach than he does his health.
 - 1) Again, that does not mean that eating is wrong.
 - 2) But if the person does not know when to quit, he shows he has no self-control.
 2. Is he able to control his spending?
 - a. If a man is always broke because he is always buying things, he is NOT temperate.
 - b. Some people have to have all the latest electronic gadgets, even though the ones they had already still work just fine.
 - 1) I can't tell you how many times I've heard my father say "I got a new computer."
 - 2) Look at the amount of people who waited in line overnight just to buy the last iPhone.
 - c. When I worked at a record store, there were people who came in near the 3rd of every month (welfare check day) and spent \$300-400 on cds.

- 1) You know, there is usually a reason if someone is ALWAYS broke.
3. Is he able to control his time?
 - a. Is he a workaholic? Does work ALWAYS come before his family or the Lord?
 - b. Does he spend all of his spare time in front of the TV or the computer?
 - c. Does he spend every possible moment fishing or hunting?
 - d. Or is he able to appropriately divide his time amongst the things which need his attention?
- D. Why should an elder be temperate?
 1. It helps assure us that he will give his time to the Lord's work.
 - a. It is possible for some people to spend too much time in certain parts of the Lord's work.
 - 1) Some preachers spend so much time in study and preaching that they neglect their family.
 - 2) The temperate man will make sure he allots his attentions to the various parts of the Lord's work (family, congregation, evangelism, etc...).
 - b. We do not want a man to be an elder if he lets insignificant things of this world take all of his time.
 2. It helps him to identify the lack of self-control in others in the congregation, so that he can help them learn self-control.
 - a. If an elder is not temperate in the first place, he would have no standing to tell others that they need to better allot their time.
 - b. It would be like a drunk telling you that you drink too much.
 - c. It would be a case of "do what I say, not what I do."
 3. It will keep him focused on his role of shepherding the local flock.
 - a. There are elders within the Lord's church who have taken to spending all their time "exposing" supposed false teachers and condemning all those who can, in any way, be connected with them.
 - 1) Is exposing false teaching proper? Of course it is!
 - 2) Is it the responsibility of the local elders to spend countless hours each day and week condemning congregations in other states because their preacher once spoke on a lectureship with someone else who they deem a false teacher?
 - b. The responsibility of the elders is to shepherd the local congregation!
 - c. The temperate elder might deal with false teaching occurring elsewhere, but he will not let that take up all of his time, leaving him with little or no time to fulfill his God-given role to the local congregation!
- E. Should all Christians be temperate?
 1. Aged men are commanded to be temperate (Titus 2:2).
 2. Paul preached to non-Christians the need to be temperate (Acts 24:25).

- a. The topics Paul preached about in this occasion were: righteousness (how to get right with God), temperance (how to live right), and judgment to come (condemnation if you don't live right).
 - b. Why would Paul tell a non-Christian he needed to be temperate if it only applied to those who were elders?
 - c. Obviously, then, this is something EVERYONE should strive for.
 - 3. Peter listed temperance as one of the "Christians graces": add to your knowledge temperance (II Peter 1:6).
 - 4. The fruit of the Spirit includes temperance (Galatians 5:23).
 - F. Temperance is required for the eldership, but it is also commanded for all Christians.
- II. An Elder Must Not Be Covetous (I Timothy 3:3).
- A. This is the first of the "negative" qualifications we will be looking at.
 - 1. These are characteristics elders (and Christians) should NOT possess.
 - B. What does covetous mean?
 - 1. Basically, the word means intensely desiring something.
 - a. Coveting prayers of your brethren is a good thing.
 - b. However, when it is used in the Bible, it refers only sinful desire.
 - c. One of the Ten Commandments is "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's possessions, including his wife, house, servants, animals, etc (Exodus 20:17).
 - 2. The ASV translates it "not a lover of money" which is apparently a literal rendition of what the Greek word used.
 - a. McCord translates it "greedy for money."
 - b. This is very similar to "not greedy of filthy lucre" which also appears in this verse (in some versions).
 - 3. Covetousness, from a Biblical perspective, means putting desire of something above your desire to do right by God's standard (Paul calls covetousness "idolatry" – Colossians 3:5).
 - a. There are at least 3 different words used in the Bible which are translated "covetous" or "covetousness" and each of them have different shades of meaning.
 - b. Most of them in the NT seem to refer to a sinful desire for money or gain.
 - C. How can you tell if a man is "covetous"?
 - 1. If a man places his focus on money and getting rich, he is covetous.
 - a. Is it wrong to be rich?
 - 1) Of course not!
 - 2) Paul gave commands to those who were rich (I Timothy 6:17), and the commands did not include "give away all your wealth."
 - b. Is it wrong to want to have a successful business?
 - 1) Absolutely not!
 - 2) Lydia was a seller of purple (very expensive clothing) (Acts 16:14), but she was never told to close her business.

