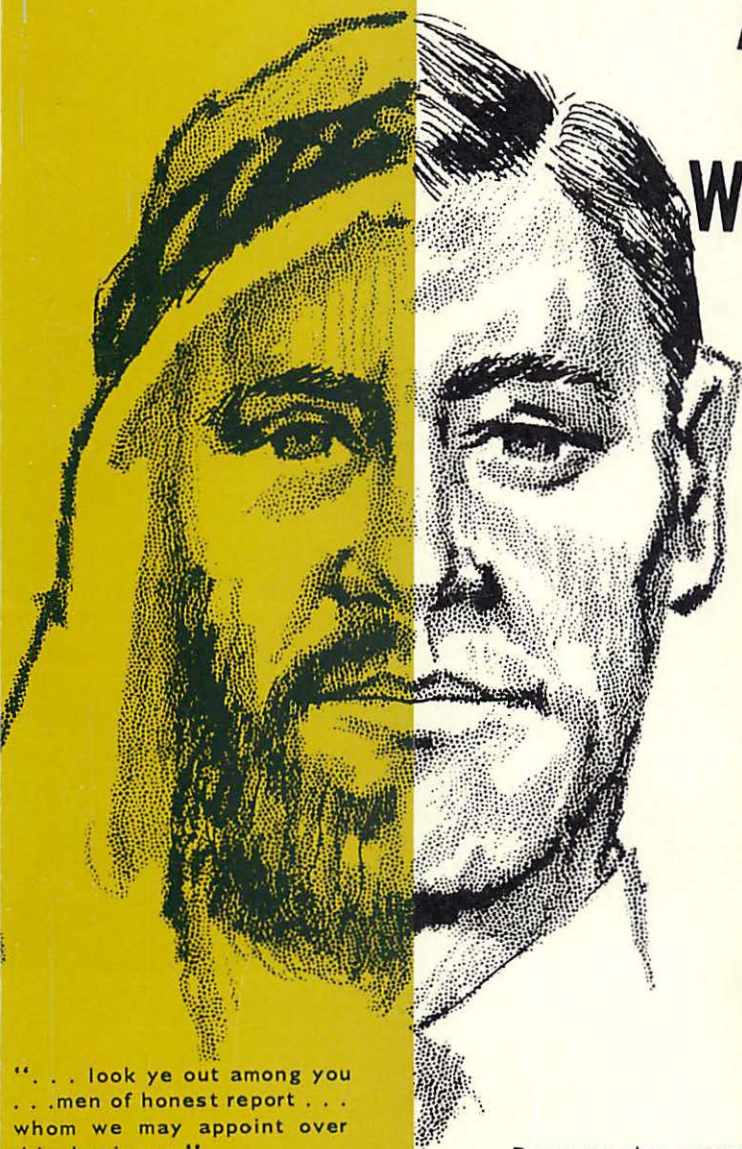


# THE DEACON

AND  
HIS  
WORK



"... look ye out among you  
... men of honest report ...  
whom we may appoint over  
this business."

Acts 6:3

Deacons also serve today

By James Bales

# THE DEACON AND HIS WORK

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CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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**DEDICATED TO**

**H. CLYDE HALE  
A Beloved Brother  
and  
Friend for Decades**

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# Introduction

Some may think that the eldership is so important that there is no need to be concerned about the deaconship. Thus some congregations exercise care in selecting elders, but give little thought to the selection of deacons. However, this office also is important; or God would not have instituted it. One should be as careful to follow God's will in selecting deacons as they are in selecting elders. In other words, churches should select qualified deacons as well as qualified elders. Thus the church needs to study the deaconship.

The fact that the church has special servants who, among other things, look after the needs of others is proof that the church is concerned for the welfare of man. L. B. Buchheimer affirmed that "*there had been nothing* like the deacon and deaconess work before. It was a revelation to the heathen world. The church proclaimed through such service of love the brotherhood and equality of men. She knew no national distinctions, such as Hebrew or Greek, no social differences, embracing the poor, the destitute, in the systematic charity of the church. As her Lord had died for all, so she was come to care for all." As to whether there was an office of deaconess, we shall discuss later; but certainly there were female servants of the church, as was Phoebe. (Rom. 16:1-2)

At times we have enlarged on subjects which are raised in connection with the qualifications of the deacons; such as the question of conscience, and also the question of drinking wine. A study of these naturally brings in a number of questions which while not bearing solely on the qualifications of deacons, yet are related to a discussion of these qualifications. Then, too, since there are no moral and spiritual qualifications of a deacon which any Christian should neglect, a discussion of the qualifications of deacons easily develops into a discussion of these principles as they relate to the life of every Christian.

Although the church needs elders and deacons, it must be emphasized that the church is made up of many people in addition to the officers. All are not elders and all are not deacons. But no one should feel that he, or any other Christian, cannot do anything to advance the kingdom of Christ just because he is not an officer. One does not have to be a deacon in order to serve the church in countless ways. If it be thought that someone is qualified, but he has never been selected, we should not be disgruntled or start a steam roller campaign to put him in office. Instead, we should be content, and so should he, to do all we can where we are. If one will not work because he has not been appointed to an office, he thereby

proves that he was not qualified for the office. One should do all he can whether he is an officer or not; and if he is not an officer, it may be that through his work for the congregation he is gradually developing the qualifications, and demonstrating to the congregation that he is becoming qualified. When he is qualified, it will often be recognized and he may be asked to serve as a deacon. There may be qualified individuals, however, who may have reasons which justify their continuing to serve the church in ways other than in the office of a deacon.

Does the deacon occupy an office? He does not have authority over the church, but he does have an office for he has a position of trust, a ministry, or a service. Not everyone has his position; for not everyone is qualified or appointed to the work of a deacon.

The author welcomes any criticisms and suggestions which will improve this book. If a revised edition is called for, these criticisms can be taken into consideration at that time. In such a case, the criticisms will be helpful to others as well as to the author.

We have not given footnote reference to the quotations. In most cases we have quoted from commentaries; and by consulting the bibliography the interested individual can identify the book. The page reference is not given, but can easily be determined by turning to the place where the commentator comments on the verse which lists such and such a qualification. In other books one can easily locate the chapters which deal with the particular qualifications.

We trust that this study will be of some help to the reader in stimulating his study of the teaching of the Bible concerning deacons.

## CHAPTER 1

# The Deaconship

Although there were temporary officers in the church, such as apostles and prophets, the permanent offices in the church are two: the eldership and the deaconship. The eldership is the highest office, and the deaconship is under the oversight of the elders. The elders are to "take care of the church of God." (I Tim. 3:5) The term bishop itself indicates that they have the oversight of the church. Thus Paul exhorted them to "take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops (margin: overseers), to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) As overseers they were shepherds, under the chief shepherd Christ, of the flock of God. As Peter said: "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly . . . neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourself ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." (I Pet. 5:1-4) Are not the elders spoken of in Heb. 13:17; for they watch for the souls of the church, and have the rule?

As overseers they were to protect the flock from false teachers and factionalists; whether they came from the outside or the inside. (Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9)

It is not said of the deacons that they are the overseers of the flock of God, or that they are to shepherd, or that they are to exercise the oversight, or that "the charge" is allotted to them. As a part of the church of the Lord, the flock of God, they are a part of those over whom the elders have the oversight.

Organizationally speaking, a congregation can exist scripturally in several forms. First, it can be scripturally unorganized. A congregation which has not developed elders and deacons is not expected by the Lord to have elders and deacons. For example, Paul and Barnabas established certain churches, but it was not until somewhat later that elders were appointed. (Acts 14:23) How long should they remain in this condition? There is no way of setting a time limit. It depends on how long it takes to develop qualified men. Some men in Judaism occupied a position in the synagogue similar to that of an elder; and on being converted it would not

take them as long to qualify as it would take a man coming from paganism.

Second, a congregation can be unscripturally unorganized. If a congregation has men qualified to be elders and deacons, they should be selected for these offices.

Third, a congregation is unscripturally organized when it has unqualified men serving as elders and deacons.

Fourth, a congregation is scripturally organized when it has qualified men as elders and deacons.

To function at its maximum capacity, the church needs to have elders and deacons. Paul wrote so that men could know how they ought to behave themselves in the church of God, which is the pillar and support or ground of the truth. This included the instruction concerning elders and deacons. These things belonged to the proper functioning of the church in its work as the pillar and support of the truth. Hendriksen suggested that "as the *pillar* supports the *roof*, even better (note the climax, the exclamation point) as *the foundation supports the entire superstructure*, so the church supports the glorious truth, *the truth of the gospel*. Cf. II Tim. 2:19; Matt. 16:18."

#### QUALIFICATIONS NOT IDENTICAL

Neither the office nor the qualifications of the elders and of the deacons are the same; although some of the qualifications are alike, and doubtless at times they do some of the same things. Concerning the qualifications of both elders and deacons, Harvey suggested that "the qualifications emphasized are those rather of the homely virtues than of the brilliant gifts. They are qualities of character and life such as evoke the respect and love and confidence of man, and form the essential basis of religious power. The passage thus suggests, not that high culture and brilliant gifts should not be sought in church officers, but that the virtues of a solid character and a pure life are of far higher moment; and that, while the former may sometimes be wanting, the latter ought never to be absent." This does not mean that elders cannot be educated, polished, cultured, refined, and scholarly; but one can be all of these and not be qualified to be an elder in the Lord's church. In fact, one can have these characteristics and lack the basic virtues which every Christian should have.

Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* suggested that "different qualifications point to different duties. The deacon's work evidently consists very much in visiting and relieving the poor, where his special temptations would be in one direction to gossip and slander, in



another to picking and stealing from the alms. If he use his office well, he may look forward to a good footing toward God and much boldness toward men. On the other hand, the teaching, the hospitality, and the general intercourse with heathens, which are so conspicuous in the Bishop's work, seem no *regular* part of the deacon's." ". . . the bishop must have sundry qualifications for dealing with other men. He must be apt to teach others, whereas it is enough for the deacon to hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. He must also be a lover of hospitality, and a moderate and peaceful man, with some experience, and a good character even among the heathen."

However, the deacons are to have all of the qualifications of the elders with the exception of the following. First, something different seems to be said of them with reference to wine. (I Tim. 3:2-3, 8) Second, the elder had to be "apt to teach." (I Tim. 3:2) Third, the elder was to have believing children (Titus 1:6); while of a deacon it was said that they must rule their children and house well. (I Tim. 3:12) Fourth, the elder was not to be a novice. (I Tim. 3:6) This is not expressly said of the deacon, although it is implied in that they were to "first be proved; then let them serve as deacons." (I Tim. 3:10) If they were new converts, they could not have yet been tested and observed so that the church would know that they had the necessary qualifications. The elders, however, would likely be older men than the deacons, or at least older in the faith, at the time they were appointed. The elders were to be old enough not only to be married and to have a family, but also to have children that believe. These believing children are children who believe in Christ and are Christians. The term believer is used frequently in the New Testament to refer to Christians. Furthermore, the children of elders are of such an age that they are accountable beings; and not little children. For Paul said that these children were not to be "accused of riot or unruly." (Titus 1:6) The prodigal son, who engaged in riotous living was not a small child. This term "riot" would not be used to describe the conduct of a little child, but of one who was old enough to have at least some degree of maturity. Instead of being such children, they were to be believers, i.e., they were to be Christians. If they were old enough to be accused of "riot" and not yet believers, the prospective elder had not yet shown that he was qualified to bring up his children to become Christians. Fifth, the bishop was to be without reproach, and of good testimony from them that were without (I Tim. 3:2, 7); but this is likely embraced in the deacon's qualifica-

tions; for if a man was of ill report, his being an officer in the church would hurt the church. Furthermore, one who has the qualifications of a deacon would be one who would make a good impression on outsiders. Sixth, it was not expressly stated that the deacons were given to hospitality. (I Tim. 3:2) He could well be; but evidently the work of an elder was such that he would be called on in this capacity as a part of his work in a way a deacon would not be called upon. However, one who is a Christian should be hospitable; and one who has the character of a deacon would certainly be hospitable.

Although some other specific qualifications are mentioned for elders that are not mentioned for deacons, it is the author's opinion that the deacon should cultivate these other qualifications as a Christian. After all, the majority of the qualifications of an elder are qualifications every Christian ought to have. An elder, however, would have matured more in these qualities than would have many of the other Christians. Thus in such qualities elders could differ in degree, while not differing in kind, from other Christians.

#### ELDERS OVER THE SPIRITUAL AND DEACONS OVER THE MATERIAL?

There are some who assume that there are two types of overseers in the church. First, the elders who have authority over the spiritual matters of the church. Second, the deacons who have authority over the material or physical matters of the church. In other words, the elders oversee spiritual matters and the deacons oversee material matters.

This is not taught in the Bible. First, the elders are the only ones who are said to be in charge of, or overseers of, or rule, the household of God. The deacons are not overseers but are a part of the flock which the elders oversee. As B. C. Goodpasture pointed out, when Paul wanted to instruct someone concerning the oversight of the church in Ephesus, he called from Ephesus to Miletus the elders of the church. He did not call the deacons. Second, the New Testament nowhere says that deacons are the overseers of the material affairs of the church. They are not said to be overseers at all, but are special servants of the church. The elders may be said to serve the church also, but a vital part of their service is to oversee the flock. When the church in Antioch sent material aid to the brethren in Judaea, they sent it to the elders; not to the deacons. (Acts 11:28-30) The material work of the church is also under the oversight of the elders. This does not mean that the elders cannot appoint deacons to various aspects of this work, but the work and

the workers are still under the oversight of the elders. If the work of the deacons is not under the oversight of the elders, the elders do not have the oversight over the entire church. It would mean, furthermore, as we shall see, that the deacons could control almost all of the work of the church.

Since deacons are a part of the church, and are under the rule of the elders, the deacons should not be able to "outvote" the elders.

Third, the New Testament does not make the distinction between the spiritual and the physical work of the church which some people make. It is true that there are spiritual matters and there are physical matters; but the two are in one way or another woven together. Helping the needy is a part of the spiritual work of the church. It is an essential aspect of pure and undefiled religion. (Jas. 1:27) Providing a place for the church to meet involves spiritual matters; for if the church has no place to assemble it cannot worship together. Paying for the publication of tracts, for radio programs, for gospel meetings, all involve spiritual work. Providing the material elements for the Lord's Supper is also tied in with the spiritual worship.

The elders may ask some deacons to look after the treasury; but in such a case the elders are still in charge. In fact, at least one elder should also be authorized to sign checks. If the elders do not have the oversight of the treasury, deacons could control much of the work of the congregation. The author knew of a congregation where some deacons insisted that they had authority over the temporal matters of the church. Therefore, if the deacons did not want to pay the preacher, they did not pay him; if they did not want to back a certain work, they did not back it with the church's money. Any part of the work of the church which involved the use of the treasury was under their control; and much of the spiritual work involves the treasury.

However, whatever work may be assigned to deacons, the deacons and their work are still under the general oversight and rule of the elders.

### ALL THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY

Paul said that "deacons in like manner," and then he described their qualifications. What does "in like manner" mean? The apostle had just described what the elder "must be." (I Tim. 3:2) Likewise the deacons must possess certain qualifications; which Paul then proceeded to enumerate. A similar statement is made in verse eleven: "Women in like manner. . . ." Jesus used the same word when He said that a father came to the second son, and "said like-

wise" (Matt. 21:30); in other words, in the same manner in which he had spoken to the first son. Does Paul mean that the deacons are to have the same qualifications as elders? No, for several reasons. First, if they had the same qualifications as elders, what would be the difference between elders and deacons? Does the church have two different sets of rulers in the local congregation? Second, if they had to have the same qualifications, why does Paul list the qualifications of a deacon? It would have been easy enough to say that they were to possess the identical qualifications. Third, Paul listed the qualifications of the deacons, and they are not as extensive as the qualifications of elders. Fourth, Paul said the same thing about the woman, with reference to "in like manner," that he did about the deacons. (I Tim. 3:8, 11) Who would contend that "like manner" here means that they must have the same qualifications as elders and as deacons? How could a woman be the husband of one wife? (I Tim. 3:2, 12) However, "in like manner" does mean that just as the elders must have certain qualifications, just so certain qualifications were necessary for deacons. As Lenski put it: " 'In like manner' simply means that, as of the former, so of the latter, certain requirements must be made; *dei*=necessitated by the very nature of the office in question."

The qualifications of the deacons mean something, or they would not have been given. Paul did not say, concerning the elders, that congregations should select the best men who were available at the time. Instead, he gave certain qualifications which they must have. Just so, he did not say that they should take the next best men, after the elders had been selected, and make deacons out of them. Furthermore, Paul did not say that they were to have just some of these qualifications.

This does not mean, however, that he has developed perfectly each of these qualities in his life. How do we know this? First, every Christian ought to hold the faith in a pure conscience. If one has to achieve perfection in this matter in order to be a deacon, he has to achieve perfection in it in order to be a Christian. And yet, one can hold the faith in a pure conscience and still have room for growth both in the understanding of the faith and in the sensitivity of his conscience. In fact, what qualifications does a deacon have which are not enjoined upon every Christian; with the exception that one does not have to be married in order to be a Christian? Should not all Christians be of sober mind? Should any Christian be double-tongued? Should any Christian be greedy? Should not all Christians hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience? And those who are married, should not they have only one mar-

riage partner? Should not all Christian men rule well their own house?

