

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 9

### I. Exposition of Chapter Three (Continued).

A. Verse 8 – “Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,”

1. “...deacons...” – “one who renders service to another; an attendant, servant,”<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe adds:

“The English word *deacon* is a transliteration of the Greek word *diakonos*, which simply means ‘servant.’ It is likely that the origin of the deacons is recorded in Acts 6. The first deacons were appointed to be assistants to the Apostles. In a local church today deacons relieve the pastors/elders of other tasks so that they may concentrate on the ministry of the Word, prayer, and spiritual oversight.”<sup>2</sup>

2. “...must be reverent...” – “pertaining to appropriate, befitting behavior and implying dignity and respect”<sup>3</sup> This is a characteristic that seems to be disappearing in our society today. Dignity, in particular, seems to be, increasingly, a thing of the past. This creates a problem for the church in finding people to serve as deacons.
3. “...not double-tongued...” – Sometimes we use the phrase, “speaking from both sides of the mouth.” The Complete Biblical Library states regarding this:

“Two meanings are possible: (1) ‘saying different things to different people to suit the occasion’ or (2) ‘given to repetition,’ i.e., a ‘talebearer.’ Either could be applied to the qualifications for this office. The words of a deacon are to be truthful and sincere. They are not to betray confidences or talk about others in derogatory terms.”<sup>4</sup>

4. “...not given to much wine, not greedy for money...” – Both of these qualifications are noted for the office of a bishop which was previously discussed (Part 8).

B. Verse 9 – “...holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.”

1. The word “holding” means; “to hold one’s self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to”<sup>5</sup>.
2. “...the mystery of the faith...” – In the New Testament, the word “mystery” means; “the content of that which has not been known before but which has been revealed to an in-group or restricted constituency”<sup>6</sup> Another reference defines it as; “...a secret unknown to the masses but revealed to a believer or believers.”<sup>7</sup> When referring to “...the faith...”, Paul here is referring to the whole of Christian doctrine. From this we conclude that those who hold the position of deacon in the church must be men or women of the Word. They need to be people who know the Word and live by the Word of God. Paul mentions the word “mystery” again in verse 16.
3. “...with a pure conscience.” – The “conscience” is generally thought of as that part of us that distinguishes between right and wrong. To have a “pure conscience” is to not act in such a way as to not violate one’s conscience. In this case, it would be to not violate their conscience concerning what they know to be right and wrong according to “the faith.”

C. Verse 10 – “But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless.” To be “tested” means; to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use<sup>8</sup> Paul is simply saying that before anyone is appointed as a deacon, they need to be tested, or proven to meet the qualifications beforehand. (cf. Acts 6:1-7).

D. Verse 11 – “Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.” Many scholars state that this is NOT referring to the deacon’s wives but to women deacons (deaconesses).

Dr. Robert Utley writes:

“This does not refer to deacons’ wives... but to women in general... Deaconesses are mentioned in Rom. 16:1 and possibly Phil. 4:3. The qualifications for these female servants are similar to those for the male leaders. They were meant to be deacon-helpers in situations where a male deacon would simply be inappropriate (caring for sick women, helping prepare women before and after baptism, regular visits to older women, etc)....The problem in our day is that we have made deacons an executive board which, because of other passages in Timothy, seem to rule out women.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 221.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 747.

<sup>4</sup> *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 891.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

<sup>6</sup> Louw and Nida, 344.

<sup>7</sup> *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, 891.

<sup>8</sup> Louw and Nida, 331.

<sup>9</sup> Robert James Utley, *Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 47.

