

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3: 12 and 13; “The Faithful Deacon’s Reward”, Sermons # 42 and 43  
combined, in the series – “To Honor God in the church”, Delivered by  
Pastor Paul Rendall on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015,  
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Last week I tried to show you the qualifications for deacon’s wives and other women who serve the church – either alongside their husbands, or as delegated servants under the authority of the leadership of the local church. If there were a separate office of deaconess, would not this verse 12 read differently? Would it not say, in 1st Timothy 3: 12, that deacons are to be husbands of one wife, and deaconesses the wife of one husband? Would there not be a great delineation of qualifications in terms of their authority of office? But there is silence. And so I conclude that there is are only 2 offices in the local church; elder and deacon. Deacons must be faithful men; men full of the Holy Spirit, and those who live out their faithfulness in the context of the home first; and then the church will be pleased to have them serve. What does it mean for a man to be faithful in his home? What does it mean for a man to be faithful in the church? And why is it a desirable thing for a man to become a deacon? These are the questions that I will attempt to answer this afternoon by way of the following points. 1<sup>st</sup> – A man who would be a deacon will be a faithful husband. 2<sup>nd</sup> – A man who would be a deacon will be a faithful ruler in his home. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – A man who is a faithful deacon will obtain a reward for his service from the Lord Himself in this life.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – A man who would be a deacon will be a faithful husband.**

“Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” The phrase in the Greek is – “mias gynaikas andres” (μιας γυναικας ανδρες), a one woman man, or husband of one wife. It will be helpful to us this afternoon to understand what this phrase does not mean in order that we can free ourselves from misconception. This verse is not saying that deacons must be married. It is not reading that a deacon must be a man who has a wife. Perhaps it would be good to remind ourselves of Paul’s teaching in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7: 32-35. “But I want you to be without care.” “He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.” “But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.” “There is a difference between a wife and a virgin.” “The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.” “But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.” “And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.” Paul is saying here that there are definite advantages to being single. The man who is unmarried can give his undivided attention to pleasing the Lord. The main purpose for a Christian remaining single is that they might serve the Lord without distraction; that is, they are able to single-mindedly pay attention to the things of the Lord, both in devotion to God and in service to Him. Paul also says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7: 7 – “I wish that all men were even as myself.” “But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” Being able to be single and walk in holiness is a gift of God, and not everyone has it. But there is no indication in the Scripture that either an elder or a deacon should not marry, or that they must be married.

Then, there are some commentators and others who believe that “husbands of one wife” means “married to one wife”. They think that the Apostle’s intent was to say that no polygamist was to be a deacon or an elder. Although polygamy is forbidden by this verse, there is something more to be brought out in this phrase than this. Some scholars and commentators believe that this phrase means married only once, and that no deacon can remarry. But this appears to contradict the teaching of the whole New Testament concerning the sanctity of marriage as

defined by Jesus and Paul. Particularly Romans 7: 2 and 3 – “But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man.” No, this phrase is meant to communicate something very important to the service of the deacon and to the whole watching church. “Husband of one wife” is meant to prohibit all sexual and marital deviation from a faithful relationship of one-man, one-woman in marriage. It not only prohibits deacons from polygamy, but also from unlawful second marriages, living together outside of marriage, homosexuality, and any questionable relationship with the opposite sex. How important it is, if a deacon is to minister to the needs of others that he, in his marriage, faithfully exemplifies the love of Christ for His Church. He is to be ravished by his wife’s beauty and not to be a man of roving eyes. A man who is a deacon must plainly love his wife, passionately love his wife. Then together they can minister to the real needs of others from a pure heart. A powerful ministry comes from a heart purified by grace from all extraneous impure sexual thoughts and content. A deacon’s heart should continually be caught up in love for the wife, the woman, whom God has given him.

Proverbs 5: 15 - “Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well.” “Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets?” “Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you.” “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.” “As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.” “For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?” “For the ways of the Lord are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all of his paths.” And 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2: 20 – “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> – A man who would be a deacon will be a faithful ruler in his home.**

“Ruling his children and his house well”. To rule well is to rule properly or excellently. The way a man rules will have practical application to the way that the family lives. The father will set the devotional mark high in the life of the family. He should read from the Bible daily and lead in prayer. He will also be very concerned with the cultivation of obedience and responsibility in the life of his children. He will meld all these things together in such a way, that his children see his life as a life which could only be lived by the grace of God. He expects obedience but he teaches grace. As they grow up, he will give them tasks and duties in which they can learn responsibility and become faithful in it. He will teach his children to see that Jesus Christ alone is the Righteous One, but he also will pray that the Lord will open their eyes to the truth. We see this kind of devotion in Job, if you will turn with over to Job chapter 1, verses 4 and 5. “And Job’s sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.” “So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all.” “For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ “Thus Job did regularly.”

Job knew the deceitfulness of sin. He knew the treachery of the human heart. He was concerned for what might be done by his children; where they may have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. He knew that children need constant training, discipline, and lots of love. They need to be guided into the paths of righteousness and truth. How good it is for a father to read his children portions of the Proverbs on a regular basis. Look with me over at Proverbs chapter 2, verse 1. Here Solomon addresses his son and he says: “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if

you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” “For the Lord gives wisdom ; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly...” These are the kinds of instructions and exhortations that a Christian father should give his children. Fathers you should realize that you are representing God in your appeal to your children that they would seek to be wise. You are pointing them to God Himself as the One who gives wisdom. You are pointing them to God’s Word whence comes true knowledge and understanding. You saying to them: Oh, that you might see how great are the riches of wisdom and knowledge which are to be found in knowing God. How lovingly and personally God will become a shield to those of your children who will pray, and seek to walk uprightly before Him! Dear fathers, point them to the treasure laid up for them in heaven, and the treasure which they can store up in heaven, by learning the Bible.

