

A decorative border of yellow stars surrounds the entire page. The stars are arranged in a rectangular frame, with a single row of stars at the top and bottom, and vertical columns of stars on the left and right sides.

# **Three Rivers Fellowship**

## **Pauline Bootcamp (Session 5)**

### ***Infrastructure and Officers***

**Robert E. Walsh, 1995  
Revised: November 18 2023**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction to Pauline Local Church Polity .....               | 1  |
| 1.1. A Look at the <i>Church</i> Word Family .....                 | 1  |
| 1.2. The Purpose of the Local Church .....                         | 2  |
| 1.3. What the Purpose of the Local Church is Not! .....            | 4  |
| 2. An Overview of the Infrastructure of the Pauline Assembly ..... | 5  |
| 2.1. The Three-fold Layering of the Local Pauline Assembly .....   | 5  |
| 2.2. The Saints of the Pauline Assembly .....                      | 7  |
| 2.3. The Deacons of the Pauline Assembly .....                     | 8  |
| 2.3.1. The Character of Deacons .....                              | 8  |
| 2.3.2. The Character of the Deacon's Wife .....                    | 8  |
| 2.3.3. The Role of Deacons .....                                   | 9  |
| 2.3.4. The Ordination of Deacons .....                             | 9  |
| 2.4. The Bishops of the Pauline Assembly .....                     | 10 |
| 2.4.1. The Character of Bishops .....                              | 11 |
| 2.4.2. The Role of a Bishop .....                                  | 11 |
| 2.4.3. The Ordination of Bishops .....                             | 12 |
| 2.5. Equivalent Terms for Deacon and Bishop .....                  | 12 |
| 2.6. The Floating Office: The Evangelist .....                     | 13 |
| 3. Summary .....   | 14 |

## TABLE OF FIGURES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Figure 1. The Venn Diagram of the Pauline Local Assembly ..... | 6 |
|--|---|

## 1. Introduction to Pauline Local Church Polity

In this session we examine the local assembly polity established by Paul the Apostle for Body saints. In his epistles Paul has laid down principles by which we are to design our local assemblies for fulfilling the purpose of the local gathering together of Body saints as outlined in Eph 4 and discussed below. We will exam in this outline assembly purpose, leadership, assembly principles of giving, assembly music, the assembly's responsibility toward widows, bootstrapping a Pauline assembly, and the optimum size of a local assembly.

### 1.1. A Look at the *Church* Word Family

Our topic comes a long way from the Greek word κυριακον (meaning “belonging to the Lord”) through the German word “Kirche”; through the Scottish word “Kirk”; finally ending up with our English word “Church”. Yet, in the New Testament the word usually translated “church” is the Greek word ἐκκλησία, a compound word from ἐκ, meaning “out of”, and καλεω, meaning “to call”; the compound form meaning “to call out of” or a “called out company”;<sup>1</sup> so that an ἐκκλησία is a group of persons that have been called “out of something-into something”. In this sense, the intent behind the meaning of this word is that it is objective; namely, that the members of the ἐκκλησία are called *from* something *toward* an object which provides the very purpose of the ἐκκλησία.

As a summary of how this word is used in the New Testament the following list represents a few of the instances. There are at least six (6) different usages of ἐκκλησία; each of which is determined by its context.

#### (1) The Nation of Israel made up of Elect and Reprobate Israelites

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

#### (2) Elect Israel

Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [See also Acts 2:47]

#### (3) Local Jewish Synagogue

Rev 2:1 Unto the angel of the church<sup>2</sup> of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

#### (4) Local gathering of Body Saints

Rom 16:5 Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epænetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. [See also Acts 2:47]

#### (5) The Entire Body of Christ

Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

#### (6) A Public Crowd

Acts 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from Gary Inrig, Life in His Body, Harold Shaw Publishers, Wheaton IL, 1975, p.30.

<sup>2</sup> We have shown in detail how the so-called seven churches of Revelation 2 & 3 are actually Jewish Synagogues, see TGF Eldership (William Cornelius), A Working Study on the Book of Revelation, Chapters 2 & 3, Trinity Grace Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA

## 1.2. The Purpose of the Local Church

The purpose of the local church is all but misunderstood in today's modern evangelical culture. Paul explicitly tells us the purpose of the local assembling of Body saints, as well as the roles of its leadership; the latter of which is taken up later in this outline. Paul specifically defines for us the purpose of the local church through "its officers" in no uncertain terms.

**Eph 4:11** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Let us capture the main thrust of these verses and what they teach about the purpose of the local church.<sup>3</sup>

Firstly, Paul defines for us the three-fold *purpose* for the local gathering of Body saints.