- c. It is when the person thinks constantly about ways to get more and more money for himself that it becomes covetousness.
 2. If a man constantly talks about his money and possessions, he is covetous.
 3. If a man is constantly seeking more material things then he is covetous.
 - D. Why should an elder NOT be covetous?
 1. People who seek after riches put their trust in material things instead of trust in God (I Timothy 6:17).
 - a. Our trust should be in God, not in riches.
 2. Men who are covetous are always on the lookout for ways of getting money instead of being on the lookout for the souls of the congregation.
 3. God does not want men as elders (and neither should we) who put money (or any other material thing) first in their lives.
 4. If an elder puts material things first, then that makes him a hypocrite when telling others to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33).
 - E. Is it ok for Christians to be covetous?
 1. Hebrews 13:5 – let your conversation be WITHOUT covetousness, but be content with such things as you have.
 2. Colossians 3:5 – Covetousness is idolatry.
 3. Ephesians 5:3 – don’t let covetousness even be named among you.
 4. Romans 1:29 – covetousness is given equal billing with murder.
- III. Elders must not be Greedy of Filthy Lucre (I Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7).
- A. What does “greedy of filthy lucre” mean?
 1. Lucre is where we get our word “lucrative” from, which means profitable.
 2. Filthy is dirty, ill-gotten.
 3. So, greedy of filthy lucre is the desire or willingness to take money in an illegal or unethical way.
 - a. This person will cheat on his taxes.
 - b. This person might steal from his employer (taking supplies from work, lying on his timecard, not earning his paycheck.
 4. “Greedy of filthy lucre” is an outgrowth of being covetous (a lover of money).
 5. While this qualification is missing from some versions in I Timothy 3:3, it is present in every version of Titus 1:7.
 - B. How can you tell if a man is greedy of filthy lucre?
 1. First, look to see if he is covetous (as we previously discussed).
 2. Is the man into “get rich quick” schemes?
 3. Does he cheat others in transactions?
 4. Does he talk about how he “pulled one over” on someone in finances?
 5. It may be hard to discern this trait in some people, because most don’t about advertising that they are looking to gain money unethically or illegally.
 - C. Why should an elder be “not greedy of filthy lucre”?
 1. Because this is an outgrowth of covetousness, it means this person puts material gain ahead of God.

2. A man who is greedy like this would be tempted greatly to abuse the office of elder for his own personal gain.
3. If we are to follow the example of the elders, we need examples that are worth following!
 - a. We cannot ask people to follow the example of someone who tries to cheat people out of money.
 - b. We need people whose focus is on the eternal life, not the earthly life!
- D. Are Christians under this same requirement?
 1. Absolutely!
 2. We saw that no Christian is to be covetous, and being greedy of filthy lucre is an outgrowth of that.
 3. We should set our sights on things above, not on things of this earth (Colossians 3:1)
 4. How would you like to explain to God why it is ok that you cheated on your taxes?
 5. How would you like to explain to God why it is ok that you stole things from work?
 6. How would you like to explain to God why it is ok that you set your sights on getting rich in material things instead of setting up treasures in heaven?

Conclusion:

1. Christians should always seek to exercise temperance in their lives!
 - a. Do you? Or do you get carried away with things (hobbies, TV, computer, eating)?
2. Christians should not be covetous!
 - a. It is setting something up ahead of God.
 - b. It could be money, time, friends, or many other things.
 - c. It is idolatry, and it is sin!
3. Christians should not be greedy for filthy lucre!
 - a. We should be content with what we have and know that our treasure is in heaven!
 - b. We should never do things unethical, immoral, or illegal to obtain anything!
4. Yes, these qualifications describe the elders, but they also describe Christians as well!
5. How do you match up?