

QUALIFICATIONS NOT SUBJECT TO QUALIFICATION

1 Timothy 3:1-9; Titus 1:5-9

Introduction

In a few weeks, voters will elect individuals to serve us in various offices of government, the most powerful and important of which is President of the United States. Each of us will have the opportunity to cast a vote for the individual whom we believe to be the most qualified as the Commander in Chief of our armed forces. In him will be entrusted the reigns of government. He will have great influence with regard to the economic condition of industry and individuals. The military will serve at his pleasure. The platforms on which the two major candidates are running are constructed of planks or issues about which God has spoken clearly in His Word.

That is why we should take the privilege of voting very seriously, studying the candidates and their positions carefully. No one should enter the voting booth without first giving considerable thought to the suitability of each candidate to the office being sought.

If you want to

- preserve the unborn's right to choose life instead of having that right aborted in infancy
 - protect the family from perversions of the divine order for marriage
 - prevent further intrusion of government into the affairs of the church
 - provide for a judiciary that interprets the Constitution as opposed to imposing legislation
- then I urge you to VOTE!

The office of President carries tremendous responsibility. That is why the Constitution stipulates certain qualifications that must be met by the individual who serves in that capacity. It says:

"No person except a natural born citizen, or a citizen of the United States, at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty-five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States."

Most positions and jobs have certain qualifications that are related to the work or the nature of the task. Some have to do with educational attainment, while others relate to specific abilities. An individual's character is important to an employer if something of value is going to be entrusted to the employee.

I have never heard a debate about the qualifications for President. Never have I heard anyone attempt to diminish these qualifications for eligibility by saying they are merely *guidelines* toward which an individual should strive. Nor have I heard anyone say the qualifications can be met "by committee," as though the combined ages of the President and Vice-President totaling 35 years is somehow satisfactory. Or that a person could run for President so long as he and his running mate have a cumulative residency of 14 years. No. The qualifications are for the President himself. If he is not a natural born citizen who has resided in the U.S. for 14 of his 35 or more years of life, he is not eligible to even be considered for President.

You would never even nominate a person who does not qualify. Arnold Schwarzenegger could be a good candidate, in the opinion of some. But his political party would never nominate him because he simply does not satisfy the qualification regarding citizenship. He cannot even be considered for the job.

Furthermore, the qualifications for president are not subject to change simply because I don't understand part of them. I don't understand why the Constitution stipulates that an individual must be a resident of the United States for fourteen years. But that doesn't change the qualification. Why 14 years? I don't know. I don't know why a person has to be a natural born citizen. That eliminates out of hand some people who are very knowledgeable of our nation's history and government. That eliminates several who have served honorably and heroically in our armed forces. It may seem to me that such quality people should be eligible to run for President. But that does not change the Constitutional qualifications. I trust the founding fathers made these stipulations for very good reasons and that the prevailing wisdom of our legislators has never seen fit to change them. And even if every person in our government and nation thought the qualifications are outdated, outmoded, or unattainable, no one who fails in any one point is eligible so long as the Constitution's stipulations are unchanged. And even if everyone in the nation agreed that a certain individual is clearly the best possible choice for the office, despite the fact that he or she is under the age of 35 or is not a natural born citizen, that person cannot even be considered. I am admittedly not a student of history. But I do not know of a single instance where these qualifications have been debated, challenged, or subject to a mass petition drive to overrule them in any individual's behalf.

The Constitution of the United States is subject to amendment. But the Constitution for the church is the Bible, which is not subject to change. Whereas the United States government is of the people, by the people and for the people, the church is the body and bride of Christ. The terms for admission and its governance is determined unilaterally by Almighty God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Man has no authority to modify either. As subjects in this kingdom, we are merely to submit to the terms set forth in God's Holy Word. This pertains to the matter of setting forth those who function in roles of leadership.

To be the church described in the Bible, we must adhere to the instructions with regard to her leaders. God has told us whom He wants. Read texts.

I. MEN

Male leadership is the model for the home and the church. The basis for this goes back to creation. Not only was man formed first, but it was Eve who was deceived by the serpent (1Tim. 2:13, 14).

God has ordained that those who serve as elders and deacons are to be husbands.

II. MEN OF AGE

No chronological age is given, but 30 was the minimum age for elders in the synagogue or members of the Sanhedrin.

Maturity is as much a part of this as age. He is to have children who have attained enough age to display respect and honor for his leadership, as well as to make a personal response to the Lord. He is not to be a recent convert, but spiritually mature.

III. MEN WITH A FAMILY

He must be married and have children. The home is the proving ground by which a man may demonstrate that his leadership is not oppressive – that he leads by being out front showing the way instead of cracking an authoritative whip of coercion and force from behind.

The way he treats his wife and the way she responds to his leadership should be observed and weighed. He is to be devoted to her alone, creating, thereby, a sense of security and safety for her – an environment in which she eagerly and confidently follows.

The dynamic you see in a man's home and family will reveal the dynamic that will result in other contexts in which he is placed in leadership.

IV. MEN OF INTEGRITY

The church needs leaders whose manner of life is characterized by honesty and righteousness when he is not being watched; a man whose character is the same through the week in the world as it is on Sunday in the church house. He is to be blameless or above reproach. In other words, of such level of purity and Christ likeness as to never be suspected of shady dealings or inappropriate conduct.

He is to be in control of his passions as well as compassionate – not contentious, greedy, or controlled by intoxicants, but rather hospitable, gentle, reputable and humble.

V. MEN OF STRENGTH

The elder must be prepared to deal effectively in opposition to any who would teach that which is contrary to the Bible. This demands that he, himself, be well-versed in the Scriptures and astute enough to recognize dangers to the flock.

This also implies that he subscribe to sound doctrine and be able to teach others in the way of salvation and sanctification.

The elder must be a man with courage and thick skin, of backbone and conviction. He will be required to confront the wolves in sheep's clothing that threaten the church.

Conclusion

Inasmuch as we have the opportunity and responsibility to select those who serve the church in these roles, we must give careful attention to how each one measures up to the divinely ordained standard.

This congregation's future depends upon the leaders we select in the present. God calls for men of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical maturity who consistently display the fruit of the Spirit in superlative measure, providing a model for the church and protecting against attacks from the kingdom of Satan.

Let us pray that each Christian will give sober attention to this critical matter and that this congregation is served well by Biblically qualified individuals.