

God's

A Verse By Verse Study of First & Second Timothy

Church Manual

First Timothy Chapter Three

Verse 1 - “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

The phrase, “*This is a true saying,*” is translated from the same Greek words as First Timothy 1:15 where we read, “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*” Paul saw himself as a sinner who had obtained mercy.

THE WORD IS FAITHFUL

Paul is drawing special attention to the fact that the Word is “*faithful,*” in that God extended His mercy to even the “*chief of sinners,*” even allowing him to be involved in the Lord’s work. He used the same phrase when he wrote to Timothy about the position of a pastor of a local church. Paul said, “*...If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*”

Psalm 37:4 says, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*” This does not mean if we delight ourselves in the Lord, we will get a new car if we desire one. It means that God will put the desires in our heart that He wants there.

None of God’s appointed pastors just decide to go into the ministry. The desire must come from God. We read in Amos 7:14-15 that Amos said, “*Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.*”

Concerning Jeremiah, we read in Jeremiah 1:5 that God said, “*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*”

WHY THE DIFFERENT TERMS?



Elders - Bishops - Pastors

Paul referred to the position of the pastor as “*...the office of a bishop.*” The Bible has different terms for leadership that are used *in the context of the local church.* One is *elder* and *elders.* These terms appear *sixty-four times* in the New Testament. Another term is *bishop* and *bishops* which appear *seven times,* and the third term is *pastors* which appears *only one time* in the New Testament. Since the term pastor is only used once concerning the local church age, we would do well to determine why we use that title today.

The Term Elder

If we use the rule of first mention, we find the word “*elders*” first appears in Genesis 50:7, where we read about Pharaoh and “*...the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt.*” The Bible speaks about “*...the elders of Israel*” in thirty-four verses, and refers to elders in connection with countries such as *Midian, Moab, Gilead, Jabesh,* as well as *towns, cities,* and other places.

Elders In The New Testament

The Bible says in Matthew 16:21 “*...Jesus suffered many things at the hand of the elders.*”

- They challenged His authority.
- They planned His crucifixion.
- They sought false witnesses against Him.





- They gave the thirty pieces of silver to Judas.
- They persuaded the release of Barabbas, and the destruction of Jesus.
- They mocked the Lord when He was on the cross.
- They paid money to the soldiers to lie about the resurrection.
- They persecuted the early Christians.
- They were involved in the stoning of Stephen.
- They sent Paul to Damascus to bring Christians back to Jerusalem to be persecuted.
- They put themselves under a curse to kill Paul.
- Peter said in First Peter 5:1, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.”

WHY DO WE FIND ELDERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

We read they, “Ordained them elders in every church.” (Acts 14:23)

BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING

Examining the Term Elder

In the Book of Acts *thousands* of people in the city of Jerusalem were trusting Christ as their personal Saviour, and local churches were being organized. These churches were to be structured “*decently and in order.*” The Bible says elders were being ordained in “*every church.*”

The residents of Jerusalem were mainly Jewish, and were all familiar with the term

“*elder.*” As seen in the Old Testament Scriptures, the elders were leaders of cities, households, countries and Jewish synagogues. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible to use the term *elder* in this situation because the Jews would know the responsibilities the elder had in their local churches.



USING THE TERM BISHOP IN THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

The word “*bishop*” is in the New Testament one time, and the plural term, “*bishops*” is found six times. We read of *bishops and deacons* together in Philippians 1:1. We read of the “*office*” of a bishop in First Timothy 3:1, as well as the *qualifications* of a bishop in First Timothy chapter three and Titus chapter one. Who are these bishops? Philippians 1:1 says, “*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus*

Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:”

BISHOPS FOR THE GREEKS

The recipients of this letter were mainly Greeks. The word *bishop* was a term used by them long before the New Testament was written. When the Greeks or Romans conquered a city or state, the emperor would appoint a bishop to take charge of the area.

A POSITION OF AUTHORITY

The bishop was a leader with authority, but was also responsible to a superior power. He was a leader who introduced new things. The Holy Spirit inspired the writer of Philippians to use the word “*bishop*” because the people in this environment would know immediately what his responsibilities were in the local church.