If a deacon to be qualified as a deacon has to achieve perfection in all of these, it follows that every Christian is disqualified as a Christian because he has not achieved perfection in these things. One should exercise care unless he interpret these qualifications in such a way as to disqualify all Christians from being Christians. This is not said to encourage the failure to meet the standards, but it is said to underscore the fact that no one is perfect. One does not have to achieve perfection in order to be a deacon, any more than one has to achieve perfection in order to be a Christian.

A second reason which shows that one does not have to be perfect in each qualification in order to be qualified, can be illustrated by the fact that Peter, who was an elder (I Pet. 5:1), at times was blameworthy; and yet an elder is to be blameless or without reproach. (I Tim. 3:2) Paul once resisted "him to the face, because he stood condemned." (Gal. 2:11) Peter was amongst those who at that particular time had "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." (Gal. 2:14) Yet, Peter became blameless through repentance and forgiveness. Thus Paul, in speaking of the qualification of elders, did not mean that they had never been blameworthy; or that there would never be anything in the future concerning which they would be blameworthy. Of course, there is a difference between stumbling, from time to time, and abiding in a blameworthy life.

Although the deacon is not a perfect Christian, yet he has achieved such a degree of maturity in the faith that people will recognize that he has all of the qualifications of a deacon.

### UNQUALIFIED DEACONS

It may be asked: What would the author do if he was preaching for a congregation which had unqualified deacons? First, he would try to remember, as with reference to many other situations which may not be what they ought to be, that the situation did not develop overnight and it cannot be changed overnight. Every problem cannot be dealt with immediately. Second, he would try to conduct himself in such a way that no division would be caused in the congregation. Third, he would recognize that he did not have authority to dictate to the congregation. As a preacher he is without authority. He has a teaching function. He would not consider it his duty to begin his work with a series of lessons on all of the things which he thought were lacking in the congregation. However, there would come a time when, whether in a series of lessons on church organization or in expository sermons on I Timothy, he would deal

with the office of deacon. He would teach the qualifications as clearly as he knew how; and leave it with the individuals who were not qualified, and with the church, as to what should be done. In the light of the qualifications, if these men were not qualified, it would be clear to the congregation and to the men that they were not qualified. And oftentimes, after lessons have had an opportunity to "sink in," and people have had time to calmly reflect on them, such men would voluntarily resign. If they did not, likely the elders would ask them to resign. If none of these things happened, the author would not consider it his duty to ride the issue constantly, either in or out of the pulpit. With additional growth of the congregation in grace and knowledge of the Lord, likely they would rightly solve the problem. If not, he has still discharged his responsibility in declaring the whole counsel of God.

#### ONCE A DEACON, ALWAYS A DEACON?

Although the epistle to Timothy deals with more than the officers of the church, it does deal with the officers also. And since the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, it is important that her officers be men of the truth in word and in deed. As Pfeiffer pointed out, in comments on I Tim. 3:14, "Paul makes clear why he thought it important to write to Timothy even though he might be with him again soon. One of the major emphases of the epistle is right conduct as a testimony to the truth. So the behavior of Christians in the government of the Church is of first importance, for the Church is the support and foundation of the truth; that is, in its sphere of testimony to the world. Christ, himself the truth, is the one foundation of the Church (I Cor. 3:11). In Heb. 3:6; 10:21, the Church is referred to as the 'house' of Christ or 'of God'; also cf. Eph. 2:19, 20."

Through ceasing to be men of the truth, deacons could become disqualified. Since one had to be qualified in order to be selected as a deacon, just so one has to maintain the qualifications in order to continue as a deacon. A deacon who had ceased to live the Christian life should be disfellowshipped as surely as any other Christian who ceases to walk in the light. Of course, there could be circumstances wherein one would resign as a deacon without "resigning" as a Christian. This does not mean that just because a deacon makes a mistake, or slips and falls sometimes, he thereby ceases to be a deacon. If anyone says that he does not commit any act of sin, he is making God a liar. (I John 1:8-10)

#### DEACONS WITHOUT ELDERS?

Should deacons be appointed when there are qualified men, but

no men are qualified for the eldership? As far as the author knows, the Bible does not give us a specific answer to this question. Some have suggested that the servants in Acts 6 were deacons, and that there were no elders in the church in Jerusalem at this time. It is true that there is no mention of elders until later, but we do not know that there were no elders at this time. Furthermore, the apostles were there, and they had authority over the church. Then, too, it cannot be proved that these men were deacons.

Paul once mentioned the qualifications of elders without mentioning the deacons. (Titus 1:5) And he appointed elders without any reference being made to the appointment of deacons. (Acts 14:23) The qualifications of deacons are discussed after Paul set forth, in writing Timothy, the qualifications of elders. Deacons are mentioned when Paul mentioned the elders in Philippi. (Phil. 1:1) There is, however, no place where deacons are mentioned as being in a congregation where there were no elders.

In a congregation where there were deacons without elders, some deacons might think that they were elders; and yet, this would not necessarily be the case. In fact, if they have the qualities deacons ought to have, they would not usurp the authority of an office which they did not occupy.

Since the work of the church must go on, even if there are no elders and deacons, someone must do some of the work which would be done by elders and deacons. No one would have the authority over the congregation, but someone would have to teach; someone would have to look after the treasury; someone would have to care for the poor and needy; and so forth.

It could be argued that if men have the qualifications, and the work certainly needs to be done, why can they not serve the congregation even if there are no elders? As a matter of fact, if they are qualified, they would perform whatever services they voluntarily could perform for the church, or the church asked them to perform, without being appointed to the office of deacon.

The author's judgment is that it would be best to wait until men are qualified to be elders, before deacons are selected.

### DEACONSHIP IN HISTORY

Not only did the church in the first century, under instructions from the inspired apostle Paul, have deacons, but we find them in the church in the second century. Although the drift away from the Scriptures on the part of some had already started, yet the office of deacon was still found. Polycarp mentioned deacons. Polycarp's life overlapped that of some of the apostles. Toward the middle of

the first century, he wrote an epistle to the Philippians. "Knowing, then, that 'God is not mocked,' we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory. In like manner should the deacons be blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being servants of God and Christ, and not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued, or lovers of money, but temperate in all things, compassionate, industrious, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who was the servant of all."

As time went on, however, men drifted farther from the New Testament; and finally, for example, deacons were forbidden to marry. The concern, however, of this book is not with what happened to the deaconship in the general apostasy from the faith, but with what the New Testament teaches as to the office and qualifications of the deacon. It is God's will that the congregations develop men who can become deacons, and thus that the church may function as efficiently as possible. Let us now consider for several chapters the qualifications of deacons.



## CHAPTER II

# Grave, Not Double-Tongued, Not Greedy

In this chapter we shall consider three of the qualifications of deacons. The first two which are mentioned are that the deacon is to be grave, and not double-tongued. The third is that he must not be "given to much wine." We are devoting an entire chapter to it. We shall include in this chapter the fourth qualification—that the deacon must not be greedy of filthy lucre.

### GRAVE

The word grave originally conveyed the idea of being revered, venerable, or august. It came to refer to that which was serious or honorable. Trench maintained that it combined dignity and gravity. Vine pointed out that "Cremer describes it as denoting what inspires reverence and awe." Moule stated that "the word points to seriousness of purpose and to self-respect in conduct." "Gravity," a form of the word "grave," is used to describe Christians in general. (I Tim. 2:2) The older men should be grave. (Titus 2:2) The *Pulpit Commentary* thought that it means to be honest in the sense of respectable; of that which becomes the dignity of a man; of "a man who inspires respect for his conduct and deportment." Lenski suggested that it meant "of serious bearing because being of serious mind and character. Because they had to deal with all classes, all ages, all types of people in their work sensible, steady men were needed." Hendriksen translates it as "dignified," and commented that this "refers not only to their necessary decorum or propriety of manner and conduct but also to the fact that in their inner thoughts and attitudes they must be men of Spirit-wrought gravity and respectability."

This does not mean that a deacon, or any other Christian for that matter, must go around with a frown. He is not one whose face would crack if he smiled. The Christian life is not only a serious life, but it is also a joyful life. We are to rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, we are told to rejoice. A merry heart is good medicine. (Prov. 17:22) Cheerfulness, and a sense of humor which is under control, can help in many difficult situations in life. But a grave person is not flighty and frivolous and unable to realize the seriousness of life. The deacon must be an individual who will take his responsibilities seriously, not lightly. Those who come to him, or

to whom he goes in the course of his duties, need to realize that they will be received with seriousness and dignity and not with contempt or scorn; nor will they be treated lightly and irreverently. He is not flippant with sacred matters.

#### NOT DOUBLE-TONGUED

"Double-tongued" is used in the New Testament in this verse only. The double-tongue says one thing to one person and a contradictory thing to another person. Such a person thinks one thing and says another. This does not mean that an individual is double-tongued if he controls himself and does not say everything which comes into his mind. The double-tongued are insincere. They do not represent things according to their convictions; or according to the information which they have.

The deacon is not deceptive like Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who lied to Naaman and got some silver and garments from him. (II Kings 5:20-27) Sanballat and Geshem were deceptive in their efforts to keep Nehemiah from rebuilding Jerusalem. (Neh. 6:1-8) As Nehemiah told Sanballat "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." (Neh. 6:8) Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 5:1-11)

Although no Christian should be double-tongued, this qualification is especially important for a deacon. As Ellicott suggested: "The deacon would have in his duties connected with the administration of the Church's alms, and also in his more directly spiritual work, much opportunity of meeting with and talking to the various families of the flock of his Master. He must be watchful, in these visits, of his words, not suiting them to the occasion, and then unsaying in one house what he had affirmed in another. Such a grave fault—not an uncommon one—would, in the long run, deeply injure his influence abroad, and would inflict a deadly wound on his own spiritual life."

The deacons would meet with problems which they would need to talk over with the elders. If they were double-tongued they would promise one thing to a needy person, and advise another way when representing the matters to the elders. As John Gill suggested, the double-tongued would "speak well to the poor when they apply to them, and promise them to do them all the service they can, and when it comes to the upshot speak against them." A double-tongued person would also misrepresent other matters to the elders or to other members of the body of Christ.

Then, too, as Kretzmann suggested, the need for sincerity "can be understood all the more easily since their visits at the various

houses exposed them to the temptation to speak of the same matter in different tones and manner, to tone down the truth to suit their own convenience, and to serve their purpose of being good (I would say, agreeable, J.D.B.) friends with everybody. That such insincerity was bound sooner or later to cause trouble is evident."

All Christians are to be peacemakers. (Matt. 5:9) This quality is especially important in a deacon. The person who says one thing to one person, and a contradictory thing to another, is sowing the seeds of discord. Mr. Two-tongues, a character in *Pilgrim's Progress*, becomes a peacebreaker rather than a peacemaker.

It is not easy to be a single-tongued person, but James emphasizes that the tongue can be bridled. (Jas. 3:2-12)

A congregation where Christians, especially the officers, spread rumors, gossip, and are double-tongued is a congregation where there is unrest and finally uproar. This develops into spiritual cannibalism wherein people bite one another. As Paul said: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (Gal. 5:15) This, as the context shows, was to live in violation of the law of love. (Gal. 5:13-14) And James admonished us by saying: "Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (Jas. 1:19-20)

Why are some people double-tongued? Or, to put it more specifically and accurately, why are all of us at one time or another guilty of having used the double-tongue? When we understand this, we shall be in a better position to guard against this evil. First, some are double-tongued through fear. They may have spoken harshly of one person to another. It gets back to this other person and he comes to the person involved. He does not want to face up to the situation; so he misrepresents what he said. He is afraid of the consequences. Instead of this fear, if we were right in what we said, we should tell the person so; while apologizing for not having come to him first, and for having said this to another person; if it was not necessary for us to say it to them. If we were wrong, we should repent and ask their forgiveness; and correct the matter with the person to whom we had misrepresented this other person.

Second, we may be double-tongued through shame and pride. We may be ashamed that we said it, but we may be too proud to admit it and openly bear the shame. The shame, however, can be a good thing if it leads us to repentance and acknowledgment of our fault. We should not let foolish pride keep us from confessing and making things right.

Third, we may be double-tongued because we want to run our-

selves up by running other people down. We may think that by throwing mud we are gaining ground; but all mud thrown is ground lost! We may be trying to show how good we are by saying how bad someone else is. Self-righteousness can produce the double-tongue.

Fourth, the desire to be popular, to please everyone, can lead us to say one thing to one person and another to another. It can lead us to promise what we have no intention of delivering. In trying to please all men, we can end up being deceitful and creating trouble through our misrepresentations.

Fifth, some are double-tongued because they do not want to hurt anyone's feelings. But no matter how tender hearted we are, the time comes when we must speak the truth even though it may hurt the feelings of someone. What would you think of a doctor who refused to operate because he was afraid that he would hurt the person's feelings! There is a difference in being cruel, in trying to hurt the feelings of others, and in causing some pain in the carrying out of our duties in love.

Sixth, some deacons might be double-tongued because they hoped to profit by it financially. The greedy of filthy lucre would be double-tongued.

Although no Christian should be double-tongued, we can see how important it is that a deacon, who moves among members of the church in an official capacity, be a single-tongued man.

#### NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE

The deacon is not to be "greedy of base gains." (Vine) The lion is greedy of prey, and greedy dogs never have enough (Psa. 17:12; Isa. 56:11); but this attitude is not to characterize the deacon. Paul said that an elder was not to be a "lover of money" (I Tim. 3:3); and neither is any other Christian. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. (I Tim. 6:10) It is not money, but the love of it, which Paul condemns.

There are those who think that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. In teaching against this false view of life, our Lord told of a rich man who had much good laid up for many years. He calculated that he could take his ease, drink, eat and be merry. He did not say eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. He did not count on death. The basic things which he left out of his calculation, death and judgment, were the very things which confronted him. And so he, who was prepared to live luxurious in this life, was unprepared to die and to meet God. Thus Jesus said: "But God said unto him, Thou foolish

one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (Lk. 12:20)

There are some whose attitude toward their possessions is such that they refuse to help those whom they can. They might feast sumptuously in this life, but yearn for water in the life to come. (Lk. 16:19-31)

An individual can have many fine qualities; and yet be covetous and thus not inherit eternal life. The rich young ruler was interested in life eternal. His interest was revealed in the fact that from his youth up he had endeavored to keep the commandments of God. But there was a commandment which he was violating; the commandment that thou shalt not covet. He coveted, in this case, not the possessions of another but his own possessions. Jesus said that he lacked one thing, he must sell all he had and give to the poor. Jesus did not require this of others, nor does he require it of us in our becoming disciples. But evidently this man needed radical surgery. He was at this time unwilling to pay the price; he went away sorrowing, for he had much possessions.

Just what is covetousness? Covetousness is not just desire, nor even strong desire. One can desire something, and in legitimate ways get it; and he may desire it that he may use it for good purposes. The apostle Paul said that covetousness is idolatry. (Col. 3:5) An idol is that which one makes a substitute for God and bows his life before. We covet an object when we would do anything in order to achieve that object. It holds sway over our lives.

Hendriksen pointed out that the emphasis in I Tim. 3:8 is slightly different from that in verse 3. "A man who is fond of money is not necessarily an embezzler. But it is the embezzler or pilferer and the man who joins a good cause for the sake of material advantage whom Paul has in mind here in verse 8. It is the man with the mercenary spirit who goes all out in his search for riches, anxious to add to his possessions regardless of the method, whether fair or foul." But the lover of money would embezzle, if it served his purposes. Paul said of the elder also that he was not to be "greedy of filthy lucre." (Titus 1:7) And Peter emphasized that an elder was to tend the flock of God, not of constraint but of a ready mind; "nor yet for filthy lucre." (I Pet. 5:2)

One who was greedy of filthy lucre would use "the spiritual office for a material advantage." (Huther) This would be a specific case of an individual who thought that "godliness is a way of gain," in a worldly sense. (I Tim. 6:5) Such a one would teach "things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." (Titus 1:11)

Judas is an example of one who was greedy for money. When he complained about the cost of the perfume, with which Jesus was anointed, he was not concerned about the poor; to whom he said that the price of the perfume could have been given. "Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein." (John 12:6)

Money within itself is not wrong; in fact, it is essential in our civilization. If it were wrong within itself, it would be wrong to make contributions to the work of the church; it would be wrong to help the poor with it. But the right use of our possessions is a part of our stewardship. Thus Paul told Timothy: "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (I Tim. 6:17-19) And the Bible tells all of us, whether rich or poor, to use what we have to the glory of God; and for the good of mankind—including ourselves and our families. No one should trust in riches, but we should all be rich in good works. (Comp. I Tim. 6:17-18) Abraham had riches; but he trusted in God, and not in his wealth.

Money is filthy when it is viewed wrongly, when it is acquired illegally, and when it is used for wrong purposes. The *Pulpit Commentary* suggested that it is filthy when it is the price of wrong doing; when it "is sought on occasions when none is due," and "when the desire of even just gain is excessive." We can have the wrong attitude toward our own possessions as well as toward the possessions of others.