1. The Perfecting of the Saints (4:12a)
2. The Work of the Ministry (4:12b)
3. The Edification of the Body of Christ (4:12c)

Secondly, he provides the threefold *goal* to this threefold purpose

1. Until we all come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God (4:13a)
2. Unto a Perfect Man (4:13b)
3. Unto the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ: (4:13c)

Finally, we arrive at the threefold *result* to the assembling of Body saints:

1. That we be no more children, tossed to and fro by every word of doctrine (4:14)
2. That we speak the truth in love and grow up together in Christ as He is our Head (4:15)
3. The whole body fitly joined and compacted (4:17)

It seems that in these 6 verses we have a three-set Alternation as seen below, where the first elements (A) are related to each other; the second elements (B) are related to each other; and the third elements (C) are also related to each other.<sup>4</sup>

- (A) The Perfection of the Saints
- (B) The Work of the Ministry
- (C) The Edification of the Body of Christ

- (A) Until we all come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God
- (B) Unto a Perfect Man
- (C) Unto the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ:

<sup>3</sup> In these verses the purpose of the local church is defined through the agency and roles of its leadership.

<sup>4</sup> Could this also represent a nine element Introversion centered around the element (Unto a Perfect Male)?

- (A) That we be no more children, tossed to and fro by every word of doctrine
- (B) That we speak the truth in love and grow up together in Christ as He is our Head
- (C) The whole body fitly joined and compacted

Because the Pauline church in the whole is the non-incarnate extended humanity of Christ, we must be conformed to Christ as He is the righteous, exalted, glorified God man. Where Christ Himself is the fullness of the Godhead bodily, His body is the full expression of His humanity. To repeat: The Body of Christ is the non-incarnate extended humanity of Christ.

Beyond this wonderful expression of God's love for the church, there are additional purposes for the local assembling together each of which falls out of this primary purpose of edification.

**1. To teach the faithful men of the assembly on how to teach others - 2 Tim 2:2**

2 Tim 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Where possible the purpose of "teaching others to teach others" speaks of the *ongoing* ministry of a local church from generation to generation, as well as, providing a base for the source of evangelists.

**2. To teach men to teach their wives - 1 Cor 14:35**

1 Cor 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.  
 35 And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

While 1 Corinthians is an early Pauline epistle these verses speak to the loving relationship of husband and wife, within the context of their local assembly. Note that it cannot be concluded from these verses that the primary construct of any local assembly is built around the family unit. While at first this may sound anti-family, it certainly is not. While there exist family relationships and responsibilities within the local assembly, in the final analysis, we are all individuals before God and His Christ. There are no family churches! No Victory Family Churches before God.<sup>5</sup>

**3. To teach men to rule and teach their children - 1 Tim 3:4,5,12**

1 Tim 3:4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;  
 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)  
 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

See family comments above.

---

<sup>5</sup> In today's modern Evangelical culture and its lack of a proper local ecclesiology, Evangelicalism is beginning to define their church organizations around the family. While family is important and addressed within the Pauline Corpus the local Body of Christ is not necessarily a collection of multi-person families. Indeed, within college communities most of these kinds of local assemblies are individual-driven. For a web site of a typical Family defined church see <http://www.lifeatvictory.com/>.

#### 4. To teach the elder women to teach the younger women - Tit 2:4,5

Titus 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,  
 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

See family comments above.

The primary purpose for the assembling together of the saints is for "education" - education (edification) in the faith and mastery of Christ the Lord as He is the Head of the Body. This means, as the context of Eph 4 dictates, the primary purpose of assembly life is the establishment (mastery and obedience) of the individual saint in the Unity of the Seven-Ones.

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,  
 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;  
 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.  
 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;  
 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

All other activities of a local Body assembly flow from this purpose. The Body's corporate unity and the individual member's peace center about the Seven-Ones and their doctrinal and practical mastery. Indeed, it cannot be over-emphasized that the Seven-Ones of Eph 4:4-6 are the official Doctrinal Statement for the Body of Christ.

### 1.3. What the Purpose of the Local Church is Not!

Several years ago, I came across a brochure from one of the local churches in my area where the brochure stated that their church's main purpose was to "church the un-churched". By this they meant that unbelievers from the surrounding communities were the primary focus for entering their building, listening to the Gospel, and "getting saved". To the evangelical or casual mind this may sound like a good thing, but not only is it un-Pauline (as we saw above), but in the long run it ultimately destroys the local church as we shall briefly discuss below.

