

***“Paul’s First Letter to Timothy –  
Good Ministers of Truth Make the Difference in Dark Times”***

***Last Time: “A Heavenly Service Requires Heavenly Minded Leaders”***

***Today: “Good Ministers of Truth Make the Difference in Dark Times”  
(1 Tim. 4:1-11)***

***Review:***

- ***Church Officers Must Be Heavenly Minded***
- ***Church Officers Must Be Exemplary***
- ***Paul’s Heavenly Standard for His Son in the Faith, Timothy, is High Indeed***
  
- ***Church Officers Must Be Heavenly Minded and Exemplary***
  - ***Elders (called both overseers & bishops elsewhere - the same office, it seems under different names)***

***1 Tim. 3:1-5***

1 This [is] a true saying, If a man desire the office of a **bishop**, he desireth a good work.

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

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

- ***Then we see the deacons (or servants) addressed with a similar list:***

***1 Tim. 3:8-13***

8 Likewise [must] the **deacons** [be] grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9 **Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.**

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a **deacon**, being [found] blameless.

11 **Even so [must their] wives [be] grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.**

12 **Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.**

**13 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.**

- ***This is a serious list as well. Those that would serve in this office must surely be heavenly minded as the office demands it. If we put the various lists together just considering the elders alone there are at least 15 qualifications for an elder or overseer. For deacons they are similar but there are a few differences we should take note of:***

- ***Most important here is this: “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.” And then this is added in 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.” [We will look at this closely today, but for now notice that this is listed for deacons. I believe it is assumed for teachers (chapter 3 indicates this) but for deacons it is added here to underscore its importance. Though teaching well is omitted from the list for deacons, this reference is included. Deacons may not be teachers but they are to know well the word of truth, the knowledge of the Mystery! Amen. What a difference it would make if the deacons (servants) in the assemblies were so knowledgeable!***

- ***A requirement regarding wives is also included here. They are, like the bishops or elders, to be “one women sort of men”. This is not about monogamy most likely but about character. Divorce and remarriage is prohibited but this is about something more serious indeed even than that. Good character implies monogamy but monogamy does not necessarily ensure good character.***

- ***Summary: - if we put the lists together, there are over 15 items not counting the ones for deacons!! Who can meet all of these requirements? Who? Is Paul being totally unrealistic here?***

- ***The total list of requirements for church leaders counting all given for elder, bishop, overseer, and deacon is very long indeed: (24 or more). I have highlighted here some where we might perhaps spend more time:***

1. **Blameless**
2. **the husband of one wife**
3. **Children, faithful and in subjection with all seriousness**  
(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)
4. **Holy**
5. **Of good report of those who are without the church lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**
6. **Not a novice lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil**
7. **Apt to teach**
8. **Stewards of God**
9. **Holding fast the faithful word and able to convince others.**
10. *Vigilant*
11. *Temperate*
12. *Lover of good men*
13. *Sober*
14. *Just*
15. *Patient*
16. *Of good behaviour*
17. *Given to hospitality*
18. **Not given to filthy lucre**
19. **Not covetous**
20. *Not given to wine*
21. *Not a brawler*
22. *Not self-willed*
23. *Not soon angered*
24. *No striker*

- **How are such long lists of qualifications to be understood? Can anyone truly meet such a list successfully? Well, yes, of course, or Paul would not have written these letters! The apostle is speaking of character and overall pattern of living, not perfection here. So, he writes that these qualification should be honored not optionally but as a requirement for godly and an exalted and heavenly manner of service.**

### **Introduction:**

- **Paul exhorts Timothy to lead in the churches as an example to be followed by all. We could read more of this in other places such as in 1 Tim. 6 or 2 Tim. 1. For example:**

***[READ ] 2 Tim. 1:4-8***

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

- ***The overall theme then is clear. The focus is on Timothy and how he must be a good example for other leaders. All have followed Paul and he was their example. But as time passes, Timothy must be prepared to take the lead.***

**Today's Outline: "Good Ministers of Truth Make the Difference in Dark Times"**

- ***Good Ministers Teach the Mystery of Godliness***
- ***Good Ministers Should Expect Satanic Opposition***
- ***Good Ministers First Nourish Themselves and then the Brethren***

**I. Good Ministers Teach the Mystery of Godliness:**

***[READ ] 1 Tim. 3:14-16***

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

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.