Gore suggests that "the idea is that of 'making small gains in mean ways—a special danger for clerks to an official who had to manage finance, specially in the East, where the clerk might expect to have his bit out of alms distributed.' (Parry)." The apostle Paul was careful to avoid giving any grounds for suspicion that he was using the collection for the poor saints to enrich himself, or anyone else. (2 Cor. 8:18-23)

One of the reasons it is good to have more than one person to count the collection is not only that it helps ensure accuracy, but it also keeps anyone from having grounds for raising suspicion. This is also one of the reasons that more than one person should know how the books are kept.

No Christian should be greedy for money, but it is especially

important that deacons not be greedy. This surely bears some relationship to their work. If they helped with the temporal affairs of the church, with the distribution of food, etc., there would be opportunities for them to misuse their position and to profit by it in a material way. Thus it was important that they not be men who were weak along this line; and subject to the strong pull of the temptation to enrich themselves at the expense of others, and through otherwise misusing their office.

Furthermore, as Roy Lanier, Sr. suggested, not only are greedy men tempted to misappropriate funds for their own use, but "they are slow to spend money where it is needed. Churches have been known to have several thousand dollars in the bank just because they have a stingy deacon who writes the checks and he refuses to write them except for the barest necessities. Stingy men will let orphans go hungry before they will run the church's bank account below a certain set liberal figure. A spendthrift will not make a good deacon, but men can be sensible and safe without being greedy or wasteful."

#### SUPPORT?

Although a deacon should not serve the church in order to be supported by the church, is it right for congregations to support deacons? A deacon who has a family to support could not labor full time for the church unless he was supported by the church. For he, as surely as other Christians, must provide for his own or he is worse than an infidel. (I Tim. 5:8) In some cases elders were supported by the church. (I Tim. 5:17-18; I Pet. 5:2) And the principle that Paul applied to the case of the elders would apply to other servants of the church; if they devoted their time to the work of the church, by the request of the church, and had need for support. The laborer, Paul said, is worthy of his hire. (I Tim. 5:18) It was right for the church to assist Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2), and it is right to support any other servants of the church when it is necessary and possible.

Of course, an individual who will not serve the church in any way unless he is paid for it, is, to say the least, very much of a spiritual infant.

Deacons, then, are to be grave, single-tongued, and lovers of that which is good instead of lovers of money. Something is also said about them with reference to wine. This will be considered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

# Not Given to Much Wine

Under the Old Testament the priest, under pain of death, was forbidden to drink any wine or strong drink when he ministered in the tabernacle. (Lev. 10:8-11) And at least certain pagan religions, according to some commentators, prohibited their priests from drinking wine on entering the temple. Was a servant of Christ's church to indulge in any wine? Drunkenness is forbidden to all Christians; and the consequences are serious, if continued in. (Rom. 13:13; I Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Gal. 5:21) What did Paul mean by saying that a deacon must be one who was "not given to much wine"? (I Tim. 3:8)

### I TIMOTHY 5:23

In the same epistle in which Paul spoke of the deacons and wine, he told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." (I Tim. 5:23) Wordsworth commented: "'Be no longer an *hydropotees*,' a water drinker," showing that hitherto Timothy had been such. . . . Observe the prudent caution of the apostle's language. He does not say *meekeeti hudor pine* (no longer drink water), but *meekeeti hudroposei* (be no longer a water-drinker); nor does he say, *oinon pine* (drink wine), but *oino oligo chro* (use a little wine); nor does he say *dia teen gasteera* (on account of thy belly), but *dia ton stomachon sou* (on account of thy stomach).'" (Lees, p. 373)

"Paul did not so much *order* his beloved son in the gospel to drink wine as give him permission to do so, using a persuasiveness without which he doubtless knew Timothy would not swerve from his rule of life." (Lees, p. 373) He expresses himself in such a way that there is no encouragement to the use of wine as a beverage. He was not instructed to take it for pleasure; or to be sociable. He was told to take a little; not a lot.

Timothy was evidently an abstainer, or, as we put it, a teetotaler. If he had been accustomed to drink wine, there would have been no need for Paul to tell him that he was no longer to drink water (only) but to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake; for his often infirmities. Hendriksen mentioned that Dr. Salvatore had written a book on *Wine As Food and Medicine*. (*Newsweek*, July 19, 1954) William Ritchie maintained that not all wines in ancient times were medicinal; but that some were. (p. 212) We do not know what Timothy's trouble was, but evidently it was something which



would be helped by the medicinal use of wine. Paul did not say that wine was good for all ailments. He did not tell all men to take a little wine; he did not say that Timothy should take it all of the time, and thus after he was well; he did not tell him to take it for any other purpose than the one for which he, Paul, prescribed it. If there is some medicinal use of wine today, but something else is better, common sense tells us to use the treatment which is best and which, although not available to Timothy, is available to us.

Lees argued that: "It is by no means certain that he would even use an *intoxicating* sort of wine at all, for Pliny's account of wine (book xiv.) shows that some sorts in good repute were not fermented; and of *adunamon* ('without strength'), one of the artificial *vina* (wines), he expressly declares that it was given to invalids when the ordinary wines were deemed likely to be injurious. In book xxiii. chap. 26 he frankly remarks, that 'to treat of the medicinal properties of each particular kind of wine would be labour without end, and quite inexhaustible; and the more so as the opinions of medical men are so entirely at variance upon the subject.'" (p. 374)

#### DEACONS AND WINE

In giving the qualifications of bishops, the apostle did not use the phrase "not given to much wine." The elder was not to be given to wine. (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7) Literally, he was "not beside wine" or not one "sitting at wine." The American Standard translated it "brawler," and in the margin gives: "not quarrelsome over wine." If he was not to be beside wine, he was not as Moses Stuart said, to be "with wine, in company with wine." Lees stated that it meant "not near wine;" thus not a banqueter who by frequenting drinking parties became associated with wine.

Something different seems to be said of the deacon; although some maintain that the Greek does not in actuality make a distinction.

#### WINE CAN REFER TO GRAPE JUICE

The term wine does not necessarily refer to wine with an alcoholic content. In fact, it is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to the juice of the grape while it is in the grape; or just after it has been released from the grape. (Deut. 28:39; Jer. 40:10, 12; 48:33; Isa. 16:10; 55:8; Deut. 32:14) There are some who think that Paul was speaking only of unfermented grape juice. Was Paul saying that an elder is not to use grape juice, but a deacon may use a little? It is hardly likely that Paul is saying that one should not be given to much grape juice; although intemperance in food or drink

is opposed in the Bible. It is possible, however, to be drunken with wine. (Eph. 5:18) Does not this make it clear why Paul says that a deacon should not be given to much wine?

The *Bible Commentary*, however, pointed out that "Excessive drinking, even of uninebriating drinks, was a vice prevalent in the days of St. Paul, and corresponded to gluttony, also common—the excessive use of food, but not of an intoxicating kind." Thus Lees is correct in pointing out it is wrong to assume that "nothing but *intoxicating* wine was abused or capable of abuse in antiquity, which is contrary to the plainest testimony. When Cratinus in his 'Ulysseses,' quoted by Athenaeus (iii.56), says—"You were all day *glutting* yourselves with white milk"; and Solomon declares that '*much* honey is not good' (A.S.V. "It is not good to eat much honey," Prov. 25:27); we must assume at once the fact of abuse, and the non-alcoholic nature of the substances abused."

The word which Paul used for wine in I Tim. 3:8 is used in several other places in the New Testament, such as: First, the medicinal use of wine which Paul prescribed for Timothy. (I Tim. 5:23) Second, the new wine which is put in new bottles. (Matt. 9:17) Third, the wine which was offered Christ. (Mk. 15:23) Fourth, Jesus said that John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and they accused him of having the devil. "The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" (Lk. 7:34) Fifth, wine and oil were poured into the wound of the man who fell among thieves. (Lk. 10:34) Sixth, the wine which was used at the feast; and the wine which Christ made. (John 2:3-10; 4:46) Seventh, Paul said it was not good to drink wine if it caused a brother to stumble. (Rom. 14:21) Eighth, Paul said that we are not to be drunken with wine, but to be filled with the Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)

Wine in the Bible is sometimes associated with intoxication or drunkenness; with violence (Prov. 4:17); woe (Prov. 23:29-30; Isa. 5:22); a false sense of security and the profaning of religion (Isa. 56:12; Hab. 2:5; Isa. 28:7); and with poison, as of the bite of a serpent. (Prov. 23:31)

On the other hand, wine was offered at the altar (Num. 18:12); had sustaining power (Gen. 27:28, 37; Deut. 7:13; 11:14; Prov. 3:10); was an emblem of spiritual blessings (Isa. 45:1); and of Christ's blood shed for our sins. (Matt. 26:26-28)

As William Patton pointed out: "In all the passages where good wine is named, there is no lisp of warning, no intimations of danger, no hint of disapprobation, but always of decided approval.

How bold and strongly marked is the contrast:

The *one* the cause of intoxication, of violence, and of woes.

The *other* the occasion of comfort and of peace.

The *one* the cause of irreligion and of self-destruction.

The *other* the devout offering of piety on the altar of God.

The *one* the symbol of the divine wrath.

The *other* the symbol of spiritual blessings.

The *one* the emblem of eternal damnation.

The *other* the emblem of eternal salvation.

“The distinction in quality between the good and the bad wine is as clear as that between good and bad men, or good and bad wives, or good and bad spirits; for one is the constant subject of warning, designated poison literally, analogically, and figuratively, while the other is commended as refreshing and innocent, which no alcoholic wine is.’ *Lees’ Appendix*, p. 232.

“Can it be that these blessings and curses refer to the same beverage, and that an intoxicating liquor? Does the trumpet give a certain or an uncertain sound? Says Rev. Dr. Nott: ‘Can the same thing, in the same state, be good and bad; a symbol of wrath, and a symbol of mercy; a thing to be sought after, and a thing to be avoided? Certainly not. And is the Bible, then, inconsistent with itself? No, certainly.’—*Nott*, London Ed. p. 48.

“Professor M. Stuart, p. 49, says: ‘My final conclusion is this, viz., that whenever the Scriptures speak of wine as a comfort, a blessing, or a libation to God, and rank it with such articles as corn and oil, they mean, they can mean only such wine as contained no alcohol that could have a mischievous tendency; that wherever they denounce it, and connect it with drunkenness and revelling, they can mean only alcoholic or intoxicating wine.’

“But the position of the advocates of only one kind of wine is that ‘the juice of the grape, when called wine, was always fermented, and, being fermented, was always intoxicating;’ ‘that fermentation is the essence of wine.’ One exception will destroy the universality of this sweeping statement.” (William Patton, *Bible Wines*, Little Rock: Central Baptist Church Publications, P.O. Box 1146, pp. 74-75)

Intoxicating wines, in other words, are not the only wines mentioned in the Bible. Then, too, there would obviously be a difference in the consequences if fermented wines were used unsparingly instead of sparingly.

#### A LITTLE ALL RIGHT?

A deacon is not to be given or addicted to much wine; but does this mean that Paul is telling him to drink a little wine? To abstain

from much wine, would not in itself imply that one should take a little. The lack of an absolute prohibition did not mean that some wine was encouraged for purposes of pleasure. Lees suggested that: "1. Excessive drinking, even of uninebriating drinks, was a vice prevalent in the days of St. Paul, and corresponded to gluttony, also common,—the excessive use of food, but not of an intoxicating kind. Prizes were often offered with the object, not of producing inebriation, but of testing the powers of incontinent imbibition to the utmost. Not a few of the early officers of Christian churches were, probably, selected from men who had been notorious for such practices (called *methusoi*, 'topers,' by St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians, 1st Epistle, vi.10, 'and such *were* some of you,' ver. 11); and the apostle here reminds them that such conduct is inconsistent with their 'high calling' as faithful servants of the Lord Jesus. He is directing his exhortation against a common vice, and is not pronouncing any opinion upon the *nature* of intoxicating liquors.

"2. To argue that by forbidding 'much wine' St. Paul approves some use of wine of *any* and *every* sort, is to adopt a mode of interpretation exceedingly dangerous, and wholly inconsistent with common usage. (1) It is highly dangerous; for once lay it down that what is not forbidden is approved, and the Bible becomes a book of the wildest licence: 'Thou shalt do no murder' becomes a permission to do anything *short* of murder; and 'Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath' is a reason for indulging in anger of any kind from sunrise to sunset! (2) It is inconsistent with usage. When the apostle Peter says that the enemies of Christ wondered that believers did not go to 'the same excess of riot' as themselves, he did not mean that Christians were guilty of any minor excess. The next clause in this verse illustrates the same point—*mee aischrokerdeis*, 'not greedy-of-filthy-lucre,' or 'not meanly-avaricious,' says the apostle, but without any intention of justifying avarice or trade craftiness in the *smallest* degree. So in the present day a Christian may condemn some excess, without implying that a less indulgence would be commendable; nay, times without number, teetotalers have blamed men for going 'so much' to the public-house, without signifying any approval of *occasional* visits. Besides, it is morally impossible that St. Paul could have intended to approve of *some* use of *all* sorts of wine then made and used. Many wines were drugged; did he recommend *these*? In his day, also, even sober heathens disapproved of the use of fermented wine unless considerably diluted with water, was the Christian moralist less indifferent than pagans to sobriety? Various wines, too, were so nauseous

to a modern taste, that no apostolic patronage, however explicit, would have induced English wine-drinkers to swallow them.

"3. If it is asked *why* St. Paul did not directly forbid all use of wine?—both a special and a general answer may be returned. (1) The particular answer is, that the term *oinos* (wine) included a great variety of drinks made from the juice of the grape; and as many of these were free from an intoxicating quality, and others were so weakened by water as to be practically non-inebriating unless voraciously consumed, a universal proscription would have ignored important distinctions that were well known to exist. (2) The general answer is, that, for wisest ends, the apostle refrained from condemning by name much which the development of Christian light and the operation of Christian love would hereafter show to be inconsistent with the principles of the Christian system; and which, therefore, would be renounced by true and enlightened disciples. Slave-holding, arbitrary government, bigamy and polygamy, lots and gambling, were *not* prohibited. (In so many words. J.D.B.) Numerous objectionable customs of ancient times were not forbidden, *in express terms*. The apostles, it is clear, trusted to the effectual working of that Spirit of truth and grace which dwelt in the Church, for the gradual elevation of human character, and the progressive extinction of institutions and habits that were in any degree discordant with the Divine principles of the Gospel. To obey the Father in all things; to be like the Son in purity; to love as brethren; to do good, at all sacrifices, as we have opportunity; to suffer, rather than inflict, wrong; to resist unavoidable temptation, and shun what we can; to make earth spiritually one with heaven—these were *first principles* which, conscientiously lived out, would cover and comprehend all circumstances, and, in the long run, banish evil from the world. Detailed and specific prohibitions, as under the Jewish theocracy, are not of the genius of Christianity; at any rate, we know they were not given; and what is most needed now, is an honest wish to apply the unchangeable canons of Christian morality to every case of conscience as it arises. . . . Actuated by this spirit, the question will be—not whether intoxicating wine is prohibited by name in the New Testament, but whether Scripture and experience afford us such a knowledge of its nature and results as, on Christian principles, binds us to renounce and discountenance its use?" (pp. 368-369)

Roy Lanier, Sr. maintained that: "This does not suggest that a man may with the Lord's permission drink some wine. What this passage affirms is that a man who is enslaved to wine is not to be appointed to serve the church. Through pity and mercy and long-

suffering one might be kept in the church with the hope that he will develop enough courage and moral strength to break the bad habit, but the fact that his name is kept on the roll is no sign that he may be selected as a public servant of the congregation. And on account of the influence and example one sets who drinks intoxicating liquor a church would be foolish indeed to select a man as a deacon if he even drinks occasionally."

L. R. Wilson thought that "in the time of Paul people had not then learned that boiling water purified it. Hence, for health's sake very little water was drunk. Since everyone used wine for drinking purposes, the inspired apostles always warned against the *excessive* use of it." (p. 52)

Lipscomb and Shepherd suggested that every Christian ought to strive toward spiritual maturity and that this will take him from strong drink. "The use of strong drink is entirely incompatible with a fully developed Christian character. The character given for the elders is that of the most complete and best-rounded Christian. Every Christian is bound to seek, in his spiritual growth, to develop the character portrayed for the elder. This will lead every Christian to entirely refrain from the use of strong drink."

A Seventh-day Adventist commentary defined the word "wine" as being a word which covered both "new or fermented" wine. "Some hold that Paul here speaks of unfermented wine—grape juice—because for him to speak otherwise would place him in conflict with his declaration against defiling the body (see I Cor. 6:19; 10:31), and contrary to the general teaching of the Bible regarding intoxicating drink. (see on Prov. 20:1; 23:29-32) Others hold that Paul here permits a temperate use of ordinary wine. They declare that if he were speaking of grape juice he would not need to warn the deacons against drinking 'much' of it, and would have no valid basis for forbidding the elders to drink it at all. The passage is admittedly difficult."

The *Homiletic Commentary* suggested that: "He who would not merely aid poverty, but as far as possible heal it, must be himself a pattern of temperance." In the current war on poverty one of the enemies is alcohol, since there are people who have money for drink who do not have it for necessities of life. And there are people who are unemployed because of their addiction to drink; and there are people who miss work for the same reason. And yet, there seems to be little effort to fight the war against poverty on this front. In fact, millions of dollars are spent in advertisement which backs this friend of poverty.