As we saw above:

1. The purpose of the local church is not for the "saving of the local community", though this may happen when Christians actively engage themselves in the community outside of the local church.
2. The purpose of the local church is not to run food banks or soup kitchens to feed the surrounding hungry, though this may happen if a member or members of the local church chose to participate in this kind of activity.
3. The purpose of the local church is not to run crisis pregnancy centers, though this may happen if a member or members chose to engage in this activity.

All these stated activities are legitimate, but purely incidental to the purpose of the local church. Indeed, they may grow out of Pauline saints being active in their communities, but these activities themselves are not enumerated among the purpose(s) of the local church.

Regrettably, in today's Evangelical world the local church is ignoring its real purpose, which is to bring each professing saint to a state of maturity both in doctrine and in practice and neither of these is consistently happening.

It is stated that the evangelical church has as its duty the preaching of the gospel (so-called). But why constantly preach a gospel to people who allegedly are already saved? Should we not be going from a state of immaturity and progressing in doctrine, faith, and practice? A mathematics student does not spend his/her entire undergraduate career in the same Algebra class. Rather, they go on to a deeper and richer understanding of the entire field of mathematics, eventually seeing the grandeur and beauty of the field of mathematics. Not only do they see its foundation and doctrine (theory) but can solve problems as well (practice).

In like manner, the purpose of the local church is to “educate” (edify) the Body saint so that they mature in doctrine, faith, and practice as articulated and centered about the Seven-Ones enumerated in Ephesians 4. In this way, we ascertain a more complete picture of Christ as He is Head of the Body and Lord of the entire cosmos. The local church is strictly *for believers*. It is not the place whose primary purpose is to save the unsaved, or church the un-churched. It is for the maturation of the believers and we as believers ought to be jealous of this time that we spend together building each other up in Paul’s gospel. Paul’s paraphrased statement “If an unbeliever comes in among you...” (1 Cor 14:23), strongly suggests that the local church and its primary purpose is for believers and not for unbelievers. ***If*** an unbeliever wishes to attend, he/she is not to be disallowed from attending, but the time spent together is for the believers. The local church should be viewed as the University of the Body of Christ where we learn theory (doctrine) and practice (obedience).

How is the modern-day notion of the local church’s purpose a dangerous thing? By abandoning a Pauline-based ecclesiology and adopting a “save the world” purpose, the truly regenerated are ultimately pushed aside and not edified in Paul’s gospel. This leads to an immature collection of saints who wind up not knowing Who Christ is as Head of the Body, and how the Body saint is to live out his/her life both within and without the local church.

Indeed, this state of immaturity even eventually wipes out the modern evangelical hopes of “keeping the culture clean” (or reclaiming the culture for Christ) as so many evangelicals want. By Christians being in a constant state of doctrinal (and behavioral) immaturity they are unable to address the issues that their culture throws their way, thus thwarting the very gospel many modern evangelicals want to preach. The very notion of the purpose of the local assembly undermines the Evangelical’s own desires of “culture-cleaning”.

Moreover, because the young professing Christian is not really prepared to understand, defend against, and attack the worldview presented to them in the academic world, they fall prey to accepting an unbiblical view of origins and end up ignorantly and perhaps unwittingly worshipping the gods of modern man: Gia, Chronos, and Tyche, namely, Matter, Time, and Chance! When this occurs, science becomes a form of magic, instead of merely a method by which man can study the world around him. The Biblical worldview is then thrown out and replaced by a form of materialism that self-refutes from jump street.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. An Overview of the Infrastructure of the Pauline Assembly

In this section we shall cover the infrastructure of the local Pauline assembly. Our focus is purposely on Paul’s latter epistles to avoid having to weave into these discussions what are often referred to as “transitional” issues. These issues will be taken up separately.

### 2.1. The Three-fold Layering of the Local Pauline Assembly.

A prime reference for the complete and mature local Pauline assembly is seen in Philp 1:1.

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

<sup>6</sup> See,

(1) Phillip W. Dennis, PhD, *The Swindle of Emergentism*, <http://scientificnotesforchristianapologetics.blogspot.com/>

(2) R.J. Rushdoony, *The Mythology of Science*, Ross House Books, Vallecito, CA, 1967.

(3) Greg Bahnsen, PhD, *Always Ready*, Covenant Media Press, Nacogdoches, TX, 1996

Here Paul describes a mature and complete infrastructure of the local Philippian church(es). The infrastructure comprises three (3) layers of believers: Saints, Bishops, and Deacons. If we correlate what we discussed under the purpose of the local church, it becomes noticeably clear that the focus of the local church is the maturation and edification of the saints. This means that the infrastructure Paul put in place is for the specific benefit for the Body saint.

