

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

7 28 26 V2n13 - WILL I 'BLASPHEME!' or WILL I 'ADORN!' THE GOSPEL!?

UNGODLY BEHAVIOR by King David gave the enemies of God a reason to blaspheme! (2 Sam. 12:14) ** The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to **WRITE** that the name of God was being blasphemed by religious Jews! (Romans 2:24-29) ** False prophets/teachers have a long history of drawing **CROWDS** and **MANY** follow their ways, causing the **WAY OF TRUTH** to be evil spoken of! (2 Peter 2:1-2) **

The Holy Spirit had Paul to exhort Titus to give GODLY BEHAVIOR EXHORTIONS to the Christians in his care; SO THAT they may ADORN the doctrine of God! (Titus 2:1-10)

THEREFORE, LET ALL SAINTS IN CHRIST — LOOK FOR! PRAY FOR! STRIVE TOWARD, and CULTIVATE character qualities-- such as are listed in the WORD OF GOD! **CONTEXT:** These are especially for pastors/bishops/elders; and/or for deacons! **BUT ALSO:** ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION these are **for all who** are in Christ:

1 TIMOTHY 3:2 — BLAMELESS — not sinless; but above reproach, does not cast reproach upon God's Word or God's Son. Think of a large iron frying pan! SOME FOLK would like to pick up this frying pan and smash A FELLOW over the head, but if he is blameless he gives them no handle! They cannot pick it up if there is no handle on it (Daniel 6:4-5).

THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE— faithful to his wife and exemplifying what Christian marriage really ought to be. He is to be a "one-woman man." NOTE: This ALSO gives ZERO ROOM for any sort of SODOMITE perversion!

This is especially IMPORTANT FOR Pastors/Elders & Deacons: No background of divorce **so as to model** the love of Jesus which **never fails** (Eph. 5:25-33: 1 Cor. 13:1-7); **and so as to model** God's plan of one marriage till death do part: Genesis 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:10-12, 39, Titus 1:6; **and so as to model** PROPER CARING FOR HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD: 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

YES, some very respected Bible Teachers say that 1 Timothy 3:6 and Titus 1:6 'SAY NOTHING' about marriage or divorce ... that the issue, in these verses, is not the elder or deacon's marriage status. **REALLY? In reality**, "the husband of ONE WIFE" speaks clearly and precisely about marriage— agreeing with God's clearly stated design for marriage: Gen 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:18-33.

MOREOVER: IN JOHN 13:34-35, JESUS REVEALS: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."
LOVELESSNESS in homes and churches greatly
BLASPHEMES the name of God! WITHOUT LOVE we are ZEROS!
 (1 Corinthians 13)

GOD'S LOVE in the home and the church is to be MODELED by all Christians— but especially by Pastors and Deacons!

VIGILANT— temperate, sober, mentally alert. Having a well-disciplined mind, in possession of the full use of all his faculties.

SOBER— sound mind, sensible, serious, "in his right mind" (Mark 5:15), having a serious attitude. There is a need for balance here. He is not to have the reputation of always cracking jokes and

being a clown (Eph. 5:4), nor is he to be one who casts a cloud of gloom everywhere he goes. A serious attitude can be blended with a healthy and Christ-honoring sense of humor.

OF GOOD BEHAVIOR— orderly, organized, a well-arranged, and well-ordered life (opposite of "chaos"). A man who is disciplined and faithful in his stewardship of time. His life should exhibit good planning and purpose.

GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY— a lover of strangers. A real love and concern for people. One who manifests a genuine love for the brethren. His door and his heart are always open when it comes to rightly ministering to the needs of others.

APT TO TEACH— (ELDERS) able, skilled, and willing to teach and communicate God's truth. According to Titus 1:9 he must be able to exhort and bring conviction by sound doctrine, "holding fast the faithful word." It is the ability, (by gifted-ness, labor, and prayer), to rightly use and communicate God's Word in helping, and confronting, and admonishing others (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17).