**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.**

- ***Paul's Heavenly Standard for His Son in the Faith, Timothy***
  - ***The knowledge of the Mystery must dominate in ministry and teaching since that is what the apostle Paul was called forth to share. Otherwise there is inevitably such confusion in the churches. We see that in our current day, don't we? The failure to Rightly Divide the Word of Truth has fruit that we see everywhere.***

- *As the apostle wrote in the beginning of this letter,*

**1 Tim. 1:3-4**

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some **that they teach no other doctrine,**

**4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: [so do].**

***Better translated, this would read as I indicated previously,***

**“... that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than the dispensation of God, the one which is in faith: [so do].”**

***And what a difference it would make if instead of endless stories and confusion about the law and what its demands are today, teachers would teach boldly the Dispensation of the Mystery, the administration of the grace of God:***

- ***Verse 16 speaks to that and introduces us to the next chapter too (and it is better to leave the chapter division out in my opinion) - 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.***
- ***To better our understanding of this teaching in verse 16, we could compare these words to those in Col. 1, 1 Cor. 15, and Rom. 1:***

**Col. 1:24-29**

**24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:**

**25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;**

26 [Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

**1 Cor. 15:45** And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit.

- *Christ in his resurrection became “the life giving spirit”. In his resurrection glory, he demonstrated his “godliness”. We can too: “... the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”, Col. 1:27.*
- *We must conclude that God has taken residence in human flesh and has proven it to all, if only they would hear the word of truth. Now, as his workmen, we as members of his body are empowered to display his godliness, and in the living out of that, we would “hold fast the word of that life”!! Amen. Such a great hope this causes to spring forth in us who believe. Such hope.*

**Rom. 1:1-4**

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared [to be] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

**II. Good Ministers Should Expect Satanic Opposition:**

**1 Tim. 3:14-16 [reread for context leaving out the chapter break]**

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

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.

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.

**[READ ] 1 Tim. 4:1-5**

**1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;**

**2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;**

**3 Forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.**

**4 For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:**

**5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**

- ***But this glorious message is contrary to all that the enemy teaches and this teaching will therefore be opposed by him and all his emissaries on every side. God's messengers of grace will be opposed by the strongest foes satan can muster. And their weaponry will be great indeed. Some will even "depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils". Satan's weapons will deceive many since his greatest tools are "lies" of which two in particular are mentioned here. These two are interesting, are they not?***
  - ***What are these "latter times"? This is an expression unique to this teaching here...***
  - ***"Forbidding to marry" & "[and commanding] to abstain from meats" This seems to refer to some kind of satanically inspired asceticism. We do certainly have this in many religions down through history and in many cults today. There is an abundance of it in western cultures.***
  - ***But in opposition to that group of satanic lie is the truthful teaching: "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." So the teaching based on the unlimited grace of God has replaced any teaching of law, especially this perverted and satanic one.***

- *The proper interpretation here, whether of perverse teachings promoted by the Catholic Church even today or of a more general kind of new age spiritism is not straightforward.*
- *But why are there only two singled out here? Your thoughts? Might it be that satan's easiest and presumed most effect attack against the church of God would be in this area?*

### **III. Good Ministers First Nourish Themselves and then the Brethren:**

**[READ ] 1 Tim. 4:6-11**

**6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.**

**7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself [rather] unto godliness.**

**8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.**

**9 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.**

**10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.**

**11 These things command and teach.**

- *The focus ought therefore be on the teaching that promotes true spiritual growth, even godliness. A focus on bodily health cannot give lasting blessing, the apostle takes note of here. Literally, “profits a little” as distinguished from godliness which profits both now and eternally.*
- *The extreme focus on the body and the physical realm with feelings being in the central focus, with most prayer directed towards that realm proves the point. There really is very little emphasis in our day on spiritual growth and understanding and our prayers reflect that,*
- *But the teaching which is “good” always promotes godliness and this is always in the realm of the spirit. It cannot be otherwise. This is Paul’s message in so many places in his letters. Perhaps the greatest of all is in Col. 1:*



**Col. 1:24-29**

24 ... Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 [Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

**27 To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:**

**28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:**

**29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.**

- ***Paul was made a minister of the Mystery! That changed so much for him. Didn't it. He was willing therefore to suffer the loss of all things for the sake of Christ. How much are we willing to loose for his sake and for the sake of those who still have not heard of his wondrous grace and transforming life?***
- ***The implication in these last verses is that the empowering Paul received to carry out his ministry of the word of grace was bestowed through that very word itself and its faithful preaching. Would to God that would be so for us as well. For we live in those dark days he calls here "the last days". We do!***
- ***Amen.***