EXAMPLE



We were recently ministering in a mud hut with the Indians in the jungle of Venezuela. The village has a leader who is called a chief. If we called him a captain he would not know what we were talking about. On the other hand, the leader of a football team is a captain, he is not their chief. Paul simply used terms for the leader of the local churches that people understood.

ELDER AND BISHOP IN THE SAME PLACE

In the book of Titus, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to use both words in the same paragraph. In Titus 1:5 we read about ordaining “*...elders in every city.*” Two verses later he said, “*...A bishop must be blameless.*” Obviously the terms are interchangeable, and are referring to the same local church office.

PAUL AT EPHESUS

In Acts 20:17 we read, Paul, “*called the elders of the church.*” In verse twenty-eight he referred to them



as tending a “flock.” He also referred to them as “overseers.” We need to keep this in mind as we look at the term “pastors.”

“HE GAVE SOME...PASTORS.”

In Ephesians 4:11 the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to use the term “pastors.” Verse twelve says *pastors* were given “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry.” God designated “pastors” for this responsibility. The place God assigned for *perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry* is the local church, as it is “...the pillar and ground of the truth.”



THE SHEPHERD

Although the term “pastors” is seen only one time in the King James Version of the New Testament, the Greek word is there eighteen times. The Hebrew word “pastors” is in the Old Testament another eight times. The Old Testament word is “ra`ah.” The word means “to shepherd.” The New Testament word is “poimen” and also means “to shepherd.”



EVERYONE UNDERSTOOD THE SHEPHERD’S RESPONSIBILITY

In the New Testament, the word for shepherd refers to *Jesus* nine times. It refers to a *literal shepherd* eight times and once it refers to the leaders God gave as a *gift to the local churches*. People in Israel knew immediately what the local church leader’s responsibilities were when they heard the word shepherd. The term “pastors” in Ephesians 4:11 is obviously used as a type of someone God has chosen to shepherd the sheep.

SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP IN FIRST PETER

First Peter 5:1-3 says, “The elders which are among you I exhort, ...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“It’s All About The Sheep!”

- Feeding the Lord’s sheep. (John 21:15-17)
 - Feeding the Lord’s lambs. (John 21:15-17)
- Watering the Lord’s sheep. (Genesis 29:3)
- Leading the Lord’s sheep. (Psalm 23:1-6)
 - Protecting the Lord’s sheep. (Psalm 23:1-6)
- Comforting the Lord’s sheep. (Psalm 23:1-6)
- Disciplining the Lord’s sheep. (Psalm 23:1-6)

Some Teach We Must Have More Than One Pastor to Have a Scriptural Church. What Does the Bible Say?

PAUL AND BARNABAS PLANTING CHURCHES

Paul and Barnabas established churches in *Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe*. Acts 24:23 says, “...they ordained them elders (pastors) in every church.” There were *thousands* of people being saved in many other cities. We read in Acts 15:36, “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.”

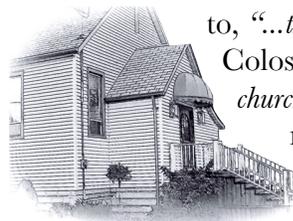


In Titus 1:5 we read, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (pastors) in every city, as I had appointed thee.” There were obviously *many* churches starting which means there would be *many* pastors. It is obvious concerning all these churches, the word to describe the pastors would be plural.

WHAT ABOUT SMALL CHURCHES?

At least ninety percent of the churches in North America come under the category of a small church. The New Testament often refers to a church in a house. Paul wrote in Romans 16:5, “...greet the church that is in their house.”

In First Corinthians 16:19 he referred to, “...the church that is in their house.” In Colossians 4:15 he referred to “...the church which is in his house.” Also we read in Philemon 1:2 about “...the church in thy house.”





(Note: The word church in these references is “ecclesia” and **ALWAYS** means an assembly. The “ecclesia” was **ALWAYS** an official organized meeting that met in a place, had a person in charge, and had a lawful purpose. See the author’s book on “**New Carts – Strange Fire – Wild Grapes – Or The Local Church.**” These references do not give licence to people holding meetings in their homes because they can’t handle the God-given authority in the local church!

