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The Deacon

I Timothy 3:8–13, Acts 6:1–7

A. THE MEANING OF THE WORD “DEACON:”

The word comes from the Greek — “diakonos,” meaning servant or minister. (Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ is also the “Chief Deacon” — **Matthew 20:28** “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”)

B. THE ROLE OF THE DEACON:

The pastor is the leader of the church; the deacon is the servant of the church. The pastor ministers in spiritual things — the deacon ministers in temporal things.

However these rôles are often reversed! The common practice of many Baptist churches is that the deacons are the perpetual operators of the church, controlling the business, the finances — and the pastor! This is without a doubt unscriptural.

C. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DEACON:

I Timothy 3:8-13 gives eight qualifications of a deacon.

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.

As with the bishop, these are all spiritual preconditions. A deacon must:

1. Be Grave — verse 8.

The term means “serious, devout, honorable, or dignified.” A deacon must behave in a mature and tactful way.

2. Be Not Doubletongued — verse 8.

A deacon must be a man of utmost integrity — never speaking one way to some, and another way to others.

3. Be Not Given To Much Wine — verse 8.

This does not imply that a deacon can drink a “little wine,” but that he must not come under its influence at all. The two words “much wine” could be described as “drunkenness.”

4. Be Not Greedy Of Filthy Lucre — verse 8.

A servant’s attitude is to be “How may I meet the needs of others?” rather than “How can I get others to meet my needs?” Deacons often deal with the “daily ministrations” (Acts 6:1), which can involve money.

5. Hold The Faith In Pure Conscience — verse 9.

a. The mysteries refer to the doctrines of the Word of God, especially salvation — Romans 16:25,26; Ephesians 3:8-10; 5:32; 6:19; Colossians 1:26,27; 4:3; I Timothy 3:16. A deacon should be well grounded in the faith.

b. A pure conscience would mean to have no doubts about how the Word of God is to be applied to life situations — see: I Corinthians 10:25-28. See also: I Timothy 1:5,19; Hebrews 13:18; I Peter 3:16.

6. Be Blameless — verse 10.

This is not a passive qualification. Before a man is chosen for the office of deacon, his servant's heart should be proven (tested).

7. Be The Husband Of One Wife — verse 12.

Both pastors and deacons must not be divorcees.

8. Rule His House Well — verse 12.

As a deacon exercises loving leadership in his home (Ephesians 5:25-28; 6:4), his wife must be submissive to him (Ephesians 5:22-24), and his children should be well disciplined and respectful (Ephesians 6:1,2).

If Acts 6 refers to the first election of deacons (which it does), then verse 3 gives three further qualifications.

9. Of Honest Report.

This refers to the man's public testimony as to his character — Proverbs 11:3a; 20:7a; II Corinthians 8:21; I Peter 2:12.

10. Full Of The Holy Ghost.

Deacons must be Spirit-filled individuals (Ephesians 5:18). This means they are spiritual — controlled by the Holy Spirit, and not by the flesh or the world.

11. Full Of Wisdom.

The situation in Acts 6 called for wisdom. Deacons work with people and situations all the time, therefore they need that quality — Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 2:6; etc.

There are also four qualifications for the wife of a deacon given in I Timothy 3:11. A deacon's wife must:

- Be grave — honorable
- Not be a slanderer (diabolos) — II Thessalonians 3:11; I Timothy 5:13,14; I Peter 4:15; Proverbs 16:27,28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20-22; Psalm 101:5; Leviticus 19:16a.

- Be sober — see above.
- Be faithful in all things — to the Lord and to His church.

See: Titus 2:3-5.

D. THE SELECTION OF DEACONS:

An examination of **Acts 6:1-7** teaches the following:

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. **7** And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

1. Deacons Are To Be Elected Only When Required.

According to verse 2 there was a definite need for men to serve tables, thus relieving the pastors of this duty. Churches should not have deacons just for the sake of having them.

2. Deacons Are To Be Elected Only When Called For By The Pastors.

It was the pastorate that decided to call for deacons in verse 3 — not the church. A wise pastor will know when he needs help.

3. Deacons Are To Be Elected With Consideration Of Qualification.

They are not chosen because of their affluence or influence. The qualifications listed above are spiritual.

4. Deacons Are To Be Elected From Within The Church Membership.

See: verse 3. It is not a professional job.

5. Deacons Are To Be Elected By The Church.

See: verse 5. The pastors exercised their leadership by directing the church to choose deacons and by stating the required qualifications — but it was the church that did the choosing.

6. Deacons Are To Be Under The Direction Of The Pastors.

See: verse 3 — “**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.**” Deacons have no oversight authority inherent in their office, except that which may be delegated to them by the pastors.

7. Deacons Are To Be Proved.

See: I Timothy 3:10. A man elected as a deacon needs to have given evidence of his suitability first, or at least initially serve in a probational period.