

I Timothy 3, Sermon #24

I Timothy 3

Theme of I Timothy – “Sound doctrine for church conduct” – how a church should

1. behave itself
2. operate

I Timothy 3 – deals specifically with the leadership of the Church

First half of the chapter – elders – which we have already covered

Second half – deacons

So far, on the deacons, we looked at how they came about – Acts 6

And last time, we looked at vs. 8 and the four qualifications

I have entitled this series “The Elders and the Deacons, God’s Leadership Team for the Church” – Part 3

I Timothy 3:8

Let us stand for the reading of God’s Holy Word

I Timothy 3:8-13

Let us pray

You may be seated

The Elders and Deacons, God's Leadership Team for the Church

Our **Fifth** qualification for the office of Deacon is in verse 9. **Verse 9**

We know what a mystery is – something we cannot figure out. In the Bible, the word *mystery* means “truth once hidden but now revealed by God.”

What is “the mystery of the faith?”

The answer is found in the word faith.

Faith defines the content of the mystery.

The New Testament speaks of the “mystery of God,” “mystery of Christ”, “mystery of the gospel,” and “mystery of Godliness” – vs. 16.

Here in vs. 9 he says, “...the mystery of the faith.”

“The faith” means the entire body of Christian doctrine.

The “mystery“ is defined, then, as the objective body of truth of which the Christian faith is comprised

So, the mystery of the faith is the New Testament revelation – 27 books of the New Testament

These doctrines were not revealed in the Old Testament – glimpses of them – but they were revealed in the New Testament

God has divulged the glorious, divine secrets of redemption to us.

It was a mystery.

It encompasses:

- the Incarnation of Christ – God becoming flesh and dwelling among us
- the sacrifice of the Lamb of God – Jesus Christ
- the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God in believers – man becoming the temple of God

- the saving Gospel, and
- the rapture of the Church
- the Church itself

This was all a mystery – but God has revealed this body of truth unto man

Now let me put two and two together – vs. 9 – this is important – key

Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure or clear conscience:

This means a man's life and this New Testament teaching must match.

A Christian cannot hold to the faith with a pure conscience and live in sexual immorality, be stealing, be in bitterness, using foul language, doing drugs, having an undisciplined eye, be in pornography, or mistreating a spouse.

★The New Testament never allows people to separate life and doctrine.

This is exactly what we see in Christianity today. ★

Whenever we knowingly act in a way that is contrary to God's Word and do not seek His forgiveness, we defile our conscience.

Every time we violate our conscience, we weaken its convicting power therefore making sin easier to commit.

The conscience is man's inner awareness of his own actions.

The conscience is a human faculty given by God to every person, which is designed to warn each person when they have violated moral law (cf. Rom. 2:14-15).

How many of us – our conscience has convicted us?

The deacon must have a clear conscience in relation to the Word of God.

A deacon must hold steadfastly to the Christian faith and live consistently with its beliefs.

A pure conscience indicates a pure life.

Deacons must know Christian doctrine and obey it with a good conscience.

- A deacon who does not *know* the Word of God cannot manage the affairs of the church of God.
- A deacon who does not *live* the Word of God, but has a “defiled conscience,” cannot serve the church of God. He is disqualified.

A deacon must hold the Bible **with a clear conscience**, that is, a conscience that does not accuse him.

Now, the **Sixth Qualification** – vs. 10 – this qualification demands examination,
I Timothy 3:10

The word “also” must not go unnoticed.

“And these also” refers back to the overseers mentioned in the previous section (3:1-7).
The elders must also be proved, tested, examined

The examination of deacons

The text plainly states that no one can serve as a deacon until “first tested” (examined) and approved – considerable amount of time in the congregation

It is important for deacons to be examined regarding their fitness for office.

An unfit deacon can cause many problems in the church and hurt innocent people.

Verse 10 tells us that the deacons are already performing before they are chosen.

They do not get the office and then begin to serve or begin to live holy.

They are already living a holy life – “Thou has been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things”

Verse 10 implies watching their lives and seeing how they conduct themselves – they have a testimony among us.

It always weakens the testimony of a local church when a person who has not been proved is made an officer of the church.

He will probably do more harm than good if you give him an office in the church.