It is interesting to note that when the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write about the qualifications for the office of the pastor and deacons, he used the *singular* term when referring to the *pastor* and the *plural* term when referring to the *deacons*.

THE PASTOR

(Note the singular references.)

First Timothy 3:1-13.

“This is a true saying, If **a** man desire the office of **a** bishop, **he** desireth **a** good work. **A** bishop then must be blameless, the **husband** of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; **One** that ruleth well **his** own house, having **his** children in subjection with all gravity; (For if **a** man know not how to rule **his** own house, how shall **he** take care of the church of God?) Not **a** novice, lest being lifted up with pride **he** fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover **he** must have a good report of them which are without; lest **he** fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

THE DEACONS

(Note the plural references.)

“Likewise must the **deacons** be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let **these** also first be proved; then let **them** use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must **their** wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the **deacons** be the **husbands** of one wife, ruling **their** children and **their** own houses well. For **they** that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to **themselves** a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE TERMS

Conclusions:

- The terms *elder/bishop/pastor* are used of the same local New Testament office.
- The Holy Spirit inspired men to use *different terms* understood by those in different areas.
- Pastors are referred to as *ruling* and *teaching*.
- The Greek term *bishop* indicates the pastor is a *man of authority who is responsible to a higher power*.
- Bishops are referred to as *caring* for the church, *teaching* the Scriptures, and *protecting* the flock, as an *officer* of the local church.
- The *qualifications* for bishops *stress strong leadership*.

- The term *bishop* and *elder* are used of the same men in Second Timothy 3:1, 2 and Second Timothy 5:17, 19.
- If the Bible demands a *board of elders* other than pastors, it also demands a *board of bishops*.
- The fact that Jesus is referred to as the “*Chief Shepherd*” indicates the pastor is the under-shepherd in the local church, when taken in the context of the chapter. (First Peter 5:1-5)

The Ministry involves...

- Teaching believers - (Ephesians. 4:11-16)
- Preaching the Word - (Second Tim. 4:2-4)
- Taking the oversight - (First Peter 5:2)
- Shepherding the flock - (Acts 20:28)
- Ruling/leading well - (First Timothy. 5:17)
- Being an example - (First Peter 5:3)



If this list is not about pastors, what do pastors do?

Verse 2 - “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”

Blameless

All Christians are commanded to be blameless. Philippians 2:15 says, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

The word means, “To take hold of.” There must be nothing in the pastor's life anyone can take hold of to tear down the ministry or the church.

Even as an unsaved Pharisee, Paul said in Philippians 3:6 that concerning the law, he was “...blameless.” In verse ten, we read the deacon must be “...found blameless.” When writing to Titus, Paul expanded a little concerning being blameless. He said, “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.” (Titus 1:7)

The Husband of One Wife

Notice it does not say, the wife of one husband. Women who hold the position of a pastor in this age of apostasy, do so in direct disobedience to the Word of God. It says the pastor must be “...the husband of one wife.” Concerning marriage, Jesus said, “And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mark 10:8-9)



The context of this portion of Scripture has to do with the fact that “...the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.*” (Verse 2) In verse four we read, “*Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.*” We read in verse five, “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.*”

Finally, Jesus said, “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not **man** put asunder.*” (Verse 9) **Moses was a man!** Moses made many mistakes. This was one of them. Again, the Bible says, “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not **man** put asunder.*”

The subject of divorce and remarriage is a complicated subject; however, a child who is old enough to read, can understand that the Word of God says no man can pastor a church if he has been married, divorced, and remarried if his first wife is still living.

 **Vigilant** - The dictionary says vigilant means “...to keep watch.” The Greek word carries the idea of being “...Temperate.” First Peter 5:8 says, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*” The pastor must have control of his emotions, under the extreme pressures of the position of a pastor.

 **Sober** - This does not mean that he cannot have a sense of humour. The truth is, he better have a sense of humour. It means that he does not act in a foolish manner that would cheapen the cause of Christ.