The details of these divisions are discussed below. Further proof and later discussion of this three-fold division are seen in 1 Tim 3:14,15, where Paul clearly states that bishops and deacons are given to the saints in the very context of discussing the qualifications of deacons and bishops.

1 Tim 3:14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:  
 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Here Paul states that he purposely wrote the summary of the eldership criteria specifically for Timothy himself and so that he might teach the assemblies how they ought to formally meet. Paul calls the local assembly of saints the "house of God". Unlike most of Christendom, it is important that we do not confuse the "assembly of saints" with a "church building". God does not live in buildings,<sup>7</sup> rather he works among His people, and the formal gathering for the maturation of the Body of Christ is in fact the local assembly.

To the assembly of saints, individuals are given and charged with the responsibility of edifying the Body of Christ and adjudicating the affairs of the local assembly - these are deacons and bishops.<sup>8</sup>

The Pauline local assembly is comprised of three sets of believers:

1. Saints
2. Deacons
3. Bishops

We are all one in Christ, yet many members. Like the American Supreme Court, all are justices, but the Chief Justice is viewed as "chief among equals". This same notion is seen in the Pauline assembly as illustrated in the figure below.

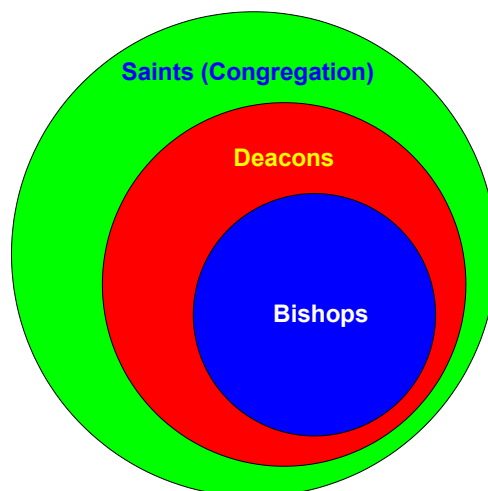


Figure 1. The Venn Diagram of the Pauline Local Assembly

<sup>7</sup> This also is a Pauline Distinctive because God's presence for Israel was seen in both the Tabernacle and Temple.

<sup>8</sup> An obvious question might be "where are the Priests, Monsignors, Cardinals, Popes, Youth Pastors, Music Ministers, Choirs, etc? These concepts are foreign to Pauline Polity. Also, consider Paul's wording here. The officers (deacons and bishops) are given TO the assembly, not the other way around. This directionality has significant implications.



Figure 1 is called a Venn diagram and illustrates the relationship among the Saints, Deacons, and Bishops of Phil 1:1. From among the saints (all of whom are equal) comes the eldership (the chiefs among equals). From among the deacons (all of whom are equal) come the bishops (all who are equal). In some sense, we see this in other arenas of life. The President of USA is no more "American" than an average citizen, yet he holds a position of authority. In this regard there is no "one-man-ministry" as abounds today. The notion of the Archisynagogos (leader of a synagogue) of the Jewish Synagogal Infrastructure has no corresponding officer in the local Pauline Assembly. In this sense, the Pauline assembly is a sort of "oligarchy".

## 2.2. The Saints of the Pauline Assembly

The Greek word for saint is ἅγιος and means "sanctified one" or one who has been "separated from something to something". Biblically, it is used of people, who have been regenerated by God and almost exclusively used for Body members (search and see). The overwhelming Pauline usage is not to be understated. The Lord Himself is labeled by the Father as "His Beloved Son" (Mat 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mk 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35).

Luke 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

The Savior is labeled by the Father with the appellative "Beloved". Paul uses this beautiful thought about the Body's distinct redemptive eternal position.

Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The Body has been redeemed to a position, whereby the Father considers us to be His Beloved sons and daughters "in Christ" as members of Christ's Body (Christ's righteous non-Incarnate extended humanity). This is the fundamental reason for the Body being the inheritance of the Father and most often described as being "in Christ".

Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Tragically, verse 11 has been butchered by the KJV translators. It is better translated as,

**"In Whom we have been made an inheritance..."**

The Body of Christ is indeed the Inheritance of the Father. In fact, those who have been accepted into the Beloved (Eph 1:6) are specifically called saints (Rom 1:7).

Rom 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

During the Body Age all "truly-professing Christians" (meaning "*possessing* Christians") have been accepted into the Beloved and therefore called saints. Because the Body has been accepted into the Beloved, the phrase "In Christ" is almost exclusively a Pauline term. There is no Biblical notion at all regarding the medieval notion of the "canonization of saints". This is utterly heretical and flies in the face of the work of Christ for His Body.

