

A few minute ago we read the entire third chapter of 1Timothy. The title of the sermon comes from verse 15: “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.” (1Ti 3:15)

This verse is packed with meaning that should be tasted, savored, chewed, swallowed and digested. I have preached from this text many times and am not going to focus on it so much today, except some few introductory remarks and the third sermon point.

By way of introduction, we might say these things. There is an institution that we call the church that is called the House of God, or the temple of God. There is no more temple in Jerusalem, nor will there ever be, for the law and the prophets have passed away, We do not offer bloody offerings, but spiritual, living sacrifices in our worship of the Lord, who shed His blood, not on a Jewish altar, but outside the camp of Israel on Mt. Golgotha.

There is also a behavior that is expected of the officers of the church as an example to the flock of God and that behavior is described briefly in this chapter. This chapter is by no means exhaustive and must not be taken apart from the rest of scripture, but it is sufficient for our uses this morning. I want to speak of three things today. I. The requirements common to all officers of the church, pastors, elders, deacons. II. The particular duty of deacons. III. The Nature of the Church requiring these duties and the character of her officers.

I. The Common Requirements. Verse 8 says “likewise.” Our Constitution, drawing on the Order of Worship of the RCUS makes this statement about the requirements for deacons: “The apostle Paul, writing on this subject, in his first Epistle to Timothy, expressly requires of them the same virtues which are needful for the office of elder.” So I have tried to summarize the basic requirements that would apply to the offices in general. I suspect that all of these things can be grouped under four solid virtues:

A. They are to be “blameless.” This is said explicitly of both offices.

1. They should have no moral or character flaw that would compromise their ability to do their office.
2. This does not mean that they are totally without sin, for there are no such people. Nit pickers can always find fault, but that is not what the apostle Paul is saying here. He is to be of modest behavior, sober and sensible. This speaks of a flaw that would destroy his ability to get his job done and to be an example to the people of God.

B. They are to be friendly, outgoing, disciplined. Given to hospitality. Not hostile, suspicious, argumentative. They are under discipline themselves, not out of control or unbalanced. They should be respectable men, with a good reputation among good people outside the congregation.

C. They are not to be novices. The snare of the devil: pride. “newly come to the faith.” They are to be seasoned, who have moved along the pathway to spiritual maturity. They have

added virtue to their faith, and are blameless. They have added knowledge to their virtue thus avoided spiritual weakness and being unrighteous in judgment.

They have added some temperance to their knowledge, being able to see something of the manifold wisdom of God and not filtering everything through one filter. And they have added patience to their temperance, for being under control for a few seconds is not worth much. Seasoned means they have proved themselves in a measured, disciplined life that can serve the church of Jesus Christ and not themselves and their own agenda. They are able to esteem other better than themselves.

D. They are to be simple and transparent. What you see is what you get.

1. “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,” is said of deacons;
2. Verse 3 amplifies this idea: 3 “Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous...”
3. He doesn’t have a secret life and a secret agenda. A “pure” conscience means that he is not double minded. The impure is mixed with something else. He desires to please the Lord by serving the church. It is as simple as that. He will therefore listen, speak plainly, and will be consistent and dependable.
4. The wisdom that is from above is first “pure” James tells us. It is not adulterated with another agenda of self promotion, secret desires, or hidden motives.

II. The particular duty of Deacons. Vs.12, 13.

- A. A special caution is given concerning the wives of deacons. They are not to be silly slanderers but sober and serious [grave]. This does not mean that the wives of elders are to be silly and slanderers, but that there might very well be a special temptation to the wives of deacons.
- B. I would suggest, perhaps, that this is because of the nature of the office of deacon: who are involved in physical ordinary things of the government of the church; tables and food, and relief of the poor; the nuts and bolts of the church. The very things that occupy the lives of mothers and wives every day. My wife know a bunch more about that stuff in our home than I do. The wise deacon will use this ability of his wife to advantage. I would much rather have our wives set the tables than their husbands—and decorate the fellowship hall and fix a meal for the needy. Deacon’s wives should be an example to the flock.
- C. This is not to denigrate the value of women in the spiritual life of the church, but great spiritual understanding and virtue is often more displayed and often more in danger in the everyday, ordinary things.

D. Deacons as well as elders must have experience in management, and the most common way of gaining this experience is in the home and the management of a household.

1. In ordinary things: payment of bills, dealing with suppliers, etc.
2. In crises: rebellious children, sinful behavior, etc. Are these things handled with temperance, wisdom, kindness, and truth?
3. Vs. 13. “Used the office of a deacon ell purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith....” They will be honored and have standing and influence; they will have boldness in the faith; confidence. These things are necessary for mature service in the church.
4. They are therefore not to despise their office, but to use it well. They are not to be slothful and careless, but diligent in their business and the business of the church.

III. Finally, the Greatness of the Calling demands this good behavior. The church is the Temple of God.

A. It is therefore holy, set a part to God, and is not to be taken lightly.

1. God’s name and his things are not to be taken in vain. Not only is God’s name holy and undefiled, but His things, his doctrine, his worship, his service are not to be in vanity and carelessness. Pr 12:24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute. There is more than one way to take God’s name in vain, and one is to do His work negligently.
2. The wicked servant did not use his pound diligently, neither did the man with the talent in that other parable. They were both called wicked servants, the one with the talent was also called slothful.

B. It is therefore precious. How precious is the truth. God has honored the church by giving it this ministry to the world; not just to the sons of Abraham, but to the world.

1. Pr 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.
2. Ps 133:2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; How precious is the unity of the people of God! Don’t think it cheap, for it was bought by the blood of Christ; do not cast it away for a bauble.
3. Pr 3:15 [Wisdom] is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

4. Most of all:
 - a. 2Pe 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
 - b. 1Pe 2:6, 7: Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner....
 - c. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot

I would make three applications:

1. Those in office should take their office very seriously and magnify it. Not themselves, but the office and treat it with the honor it deserves, faithfully and honorably.
2. Those who are not in office and to be willing and obedient to enable those in office to do their job well. They should not throw stumbling blocks in the way or raise needless or trivial objections that the great cause of Christ be not sullied by constant bickering and strife.
3. You and I are under the rule of Christ, and He has chosen to rule us by these offices filled by people just like you and me, who have walked with the Lord and have shown sobriety and seriousness in that walk. We now have seven good men along with the minister on the Consistory of the church. You have chosen well, and now we trust the Lord to lead us along the way. May the rule of Christ be seen in this congregation and the scripture fulfilled in us in terms of all Christian behavior in His church: Ephesians 5:
 - 14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.
 - 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
 - 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
 - 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.
 - 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
 - 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ;

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Amen and Amen. May God bless you.