 **Of good behavior** - The Greek word translated “good” has been translated “modest” in First Timothy 2:9 where we read, “*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.*” The dictionary says modest is “*Having or proceeding from a reluctance to call attention to oneself.*” The Greek word “*kosmios*” means “*well-ordered, becoming,*” and “*dignified.*”

 **Given to hospitality** - Sincere members in the local church need to know that the pastor will

receive them and will reach out to them in Christian love.

 **Apt to teach** - The pastor must be a student of the Book, and be able to explain and apply the message of the Book to those who hear him speak. The Greek word also implies that the pastor must be teachable. There are few things more harmful to a local church than a pastor who thinks he knows it all.

 **It was to the pastor that Paul said**, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (Second Timothy 2:15)

 **Not given** (to have) **to wine** - Barnes Notes On The New Testament reads, “*Not ready to quarrel and offer wrong, as one in wine.*” In the previous verse we read the pastor is to be “...**given** to hospitality” and has to do with how he will respond to people. When the Bible says the pastor is not to be given to wine, it also has to do with not responding as one does who is given to wine. One who is given to wine is not in control of his facilities.

Proverbs 23:31 says, “*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*” There is absolutely no doubt that the Bible teaches that Christians are not to drink fermented wine.

 **No striker** - Literally, “*Not looking for a fight.*” The pastor is not to be a man looking for battles. If he preaches the Word as commanded, the battles will come and he must “...earnestly contend for the faith.” (Jude 1:3); however, contending for the faith and having a mean spirit are two different things.

 **Not greedy of filthy lucre** - Proverbs 15:27 says, “*He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house.*” The word “*lucre*” means “*to enjoy monetary gain.*” The man who is greedy for monetary gain is disqualified from the position of a pastor. First Timothy 6:10 says, “*For **the love of money** is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced*



themselves through with many sorrows.” Ananias and Sapphira were too concerned about money, and it cost them their lives.

It is right and proper for a church to provide for their pastor. First Timothy 5:17 says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

Many churches fail to have the blessings God would like to bestow upon them because they do not take care of the pastor financially.



Patient - The pastor must be able to remain calm in spite of the opposition and discouraging situations that will come his way. In Second Corinthians 11:13, Paul had to deal with “false apostles and deceitful workers” who were inside the churches. In verses twenty-three we read he was whipped and put in prison.

In verses 24-27, he said, “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

In verse twenty-eight he said, “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” In verses 32-33 he said the governor had “...the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.” The pastor must be patient. He must be able to take criticism without responding in anger.



Not a brawler - The pastor while contending for the faith must not be contentious. The Greek literally reads, “Not disposed to fight.”



Not covetous - The word *covet*, means to desire what belongs to another. The first thing we are commanded not to covet is found in Exodus 20:17, where it says, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's

house...” The list includes thy neighbour's, wife...manservant...maidservant...ox...ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.”

The pastor must not covet what is not his, including a ministry that God has given to another pastor. One of the greatest mistakes a pastor can make is to focus on the number of people that another pastor has and covet a numerical growth. It is very important for the pastor to realize his main responsibility as a pastor is not a numerical growth, but a spiritual growth in the people God has given him.

The pastor must feed the sheep God has given him rather than coveting sheep he does not have. Again, this does not mean as a Christian he should not be concerned about leading people to Christ.

It means as a pastor his first responsibility is to feed the sheep.



His family - “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” It is the responsibility of the pastor to be in charge of the local church.

The pastor is commanded to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, **taking the oversight thereof.**”

First Peter 5:2 and First Timothy 5:17 refer to “...the elders that **rule** well...” Hebrews 13:7 says Christians are to “Remember them which have the **rule** over you.” Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey them that have the **rule** over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls.”

If the pastor is not “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity,” he is disqualified from being a pastor. God's Word continues, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” In Ephesians 5:22 God commands, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”



If a man has a wife who will not submit to him in his role as the leader in the home or has children who are not in subjection, he is not qualified to pastor a local church.