NOTE: this 'qualification' is not required for deacons and others in a congregation— and YET, EVERY CHRISTIAN FATHER and Mother is to TRAIN UP their children in the ways of the LORD! (Ephesians 6:4; Deut. 6:1-9)

1 TIMOTHY 3:3 — NOT GIVEN TO WINE — literally, "not beside or alongside wine." No affinity for wine. In a society infatuated with alcoholic beverages and defiled by the unwholesome things associated with drinking, total abstinence from alcoholic drinks and avoidance of any wrong or questionable association is the only truly safe choice for the elder. ... Or for all Christ-honoring saints! (Proverbs 23:29-35; 31:4-5;)

NOT A STRIKER— not quick tempered to fight. The man must not be a fighter (ready with his fists). Comes from a verb meaning "to strike."— You rub this kind of violent person the wrong way and he will really let you have it!

NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE— not someone who is out for personal gain and profit. The man's financial dealings must be blameless and not in the least bit questionable. Free from greed.

PATIENT— gentle, forbearing (Phil. 4:5), sweet-reasonableness, considerate of the feelings of others, a man who is able to yield and who does not always insist on having things his own way, willing to concede, and yet not compromise when it comes to truth.

NOT A BRAWLER— not a fighter (literally "without war"), not one who is always arguing and getting involved in carnal disputes and quarrels. A man who is peaceable (Rom. 12:18).

NOT COVETOUS— literally, "not a lover of money" (Heb. 13:5). The ruling motive in his life is not money or possessions, but the glory of God; and seeking to advance Gospel ministries.

1 TIMOTHY 3:4-5 — RULES WELL HIS OWN HOUSE — For a Pastor, without question, this has to first be in operation with his wife — he must model godly managing and guiding his house hold by first of all loving his wife as Christ loves the church. (Ephesians 5:21, 25-32); overflowing into having children who are obedient and respectful and well-disciplined (kept in line).

1 TIMOTHY 3:6— NOT A NOVICE-- not one who has newly come to the faith, not a new convert, not one who has recently become

a Christian, not a new believer, but rather one who has had years of growth and development in the faith (well tested by time).

1 TIMOTHY 3:7— A GOOD REPORT-- an excellent testimony before the unsaved, a good reputation among the community.

[NOTE: The other passage which list the qualifications of bishops (elders) is found in Titus 1:5-9 and is similar in many respects to the 1 Timothy 3:1-7 passage.]

CHARACTER QUALITIES FOR DEACONS

INTERESTINGLY, the seven men chosen to serve in Acts 6:1-6 were likely the first deacons ever to be appointed in the church—**however, the word for deacon ('diakonos') is NOT USED IN Acts 6.** The word "DEACON" means "servant" and refers to one who humbly serves the local assembly, caring especially for the MANY and varied physical needs of the assembly. This allows those with shepherding responsibilities to give themselves more fully to prayer and the Word of God (Acts 6:1-7). **That the early "deacons" were spiritual men** is clearly seen by the fact that both Stephen and Philip were 'deacons' (Acts 6:5). Philip served as a 'deacon' (Acts 6:5) but was also gifted as an evangelist (Acts 21:8; compare Eph. 4:12).

[ACTS 6:3— AMONG YOU-- a deacon must be a believer, a saved person. **OF HONEST REPORT—** must have a good reputation and an excellent testimony. **FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT—** a spiritual man, controlled by God the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-6:1; Eph. 5:18). **FULL OF WISDOM—** the ability to judge rightly and follow a sound course of action by way of knowledge and experience; the ability to apply God's Word to life's situations and problems. **WHOM WE MAY APPOINT OVER THIS BUSINESS—** able to do the job, competent.]

1 TIMOTHY 3:8— GRAVE-- dignified, serious, respected, a man people look up to, a good example, a good testimony, a man of character.

NOT DOUBLE TONGUED— not "say one thing and mean another" and not one who says one thing to one person and then something different to another person. He must say what he means and mean what he says. A man whose words can be trusted and whose motives will not be suspected; one who is honest, truthful, and sincere.

NOT GIVEN TO MUCH WINE— not addicted to wine. Because drinking is such a problem today, we believe that the deacon should be a man who does not drink any alcoholic beverages at all in light of the stumbling block principle of Romans 14:21;

And AGAIN: In a society infatuated with alcoholic beverages and defiled by the unwholesome things associated with drinking, total abstinence from alcoholic drinks and avoidance of any wrong or questionable association is the only truly safe choice for the elder. ... Or for all Christ-honoring saints! (Proverbs 23:29-35; 31:4-5;)

NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE— literally "shameful gain." See above discussion under 1 Timothy 3:3. He must be a man you could fully trust to take care of your money.

