

Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult

Deacons / Deacons / 1 Timothy 3:8–13

#### Notes

03/08 1 Tim. 3:8-13, "The Profile of the Called," Subtitle: Why the internal life is the engine for external service, Scripture: Psalm 15, Key Concept: We'll look at the specific "shalls" and "shall-nots," to contrast the Elder's requirement to teach with the Deacon's requirement to hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. Communion

---

**Sermon Series:** Acts & Beyond (Week 2 of 4)

**Title:** The Profile of the Called

**Subtitle:** Why the internal life is the engine for external service

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NASB)

**The Goal:** To show us all that the preached mystery needs living proof, so that the whole household of God can embrace and embody it.

#### Introduction

*(Acts 6 Recap)* Imagine you are at a classic car show, and you see a beautifully restored vintage truck. The paint is flawless, the chrome is polished, and the interior is immaculate. On the outside, it looks like it's ready to haul anything you put in the bed. But when the owner turns the key... nothing happens. You pop the hood, and you find a cracked engine block, leaking oil, with spark plugs covered in rust. It doesn't matter how good the truck looks on the outside or how much cargo the bed can technically hold; if the engine is broken, it isn't going anywhere. It's just an expensive lawn ornament.

Last week, as we started our series in Acts chapter 6, we looked at the external "cargo" of the church. The early church was facing a massive functional crisis: the Greek-speaking widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The Apostles realized that the church couldn't fulfill its mission if the practical needs of the body were falling apart. So, they called for seven men, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to manage this vital external service. That was the foundational framework for the office that would be later described by Paul here in our text for the office of the Deacon. The Greek word Paul uses is *diakonos*. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, a *diakonos* was at the bottom of the social ladder—it literally meant a servant, a runner, or one who waits on tables. Acts 6 showed us the critical need for these tasks to be managed.

But today, as we move into 1 Timothy chapter 3, the Apostle Paul is going to pop the hood.

Acts 6 gave us the job description, but 1 Timothy 3 gives us the diagnostic check. We often think of service in the church as simply getting things done—managing the tasks, fixing the problems, and organizing the people. But Paul is about to show us that a shiny exterior isn't enough. God cares just as much about *who* is serving as He does about *how* and *what* is being done. To be a Deacon is to embrace the towel and the basin as Christ did for the Apostles, but it is also a call to profound character.

**In the household of God, the preached Gospel needs living proof.**

*(The Big Idea)*

**Deacons are not just managers of tasks; they are models of truth.**

It is not any less or greater role than the Pastors, but it is unique in purpose. In some ways, it reflects the nature of the Triune God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have unique rolls within the relationship of the Godhead, and at times there is even emphasis overlap in those accepted rolls, yet all three are still fully God. Not one of them is less God, less glorious, less preeminent than another, they are of equal value.

The same is true of God's design for husband and wife. They are of equal parts in the union of one, unique in roll, yet of equal value and importance.

In the same way within the church...

The Pastors are called to proclaim the mystery of the faith, but the Deacons are called to prove it.

When our leaders model this truth in and to the eyes of the church, it gives the entire congregation the blueprint to embrace and embody the Gospel in our everyday lives as we were meant to (Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 2:21).

The office of Deacons is meant to be fulfilled by men who, within the church, are "Models of truth." So, lets see what the Apostle Paul tells Pastor Timothy about these "models of truth" those we know as deacons.

## **I. Models of Truth Refuse Compromise (v. 8)**

*"Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,"*

*(Preach)* If you are going to be a model of truth, your internal engine has to be clean, oiled, lubed, charged, and fueled up.

Paul gives Timothy and us four diagnostic checks to show what it looks like when a leader refuses to live a divided life:

## A. They refuse to treat the sacred casually (v. 8a - Men of Dignity)

- **Concept:** The Greek word is *semnos*, which means carrying a "holy gravity" or being worthy of deep respect. This is not something that is by virtue of their position, it is something that is recognized by virtue of their servicing.
- **Application:** Models of truth (deacons) refuse to treat the church like a casual hobby. They carry a spiritual weight and reverence that commands respect because they take the things, the calling, the serving of God seriously.