Those who have been regenerated into the Body and therefore accepted into the Beloved are compelled by regeneration to assemble themselves together and to be "officially" built up in the Body of Christ, for Christ is indeed the Beloved. Recall Mat 3:17 "This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased", and yet, we are the Body of Christ, His non-incarnate human extension. So, we are said to be "accepted into the Beloved" as Christ's non-incarnate human extension. Eph 4 clearly indicates that all Body saints are to strive to "fellowship together" for the purpose of understanding and mastering the Seven-Ones (Eph 4:4-6).

Thus, the "saints of the assembly" are all regenerated people of the assembly, including men, women, and children.

The saints are the human focus of the local assembly.

All of this should cause us to ponder the tragic demise of the local church. In today's modern churches the saints are hardly their focus. How often have we heard that the church is preaching the Gospel so that the unsaved get saved? Should not the evangelizing of the world take place outside of the local church "within the world"?

### 2.3. The Deacons of the Pauline Assembly

In this subsection we briefly look at the role of the deacons.

1Tim 3:8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

#### 2.3.1. The Character of Deacons

The foundational reference describing the character (hence characteristics) of the deacon is found in 1 Tim 3:8-13. The Greek word for deacon is *διακόνος* and means "servant" or "one who serves". The deacon must progress and satisfy all these characteristics, not merely a "specialist" in a particular item.

1. **Grave** (*σεμνος*) - honorable.
2. **Double-tongued** (*διδυλος*) Literally, double-speak. The deacon does not tell someone one thing, then turn around and tell another something else.
3. **Not given to much wine.** The Greek word for *given to* is (*προσεχω*) and means "beholding to" (i.e., under the bondage of). Paul is not saying that a deacon cannot drink wine, rather he is stating that the deacon is not to be under bondage to it!
4. **Not given to filthy lucre** (*αισχροδερος*). Does not require unreasonable profit.
5. **Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.** "Pure" is from the Greek word (*καθαρος*) meaning "clean, good, or pure". The word "conscience" is from the Greek word (*συνειδησις*), a compound word from (*συν*) meaning "with" and (*οιδα*) meaning "knowledge" or "perception". The deacon must have a clear perception, a clear understanding of Paul's gospel, meaning that he can articulate and defend it.
6. **Not more than one wife.** If the deacon is married, then he must have only one wife. No bigamists within the eldership.
7. **Ruling their children and houses well.** The Greek word for "ruling" is (*προισταμενον*) and means to "stand before". The deacon is a good provider and good protector of his children and household. The secondary notion of "ruling his children well" is also carried with this word. For one cannot provide for his home if there is not "loving discipline". The deacon must be a "loving" and "wise" dispenser of household discipline without bringing your child to wrath!

#### 2.3.2. The Character of the Deacon's Wife.

The wives of the deacons must also satisfy essentially the same criteria as their husbands and if they do not, they disqualify their husbands from the office until she meets the criteria. Paul lists a few.

1. **Grave** (σεμνος) honorable.
2. **Not slanderers** (διαβολος) meaning "not casting against".
3. **Sober** (νεφαλεος) Calm, cool, collected.
4. **Faithful.** Dependable, trustworthy with respect to Paul's Gospel the gospel of the Great Mystery.

It should not seem strange that the wives of the assembly officers are to be held to a similar standard. Why? By the very nature of the marriage relationship, and its integral impact on the assembly: Hosting saints, teaching, edifying often includes the deacon's wife. Also, in privacy matters the deacon's wife may be privy to certain personal information and therefore must be held to this higher standard. The implication is that if the wife of a potential deacon is disqualified by Pauline standards, then the man is also disqualified from holding the office of deacon.

### 2.3.3. The Role of Deacons

The role of the assembly deacon is to serve and administrate the affairs of the assembly. While it will be seen below that the bishop is the office specifically charged with the public teaching ministry, the deacon by default also plays a general role in the assembly's teaching ministry. It seems that the deacon is responsible for the assembly for items necessarily outside of the teaching ministry. This does not mean that he does not oversee the teaching, for the general sense all members of the eldership are both servants and overseers.

Thus, while the deacon does not officially participate in the formal teaching of the assembly, he manages the affairs of the assembly such as taking care of the physical needs of the assembly. In the Jewish synagogue within Jerusalem, we see this distinction between the teaching (or public roles) with that of taking care of the physical needs of the synagogue.

