The Deaconry

Intro: In this lesson, I want us to study the qualifications the Bible sets for the office (or work) of a deacon.

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF DEACON
   A. It comes from the Greek word διάκονος (diakonos) meaning “servant, attendant, minister, helper, or waiter.”
      1. It is probably connected with the verb διώκω (dioko).
         a. It means “to hasten after, pursue.”
         b. It was used figuratively “of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal” (Thayer).
      2. The basic idea is diligent, active service that one hastens to perform.
         a. Ecc. 9:10 “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”
         b. Rom 12:11 “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;” This literally says: “In zeal not slothful, in spirit burning, the Lord serving.”
   B. It is found in many places and is expressive of many people.
      1. Angels; Mat. 4:11 “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”
      2. Women;
         a. Peter’s mother-in-law; Mat. 8:15 “And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.”
         b. John 12:2 “There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.”
         c. Rom. 16:1 “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:”
      3. Christ;
         a. Mat. 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. Rom. 15:8 “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:”
      4. False apostles, servants of Satan, those lost;
         a. Mat. 25:44 “Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?”
         b. 2 Cor. 11:15, 23 “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works…. 23Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.”
5. Domestic servants; John 2:5, 9 “His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it…. 9When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,”

6. All followers of Christ;
   a. John 12:26 “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”
   b. Rom. 12:7 “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;”
   c. 1 Pet. 4:11 “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

7. Civil rulers; Rom. 13:4 “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

8. Apostles;
   a. Rom. 15:25 “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.”
   b. 1 Cor. 3:5 “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”
   c. 2 Cor. 3:6 “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

9. Preachers and teachers;
   a. 1 Tim. 4:6 “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.”
   b. 1 Cor. 3:5 “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”

C. It is also used in an official capacity.
   1. 1 Tim. 3:8, 10, 13 “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;… 10And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless…. 13For 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.”
   2. Phi. 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:”
   3. It is in this latter sense we are now primarily interested.

II. Qualifications.
   A. Acts 6:1-7 “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. 2Then 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. 3Wherefore, 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. While I believe it is doubtful that these men held that official work of the deaconry, they were still servants and we can learn some things from them.

2. “Of honest report”
   a. He must have a good reputation.
   b. That reputation must be from those without the church and those within the church.

3. “Full of the Holy Ghost”
   a. He must be full of God’s Word and allow that Word to permeate his life.
   b. He must be bearing the Spirit’s fruit in his life and demeanor; Gal. 5:22-24 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

4. “Full of wisdom”
   a. He must be a man of sound, mature judgment in applying the principles of God.
   b. He must know how to properly manage his life and affairs.

B. 1 Tim. 3:8-13 “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.”

1. Negative Qualifications
   a. Not doubletongued.
      (1) It is from the Greek δίλογος (dilogos) which is from δίς (dis) meaning two or twice, and λέγω (lego) meaning to say or speak.
      (2) It is a person who says one thing and means something else.
      (3) A deacon must not be a person who would speak according to circumstances or persons present.
      (4) A deacon must be properly concerned with truth.
      (5) He must mean what he says and say what he means.
   b. Not given to much wine.
      (1) Literally this is, “not wine to much addicted.”
      (2) This would involve the principle of concern about one’s influence.
      (3) A deacon could not be involved in the evil fruits of beverage alcohol.
c. Not greedy of filthy lucre.
   (1) This literally is, “no lover of money.”
   (2) They must not be concerned about material gain; instead they must put
       spiritual matters first.
   (3) They must not be covetous.
   (4) 1 Tim. 6:9-10 “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,
       and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and
       perdition. 10For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some
       coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through
       with many sorrows.”
   (5) They must be liberal, generous givers.

2. Positive Qualifications
   a. Grave.
      (1) This is from the Greek σεμνός (semnos) meaning serious, dignity, reputable,
          or honorable.
      (2) They must be men of sound mind with mature judgment, not flighty of
          flippant.
   b. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
      (1) Holding steadfast the mystery (that which once was not made known but
          now has been revealed) of the faith (the Gospel) in a pure (clean) conscience
          (co-knowledge, knowledge with oneself; that process of thought that
          condemns or approves).
      (2) They must be sound in the faith, allowing the Word of God to govern their
          life.
   c. Proved.
      (1) A deacon must first prove himself.
      (2) He must be known and tested in his life and actions.
   d. Blameless.
      (1) It comes from the Greek ἀνέγκλητος (anegkletos). It is made up of:
          (a) The privative a which means not.
          (b) Egkaleo meaning “to accuse in court.
          (c) Thus, it is one who is not called into an accounting.
      (2) Their daily actions are without reproach, unreprovable.
      (3) They are well spoken of by those who are in a position to observe their daily
          actions and to evaluate their characteristics.

3. Special Qualifications.
   a. Husband of one wife.
      (1) Each deacon is to have a wife.
      (2) He must be married and be faithful to the marriage relationship.
   b. Ruling their children and their own houses well.
      (1) They must have at least one child.
      (2) They must rear them carefully and correctly so they are obedient to their
          parents and the Lord.
(3) They must rule well all that is involved in the family unit and family affairs.
(a) His wife must be in subjection.
(b) He must be a good manager of his home.

III. Duties.

A. Deacons are not elders.
   1. They do not have the oversight but work under the oversight of the elders.
   2. They should never attempt to serve as elders unless and until Scripturally qualified and selected by the congregation to be elders.

B. Deacons are not to oversee the church of God but rather to serve the church.

C. They are to serve the church in any capacity that the church, under the oversight of the elders and in harmony with the dictates of God, desires.

D. The elders, in their managing and oversight of the church, assign areas in which deacons are to serve.

E. Deacons are ministers or servants of the church and, thus, of God.

Conclusion: These men who faithfully serve as deacons gain to themselves a good standing (they will be honored and respected by the brethren and be pleasing to God) and gain great boldness in the faith. Their work is an important work and needs to be treated as such.