

We are studying Paul's first letter to Timothy and if you recall from last week we began examining Paul's criteria for elders and deacons. Paul stated that overseers (elders) need to not be recent converts and that they have good reputations outside the church.

*6and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 1 Tim 3:6,7*

Paul was talking to Timothy about the qualifications of those who would be leaders in the church. Men able to step up to help with building up believers in the church. Peter and the other disciples did this in Acts. Peter declared, *brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. Act 6:3* Paul began this chapter with, *It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 1 Tim 3:1*

Paul says the leaders must have a good reputation outside the church but he also states they must *not be a new convert*. It seems obvious, but necessary, the first criteria for a leader in the church was that they be a convert and not a new one. Christ's body, the church, is made up of called out people, people who have repented from dead works and believed in Christ as their Savior, whose death on the cross has freed from sin. New Life is based on *a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God*. These converts are those who may rise to leadership.

The work of the Spirit in the life of the believer makes servant leadership possible. The believers is one born, given new life, by the Spirit of God. The Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that God has called us and given us an invitation to join His eternal kingdom. We pass from death to life, from life in Adam, the flesh, into newness of life, the redeemed existence, by the Spirit of God. Once this happens we have value in the kingdom, we become righteous, just as if we had never sinned, *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21* Paul states the work of the Spirit in the believer makes service possible, *we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. Rom 7:6* Believers *serve in newness of the Spirit*. We are slaves to God and Jesus our Redeemer. We are learning to live (not new converts—maturing Christians) as those of whom God has ownership rights (*we serve, to serve as a slave, having all personal ownership-rights assigned to the owner*)

*19Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Cor 6:19,20*

*16The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17and if children, also heirs: heirs indeed of God. Rom 8:16*

If God has led us to repent of our dead works (the unprofitable lives we lived in the flesh without Christ) and put our faith in Christ, God's Spirit bears witness we are *children of God*. *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 1 John 3:14* Growing toward a life of service is a concrete way we can express *love for the brethren*. We are drawn to love God, not a thing we do in our flesh, by nature we are at war, enmity, hostile to God because of our sin nature. But we are also drawn to love the brethren, love our neighbor also also contrary to our sinful natures. *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Rom 8:7*

So Paul is instructing all believers, those who *have passed out of death into life*. He was also encouraging those who have been Christians for awhile, who have learned to walk in newness of life, and have been practicing spiritual disciplines. *Spiritual disciplines are habits of holiness, or a way of life in which I practice piety. What is piety? John Calvin defined piety as "reverence joined with love of God which knowledge of his benefits induces" (Institutes of the Christian Religion).* <https://unlockingthebible.org> Paul wrote, *For God has not called us to impurity, but into holiness. 1 Thessalonians 4:7* Peter writes *believers ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. 2 Pet 3:11,12* So back to 1 Timothy 3 an overseer should not be *a new convert*. This is a matter of safety for the church both in regards to the believer who is just not ready for the task but also so the church wouldn't be hurt by false and improper teaching. Paul stated a spiritually underdeveloped leader might *become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil*. They also might fall away and that wouldn't be valuable. *For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 2 Pet 2:20*

One common problem of the early church was from Jews who had become Christians. They, by their upbringing, knew much more about the OT and the Law than pagan Gentile believers. But if they didn't comprehend salvation *by grace alone* they, as many did, would want to marry Judaism and Christianity. This was not in accord with the apostles teaching. Paul wrote of Jews who were teaching Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised, *I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves, (get themselves castrated!)*. *Gal 5:12* Another reason to not lay hands on anyone, for leadership, too quickly. Later in 1 Timothy Paul writes, *Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. 1 Tim 5:22*

*He must have a good reputation with those outside the church.* Paul says if we are to be Christian leaders it is essential that our good behavior is not an act, a false face, appearing to be good Christian's when in reality our character, at work and in our homes, does not display the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is to in the process of being transformed from the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of this world, the fallen fleshly life we were born into, to the kingdom of our God, we are born again by the Spirit of God. With this new nature, identity (*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new 2 Cor 5:17*), the believer is in the process of change; from being in the world, of the flesh, into residents of the kingdom of God. With newness of life in Christ comes the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. And it is with this transforming power, the new life, this gifting of God for ministry that we are to lead in the Christ's body, the church.

*2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:2*

One seeking the office of overseer is not who practices sin, continues in sin. Paul wrote the Corinthians that they were walking in the flesh, *For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 1 Cor 3:3* The one born of God, the one growing in the Spirit, the one *aspiring to the office of oversee*, must not continue practicing sin, continue walking as they did before they were saved. John states, *We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. 1 John 5:18* *God keeps him*, God is conforming the vibrant Christian into a willing servant, the temple of the Holy Spirit and a dynamic witness. John states, *everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:3* This transforming is only possible for the true believer, one born of

the Spirit. Many people put on Christian behavior but do not come to repentance for our dead works. John writes, *no one who is born of God sins*. The believer who has been *transformed by the renewing of their mind*, who is born of God, and has begun the process of walking in the Spirit, living their life in the flesh as one being conformed to the image of God. One who considers themselves, *to be dead to sin (self rule, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (servanthood))*. This is the believe that has settled the foundation of their faith and have purposed to go on with Christ to maturity. Their life in Christ is not just about them, what they can get out of their relationship with God, but *count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus*. Phil 3:8

*7But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Phil 3:7-10*

*1Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Heb 6:1,2*

This transforming is only possible for the true believer. Fleshly people can model Christian behavior but they are not qualified to serve the church because they haven't repented from their dead works.

*28And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. Rom 8:28-30*

We have talked about the overseer which seems to have a little more standing in the church since they are to be *able to teach*. It is a little more of a leadership and shepherding role while the next officementioned is that of the deacon.

*8Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. 13For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 1 Tim 3:8-13*

Deacons must *hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*. What is this mystery? It is *the secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly*. Strong's To the Colossians Paul wrote, *God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col 1:27* Deacons must understand the faith. Deacons

are servants, historically servants of a king. A *deacon* by virtue of the office assigned him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected. Thayer They are must be men of dignity (of character, honorable), not double-tongued (saying one thing with one person, another with another) Indians in the old westerns used to say, 'whiteman speak with forked tongue.' That is not the character quality of the deacon or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain (eager for base gain (greedy of filthy lucre) Sordid gain is not a Christian quality and would not be fitting for one trusted with the treasures of the church.

As the church grew in Jerusalem the Apostles appointed seven deacons, *select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. Acts 6:3* Women it seems were able to serve in the office of deacon. Most of the time the most likely served with their husbands as in the case of Priscilla and Aquila who Paul calls fellow workers in the gospel. *Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5also greet the church that is in their house. Rom 16:3-5*

In this passage while discussing deacons he includes women. *11Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 1 Tim 3:11* It seems Paul in teaching that woman may be deacons and the history of the church has the stories of women who have served Christ in this way. Some of these may have been widows and were supported by the church. Paul gives Timothy additional instructions for these widows.

*5Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. 6But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. 7Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. — 9A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, 10having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. 11But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, 12thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. 13At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. 14Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; 15for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. 1 Tim 5:5-7,9-14*

We must all make it our goal to grow in the faith because of the hope of our calling. We should all desire and pray that God will make us witnesses, declaring the mystery of the Kingdom which is *Christ in us the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27*

*18I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Eph 1:18-22*