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

This nice section of Scripture suggests several things about the Jerusalem synagogue. First, its infrastructure must have been large enough to maintain a ministry for the taking care of widows. Secondly, the apostles focused on the teaching ministry of the synagogue. Finally, this conflict forced the distinction between the teaching and non-teaching ministries of the synagogue, where the non-teaching ministry is to support the teaching ministry. Thus, it seems that all ancillary services of the synagogue were to support the teaching ministry of the synagogue.

These observations make it clear that the focus of the synagogue was to edify the Jewish disciples. How much more should the modern-day Body assembly provide for the maturation of the Body saint. The entire eldership exists for the saints, not the other way around.

The responsibility of the deacons is ultimately to support the teaching ministry of the local assembly.

### 2.3.4. The Ordination of Deacons

Verse 10 continues with the criteria for the local assembly's deacons.

- "And let these be first proved"
- καὶ οὗτοι δὲ δοκιμαζέσθωσαν πρῶτον

Firstly, the phrase “καὶ οὗτοι δὲ” is much better translated into English as “but these also”. The Greek contrasting conjunction “δὲ” is used to relate this verse with the criteria just presented by Paul. The idea is that in addition to satisfying the list of criteria above, those who are candidates for the deaconate, must also be “proved”; in other words, in addition to these criteria the candidate must be proved. So the contrasting conjunction is used to strengthen the importance of this “proving” and the usage of “καὶ” as it is translated “also” is used to show that both elements must be satisfied for the candidate to be accepted into the deaconate. The “proving” of the candidate is on equal footing with satisfying the list of criteria. Not a single item is to be ignored.

Secondly, our word for “proved” is the Greek word “δοκιμαζέσθωσαν” from the Greek word “δοκιμαζω” and literally means “to document”. It is in the Imperative mood showing that the documenting of these gentlemen is a command and absolutely required. Also, it is in the Passive voice, which means that the source of the documenting is from an outside source. The candidates for the deaconate are being documented by the local eldership within the context of their responsibility of educating the Body saints and the Holy Spirit actively working within the individual driving him to satisfy the criteria list as well as being documented in service. How are these persons documented? First, they can be given assignments by the eldership on behalf of the local assembly and if they show faithfulness, accountability, and success this will go toward their “proving themselves”. Secondly, they need to prove themselves as to their solid understanding of Paul’s gospel. This they can do in several ways.

1. Teach their family at home
2. If called upon by the eldership they may have the opportunity to provide some teaching to the assembly as a whole
3. The eldership may wish to give them an assignment to be presented to the eldership alone
4. Their ability to present and defend Paul’s gospel to the fallen world

Men being considered for the deaconate do not hold any office. How is this known? Because the only other "official" office is that of a bishop and his criteria is essentially the same as that of a deacon (with a few exceptions-see below), and so since he does not yet satisfy the criteria of a deacon the man must not yet be part of the assembly's eldership. This clearly indicates that the candidate for the deaconate is from among the "non-elder" men of the assembly. It is in this sense that all men (and indeed women in their own sense) ought to have the desire to fulfill these Pauline deacon criteria. It is the character of the deacon that provides the template for which we must all strive.

All these requirements exist so that the deacon may serve his local assembly with honor. This would seem to indicate that the focus in all of this is not so much the man, but rather the assembly since they are being overseen by these individuals for the strict purpose of the edifying of all of the saints.

Thus, the criteria of the deacon are something that every saint ought to strive for.

It is in this context and thought that Paul says to Timothy "lay hands on no man suddenly" (1 Tim 5:22). Let the men manifest themselves before they are given responsibility of oversight of God's assembly. A deacon is not a neo-phyte.

## 2.4. The Bishops of the Pauline Assembly

In this section we briefly look at the role of the bishop.

- 1 Tim 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.
- 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

- 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;  
 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;  
 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)  
 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.  
 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

#### 2.4.1. The Character of Bishops

As quoted above, the reference describing the character (hence characteristics) of the bishop is found in 1 Tim 3:1-7. See also 1 Tim 5:17-22; Titus 1:4-9; 2 Tim 2:2. Notice that the bishop must progress and satisfy all these characteristics, not merely a "specialist" in one or a few items.

