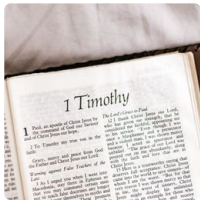


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1 Timothy 3:3 - 4:4



1 Timothy - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the meaning of 1 Timothy 3:3-4:4, discussing the qualities required for church leaders and the importance of a pure conscience. He delves into the role of deacons and the difference between their authority and that of elders. Gregg also offers insights into biblical passages, interpreting verses such as "camel through an eye of a needle" and explaining the significance of the statement "cauterize their own conscience." Overall, he emphasizes the importance of humility and service in church leadership.

Transcript

Maybe not. They could be in their work paper when they're in absolute primacy. But the worst... the social setting in which men are... really let their hair down and really act the way they really are most is in the home.

And it's kind of hard for them to hide what goes on in their home. Even when you show up at the door, they start trying to put on a good show, they can't hide the way their children have been raised, because their kids are there. And their kids don't know how to put on a good show, even if they're told to.

And you can definitely learn a great deal about a man's qualifications for eldership by visiting his home. And actually, I believe that before a man is selected for eldership or deacon, that his wife should be interviewed, and his children should be interviewed, and if he's an employed man, which he ought to be, his boss should be interviewed, and his fellow employees should be interviewed. We shouldn't be too quick or hasty.

Paul says, don't lay hands suddenly on anyone. We should avoid the haste of saying, oh, we've got a vacancy, we better fill it fast. I think some homework ought to be done.

And say, is this man, in all of his social relationships, known to be a man of high character? Does his wife respect him and think, now there's... does she say, that's a man of God? Or does she say, there's a guy who's got everybody fooled? And those are the things that need to be taken into consideration. He may be a violent man, and no one knows it but his own family. But it'll show, and they can tell you, if they will, whether

they think he should be an elder or not.

Not greedy for money is a phrase that's not actually found in some of the manuscripts. However, not covetous at the end of verse 3 is, and it's the same thing. Not covetous, not greedy for money, essentially means he shouldn't be a man, a high-living individual.

His taste, if he has expensive taste, there's a good reason to believe he doesn't qualify. A man who chooses to live in an expensive home and drive an expensive car and wear expensive clothes, it may not always be a mark of his spirituality, but in most cases it is. Jesus indicated it's harder for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

And if that's so, then we should find it a very rare thing for a rich man to really even be saved. And much less to be a leading spiritual example. In our own society, prosperity and the products of covetousness are often esteemed as a social virtue.

They are the marks of success. The Christian church is to have a different standard for judging success. And the very things that the world esteems as the marks of success are to the Christian, to the biblical Christian, the marks of failure in the Christian life, or the marks of weakness.

Remember that Jesus said the things that are highly esteemed among men are what? An abomination to God. So we should expect that mankind's value system is just the opposite of God's. And it is so, as the scripture reveals.

So rather than choosing men because they're rich and influential in the world, as elders, we should choose those who seem to have no concern about such things. Jesus said that in Luke. I'm not sure I can immediately find the passage.

I think it might be chapter 16. And it is verse 15. Luke 16, 15.

At the end of that verse. Okay, well. So he should not be a man of covetousness.

And usually that would be the same person as affluent. Affluence and covetousness very rarely are separable from each other. Although maybe on rare occasions.

In verse 3 it also says he should be gentle and not quarrelsome. That also is simply the way any servant of God ought to be. It says in 2 Timothy 2.24. 2 Timothy 2.24 says, A servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach.

In other words, basically should be like an elder. Everybody should aspire to be like an elder. But an elder should really be that way.

Every Christian should aspire to be that way. An elder should have succeeded in becoming that way. And be a model for others to live up to and follow.

Okay, now. We focus in verses 4 and 5 on his family line. He is to be one who rules his own household.

Now the word rules there in the Greek actually means manages. He is a manager of his household. It does not mean that he rules with a rod of iron.

And he has his children and wife crushed under him and demoralized. And absolutely afraid to speak any word of contradiction. Because he is the tyrant of the household.

Rule means manage. And manage means something very different than dominate. A manager of a business, if he is a good manager, notices when he has talented, gifted people under him.

And he puts them to work in the areas that their gifts are. A man will do the same with his wife if he is wise. He will not be afraid to put her in charge of a checkbook.

For fear that that challenges his ego dominance of the family. If she is better at balancing the checkbook than he is, there is no reason why he should not let her do it. He should manage his wife and his children's gifts and skills in such a way as to release them as much as possible into areas where they have strengths.

Not to keep them under his heel. Nonetheless, management of the home is very much analogous to management of the church. Because the church is just like a house.

It's like a family. A bunch of kids. That's really what it is, believe it or not.

Running a school like this is like taking care of a bunch of teenage kids. With a few exceptions. But, I mean, I'm sure that Joe in Virginia, who has actually raised kids through their teens, as I have, would see just what they have been able to observe here.

That even adult children like yourselves, or let's just say adults, young adults, have many of the same problems of character that kids have in a home. And the same kind of skills that make a person a good parent would make him a good leader of Christians, especially young Christians. And so the proving ground for whether a man is really capable of pulling this off is take a look at his family.

How has he managed that challenge? How has he done? If he has not shown wisdom and good management of his family, then let's not, if it doesn't work at home, don't export it. If he can't do it at home, let him not, don't turn him loose on the church. Because he'll probably get about the same results with the church that he got with his own kid.

Similar, anyway. Now, his children are to be in submission with all reverence. And as I said, this is one of the reasons I don't think I'd qualify to be an elder.

I have at least one child now, grown and gone, who is not doing what I wish she were doing with her life. Now, I don't know that she's living in any kind of scandalous behavior.

I don't know that she's doing any sins that would be, that if anyone's found out about it, it would embarrass me, because I really don't, I don't think she's that kind of girl.

She's professed Christian, but for the past three years she's lived with a non-Christian mother. When she lived with me, she was well-behaved. She was probably rebellious inside, I don't know, because that seems to have been an advantage when she lived with her mother.

But she behaved well. She was well-spoken. She was in no way an embarrassment.

But today, she's not really living the way that I think, that I want my children to grow up to live. And for that reason, I don't believe that I would pass this test. At the same time, the question of whether I would be qualified, for instance, to leave a school like this, and whether I can expect the same results from all these students as I got in my training with her, may not be an accurate test, because I didn't have the sole influence in her life.

She had two parents influencing her. One was a Christian, one was a non-Christian. And it seems to me that when she was under my influence, she behaved like a Christian.

When she went to live with a non-Christian parent, another influence seemed to fly. I'm not trying to make excuses, but I don't know that we have exactly a normal situation here. Then again, I'm not the only influence in your lives either.

And so it may be more analogous than I think. But the fact is, I would not wish to make myself your pastor, or your elder, for this reason. I want to see more success than I've had in my family.

I want to see that the children I'm now raising... And by the way, my childhood philosophies have changed since I raised my daughter, too. When she was young, I was an airhead about parenting. I didn't know a thing.

I made a lot of mistakes, and they may have contributed to the way she is now. I've started a brand new family 11 years later, with a totally different frame of mind about family, and about child raising policy, and so forth. So far, I would say I see what I would call success in my children, but they're only young.

They haven't really been tested yet. When they're teenagers, when they're grown, then you'll know whether I did it right or not. And then I'll know whether I did it right or not.

And I won't really know until then, unfortunately. I'd like to know. And for that reason, I really believe elders should be older men whose children are raised.

Because the fact that he's got his little kids at home under his heel, and they behave well enough, is no proof that he's really doing the right thing. The real thing is to see if when they're out from under his influence, has he built into them the ability to be loyal

to God without being leaned on about it. Has he built into them internal controls such as a Christian ought to have? You really never know that until a man's family is grown and left home.

And that's probably why the leaders of the church were the older men of the church, because they didn't have kids at home, for the most part. Their kids were probably grown, and you could see what was the fruit of their parenting. It is too early to tell what is the fruit of a man my age.

It's parenting in most cases. I still have little kids at home. I do not oppose having a younger man be in the office of an elder in the church if that's the best the church has available, and if he qualifies in other respects.

But I certainly think it's desirable that the elders be men who have already proven by raising their children to maturity, and where you can see what the final outcome of their policies is before you really make them a father figure in the church. So another reason, again, that I don't believe that I'd ever want to be an elder, at least not in the next 10 or 20 years, is because I don't believe I'm old enough to be an elder. I've been an elder in two churches previously, but that was more or less against my will.