- E. **Verse 12** – “Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.” – Here we have the same commands that were given in the qualifications for bishops (3:2, 4). Again, this shows how important it is to have the natural family in order, for one to be able to help lead and serve the spiritual family – the Church.
- F. **Verse 13** – “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” – The meaning of having obtained “...a good standing...” means, at least in part, “of a grade of dignity and wholesome influence in the church.”<sup>10</sup> Unlike what some people may think, being a servant to the church is a place of dignity and honor. It’s not a degrading position. Even Jesus came to be a Servant (Matthew 20:28 – Same Greek word as translated “deacon”). The phrase, “...and great boldness in the faith...” refers to “free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance.”<sup>11</sup> This seems to be suggesting that faithful service to God will help in having a boldness toward men and a confidence toward God.
- G. **Verses 14-15** – “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
1. **Verse 14**- Paul hoped to come to them but thought he possibly could be delayed. It’s not certain whether or not Paul ever made it to Ephesus after this.
  2. **Verse 15** – Paul states that, just in case he doesn’t make it there in person, he wrote this letter to Timothy and all the others who would read it. Some scholars believe that this verse conveys the central purpose of the letter, the purpose being; “...that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God...”
    - a) The “...house of God...” would have been better translated as “...the household of God”. This denotes family. Dr. Warren Wiersbe writes:  
**“God’s church is a family, so ‘household’ might be a better translation. One of Paul’s favorite words is ‘brethren’ (see 1 Tim. 4:6). When a sinner believes in Jesus Christ as Saviour, he immediately is born again into God’s family (John 1:11–13; 1 Peter 1:22–25). Paul advised young Timothy to treat the members of the local church as he would treat the members of his own family (1 Tim. 5:1–2).”**<sup>12</sup>
    - b) “...which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” – The “church” is defined as; “a *calling out*, i.e. a popular *meeting*, espec. a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both)<sup>13</sup> So, the “church” are all those who have been called out of the world in order to assemble together to meet with each other and God.
    - c) “...the pillar and ground of the truth.” – A “pillar” is, “an upright shaft or structure used as a building support”<sup>14</sup> The word “ground” here means; “that which provides the basis or foundation for belief or practice”<sup>15</sup> The true Church of Jesus Christ – God’s People are supposed to be the keepers and the defenders of the Truth in the midst of a world that is resisting and twisting the truth!
- H. **Verse 16** – “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”
1. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness...” – “...without controversy” means; “that it must be admitted.”<sup>16</sup> The greatness of the “...mystery of godliness” must be admitted. Remember we stated that a “mystery” is, basically, a secret now revealed to the believer. Donald Stamps in the Fire Bible writes:  
**“This phrase means ‘the revealed secret of true piety’ (piety means goodness and godliness in practice) or the secret that produces godliness in people. That ‘secret’ is Jesus Christ himself (v. 16) and all he accomplished in becoming human.”**<sup>17</sup>
  2. “...God was manifested in the flesh...” – (NOTE: Scholars all agree that the remainder of this verse is from an early hymn.) – The Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ was, and is God, co-equal with the

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 223.

<sup>13</sup> James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 26.

<sup>14</sup> Louw and Nida, 87.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>17</sup> *Fire Bible: English Standard Version*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2011), 2101.

Father and the Holy Spirit. The fact that God became Man, in the Person of Jesus Christ, is the foundation of our Christian faith. Through the virgin birth, the Perfect, Sinless God became clothed in flesh, so that, as a Sinless Man, He could bear the penalty for all of humanity's sin. The Innocent died for the guilty. (cf. **Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-18; Hebrews 8:5-10**).

3. **"...Justified in the Spirit..."** – After having died for our sins, He was **"justified"** (**'to show to be right, to prove to be right'**<sup>18</sup>) by the power of the Holy Spirit in His resurrection from the dead. (cf. **I Peter 3:18**). D. Edmond Hiebert writes:

**"Justified in the spirit' refers to the vindication of His claims when God raised Him from the dead. Men rejected and crucified Him as a criminal but in the resurrection God reversed the verdict of men."**<sup>19</sup>

4. **"...Seen by angels..."** – There were many instances when Jesus was seen by angels (**Mark 1:13; Luke 22:41-43**), and especially at the resurrection (**Matthew 28:2-7**).
5. **"...Preached among the Gentiles..."** – The Great Commission commanded the Gospel to be preached to all nations. (**Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 13:46-47**).
6. **"...Believed on in the world..."** – (**Romans 10:14-17; Acts 4:4; 8:12; 9:42; 11:17, 21, etc.**)
7. **"...Received up in glory..."** – This refers to His ascension to the right hand of the Father. (**Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11**).

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<sup>18</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, 743.

<sup>19</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Timothy*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1957), 74.