



The Leadership of the Church

CRC Deacon Ordination, Dec 6, 2020

Text: 1 Timothy 3

After being released from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30), Paul pens this letter to his beloved Timothy somewhere around 62-64AD. I say beloved because Paul seemed to always either be with or mentioning Timothy in his letters. Timothy began to travel with Paul when was very young (Acts 16:1-5), and was sent to various places by Paul to represent him to the churches.

This assignment for Timothy in Ephesus was probably difficult because it was the leadership of the church he was being asked to correct. (1 Tim 1:3) The church in Ephesus had been damaged by false teaching and despite his youth, Timothy was to “command” those doing it to stop and bring order to the church by selecting and installing good leaders. Because of the nature of jurisdictional authority God has set up, good leaders are always critical!

As we discuss God’s church and its leaders, please know that God has always had a people He cares deeply about...

In the Old Testament, it began with Adam and Eve and continued through the line of Seth. Through Seth’s line came Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. Through Noah’s line eventually came Nahor, Terah, and Abraham. Through Abraham came Obed, Jesse, and David. Through David’s line came our King and Messiah, Jesus the Christ! Through Jesus, King of Kings and Savior of the Elect, came the elimination of bloodlines for God to establish a people:

- **Romans 9:6 (KJV)** *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*
- **Romans 9:8 (KJV)** *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*
- **Galatians 3:26-29 (KJV)** *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- **John 3:3 (KJV)** *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*
- **John 3:5-7 (KJV)** *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Indeed, this people consists of people from everywhere:

- **Revelation 7:9-10 (KJV)** *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

In the New Testament, this people is called The Church, and this Church is being built by Christ:

- **Matthew 16:18 (KJV)** *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Christ has established the jurisdiction of the Church in His own blood for His glory and the guidance and protection of His own people.

- **Acts 20:27-31 (KJV)** *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

By His grace and providence, Jesus has established leaders in the Church for these purposes: to teach and protect His flock! In Ephesians 4:7-16, we read of these men: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers). They are described as:

- Gifts to the Church
- For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry
- Given for the saints' edification, unification, maturation, and protection.
- Apostles were those that were directly commissioned by Jesus and had seen Him (1 Cor 9:1). Prophets were those that received direct revelation from God. Both apostles and prophets were part of the foundation of the Church:

Ephesians 2:20 (KJV) *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

- Evangelists are those “who preach the good news of salvation. They are divinely equipped to win the lost to Christ. They have special ability to diagnose a sinner's condition, probe the conscience, answer objections, encourage decisions for Christ, and help the convert find assurance through the word. Evangelists should go out from a local church, preach to the world, then lead their converts to a local church where they will be fed and encouraged.” WM

In the context of leadership, in our opinion, Pastors and Teachers are the primary “local church” gifts, mostly functioning in the offices of Bishop/Pastor/Elder and supported by Deacons.

Leadership of the Church: The Bishop/Pastor/Elder

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (KJV) *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?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

1. First, these are offices that must be desired; they cannot be forced. They are good works but they are difficult! (v1)
2. The word for bishop (episkopē) can also be translated “overseer” and in the NT is mostly synonymous with “elder” or “pastor.” I say *mostly* because there does seem to be a more prominent leader in the churches, both in the NT and throughout church history.
3. Bishops/Overseers/Pastors, and Deacons are men. Observe the masculine pronouns and the qualifications for both to be the “husband of one wife” and rule or manage their homes well (vv4, 12). (Note, some argue that Pheobe was a deacon, Rom 16:1, but these qualifications let us know she was a wonderful servant of the church without this office. The additional role/title of “deaconess” is another discussion.)
4. Their qualifications were/are stringent:
 - Blameless. Being “above reproach” (literally “not able to be held”) means living a life where one cannot be easily or rightly accused of consistent wrongdoing or sin.
 - Husband of one wife. This means “a one woman man.” Before he can be effective in the church, a married leader must model Ephesians 5:25-32, as marriage is a visible model of the Gospel.
 - Vigilant. This word can be understood as *watchful, alert or clear-headed*. This speaks to the pastor's ability to think clearly regardless of the emotions of the moment, personal preferences, or external pressures. This is the sort of man that “stays in his lane” and does not allow the body of Christ to be “blown about by every wind and doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Rather, he “keeps a close watch on himself and the teaching” (doctrine) and “persists in them” because he recognizes that doing so will “save both himself and those who hear him” from much stress and drama (1 Tim 4:16).
 - Sober. Disciplined. Since leaders should be models for the church, an elder must set the example in all areas as best he can: family, money, faith, study, evangelism, and faith.
 - Good behavior. This term literally means *orderly* in Greek. Again, a pastor leads an orderly, controlled life. There is little chaos, drama, or “gossip-worthy” activities going on! This guy sounds pretty boring, but that is good!
 - Hospitable. This word in Greek literally means “to love strangers” and is in line with the Great Commission.