I did it to acquiesce to demands by the pastors that wanted me to be, and I frankly would not accept that position for one reason. I do think I'm too young to be an elder. I don't think I'm too young to teach people what the Bible says if I happen to know more about it than someone else does, but that doesn't mean I can be a father to these people.

I mean, that remains to be seen whether I can do that successfully. Okay, verse 6. We're going to have to just finish these qualifications for elders, and then we'll take our break. Not a novice.

The word novice in the Greek is neophuton, from which the English word neophyte is taken. Some of you may know the English word neophyte or may not. Literally, it means newly planted.

Neophuton means newly planted, and since the New Testament Christians used the word planted as a description of baptism, Paul says we were planted in the likeness of his death when he was talking about baptism, newly planted was a term that came to be used as a person recently baptized. So, a neophyte or a novice is a person who's recently baptized, but you know, there's a new convert. And the reason not to have a new convert in that position which is lest he be puffed up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Now, why would immaturity tend toward pride? Just because it does. By human nature, we all tend toward egotism and pride, and it takes years, usually, of hard knocks and certain failures and certain rude awakenings to teach us that we're not so tough stuff.

Everybody thinks he's pretty cool when he's 20.

By the time you're 40 and you look back at when you're 20 and say, I don't know how I ever survived with the idiocy that characterized me and the level of foolishness I had. And that's just human nature. We're born with a high self-image.

It takes years of God's dealing on us to knock us off our high horse and say, you know, you're not such hot stuff after all, are you? And it's a healthy thing. It's a desirable thing for a person to get knocked around a little bit so that in their older age they can have developed a true sense of humility. And youthfulness is almost always associated with pride.

Now, I've known a few young men who appear to be humble to me, and I'm amazed. But it's very rare. And basically, to make sure they don't get too proud, if they're recognized, if they're listed with the older men and the people that people look up to, and they're a fairly young Christian, they haven't been very sanctified yet, they don't have the character to go along with the authority.

I've seen churches and organizations really falter and spoil their reputation because they were growing so rapidly in numbers that they had to appoint many leaders. There's a community in Australia like that. There's some mission organizations I know like that, but they grow very rapidly.

And because of the large number of persons in their organization, they have to have a higher density of leaders, and they have to raise up from their ranks leaders that are not really proven, not really very mature. And sometimes that works out okay. Other times it's disastrous.

Because when you give a person authority who has not character, then you've got disaster. You've heard the saying that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is very true that power will corrupt unless a man is uncorruptible.

And uncorruptibleness is a character trait that we're not born with. It has to be developed. It is a process of sanctification that a man can be entrusted with power, and it won't go to his head.

He won't try to lord it over people because he just doesn't have any interest in doing so. Young men are not usually like that. And so, Paul warns, don't make a young person, a young convert, an elder.

Now, sometimes Paul may have had to violate that principle simply because all the Christians were young in a church. But Paul appointed elders in the Southern Galatian churches on his first missionary journey. He had just converted those guys a few months earlier, but everyone in the church was a new convert, so he had to pick the best that were available and make them elders.

Obviously, in some cases, you don't have any choice. There's no older Christians. In the Jesus Movement, there was a series of Christian houses, Christian communal houses that was established called the House of Miracles Movement and Shiloh Houses and so forth.

And the very first one was in Riverside, California, and everybody in it was a brand new Christian. And yet there needed to be someone kind of overseeing it. And so he appointed a guy who was three months old in the Lord to be the pastor of the house.

He worked out pretty well, actually. He was a fairly mature guy. Although, I understand from what I've heard, he's back since then.

But he was a pretty good leader for a while. But, I mean, there was just no choice. That's all you had.

You got Congress, they need oversight, you put a young leader up and you pray for the best. But it's better not to put young leaders up if there's mature people at all available. It's even, I think, important to have fewer leaders, a lower density of leaders, if you've got a few mature ones, than to have a multitude of immature ones.

The more immature ones you add, the more likelihood of disaster comes up. These people, it goes to their head, they've got authority and power, but they're not mature, they're not sanctified, they don't have the character, and they become abusive, and they get proud. Now, he says that the danger is that a young, new convert, who is put in a position of authority like this, and has lived up with pride, is likely to fall into condemnation of the devil.

I've already acquainted you with the problem with this particular line. Some believe that this means the same condemnation that the devil fell into through pride. And therefore they take this as a proof text that the devil is something different than he is, but through pride he fell.

That might be reflected in the way that New King James has retranslated this as the same condemnation as the devil. Another interpretation has nothing to do with Satan's history, but looks forward to Satan's future, and basically would say, if they fall into pride, they will experience the same condemnation that the devil is going to experience, in other words, they'll go to hell with the devil. That would not, of course, make any implications about where the devil came from, but it would say that he is destined to be condemned, and so will they if they fall into pride.

Now, actually, the way that New King James is rendered could be rendered that way, and therefore I shouldn't accuse the translators of trying to promote, you know, the view of Satan being a fallen angel here, but there is that possible interpretation. Another interpretation, the one that seems most likely to me, is that it's condemnation that is instigated against the Christian by the devil. Now, admittedly, it's not entirely clear why

a proud person would be more subject to experiencing this condemnation than another person would, but it seems to fit verbally.

The next line, which says in verse 7, Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, that is, non-Christians should think of him as a good person also, lest he fall into reproach, that is, criticism from the world, and the snare of the devil. Now, here we have the snare of the devil and the condemnation of the devil. The of the devil part is the same in both passages.

Now, the snare of the devil certainly does not mean a snare that the devil is going to fall into. We know that because the same expression is used in 2 Timothy 2.26. In 2 Timothy 2.26 it says that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, same expression, had he been taken captive by him to do his will. So, clearly, the snare of the devil is the snare that the devil has ensnared people with, taken people captive with.

Therefore, the devil is the instigator of the snaring, not the victim of the snaring. Likewise, the condemnation of the devil, therefore, would suggest that the devil is the instigator of the condemnation, not the victim of condemnation. So, a novice or one who does not have a good reputation with good people outside the church is in danger of various attacks from the devil, coming under condemnation and being snared.

Now, the exact nature of this condemnation and snare is unfortunately not clarified by Paul, and commentators themselves puzzle over it, you know. And, therefore, I can't really be sure exactly how that means, except that, obviously, if you don't have a good reputation, if you're subject to criticism in the community because you're not really blameless, or if you're a proud person, you certainly suffer to be a victim of the devil because you're basically, for one thing, you're in sin if you're in pride, and you have reason to feel condemned, in a sense. And, secondly, if you don't have a good reputation outside the church, the devil can certainly trap you, if anything, by false accusations or by true accusations against you, and destroy your ministry.

And, therefore, you can get trapped in a place where elder ought not to be. Well, we're going to have to stop there, take our break. You know, last time I did a lot on the pastoral epistles, I taught chapters three and four in one session.

As you know, in our last session, we covered only seven verses of chapter three, and I have far more to say on the subject of elders and bishops. I would love to tie in a great number of scriptures and talk about their relevance to the subject, but, obviously, I'm afraid we can't do that. Well, we're going to cover it again in Titus.

Yeah, we'll cover those things again in Titus, it's true, and it may give me an opportunity to say some additional things. We come now to the qualifications for deacons. Let's read it.

In Bena verse 8, chapter 3, verse 8, 1 Timothy, Likewise, deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, which probably means not speaking two different things, or, as we say, talking out of both sides of their mouth. They should, in other words, say one thing and do the same thing. I mean, they should be sincere, I think is what it would suggest.

Not given to much wine. Not greedy for money. Most of these things are very much like the qualifications for the elders.

Holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience. That's an interesting expression, holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience. Obviously, the conscience and concern about a pure conscience is not new to us now.

We've encountered this already several times in the Epistle, and we will again before the pastoralist has been treated completely, because a clean conscience is a vital, perhaps the vital, key to success in the Christian life. Holding the mystery of faith, it's a difficult thing to know what he means by mystery. He later uses the word mystery in verse 16, the mystery of godliness.

Whether the mystery of faith is simply meaning faith in the mystery, that is, faith, belief in the mystery of godliness, which he lays out in verse 16, is, I suppose, impossible for us to be determined. Paul talks about the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the gospel in various places. The mystery of the fellowship, or the fellowship of the mystery, actually, he uses that expression more frequently.

