

1 Timothy 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

Analysis

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει, echontas to mystērion tēs pisteōs en kathara syneidēsei)—'holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.' Mystērion means mystery—not something incomprehensible, but truth previously hidden now revealed in Christ (Ephesians 3:3-6). Katharos means clean, pure. Syneidēsis means conscience, moral awareness.

Deacons must hold gospel truth ('the mystery of the faith'—God's redemptive plan in Christ) with clear conscience. This means both sound doctrine and moral integrity—believing the truth and living consistently with it. No hypocrisy, no contradiction between confession and conduct. The gospel must be held both intellectually (right belief) and morally (right behavior).

The 'mystery' is the gospel itself—Christ in us, Jew and Gentile united in one body, salvation by grace through faith. Deacons must grasp this truth firmly and live it out purely. Those who serve practically must be as sound in theology and ethics as those who teach.

Historical Context

In the Greco-Roman world, 'mysteries' were secret religious rites restricted to initiates (Eleusinian mysteries, Mithraic mysteries). Paul uses the term but redefines it—the Christian 'mystery' is now revealed to all through the gospel. It's

not esoteric knowledge for elites but saving truth offered freely. Deacons must understand and embody this revealed mystery, living with clear conscience.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What is 'the mystery of the faith'—what truth was hidden but is now revealed?
2. How does 'pure conscience' relate to holding doctrinal truth—why link belief and behavior?
3. Why do practical servants (deacons) need sound theology as much as teachers do?

Interlinear Text

ἔχοντας	τὸ	μυστήριον	τῆς	πίστεως	ἐν	καθαρᾷ
Holding	G3588	the mystery	G3588	of the faith	in	a pure
G2192		G3466		G4102	G1722	G2513

συνειδήσει

conscience

G4893

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 1:19 (Faith): Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

1 Timothy 1:5 (Faith): Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