In a society in which any use of wine, other than as a medicine,

brought reproach on the church, the author does not see how that Biblical principles would permit a deacon to be given to any wine. And yet, in some societies, and in the society of Paul's day, a man who was not a total abstainer, but at the same time was not given to much wine, could serve as a deacon; if he possessed the necessary qualifications. No matter how one looks at it, this passage does not say that he cannot be given to *any* wine. There is a difference between taking no wine at all and taking a little wine. And although one passage may limit another, there is no passage which literally says, concerning the deacons, "no wine at all." And yet, as we shall see, there are passages which could under certain circumstances say this very thing.

Paul's statement about deacons and wine raises the entire problem of Christians and strong drink. Let us briefly consider this problem.

### CHRISTIANS AND DRINK

The author has never drunk and he does not have any intentions of starting. However, this does not mean that he should be self-righteous and look down in contempt on those who are not abstainers. However, he does believe that there are good reasons for Christians to be teetotalers.

Alcoholism, the addiction to drink until it has become also a self-inflicted disease, has claimed at least 6,000,000 people in America; and around 1,000,000 are women. If there are ten or twenty cases of a disease for every hundred thousand people, we become greatly alarmed. Yet, as a psychiatrist, Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, said: ". . . the public fails to become alarmed about alcoholism, an illness where the rates are literally *thousands* per hundred thousand population." Relatively few are cured; and yet around 65 per cent of the people in the United States, who are over twenty-one, use one or more forms of alcoholic beverages. (Editorial, *Christianity Today*, Sept. 16, 1966, p. 1260.) When have so many people so carelessly exposed themselves, and that continually and unnecessarily, to other such terrible diseases?

It is true that an alcoholic has gotten himself into the situation where he may need the help of a physician; but that does not mean that physically he became exposed to some germ which, without his consent, invaded his body and made him ill. He may have cultivated a strong desire and affinity for alcohol; but it was not a physical condition which made him weak and susceptible to infection from this "germ." As a Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois, Dr. O. Hobart Mowrer, said: "If the alcoholic, actual

or potential, has an abnormal physical need for EtOH, why is it he so often finds that any other form of sedative or tranquilizer, which has a totally different chemical composition, is an acceptable substitute? No, the evidence clearly points to the existence of a *psychological*, rather than physical, need for alcohol; and, as I have studied the problem over the years, it has seemed increasingly clear that such a need, if it is chronic and conducive to addiction, always has a moral basis." ("Alcoholism, a Metabolic or Moral Problem?", *Kerygma*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1965, pp. 15-16) He contended that a morally adequate understanding of the problem must view it as involving "responsibility and irresponsibility, morality and immorality." Drinking, he pointed out, often silences the conscience when faced with temptation; and drowns its accusing cry after we have given way to temptation. (*Ibid.*, p. 17-18)

#### DISEASE?

There are those who try to escape the moral problem involved in alcoholism by saying it is a disease. And yet, it is the only disease on which many millions of dollars are spent every year to encourage people to catch it; and it is the only disease that some people personally urge you to expose yourself to unnecessarily. It is a disease which no one catches if he does not drink at all; but which no one, who takes his first drink, can guarantee that he will not catch. The only absolute guarantee is abstinence.

Anton J. Carlson said: "The tendency today is to blame alcoholism on everything else but alcohol—frustrations, unhappiness, anything. The truth is that perfectly normal, happy people can become addicted to alcohol through chronic consumption; or, in plainer words, too much social drinking." (Quoted in *The Christian Century*, Feb. 22, 1956, p. 238.)

#### OTHER TRAGEDIES

Alcohol is involved in many accidents. Not all of the cases where alcohol is involved are reported. Not all cases are known; for an individual may have had enough alcohol to slow up his reactions, increase his confidence, and yet it not be known that alcohol was involved. It is estimated that alcohol is involved in from 40 to 60 percent of all accidents. (*The Christian Century*, Feb. 22, 1956, p. 238; *Time*, June 2, 1961, p. 40; *Christian Herald*, June 1963, p. 29; *U.S. News & World Report*, October 3, 1966, p. 84.) With .15 of 1 percent alcohol in a driver's blood, his chances of being responsible for an automobile accident are increased 25 times. (*U.S. News & World Report*, Oct. 3, 1966, p. 84.) And yet, this invitation to accident and disaster is advertised on highways.



The higher faculties of the brain are impaired by alcohol, as Dr. Ivy pointed out, "before a person feels the effects and occurs after the consumption of 1 or 2 beers or 1 or 2 cocktails." In today's world, where we have to make such quick decisions in handling high powered machines, such as the automobile, it is difficult enough with all of one's wits about him. Why complicate the situation with alcohol?

Alcohol is involved in disharmony within the family. One study in Ontario indicated that it was "the major problem behind the marital discord of 47 percent" of the cases. (*Toronto Daily Star*, August 25, 1966.) Alcohol completely breaks up many homes; and broken homes help create juvenile delinquency.

#### COST IN MONEY

For every dollar in taxes which liquor brings in, it takes more than eleven dollars to "take care of the results of the alcoholic beverage traffic. For me personally," Horace Chandler said, "this meant handing over extra taxes of \$132 a year." (*Christianity Today*, April 15, 1966, p. 719) Jerome Ellison wrote: "Excessive drinking costs the nation \$35 million annually in medical care, \$30 million in jail maintenance, \$100 million in accidents, \$500 million in wage losses, according to estimates based on a Public Affairs Committee pamphlet." (*Christian Herald*, Feb. 1964, p. 32) The billions of dollars spent on liquor each year in America is hardly a sign of faithfulness in stewardship of one's material possessions.

Since the number of alcoholics is continually increasing, since it is not easy to rehabilitate an alcoholic, since in the majority of cases it is not very successful, since there are over half as many pre-alcoholics as alcoholics, since numerous traffic accidents involve alcohol, since it is our number three health problem, since alcohol is the cause of alcoholism and a contributor to other accidents and diseases, since abstinences make it impossible to contract the "disease," since no one knows whether or not they will become an alcoholic, since our influence if we drink can encourage some to drink who may become alcoholics, and since our not drinking cannot be an example which encourages others to drink, and since it is only in rare cases that it has medicinal advantages, why drink socially or for pleasure?

#### IN A DRINKING SOCIETY

If a Christian goes into a society today in which drinking is generally accepted, should he demand that every convert give up drinking in order to remain in fellowship with the church? First,

so far as we know, this is not what the apostles and prophets did in the first century.

Second, they taught very plainly against drunkenness, and said that drunkards cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. (I Cor. 6:10) Drunkenness is a work of the flesh. (Gal. 5:21) The Christian would work with a brother who was trying to overcome the sin of drunkenness; but with a Christian who was a drunkard (one who was content to continue in this manner of life) the Christian was not to eat. (I Cor. 5:11) The Bible clearly teaches us not to be drunken with wine. (Eph. 5:18)

Third, elders, who constitute the finest type of Christians, were not to drink. This holds before others the high pattern of Christian living with reference to wine, and should encourage others to abandon wine altogether.

Fourth, while not teaching that it is impossible for one to be a Christian if he drank at all, one would place on their conscience the principle that they have a responsibility toward others. Even if it is not required as an essential condition of salvation, that one not drink at all, yet we must recognize our influence on others. Instead of trying to force them to quit, one would lay on their conscience the welfare of others. "For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another. Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to *do anything* whereby thy brother stumbleth." (Rom. 14:15-21)

The example of Christ should convince us that we should follow the principle of using even our freedom in such a way as to edify others. "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me." (Rom. 15:1-3)

Although this will not eliminate alcohol overnight, and may not eliminate it from the lives of some, yet the outcome of these principles is abstinence from alcoholic beverages.

There may be individuals who say that if it is not absolutely

essential to salvation, they will not give up what they call moderate drinking. They might ask themselves such questions as: First, Is my attitude one of doing just as little as I think that I can get by with? Jesus teaches the religion of the second mile. (Matt. 5:41) The first mile was the mile that one was legally bound to carry the equipment of a Roman soldier, or to help a courier. Jesus said if they were compelled to go one mile, they should go two miles. They should do more through good will than they could be compelled to do by law. Are we not willing to do more through gratitude and love for Christ, and because of what He has done for us? Are we going to do just what we "have to do," and not do as much as we can do through good will and concern for others?

Second, we can ask: If I am a social drinker, and my wife or my husband, as the case may be, is an alcoholic who is trying to stay sober, would I say: It is my right to keep wine in the house, and to drink it in moderation; therefore, even if my actions make it much harder on my marriage partner, I am going to drink it anyhow. Should we not be concerned lest we give someone else even an excuse to justify their continued drinking? What if our example in this matter leads someone to perish?

Third, I should want to influence as many other people for good as possible. If my "moderate" drinking influences someone else to start drinking, or to continue drinking, and some of these may become alcoholics, am I using my influence properly?

Furthermore, we may lose influence with those who are opposed to drink, if we ourselves drink.

One may say: I shall lose influence with the social drinkers if I do not drink with them. This is extremely doubtful. Of course, if one refuses in a haughty and self-righteous way, it may uselessly antagonize someone. If they understand that you do not drink because of your conviction against it, and because of your conviction that it may encourage someone to become an alcoholic, it is doubtful that they will be offended. And if under such circumstances they are offended, the offence has come because you chose to follow the higher way; and you are not responsible for such offenses. However, it is likely that a polite refusal on your part would end the matter; and no one will take offence. If asked for your reasons, you can give them; and it may even lead them, one of these days, to reconsider.

Well did Dr. Ivy say: "Let us inquire who is really responsible for the fact that the consumption of alcoholic beverages has created such a tremendous social evil in the U.S.A. The abstainers are not responsible. The heavy drinkers and alcoholics are not responsible

because they are the worst advertisements that the consumption of alcoholic beverages have. What group then is responsible? It must be the occasional and moderate drinkers who can control their drinking. That is the group which glamorizes the social custom of drinking alcoholic beverages, and is responsible for the perpetuation of the huge public health and social problem."

"As the report of the Committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has indicated ways must be found to deglamorize the use of alcoholic beverages. If a person believes that he or she has responsibilities as well as rights as a member of society, he or she cannot be guided merely by what he likes and desires. Until men and women of influence who can control their drinking realize that their drinking contributes to the problem of alcoholism any alcohol education program will be sorely handicapped."

Even if alcohol were as harmless as meat, which it is not, Paul said that if eating meat sacrificed to idols caused a brother to stumble, to sin, he would eat no more meat. (I Cor. 8:13; Rom. 14:21) What is your attitude? Do you "do all things for the gospel's sake?" (I Cor. 9:23). Is your determination to "do all to the glory of God"? (I Cor. 10:31). Are you a wise steward with reference to your money? Can you evaluate all these, and apply them to the question of drinking?

## CHAPTER IV

# The Faith and Its Container

Deacons must hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." (I Tim. 3:9) Both that to which they are to hold, and the container in which it is to be held, are emphasized in this qualification of deacons. What does it mean to "hold?" It means to hold fast, to hold on to, to have, to adhere to, a belief or position. Thus it was said, concerning the people, that they "all hold John as a prophet." (Matt. 21:26) Paul used it to refer to "stedfast adherence to faith, or the faith." Timothy was exhorted to hold "faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith." (I Tim. 1:19) Timothy was also exhorted to "hold the pattern of sound words which thou has heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 1:13) Deacons must not be wishywashy concerning the faith. Instead, they must hold it fast; they must keep clinging to the faith. This is essential. One does not maintain a skill by being indifferent to its exercise. An individual does not hold on to his health by neglecting it. It is possible for an individual to *apostatize* from the faith without having purposed to do so. He may simply drift. He does not give attention to those things which enable him to grow spiritually. He does not do that which enables him to hold fast the faith. We are warned to give attention to the truth lest we let it slip. (Heb. 2:1-4)

There is a vital relationship between faith and the sincerity of one's ethical life. Weiss suggested that "it is as if the pure conscience were the vessel in which the mystery of faith is preserved." Vincent commented: "The idea is sound and valuable. A mere intellectual attitude toward the mystery which, in every age, attaches to the faith, will result in doubt, questioning, and wordy strife (See I Tim. 6:4; II Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9), sometimes in moral laxity, sometimes in despair."

Holding fast the faith in a pure conscience is not only an extremely important qualification of a deacon, but it is also the objective of every Christian. There are some things required of a deacon—for example, that he be an individual who possesses some maturity and experience, as is clear from the fact that he must first be proved before he can become a deacon—that are not required of every Christian. One who has just been born into the family of God is not mature. He has not been tested, and yet he is a Christian. Not every Christian is married; although deacons are to be married. But every Christian ought to study so that he knows the faith; all

ought to be persistent in holding fast the faith, and hold it in a pure conscience. Thus whether one aspires to be a deacon or not, he can profit by an intensive study of these qualifications. Furthermore, if one does not hold fast the faith in a pure conscience, he disqualifies himself not merely as a deacon but as a Christian; if he persists in this condition.

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH

To what are the deacons to hold? They are to hold to the mystery of the faith. What is meant by "the mystery?" Is the gospel a profound secret which can be known by only a few who are highly endowed, intellectually speaking? No. The gospel is referred to as the mystery because it is the product of God, and was made known by revelation. It is not the product of man's wisdom; but what man could not know by unaided human wisdom God has revealed through certain inspired men. (I Cor. 2:6-16)

This gospel had been hidden in the mind and purpose of God before He revealed it to man. The wisest man alive could not penetrate into the mind of God to learn the gospel. Man could not of his own reason discover it. It had not entered into the heart of man. But just as a man's spirit knows the things of a man, and can reveal these things to others; just so God's Spirit knows the things of God, and the Spirit has revealed the gospel. This did not mean that each individual had a direct revelation from God; for the Corinthians, to whom Paul was writing, had themselves learned the gospel through Paul. God had revealed it to Paul, and Paul taught it to them. Thus Paul in Corinth had "*reasoned* in the synagogue every sabbath, and *persuaded* Jews and Greeks." ". . . Paul was *constrained by the word, testifying* to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." ". . . and many of the Corinthians *hearing* believed and were baptized." In a special vision Paul was told by the Lord: "Be not afraid, but *speak* and hold not thy peace . . . he dwelt there a year and six months, *teaching the word of God* among them." (Acts 18:1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11)

Because not everyone was inspired by the Holy Spirit, because the gospel was revealed directly to but a few, it was necessary that these inspired individuals teach others. Thus Paul said: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." (I Cor. 2:13)

The gospel was a mystery in that it was not the product of man's mind; and was unknown to man before God revealed it. It was a mystery to those who repudiated divine revelation. But to them it is a mystery, not because it has not been revealed, but because

they have not opened their hearts to the divine revelation which comes to us through the word of God.

### WHEN WAS THE MYSTERY REVEALED

This mystery was something which though once hidden was now disclosed or revealed. There is the basic mystery of the gospel, but there are other mysteries which are included in the gospel. The basic mystery of the gospel is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ; His work, His death for our sins, His burial, resurrection, ascension and reign in heaven; until the conquest of the last enemy, and the deliverance of the kingdom to God in eternity. In the same chapter, in which Paul stated that the deacons were to hold "the mystery of the faith," he said: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory." (I Tim. 3:16)

There were some things, concerning the kingdom, which were called mysteries of the kingdom. They were called this either because they were not made known in times past in the fullness in which they are now made known; or they were not made known at all, in some cases. A part of a mystery might be made known at one time, and more about it later. The parables, Jesus said, dealt with "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 13:11, 35; Lk. 8:10) Jesus did not say that the kingdom itself was a mystery concerning which nothing had been revealed in times past. For the prophets had revealed that the everlasting kingdom would be established in the last days, and would continue until all enemies were conquered. (Dan. 2:44; Psa. 110:1-4; Acts 2:16-17; 2:34-36; I Cor. 15:24-28; Heb. 12:28; 13:20) David clearly stated that Christ would reign, at God's right hand, as king and priest. (Psa. 110:1, 4) And Peter just as clearly stated that, in fulfilment of this prophecy, Christ is now reigning. (Acts 2:34-35) Thus although there were mysteries concerning the kingdom, which were brought out in some of the parables as they had not been brought out before, yet the kingdom itself was no mystery; for it had been prophesied. Although it was a complete mystery before any of it was prophesied, yet whatever was prophesied about it was not a mystery to those who received and understood the revelation.

There are some who think that the church was a mystery which was not prophesied; but this is not what Paul taught. The reign at God's right hand, which was prophesied (Psa. 110:1, 4; Acts 2:34-36), is the same thing as the headship of the church. For Paul showed that the exaltation of Christ to God's right hand also

involves His headship over the church. (Eph. 1:19-22) When Christ's people are spoken of as a kingdom, He is spoken of as the King. When they are referred to as the body of Christ, the appropriate way of designating Christ's relation to the body is to speak of Him as the Head. But in both cases, His authority over His people is affirmed.

