

Arm 2300

**THE  
DEACONSHIP  
AND  
CHURCH FINANCES**

*by*  
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**Indian Creek  
Primitive Baptist Church  
Greenville, WV**

**SERVICES:**  
Each Sunday 10:30 A.M.

## THE DEACONSHIP AND CHURCH FINANCES

The Scripture allows for only two offices in the New Testament Church. They are, taken in order, the office of *elder* and the office of *deacon*. Other terms are used for that of *elder*, such as *pastor* or *bishop*, but these are merely alternate terms for the same office. The second office is that which claims our attention at this time.

### Qualifications

The first use of the word deacon is in Philippians 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 . . . ." The qualifications of a deacon are found in I Timothy 3:8-13, "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 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."

### Some Common Misconceptions

The above Scripture is too plain to be misunderstood. It is, however, not in the qualifications, but in the work itself that misunderstandings and differences of opinion exist. I have never seen any connection between the passing of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper and the deaconship. I see nothing wrong with the practice of calling on deacons to do this, but let us never think that no one else can do it, or that it has any special significance in the order of the service. Another thing I have noticed, which I think is an erroneous idea, is the fact that some seem to think that only a deacon can speak in conference by way of making a motion or anything of that nature. The Scripture allows for no such idea. Some have the notion that a deacon is the watchdog of the pulpit, and must call the preacher down if he steps out of line. Some seem to think that deacons are a sort of

pulpit committee whose office it is to say who is to preach on particular occasions, while others are convinced that deacons are janitors and maintenance men who are to take care of all such things without bothering anyone else. I suppose the worst of all misconceptions is that a deacon is one who wears a title, but does nothing at all other than that which is done by all church members.

### The Principle

To find the principle involved in the work and office of the deacon we must go back to the book of Acts, chapter six. If we can establish the reason for the office we can better understand its functions. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). In this Scripture we find the principle for placement of deacons in the New Testament Church, the purpose being to relieve the hands of the ministers in order that they may do the work assigned to them, which is prayer and the ministry of the word.

At the particular time that the deaconship was instituted the apostles were performing certain functions not necessarily their responsibility but which could just as well be performed by others. The circumstance was the distribution from the common fund to those in need of sustenance. Because of the double load the apostles were carrying, they had apparently overlooked some needy widows in the distribution of funds and there was murmuring in the church because of this. The answer to this problem was the institution of the deaconship. Said the apostles, "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). Deacons were not appointed over *all* the business of the church, but it is clearly implied that they should be appointed over all *this kind* of business; that is, over any business that will relieve the hands of the ministers so that they can give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Seeing that in the early church the deacons took charge of the kinds of things that would detract the ministers from their work of prayer and ministering the word, we can easily understand the work and responsibility of our deacons today.

## **To Take Charge of Funds**

That the early church had funds and someone in charge of those funds can easily be proven. At the Lord's Supper the disciples assumed that Judas had gone out either to buy supplies or give something to the poor, because he had the bag containing the funds belonging to the church at that time (John 13:29). The problem which gave rise to the institution of the deaconship was one involving church funds (Acts 6:1). Therefore we conclude that the primary function of the deaconship is collecting and distributing church funds. The only principle given in New Testament Scripture for the collecting of church funds is that every man give as the Lord has prospered him according as he has purposed in his heart, knowing that the Lord loves a cheerful giver. No bake sales, no fund raising campaigns, or anything of the like, but simply everyone giving as God has prospered him. By the deacon collecting these funds, I mean only that each member should pay his portion into the hands of the deacons for their dispersion as the need arises. One deacon should be designated treasurer, but it wouldn't hurt for all deacons to be authorized to sign checks so that in cases of emergency where the treasurer is not available, these needs could be taken care of.

## **Dispersal of Funds**

Let us look at some of the things for which funds are to be dispersed by the deacons. We have already seen from John 13:29 that the early church was expected to use the common fund for buying necessary supplies. In our churches today this is still necessary. Cleaning supplies, tools, and equipment for the upkeep of the building and grounds are all a part of the deacon's responsibility. The deacons should not wait for someone to bring these things to their attention, nor should they have to bring them up in church conference, but should act on the authority given them when they were chosen to that office. Painting and repair of the meetinghouse should be in the hands of the deacons. The deacon should not be expected to do the actual labor himself, but only to see that it is done. The same is true of cleaning and mowing, etc. The deacons should be in charge and should see to it that an equal system is worked out using as many of

the members as are available and able to do these things. No church member has any reason to be offended when called upon by a deacon to perform his part of the necessary work around the church. This is part of the deacon's job. If enough manpower is not available, the deacons should hire a janitor (or sexton as they were formerly called).

Another thing that is necessary for the deacons to take into consideration as they make distribution of the funds placed in their hands is the need of the poor. However, in almost every example given in the New Testament, monetary assistance is given to those designated as "the poor saints" or some such designation and not to the community at large. The church is not a charity organization, but is responsible to take care of its own. If consideration is given to any outside the church, it should be brought before the church body and not be left to the deacons. Also, consideration should be given to the type of person to whom the funds are being given. I Timothy 5 describes "a widow indeed" who is to be taken into the care of the church. She is not just any woman who has lost her husband, but one who meets all the qualifications so stated. Nevertheless, deacons should constantly be on the lookout for any special needs in the church and see that they are promptly met.

Probably the most important need to be looked after by the deacons is that of the ministry, and especially the pastor. The support of the pastor is a duty the church assumes when it calls a minister to fill that office, and is in no sense to be considered almsgiving. The minister is not a charity case, but a workman without which the church cannot for long survive. The Scripture is explicit on this subject, stating emphatically that "The labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7), and as in the Old Testament, "They which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar, even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:13-14). Also, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (I Cor. 9:11) "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6).

### How Much, Not How Little

The question arises, how much shall I give or how much is enough? By nature, we all have a covetous spirit about us. It is this spirit of covetousness which has crippled the Lord's Church in many areas, and not the system God instituted. In many cases we are prone to ask not how much, but how little can we get by with? If this spirit were conquered, there would never be a lack among the Lord's people.

In the Old Testament the Lord's people were required to offer the tithe, or a tenth of all their increase, as well as several other offerings of various types. While this is not a law to be carried over into the New Testament day, it is a *principle* which should be carefully considered. If in the day of *lesser blessings* they were required to give a tenth of their increase, should we not with grateful hearts, cheerfully give more than ten percent of our increase in this day of *greater blessings*?

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