

1 TIMOTHY VERSE BY VERSE  
SESSION 8 | 1 TIMOTHY 3:11-15

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13 | THE THIRD CHARGE (PART 2): DEACONS

- Verses 8-10 – see session 7
- Verse 11 –
  - Next Paul mentions **their wives**. There are three major interpretations:
    - The wives of the deacons (vv. 8-10, 11-13).
    - The wives of deacons and bishops (vv. 1-10).
    - Female deacons - which would cause one wonder why Paul gave such masculine language in the context when he could have spoken of “deacons” in a much more gender-neutral way (especially v. 12). The noun *deacons* would have been masculine if speaking of a mixed gender group, but the descriptions of their role need not be so gender specific if they are a mixed group.
  - Though the immediate context seems to be toward *deacons’ wives*, I favor including both deacons and bishops.
    - Note: The current Roman Catholic prohibition against marriage for overseers was not instituted fully until Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085 AD).
  - These wives were given three specific characteristics and one general, to be **faithful in all things**. This seems to be a manner of saying, “Moral character required for their husband is also required of the wife.”
- Verse 12 –
  - As for the Bishop, I interpret this to mean, “not divorced.”
  - The only other real possibility is polygamy, which was not an issue at all in the Greek/Roman world and there was very little in the Jewish world, and mostly among the royal family as a diplomatic measure (none of whom were candidates for the diaconate).
  - Biblical evidence that verse 12 does not refer to polygamy:
    - Matthew 19:8-9 says that if a man marries another woman while his first wife is still alive, he **committeth adultery**. This is not presented as some new doctrine, but rather a comment on divorce.
    - Romans 7:3 has the same principle, but in reference to the wife marrying a man while her first husband is living. If Paul was concerned about polygamy, why did he only write in the context of monogamy?
    - 1 Timothy 5:9 is in reference to widows who have been **the wife of one man**. The Greek terminology is the same as in the requirement for the deacon, simply reversed. The practice of a wife having multiple husbands was simply unheard of in both Jewish and Greek/Roman society, and Paul was clearly speaking of divorce.
  - Does this mean that divorce is unforgivable?
    - This is not a situation of salvation, or even fellowship, simply one of service.
    - Divorce is a sin which is a “current status.” Therefore, the argument of “he got divorced a long time ago” is not fully relevant.
    - There are many areas of service and ministry in which a divorced man or woman *can* serve, with distinction and with honor.

- In my estimation, this prohibition is given simply as a means of honoring marriage within the church.
- Verse 13 –
  - This verse (like v. 11) could grammatically be allowed as a summary of verses 1-12, or, more narrowly, verses 8-12.
  - The phrase **have used the office of a deacon** is one word, διακονέω [diakoneo], in the aorist active participle, thus “having served” or “having deaconed.”
    - The “service” could be general to both deacons and bishops or specific to deacons alone.
  - The term **purchase** is literally *to acquire for yourself*.
    - In this case, the “purchase price” is service.
    - They have purchased a **good degree**, literally “a good step,” as in “a step in the right direction.”
    - They have also acquired **great boldness in the faith**.
      - The world **boldness** is παρρησία [parrasia], which gives the picture of *free flowing*.
      - Indeed, there is something about taking a title of ministry that causes one to be more bold in the faith.

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15 | PERSONAL PLANS

- Verse 14 –
  - These words are only applicable to Timothy.
  - The only interpretive question is whether the phrase **these things** refers to verses 1-13, or verses 15 and following.
    - I believe they refer to *things not yet written*, thus verses 15 and following.
    - Paul could have said “these things I have written,” rather than **these things I write** (as he did in 12 other places, such as Romans 15:15, etc.).
- Verse 15 –
  - Though these words are to Timothy directly and not directly applicable to the church today.
  - The words concern how Timothy as a Jew should **behave...in the house of God**.
    - The word **behave** is ἀναστρέφω [anastrepho], a “turning again” or “comings and goings” word.
  - The behavior has to do with the **house of God, which is the church of the living God**. But what is this **house of God**?
    - The English phrase is used 90 times in the Scriptures.
    - As far as I can tell, the other 89 times the phrase refers to the Temple, except for Genesis 28:17, where the Temple did not exist, and the reference is to the entrance to heaven.
    - How then can we take this to be anything less than Timothy’s *behavior in the Temple*?
  - Paul not only calls it the **house of God** but also equates this **house** with **the church of the living God**.

- Which *ecclesia* is this? Most would say it is the church of our dispensation, based on the following:
  - They assume only a single understanding of **church**. This would be the *standard evangelical* position.
  - They assume that Pauline writing exclusively concerns the church of our dispensation. This would be the standard *rightly dividing* community position.
- In truth, while this *could* refer to the church of this dispensation (see below), it can also easily be taken to refer to the assembly of Israel (as in Acts 7:38).
- This **house of God** is further described as **the pillar and ground of the truth**.
  - These seem to refer to that which is *structural* and *foundational*, which *does not* seem to be the church of this dispensation, for the current church is “johnny come lately,” a wholly new creature.
- If we take this **house of God** to be the Temple, then Paul is *about* to give instructions about Timothy’s *Jewish* life, living as a Jew who has also received the free-gift of eternal life *while living in the period of transition* prior to the total abeyance of the Kingdom offer (and the destruction of the Temple).
- There is only one avenue for making **house of God** be an exception to the 89 other uses of the phrase, and that would be to take Ephesians 2:21-22 and its **habitation of God** to be equal.
  - If this is done, one could precariously build an argument that **these things** (v. 14) are *things already written* (i.e.: vv. 1-10) and that Paul is concluding the context above rather than beginning a new subject.
  - I believe that if this is done, the believer is going to create many applicational problems later in the letter (like why widows are not supported financially by the church, in accordance with Paul’s commands).