If Paul did not say that the church itself was a mystery, which was not prophesied, what did he mean by "the mystery of Christ" in Eph. 3:4? He spoke of this mystery, in a few words, in Eph. 1:9-10 when he said: "making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say. . . ." (Eph. 1:9-10) This mystery included the complete equality of Jew and Gentile in the church. And even of this Paul did not say that nothing was known in times past; but that it had not been made known in times past as it is now made known through the gospel. "Whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Eph. 3:4-6)

Although the gospel is now made manifest, is now clearly disclosed or revealed, Paul showed that it had been testified to, prophesied, and pointed to by the Old Testament. "Now to him that is able to establish you according to the revelation of mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith. . . ." (Rom. 16:25-26) Thus earlier in the Roman letter he had shown that God's way of making us righteous through Christ had been manifested apart from the law, but that it was "witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction. . . ." (Rom. 3:21-22) Yes, the gospel of God was "promised afore through his prophets in the holy Scriptures." (Rom. 1:2)

The deacons, it is clear, were not to be ignorant of the gospel; but were to hold fast the mystery of the faith which God has revealed to man.



## OBEDIENCE IS INVOLVED

The gospel cannot really be held fast if it is simply something we memorize and recite, but not something which guides our lives. The gospel was made known not to satisfy our curiosity but to save our souls. And since we cannot be saved in our disobedience, the gospel was made known in order to bring about the obedience of faith to the faith, or gospel. Paul said that this mystery was "made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:26) The gospel was revealed to produce mental assent to its divine truth, but not to produce this only. It was revealed that men might believe, but not to produce faith without the works or obedience of faith. We are to be obedient to the faith, as were a great number of priests. (Acts 6:7) We do not want to be among those who obey not the gospel. (II Thess. 1:8) In Romans 16:26 reference is made to the obedience of faith. This is to an obedience which springs out of faith and which is characterized by faith. Those who have living, not dead (Jas. 2:26), faith in the gospel (the faith) render the obedience which is not an obedience of mere formality, nor an obedience of lip service without life service; but is the obedience which grows out of, and is grounded in, as well as is characterized by, faith.

In order to become a Christian one must receive the gospel not by hearing only, but by the hearing which leads one to believe and obey the gospel. He must respond to God's revelation by rendering the obedience of faith. And as a Christian, he continues to render the obedience of faith as he lives or walks by faith. (II Cor. 5:7) Since this is true of every Christian, it must also be true of the deacons. They are to receive the gospel by faith and to live by faith.

## HOLDING THE FAITH

When Paul spoke of holding the mystery of the faith, does faith refer to their own confidence or trust in the Lord; or does it refer to the faith, the gospel itself? Does he refer to their faith, or to the faith in which they had faith? Paul has reference to the gospel itself; to the faith once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) He is not speaking of their own confidence in the mystery of the faith; although their faith is implied in the fact that they are to hold to the faith. But their own faith is not the mystery to which they hold. He is not saying that faith is mysterious; instead he is saying that they must hold to the mystery of the faith. This faith exists whether they believe in it or not; but it is through their faith that they appropriate and hold to the faith. As Lenski observed, " 'possessing' the mystery already includes the faith which believes and

thereby 'possesses' the mystery, namely personal faith. . . . The feature that needs to be added is *what* mystery is referred to, a defining modifier is required. We have it: this is 'the mystery of the faith.' It is not that "the faith found in the hearts of the deacons is to believe the mystery;" although they do believe it. But by this faith he is to hold or to possess, the "faith," the gospel itself. This, of course, is not an impersonal gospel, but involves the personal faith of the individual in the personal Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The mystery of the faith is not something which Christians are to keep to themselves. It should be proclaimed to the world. (Rom. 16:25; Col. 4:3) And thus it is strikingly different in this manner also from some of the "mystery" religions of the Greeks where certain doctrines were for the ears of only those who were initiated into that religion. They were for the group only, and thus they were not to be proclaimed to the outsider.

### PURE

The faith is to be held in a pure conscience. What is meant by pure? In his discussion of the word for pure, William Barclay, in *A New Testament Word Book*, (pp. 68-71), pointed out that the word at first simply meant to be physically clean. It then came to be used of something which was pure in the sense of not being mixed with something else. A metal that was without alloy was a pure metal. It was further used of a man who has settled his accounts, such as taxes and debts, and was now free from debt. No man had a claim on him with reference to debts. It was also used of one who had been acquitted of some charge against him. It developed the moral meaning of being without pollution or without guilt. The person who was innocent, and who was morally clean, was a pure person. It was also used to speak of being ceremonially clean and fit to worship in a temple. It also carried the meaning of being genuine; such as one who was pure in blood. These were the meanings, Barclay pointed out, in classical Greek. In the papyri, which reflects the ordinary language of the people of Jesus' day, the word was used to mean something that was pure or clean and without blemish. It was used to refer to a document which had been corrected and thus was without errors. In the New Testament it was used to refer to physical cleanliness; such as the linen sheet in which Jesus' body was placed. (Matt. 27:59) Purity or cleanliness also referred to those who were fit for God's service, and to things that the Christian could utilize. (John 13:10; Lk. 11:41; Rom. 14:20; Titus 1:15) One who was pure from the blood of all men was innocent of crime. (Acts 18:6; 20:26) When religion is as God wants

it to be, it is pure and undefiled religion. (Jas. 1:27) The word for purity is also used in Matthew 5:8 where Jesus said that the pure in heart would see God. They are genuine and not fakes. They are unmixed in their motives. They are not alloyed with impurity. Barclay suggests that in the Beatitudes it means "blessed are those whose motives are absolutely unmixed, whose minds are utterly sincere, who are completely and totally single-minded. What a summons to self-examination! Here is the most demanding Beatitude of all. When we examine our motives with honesty, it will humiliate us, for an unmixed motive is the rarest thing in the world." (p. 70) We shall not achieve perfection in this matter but we should grow in it. We can be sincere individuals, and yet be individuals who at times have had motives which were mixed with impurity; although we should continually strive to purify ourselves from these impure motives.

Although every Christian should hold the faith in a pure conscience, this is especially important for officers in the church who, more than other Christians, will be viewed by the community as outstanding examples of Christianity. They must, indeed, be men with pure consciences.

### CONSCIENCE

A pure conscience is the vessel, as it were, in which the faith is to be held. Conscience involves such vital matters, and is so important for every life, that we need to examine in some detail what the Bible teaches about it. Regardless of how great may be one's intellectual grasp of the gospel, if it is held in an impure conscience the purposes of the gospel will be frustrated; and reproach will be brought upon the cause of Christ.

Before defining conscience, let us think what the existence of conscience reveals about the nature of reality, and the nature of man. Then, as we discuss conscience, we shall better understand what the condition of a person's conscience reveals about the character of that person.

### WHAT CONSCIENCE IMPLIES

It is a fact that all men everywhere have what we call a conscience. What does this fact reveal? First, it reveals that man is a being who is sensitive to morality. Conscience testifies that man is convinced that good exists and that evil exists. This is not to say that men automatically know what the good is and what the evil is. Men need to be taught rightly in order that they may properly distinguish between good and evil. But regardless of the lack of teaching, or the false teaching which one may have received, every

man at one time or another is convinced that there is good and there is evil. As A. E. Taylor pointed out, in his book *Does God Exist?*, although men may draw the line between good and evil in different places, all men agree there is a line to be drawn somewhere. Every man believes there are some things which he ought to do and some things which he ought not to do. Even individuals who repudiate the idea of morality, and who affirm that everything is in a state of flux and flow without any moral law in the light of which to judge any action, will sooner or later say or do something which indicates they believe that good and evil exist. For example, every man is convinced that justice and injustice exist. Oftentimes he may feel he has not gotten that which he deserved; or others have been treated in a way which they did not merit. Unless there is a standard of justice, and unless good and evil really exist, how can anyone seriously claim that there is justice and injustice? Some individuals argue that everything changes, that there are no real moral principles; and then they will say: Therefore, we *ought* to be tolerant of one another. But what obligation do we have to do anything if there is no good or evil? Why ought we to be tolerant? Who is to say that intolerance is wrong and that tolerance is good? One could just as easily argue, if there is no moral law, that intolerance is right and tolerance is wrong. In fact, there would be no difference, morally speaking, between the two; if there is no moral law. And yet sooner or later every man acknowledges, by word or action, that sometimes there is a difference between what is (between what exists at a given time) and what ought to be. The is and the ought are not always identical.

Second, the fact of conscience testifies to man's conviction that he is obligated to do the good and not to do the evil. Studies have shown that so-called primitive people are convinced that one's duty is to good and not to evil. In some cases they may have convinced themselves that they must do evil in order that good may come; but even in this case they are saying that they do this evil because of the good which they think will result from what they do. In other words, their obligation is to the ultimate good. Although men may beguile themselves into thinking that the evil is really good, yet men do not believe that man's moral obligation is to evil; or that man's moral obligation is to refuse to do the good.

Third, conscience reveals that man is convinced that he is obligated. He believes there is a realm of duty. There are things which he ought to do and things which he ought not to do. Duty exists. When he fails to do what he is convinced that he ought to do, his conscience bothers him. When he does what he is convinced is

right, his conscience gives its approval.

Fourth, conscience testifies that there is a realm beyond the material. The moral realm exists; otherwise conscience is an illusion. And if this which is so vital to making man man is an illusion, how can we seriously contend that anything else is a reality? When we speak accurately, we never use "ought" in describing matter and its relationships. One would not give a moral lecture to a tire, and exhort it to do its duty and to carry one safely and smoothly to one's destiny. If it blew out, he would not rebuke it and say that it had failed in its duty. He would not appeal to its sense of right and wrong, and say that it ought to pull itself together so that one can make the appointment without delay. No, for we realize that a tire is not a moral being; and that, physical conditions being what they were, the tire could not help going flat. And we shall have to put into operation certain material forces if the tire is to be fixed. But we do hold men responsible for their conduct. And yet this is ridiculous, if matter in motion is the only reality.

Fifth, conscience implies a realm of freedom. To say that one ought to do a certain thing, is not the same as saying that he cannot help but do that thing. We say that he is obligated to do it, but that it is possible for him to do otherwise. And yet, if man has no freedom at all, we could only talk about what matter forced him to do; for he would be but matter in motion, and thus regulated by the laws which regulate the motions of matter.

Sixth, the philosopher Kant argued that once we grant the fact of conscience, the fact of duty (and every man does, sooner or later), we cannot deny the reality of freedom. I ought, therefore I can; but it is not absolutely sure that I shall do what I ought to do. If duty exists, there must be the existence of the moral realm and moral law. But unless the moral law is enforced it does not in reality exist. In other words, if moral law holds good there is moral *law* and man is responsible and accountable for his deeds. If transgression results in the same outcome as obedience, there is no moral law. But justice is not carried out in this life. Therefore, if justice exists there must be a life to come; for here the wicked may prosper and the righteous may suffer and even die at the hands of the wicked. But no man is wise enough to evaluate the deeds of all men, and yet this must be done if there is moral law and man is an accountable being. Therefore, there must be the Just Judge of all the Earth, God Himself, who will bring man into judgment. Thus if conscience is a reality, so are duty, freedom, immortality, and God. This does not mean that God cannot be merciful, but it does mean that, unless conscience is an illusion, these other realities

also must exist. There are other reasons also to believe in God, but the moral realm, as a realm beyond the material, points to God the moral Creator. God is the creator of the realm of morality, and of man with his conscience. We have discussed in some detail the reality of morality, with arguments drawn from outside the Bible, in our manuscript on *Communism and the Reality of Moral Law*.

The evidence reveals that man is a being who at times is even tormented by the idea of duty. It is a reality which he cannot escape. And when he recognizes and does his duty, he grows morally speaking; when he does not recognize and does not do his duty, he becomes diminished in character; and descends more and more to the level of the animal. In fact, man is a being who, although not an animal, can sink lower than the animals. But man cannot hold to the reality of conscience and duty, without also accepting the moral realm, moral law, freedom, God, judgment, and immortality.

As bad as our world now is, think what it would be if no man had a conscience. What if no one felt obligated to do good or to avoid evil? What kind of world would it be, if everyone treated himself and others as if they were but things; which were in the grip of forces which left them no freedom, and which placed them under no duty. If such a situation existed, the world could not long stand.

Stalin's wicked works emphasized what happens when a man destroys, or at least almost totally perverts, his conscience. Milovan Djilas, a top Yugoslav Communist who was later jailed by Tito, knew Stalin. He came to realize, however, that Stalin had indeed become a man of steel so that, so far as Djilas could tell, he was without conscience. Djilas wrote: "An ungainly dwarf of a man passed through gilded and marbled imperial halls, and a path opened before him, radiant, admiring glances followed him, while the ears of courtiers strained to catch his every word. And he, sure of himself and his works, obviously paid no attention to all this. His country was in ruins, hungry, exhausted. But his armies and marshals, heavy with fat and medals and drunk with vodka and victory, had already trampled half of Europe under foot, and he was convinced they would trample over the other half in the next round. He knew that he was one of the cruelest, most despotic personalities in human history. But this did not worry him one bit, for he was convinced that he was executing the judgment of history. His conscience was troubled by nothing, despite the millions who had been destroyed in his name and by his order, despite the thousands of his closest collaborators whom he had murdered as traitors

because they doubted that he was leading the country and people into happiness, equality, and liberty. The struggle had been risky, long, and all the more underhanded because the opponents were few in number and weak. But he succeeded, and success is the only criterion of truth! For what is conscience? Does it even exist? It had no place in his philosophy, much less in his actions. After all, man is the product of productive forces."

Since Communists believe that man is the product of productive forces, and since these forces have no conscience, there is no room in such a view of man for conscience.

Having seen something of what conscience implies, and of how important it is, let us now attempt to define conscience.

### CONSCIENCE DEFINED

Because something may be difficult to define exactly, it does not mean it does not exist. Life, electricity, love, and other fundamental realities are not easy to comprehend and define. Although one may have some difficulty in defining conscience, it does not mean that it is not a reality. Some have thought of it as an instinctive and infallible authority which tells us what is right and what is wrong. This cannot be the right definition because there are many people who conscientiously do things which are contrary to the right. If the conscience were infallible, men would not do this; and they would not contradict one another as to what is right and what is wrong. When Paul judged things in the light of his own misunderstandings and the traditions of men, he thought that he ought to persecute Christians. "I verily thought with myself that *I ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts 26:9)

Everest defined conscience as "the judgment pronouncing on questions of right and wrong, together with the feelings consequent on these judgments." In other words, the mind is involved in a decision as to what is right and what is wrong. Since we may reach a wrong decision, through ignorance or because of bias or prejudice, it is important that the mind be properly instructed so that we may make the right judgments as to what is the good and what is the evil. By feelings, he had reference to the sense of self-condemnation, the regret, and the remorse which come when we do what we believe to be wrong; or the sense of approval when we do what we believe is right. And thus we feel good about it or bad about it; as the case may be.

E. W. A. Koehler defined conscience as "the emotional reaction of the heart to a moral duty the mind has recognized."

H. Langhorne Orchard defined conscience as the "faculty of duty"; the sense of duty or obligation. It involves the realization and conviction that one ought to do his duty; that certain things should be done and certain things should be avoided and opposed. In line with this P. W. Stonestreet wrote: "it is difficult to arrive at an adequate definition in concrete form. Like love, perhaps we can come nearer telling what conscience is by observing what it does. *It is an urge to do right.* While its possessor is often misinformed as to what is right, there is certainly nothing wrong with that mere and noble urge, however faulty one's knowledge may be. Hence, let us attack unrelentingly the fundamentals of religious error, but stay off that noble urge to do right. While a good conscience always reflects the degree of knowledge of the teaching of the Scriptures that its possessor has, yet there is an important distinction to be made between conscience and one's knowledge of good and evil, for the former can be revised only by the revision of the later, but not the other way around." In other words, we should always encourage a person to hold to the conviction that he should do that which is right, and avoid the evil. But at the same time we should try to instruct others, as well as being instructed ourselves, so that the understanding may be enlightened; and so that one can know what his duty actually is.

#### LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE?

The affirmation that we should let our conscience be our guide is usually, although there may be some exceptions, used by individuals to imply that they must be right as long as they act conscientiously. Some may use this to justify the wrong which they have done; and to prove that they do not need to study the Bible to see what is right and what is wrong. One, however, is not right just because he is conscientious; although he cannot really be right in his life if he is not conscientious. How do we know this? First, Paul was conscientious while persecuting Christians. (Acts 23:1; 26:9) Paul not only needed conscience but he also needed knowledge. Second, a conscience may become defiled. (Titus 1:15) Third, there are some who have had an evil conscience. (Heb. 10:22) Fourth, some have not had their conscience purged from dead works. (Heb. 9:14) Fifth, some have seared their conscience as with a hot iron, (I Tim. 4:2), so that they are without conviction, and without a sense of duty concerning at least certain things. Someone said that if we refuse to listen to our conscience, to the urge to do our duty, the voice of conscience will become weaker and may finally cease to speak to us. In other words, it is possible to harden



one's conscience. We keep it tender by listening to the call of duty, and by acting conscientiously. Sixth, a conscience can be weak. (I Cor. 8:10, 12)

Conscience needs the word of God to guide it. It is in the light of the Word that the urge to do our duty can know what its duty is. The conscience is not a safe guide in and by itself, but it is an essential safeguard; for without conscience we would not respond to our duty even when we see what is right; and we would not avoid the evil, even when we know what is evil.

As long as one has any conscience left, he can be convicted by his own conscience; when he examines his life in the light of the word. For example, certain Jews, who were trying to trap Jesus, were convicted by their own conscience when they were asked to examine their lives in the light of God's word. (John 8:9)

#### TESTS OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Although none of us make a perfect score when our conscientiousness is tested, what are some of the tests to determine whether or not we are conscientious? If we more and more measure up to these tests, it will be manifested in our conduct; and others, over a period of time, shall be able to see that we have a good conscience.