- A Teacher. Again, this is critical to his role. He must “lead and feed” the flock of God! (Jer 3:15) He must reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (2 Tim 4:2) He must not allow the Word of God to be lightly disregarded or blasphemed. (Titus 2:5, 15)
 - Not given to wine. He is not a drunkard. Biblically, drunkenness is a sin (Pr 23:20-21; Eph 5:18).
 - Not violent. This literally means “not a giver of blows.” Although there is no biblical prohibition against coming to the rescue of someone in need or defending one’s family, an elder is not to be a fleshly fighter or brawler. He is not to react to circumstances with violence if it can be helped.
 - Not covetous or out for money. A pastor’s life should demonstrate modesty, contentment, stewardship, giving, and balance in the area of money. It should be evident to all that his preaching and leading is not motivated by personal gain. Although the New Testament does not argue for poor preachers, it certainly makes no case for the unbalanced pursuit of or the flaunting of wealth by God’s servants.
 - Patient. The overseer is always looking for ways to keep the peace and promote unity, although not at the cost of fidelity to God’s Word.
 - Manages an orderly home. This is a tough standard, particularly in our age. An overseer must do everything he can to provide for his family, love his wife, and disciple his own children.
 - Not a novice. This speaks to having demonstrated depth and consistency in Christ. Putting a new believer in this level of leadership quickly exposes him to the pride trap, which apparently was Satan’s downfall (Isa 14:12-14; Eze 28:11-19).
 - Spoken well of. Having a good reputation is the result of all the other skills and traits we have considered. Even though standing strong in the Word will always produce enemies on the outside, even most of an elder’s enemies will respect his consistency, integrity, stewardship, and family life.
5. These men bear the responsibility to be humble examples to God’s flock:
- **1 Peter 5:1-4 (KJV)** *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Leadership of the Church: The Deacon

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (KJV) *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.*

1. Like Bishops/Elders/Pastors, **Deacons have a high and holy calling with very lofty and difficult (and some repeated) qualifications!**

- Grave. This word means “dignified” or “honorable and honest.” A deacon must have the **highest integrity**. This is similar to the bishop's call to be “blameless.”
- Not doubletongued. This means “he must not give conflicting reports to different persons or at different times. He must be consistent.” -WM
- Not given to much wine. (Same as the Bishop/Pastor/Elder)
- Not greedy of filthy lucre. (Same as the Bishop/Pastor/Elder)
- Committed to sound doctrine. Although not specifically called to teach, a Deacon must know and hold to Scripture, and be willing to sacrifice for truth like Stephen! (Acts 6-7)
- Proved. A man is not ordained as a deacon in order to acquire these qualifications. He is ordained because he already has them. A man who is nominated as a deacon should have already been shown to be faithful in his service, church attendance, giving, witness, prayer, and Bible study.
- Husband of one wife. (Same as the Bishop/Pastor/Elder)
- Manages an orderly home. (Same as the Bishop/Pastor/Elder)

1. **In the middle of the Deacon qualifications, commands for wives are added (which I believe are also for a Bishop/Pastor/Elder’s wife):**

- She is also “grave.” See above!
- She must not be a slanderer. The word for slanderer here is *diabolos* in Greek, *an accuser*. Literally, “don’t be a devil! Don’t gossip, spread misinformation, so sow disunity.”
- She is sober. Meaning, she is circumspect...temperate...self-controlled. She understands propriety and shamefacedness.
- She is faithful in all things. She is trustworthy; she can be relied upon. (**Proverbs 31:11 (KJV)** *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.*)

2. **The ministry of the Deacon is needed in every church! In the NT, Deacons helped shepherd and ministers to God’s flock!**

- **Acts 6:1-7 (KJV)** *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. **2** Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. **3** Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. **4** But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. **5** And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: **6** Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. **7** And the word of God increased; and the number of the*

disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

3. **In Acts 6, when both primary offices (the overseeing/teaching office and serving office) function in harmony and in the Holy Ghost, the Word of God increased and the church grew!**
4. **CRC, this is our heart for our Deacons and their families: to help shepherd and serve you.** We are asking them to:
 - Set the example in the things of God
 - Set the example in all things CRC
 - Oversee our Care Groups
 - Work and minister to ensure you have the basics of life, fellowship with one another, are cared for during times of difficulty, and are girded up in the Truth!
5. As we always say, here at CRC we teach hard, but we love hard too! CRC Deacons and their wives are an extension of that great love.
6. **Pray for these men and their families; they are critical to our mission and vision!**

A great Goal of New Testament Leadership

1 Timothy 3:14-16 (KJV) *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.*

1. As the Holy Spirit (through Paul) set up leadership and order in the gentile churches, it was for very important reasons:
 - That the God's people would know how to behave in God's house!
 - That such behavior would reflect and give glory to the living God!
 - That the church would be the pillar and ground (foundation) of truth! (We should bear witness to what SHOULD be happening in the culture, not what IS happening!)
 - That the church would manifest and message the great mystery of godliness: the Gospel!
2. By implication, there is a right way and a wrong way to behave in the Church. If we do not order and conduct ourselves according to Scripture, we veil His glory among the nations, tarnish this great mystery and blaspheme God's Word.
3. May we hold to the pattern we've been given!
 - **2 Timothy 1:13 (KJV)** *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*
 - **2 Timothy 1:13 (NLT)** *Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus.*

Final thoughts:

Church leaders are just sinners saved by grace. Nevertheless, they are appointed by God to lead and serve His church, and are critical to the church by the LORD's design. They:

- Are called to set a standard of honesty and integrity before God and His people.
- Must be consistent in what he says and does.
- Must handle the Word of Christ with extreme care and fidelity, refusing to take liberties with the text.
- Must hold *truth* as the highest of core values because it is upon this that his ministry will be built.
- Must be willing to die to themselves, to fame, to fortune, and to pride continually in order to rightly serve Christ and His church.
- Must pledge themselves to truth and righteousness.

But the flock of God has responsibilities too:

- To submit to their teaching (1 Tim 4:11; Titus 3:8; Heb 13:17)
- To submit to their discipline (1 Cor 5; 2 Thes 3:6)
- To pray for them (1 Thes 5:25; 2 Thes 3:1)
- To support them financially (1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:18)
- To walk in unity, which blesses them (Php 2:1-3)
- To esteem them highly and love them (1 Thes 5:12-13)

As we taught in October, CRC let us:

- Honor the LORD!
- Honor our Leaders!
- Honor God's People! (honor from leaders)
- Honor the House!
- Honor One Another!

Ephesians 3:21 (KJV) *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*