Paul's use of the word mystery is sometimes a bit perplexing. He clearly teaches that a mystery is something that has been revealed, and he might not be saying that the deacons should have special revelation given to them, but rather the revealed gospel, the revealed truth and doctrine that they've received, which is in other places described as a mystery that's been revealed to the apostles and prophets. They should hold tight to it.

They should not lose their grip of that. They should not drift from it. And that is probably his meaning.

Verse 10, but let these also first be proved, or tested, then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Now, it's interesting that he says specifically that deacons should be tested and proved before they're made to be deacons, and we didn't have a direct statement to that effect about elders. However, it is implied by the statement, let these also first be proved.

Also, in addition to what? Probably in addition to the elders. The elders should be proved first, and the deacons also should be. Although he hasn't directly said in his qualifications for elders, let them be tested first, yet he certainly has given an extensive test for elders.

I mean, it's implied that if their family is not in order, they don't pass the test. If they

don't meet the qualifications, they don't pass the test. Likewise, deacons.

Deacons is not a minor office. It is an office that also requires blameless character. Let these also be proved, then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

A term that was used also for the elders. Likewise, their wives. Now, there's a problem here with the translation.

The word wives in the Greek can simply mean women or wives. There's really no way to determine for certain, except by context, whether the word wife or woman is better in any given place, since the Greek word is the same word for wife or woman. Some believe that this should be translated, Likewise, the women must be reverent, not slanderous, temperate, faithful, and all things.

Now, the reason that some people prefer wives, as apparently these translators do, is because Paul has already talked about women in chapter 2. He also talks about women in chapter 5. It doesn't seem necessary for him to interrupt his discussion of deacons in order to simply talk about women generically, because he continues to talk about deacons in verse 12. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children in their own house as well, like an elder must. For those who... Now, let's stop there.

Notice that verse 11 interrupts or falls in the middle of a discussion of deacons. So, to translate the women, certainly it would seem strange if Paul is now speaking generically about Christian women, and he's interrupted his discussion of deacons, and then he goes back to it in order to talk about it. And this has led many to believe that he is talking about the wives of the deacons.

And it can be translated, likewise, the wives. And since it's in the midst of a passage talking about deacons, many understand it to be the wives of the deacons. Now, there's a slight problem with this, sir.

We'll deal with that possibility. It can't be translated deaconess. The word doesn't mean deaconess, as it's not even etymologically related.

But there is a possibility that deaconesses are implied. It could be that he's talking about the wives of the deacons. After all, this is included in the qualifications for deacons.

It certainly would be sensible that he might, as part of that, especially just before he says that the deacons must be the husband of one wife, which means he is concerned with the family life of the man, that he might say something about the character of his wife. And there is really nothing to argue against this, with the exception of the fact that he has not said anything about the elder's wives. And it would seem, if anything, if the wives are going to be under examination before a man is appointed to office, certainly those appointed to the higher office of elder would seemingly, their wives would have to be examined, and there's no reference to qualifications for elder's wives.

And so it raises some questions as to whether this is talking about the deacon's wives. As I said, it can be translated, the wives or the women. Now, since it is in the passage about deacons, and it's right in the middle of it, it seems clear that something about these women is somehow related to the office of the deacon.

Either as the wives of the deacons, or as some have suggested, a feminine version of deacons, or we could say deaconesses. Now, the Bible doesn't have the word deaconess in it, the feminine form, but there is a woman who is called a deacon in the Bible. In Romans chapter 16, in verse 1, Romans 16.1 says that Phoebe has been a servant of the church in century, and the word servant there in the Greek is deacon.

She is proven to be a deacon, since she's female. We should probably more properly say deaconess, or make the word more feminine. And therefore, it suggests to many that in addition to a class of deacons, there's also a feminine version of the same called deaconesses, and there's no reason to doubt this either.

There's nothing about the office of a deacon that a woman could not perform in. And so, there may be a suggestion here that the majority of the deacons, or those with other offices, were men, but there were some women in that role, so Paul took a moment out to speak to them on the side. You know, he's basically telling how a deacon should be a husband and one wife, but there are some women deacons too, and tell us what they should be like.

They have to have good character as well. I think this is probable. Again, I think it's probable because it seems unlikely that Paul would address the qualifications for a deacon's wife, and not address the qualifications for an elder's wife.

But, it makes perfectly good sense that he would give qualifications for a female version of the deacon, and we know there were such, in persons like Phoebe, and therefore, no problem. Also, if anyone objects that, you know, Paul is not the type to give an office like deacon to the women, because of what he said in chapter 2, I would disagree. What he said in chapter 2 is he does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over men.

Deacons do not necessarily have authority over the church in the sense that elders do. We'll talk about that in a moment. And furthermore, probably the one difference in the qualifications for elders from the qualifications for deacons is that the elders are to be apt to teach and the deacons are not necessarily so.

The elders are to be teachers, at least in ability, but the deacons do not have to have that, because it is not their role to teach. Therefore, we can see why Paul would not list a female version of the elder's office, but he might include a female version of the deacon's office, which is a service function in the church, not a leadership function, and which does not require teaching. And the things that Paul forbade women to do is to teach and usurp authority over men.

So, while this cannot be settled finally from the text, it seems to me like we have the two options that we have here, not a reference to the deacon's office, but to the women who held the deacon's office. These are described qualifications. Would there be any description of what a deacon does? I do wish to get to that in a moment, okay? It's a good question, and it certainly is one that should be addressed.

I want to first cover the passage that gives the qualifications, and then we'll talk a little bit about what is done by both elders and deacons. The deacons like the elders to be husband and wife, and whatever sense that means, probably the same sense. 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.

Whatever that means is very difficult to say, exactly. I mean, the commentators are pretty much left scratching their heads about this. What does it mean to purchase? Actually, that's what it says in the King James.

Obtain for themselves a good... The New King James has made it a little clearer. If it is correct in how it renders it, a good standing probably means a good reputation. Some people believe that it is saying that if a person is faithful in his function as a deacon, he may be promoted to an office of an elder.

After all, in character, a deacon has to be essentially the same as an elder. The difference is that he doesn't have to be a teacher, and that would suggest that he could possibly be a younger man than an elder, and he may grow older and qualify, especially when he becomes capable of teaching, he may qualify also as an elder. And some would say, and may be right, that Paul is saying that the deacon office is the proving ground for possible future elders.

A man who is too young, or not capable of teaching, but otherwise has good character and a good reputation in a servant's heart, can serve as a deacon first, and if he does well there, he is a candidate for promotion, eventually, when he is older, to be an elder. And that seems to be a good and likely interpretation, though commentators have postulated various other interpretations. It also would be agreeable with the fact that Jesus said that a leader has to be a servant.

The word deacon is simply the normal word in the Greek, in the Bible, for servant. There are other words, by the way. The word *doulos* is another Greek word that's used in the New Testament for a servant, or slave.

But *diacon*, or *diaken*, I forget, I mean, there's several forms. There's *diakone*, and there's different forms of this word. I don't remember exactly which one is translated deacon.

But the Greek word for deacon is a generic term for servant, and therefore these persons

didn't have an ecclesiastical-sounding title. They were just called servants. They were officially appointed servants to do official service on certain titles.

We'll talk about what that service is in a moment. But the word minister, although we think of a pastor as a minister, the word minister really means servant, and they were there to minister, or to serve. Now since an elder is an authoritative office, it might be reasonable to suggest that a man who wishes to be an elder should prove himself to be a servant, since that is the qualification for being chief in the kingdom of God.

And so it would make sense that Paul would say, first a man is tested in the office of the deacon. Let him be a humble servant first. If he does well there, then he may be considered for higher office.

And I would like to say that whether Paul means that or not, it would make a very good bit of advice, in view of the fact that Jesus said that a true leader should be a true servant. And I would wish to be reluctant to appoint anybody to any kind of position of authority in a church or in a school who had not shown himself willing to do the most menial work with a cheerful and Christian attitude. I myself have enjoyed janitorial work when I had to support myself and I had to work for a living.

I've always, by preference, when I had to pursue a job, chosen janitorial work. Partly because it's mindless work and I could meditate on the scripture rather than some more responsible jobs. I didn't enjoy being a waiter because I had to memorize menus and think about them and remember what people ordered and so forth.

I was only a waiter for a very short time, but for very many years, I did janitorial work on the side, window cleaning stuff, because I mean, it's not a, you know, when people say, well what do you do as a squirter? I say, oh, I'm a window cleaner. And people would laugh. I wasn't quite sure why.