## B. They refuse to spin the truth (v. 8b - Not Double-Tongued)

- **Concept:** The Greek word is *dilogos*, literally meaning "two-worded." It describes someone who says one thing to one person and something completely different to another. We consider one who is not that as someone who had integrity.
- **Application:** Integrity means your words don't change based on who is in the room. They refuse double-talk.
- Proverbs 10:19 warns us, "When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise." A double-tongued man has to use a lot of words to keep his stories straight depending on who he is talking to. A model of truth uses fewer words, but ensures they are consistently true.
- You cannot hold the truth of the Gospel if you are constantly spinning your words to please the crowd.

## C. They refuse to surrender control to earthly things (v. 8c - Not Addicted to Much Wine)

- **Concept:** The text uses the Greek word *prosechō*, which means "to give one's mind over to" or "to be addicted." In this verse it describes a mind captivated and controlled by a substance, in this case wine.
- **Application:** They refuse to be controlled, numbed, or influenced by a substance. A model of truth guards the driver's seat of their mind, ensuring that instead of the things of this life, the Holy Spirit is the only one steering their life.

## D. They refuse to profit dishonorably (v. 8d - Not Fond of Sordid Gain)

- **Concept:** The NASB rightly translates the Greek word *aischrokerdēs* (eye-skhro-ker-DAYS) as "sordid gain." It describes a person who is willing to compromise their

ethics, cut corners, or take advantage of others to make a base or shameful profit.

- **Application:** A model of truth must have an undivided financial life. Think of the Pharisees in Mark 7. They created a religious loophole called *Corban*, where they would declare their money and assets as "dedicated to God." Because of this legal loophole, they didn't have to use those funds to care for their aging parents. They looked incredibly generous and religious to the public, but they were actually using the things of God to protect their own wallets and avoid their basic, God-given responsibilities. That is exactly the kind of sordid gain Paul is warning against. A model of truth refuses to play religious shell games with their finances. They refuse to let money dictate their morality.

Instead of these negative things that prevent these deacons, these models of truth from being men of dignity...

## II. Models of Truth Guard the Gospel with a Clean Conscience (v. 9)

*Look at v. 9, "but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."*

*(Preach)* Here in this verse is Paul's deliberate substitution. In verse 2, Paul said Elders must be "able to teach." But here, he doesn't require Deacons to be formal teachers; instead, he requires them to be faithful containers.

They were not expected to just fix the building or balance the budget; they must have a theological grip on the truth, and a heart clean enough to carry it.

### A. They firmly grasp the treasure of the Gospel (v. 9a - Holding to the mystery of the faith)

- **Concept:** In the New Testament, a *mysterion* (mystery) is not a puzzle to be solved, but a divine truth that was once hidden and is now revealed—specifically, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Holding" means to possess it firmly and intimately.
- **Application:** Deacons are not just practical handymen; they are theological guardians. They must deeply know and embrace God's live training of the core truths of Christianity.
- **Illustrate:** soldiers on the battle field and why they needed live-ammo training
- You cannot be a model of a truth if you do not intimately/experientially know it and embrace it.

When they do, their realize the value of it, so they are motivated to...

## **B. They protect that treasure with an undivided heart (v. 9b - With a clear conscience)**

- **Concept:** A conscience (*syneidēsis*; *soon-i-DAY-sis*) is our internal witness—the engine that aligns what we know with what we do. A "clear" (a *katharos*) conscience means there is no hidden friction or unconfessed sin **contradicting** the Gospel they claim to believe.
- **Application:** The "mystery of the faith" is the treasure, but the "clear conscience" is the jar. If the jar is dirty with the compromises of verse 8, it contaminates the treasure in their life's experiences and in the eyes of the watching world. The internal life must strive to align uncompromisingly with the external confession.
- The writer of Hebrews captures this beautifully in Hebrews 13:18: "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things." That perfectly parallels the Deacon's call.
- Your honorable conduct on the outside is manifested by your conscience on the inside.
- You cannot conduct yourself honorably on the outside if you do not have a clear conscience on the inside.