Not a novice - "new convert." A Christian must be thoroughly grounded before he is placed in the pastorate. Verse six says the pastor cannot be "...a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." In Mark chapter four, Jesus said when the Word is sown "Satan cometh." Concerning the person who is not grounded in the Word Jesus said, they, "...have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."



Verse 7 - "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

The pastor must have a good reputation with the unsaved concerning his morals, his finances, and his honesty. His manner of life must be such as not to bring reproach to the cause of Christ. Satan always has a snare laid in hope of catching the pastor of every church. In Acts 20:28 **it was to the pastor that Paul said**, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." Peter held the position of an apostle, and he was later a pastor. It was to Peter that Jesus said, "...behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." (Luke 22:31)

THE DEACONS

Verse 8 - "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;"



Be grave - To be grave means they must be sober-minded men. They should be men who will inspire respect.



Not doubletongued - Not doubletongued literally means not uttering the same thing twice. In other words, the deacon will need to keep quiet about church problems that are discussed between the deacons and the pastor. To be doubletongued also means to be deceitful. The deacon cannot express

his loyalty to the pastor and then live deceitfully concerning his promise of support.



Not given to much wine - It is not suggesting that the deacon can have a little wine. Proverbs 23:31 says, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

One thing is certain: the deacon will need wisdom in handling his God-given responsibilities. The key word in understanding this command is the word "given."

The deacon is not to be given over to the loss of control as one on much wine is given over. Paul used the same analogy in Ephesians 5:18 where we read, "And be not drunk with wine, **wherein is excess**; but be filled with the Spirit;" He was not saying we could drink wine as long as it wasn't in excess. He was saying wine is the cause of surpassing God's specified limits of control.

He said, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;" and in contrast he said we're to be "...filled with the Spirit;" To be filled with the Spirit is to be led by the Spirit. Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."



Not greedy of filthy lucre - The pastor and the deacons would be handling the funds of the local church. It was important that neither are greedy or guilty of coveting money.

A VERY IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION

Verse 9 - "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

This is a very important, overlooked, and misunderstood qualification for the position of a deacon. To understand the importance of this verse it is necessary to have an understanding of what is meant by "...the mystery," and it is necessary to have an understanding of what is meant by "...the faith."





THE MYSTERY

When the Word of God reveals a mystery it reveals a sacred secret that was not previously known. For example in Mark 4:11 Christ said to His disciples, “*Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.*” That secret had to do with the Jews, and only the Jews. I had nothing in common with the secret that was revealed to Paul.

PAUL’S MYSTERY

In Romans 16:25 Paul referred to his as “*my gospel.*” The phrase simply means “*good news.*” Paul said, “*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, (my good news) and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.*”

- **In Ephesians 3:3 Paul’s said,** “...by revelation he (Christ) made known unto me the mystery.”
- **In Ephesians 3:4 Paul’s desire was that,** “...ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.”
- **In Ephesians 3:9 Paul Paul’s ministry was,** “...to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”
- **In Ephesians 6:19 Paul’s desire was,** “...that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery...”
- **In Colossians 1:26 Paul’s referred to** “...the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”
- **In Colossians 4:3 Paul asked for prayer,** “...that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.”

Referring to the council meeting at Jerusalem where they were trying to figure out how God wanted things done Paul said, “*But of these who seemed to be somewhat...in conference added nothing to me.*”

Paul had received this revelation straight from Christ. The men at Jerusalem could argue all day but they had no new information for him. He said, “*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (Galatians 1:12)

In First Timothy 3:9 Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said one of the qualifications for deacons in the local church was, and still is, that they would be, “*Holding (hanging on to) the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*”

“THE FAITH?”

In First Timothy 4:1 we are told that “*...the latter times some shall depart from the faith...*” It is obvious that this is not referring to salvation. It is referring to the system of truth that is held by those who are followers of Christ. The new system of truth that was revealed to Paul was the fact that God’s program was now going to be done in local churches.