I wasn't embarrassed to be a window cleaner, but, you know, apparently, I mean, there were, more than one time, there were some people that wanted me to be a window cleaner. So, I, you know, cleaned windows. And they'd chuckle, like, you know, boy, you must be humble to admit that.

Is that so humbling? You know, I didn't know it was. Maybe it is. You know, I clean toilets and I clean floors on my hands and knees and I do those things.

And that's probably the way I've supported myself financially. And in terms of health jobs, I've held a number of jobs, but the majority of the time it's been as a janitor. And I, frankly, don't see anything too debased about it.

And likewise, in this school or in the church, I've got nothing against doing the most menial tasks. And anyone who has a problem with that has an ego problem and shouldn't be in any kind of leadership role. And so let them first prove themselves willing

to do menial labor to serve in the un-glorifying or un-glamorous tasks, and then they may obtain for themselves good standing, which may mean a promotion or a higher standing in terms of responsibility in the church, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Now, what is meant by boldness here? Well, actually, boldness is fairly self-explanatory. I guess the question that comes to mind is, why did Paul speak of a deacon being made more bold after he's been faithful in the deacon's office? Paul may be thinking back to the first men whom we would probably call deacons. And when we ask what an elder does, what a deacon does, we probably should go back to the very earliest form of church government that was known in the church, back in the Jerusalem church, immediately after its founding, back in the book of Acts.

It is quite clear from Acts chapter 2 that the original leaders of the church, and the only original leaders of the church, were the apostles themselves. So there was just one church, they all lived there, and the apostles were the undoubted, indisputed leaders. People sat daily under the apostles' teaching, and the apostles laid out what was normative for Christian conduct in the church.

In chapter 4, we find the same thing affirmed, and we find that even when people wanted to give money to the poor, they would sell it and bring the money to the apostles, and the apostles would make distribution of it. So the apostles were apparently the only people who handled all the administrative and spiritual leadership in the church. However, as we find in chapter 6 of Acts, the apostles apparently found themselves overworked, and the part that got neglected was the administration.

And there appears to have been some inequity in the distribution of goods to the poor, and the Grecian widows complained that they weren't getting their share, whereas the Hebrew widows were getting preferential treatment. The apostles did not want this to happen, but they realized that they didn't have enough time to do all things well, and so they decided to appoint somebody to whom they would delegate this service. And we find this stated in chapter 6, verse 2 of Acts, Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

By the way, this word, serve tables, is the word for being a deacon, a servant in that sense, but the word deacon or a cognate of the word deacon is used here. It's not right for us to leave our task of preaching the word in order to be deacons, essentially what they're saying, servants at tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business, that is of distribution of goods, distribution of food.

But we, the apostles, will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Now, here is the first instance where there was a division of responsibilities in the

early church. Initially, all the responsibility and all the authority rested with the apostles, spiritual and practical, but at a certain point it became clear that the practical needs of the church were a full-time job, just like the spiritual needs of preaching the gospel and feeding the flock were.

And so they first made a distinction between two categories of work that had to be done in the church, the spiritual work of teaching, preaching, and so forth, providing spiritual guidance for the church, and then the more practical necessities of the church, which had to do with just down-to-earth meeting the physical needs of people. Christians, and therefore the church which is made up of Christians, has two sets of needs. There are physical people and spiritual people, and they have spiritual needs and physical.

They need to be fed spiritually and fed physically. And therefore the church very early recognized the need for a class of people who would devote themselves to the physical needs of the church, so that others, the apostles, could devote themselves to the spiritual needs. Now, later on when there were many churches and there weren't enough apostles to go around, so that not every church had apostles, it seems that Paul was the first to begin to appoint elders in every church.

The elders were the teachers and the leaders in the church, and apparently held a position in the individual churches that were as close in approximation as possible to that which the apostles held in Jerusalem. I do not mean that the elders had apostolic authority, but I mean that I think from what I read of elders, they functioned in the individual churches they were in, in a role that was analogous to the function of the apostles in the Jerusalem church. That is, they were there to teach, they were there to be spiritual shepherds of the flock, and so we read of their duties whenever they're discussed.

They were there to provide the spiritual oversight of the church. The deacons apparently fulfilled the role that these seven men, chosen in Acts chapter 6, fulfilled in the Jerusalem church. That is, each new church became a microcosm of the mother church, which was Jerusalem.

Jerusalem had the apostles providing spiritual needs, and these seven, who were never called deacons. But the fact that Peter said it's not right for us to leave the Word of God to be deacons, or to deacon to serve tables, suggests that we can refer to these seven who took the job of deaconing to be deacons. The title is never given to them, but almost all scholars agree that these seven should be called deacons.

And in the individual churches that didn't have apostles, and where these seven were not, they had elders and deacons to take those offices. In Jerusalem, the apostles provided spiritual, and the deacons, physical ministry to the church. Likewise, the elders and deacons in other churches seem to have that division of responsibility.

Therefore, the elders should devote themselves not to pulling the weeds in the church, or painting the church building, although many pastors are the only sowing persons in the church, and therefore they're expected to do everything. To mow the lawn, to paint the church, to clean the windows, to clean the bathrooms, and so forth. Which is, by the way, no pastor should object to doing that.

He shouldn't be too proud to do that. Yet, if he's the one doing those things, he cannot, as the apostles themselves found, devote himself as a man of God ought to, who has the spiritual nurture of the church given to him as a task. He cannot spend the time he needs to in prayer and study and preaching.

And sadly, many churches want the pastor to do everything. Whereas, in the early church, the practical matters were devoted to another class of people. Not so much of a prestigious class as elders, but in many respects, more noble.

I mean, both were noble colleagues. But to be a servant of the most base sort is what Jesus himself made himself when he washed the disciples' feet. And he demonstrated that even the apostles should be willing to do that, and I believe the apostles were willing to do that.

But as it came time that their workload increased, they had to choose whether they could do that or something else. And they devoted themselves as their main task to the spiritual needs, as the elders also should. And the deacons are appointed to do the menial work, as it were, the practical things.

Setting up the chairs, cooking and cleaning the meals for the church banquet, or whatever. Whatever needs to be done physically. Repairs on the church, maintenance of the buildings, and so forth.

Those are the deacons' responsibilities. Distribution of the church monies to the poor. That's what the original deacons were chosen for.

And by the way, Calvary Chapel, Santa Cruz, where I was an elder for a while, we had deacons. It's the only church I've ever seen or been in where the deacons were given all the finances to distribute. The elders didn't even bother with financial concerns.

The elders just got together to meet over the spiritual needs of people. And the deacons had the whole responsibility of taking all the money that came in and distributing it to the poor and the church, and of course paying the bills of the church as well. And I feel like that resembles very much what the Seven did and what deacons were supposed to do in the early church, to make sure that physical things were taken care of, the financial things were taken care of.

Jim Soderberg, who is now the pastor of Calvary Chapel, the same church, has even added more to his deacons' responsibilities, which strikes me as a real good thing. He

has his deacons. Each of them is assigned a certain number of people in the church so that everyone in the church is, in one way or another, known by a deacon.

And that deacon, on a regular basis, I don't know if it's weekly or monthly, is supposed to telephone these people and say, Do you have any needs? How are your finances? Do you have any special needs that we should know about? And so that they keep their finger on the pulse and become aware, on an ongoing basis, of what the real physical needs are of the people. Not talking about their spiritual needs, that's the pastor and elder's job, but basically to find out if there's really any poor people in the church, or anyone who's facing a crisis, where the church ought to come to their aid. And so the deacons in his church have just been given that whole responsibility.

And he makes sure, then, that the people are cared for, and that the deacons are in touch with what really is needed by each individual family. Anyway, that is what the deacons, I think, were for. And while there's not very frequent reference to deacons involved, for instance, the word deacons, as an officer, is not mentioned in the Book of Acts, although elders are mentioned.

We do find Paul writing to Philippi and greeting the saints along with the bishops and deacons. So we know that bishops are elders and deacons were in the church of Philippi. Paul, no doubt, had appointed them.

We know that Ephesus, where Timothy was, and we don't know about Crete, because Paul doesn't talk about qualifications for deacons in Titus, but we know that churches often had deacons as well as elders. Now, in the modern church, the word deacon, like the word bishop or elder, has almost taken on an authoritative officer kind of usage in some cases. There are some churches where the board of deacons practically run the church.

They can hire and fire the pastor. I mean, they're basically in charge. They are the ones that the pastor answers to.

And I think the opposite was true in the early church. The deacons answered to the elders. The elders were providing the real leadership in the church.