1. **Blameless** (ανεπιληπτος). Literally, "not received upon" - no accusation can be made against - Irreproachable
2. **Not more than one wife.**
3. **Vigilant** (νεφαλιος). Temperate - Calm, cool, collective.
4. **Sober** (σοφρον). Literally, of a sound mind.
5. **Of good behavior** (κοσμιος). Literally, "well ordered".
6. **Given to hospitality** (φιλοχενος). Literally, "lover of strangers".
7. **Apt to teach** (διδακτικος). Literally, "talent for teaching".
8. **Not given to wine** (παραουινος). Literally, "not beside wine" - not "in need" of wine - not under bondage to wine.
9. **No striker** (πλετης). Quarrelsome, apt to strike - 1st move is not to go to "fisticuffs".
10. **Not given to filthy lucre** (αισχροδεροδος). Does not desire or require unreasonable profit.
11. **Patient** (επικετες). Literally, "super-patient".
12. **Not a brawler** (from μαχη). From which we get the English-Spanish word "macho". Not violent or overly aggressive.
13. **Not covetous** (αφιλαργυπος). Literally, not a "lover of silver" or "lover of money".
14. **Rules well his house** (προισταμενον). Meaning to "stand before". The intent is that the bishop is a good provider and good protector of his children and house - just like the deacon.
15. **His children in subject with all gravity.** Having his children revere and honor him. Choosing the word "gravity" is an interesting choice, especially to the modern reader. Consider gravity: We do not see it, but we see its affects. So like gravity, the loving father, who is also a bishop ought to have a similar characteristic. His children respect him because as a loving father his children behave without disaster and catastrophe (most of the time). He does not or has not brought his children to anger!
16. **Not a novice** (νεοφυτος). Not a neo-phyte or "young sprout". Experienced. Mature
17. **Having a good report with those outside.**

Each of these characteristics can be related to the bishop's teaching role - having patience, loving to host people over and discuss the Scriptures, not apt to strike at the first disagreement, not a drunkard and out of control, good family.

All these characteristics play a key part in the bishop's role as a "teacher".

#### 2.4.2. The Role of a Bishop

The Greek word for bishop is ἐπισκοπος, and means "over-seer", one who exercises guardianship. An examination of the bishop's characteristics quickly shows that these are for the most part items that aid the bishop in "public" matters. The reason is that the primary role of the bishop is the over-sight of the assembly in every aspect of teaching (i.e., doctrine, behavior, music, etc.).

The bishops as "teaching pastors" (Eph 4:11) are given to the local assemblies for the express purpose of building up the Body of Christ in doctrine, faith, and practice.

### 2.4.3. The Ordination of Bishops

The bishops come from among the deacons (men who have already established themselves as having Pauline honor and holding fast to the Pauline mystery). However, there are two additional requirements for the bishop not found in the criteria for deacon. The bishop must be a man (deacon) that "desires" the office or work (1 Tim 3:1) of a bishop AND has the gift of teaching. He must be one that desires to labor in the "official" teaching ministry of the assembly.<sup>9</sup> Titus 1:5 shows that Titus was responsible both as a bishop and apostle to ordain the bishops of Crete.

Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

It is also clear that these men came from among the deacons, who had already established themselves as honorable Pauline men. Titus provides us an example of establishing bishops, since he was also an elder in the Cretan assembly (thus, he knew them well). When a deacon indicates that he desires to be part of the assembly "bishopric" then the eldership ordains him to that position, if he satisfies the Pauline criteria<sup>10</sup> of the bishop. All elders (deacons and teaching deacons) cast their vote for or against the man. This provides a "due process" necessary for establishing and evaluating men for the office of bishop.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.5. Equivalent Terms for Deacon and Bishop

- **Teaching Deacon** (διακονος)

Both Epaphras and Paul are considered teaching deacons (Col 1:7, 23, 25) and Timothy is considered a teaching deacon (1 Thes 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6).

Col 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; ...

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;....

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

- **Teaching Elder** (πρεσβυτερος)

There are elders that teach (teaching elders) and elders that don't (1 Tim 5:17).

1 Tim 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine

<sup>9</sup> Over the years, I have known several men that were quite capable of teaching, but did not desire to be part of the official teaching ministry of the assembly.

<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the ability and talent of teaching since he already satisfies the criteria of the deacon.

<sup>11</sup> Frankly, this is the way that assemblies that I have been involved with over the years have formed. It may not be the only way and I am making no claim to authority on this matter.

- **Teaching Pastor** (ΠΟΛΙΜΕΥ)

Teaching pastors are given to the Body assemblies for the maturation process (Eph 4:11). The Greek phrase is a Figure of Hendiadys,<sup>12</sup> where the second noun (teachers) becomes a superlative adjective of the first (pastors), hence teaching-pastors.

- **Summary**

There are two sets of equivalent terms for deacons and bishops. The first equivalent set is for the deacons.