First, am I honest? Is there the willingness to change when I learn that I am wrong? We may not find it is easy to do so, and we may have to struggle with ourselves at times; but are we honest enough to admit the truth, even the unpleasant truth, about ourselves? Jesus emphasized that the honest heart is essential to the reception and retention of the word of God, the seed of the kingdom. (Lk. 8:11-15)

Second, am I willing to study? Do I continue to study God's word, and my life in the light of His word, that I may know what I ought to do? A person is not conscientious as he ought to be, if he merely follows the prompting of his conscience without making any real effort to instruct his conscience by the Word. It is both our privilege and our duty to study the Bible. One is not following honest convictions, when he gives himself over to prejudices and evil inclinations; when he is unwilling to use the means at his disposal for learning more. The heathen in Romans 1 had refused to use the light they had; and their idolatry was the result of their refusal to be honest with the evidence, and of their desire to get away from God. (Rom. 1:18-21) Where it is our duty to act, it is also our duty to inform ourselves. And he who refuses to act on his duty to inform himself, is not really being honest and conscientious in his actions.

Third, do I do what I believe to be right, and refuse to do what I am convinced is wrong? Convictions, however, should be honestly and studiously arrived at, and should not be prejudices which we may have inherited; or whims which come over us at the moment. The obligation to do our duty also involves the duty of studying so that we may know what our duty is. If an individual does not believe that he should do a certain thing, he should not do it as long as he has doubt concerning its lawfulness.

The apostle Paul discussed this with reference to those who thought that certain meats were unlawful. They did not think that it was right to eat these meats, and Paul said that they must refrain from meats under such circumstances. For "he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23) "Faith" here does not have reference to the faith once for all delivered to the saints; although if they had understood the teaching of Christ they would have realized that the meat in itself was not unclean. (Rom. 14:14) "Faith" here refers to their own conviction; their own subjective belief in this matter. They were convinced that it would be wrong to eat it; and Paul said that under such circumstances they sinned if they did eat it. Thus a thing that was right within itself, a thing which one who understood the truth of the matter could do, but did not have to do, became sinful to those who violated their conviction and their conscience. Why? Paul did not enlarge on the why, and and we do not have to know why in order to know that such is the case. We can understand, however, that the individual who thus violates his conscience is going against his conviction of duty, his sense of obligation. And this sense of obligation is essential to his life as a Christian. Without it, he would not do his duty when he saw his duty; because he would be unconcerned about duty. This individual is trampling under foot his conscience. He is hardening it. He did the thing not because it was right, but because he wanted to do it in spite of the fact that he believed that it was wrong.

The conscientious person, therefore, is not only one who continues to study with an honest heart, but also one who does not do that which he is convinced is wrong. He will not do it even though others are doing it; even though he is tempted to do it; and even though others may say that it is right and urge him to do it. He may study and later learn he was in error, and that it is all right to do this thing. But he does not do it while he thinks it is wrong.

The conscientious man tries to teach others, but does not tamper with their conscience. In other words, he may instruct another person, but he will not urge him to do what he is convinced is

wrong. He will encourage the person to stay with the conviction that we ought not to do that which is wrong; while he may instruct the person and get him to see that something which that person thought was wrong was in reality right. But he does not urge the person to act against his convictions that a certain thing is wrong. Change his mind through instruction, but do not try to dull his conscientiousness.

Fourth, the conscientious person will try to keep from leading others astray. He will have respect for their soul's safety, thus he will not do things which they are convinced are wrong, if they will be emboldened by his act to do it themselves. One must respect the conscience, or rather have concern for the spiritual well being, of the weak brother. This weak brother is not the brother who merely objects to what you do; but who will not himself be led to do, against his conscience, what you have done. There are people who assume that if they do not want you to do a thing, you should not do it. If they object, you must refrain. But this is not what Paul is saying. He states that if our example in this thing, which is permissible, will lead that individual to do what he is convinced is wrong, we should not do it. He is speaking not of a brother objecting, but of leading a brother to stumble; of causing the loss of the soul of one for whom Christ died. (I Cor. 8:11-13; Rom. 14:15, 21) There are some "weak" brethren, however, who became the "strongest" brethren with the desire to rule others by saying that, although I am not going to be led by your example to do this thing which I think is wrong, you cannot do it either. When I am in doubt, not only I shall not do it, but you should not do it either!

The conscientious person will refrain from a thing if it leads another to sin. Of course, the apostle is not talking about something which is our duty to do. He speaks of that which is lawful for us, which is permissible, which is a part of our rights, which belongs to the realm of our freedom, but which if we do will lead others to sin. To use our superior knowledge so as to cause someone to sin, is to fail to live in love. Knowledge alone can puff us up, but "love edifieth." "If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know." (I Cor. 8:1-2) One is not walking in love (Rom. 14:15), if he uses his freedom so as to overthrow the work of God in the weak brother's life; and bring about his fall. (Rom. 14:20, 21)

The conscientious brother is conscientious not merely in studying to learn the right, but also in walking in love and using his knowledge to edify; instead of using it in pride and with destructive results.

Paul discussed this principle in connection with some weak converts in Corinth who did not realize that in reality an idol was not a god. They were weak, uninformed Christians. And thus if they bought food which had been sacrificed to an idol, and ate it, they viewed it as a part of idolatrous worship. There were other Christians, however, who knew that even if food, which they bought, had been sacrificed to an idol, yet to eat it was not to participate in an idolatrous ceremony. They could eat this meat. But the weak Christian did not know this; and if he saw them eating meat which had been sacrificed to idols, he would conclude that they did it unto the idols, and that it was right for Christians to worship idols. As Paul said: "Howbeit there is not in all men that knowledge: but some, being used until now to the idol, eat as of a thing sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But food will not commend us to God: neither, if we eat not, are we the worse: nor, if we eat, are we the better. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to the weak. For if a man see thee who hast knowledge sitting at meat in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble." (I Cor. 8:7-13)

If one visited in a home, he was to eat what was set before him; unless the man put it in the context of a sacrifice to an idol. In such a case, for his sake one was to refrain from eating. He was not to leave the impression that he was participating in a sacrifice to an idol. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, eat, asking no question for conscience sake; for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. If one of them that believe not biddeth you *to a feast*, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This hath been offered in sacrifice, eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other's; for why is my liberty judged by another conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God*. Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of the many, that they may be saved. Be ye imitators

of me, even as I also am of Christ." (I Cor. 10:25-11:1)

This did not mean that it would be all right for an individual to go to a ceremony, which had been dedicated to an idol, and to participate in an idolatrous religious festival. This would be quite a different thing from buying meat in the market place; or eating meat at someone's home, which although it had originally been sacrificed to an idol, was now out of the context of idol worship. It was simply meat, and not a part of a ceremony. However, to engage in an idolatrous ceremony was to sacrifice to demons. "Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they that eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? What say I then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of the demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" (I Cor. 10:14-22)

Therefore, it was on two grounds that Paul condemned eating meat in an idol's temple. First, we may lead a brother to sin. (I Cor. 8:10-13) Second, it was to commune with demons: for although an idol itself was nothing, yet in reality the pagans sacrificed to demons. (I Cor. 10:19-22)

### A GOOD CONSCIENCE

A conscience needs to be good in at least three senses. First, in that we endeavor to do what we believe to be right. In other words, we are conscientious. What Paul said before the governor is true, in the author's judgment, concerning Paul's conduct both before he became a Christian and after he became a Christian. "Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always." (Acts 24:16) We should endeavor to live conscientiously; and with the determination to be void of sin against God and man. This should always be our aim; although there are times when we shall fail to live up to this standard of perfect conscientiousness. In this sense, Paul's conscience was a good conscience, even while he was persecuting the church. He persecuted Christ ignorantly and in unbelief. Because of God's grace, and God's

determination to use Paul as an example of His mercy and forbearance, Paul said: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (I Tim. 1:12-16)

Because Paul had acted conscientiously, he could say, in this sense, that "I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day." (Acts 23:1) But Paul had done wrong even while acting conscientiously; for he had thought that he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. (Acts 26:9) Thus one must not only be conscientious, but also informed as to what is right and what is wrong.

Second, a conscience needs to be good in that it is cleansed by the blood of Jesus; but in order for this to take place we must not only be conscientious but we must also accept Jesus Christ. This means that the conscience needs to be informed.

Thus the third sense, in which the conscience needs to be a good conscience, is in the sense that it is an informed conscience. It needs to be instructed by the word of God so that we may conscientiously do the will of God. The alien sinner, who is conscientious, and who is instructed in the word of God, will respond by being baptized into Christ. Thus baptism involves the interrogation, or, as some translations give it, the inquiry, or appeal, "of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 3:21) There is some difficulty as to the meaning of the word translated answer, interrogation, inquiry, or appeal. There are those who think it means that through baptism we appeal to God to give us a good conscience. In other words, through baptism into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and unto the remission of sins, we are asking God to cleanse us from sin; and in this sense to give us a good conscience. It is true that this is done in baptism; and we can thus have a good conscience; in the sense that not only are we conscientious but also that our conscience has been cleansed from sin through the blood of Christ. There are others who think that it means that a well taught, and tender, conscience responds to God, and appeals to Him (through Christ's death, burial, and res-

urrection) by being baptized into Christ. Regardless of the difficulty in determining the meaning of the word "answer", and even if we are not able to settle in our minds the exact meaning of this passage, we do know from other passages that both of these things are true. First, we do thus appeal to God, in an act of faith in baptism, for a cleansed conscience. Second, we know that a well taught and tender conscience is essential to lead one to be baptized scripturally. In this sense a good conscience precedes baptism. Being conscientious is not enough, for Paul was conscientious while persecuting the church. (Acts 23:1) The conscience also needs to be instructed by God's word, and obey God's word.

#### THE NECESSITY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

Regardless of how much intellectual understanding one has of the faith, if he repudiates a good conscience he will make shipwreck of the faith. It is necessary to "war the good warfare; holding faith in a good conscience; which some having thrust from them make shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme." (I Tim. 1:18-20) These individuals had entered into unbelief as a result of their unwillingness to do that which is right. They had thrust their good conscience from them. These men, as Golf suggested, "are men of a bad conscience (v.2) *which*, namely conscience, having 'thrust from them,' they have also lost their faith. The participle implies the wilful, reckless character of the act, deliberate violence to their better nature. Following their lusts they renounced conscience as 'a troublesome monitor.' Beng. 'it withdraws unwillingly.' And since they had wantonly cast away the anchor, their faith was driven before the winds and wrecked on the breakers. Without a good conscience it is impossible to sail in the ship of faith. The loss of the one is the wreck of the other."

This discussion of conscience underscores the importance of the qualification that deacons must hold the faith in a pure conscience. Although every Christian should develop a pure conscience, the deacon must not be a weak, or immature, Christian who knows little or nothing about the faith and who is not very conscientious.

The *Homiletic Commentary* well summarized this qualification when it said: "The mystery of the faith is like a treasure in the actual possession of the deacons, and the coffer in which it is best preserved is a good conscience. Having a firm hold of the truth themselves and realizing its power in their hearts, they must illustrate it in their lives and actions."

## CHAPTER V

# Ruling Their Own House Well

"Let deacons be husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own house well." (1 Tim. 3:12) The Bible is clear that every Christian who is a husband should be the head of the wife, and thus rule the household which includes the wife. However, there may be Christians who are so weak, and their wives are so strong-willed, that their wives dominate and rule them. Such a one is not qualified as a deacon. For, as the *Pulpit Commentary* observed, the deacon is "literally, *being at the head of, presiding over*" his own household (3:12); although, unlike the elder, he is not set over the house of God. (3:5)

### MARRIED

Being the husband of one wife indicates both that he is to be married, and that he is to be faithful to his marriage vow. This does not mean that if his wife died it was wrong for him to have remarried. Paul tells us that death breaks the marriage bond; so if the husband is dead, for example, the wife is free from the law of that husband. (Rom. 7:1-4) If she is free, she is not bound so that she cannot remarry. The man whose wife has passed away is not married. If he marries, he is married to but one wife; for he is free from that former bond of marriage. Then, too, the apostle Paul said of the widow that she was to have been "the wife of one man." (1 Tim. 5:9) And yet, he desired that the younger widows remarry. (1 Tim. 5:14) Surely he was not suggesting that they do this and automatically disqualify themselves for being enrolled among the widows; if they were widows at the age of sixty, and had the other qualifications of those enrolled among the widows.

Being the husband of one wife not merely authorizes the marriage state but it also prohibits polygamy. However, polygamy is not authorized for Christians in general. So Paul is not saying that deacons must not be polygamists but others may be. Jesus restored the original marriage law which teaches that one man becomes one flesh with one woman. (Matt. 19:4-6) A husband is to love his wife as his own flesh, but nothing is said about a husband loving his wives. "*The husband is the head of the wife*". (Eph. 5:23) "He that loveth his own *wife* loveth himself." (Eph. 5:28) "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his *wife*; and the *two* shall become one flesh." (Eph. 5:31) "Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own *wife* even as himself; and let *the wife* see that she fear her husband." (Eph. 5:33)



In speaking of the qualifications for enrollment in the group of widows, Paul said that she was to have been "the wife of one man". (1 Tim. 5:9) He is not saying that she had to be the wife of only one man, but that other women could be the wife of more than one man. She was not to be unfaithful to her marriage vow. She was to have been the wife of one man and one man only. But since any female Christian, if married, should be the wife of but one man only; Paul is here saying that she must have been married; and that she must have had only one living husband at a time. Hendriksen summed it up by saying: "The expression 'one husband's wife' must simply mean that while married she had been faithful to her one husband." Just so a deacon was to be "one wife's husband." He must, like an elder, "be an example to others of faithfulness to his one and only marriage-partner." He "must be a man of unquestioned morality, one who is entirely true and faithful to his one and only wife; one who, being married, does not in pagan fashion enter into an immoral relationship with another woman." This should be true concerning all married Christians; although all Christians do not have to be married. One might work patiently with an erring Christian in such a matter, but such conduct could not be borne with on the part of an officer of the church. It would disqualify him for the eldership, or deaconship; and even though repentance could restore him to the fellowship of the church, how could it be that such a one would be placed as an elder over the flock of God, or serve as a deacon?

The most extensive discussion, known to the author, of the meaning of the husband of one wife, and that marriage is required, is in H. E. Phillips, *Scriptural Elders and Deacons* (Phillips Publications, P. O. Box 17244, Tampa, Florida, pp. 97-140.)

#### UNMARRIED?

Paul did not say that *if* a deacon is married he must be the husband of one wife. He specified marriage when he said that the deacon was to be the husband of one wife. There are some who object to this, and various arguments are made to justify both unmarried elders and deacons. First, some say that this would disqualify Paul; for he was not married. If Paul was not married, and thus did not have any children, the qualifications which *he*, by the Spirit, laid down disqualified him. Why should it be thought that Paul must qualify as a deacon? He was an apostle of Jesus Christ, it was not necessary for him to be able to serve in every office of the church. Who can show that Paul was qualified for the office of an elder or a deacon? Since nothing says that he was so qualified,

there is no ground on which we can maintain that Paul's case enables us to disregard Paul's instructions.

Second, there are those who maintain that Paul's purpose is to prevent a polygamist from being a deacon. It is true that his instructions do this; for being the husband of one wife includes marriage but excludes polygamy. If Paul's purpose had been simply to exclude polygamy, without requiring marriage, it would have been simple for Paul to have stated that an elder or a deacon was not to be a polygamist. In this way polygamy would have been forbidden, while marriage would not have been required. Since no Christian is authorized to be a polygamist, why would it be necessary to specify that the elders and deacons were not to be polygamists?

In the author's judgment, when the gospel penetrates a polygamous society, it will be impossible to change everything in the lives of converts overnight. And thus it may take time for the new convert, in this case a polygamist, to grow in knowledge and understanding so that he sees that a Christian should not be a polygamist, and should cease to live in such a relationship. In solving the problem, however, he would not be authorized to turn any of his former wives out on the street to starve. He could continue to the extent possible to support them while discontinuing the polygamous marriage. But there is a difference between working in long-suffering with an individual who was brought up in polygamy, and claiming that the Bible sanctions polygamy. Since it does not sanction it for the Christian, obviously it would not sanction it for an officer who should be a shining example of Christianity.

#### PRESIDING OVER THE HOUSEHOLD

The husband is the head of the household. Paul teaches that the woman is to be in subjection to the man in the marriage. "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:22-23)

This does not mean that the husband is a dictator. How could he be, for he is told to love his wife "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." (Eph. 5:25) This means that he will seek her good as well as the good of the entire household. He must also love his wife as he loves himself (Eph. 5:28-29, 33), although this is not as high a standard of love as the love where-with Christ loved the church; which love he is also to have. Since the husband, in such a circle of love, cannot be a dictator, it means that he will take into consideration the needs of the wife and of the

family; he will talk things over with them when the situation calls for it.