The deacons were serving, in practical ways, the needs of the church. And that's why it was appropriate for, for instance, a woman to be in the role of deacon, because there's no reason she couldn't serve in that office, which was not an office of running the church. Now, when Paul says that he that serves as a deacon well purchases himself a good standing and great boldness in the faith, I can't be sure what Paul is talking about, but he might be thinking of Stephen, one of the seven.

Paul himself, before his conversion, had the opportunity to hear Stephen. And one thing about Stephen was that he was more than an ordinary deacon. I'm sure he was a faithful

deacon.

I'm sure he used the office of the deacon faithfully. But he purchased for himself, or obtained for himself, other recognition as a preacher, an apologist, an evangelist, and a martyr, of course. But we are told that he very boldly stood up, and we have some samples of his teaching, where he confronted even the ruling body of the Jews, and spoke very boldly to them, confronted them about their sins, even though he stood to die at their hands.

And Paul might have been impressed by Stephen. I'm sure Paul was impressed by Stephen. He may have even had Stephen in mind when he says, you know, a guy who starts out as merely a deacon, you never can tell what God will do in elevating him if he's faithful in that office, because, you know, it can result in a very bold and elevated ministry, in some respects, a very visible ministry.

And that might be what he has in his mind. Let's go on. Verse 14.

One thing I did want to say about elders and deacons before we leave the subject, and though we'll come back to elders in Titus, we won't come back to deacons there, so I'm going to say it now. It should be understood that any ministry in the church is only properly done by those who are gifted to do it. That is, spiritually gifted.

You don't pick an elder because he has natural qualifications, because he's naturally smart, or because he's a good corporate leader in the company he works in, and therefore will stick him in charge of the church, too. He should have good qualities recorded, but he should also be, you know, spiritually called and gifted for it. There should be a spiritual dimension to him, and this is suggested by the fact that whereas deacons are told to serve and elders are told to rule, both words are used in a list of gifts.

In Romans chapter 12, there's a gift of ruling and a gift of serving mentioned. In Romans 12, where gifts of the Spirit are being listed, verse 6 through 8 says, Having them gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them in prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith, or ministry, which literally means service, it's the word for being a deacon. Let us use it in our ministry, in our deaconing.

He who teaches in teaching, he who exhorts in exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads or rules with diligence. The word here is the same word as when the elders are told to rule well. It says in 1 Timothy 5, we saw verse 17, that the elders who rule well, it's the same Greek word as here, with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness.

Now there's a number of gifts here, many of them don't appear to be supernatural in nature. They're not gifts like healing and miracles and tongues and interpretation and so

forth, but they do have, prophecy is mentioned, which suggests that these gifts have never been as much spiritual gifts as the other kinds of gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. But the gift of serving and the gift of ruling or leading are mentioned as gifts very much like the gift of prophecy or any other gift.

It is a calling in God, it is a special equipping that God gives through the Holy Spirit, and we should assume that those in the church who have the gift of ruling are the ones who are in the position to rule, namely the elders. Those who have the gift of serving are those whose gift has been recognized by acknowledging them as deacons, and that's what they're set free to do in the church, is to serve. And therefore we have a suggestion that it's not just the objective qualifications that we read of in Timothy that qualifies them, but they have to actually be gifted.

It says, those who rule should do so with diligence. Over in 1 Peter, Paul exhorts the elders. Likewise, I brought this up during the break, in the conversation, but in 1 Peter 5, verse 1 and following, especially 5, verse 1 and 2, the elders who are among you I exhort, who am also a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.

Here's what he tells the elders to do. Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, the word of this for us, bishops, not by constraint, but willingly. Not for dishonest gain, but eagerly.

Now, Peter seems to, he exhorts the elders to do it eagerly, and not because they're forced to, and not because they're bribed to. They should do it willingly and eagerly. This may suggest that people who ought to be elders sometimes are a little reluctant to take the position, and that may be a good sign, because Moses and Jeremiah and others showed some reluctance to move into their office, but they were willing to when God made it clear that that was His will, they did it anyway.

It seems to me that a person ought not to hold the position of deacon or elder unless they really can do it eagerly, unless they can really do it diligently. A person who's doing it against his will, because he was voted in or something against his will, is going to not be diligent at it, as Paul said, he that rules under diligence. He's going to take shortcuts, he's going to try to shirk responsibility, because he doesn't really want to be there.

And one of the first ways that a person knows that he has a gift is that he has a desire to do something. That's not the only way you can know, but a person who's gifted in something has, in some sense, a willingness and desire to do it. He may be reluctant, he may be fearful, but he still really wants to do it if that's what the will of God is, because he's concerned about the need being met.

And so elders and deacons not only should be qualified in that sense, but there should be some sense that they're called and gifted of God for it, and part of that sense would

be that they're eager to, or that they're willing to, without being forced or robbed to do it. Now, going on in 1 Timothy 3, verse 14, These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly. In other words, I could say these to you when I come to you, but I'm not sure I'm going to, so I'm going to write anyway.

Though if I do come to you shortly, it won't be necessary for me to have written. I'm glad he did write, because these are valuable words he wrote to us. So he wasn't sure if he was going to come to Timothy shortly, so he decided to write, in case he might be delayed.

He says, But if I am delayed, I write, so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth. The other day in Isaiah we were talking about the mountain of the house of the Lord being exalted, and I gave you a number of scriptures in the New Testament that identified the church as God's house. I didn't bring this one up.

I could have, but I brought up some other ones. This is another case where we see that to the mind of the apostles, the only house that God was in today is his church, the body of Christ. He says, If I came to you, I wouldn't need to write, because I could then tell you how to behave in the house of God, or how to conduct yourself.

But since I may be delayed, I'll write to you, just so this won't go unsaid. And you do need to be informed of how to conduct yourself in the house of God, and obviously how others need to be conducted in the house of God. He says, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The word ground of the truth may suggest that the church is the foundation of the truth, which is not the case. It's more proper that the truth is the foundation of the church. If we make the church the foundation of truth, that is, the visible church is recognizing whatever it says is true, well then we move into the problem of church traditions having as much authority as Scripture, because the church is the basis of truth.

And that is in fact the view held by the Roman Catholic churches, and the main difference between Catholics and Protestants is that Protestants have said traditionally that the word of God is the only ultimate authority, whereas the Roman Catholic conviction is that the word of God is authoritative, but on the same level with the accumulated traditions of the church. If the church is in fact the ground of the truth, it suggests that the church as an institution or as an entity is in a sense the basis of truth, and whoever, it might be argued, whoever is in charge of the church at any given time is the final arbiter of what truth is. But the word ground is not the right translation.

Most translators prefer the word bulwark or fortress, the defender of the truth. It is the church that is given the task to defend the truth upon which it is built, and it is the commission of the church to do so. In the world, there is deception.

The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one. John tells us, we know the evil one is the father of lies. Therefore, if truth is to be known, it's got to be retained uncompromised, unfolded by the church.

Unfortunately, many churches do not have this vision and have played fast and loose with truth. In fact, many of them say truth is not so important as love. Unity is more important than being a stickler for truth.

You know, let's not cause divisions over error that people have. Well, okay, there's a lot to be said for love, there's a lot to be said for unity, quite obviously. The Bible says a lot of things urging us to be loving and unified.

But Paul assumed that the church would be unified in the truth, not unified without the truth. Not that people who were in error and in heresy would be in unity, in an uncritical sort of a unity with believers. The church would then cease to be the bulwark of truth.

The church has the task of preserving for the world the untainted truth. As soon as truth begins to be compromised for the sake of unity or anything else, there is no other witness for truth in the world. Because the church which is given to be the champion of God's truth has defected or reneged on its responsibilities.

Verse 16, interesting and rather a curious verse. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh, modern translations would say he or who was manifested in the flesh, following the Alexandrian text.

Justified in the spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed not in the world, and received up to glory. As you can tell from the way the passage is set by the typesetters, it is believed by most scholars that this is a creedal statement or a hymn of the early church, and that Paul is not just making this up, he's quoting something. Something that Timothy was already familiar with and most Christians were.

Sort of a succinct statement of Christian doctrine. And he says that this doctrine embodies the mystery of godliness. Now that's one of the perplexing things of course, what is meant by the mystery of godliness.

Now, if he said the mystery of correct theology or something like that, it would make sense, but godliness generally is treated in the Bible as a character trait. Peter says in 2 Peter, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, to patience godliness. It's a character trait.