**Elder == Pastor == Deacon**

The second equivalent set is:

**Teaching Elder == Teaching Pastor == Teaching Deacon == Bishop**

I believe that most commentators have failed at the proof, often stating that 1 Thes 5:17 states the elder == bishop. But the text clearly distinguishes between "elders" and "teaching elders": "Elders that rule well...especially those that teach (distinguishing from the whole eldership). This proves that there are "elders" and "teaching elders". Hence, elder and deacon are the basic terms.<sup>13</sup>

The deacons form the foundation for the character of the assembly, and out of the deacons come the "teaching" deacons or bishops. So that which distinguishes the bishops from the deacons is primarily the "official" responsibility of public teaching (i.e., the additional requirements of "being apt" or "having the talent to teach" and "wanting the job").

## 2.6. The Floating Office: The Evangelist

The evangelist is one "given" to the assembly (Eph 4:11). The evangelist is analogous to the Jewish traveling Rabbi, traveling from synagogue to synagogue proclaiming the Kingdom gospel. The Pauline evangelist is a "traveling bishop" who establishes local assemblies and visits assemblies on a regular basis. He is "ordained" (officially recognized) by an assembly sent to other assemblies for the purpose of edification and the perfecting of the saints. An established assembly may send an "official" emissary to another assembly to provide instruction in Paul's gospel, doctrine, faith, and practice. In this context, the evangelist may also form new Pauline assemblies, by "spending time" teaching men to fulfill the character of deacon and bishop. Both Paul and Titus performed this function in Crete (Tit 1:5-12). Notice, that there is extraordinarily little (if any) sense that the evangelist "gets people saved" as his primary function and role. His main function is to provide a "bishop" role outside of his "home" assembly for the purpose of other assemblies. In this way he may be thought of as a "traveling bishop". Note, in each of these roles the maturation of the Body saint is in view.

"Philip the Evangelist" was one of the seven men ordained by the Jerusalem apostleship to the position of the Chazzanim (Act 6:1-7). Apparently, he later became a traveling Jewish Rabbi (probably as a result of the diaspora of Acts 8) preaching the Kingdom gospel to ends of the earth (land) and finally settling in Caesarea (Acts 21:8).

Unlike today's definition of evangelist, the New Testament teaching regarding the office of evangelist is one who essentially "establishes" Pauline assemblies. In this sense, the evangelist is the Biblical equivalent of our modern-day "missionary". Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5.

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

<sup>12</sup> This phrase is a wonderful example of the so-called Granville Sharpe Rule, stating that when two nouns joined by the copulative (AND), and both modified by only ONE definite article, then a Hendiadys is intended.

<sup>13</sup> It is my opinion that most modern exegetes have missed the point in Acts 20 when discussing the general term between elder, pastor, deacon, and bishop. I believe they missed the idea of discussing an item in its narrow sense versus its broad sense. In the broad sense all elders are "overseers" (bishops), but in the narrow sense only the bishops are overseers. In the broad sense bishops are also servants (deacons).

2 Tim 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.  
6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

First, note that one of the offices given to the local assembly is the evangelist - one who is essentially a "traveling bishop" establishing Pauline assemblies and bootstrapping the saints' road to maturity in the Seven-Ones. Finally, note also that Timothy who was also part of the Pauline apostleship is exhorted to "do the work of an evangelist". Why? The Pauline apostleship is about ready to cease with the parting of Paul, and the once "charismatically" empowered gifts will cease. This is supported by the grammar of Eph 4:11, with the Figure of Parallelism.

Apostles => Evangelists  
Prophets => Teaching Pastors

The charismatically empowered offices cease and the non-charismatically<sup>14</sup> empowered offices take over. The charismatically empowered apostle becomes the evangelist (a traveling bishop) and the prophet becomes the bishop. Each office is founded upon the office of the deacon - the very template for all Saints to seek.

### 3. Summary

The objects of the local Pauline assembly are the saints. The purpose of the local Pauline assembly is the saints' maturation in both doctrine and practice. To accomplish this often-difficult task a set of elders comprising deacons and bishops is given to the assembly. There are no "one-man ministries" encouraged in the Pauline Scriptures.

The focus of the local Pauline assembly are the saints, and the focused activities of the local Pauline assembly is the edification process bringing the saints to maturity in Christ as He is our Head!

Anything different from this may be legitimate, but purely incidental to the mission of the local Pauline assembly. We should not lose focus on the true mission of the local Pauline assembly – THE SAINTS AND THEIR EDIFICATION IN DOCTRINE AND IN PRACTICE!

---

<sup>14</sup> Ignoring the plethora of heresies and blasphemies within the so-called "Charismatic Movement", the very notion of "charismatically empowerment today is anti-Pauline and therefore demonic in the sense of Ephesians 6:12, not in the sense seen in the movie "The Exorcist".