**3rd – A man who is a faithful deacon will obtain a reward for his service from the Lord Himself in this life.**

Verse 13 says, “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Sometimes I fear that we have a wrong view of deacons. Since they are called to be officially designated servants of the church, we somehow get the impression that their work will not be rewarded in this life. We somehow get the impression that their office is undesirable, and thus, qualified men never step forward. Sometimes there is the attitude that since all Christians are called to be servants of Christ, that it is no big deal to have an official designation. That is not what is said in this verse. This verse says that there is a reward and advancement in the sight of God and men, for the deacon who serves well. Serving well means that the deacon is working hard at the tasks and responsibilities that he has been entrusted with. He diligently has worked at showing mercy and giving help and aid, in the biblically defined sense of that word, to every person in his congregation. He has painstakingly served the church and has seen to it that the pastor or elders can give themselves to the Word of God and prayer. He has sacrificially given of his time and wisdom and strength to be the hands and heart of Christ to those in need within the local church. Let us understand from this verse that there is a reward.

Deacons who serve well, our text says, obtain a good standing and great boldness in the faith. There is a reward in this life, and the life to come. The word, “standing”, (*βατημος*, bathmos in the Greek), Lenski says – “is used in the LXX to designate a step before the door, or, in the plural to designate the steps of a stairs.” “In the inscriptions it is used metaphorically in the sense of a foothold, a standing, or a rank.” “By having ministered excellently, the deacon is obtaining a standing that is excellent, noble, and fine.” The 1<sup>st</sup> step is a good standing with those in the church. There is a great respect which comes to a faithful deacon. He may not know it, but he is a fulfillment of the Boy Scout motto. I had to memorize this as a young man, and it is very good. “Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” I guess there are times when the word “clean” might not apply. I’ve seen some pretty dirty deacons in my time. If a man is going to be diligent, there are many times in which he will get dirty. But a deacon who is serving well is dependable. The pastor depends upon him greatly. He is the shepherd’s guardian in material and sometimes even spiritual things. The deacon takes particular notice of what it takes to materially and financially run the church. He is concerned with all the particulars of the church budget, but he still maintains a generosity to the church’s poor and needy. This gives him a good standing, and an excellent reputation in the sight of all the members. They ought to hold him in high regard because of his labors, and take notice of the things he has done and is doing. They need to pray that he might have wisdom, insight, and effectiveness in his work.

The next step of honor and advancement which comes to the deacon is the increase of faith and the grace of boldness at work in his soul. This good standing and great boldness have direct reference to the faith which is in Christ Jesus. We have already read of the deacon's holding fast the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience in verse 9. Here we see the reward of not only holding fast sound doctrine, but the reward of bringing Christ into all that he does. This is true for every believing Christian. Faith becomes stronger when it is exercised. Faith is the grace of resting and relying on God's wisdom and seeking for His help in all problem solving situations. Faith certainly needs to be exercised for forgiveness of sins, but it is also evidently that it is needed for all the situations which we encounter in this life. How much more so for the deacon who must live by faith, make decisions by faith, work toward holy results by faith, and trust God that He will supply not only his own needs, but also the pastor's, and the church's needs as well. His confidence in God grows as he proves the sufficiency of Christ, as he prays and seeks answers which only God can bring. As God looks down upon him, and sees Christ's grace at work in the life of the deacon, He will honor him with a greater measure of holy boldness. Even as God was with David and he grew stronger and stronger, so He gives boldness to deacons both in word and deed.

Some deacons in the Early Church grew bold as preachers. I think of Stephen, of whom it was said in Acts 6: 10, that the men who disputed with him over the truth of the gospel were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. After he preached a fine historic sermon to them in which he convicted them of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit, he grew bold enough to reprove them for their unbelief, and their being stiff-necked and always resisting the Holy Spirit. I believe that this verse teaches us that there is this same greater boldness which is given to deacons in our day, who serve well. Boldness to reprove error and immortality in the congregation, boldness in proposing to the church what they ought to do to improve the building, or to help the needy, or to help the pastor to forward the truth. Deacons, we should understand, who serve well, have this great standing, and they have this great increase in faith and boldness.

And then there is a final step of honor and advancement; it is the reward from God Himself at the last day. Patrick Fairbairn says that the word designating the diaconal service (diaconesantes) is in the indefinite past tense and it appears to contemplate the work of the deacon as a finished totality. That is, this verse is an encouragement for the deacons to consider the rich rewards of their service for Christ and the church. They should pause and think, "God has entrusted me with this official kingdom business until He comes." "Do business until I come," says Jesus in Luke 19: 13. This is what the deacon is doing. When Jesus' kingdom comes, when he returns again, there will be an accounting of the ten minas that the deacon, or any Christian servant, was given. "Master, your mina has earned 10 minas." Do you remember the response of the Master? "Well done, good and faithful servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." Now whatever that may mean, surely we can agree that it is a high and excellent standing for a deacon or for any Christian, for their diligently using all that the gifts and grace that they have been given. This commendation from our Lord Jesus is what each of us should strive for, but especially the man who would be a deacon.