It is worth noting that quite a few leaders mentioned in the Bible were first tested as servants:

- Joseph was a servant in Egypt for thirteen years before he became a second ruler in the land.
- Moses cared for sheep for forty years before God called him.
- Joshua was Moses' servant before he became Moses' successor.
- David was tending his father's sheep when Samuel invited him to be anointed king of Israel.

Even our Lord Jesus came as a servant and labored as a carpenter; and the Apostle Paul was a tentmaker.

First a servant, then a leader

Now, what about this examination process!

Every prospective deacon must be evaluated by others.

The idea here is for others to officially examine and evaluate the deacon's character.

Just airplane pilots, doctors are officially examined before they are licensed – deacons are examined before they're “licensed”

★But how is a prospective deacon actually to be examined? What are the procedures?★

The New Testament is silent on these specific matters.

Because the Bible provides no detailed procedures for examination of deacon candidates, different churches will develop different procedures.

Whatever way a church does it – the requirements of Scripture are that

1. the deacon candidate meet all Biblical qualifications
2. the deacon candidate must be examined as to those qualifications
3. no deacon candidate be appointed to office in a hasty, careless manner
(I Timothy 5:22)

Although detailed procedures are left to the discernment of the local church, certain key, general elements should be part of any examination or confirmation process.

Let me briefly examine some of these elements for orderly examination.

First of all, the elders should direct the process

Elders oversee the direction of the church including the examination of deacons-to-be

So in vital matters as important as examining and appointing deacons, the elders should direct the entire examination process.

The elders have the authority, position, and knowledge to move the church forward. They know its needs, and they know the people.

Furthermore, the elders are responsible to decide if additional deacons are needed and to initiate the process of selecting them.

Because the elders are to take the lead in examination procedures does not suggest that the congregation is left out of the evaluation process.

New Testament elders should never act like dictators.

Rather, they actively lead as loving pastors among God's people.

They must listen to, consult with, and seek the wisdom of their fellow believers.

A good shepherding body also wants an educated, involved congregation – not a passive one.

Everyone in the church is to know these qualifications and is also obligated to see that these Biblical instructions are implemented.

Some people in the congregation may have information about a prospective deacon that the elders do not have, so their input in the evaluation process is essential

Business dealings are shady or crooked?

Sometimes what we see on Sunday is not really what the person is like.

Now, people must give scriptural reasons for their objections.

Part of the examination process should include—**questioning and instructing the deacon candidate**

They should inquire about his beliefs, interests, family, and commitment of time

They should clarify to the candidate what work he will be expected to do.

Acts 6:3 – look among you for seven men of honest report [qualifications] whom we may appoint over this business – waiting tables – what they would be doing

In Scripture, no specifics are given as to the duties of deacons – they were to carry out whatever was assigned to them by the elders

After the elders give their final approval, the candidate should be publicly installed into office.

This whole process should be bathed in prayer

Sadly, too many churches expend no time and effort in examining prospective deacons or elders

After the person is examined and meets the qualification, he then is officially and publicly placed into the new position by prayer and the laying on of hands

We call this process ordination

By laying hands on a candidate for the ministry, church leaders show their unity and support.

Now, those who ordain an unworthy man to the ministry share the responsibility for his sin.

The early church took ordination very seriously.

In Acts, we read that prayer and fasting accompanied the setting apart of men for the ministry.

The laying on of hands was the way to recognize people who were being appointed or commissioned for special work.

#7 – This examination process needs to qualify the man that he has been living and serving in a way that cannot be questioned – verse 10 – unaccused

No one could call him into question – spotless life

Even though deacons are not given the authority of elders, they still must meet certain qualifications.

Any Christian man who is inconsistent with these qualifications and the New Testament Bible, cannot be a deacon

Let us stand for closing invitation

The Bible also tells us to examine ourselves to see if we are really in the faith

Are you saved?

Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ?

Do you remember a time when you were under conviction of sin and in need of the
Savior?

Salvation is not found in being good or church attendance

Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone

Have you asked Him to forgive you? Save your soul?

Christian, if our living for the Lord were to be examined, would we be found blameless?

What areas could people point out?

What area does our own conscience point out?

Deny ourselves – submit ourselves to the Word of God

Let us confess and repent of any sin and be right with God today

A man should not be shoved into office a month after he joins a church and before he
has proved that he is the type of man that Scripture has described here.