It's roughly now just, or I should say almost synonymous with the word pious, or God-fearing. Godly. A godly man is a man who is pious or God-fearing.

So it seems strange that he would lay out this doctrinal statement and say this is the mystery of godliness. Now it is possible that he's saying that this statement, that God

manifests in the flesh, is the essence of the mystery of being godly. Jesus was manifest in the flesh, and the only way you're going to be godly is by God being manifest in your flesh too.

That is, by God reproducing his life in your flesh is how you're going to be, that's the mystery of how you can become godly. But I can't be sure that's what Paul means because the context doesn't help us here. What Paul has just said about the church being the pillar of God and the truth does not necessarily lead us to expect Paul to tell Timothy how to be godly in the next verse, but rather maybe to summarize what the truth is.

The church is to preserve the truth. Here is, for instance, a specimen of the truth that the church is supposed to preserve. And so godliness, it's hard to know exactly.

Maybe he's saying that a godly person must have this doctrinal or theological foundation. Which, at any rate, I'm not sure. He might say this is the mystery, he might mean the mystery of godliness, meaning the mystery that pertains to the godly life or the mystery that leads to a godly life.

The mystery meaning the mysterious message which has been now revealed to the apostles and prophets. I must confess, along with most commentators, it's not entirely clear why Paul chooses this language. Furthermore, the statement that he quotes has some difficult parts.

Of course, the question of whether it's God or he who was manifest in the flesh is not a serious problem. Obviously, the manifestation that he's talking about is in Jesus Christ. And even if it's he who was manifest in the flesh, it can still imply that he was God manifest in the flesh, as John tells us in John chapter 1. The word was manifested.

Actually, it's 1 John chapter 1. It says the word was manifested among us and we saw it and heard it and so forth. That's Jesus, God in the flesh. Now, obviously, we would prefer as Trinitarians to read God was manifest in the flesh because that's a proof of Jesus' deity.

Unfortunately, since there's a textual problem there, it makes it difficult to use as a proof text. And so anyone could argue, well, you're using an inferior text. For instance, Jehovah's Witnesses follow the Alexandrian text, which does not say God was manifest in the flesh here.

So we lose this because of the textual curiosity of the passage. We lose this as a proof text of the deity of Christ, but we have others upon which we can establish that doctrine. But one of the problems of this passage is just the order in which certain things are stated.

God was manifest in the flesh talks about the incarnation. The last line, he was received

up into glory, certainly speaks of the end of his earthly career, at the end of the gospels, Jesus was caught up into heaven. Therefore, since it begins and ends with the beginning and ending of Jesus' earthly career, you somewhat expect the statements in between to somewhat survey the earthly life of Jesus, and this they do not appear to do, especially when it says preached among the Gentiles and believed not in the world.

That really was only fulfilled after Jesus ascended, and therefore is mentioned out of chronological order. Maybe. We'll talk about that a little later.

It's not too hard for us to understand what it means that Jesus was manifest in the flesh. We know that he was incarnate. God became man.

There are some mysteries about that, and Paul says without controversy that is a great mystery. He admits that that's mysterious, and we maybe shouldn't expect to be able to explain everything about that. It's mysterious, but what does it mean justified in the spirit? It seems clear that in the spirit is in contrast to the in the flesh in the previous line.

He was something in the flesh and something else in the spirit. In the flesh, he was manifested as a human being. In the spirit, he was justified or vindicated, some translations say.

What does that mean? Declared just? Declared righteous? How did the spirit declare Jesus righteous? Well, there's a whole bunch of theories about that. Some believe that it is a reference to God speaking from heaven and the spirit coming down upon him in the form of a dove in the Gospel of John and in the other Gospels when Jesus was baptized. We know that in Matthew 3, 16, which by the way is given as a cross-reference in the New King James, the spirit came down in the form of a dove along with the professed voice of God saying, This is my son in whom I am well pleased.

Therefore, he was justified or vindicated or declared to be the righteous one by the spirit. That is, by the appearance of the spirit in the form of a dove upon him and by the voice of God speaking from heaven. That could be what is being professed.

Some have felt it means by resurrection. Because in Romans 1, Paul says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. Suggesting that the Holy Spirit, by resurrecting Jesus from the dead, declared him to be the Son of God.

So the spirit of God is involved there too. Now, the statement could refer to the spirit vindicating or declaring Jesus to be the righteous one. Either in the resurrection or possibly in the dove coming down or other ways have been suggested.

Which we don't really have. I mean, if this is looking beyond the earthly life of Jesus, for instance, the preaching of the apostles when he was preached among the Gentiles and

believed on the world. The Holy Spirit bears witness to us, leading us to conversion.

That Jesus is who he is said to be. In a sense, the reason that you believe in Jesus Christ is that he was justified by the spirit. Because the spirit declared to you who Jesus was and confirmed to you who he was.

So, I mean, there's another possibility. There's a variety of possibilities here. And it's difficult to know exactly how the early church understood this line.

But it's clear that Jesus had not only a fleshly but a spiritual aspect that they wanted to emphasize in this statement. The next line is difficult too. Seen by angels.

The only reason that's difficult is because it's not unusual to be seen by angels. It's far more unusual to see an angel. But to be seen by angels does not appear to be unusual.

The angel of the Lord encamps around the righteous. I presume they can see us. So, what's so special about Jesus being seen by angels? Some feel that this may be a reference to the eyewitness testimony that the angels gave at the tomb when Jesus was raised from the dead.

Another possibility is that angels here should not be taken of heavenly messengers. Because the word angelos in the Greek simply means messengers. And on some occasions refers to human messengers.

It may be saying that the messengers of the gospel saw him. They were eyewitnesses. He was seen by the messengers.

It could be rendered. The apostles, in other words. In other words, his resurrection is not just hearsay.

It was witnessed by certain messengers who told us about it. That is a possible rendering and it would make good sense. Another possibility is to render the word seen in a sense that it is occasionally used in the New Testament.

Which means to attend to something. For instance, when the Sanhedrin asked Pilate for permission to seal the tomb of Jesus. Pilate said, you have a watch.

See to that yourself. See to it. In other words, attend to that detail on your own.

The same Greek word is used. And some feel that maybe this means that Jesus was ministered to by angels. Attended by angels.

That's true too. So again, there's a variety of possibilities and we simply cannot choose finely between them. It's impossible, I think, to do so.

Now, I would say this. That if we understood justified in the spirit to refer to what

happened at Jesus' baptism. And seen by angels to mean attended to by angels.

And we do have a bit of a chronology here. Manifest in the flesh when he made his public appearance at his baptism. Or when he was born.

Then he was baptized and vindicated by the spirit coming down on him. Then he went into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil at which angels came and ministered to him. So all these things, if interpreted in that particular way, would suggest early events in the career of Jesus.

And we would expect, therefore, the rest to speak of later events in his career. And that is a possibility. It may argue for those interpretations.

But simply no one knows. I mean, to tell you the truth, to read the commentaries. Everybody's devoted to finding out what this means.

But there's simply a variety of possibilities. And we don't know for sure. What is this talking about us? And great is the mystery of godliness.

Who, instead of God, who was manifest? It's talking about our godliness. The godliness of Christ is manifest in our flesh. We're justified by the spirit.

We're seen by the angels. Christ has preached among the Gentiles through us. Believed on the world through us.

That's what they say, remember? Yeah. I like that. I like that a lot.

It totally gives a totally different flavor to the concept. I don't know that any commentator has ever suggested it. At least none that I've read.

It seems to fit in context with talking about servants of the church and the church together. I mean, maybe not. But I like it, too.

Yeah. Actually, you know, I must confess that the thought has never really occurred to me to take the whole passage in light of Christians. Although I did suggest that Christian godliness is based on God being manifest in our flesh.

I've never taken it further steps. But all those things would be truth. And we may have discovered what all the commentators have missed here.

And that is a good possibility. Can you run that one more time? Okay. The suggestion is that he's not talking so much about Christian doctrine as he is talking about the Christian experience.

The mystery of godliness, the experience of godliness in the Christian life is based upon and is characterized by God being manifest in our flesh, vindicating us by his spirit,

justifying us, his angels giving attention to us. We are seen by angels. Paul says that in Ephesians that the church is being watched by the angels.

And then, of course, preached among the Gentiles and believed not in the world. That definitely is related to the career of the Christian. The Christian is a preacher and a believer.

