

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 4.23.2023

FAITHFUL DEACONS - PART 10

I. INTRODUCTION

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. **2** Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, **3** not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **4** He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, **5** for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? **6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, [c] not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. **9** They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. **10** And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. **11** Their wives likewise [d] must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. **12** Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. **13** For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

II. WHAT ARE DEACONS?

- "Deacons likewise..." - in the same manner as elders.
- The idea is that the same expectation of high moral and spiritual character of elders also applies to deacons.
- Just like elders must be examined and these qualifications must be recognized in that person, the same must be done with deacons.

- What are deacons?
- The noun form of the Greek word is "diakonos" and it means "servant, minister."
- A deacon is one who serves.
- The noun form is used dozens of times in the new testament but it is only translated as "deacon" four times in the NT. In all other passages, the word is translated as servant or minister.
- The context of the passage helps us to understand if it is speaking in a general sense of someone who serves or if it is speaking about someone who serves in an official capacity.

- Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants (duolos) of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers (episkopos) and deacons (diakonos):
- Paul and Timothy address themselves as bondservants and slaves, and they address the letter to all the saints, singling out the overseers and deacons. These are the officers of the church at Philippi.

THE FIRST DEACONS

- **Acts 6:1-7** Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. **2** And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. **3** Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. **4** But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **5** And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. **6** These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. **7** And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
- Conflict arises in the early church and what do the apostles do? They call the church together and tell the church that they cannot be distracted from their ministerial priorities of preaching and prayer to handle this problem of taking care of the physical needs of the widows.

- The congregation is to recognize from among their numbers, seven men who meet moral and spiritual qualifications to be appointed to the task.
 - They must have a good reputation among the saints, be full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom.
 - The church was happy that their needs would be taken care of, they selected the seven, and the apostles prayed and set them in office.
 - The noun deacon is not used of these men but the verb form “diakonia” is used for “serve” and “ministry.”
 - These seven who appointed were godly, qualified servants, people who knew how to serve, where examples of serving, and were committed to serving.
 - These men are charged with assisting the apostles in the practical matters, such as caring for the poor and widows, distributing the food and resources, and ministering to the needs of the congregation.
 - The apostles could focus on their area of responsibility; prayer and teaching and preaching the Word.
 - The result is that the gospel continues to advance and the church flourishes, because faithful men are leading the church and faithful men are caring for the needs of the church.
- This passage describes how deacons are responsible for supporting the ministry of the Word through their taking care of the physical aspects of the body.
 - Those who serve in the office of deacon are assistants to the elders.
 - Elders serve through leading and deacons lead through serving.
 - Elders lead the ministry and deacons help execute the ministry, leading the rest of the church in the work.
- Aren’t all Christians called to serve? Yes, they are.
 - Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry (diakonias), for building up the body of Christ,
 - 1 Peter 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve (diakoneō) one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:
 - So why do we need the office of deacon?
 - Because the larger a congregation gets, the more organized service needs to be in order to make sure everyone is taken care of and that requires leadership.
 - Deacons are servants among servants. They set the example of service. They help coordinate service. They mobilize the congregation to service.
 - The needs of the congregation will determine how many deacons are needed and what skill or competencies they must have in order to help the elders with those needs.
 - The NT says very little about what deacons do. There is freedom to help determine that based on the needs of the local church, the size of the local church, and the ministry of the local church.

III. TESTED AND PROVEN

- Just like the elders, the character is the job description.
 - Character comes before competency.
 - Even though the elders and deacons have different roles and responsibilities, all the moral and spiritual qualifications of elders apply to deacons.
 - The functions and roles are different but not the character qualifications.
- How are deacons selected?
 - V10 And let them also be tested first; and let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.
 - To test means to examine and approve.
 - It is assumed they are already serving and have proven themselves as an example to the flock in the area of service.
 - They meet the qualifications that we will briefly consider and have proven Christian character and conduct.
 - This must be measured over a certain period of time.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Take note of how many times Paul writes they “must be” these things. These are not optional.
 - “Must be dignified” - serious, respectable, held in high esteem in regards to their character and conduct.
 - “Not double-tongued” - not hypocrites, but sincere, authentic, they can be taken at their word. They don’t speak out of both sides of their mouth.
 - “Not addicted to much wine” - They have self-control. They are not mastered by their urges and impulses.
 - “Not greedy for dishonest gain” - they are not lovers of money as Paul states in v3. They can be trusted with the church’s resources.
- A spiritual qualification is next.
 - V9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.
 - A deacon must be a believer. They must believe the gospel. While they don’t have the ministry of authoritative teaching like the elders, deacons must know the Word.

- Now Paul writes with qualifications for the wife of a deacon, since wives would naturally be assisting their husbands.
 - She must also be dignified - like her husband, she must be respectable.
 - She must not be a slanderer - She does not attack the reputation of others, she does not gossip or backbite.
 - She must be sober-minded - She is level headed, self-controlled with her temper and her tongue.
 - She must be faithful in all things - she is reliable and has a strong faith in Christ.
 - She compliments her husband well. Like her husband, she sets an example for others to emulate.
- The home front again is an important indicator of a person's fitness for leadership in the church.
 - 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.
 - The deacon must be a one-woman man. This is about fidelity and sexual purity. He is faithful to his spouse thus proving he is faithful to the Lord.
 - The home is the little church. How one manages their home and how they shepherd the little flock is an indicator of how they will manage in God's household.

A DEACONS' REWARD

- Paul writes a word of encouragement to those who serve well as deacons, they will receive a reward.
- There is a benefit to serving well as a deacon.
- 13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.
- There is a great reward for anyone who serves the Lord and His people well.
- The reward is two-fold - one is before man and the other before God.
- "Gain a good standing" - standing is the word rank, step, or degree. They are highly regarded for their faithful service. They have a good reputation among the saints and are seen as a worthy example to follow. They will have a growing influence in the congregation.
- "Great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" - Their confidence and assurance in the Lord grows, they grow in boldness and courage in the faith.

CONCLUSION

- 1 Cor 16:15-18 Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— 16 be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. 17 I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, 18 for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?