UNDERSTANDING PAUL’S MINISTRY

Immediately after Paul was saved we read in Acts 9:6 “*And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*”

A VERY IMPORTANT TIMELINE

1. **He went to Damascus looking for,** “...any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”
2. **He met Christ,** “...as he journeyed, he came near Damascus...”
3. **After he met with Ananias and received his sight and was,** “...filled with the Holy Ghost,...
4. **Verse 17 says,** “...Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.”
5. **Verse 20 says,** “...straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”
6. **Verse 22 says Saul,** “...confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.” He continued preaching for “...many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.”
7. **Verse 25 tells us,** “Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.”
8. **He then travelled about 100 miles to Arabia.** “Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.” (Galatians 1:17)
9. **In Galatians 1:18 we read,** “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”
10. **Acts 9:26,27 tell us, when Saul came to Jerusalem,** “...he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”
11. **Acts 9:28,29 tells us,** “...he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.”
12. **Paul’s life was in danger so the Believers in Jerusalem,** “...brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.”

We do not know how long he spent in Tarsus. The next we hear of him is in Acts 11:25 when the local church at Antioch was getting organized, “*Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul.*”



Paul was the only person on earth who knew about the new system of faith we now know as the local church dispensation.

A NEW DISPENSATION AND A NEW SET OF INSTRUCTIONS:

Paul left Damascus and traveled over 100 miles to the same area where Moses had received instructions for the dispensation of the Law. We read in Galatians 1:11-12 Paul said, “*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

How long he was alone with God in Arabia is uncertain. Paul said in Galatians 1:17, “*I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*” Perhaps, like Moses, he was forty days on the mountain receiving instructions.

Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God...*” Paul met with Christ and learned one of God’s secrets. This secret had to do with the local church dispensation. Paul started at Antioch and then spent the rest of his life revealing “*...how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*” (First Timothy 3:15).

THE MYSTERY

Ephesians 3:3 - “*How that by revelation He (Christ) made known unto me the mystery...*”

Ephesians 3:4 - “*...ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery...*”

Ephesians 3:5 - “*Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*”

Ephesians 3:6 - “*That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body...*” (Colossians 1:18, ‘...the body, the church...’)

Ephesians 3:9 - “*And to make all men (Jews included) see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.*”

“The universal church virus has been the major promoter of the apostasy we face today.”

DEACONS' QUALIFICATIONS INCLUDED UNDERSTANDING THIS MYSTERY

Verse 9 - “*Holding (hanging on to) the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*”

THE MYSTERY WAS THE NEW SYSTEM

Again, in First Timothy 3:9 the phrase “*the faith,*” is not referring to salvation. It obviously refers to the system of truth itself rather than faith concerning salvation. The faith (system of truth) has to do with “*...how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*” (First Timothy 3:15) The pillar and ground of the truth had previously been the Jewish Temple.

When Paul gave this qualification for deacons, it required he was capable of “*Holding the mystery of the faith.*” He was saying that the deacon must have a very “*pure*” (no mixture) understanding of the difference between the dispensation of the Law and the new dispensation of the local church.

TODAY’S DEACONS MUST UNDERSTAND THE ERROR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH DOGMA

First Timothy 4:1 warns us that “*...in the latter times some shall depart from the faith...*” In our day of apostasy, this qualification for deacons requires that they have a clear understanding of the difference between the unscriptural so-called universal church and the local church.

The universal church virus has been the major promoter of the apostasy we face today. The deacons needs to have a very clear understanding that God’s system for presenting the work of God today is the local church, and only the local church. According to Strong’s Concordance “*conscience*” here means “*to understand or become aware, to be conscious or informed of something*”

Verse 10 - “*And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.*”

First be proved? - The Greek word means “*to test,*” and it specifically refers to being tested concerning the deacons' ability to “*hold onto*” the truth of the local church.



Every place where Paul established local churches, the Jews followed him in an attempt to convince the new members of local churches that they must go back under the law of Moses, if they were to be truly saved.

The first four qualifications for deacons were obvious and needed not to be tested.

- 1) - “...the deacons be grave.”
- 2) - “...not doubletongued.”
- 3) - “...not given to much wine.”
- 4) - “...not greedy of filthy lucre.”

