



RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

300 Eagles Nest Farm Road, Hawk Point, Missouri 63349 • Ph: 636-597-3755 • FAX: 636-597-3743

Paul and Gretel Haglin

EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

November 2008

Letters of Faith

**“...in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds,
with purity in doctrine, dignified,
sound in speech which is beyond reproach,
in order that the opponent may be put to shame,
having nothing bad to say about us.”**

Titus 2:7-8 NASB

Dearly Beloved,

In his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus, the Apostle Paul offered them sound, practical, and divine advice for wrestling with problems, challenges, and difficult situations that they had never faced before. As we have been dwelling in these love letters to his beloved children in the Lord, we have noticed how strongly he exhorted them to display DIGNITY in DIFFICULTY.

That sounds like a very good word to all of us right now! Surely we are facing difficulty individually, as the Body of Christ, and as a nation that we have never encountered before.

Although “dignity” may seem to be an old-fashioned word for the 21st Century, if the Apostle Paul thought it to be a vital qualification for leadership and a distinguishing trait by which the whole Body of Christ was to be recognized, we think we had better ponder its definition and its application to our lives today.

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* dignity is: “The presence of poise and self-respect in one’s deportment to a degree that inspires respect; inherent nobility and worth.”

That Paul would list “dignity” as an important leadership quality should not be surprising as Jacob, inspired by the Holy Spirit, prophetically blessed his first-born son, Reuben, with going to be “**preeminent in dignity**.” (Genesis 49:3) But scripture records that because of Reuben’s undignified behavior, Jacob withdrew his blessing of preeminence in dignity. (Genesis 49:4) Not only dignity, but preeminence in dignity was obviously of great import to the Patriarch!

And the writer of Proverbs described the “**excellent wife**” (perhaps connoting the Bride of Christ) as being clothed with “**strength and dignity**” (Proverbs 31:25).

Even though we do not seem to see much of this kind of real dignity modeled for us these days by celebrities, politicians, or even church superstars, it remains a valid Biblical qualification for all saints and for leadership in the Body of Christ.

“He (an “overseer” in the church) must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity” (1 Timothy 3:4).

“Deacons likewise must be men (people in the NLT) of dignity...” (1 Timothy 3:8).

“Women must likewise be dignified...” (1 Timothy 3:11).

“Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.” (Titus 2:2).

The Apostle Paul even declares “dignity” to be one of the primary objectives of our prayer life for the world and society in which we live: **“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”** (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

It has occurred to us, as we review these emphases on dignified behavior in the early Church, that dignity might well be one of the God-ordained separators between the Christian and the heathen world systems. In order for that to be true in reality, however, we Christians need to start modeling true dignity to the world by our words and actions.

Perhaps we have been concentrating so much on our doctrinal purity that we have neglected the basics of dignity and “**sound speech...beyond reproach.**” Perhaps we have allowed our zeal to save the lost to quench our sensitivity to how we look and sound to them even as we try to reach them.

We were ministering at a weekend gathering of the elders of one of our favorite churches when one of the elders said before we were to start a leg-stretching volleyball game: “My ears hurt so badly that I almost left to go home. Will you please pray for me?”

So we gathered around him to pray. But just before we started to lay hands on him, Gretel said: “Wait a minute! Please let me share with you what Paul and I observed when this precious man arrived this morning. This is the way he was greeted: ‘Boy, you’ve put on a lot of weight.’ ‘Oh look what the cat dragged in—late again.’ And there were some equally bad “jokester” greetings from the rest of you. What did you put in his ears?”

The Spirit of God hit those elders and they dropped to their knees in front of him in repentance and each said: “Forgive me! I’ve been used by the ‘accuser of the brethren’ - Satan himself! Forgive me, brother, for what I’ve said to you. I really do love you!”

There were tears of repentance and tears of rejoicing, and when we then gathered around him again to pray, he said, “No need to pray now! My ears are healed!”

Beloved, sound speech beyond reproach does not include coarse jesting!

Beloved, there is no room in the Kingdom of God here on the earth, or in heaven, for this kind of behavior from God’s kids. Difficulties are pouring on us these days faster than this summer’s rain storms, but we must represent Jesus in them and through them with the dignity of our role as ambassadors for Christ.

Our behavior in all circumstances is the only Gospel some people will ever see or hear. Will it be a true witness of our Lord Jesus, or will it be witness of just another disgruntled servant of Satan!

We observed a street preacher in Wales ranting over a hand-held loudspeaker about the evils of TV, the degraded morals of the youth, and the wrath God was about to pour forth on Great Britain if the people did not all repent *Now*. We witnessed the disgust, yes and even rancor, he stirred up in the people who were forced to hear him as they quietly went about their Saturday morning business in the town center.

Surely Jesus, who is our perfect model for all our behavior, conducted Himself with unpretentious natural dignity at all times. And we are currently hearing accounts of the incredible dignity with which our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church around the world are facing unthinkable treatment and even death.

We offer you a challenge: let the Spirit of the Lord Jesus work His dignity into your life so that you, in all of your behavior, will inspire respect, honor, and esteem in all those who observe you.

In all things, let us show ourselves to be an example of dignity, beyond reproach, in order that any opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

Heavenly Father, I confess that I don’t feel that I even begin to understand how to act dignified, especially in difficult situations. But I desire to, so that I can exhibit You and Your Son Jesus at all times! Help me, Lord, to refrain from “losing my cool” and acting undignified or unbecomingly. Help me not to allow my mouth to convict me in the court of my enemies. May only sweet water flow from this well, so that nothing bad can be said of You because of what I do or say. Amen.

Hugs,