## **III. Models of Truth Prove Their Calling in the Crucible of the Home (v. 10-12)**

*"These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households."*

(Preach) You might be able to in public, but you cannot fake a clear conscience in your own living room. Paul insists that before anyone is handed the public trust of the church, their private life must pass the test. The home is the ultimate proving ground for the internal engine. If the Gospel isn't working under your own roof, it won't work in the church.

### **A. They submit to the scrutiny of time and community (v. 10 - Tested first... beyond reproach)**

- **Concept:** The Greek word *dokimazō* means to test or examine for the purpose of approval. *Anenklētos* means "unaccused."
- **Application:** We must be clear: "beyond reproach" does not mean sinless

perfection. **If perfection were the standard, the communion table would be empty.** The threshold is not a flawless life, but a transparent life. And importantly, this isn't a formal, written theological exam or a probationary period set by a committee.

The "testing" is the general, ongoing observation by the congregation of the man's everyday life

- Think of King David—he was certainly not a flawless man, and he committed terrible sins. But when confronted with his sin, his repentance was so profound and transparent that the New Testament still refers to him as a man after God's own heart. "Beyond reproach" means there is no glaring, unhandled, or unrepentant sin that someone could point to and say, "Hypocrite."
- When a model of truth fails, they own it, repent quickly, and make it right. Their life has a consistent track record where accusations simply don't stick because their integrity is an observed and thereby known quantity.

## **B. They foster integrity in their closest relationships (v. 11 - Women likewise...)**

- **Concept:** Placed directly between the testing of the Deacon (v. 10) and the managing of his household (v. 12), Paul addresses the "women likewise." While some debate if this is a separate office of deaconess, the context strongly tells us otherwise. Paul sandwiches this right in the middle of a section on how a Deacon manages his home. He isn't interrupting his thought to create a random new category; he is addressing the wives who are intimately partnering with these men in ministry. He demands they not be *diabolos* (slanderers/malicious gossips) but instead *pistos* (faithful/trustworthy).
- **Application:** A leader's ministry is inextricably linked to his marriage. A model of truth must be partnered with a spouse who shares that same commitment to integrity. They must cultivate a home built on trustworthiness, actively refusing the toxicity of gossip. The character of the wife is a vital part of the visible proof that the household is healthy.

## **C. They prove their faithfulness in the private sphere (v. 12 - One wife, managing households)**

- **Concept:** A "one-woman man" speaks to absolute marital fidelity and moral purity. *Proistēmi* means to stand before, lead, or direct well.
- **Application:** The highest qualification for public service is private faithfulness. If a leader cannot manage their own children with grace and discipline, or keep their vows to their spouse, they cannot be entrusted with the bride of Christ.

- The practicum (real-world experience) of the Gospel always starts at home.

When this type of internal character and external evidence is realized and recognized for those in the office of deacon...

## IV. Models of Truth Experience the Reward of Faithful Service (v. 13)

*"For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."*

(Preach) Keeping your internal engine clean and refusing compromise is hard work. But Paul tells us that this kind of faithful service is **not** a thankless grind.

**Illustrate:** The hymn writer who wrote "So Send I You to Labor Unrewarded" (often known as "So Send I You") is **E. Margaret Clarkson** (1915–2008), a Canadian educator and poet. She wrote the original, somber, and sacrificial version of the hymn in **1937** at the age of 22, based on John 20:21.

Years later, acknowledging that her first version was "one-sided" in focusing only on the trials of service, she wrote a second, more balanced version in **1962** (published 1963/1964) that emphasized the victory, grace, and joy of service.

### The Testimony and Context

- While working as a young teacher in an isolated, non-Christian mining camp in northern Ontario during the Great Depression, Clarkson experienced intense spiritual, mental, and cultural loneliness. Despite having a deep desire to be a foreign missionary, a physical disability prevented her from doing so. She wrote the poem as a reflection of her personal suffering, feeling "sent" to a desolate place to suffer rather than to experience triumph.

### The Original Hymn (1937):

- As she grew older and deeper in her study of Scripture, she felt the original, melancholic lyrics did not fully reflect the biblical reality of Christian service.