Being the head of the household does not mean that a wife cannot have a mind and a thought of her own. The author knew of one man who thought his wife was not in subjection because there were times when she contradicted him and said that he was wrong. And in some cases he was; surely she was not supposed to lie, when the matter came up, in order to agree with him! Of course, there is something wrong with a wife who is constantly looking for something about which to criticize her husband. Furthermore, within the general circle of the authority of the husband, the wife has authority within the household. Thus Paul spoke of women ruling the household (1 Tim. 5:14). They were to manage the house. This verb, Hendriksen pointed out, "occurs nowhere else in the New Testament."

However, there are situations concerning the entire household in which someone has to have the final say; and in such a case the husband must not only exercise this right but also this responsibility. He may, in this decision, accept the suggestions of others. We can see how important this would be, especially for an officer of the church. If his family has no respect for him and his authority, if they are in constant rebellion, it will bring reproach on the church. This does not mean that his family is perfect; any more than it means that one must be perfect in order to be a Christian. Every family has some disagreements, some defiance of authority in one way or another, but the question is: What is the manner of their lives; and not what are the occasional stumblings and shortcomings?

Furthermore, if a deacon is asked by the elders to do a certain job, or to carry out a certain decision, it will disrupt matters if the deacon's wife dominates him so that he change the assignment and disregard the decision made by the elders.

#### CHILDREN?

Presiding over his household included ruling or presiding over his children. All children should obey their parents in the Lord, and thus they should be in subjection to their father. The fathers are not to provoke their children to wrath, but are to "nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:1-4) Some Christians, however, do not do a very good job of this; and although such are not therefore disfellowshipped by the church, the person who is a deacon must be one whose children are in subjection. This, too, cannot mean that they do not have a mind of their own at any time. It does not mean that the deacon does not have any problems

with his children. It does not mean that he will not have to deal very patiently with them in their mistakes and wrong-doing from time to time. There is a difference, however, between having problems and having children who are in reality out of control.

If a man has not taken the time and effort to bring up his children rightly, he is certainly not qualified to serve as an officer in Christ's church. If he has neglected his home responsibilities, why should he be entrusted with the responsibilities of an officer in the church. Furthermore, his failure in his family would bring even more reproach on the church if the church, in the face of this failure, appointed him to the office of deacon. Those who thus represent the church in the minds of the public should be good examples of Christianity.

There are those who argue that, since an individual may learn these things without having a family, it is unnecessary for him to be married; or, if married, to have children. But their logic in this matter overrides the Bible which teaches that the deacon is to be married and have children. Thus although certain things may be logical from a human standpoint, faith must be willing to go by what the Bible teaches. Therefore we should accept the fact that the Bible does not say that *if* he has children he is to preside over them well. It specified that he was to have children. It is not said, as of the elder, that the children must be believers.

Must the deacon have more than one child? The author thinks that it would be well for such to be the case; and yet he cannot rule out the fact that in at least some cases the Bible uses the term "children" to refer to one or more children. If a widow had only one child, that child could not say that he did not have to support his mother, for Paul said "if any widow hath *children* or grandchildren, let *them* learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite *their* parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of God." (1 Tim. 5:4) He could not say that Paul said "requite *their* parents," and since my father is dead, my mother as a widow is my parent, not parents. He could say that I have no parents; thus Paul's instructions do not apply to me on two grounds. First, I am not "children." Second, she is not "parents." A child is not exempt from Paul's instruction to children (Eph. 6:1-3). Fathers are not to provoke an only child to wrath; and then say that Paul said "provoke not your *children* to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4) When Sarah was barren, "she had no child." (Gen. 11:30) And of the same situation it said: "Abraham's wife bare him no children." (Gen. 16:1) The plural is used by Sarah when she referred to one son. "Who would

have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give *children* suck? for I have borne him *a son* in his old age." (Gen. 21:7)

Does this mean that adopted children will not suffice? Adopted children are his children, and if he rules them well, he is qualified. Paul did not say whether they were to be natural or adopted children. Paul said children; and the father of adopted children has children who are a part of his household.

By including marriage and a family among the qualifications of deacons, it is clear that Paul is saying that a man who knows how to rule well his own household has cultivated qualities which are essential in his work as a deacon. First, he is a man of experience. Second, he has demonstrated the ability to influence people. Third, he has learned to deal with numerous problems; as in love he seeks the good of his family. Fourth, he has thus learned how to help people adjust to one another. Fifth, he has learned to control himself. Sixth, he has learned what it means to subordinate his own whims and desires to the good of the family as a whole. Thus he has learned the necessity of taking others into consideration. Seventh, it should not take very long for parents to recognize that their children are different. What works with one does not necessarily work with another; and what works at one time may not work at another time. Having learned that people are different, the deacon is better prepared to deal with different types of people in his work. Eighth, he has learned that it takes patience to work with people. In his family experiences he has been taught that he cannot get everything done overnight, and that sometimes problems are not solved once and for all. They may come "unsolved," and have to be tackled again. It takes patience and love to do this.

These and other qualities have been tried, tested, and strengthened in his experiences as head of the house.

## CHAPTER VI

# Duties of Deacons

Although elders are to serve the church, they are also to oversee it. The deacons are not overseers, but they are servants of the church. The word for deacon means one who ministers or serves; and this may include one who serves through executing the commands of another. The word which is used for deacon in 1 Tim. 3:10, 13 is used several other places in the New Testament. First, angels ministered unto Christ. (Matt. 4:11) Second, when healed, Peter's mother-in-law ministered unto them. (Matt. 8:15) Third, Christ said that He came not to be ministered to but to minister unto others. (Matt. 20:28) Fourth, those who are saved must be those who also have served. (Matt. 25:44) Fifth, Martha served at a supper for Jesus (John 12:2). Sixth, the apostles said it was not right that they should leave the word of God and serve tables (Acts 6:2); so seven men were selected and appointed to serve tables. Seventh, Paul ministered unto the saints in taking to them the contributions which others had made. (Rom. 15:25-28) Eighth, the prophets ministered unto us in that they prophesied concerning Christ. (1 Pet. 1:12) Ninth, Timothy was a good minister of Christ. (1 Tim. 4:6) Tenth, all Christians are to serve Christ; and to do this we must follow him. (John 12:26) These are some of the places where the term is used, and the basic idea is that of service. Although every deacon served the church, not everyone who served was an officer in the church. The diaconship was an office, and Paul in 1 Tim. 3 set forth the qualifications of the office. Deacons are not the only servants of the church, but they are a special class of servants. (1 Tim. 3:8; Phil. 1:1)

One of the characteristics which every Christian should cultivate is that of spontaneous participation in some phases of the work of the kingdom of God. The Samaritan woman was so delighted and impressed by the fact that she had come face to face with the Messiah that she could not keep this good news to herself. She went back to the village and spread the message. She did this spontaneously. The good news just cries out to be shared. If we have some good news, we generally like to find someone and tell them about it. The gospel is good news and should be shared. The fact that we do not spontaneously share it, as much as we ought, may be due to the fact that we have grown up listening to this good news and are not as impressed as we ought to be with how tremendous this news really is. If we would but visualize what life would be like, if all the influences for good and all the hope that have come into it because

of Christ were suddenly withdrawn, then we would better appreciate this good news.

Although deacons as Christians should spontaneously take advantage of certain opportunities which present themselves, or which they seek out, to extend the borders of the kingdom, at the same time there should be some specific work which they should do. There are some things that go unattended, if they are everybody's business, because they are viewed as nobody's business. If the work of the church is to progress, there are certain things that continually need to be attended to. Some of these will be of such a nature that people will not feel it is really their business voluntarily to do these things. For example, it would not be their business voluntarily to write checks on the account which the church has at the bank. Therefore, specific works should be assigned. Deacons, having been assigned to specific works by the elders, will be responsible to the elders for these works.

Christianity must embody the principle of service, for our Lord came to minister unto man. (Matt. 20:28) Christianity embodies the principle of service, because it embodies the principle of love, and love reaches out in compassion to help those who are in need; as Jesus underscored in the parable of the good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37) Since service must be a quality of all Christians, it is a quality of the church. It, too, is to serve. Thus we are not surprised that the Lord made special provision for official servants in the church. Therefore, the term deacon is not a meaningless designation, but describes the nature of the office. As Alford suggested, such designations are not mere terms of ecclesiastical classification, but are titles or names which sprang out of realities.

The deacon is a servant, an official servant, of the church, and thus his duties are to serve. However, the Bible does not spell out what these duties are. As L. R. Wilson suggested: "We may say that there is hardly any service which may be needed that they may not perform."

#### HOW TO DETERMINE THEIR DUTIES

The Bible does not specify exactly what they are to do, therefore we must draw our conclusions as to their duties from at least three things. First, the elders are to oversee the flock. This includes oversight of the deacons. It is obvious there will be many things which need to be done concerning which the elders need helpers. Any work that needs to be done in the congregation, which the elders can delegate to the deacons, and which is within the range of their qualifications, would be a work for deacons. They are to assist the

elders. Since many of their qualifications parallel those of the elders, they would be in a position to help the elders in numerous matters. Second, what they are to do can be deduced from their qualifications. They are not the overseers of the congregation, since they are not elders, but their qualifications are of such a nature that they are equipped to render a wide range of services. Third, they are servants of the church, and their duties would tie in with the types of services which the church needs. As deacons, they could serve the church in any capacity which was within their qualifications, and which did not usurp the authority of the elders. Thus their work will be found in the answer to the question: *What are the needs of the church which can be met by men with these qualifications?*

They are not, as we have already pointed out, the only ones who serve the church; and other servants may do some of the things which they do, but the deacons are official servants of the church.

#### DEFINITE DUTIES

Difficulties may arise when deacons are not given any definite duties. They do not know what is expected of them in such a situation. Hulen L. Jackson pointed out that, where he has preached for a number of years, "the elders and deacons in a meeting made a list of the jobs they felt that deacons should look after in our local work. This work was classified under twelve headings with a deacon as chairman of each committee of deacons. When the deacons meet now, the various committees of deacons report on their phases of the work. When a job comes up, that job is assigned to the deacons handling that task. The elders understand and the deacons understand. Two elders meet with the deacons in their (deacons') monthly meeting and merely make suggestions or pass on to them matters discussed and decided in the elders' meetings."

These twelve were: "1. Benevolence. 2. Building (upkeep). 3. Handling of offerings (counting of the money and banking of it). 4. Communion supplies and the service itself. 5. Baptismal services (assisting the candidates and arranging for the supplies, etc.). 6. Ushering. 7. Tracts kept in racks, visitors' cards and information cards, etc., kept on hand. 8. Furnishings of the buildings. 9. Advertising. 10. Parking. 11. Funerals (details pertaining thereto). 12. Bible school details (assisting the elders overseeing the class work)." (p. 346)

Without attempting to be exhaustive, let us enlarge on some of the duties of deacons. For what works do their qualifications prepare them, what work can they assist the elders in, and what are



some of the services needed by the congregation? These services would be rendered under the oversight of the eldership. Because the elders delegate certain responsibilities, it does not mean that the deacons are not responsible to the elders. Furthermore, it does not mean that having once been assigned to one work, they will always be assigned to it. The elders may decide that it is best to assign them to another task. Of course, there will be spontaneous work which they will do in other areas; as they have time and opportunity.

### BENEVOLENT WORK

Individual Christians should engage in at least some benevolent work directly, while in some cases they may do it through others. Such good works will be considered in judgment; therefore, they must be performed in this life. (Matt. 25:34-46) Dorcas was full of good works and alms which *she did*. (Acts 9:36, 39) And yet, there should be those in the church whose special work involves both the seeking out and the assisting of those who are in need.

Around the middle of the second century, Polycarp stated that the elders or presbyters should "be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always 'providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man;' abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; keeping far off from all covetousness, not quickly creding (an evil report) against anyone, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under the debt of sin." (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, p. 34). Since deacons are to assist the elders, they would assist in any of these works for which they qualified and to which the elders have assigned them.

A need arose in the church in Jerusalem for men to assist the apostles by relieving them of certain work. This need came about due to the growth of the church; the increase in the number of those who were living out of the common treasury; the neglect of the Grecian widows; and the pressure of the duties of the apostles, which they could not afford to abandon in order to serve tables. Seven men were selected and placed over this work. (Acts 6:1-7) Were these deacons? In the author's judgment, it is impossible to decide with certainty whether these were deacons. Some of the arguments for and against their being identified as deacons will be briefly presented. They were not called deacons. Men can be appointed to a work without being appointed to an office. And later, after Philip had been an evangelist for a long period of time, he is

called an evangelist; and he is identified as one of the seven (Acts 21:8), but he is not called a deacon. However, the term deacon means a servant, and in this sense they were deacons. The cognate form of the word for deacon was used to describe their work, which was one of "the daily ministrations," or the serving of tables. (Acts 6:1, 2) However, in the next verse the apostles are also described as servants who would attend to the service of "the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4)

It is maintained by some that the qualifications of the seven are not only different from, but also superior to, that of deacons. However, we do not think that this is the case. The deacons were to be mature Christians; and as such they could be described as having the Spirit, for our bodies are the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). They were also obviously to be under the control of the Spirit's Word, and thus they could be said to be full of the Spirit. That this was not a miraculous indwelling of the Spirit, we have argued in our book on *The Holy Spirit and the Christian*. The seven were to be men of good report, and the same is true concerning the deacons. Then, too, they were to be men of wisdom. It is obvious from the qualifications of the deacons that they were to be men of wisdom. It is not said that the seven were not to be greedy of money; but it is clear that such individuals would not have been appointed to the office of serving tables; for this involved the handling of money. There is no qualification which the deacons were to possess which would not be important for the seven—unless it may have been the one concerning marriage. But Philip was either married then or soon thereafter; for he is later mentioned as having several daughters who were evidently of age. Certainly there is no qualification of the seven that was not important for the deacons also to have.

Brother J. W. McGarvey thought that the seven were deacons. He wrote in his commentary that: "The title of the new office here created is not given, and from this circumstance some scholars have failed to identify it with that of deacon, mentioned in the first chapter of Philippians and the third chapter of First Timothy. But while the name of the office is absent, terms are used which show plainly that the office is the same. If the question had been one about ruling, and the seven had been chosen and appointed to rule, there could certainly be no hesitation about styling them rulers. The case before us is a perfect parallel. The question was about the 'daily diakonian,' and the seven chosen to *diakonein*; why, then, hesitate to call them *diakonoi*? Indeed, the verb *diakonein*, here used to express the chief duty of the office, is the very one which in the third chapter of First Timothy is twice rendered in our version

'serve as deacons.' Undoubtedly, then, it is the deacon's office which was here first created, and supplied with incumbents. The chief duty for which they were appointed was 'to serve tables;' and as reference is had to the 'daily ministration,' and the complaints of neglected widows, the tables of the poor are specially those to be served. But while serving these tables, it was a natural consequence of having such business in charge that they also served the Lord's table; and it was an equally natural transition, that forasmuch as the poor fund was in their hands, all the other financial interests of the church were also committed to them. Because these officers were charged with the business affairs of the church, it by no means follows that they were shut off from usefulness in any other way for which they had capacity and opportunity. God exacts the employment of every talent which he has committed to us, and he has appointed no work to be done which is too holy for the humblest disciple. We therefore find one of the seven soon after standing in the front rank of the defenders of the faith in the very city where the apostles themselves were laboring; while another was the first to plant a church among the Samaritans. Those who deny to deacons in the present day the same privilege, impose restrictions in conflict with this manifestation of God's will. Only two of the seven are mentioned afterward in Acts, but this does not prove that the others were either inactive or unfaithful. The service of all as deacons proved temporary; not, as some suppose, because it was so intended; but because the church which they served was soon scattered to the winds, and their ministration was no longer needed. When the church was afterward restored, it may be that some of them returned to the city and resumed the duties of their office."

Cook thought that the solemnity with which the seven were appointed indicated that they were being appointed to an office and not to a temporary work. However, such solemnity was followed when men were sent out on a special mission; such as Paul and Barnabas for a special work which they soon fulfilled. (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27)

Cook suggested that: "the circumstances which gave rise to the appointment were not peculiar to Jerusalem. Wherever a Church was planted, there would be the poorer members to be cared for, and it would not be desirable for the preachers of the Gospel to be all occupied in 'serving tables.'" The elders, who are to oversee the flock, would need helpers as surely as did the apostles. The deacons, as helpers of the elders, are able to do many things which relieve the elders for the work that others are not qualified to do; or do not have the authority to do. Since the assistants to the elders were

deacons, some have thought that these assistants to the apostles were deacons. However, this is not necessarily so; because people could assist an apostle without being deacons. (Phil. 2:25; Rom: 16:1-2)

The fact that later Philip and Stephen preached is not related to the work which they did as a part of the seven. Nor is the ability to preach or teach set forth as a qualification of deacons.

It is not essential to *know* whether or not the seven were deacons; if it were, God surely would have revealed it.

In the work of helping the poor and the sick, in so far as they are able, we can see how the qualifications of the deacons enable them to perform this work. If they were of double tongue, they would misrepresent some situations to the elders and some situations to the people whom they were supposed to be helping. They would become spreaders of gossip as they visited in different homes. As Lange said: "In the manifold relations of the deacons with different persons and families, they might readily fall into this vice (double-tongued), so wholly unworthy of a man of character." And not only unworthy, but for a person in their position it would also be very unhealthy for the church. If they were given to wine, they would disgrace themselves and the church. And as Lange observed: "He who would not merely aid poverty, but so far as possible heal it, must be himself a pattern of temperance." If they were greedy of filthy lucre, they would misappropriate, or otherwise dishonestly use, that which had been entrusted to them to aid the poor. If they did not hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, they would spread false doctrine as they went from house to house. If they were seared in their conscience, they could become involved in immoralities of one kind or another. If they did not have the wisdom, the longsuffering, the compassion, and the sternness, when necessary, of a wise father, they would have neither the insights nor the patience to deal with some of the problems with which they would be confronted. If their wives did not possess the necessary qualities, they would be unable to help their husbands in their work; they could be a source of friction in that they would endeavor to influence their husbands wrongly; and they could be gossipers who made public the secrets which they learned as they worked with and talked with their husbands concerning some of the people with whom they came into contact in their work.