1 TIMOTHY 3:9— HOLDING THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH IN A PURE CONSCIENCE. The mystery of the faith refers to Christian truth. "The faith" is that whole body of truth that we believe (Jude 3). The "mystery of the faith" is more specific and involves those aspects of the faith that relate to church truth (compare 1 Timothy 3:14-16). A deacon must have the right concept of the local

church. He must see the local assembly as God sees it— a living organism under the sovereign Headship and Lordship of Christ. (AND SUCH IS THE NEED OF ALL SAINTS in a local assembly!!)

1 TIMOTHY 3:10 — PROVEN MEN -- to be put to the test for approval. Time must be allowed before the judgment is made that this man should be a deacon. Give the man time to show his faithfulness and prove himself worthy of the office. The same should be true for the elder as indicated by the phrase "not a novice." (1 Timothy 3:6)

BLAMELESS— His life is so consistent and faithful that he will not need to be called in before the church to answer for some questionable action or behavior or deed.

1 TIMOTHY 3:12— THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE --see discussion under 1 Timothy 3:2. **RULING THEIR CHILDREN/HOUSES WELL—** see discussion under 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

BUT WHO CAN MEASURE UP TO SUCH STANDARDS?

One of the most fundamental principles of Scripture is that we all fall short of God's glory and perfection. While godly maturity and Christlikeness should be the goal or target of every believer; and one of the goals of every ministry and its leadership should be to bring its people into higher and higher stages of godly maturity, (cf. Col. 1:28).

Still, no matter how mature or how godly one becomes, none of us even comes close to perfection. Do you remember David's plea in Psalm 143:3? David, a man after God's own heart and a leader of God's people, when praying for God's help said:

“And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, For in Thy sight no man living is righteous.” Paul also brought out this truth in **Philippians 3:10-16**. The goal, the mark we are all to pursue, as did Paul, is spiritual maturity, being conformed to the character of the Lord Jesus! But no matter how much we have attained that goal, there will always be plenty of room and need for more growth and change. No person has ever attained full maturity except the Lord Jesus Himself!

So, what does this truth and fact mean?

(1) It means there will always be room for improvement and growth in the qualities mentioned in these passages. Being “above reproach” is not a demand for perfection before selection. If that were so, no man would ever be qualified.

(2) However, it teaches us that being above reproach in relation to these qualities **means that a CHRISTIAN’S life-style, (AND ESPECIALLY for Pastors and Deacons!), is such that,** generally speaking, no one can legitimately accuse him of conduct which is unbecoming a mature believer; and/or of which when there was failure—he confessed, repented, made restitution if needed or possible, and now walks in deliverance/victory.

(3) It means that these qualities should exist in a man’s life to such a degree that they stand out as prominent and consistent characteristics. They are clearly distinguishable, but there will be room for growth and times when he may fall short.

(4) It means that, because none of us is perfect, we should not expect our Deacons and Elders to walk on water. They all have feet of clay. **However, being above reproach does mean** we

should look for those men who are mature and examples of Christlikeness, and we should expect them to continue to grow.

AND AGAIN, REMEMBER: Almost without exception the same character qualities set forth for Elders and/or Deacons **are elsewhere called for in the New Testament for every believer.**

WHY?

"God intends to display the glory of His holiness, beauty, perfection, and love through CHRISTIAN HOMES and LOCAL churches. There is no better evangelistic tool, mission's strategy, or counseling program than the image of God displayed through His gathering and scattering of imperfect but transforming people."

JESUS CHRIST is building HIS church with men, women, youth, and children Who are on a LIFETIME JOURNEY of becoming like Jesus! DISTINCTIVE! CHRIST LIKE!

SO LET IT BE IN MY LIFE, O LORD!

Abundant Grace to all!

James www.southsidegallatin.org

SUNDAY SERVICES for AUGUST 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

[1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes.

[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!

AUGUST 2 – Covered-dish fellowship meal, after morning worship!

AUGUST 16 – LORD’S SUPPER after morning worship! HOME GROUPS

AUGUST 23 — EVENING WORSHIP, 5:00PM

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM — Men’s Bible Study!** (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee’s Biscuits are available!*) *AUGUST 1 - Romans, Chapter 11, Part 2)*

NEXT LADIES’ BIBLE STUDY IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 4 @ 11:00 AM **TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am [NEXT Study: Acts 14]

Young Adults! Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhī’s home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN’S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE: BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:

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