

## In a Pure Conscience

*First Timothy 3:8 – 16*

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~ There are three things that will destroy the pastor of a church and irreparably harm the congregation: money, sex, and power. Each of those are rooted in one thing: pride. Their destructive forces become compounded in myriad ways when one denies these things are, in fact, problematic in the church. In this report, our Spiritual Safari continues to observe devastating issues that plague our contemporary church around the globe, rendering it wholly ineffective at saving souls; impotent in furthering the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ in this lost and dying world. If anything, the church harms the cause of Christ today.

If you have not read our last report, I suggest you go back and do so now; if, that is, you care about getting the entire Word of God out to the entire world in sound doctrine to people that you may never even realize you have an influence over. Getting this particular section of Scripture correct is absolutely the hinge that the door of complete doctrine swings on. If this hinge is loose, maligned, or not installed properly in your mind, then the door will always be opened to reckless, irresponsible, and faulty thinking; and my friend, you can *NEVER* think wrong and act right – it just isn't going to happen.

Our last several reports have dealt with the subject of church government, the different offices within a church, and the qualifications for those positions. Our last report covered the requirements of the office of elder – or overseer – or bishop. In this report, we come to the requirements for the office of deacons; and they are very similar. The word used for deacons is the same word used for ministers; and both Paul and Apollos were called deacons. Jesus was also called a minister in Galatians chapter two verse seventeen. Paul also called government officials “*ministers*” in Romans chapter thirteen verse four – and Satan has his own, which are also called ministers, in second Corinthians chapter eleven verse fifteen.

So, that makes “*ministers*” a general term for a servant or a worker. Interestingly, most people go all the way back to the sixth chapter of Acts to attempt to establish the office of deacons – but neither the word “*deacon*” nor the Greek word for it is used there. Even so, I am confident there are Scriptural grounds to establish that they were deacons appointed in the church at that time. Well, although deacons deal mainly with material things in a church, the primary qualification is certainly that he be a spiritual man. Many men in church offices today have excellent physical expertise, such as business degrees – and they are appointed on that basis alone, but they are lacking spirituality; and it is always a complete disaster when that happens.

Naturally, a local church needs a brick and mortar structure with lights, heat, air conditioning, and the material things that allow them to function and be effective in a community; however, the spiritual emphasis is by far the most important ministerial quality. Most organizations have that exactly backwards; erroneously thinking that material provision must come first. Well, when the local church ceases to be in touch with another world, then she is no longer in touch with this one, either. You can just write that down, my friends. That’s why this so-called safari places the main emphasis on the spiritual in this virtual environment; because, until the church returns to its first love, it cannot be of any material or practical help in the world. See, if you are reading these reports and learning anything at all, then you are part of a very real church....

***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.***

~ Today, alcohol is a serious problem in this world. My belief is the church should teach total abstinence from alcohol; even though the Bible teaches temperance and moderation. Naturally, alcohol based medicine is not what we are talking about here. However, social drinking as a beverage, even in strict self-controlled moderation, just isn’t a good example for the child of God to set. I’m not saying you shouldn’t go to church if you drink alcohol occasionally – and I am certainly not saying you’re not saved – but I

wouldn't give you five cents for your testimony; and you definitely would not serve in a church office if I had anything to do with it. See, if you are going to be an effective person in a church, your word is going to have to actually mean something; and, agree or disagree, I just happen to know that alcohol use is the characteristic hallmark of a person whose word doesn't mean much.

Those who handle the money in a church and the financial responsibilities are simply going to have to be honest men of integrity. Nothing will hurt a church faster than word spreading that the deacons are juggling finances or cooking the books. If money is given for a particular cause, then that money *MUST* go to that particular cause. If a church develops a reputation for using money in a way that it was never intended to be used, then that reputation is poisoned. Today's modern churches, with ridiculously expensive buildings, stages that cost tens of thousands of dollars, and programs that obviously waste money on abject frivolous expenditures, are contributing to diminishing any credibility a sincere and legitimate Bible teaching church may have. It's a very real problem, friends. The first and foremost thing that the true and living church must present as is that they are an honest cause led by men of high integrity and moderation.

The "*mystery of the faith*" in verse nine means the revelation of the Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we say "*the faith*" it is not some abstract concept – it is the quality of the doctrines of faith that were not revealed in the Old Testament. These doctrines were a mystery to everyone from Adam to Malachi; but were revealed by Christ Jesus. We're told that the early church "*continued in the apostles doctrine.*" The faith of the early church should still be the faith of the present-day church; representing faith in the Son of God before and to the world. I realize that many people think this needs to be changed because it is outdated and outmoded – but that leads to heresy; in fact, it *IS* heresy to even suggest modifying the commands of Christ.

Life Magazine ran an editorial article many decades ago that changed the so-called seven deadly sins to an "*updated version*" of them. One excerpt said, "*... judging by the amount of deploring of the seven deadly sins, we have received a current list that goes like this: selfishness, intolerance,*

*indifference, cruelty, violence, destructiveness and prudery....*” If you are familiar with the seven deadly sins, then most of the changes are self-evident. Lust, for example, has become as common place as the movie theater; so, of course, that would need to be changed to *prudery*. Gluttony may give a man a cholesterol problem – but, in our society of overeating, man needs to make sure his bad habits don’t give anyone a theological problem. Words like covetousness and slothfulness are laughed off as antiquated. As for the additions, sins have been omitted that most people want to believe only apply to one societal segment or specific ethnicity. I’m sure some people would object to selfishness and violence even being in the *“updated list.”*

So, we can see how man has gone from substituting his sin of choice with pleasant labels to denying sin is even a reality. Well, again, the hypocrisy of a revised sin list and subsequent attempts to relegate them to an obsolete concept altogether is a very real, very destructive problem in these United States and, indeed, around the world. Well, let me tell you something, my dear readers, sin is a destructive force in your life, and in the lives of all who become entangled in it. Sin is still sin. Human nature is still human nature. It’s just as real as it was in the Garden of Eden; and they are labeled very clearly and very definitely in the Word of God. Sin will simply have to be dealt with Biblically, in a pure conscience, if the church is to represent the Lord Jesus Christ here in this world any longer....

***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.***

***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.***

~ So, our Spiritual ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with the key verse to this epistle – verse fifteen. This letter the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy is an instruction for order in the local church. There is a very definite, proper, correct, and high code of conduct to follow regarding the way we are to act in the church of the True and Living God – the Lord Jesus Christ. The pillar of truth reaches up from the foundation to hold the roof in place and keep it from falling in on the heads of everyone. If the officers of a church do not represent the truth according to sound doctrine, then that church is poison in the water supply of the community. I cannot stress that truth to you enough, my dear readers. This is so important. I don't care how much you talk about love and Jesus and being helpful – and I don't care how big the Bible is that you display in the window of your car, if you have not the truth of the doctrine of the apostles – you're a lying, murdering thief – and nothing else, according to God, that is. Not according to me. But to doubt what I am teaching is to call God a liar. Make a note....

***16 And, obviously, 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 ~***

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