

1 Timothy 3:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Analysis

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without (δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν, dei de kai martyrian kalēn echein apo tōn exōthen)—the elder must have 'good testimony from outsiders.' Greek exōthen refers to non-Christians, those outside the church community.

Lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil—oneidismon (reproach, disgrace) and pagida (trap, snare). The elder's reputation affects both his ministry effectiveness and his spiritual safety. Satan exploits moral inconsistency to discredit the gospel message. When leaders are hypocrites, the enemy has ammunition to attack both the man and the church.

This remarkable requirement shows Christianity is not a private religion—the watching world's perception matters. Not because we seek human approval, but because our witness to Christ's transforming power requires visible integrity. The elder's life commends or contradicts his message.

Historical Context

Ephesus was a cosmopolitan port city where Christians lived in close proximity to pagan neighbors. Business dealings, civic responsibilities, and daily interactions meant believers were constantly observed. If church leaders were known for dishonesty, immorality, or financial impropriety, the gospel would be dismissed as

powerless. Paul insists elders must demonstrate Christlike character before both church and world.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why does Christian leadership require the approval of non-Christians regarding character?
2. How might a leader with poor outside reputation become ensnared by Satan's schemes?
3. What areas of your life would unbelievers critique if they knew you were a Christian leader?

Interlinear Text

δεῖ	δὲ	αὐτὸν	καὶ	μαρτυρίαν	καλὴν	ἔχειν	ἀπὸ	τῶν	
must	Moreover	he	and	report	a good	have	of		G3588
G1163	G1161	G846	G2532	G3141	G2570	G2192	G575		
ἔξωθεν		ἴνα	μὴ	εἰς	όνειδισμὸν	έμπεσῃ	καὶ		
them which are without		G2443	G3361	into	reproach	he fall	and		
G1855				G1519	G3680	G1706	G2532		
παγίδα	τοῦ	διαβόλου							
the snare	G3588	of the devil							
G3803		G1228							

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 8:21 (Parallel theme): Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Colossians 4:5 (Parallel theme): Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

2 Timothy 2:26 (Evil): And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

1 Timothy 6:9 (Parallel theme): But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Acts 6:3 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

1 Corinthians 10:32 (Parallel theme): Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

2 Corinthians 6:3 (Parallel theme): Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

1 Thessalonians 4:12 (Parallel theme): That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 (Evil): Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Titus 2:5 (Good): To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.