### The "One-Sided" Realization:

- She wrote a new version to complement the first, often titled or subtitled or simply recognized by its focus on victory. **The Second Hymn (1962/1963): "So Send I You —By Grace Made Strong"**
  - **The Original Focus:** *"So send I you to labor unrewarded, To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown..."*
  - **The Response (Later Version):** *"So send I you—by grace made strong to*

*triumph... So send I you, My victory to win... So send I you, eternal fruit to gain"*

The second version includes the hope of the final reward: "To hear My voice, 'Well done, My faithful servant; Come share My throne, My kingdom and My crown'".

- God promises a beautiful, two-fold reward for those who model the truth well.

## **A. They Avail themselves to a trusted influence within the church (v. 13a - Obtain for themselves a high standing)**

- **Concept:** The Greek word *bathmos* literally means a "step" or a "degree." It refers to an honorable rank or standing.
- **Application:** Remember what *diakonos* means: a lowly table-waiter. But look at what God does! He takes the people willing to wash feet and wait tables and He elevates them.
- This is not about climbing a corporate ladder; it is about spiritual influence.
- When you serve with a clear conscience, the church notices. You become a trusted pillar. Your life becomes the blueprint that others look to when they want to know what following Jesus actually looks like.

Because they live out such a blueprint for their lives internally and externally...

## **B. They gain a bold assurance before God and men (v. 13b - Great confidence in the faith)**

- **Concept:** The phrase *pollēn parrēsiā* means boldness, courage, or freedom of speech.
- **Application:** This loops right back to the "clear conscience" in verse 9. If your engine is clean and your life is undivided, you don't have to look over your shoulder. You don't have to fear being exposed as a hypocrite. A clear conscience produces a bold Christian. You can speak of the Gospel with total freedom because your private life backs up your public words.

*(The Big Idea)*

**Deacons are not just managers of tasks; they are models of truth.**

### **The Diagnostic Check (Communion)**

*(Pivot)* We've looked at the profile of the called. But the beauty of 1 Timothy 3 is that it doesn't just give us a leadership manual; it gives every single one of us a mirror, like that of the Word of God.

In Psalm 15, David asks a profound question: "O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who

*may dwell on Your holy hill?" God's answer sounds exactly like the profile we just read: "He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue... nor takes a bribe against the innocent." (Psalm 15:2-3, 5).*

The Apostle Paul echoes this exact standard when it comes to the Communion table. In 1 Corinthians 11, he warns us against taking the elements in an unworthy manner. His instruction is clear: *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup"* (1 Cor. 11:28).

As the Deacons come forward, they are going to step directly into verse 9—literally and physically *"holding the mystery of the faith"* as they serve us the bread and the cup. But before we take it, we must do what Paul commands for the deacons in 1 Tim. 3 and for us in 1 Cor. 11. We must examine ourselves. Let's look under the hood of our own spiritual engines:

- **The Check of the Tongue:** Have you been double-tongued this week? Have you spun the truth, flattered to someone's face while tearing them down in private, or used your words to manipulate rather than heal?
- ++**The Check of Control:** What has been driving your mind? Have you been running to a substance, a habit, or a screen to numb your stress, rather than submitting your mind to the control of the Holy Spirit?
- ++**The Check of Motive:** Have you compromised your integrity for a dollar this week? Have you leveraged people for your own gain, or has your financial life been a model of truth?
- ++**The Check of the Home:** If we asked the people who live under your roof if you are a model of truth, what would they say? Is there a gap between the Christian you are in this sanctuary and the person you are in your living room?

If the Holy Spirit is highlighting a fault in your engine right now, do not let it keep you from this Table.

This Table is exactly where broken engines are brought to be restored. We do not come to this Table because our engines are flawless; we come because Jesus Christ was the ultimate Servant and the only perfect Model of Truth. His body was broken and His blood was poured out so that our consciences could be washed completely clean. This table is a celebration of the washing of Jesus Christ through His act of service, His sacrifice for us.

Right now, right where you are, won't you bring your compromises to the cross through silent prayer to the Lord. Repent and confess to the Lord those things that He has revealed to you that must change inwardly so that you can live outwardly Christ's example, just as David did, so that you can partake of this mystery with a clear conscience and great confidence.