

Setting the Church in Order # 6

Qualifications of Deacons

Int.

1. Aim: To explain the qualifications for this important work.
2. 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:"
 - a. God's plan of organization for the church includes elders and deacons
 - b. It is not enough to just have elders. The Bible also includes deacons
3. 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:"
 - a. The word bishops is the same as the word overseer
 - b. Notice there are two distinct groups of men mentioned
 - c. Deacons are a distinct class of men separate from the elders
 - d. Some people think they are exactly the same - but the Bible gives us a different account.
4. They have certain qualifications which they must meet
 - a. The qualifications are much like those for the elders.
 - i. There are fewer for Deacons -- but similar
 - ii. Paul said "Likewise must the deacons...." I Tim. 3:8
 - b. It is not required of deacons:
 - i. That they be "apt to Teach" - but that does not exclude them from teaching if they are qualified, but it is not required as it is for elders. Examples in Acts 6 of Stephen and Phillip.

- ii. That they have faithful children - This would indicate that possibly the deacon could be younger and still in the process of raising his family. This does not mean, however, that a deacon's children should not be believers when they reach the age of accountability. All Christians are to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:4
5. The most important qualification for deacons is that they love the Lord with all their heart and have the desire to serve. Jesus said: "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Mt.20:28
 6. This lesson is about deacons who are a special group of servants or ministers to the church.

Discussion

I. MEANING OF THE WORD DEACON

- A. The Greek word diakonos, "deacon" means, according to J. H. Thayer, "one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant, attendant, minister."
 1. This word occurs some thirty times in the Greek New Testament, but only three times is it translated "deacon."
 2. Otherwise it is translated by the word minister or servant
- B. Some words are used in two different senses: an ordinary sense, and a special or official sense. ¹
 1. For example, the word elder, in its ordinary sense simply means an older person.
 2. But that same word is used in an official sense to designate those who have been selected and appointed to oversee the congregation.

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3. When "from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17), he was not calling for all the older people in the church, but for the overseers (v. 28) or bishops (ASV).

C. The Greek words rendered "deacon" are used in two different senses: (1) the ordinary sense, and (2) a special or official sense.

1. Some sixty-two times these words are used in the ordinary sense of being a servant or of serving in one way or another.
2. Five times, however, the context forces us to the conclusion that the terms are being used to designate a special group in the church who have been selected and appointed to function in an official capacity and to be designated deacons.
3. The fact that the apostle sets forth certain qualifications for deacons (I Tim. 3:12) shows that some are deacons in an official capacity.

D. What about Acts 6?

1. Acts 6:1-6 - The text does not refer to the ones appointed on this occasion as deacons, but many believe these were the first deacons -
2. It illustrates the need for special men called deacons

II. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

A. Negative Qualifications of Deacons

1. Not Double-tongued - I Tim. 3:8 -

- a. Talking from both sides of his mouth
- b. Not saying one thing with one person and another thing with a different person
---- Not having two languages talking to suit the present company
- c. Indians use the expression "HE TALK WITH FORKED TONGUE"
- d. We say "talk out of both sides of his mouth"
- e. The Greek word means -- speaking one thing and meaning another, being deceitful in words
- f. Double tongued people destroy themselves and others. It is possible to "bite and devour" with the tongue. This practice would be like cannibalism.
- g. That is why this kind of person could not serve as a deacon
- h. A deacon must be truthful, honest in the use of his words

2. Not given to much wine - I Tim. 3:8

- a. Not a drinker
- b. Elders were also to obey the same rule - Tit. 1:7
- c. Deacons must not use wine socially - Christians do not use STRONG DRINK!
- d. If it is not wrong to drink just a little, just as long as you do not drink too much, then why would it not be just as right to lie a little, steal a little or commit adultery a little?
- e. This qualification is easily understood unless you want to justify social drinking.

3. **Not greedy of filthy lucre** - I Tim. 3:8

- a. Honest in money matters - not seeking after money in a dishonorable way.
- b. They are not covetous, not lovers of money
- c. They do not have an insatiable desire for gain
- d. Money or property is not evil in itself, but it's the love of money that is wrong.
A covetous man will sell his soul for material gain.
- e. They must put spiritual matters first.

