

Introduction

In verses 1:5-8, the Bible has laid out the *family* and *personal* qualifications of elders. In summary, these men are to be spiritually mature Christians. They are examples so that all Christians in the church would be mature like them. A third qualification is given in verse 9, and that is the *doctrinal* qualification, the subject of these brief notes. The remainder of the chapter, 1:10-16, gives the reason why such qualified elders are necessary and will be a subject for another message.

A. Convictions – “holding fast the faithful word...”

1. *Holding fast* means to adhere to, to have a strong attachment to, to cling to, or to be devoted to something. It certainly includes the idea of understanding, believing, and ability to explain, and passes to a full-hearted devotion that is exercised in the presence of error.
2. The *faithful word* could also be translated “the trustworthy message.” Because it is sourced in God who is the ultimately Faithful One, it cannot be anything but faithful. It will not change at the whim of chance or circumstances. In other words, the qualified pastor is to have a devotion to the unchanging standards of Christian teaching.
3. *As he has been taught* comes from a phrase that literally reads “according to the teaching.” He is to hold fast to that which he was taught. Note that 2 Tim. 2:2 comes in here—Paul taught Timothy, who was to teach others, who could in turn teach others. The common thread here is the truth—the message of the gospel must remain constant no matter what generation. Assuming that what the elder-candidate learned was indeed the truth, there is no room for invention or variation. It is God’s truth.

B. Competency – “that he may be able...”

1. *That he may be able* suggests that without the “holding fast” he will not be able to do his job.
2. *By sound doctrine* is the means and content by which the pastor is to exhort and convict. It is the golden standard by which all is measured. Proclaiming it and making appeals/commands on the basis of it is the only way to properly carry out ministry. Soundness carries the idea of freedom from error or correctness. It is a pathetic thing today to hear preaching in which the point of the sermon is not the same as that of the text!
3. *To exhort* means to urge strongly, to appeal, to encourage. There is to be, based on the faithful Word of God, a strong appeal to godliness (Titus 2:15). Exhortation applies to believers and unbelievers alike.
4. *To convict*, on the other hand, applies specifically to non-believers, as the following phrase “those who contradict” indicates. Conviction refers to bringing a person to recognize their wrong actions and beliefs. These folks are ones who *speak against* (lit.) the truth. They have something else to say other than what God has said.

Conclusion

A man without proper convictions will not be able to carry out the work of the pastorate. This work is two-fold: exhortation and conviction. The standard of the work is sound teaching right from the Word of God. MAP

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