

THE WORK AND QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

(I Timothy 3:8-13; Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1-7)

INTRODUCTION:

When Jesus established His church, He organized it the way that was best and most workable. He ruled that godly, qualified men should oversee the church's work and worship--these are elders (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-5). Deacons are another group or order of special servants in the church who are to fulfill special functions.

I. WHAT IS A DEACON?

- A. The general use of the term "deacon" (DIAKONOS in Greek) means: a waiter, attendant, servant, or minister and it applies to all Christians. All Christians are servants.
- B. "Deacon" also comes from DIACHO (in Greek) which means "to run; hasten". Therefore, it involves active service. One who is inactive in the church cannot be a deacon.
- C. Thayer, a Greek authority, defines deacon as: "One who executes the commands of another, especially of a master."
- D. Deacons are a distinct group of special servants who meet certain qualifications (I Tim. 3:8-13).
- E. We must not choose them or reject them just because of our personal likes or dislikes. Favoritism must not play a part (I Tim. 5:21).

II. WHAT IS THEIR WORK AND ITS PURPOSE? (ACTS 6:1-7)

- A. According to Thayer, the word "deacon" further means: "One who by virtue of the office assigned him, cares for the poor, and has charge of and distributes money collected for their use."
- B. In the reading of Acts 6:1-7, we see how a problem in the Jerusalem church was solved. Note the following words:
 - 1) (Acts 6:1) "Ministration" -- from the Greek, DIAKONIA
 - 2) (Acts 6:2) "Serve" -- from the Greek, DIAKONEO
 - 3) (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8-13) "Deacon" -- from the Greek, DIAKONOS; thus, setting up a distinctive group of workers or servants.
- C. No title is given the seven men in Acts 6, but the words describing their work comes from the same general Greek word as one who serves as a deacon.
- D. What is the purpose of their office and work in the church?
 - 1) Remember that elders (pastors, bishops, overseers) are charged with the responsibility of "watching for souls" (Hebrews 13:17).
 - 2) Deacons are under the oversight of the elders as special servants to relieve the elders of many tasks so the elders may spend more time devoted to teaching, warning, admonishing, guiding and disciplining members.
 - a) Some contend that elders oversee the spiritual welfare of the church and deacons are to oversee the temporal needs -- Such is not the case!
 - b) Deacons are not overseers!
 - c) Elders are to oversee the deacons--Only elders are said to be "Overseers."
 - d) Some mistakenly believe that the church is run by the elders and deacons, as if they both hold the same authority -- This is not the case!
 - e) Deacons are never said to have authority as do elders.
 - f) Deacons are assigned work by the elders, based upon ability. They are given or delegated authority to carry out their particular assignment. But, their authority is not inherent -- It is delegated by the elders.
 - g) In elders/deacons meetings, the elders may ask the deacons' views on any number of matters, but the elders always have the final say in matters of judgment, and deacons do not have authority to overrule the elders. A majority of deacons cannot overrule the elders! Nor are the elders bound by a majority of members!
 - h) Remember, a "deacon" serves under authority.

3) The work of deacons is specially done on behalf of the church:

- a) It is not suitable that the spiritual leaders of the congregation should forsake the Word of God to "serve tables" (Acts 6:2)
- b) Thus, the deacons are appointed to "serve tables"-- What might this involve?
- c) The work of the church involves three basic areas:
 - (1) Evangelism -- Teaching the lost the gospel in order to save them (Mark 16:15).
 - (2) Edification-- Building up and strengthening members through teaching (Heb. 5:12)
 - (3) Benevolence-- Doing good to all, especially to Christians (Gal. 6:10).
- d) Deacons may care for the poor, needy, sick in order to free the elders and the preacher to do the work of evangelism, teaching and exhorting.
- e) He may see to the distribution of literature, bulletins, etc.
- f) Usher--See that people are properly seated at worship; Count; register visitors.
- g) Give assistance to those preparing for baptism, if needed.
- h) Make sure baptistry water is ample and warm; that clothing is ready.
- i) Make sure trays for Lord's Supper are prepared and in order.
- j) Look after financial interests in general; take up collections; pay the bills; balance the books; submit financial reports, etc.
- k) Assist in planning new construction, getting plans, costs, etc. Report to elders.
- l) Look after cleaning & maintaing of church building & grounds; preacher's house.
- m) See to heating, lighting, air conditioning, & ventilation, etc.
- n) See to lighting (lights on/off; replace bulbs; Public address system.
- o) Help in work with young people.
- p) Help in Bible School department.
- q) Advertising for meetings, lectures, etc.; order materials or have them printed.
- r) Be involved in evangelism

- 4) If one who is called a deacon does not do anything in line with the work of a deacon, or cannot serve under the elders, he needs to be man enough and Christian enough to quietly remove himself or else be removed by the elders. The same applies to elders.

III. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS:

- A. Grave -- Dignified behavior; a serious outlook on the Lord's work.
- B. Not double-tongued -- A man of his word; He does not say one thing with one person, and another with someone else with the intent to deceive; not hypocritical.
- C. Not given to much wine -- He abstains from intoxicating beverages (I Thes. 5:21-22)
- D. Not greedy of filthy lucre -- Does not seek money through base or dishonorable means. He is not a gambler; does not sell liquor, illegal drugs or women.
- E. Holds the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience -- He is sound in the faith; His life is patterned after the Word; His conscience is educated according to the Bible and he is well indoctrinated in truth because he may be involved in evangelism.
- F. Blameless -- Lives a life that cannot be called in question; No sustained accusations against him.
- G. Let them first be proved -- Not selected, then proved. One is not to be made a deacon with the idea that it will make him more faithful. Unfaithful men cannot be deacons. A man who fails to worship, refuses to worship, or allows his job to take priority over the Lord's work and worship is not a fit subject for becoming a deacon. And, any man now serving as a deacon who is guilty should remove himself quietly. A man becomes a deacon because he has already been tried (proved) as to his ability, life, conduct, sincerity and steadfastness. Is he now working and active in the church? If he has shown little or no interest, he will probably not serve well as a deacon and doesn't deserve the work!
- H. Rules his children and his house well -- This refers to his whole family. He is to be the head of his house; to preside over and superintend his family; His wife is not bossy, nor does she try to assume his place. His children are to be in subjection to him. NOTE: The deacon is not required to have believing children as are elders.
- I. The husband of one wife -- He must be married to one woman scripturally. He cannot be a polygamist.

CONCLUSION:

One may serve well as a deacon (I Tim. 3:13) and gain good standing (a good name). Deacons render an important, valuable and necessary work in the church. Serving well as a deacon promotes boldness (confidence) founded on faith in Christ!

Any man who would seek to serve as an elder or deacon must have a wife who is a faithful Christian. The work of both groups of men is so important that God has seen fit to refer to their wives. If a man is serving as an elder or deacon and his wife is not the person she ought to be before God, she needs to repent, or else he needs to quietly step down. The way to greatness in the kingdom of God comes through service (Matthew 20:25-28).