B. **Positive Qualifications of Deacons**

1. **Grave** - I Tim. 3:8

- a. Serious, dignified conduct
- b. Serious-minded, not giddy, childish or unbalanced
- c. In malice be children, but in matters about the work of the church men are to be grown-up

2. **Hold the mystery of the faith in a good conscience** -

- a. I Tim. 3:9 - sound in the faith
- b. Not required to teach but they must have a clear understanding of God's Word
- the truth - the mystery of the faith
- c. Have spiritual conviction - hold fast to what they believe ---- Sound in the faith
- d. Deacons are men who are not wishy-washy when it comes to the Gospel of Christ and the building up of his church in this community.

3. **Blameless** - I Tim. 3:10

- a. No evil reports about him
- b. The absence of a charge or accusation against a person
- c. Evil reports do not continue to circulate

4. **Husband of one wife** - I Tim. 3:12

- a. Must be married -- cannot be single
- b. Cannot have more than one living wife - polygamy is not allowed

5. **Rule their children and their house well**

- a. He must have children
- b. I Tim. 3:12 - good manager of his own family - "rule" = preside over
- c. No man can be an influence for good in the church when he is unable to control his own family
- d. A man who cannot control his own family does not need to be in a position of leadership in the Lord's church.
- e. A man shows his ability to be of service to the Lord's church by his ability to rear and train his own family.

6. **Let them first be proved**

- a. I Tim. 3:10 - Proved = acceptable, tested in RSV
- b. Not selected then proved. That is backwards.
- c. Proved his sincerity, steadfastness, consistency, and life. He is faithful in attendance and Christian living.
- d. Cannot be new Converts. He has successfully stood the test of time.

7. **Of Good Report** - Acts 6:3

- a. Good reputation
- b. Blameless by Paul, same as of Good report
- c. If a man is blameless then he is of good report, and if he is of good report then he is also blameless.
- d. This does not mean he is perfect. If so then no one could ever qualify.
- e. He is living a life that is above reproach.

8. **Full of the spirit** - Acts 6:3

- a. Do not receive miraculous gifts today
- b. But are filled with the word of God
- c. Fruits of the spirit are obvious in his life. Gal. 5:22-23

9. **Full of Wisdom** - Acts 6:3

- a. Good judgment
- b. Capable and competent -- men who can carry on the work in an intelligent manner. Practical - Good common sense

C. QUALIFICATIONS OF WIVES I Tim. 3:11

- 1. Even so must their wives....
 - a. This implies that they must be married
 - b. The wife plays an important part in the lives of elders and deacons.
 - c. A wife can be an asset or a hindrance. They can disqualify a man from serving as an elder or a deacon.
 - d. The wife of an elder or a deacon must be...

2. GRAVE

- a. Dignified, solemn; sound in life and faith
- b. Good Christian woman, not frivolous
- c. She is to realize the seriousness of the Christian life and live accordingly.

3. NOT SLANDERERS

- a. Greek word Diabolous = devils or a slanderer or accuser
- b. Not a backbiter, or a tale-bearer - not a gossip.
- c. Not one who has a habit of trying to hurt and destroy the character of other people
- d. Stealing a person's good name is worse than stealing his wallet. It is much easier to regain material wealth than to regain a good name.

4. SOBER

- a. Very much like grave. Serious minded, solemn
- b. Not easily excited, but one who can control herself in difficult situations.
Calm in spirit and sound in her thinking.
- c. She is not one who is easily upset or who makes hasty decisions.
- d. She is one who will weigh matters carefully before deciding.

5. FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS

- a. In the work of the Lord
- b. In the requirements of being a wife and a mother

- c. It is possible that the wife would come into knowledge that must be kept to herself.
- d. Some people are quick to spread rumors abroad and this cannot be characteristic of the deacon's wife.
- e. Many things known are best left unsaid.

CONCLUSION

1. These qualifications can be met for deacons
2. Blessings and benefits to deacons who serve well - I Tim. 3:13
 - a. "Gain to themselves a good standing" - ASV
 - (1) They will be loved, honored, respected by the brethren
 - (2) They will be pleasing in God's sight
 - b. "Great boldness in the faith"
 - (1) They constantly grow
 - (2) Their faith in Jesus Christ increases
 - (3) They have more confidence and vision
3. A deacon should be a man who is reliable and dependable so he can be a help in carrying out the work of the church. If he meets these qualifications he will be such a man.
4. The congregation should work as a unit. Every member should work to the good of the other.
5. The elders and deacons must be qualified to serve and then perform the work that God has commanded them to do.
6. The congregation must recognize them as the leaders and co-operate with them in the greatest work in the world, the work of the Church.

7. Let us all pray for one another that we all may work together in serving God in such a way that others will be brought to Him and that we all might be saved.
8. 2 PET 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

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