And received of the glory certainly referred to the Christian's ultimate destiny too. Being glorified when Jesus comes back. So, all I can say is, without controversy, the mystery of what Paul is saying here.

It certainly would make, in my judgment, it would make good sense to take it the way that Gail has suggested, namely that it is talking about the Christian's experience and the Christian's personal godliness. I like that. But most commentators have taken it otherwise to be a confession of faith in Jesus and certain things about him.

But as I said, taken that way, it becomes much more difficult to really make sense of the individual lines and also of the order of events. So, frankly, all I can say is, if we lived in Paul's day and made this confession in church practice on a regular basis in the church service, and had it expounded to us, we would know more than we do now. This is a hymn or a creed of the church, which is not survived except in this fragment.

And in the particular context, we cannot be absolutely certain how it was understood. Do I like saying creeds? I don't object to saying creeds. Unfortunately, people can say a creed and not mean a word of it.

But that doesn't mean that a person who does mean it gains no advantage by saying it. And I think that it's always good to affirm what we believe, if it's true. I mean, if it's true that we really do believe that.

Amen. Okay, chapter four. Hey, we actually got to a new chapter.

Now, the Spirit expressly says that in latter times, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God in prayer. Now, Paul is looking forward to some future thing.

I pointed out in our introduction that both 1st and 2nd Timothy make predictions about the future. In 2nd Timothy chapter 3, he says, In the last days, perilous times will come, and he goes on to describe things. There is a difference, though, between 1st Timothy 4 and 2nd Timothy 3, namely, that in 2nd Timothy 3, he says, In the last days, a different expression than we find here, And the last days that he uses in 2nd Timothy 3 is the

same expression used by Peter on the day of Pentecost, which says, this is what Joel spoke of, in the last days, and it is the common expression for the last days used frequently in the New Testament, which, as I pointed out before, the apostles always, whenever they used that expression, spoke of something in their own times, or their own general period, which I suggested as a possibility for you to consider, that they mean the last days of the Jewish dispensation, the last days of the Jewish order of things.

In other words, the final countdown years before 70 AD and the destruction of the Jewish system. Now, that certainly is agreeable with the use of it in all the passages other than 2nd Timothy, when in 2nd Timothy 3, he says, In the last days, perilous times will come. The question of whether it applies to 2nd Timothy 3 is something to be considered, which we'll consider later.

Personally, I think it fits that context as well, but we don't have time now to consider that message, but we'll have time for that later. At this point, I want to point out that he does not use the term, in the last days. He uses another term, which is much more generic, in latter days, in latter times, which is a term that just means some time later than this, some time in the future.

It does not necessarily have to, in fact, it probably does not refer to the same period of time, which he called the last days in 2nd Timothy 3, or else he probably would have used the same expression. He has some period of the future unspecified in mind. Now, we perhaps can discover what future period he has in mind, by comparing what he says with some other passages, like, for instance, a few pages before this, 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2. For example, he tells us in Timothy here, 1st Timothy 4, 1, In latter times, some will depart from the faith.

They will apostatize. Well, in 2nd Thessalonians, chapter 2, Paul said we expect a great apostatizing, a great falling away, the same term, essentially. In verse 3, 2nd Thessalonians 2, 3 says, Let no one deceive your body means that day will not come unless of the falling away, or the apostasy, comes first.

And the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. Furthermore, it says in 1st Timothy 4, that people will be deceived by deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. Well, over in 2nd Thessalonians 2, it says in verse 9, Coming of the lawless one will be according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying, or deceiving wonders.

Satanically inspired deception, in other words. Okay? And so, there is some parallel there. Also, in 1st Timothy 4, 3, at the end of that, it says, It contrasts those who succumb to this with us, who are described as those who believe and know the truth.

The Christian, unlike those who depart from faith, is one who believes and knows the truth. In 2nd Thessalonians 2, those who are deceived are described as those who do not receive the love of the truth. 2nd Thessalonians 2, 10.

It is their failure to believe and love the truth that causes them to be deceived. Likewise, the deceived ones in 1st Timothy 4 are in contrast to us, who believe and know the truth. So, I mean, there are some verbal parallels.

Furthermore, as you will recall, when we said 2nd Thessalonians 2, I suggested to you that, along with the church fathers and the reformers, I leaned toward the view that the apostasy of which Paul spoke was the degeneration of the church in the 4th and 5th centuries to the point where it resulted in the rise of the papacy. And that everything Paul said about the man of sin was fulfilled in the papacy and has been fulfilled in the papacy. Now, it's interesting that in 1st Timothy 4, something that is said about the results of this falling away, in verse 3 it says, they forbid to marry and command to abstain from foods which God has ordained to be eaten.

Now, we could take that a number of ways. We could see it as ascetic Gnosticism, which was present even in Paul's own time. And it could be that which we're talking about, an increase of asceticism, where marriage itself is considered to be evil, because sex is evil.

And where, you know, foods of certain sorts are rejected. And where vegetarianism is recommended. It could mean that.

It could be that Paul knew of this tendency already, or that later on this tendency arose in the church, maybe partly influenced by Revelation. Chapter 7 and Chapter 14, which talks about the 144,000, says they are virgins. They marry among themselves with women.

Some people taking that more literally than it is intended, that is, understanding it as physical virginity rather than spiritual, would have concluded, of course, that, well, in order to be acceptable, to be of this group that's saved, you have to be a virgin. You can't be married. Paul says to take it that way is to take it as a doctor of demons.

Forbidding to marry is not what he has in mind. And certainly it is a doctor of demons to make such a forbidding. It is interesting, though, that the Roman Catholic tradition developed in such a way as to, at a certain point, advocate and require celibacy of the priesthood.

Now, of course, the Catholic Church cannot be accused of forbidding marriage across the board. Of course, the Catholic Church is very much in favor of family life. However, I don't know whether the Roman Catholic Church still teaches this, but an earlier teaching of the church, and it may be still the teaching of the church, teaches that sex, including in marriage, is evil.

Evil is sin. But it's a necessary evil for procreation. And therefore, you just kind of have to live with it.

That is why they had to come up with a doctrine that Mary remained a virgin even after

Jesus was born, to keep her holy. Even marital sex between her and Joseph is considered to be not pure. And she actually kept pure in their tradition so that they have to suggest that even after she and Joseph were married, they didn't have sexual relations.

And they also had to come up with the idea that Mary was born without her parents having sexual relations, which is called the Immaculate Conception, not to be confused with the virgin birth. The virgin birth is the doctrine that Jesus was born from a virgin. The Immaculate Conception basically teaches that Mary was born without her parents having sex also.

And that's a doctrine the Catholic Church came up with later on, and they also came up with the doctrine that she remained a virgin afterwards because of their negative view of even marital sex. Now, since the Catholic Church could not expect to be propagating generation after generation without any marital sex, sex in marriage is permitted but looked down on. And for that reason, the holiest men in the Church must be people who don't even get married or have sex, and therefore, the celibacy of the priesthood became a standard in the papacy, under the rule of the papacy.

Yes, John? I'm sorry, I wasn't aware that the doctrine of Immaculate Conception encompassed what you just said. Yeah, it's not about the birth of Jesus, it's about the birth of Mary. Mary was... the similarness of Mary's involvement.

The Immaculate Conception is given in order to keep Mary untainted. The doctrine has to do with her being conceived in her mother's womb. It's not relevant to the subject of Jesus' conception.

A lot of people are confused about that, and when they think of... they sometimes use the word Immaculate Conception when they really mean the virgin birth of Christ, but that's not what the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is. Now, the point I'm making is that while the Catholic Church never did really forbid marriage, it did forbid marriage to its leaders. And that's rather interesting in view of the fact that Paul has just been talking about true church leaders, and in every case, they were to be the husbands of one wife.

That is, a married state is desirable for church leaders. But a time would come when, because of degeneration in the church and apostasy, there would be an advocacy of celibacy, especially among leaders. And the forbidding of foods... I don't really know very much about dietary laws in Catholicism, I don't think they have many, but I know that there was at one time, and there may still be, I'm not very much in touch with modern Catholicism, I've only studied the history of Catholicism, but there was, and there may still be, a ruling against eating meat on Fridays.

That's no longer a thing. That was at one time a rule in Roman Catholicism. And Protestants have, for a long time, looked at this passage as being relevant to the

Catholic Church.

I must confess, I was suspicious that they were wrong. That is, that the Protestants were wrong for a long time. I thought they were just trying to take the paw shots at their rivals, you know, and try to find any way of putting it in the Scriptures.