Unlike the four things listed above, it would not be obvious if the deacon was capable of “*Holding* (hanging on to) *the mystery of the faith* (body of truth concerning the local church) *in a pure conscience.*” therefore, Paul said, “*And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.*” It was very important at the beginning of the local church age that the deacons understood “*the mystery.*”

It is also very important that pastors and deacons have an understanding of how it pertains to us today. It is not enough for the deacon to say he takes a strong stand against the flood of para-church ministries that have dwarfed the local church. He must be able to Scripturally know why he takes the position he takes. There is MUCH confusion and apostasy reigns because this important teaching has been neglected.

THE DEACON’S WIFE

Verse 11 - “*Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.*”

It is noteworthy that qualification for deacons includes that the wives of deacons must be “...grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.” The pastor’s wife is not mentioned in this manner; however, verse four says the pastor must be “*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*” If the pastor does not rule his own family well or a deacon’s wife is a slanderer and unfaithful in things concerning the ministry, it is very obvious the church will soon be in trouble.

Verses 12,13 - “*Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*”

The deacons are servants and as servants they have “...purchase (acquired) to themselves a good degree.” In John 13:5 concerning Jesus, we read that “...he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” God’s greatest position for Christians is the position of the servant. In Philippians 2:7 it says even Christ Himself, “...took upon him the form of a servant.”

A GOOD POSITION

A good degree - This phrase refers to a step of advancement in the Christian life. The position of a deacon is referred to as an “*office*” twice in this one chapter. Concerning the pastor, Paul also said, “*This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*”

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

There are many different positions of responsibility in life. There are fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, kings, governors, pastors, deacons, etc. We know that “*God is no respecter of persons:*” (Acts 10:34) We are commanded not to respect one person above another. James 2:1 says, “*My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.*”

GOD IS A RESPECTER OF POSITIONS

The Bible, however, is very clear about our having respect for *positions*. For example, Ephesians 6:2 says, “*Honour thy father and mother...*” Romans 13:1 says, “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*”

- **Mark 3:14** - “...he **ordained** twelve...”
- **Acts 14:23** - “...**ordained** them elders...”
- **First Timothy 2:7** - “I am **ordained** a preacher...”
- **Hebrews 8:3** - “For every high priest is **ordained** ...”
- **Titus 1:5** - “...**ordain** elders in every city.”
- **Luke 1:8** - “...the priest’s **office.**”
- **Romans 11:13** - “...I magnify mine **office.**”
- **First Timothy 3:1** - “...the **office** of a bishop.”



- **First Timothy 3:10** - “...the **office** of a deacon.”
- **First Timothy 3:13** - “...the **office** of a deacon.”
- **Hebrews 7:5** - “... the **office** of the priesthood.”

Verse 13 - “For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, (step to a position) and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Verses 14,15 - “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

IT WAS WRITTEN FOR THE PASTOR

This is the key verse in First Timothy. We know the purpose of Paul’s writing was that every pastor may know, “...how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” In keeping the things said in this book within there context, it is important to remember that the Book was not directed to the people, it was written for the pastor.

First Timothy 1:2 begins with the words, “Unto Timothy.” Chapter 3:15 is referring to the pastor’s behaviour (the manner of conducting oneself) in his position as a pastor.

Paul said, “These things write I unto thee, (Timothy) hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou (Timothy) oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Verse 16 - “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

As previously stated, the mystery here includes the fact that God was taking the Gospel to the Gentiles by means of the local church which was now to be “...the pillar and ground of the truth.” Colossians 1:26 says, “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:”

THE NEW DISPENSATION

The mystery of godliness - In the Old Testament dispensation, the major focus was on

God the Father. In the local church age, the focus changes to God the Son. Referring to Christ, we read, “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Second Peter 1:3 says, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him (Christ) that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

The fact that the good news was now to be “...preached unto the Gentiles” was one of the “great” things which constituted the “mystery.” During the Old Testament dispensation a wall of partition had divided the Jewish and Gentile worlds. The plan of redemption is now adapted to “whosoever will.”

Ephesians 2:13,14 says, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off (Gentiles) are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;”

After Christ died on the cross, we read in Matthew 27:51, “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” Now, unlike the times prior to Calvary, we read in Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”



“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”

(Matthew 27:51)