But, in view of the connection between this passage, or the apparent connection between this passage and what Paul said in 2 Thessalonians, where I do think the evidence inclines toward an identity of the Madison with the papacy, and I don't say that out of any hostility toward the papacy, but simply what I feel the evidence inclines toward, I think it's very possible Paul's talking about the same apostasy here that he talked about in 2 Thessalonians. And therefore not the last days, as he uses that term elsewhere, but days later than his own, he didn't know when it would be a few centuries off, as a matter of fact. By the way, certainly the Catholic Church is not the only religious group that has come up with these ideas.

Vegetarianism and ascetic views about sex and marriage do exist, even in Eastern cults and Hindu cults. Not all Hindus, of course, take all these views, but vegetarianism is generally a Hindu idea, and it was the modern New Age movement. Those who really go all the way with their Hinduism usually stick with the vegetarian diet, and some of them, like the Hare Krishnas and everything, also forbid marriage.

Now there was a cult, I don't know if they're still around, you used to see them all the time walking along the streets with their sheets on, barefoot, and with an army blanket for warmth, and they would walk about, usually smoking cigarettes, because that was the only pleasure they were allowed to do in their religion, and they were part of a group called the Jesus Family, is what they called themselves. They followed a leader who is alive on the earth today, who claims to be Jesus, returned his official name as Lightning Amen, because Jesus was returned like lightning, he calls himself Lightning Amen. And he's a pretty ruthless character, as I understand it, I mean, he's kind of a scary guy.

I mean, like a Jim Jones type, for sure. But his followers numbered in the thousands, and they had a basic creed. Their creed was three no's.

No killing, no sex, no materialism. Now actually, obviously, those things are appealing in terms of morality, in a sense that sexual misconduct is the most common kind of misconduct. Killing is obviously an obnoxious practice, especially in war and so forth, and materialism is clearly forbidden in the scriptures, and therefore they have a form of godliness.

But to them, no materialism means they can't own anything except the sheet and the army blanket they're wearing, not even shoes. They can't own cars, but they're sure glad that some people do, because they're always hitchhiking. No killing not only means no murder and no participation in war, it also means no killing of animals, so they have to

be vegetarian, and they are, more or less.

I mean, they eat and smoke vegetables, but they don't do either to animals. And no sex for them means including no marital sex, so marriage is out for them. I've talked to them on many occasions.

On one occasion I picked them up hitchhiking and put them in the back seat, and I and another Christian brother were going actually for several hours in the direction they wanted to go, so we had a long time with them as a captive audience, and we were talking to them. I knew their creed already before I picked them up, and I knew where it stood. We got talking about these very issues.

Of course, I could not refrain from bringing up this passage. I said, have you ever read this passage? I had them read it out loud to me. I gave them my Bible, and they didn't care what I meant.

I said, would you read this passage to me? It says, In the latter days, many will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods or meats. And I said, isn't it interesting that the very things that are the distinctives of your religion are things that Paul, 2,000 years ago, said people in latter times would teach, and he called them doctrines of demons. And they were kind of nervous and silent.

They lit up a cigarette. After a short time, they decided they would seek another ride, and they didn't let me take them all the way to where they were going. But it is amazing that despite this warning given, this clear teaching given 2,000 years ago, so many people professing to be Christians, whether in a respectable denomination or in a cult, have, in one way or another, professed the very things that Paul said would be the doctrines of demons that would arise in latter times.

And that clearly is the case. Now, Paul indicated in verse 2 that this would be the result of their searing their conscience. The word sear, actually in the Greek, is a word which we would transliterate with the English word cauterize.

It's something like cauterizo in the Greek. And to cauterize usually means that you create instant scar tissue by some caustic chemical or perhaps a hot iron, as he suggests here. Some wounds, especially in the old days, I think even still in some cases, are best treated by being cauterized.

They won't heal well on their own. Stitches don't necessarily help. And simply by cauterizing with something hot, it instantly seals up the wound, the flesh is sealed, and it creates scar tissue, which is what cauterize refers to.

The interesting thing about cauterized tissue, though, is that it's insensitive. The nerves

are desensitized. And what he's saying is, like, he's speaking about the conscience as if it was an organ of the body, as if it was made of flesh.

And in a sense, it's not a bad way to speak of it, though the conscience certainly is not associated with any particular organ of your physical body. It can certainly be described as a spiritual organ, because it is like a sixth sense. Your body has certain organs that provide you with your five senses.

Your eyes help you see, your ears help you hear, and so forth. Your nerves help you feel. Well, your spiritual sense, the sense of what's right and wrong, which is not discerned by the five senses, is a sense also, and the conscience is figuratively spoken of as a sense organ, an organ of spiritual and moral sense.

And these people have cauterized their conscience so that it is as if it is now scarred, an incapable feeling. It is no longer capable of telling them what's right and wrong. They have lost touch with moral reality, and therefore they drift into all kinds of weirdness.

Now, it does not say exactly how one goes about to cauterize or sear his conscience. It certainly isn't with a literal hot iron. But it is possible, I mean, he talks about the results of a cauterized conscience.

He doesn't say how it happens that way, but it seems almost certain that a person's conscience becomes cauterized or becomes numb or seared when he does something wrong, his conscience protests, and rather than responding as he should and retents, he ignores or tries to ignore the conscience and heaps further and further abuse on the conscience until the conscience just goes into shock, as it were. It's been so abused that it lapses into a condition that now is just a shock in the human body. Now, I can't give you chapter and verse for this, so you're welcome to dispute it or disagree with it, but I'm speculating merely.

But I have seen in some years of ministry with people who have definitely ignored their conscience to their own hurt that this does seem to happen, that a person who neglects the care and feeding of his conscience will find that it becomes very insensitive and unfriendly and unserviceable. And so it seems likely that Paul is saying here, this is why it's so important to maintain a good conscience and to always keep your conscience in good repair and good health, as it were, rather than allow it to become desensitized and lead to you going into all kinds of heresies, which are doctrines of demons, you lose all sense of spiritual discernment. Now, when he says that some people will come in to abstain from foods, he says in verse 3 that those foods are created by God to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

And he says, for every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God in prayer. Now, to suggest that foods were created, and he means animal foods, of course, were created to

be eaten, and that every creature of God is good, of course, calls our attention back to the creation, and it also stands in direct conflict with Judaism. Judaism taught that some foods were clean and some were unclean, and the Jews, of course, were required by their law to eat all foods.

Here's another case where we can see a declaration that dietary laws are no longer relevant. Paul would say, if you advocate these dietary laws, you're following doctrines promoted by demons, rather than by God. Even though it was in the law of God, and that law is passe, now, and has been replaced, and therefore only demons promote such behaviors.

Now, in saying every creature of God is good, that agrees with what it says in the book of Genesis. When God made the animals, like everything else, he looked on all the evidences and said it's good. He saw that it was good, and eventually very good.

So, Paul can say there's nothing really evil about any animal. All could potentially be edible. Now, we know that the law forbids eating of certain animals, largely for symbolic reasons, I think, like all the ritual law.

But, he's saying there's nothing intrinsically evil about the meat of any species of animal. After all, although God did not, you know, he says God created the animals to be eaten, it does not appear to be so. In Genesis chapter 1, when he made the animals and man, he said that he made the green herbs and the grass to be eaten by man and beast.

It implies that neither man nor beast ate animal flesh initially. However, in Genesis chapter 9, we do have a reversal of that. After the flood, God seems to permit, and almost, not necessarily to, but seems to come close to commanding the eating of meat.

Why this change at this time, I don't have time to go into right now. But, it is nonetheless true that God says, in chapter 9 of Genesis, verse 3, he says, every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. Notice he doesn't distinguish between clean and unclean.

Every moving thing that lives shall be at least potentially edible for you. It was later when the law was given that certain foods were called unclean, possibly for, in some respects, health reasons, other times for more or less symbolic, ceremonial reasons. But, without going into that, it seems clear that though God did not initially allow men to eat meat, eventually he did.

And God certainly must have known when he created animals in the first place that man was someday going to eat them. So, Paul can say they were created to be received with thanksgiving by people, to be eaten. Now, while the law itself made a distinction between animals and declared some unclean, Paul says that the creation order never did.

God's command to Noah that freedom to eat animals did not make a distinction between

animals. And Paul does not either. Every creature of God is edible.

Now, some are better for you than others, of course, and some would be a little disgusting to eat, but we know people who eat insects, we know people who eat, of course, snails. Some of you may have eaten snails.