#### MATERIAL ASPECTS OF THE WORK

There are those who think that the deacons are to attend to the material or physical aspects of the work of the church, while the

elders are to concern themselves with the spiritual aspects of the work. Hayden suggested that it "has been truly said they must provide for three tables in the church of the living God. These are the table of the Lord, the table of poor saints, and the table of the preacher. That is, the deacon's duties include the care of the house of worship and making provision for the orderly administration of the ordinances of the Lord, the oversight of the needy members of the congregation, and the raising of funds for the support of the pastor and for the general enterprises of the church. They attend to the financial, material and other interests of the church, under the supervision of the pastor and other elders. These are highly important duties, and essential to the prosperity of a congregation." (pp. 66, 67) The elders, it should be noted, are the pastors of the church. Hayden evidently has in mind preachers of the gospel; although there were elders who were supported by the church. (1 Tim. 5:17-18)

In the judgment of the author, it is unwise to speak of their work as material and the work of the elders as spiritual. Even what we call the material things are related to the spiritual. Thus Brother Fanning suggested that any work which the Spirit authorizes us to do is a spiritual work—feeding the poor in Jerusalem as well as preaching the gospel. And these so-called material matter, as Scott pointed out, "involve the well-being of the church, and it is the church that maintains the gospel and offers it to the world."

### FINANCIAL MATTERS

The finances of the church may involve a lot of work. Since deacons are to serve the church, and such service may involve business matters and business procedures, deacons may be asked to serve in such matters. It would not be wise, of course, to assign someone who had no experience in such matters; unless he was expected to work with someone who did have such experience. If a person knew nothing about keeping books, he should either be taught, or he should not look after the financial records of the church.

There are congregations in which the elders may assign some deacons to formulate a budget for the church. This, of course, would be passed upon by the eldership, and then passed on to the congregations with whatever revision the elders may suggest. The congregation then would be urged to accept and to back this program.

It will also be necessary for someone to prepare reports to the congregation. If a congregation is not being kept informed as to what is being done, they are not encouraged to continue to give as they ought to give. Giving in the dark is not a way to stimulate

giving, or to encourage confidence in the leadership.

Should a deacon be treasurer of the church? The Bible does not say who is to look after the treasury; but as it involves the congregation, the elders have oversight over the treasury. If a deacon is appointed treasurer, an elder or elders should also be authorized to write checks. This does not mean that a number of different people will be writing checks about which the others know nothing. It does mean that if a deacon is sick, or out of town, someone will be there who can write checks. Furthermore, there might be an occasion when some deacon refused to write checks authorized by the elders. In such a case, serious financial problems could develop if the deacon were the only one who could sign checks.

If a deacon was treasurer, he would write checks to pay the preacher; but he would not be the one who decided how much the preacher was to be paid; nor would he have the special responsibility to raise the money for the preacher's support. He would not have the oversight of the poor; except in the sense that he served them under the oversight of the elders.

### TEACHING

Although being apt to teach is not a qualification demanded of a deacon (he does not have to be a public teacher of the word), it is still true that deacons would find themselves teaching others. They would do this because they are Christians. Every Christian needs to share (within the limits of his ability, training and opportunity) the gospel with others. Those who were scattered abroad by the persecution in Jerusalem went about preaching the word. (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21)

Since the deacons were to hold the faith in a good conscience, and were to have boldness, undoubtedly as opportunity presented itself they would teach publicly or privately.

Furthermore, as Schaff pointed out, in helping the sick and the poor the deacons would have opportunities to instruct others; in fact, "Christian charity uses poverty and affliction as occasions for leading the soul to the source of all comfort." "Hence the appointment of such men for the office of deacon as were of strong faith and exemplary piety. . . ." Here again, it would be important that they be conscientious men who are sound in the faith.

Deacons could well be responsible for at least some of the personal work program of the church; also for work in prisons.

There will doubtless be deacons who are qualified, or will become qualified, to preach the gospel publicly. Stephen and Philip, who were servants of the church in Jerusalem, publicly preached the

gospel. However, this was not a part of their work in serving tables; nor would such preaching be an essential part of the work of a deacon.

#### COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Otto Foster, who was for a long time an elder in the church of the Lord, stated that: "From my experience, gained by more than a half century in the church, I would say the counsel, the advice, the help and information given by the deacons in joint meetings with the elders is their most valuable work. In this capacity they have always been willing and capable helpers in presenting a cross section of the congregation's views."

There are other things which are essential to the smooth functioning of a congregation; and if the elders tried to do everything, they would not have time to exercise the oversight; or to deal with the problems and challenges which come to them by virtue of the fact that they are elders. Deacons can be called on to assist them in any way possible.

The tendency of congregations today is to turn a preacher into a jack of all trades who is expected to run numerous errands for members of the congregation; to do all the visiting of the sick; to be in charge of entertainment for young people; and to speak on countless occasions. As L. R. Wilson pointed out, there are some cases where he is expected to be "preacher, elder, deacon, janitor, physician, nurse, and everything else." (p. 54) He may even be called upon to drive people various and sundry places; when it was possible to make other arrangements. If this is done, the preacher will not have time for the study and personal work that he needs. We are not suggesting that the preacher is too good to do any of these things; and all of them will do some of these things. In fact, all of them will do all of these things to some extent; if my knowledge is anywhere near accurate. And yet, a congregation where the deacons are functioning properly will have many such things taken care of by the deacons rather than by the preacher alone. The preacher will then have more time for study, visitation, and teaching.

#### HOW MANY?

How many deacons should a congregation have? It would be impossible to give an exact answer because the size of the congregation and the number of qualified men, who are willing to serve, are involved. There should be sufficient deacons, when possible, to take care of the work of deacons. This is the broad and indefinite answer to this question.

There are some who assume that the deacons must always be

present at the meeting of elders. Since the elders have their special responsibility, which is the oversight of the church, there is nothing to indicate that they must have the deacons in to discuss these matters. However, since the elders have the oversight of the church, and deacons work under the elders, there may well be meetings in which they will be called upon to participate, to make reports, and to advise in various ways. They should attend as often as the elders want them to attend. It would be wrong for the impression to be left that the elders cannot meet without the deacons. After all, the elders have the oversight of the church. Furthermore, if in the elders' meeting matters are settled by voting, and deacons take part in this voting, they can in some cases outvote the elders and be exercising the final say in the oversight of the congregation. Then, too, as Hulen L. Jackson, said: "Why have elders if the majority of the men in the business meetings are going to decide the matters? Surely, it is quite all right for elders and deacons to meet together but as such they should have their separate meetings, too. Let the elders meet as elders and decide matters concerning their work. Let the deacons, then, have their own meetings and make decisions about the jobs assigned to them. Elders can advise, counsel, and meet with them. *But any church that decides every matter in an open business meeting with everyone present or in a meeting with deacons and elders all present is headed for serious difficulties. Elders should be elders and deacons should be deacons.*"



## CHAPTER VII

# Deaconesses?

In the midst of the presentation of the qualifications of deacons, Paul said: "Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things." (1 Tim. 3:11) Does this refer to an office of deaconess? The scriptures make it clear that there were women who served the church; thus although no woman was an apostle, or elder, or public preacher, women could do something in addition to being silent in the assembly of the saints. (1 Cor. 14:33-35; compared with 14:28, 29, 30) The qualifications of the women in 1 Tim. 3:11 are qualifications which every woman ought to have; but there are many Christians who are immature, and Paul demands that these women who serve the church should possess these qualifications. They have matured in the faith so that they have these qualifications. However, Paul is not discussing women in general, any more than he is discussing men in general. Chrysostom, in the fourth century said: "Some have thought that this is said of women generally, but it is not so, for why should he introduce anything to interfere with his subject? He is speaking of those who serve as deaconesses . . . for that order is necessary and useful and honourable in the Church."

There were women servants of the church, but was there an office of deaconess, as there was an office of deacon? Who were the women of 1 Tim. 3:11?

### WIVES OF DEACONS?

The King James translation identifies these women as the wives of the deacons. They assumed this evidently because they were mentioned in the midst of the qualifications of deacons. And some have thought that the wives of deacons were deaconesses; that a man to be qualified had to have a wife who qualified as a deaconess.

It has been asked why the qualifications of wives of deacons are mentioned, but qualifications of the wives of elders are omitted—except by implication, since they were to be in subjection to their husbands (1 Tim. 3:5); just as the deacons' wives also were to be in subjection. (1 Tim. 3:12) Thus here the same thing is implied about the wives of the deacons and of the elders. It may be, if reference is to the wives of the deacons, that since the deacons would be involved, among other things, in helping the sick and the poor, it would be important for their wives to accompany them. In some countries, the wives were secluded, and only a woman servant of the church would be able to see them. Then, too, in any society

it would be important that a deacon's wife be with him when he visited a home; especially if there was no man of the house present—either because he was at work, or dead, or divorced, or had deserted the family, or was absent for some other reason. Thus, the qualifications of the wives were such as fitted in with the work of their husbands. It will be observed that there is no special reference to domestic duties of the wives; but rather to qualifications which would have enabled them to assist their husbands in their work. "In administering alms to sick and dependent females, the deacons would of necessity call to their assistance their own wives, who must accordingly excel in the same virtues prescribed for their husbands. It is grammatically impossible to include the wives of 'bishops,' that subject being closed by 7, and their duties, too, gave less occasion, if any, for the cooperation of their wives. There was no special call for enjoining domestic duties on these women. That what was called for, was that in certain respects 'their character was material to their husband's fitness.'" (Wolf)

However, would not the wives of the elders be important in visiting with them in the homes of members of the church; especially with reference to visits with women whose husbands were not members of the church? Would they not have to visit the women, instead of the men visiting them?

Although Scott identified the women with the widows indeed of 1 Tim. 5, yet he observed that: "Since the deacon's duties were largely social, his wife would take some part in them; in any case it would not be fitting that a leader of the Church should have a wife out of sympathy with him, who might injure his usefulness. The directions, however, repeat what has been said about deacons, and seem to refer to women who were engaged in the same kind of work." Whether the wives of deacons, or other female servants of the church, there would be certain work they could do that the men could not do.

However, the author is not convinced that it can be proved that these women were the wives of the deacons; or at least, that this is confined to the wives of deacons. First, the Greek word which is used is "women," not wives. If Paul had meant wives, it would have been easy to use the word for "wives"; in fact, he used the word "wife" in the next verse. Second, when Paul introduced his discussion of the women he said: "women in like manner. . ." Is he not speaking of a distinct class, just as he is speaking of a distinct class when he introduced the discussion of deacons? Third, Paul goes on, after the reference to the qualification of "women," to mention the wife of the deacon. "Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling

their children and their own houses well." (1 Tim. 3:12) If the women in verse eleven referred to their wives, this would have been a clear statement that deacons were married men. Why, then, repeat in verse twelve the requirement that deacons be married? Fourth, if these women were deacons' wives, it would still follow that some special work is being discussed here, and some special women—women who met these qualifications—were being designated for this special work. Fifth, Lenski suggested that: "It would certainly be the sensible thing to elect unattached women. Paul would be the last one to select both husband and wife for an office and assign to the wife duties that would take her away from home and her children." Deacons, of course, also have duties at home, for they must rule well their own household; but if both the wives and the husbands spent too much of their time outside the home, it would result in the neglect of the children.

However, it could be a sufficient reply to this that the deacons themselves were not necessarily full time in their special work as deacons; nor that they were to devote all of their spare time to their work. For they, too, have family responsibilities. Christian women, including the wives of deacons, would have duties to help the poor and needy as they have opportunity. No one is exempt from responsibilities outside the home just because they have responsibilities in the home. While it is doubtless true that a wife with several small children does not have as much time as she will have when they are grown and out on their own, yet she, too, should do something beyond the borders of the home.

It would be important that the wives of both the elders and the deacons be such women as Paul described; even though they did not assist in any direct way with the work which either one of the officials performed. As the wife of a church official, a woman would become acquainted with many of the problems of the congregation which should not be broadcast. If she did not have a degree of maturity as a Christian, she could become a source of a lot of friction and trouble in the congregation.

#### OFFICE OF DEACONESS?

There are those who maintain that the office of deaconess, alongside the office of deacon, is provided for in the New Testament church. The expression "even so" of verse 11 is the same expression as likewise or in like manner in verse 8. H. Harvey suggested "*in like manner*, with which this verse begins is the same transitional word that introduces the directions for the deacons, and in itself suggests the introduction of a class separate from them; and doubt-

less the verse was introduced at this point, because the qualifications of the deaconesses formed, as will be seen, a parallel to those required of the deacons in the immediately preceding verses."

The *Pulpit Commentary* thinks it is likely that this referred to deaconesses. Having spoken something about the deacons, Paul goes on to speak of the female deacon. "The return in verse 12 to the male deacons is in favor of understanding 'the women' or the deaconesses, as showing that the subject of the diaconate was not done with."

Phoebe was a servant of the church which was at Cenchrea. Paul said: "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self." (Rom. 16:1-2) On this Buchheimer commented: "That is, she held an office to which she was set apart by the church at Cenchrea, from which follows: It is not an office which she had assumed for herself, or one transmitted by external succession from other deacons, but the congregation at Cenchrea had called her and set her apart to the work. She thus became, and remained even while at Rome, an officer of the Cenchrean church. We also note that her office was not a ministry of the Word or Sacrament, but a ministry of mercy, a ministry of the church, for the church, and by authority of the church. Nor is it to be understood that her work was a mere philanthropic work. The deaconess work is not to be a mere work of charity in ministering to temporal needs. Its end and aim is deeper and higher, viz, to save souls lost in sin for Christ. This is the end; and others are means. As the work fails in this, it loses its commanding position, and the deaconess becomes no more than a professional nurse or an ordinary parish visitor, or a mechanical agent and tract distributor."

In early church history there are references to deaconesses. Pliny, a pagan, mentioned deaconesses in a letter which he wrote early in the second century to the Emperor Trajan: "I deemed it necessary to put two maidservants who are called deaconesses to the torture in order to ascertain what is the truth." The Apostolic Constitution, Book 3, in the third century said: "Ordain a deaconess who is faithful and holy for the ministries toward the women."

Buchheimer maintained that the "most noted of all the deaconesses of the early Church was Olympias, a friend and admirer of Chrysostom, the golden-tongued preacher of Constantinople. No fewer than eighteen letters are addressed by him to 'my lady, the Deaconess Olympias, most worthy and beloved of God.' She was

descended from a good family, in early life was left an orphan and inherited large wealth. At an early age she was married and in less than two years was left a widow. The Emperor Theodosius desired to have her marry one of his own kindred, but her purpose was to devote herself to the Church, seeking for that reward which she opined is gained by an ascetic life."

## OFFICE OF DEACONESS — NO

While it is true that there were deaconesses in the sense of female servants of the church, there are arguments against the idea of an office equal to that of the office of a deacon. First, Hendriksen suggested that "the fact that no special and separate paragraph is used in describing their necessary qualifications, but that these are simply wedged in between the stipulated requirements for deacons, with equal clarity indicates that these women are not to be regarded as constituting a third office in the church, the office of 'deaconesses' on a par with and endowed with authority equal to that of deacons." Deacons, it should be observed, have only delegated authority. They are not overseers of the church. Paul, as it were, "*parenthesizes* the requirements for women-helpers," and Hendriksen concluded that the "simplest explanation of the manner in which Paul, not yet finished with the requirements of the office of deacon, interjects a few remarks about women, is that he regards these women as the *deacons' assistants* in helping the poor and needy, etc. These are women who render *auxiliary* service, performing ministries for which women are better adapted."

Second, if there is an office of deaconesses, it is strange that it is nowhere clearly stated. Why did not Paul mention it in sending greetings to the church in Philippi? He mentioned bishops and deacons. (Phil. 1:1)

Huther suggested that "there are two circumstances which should be considered, viz., that the instruction regarding the deaconesses is inserted among those given to the deacons, and also that the apostle calls them quite generally *gunaikes* (women) instead of using the definite (*h*)*ai diakonoi* (deaconess) (comp. Rom. xvi. 1). This makes it probable that by the *gunaikes* (women) we should understand the deacons' wives (so, too, Plitt). The reason of the special exhortation would then be, not, as Heydenreich says, that even the domestic life of the deacons should be considered, but that the office of the deacons, consisting in the care of the poor and the sick, was of a kind in which their wives had to lend a helping hand. Hence we can explain why the wives of the bishops are not specially mentioned."

If the women in 1 Tim. 3:11 are deaconesses, it is strange that they are not called deaconesses. It would have been as easy for Paul to have used the term deaconesses as to use the term women.

Furthermore, these qualifications are in the midst of the discussion of the deacons, and this seems to indicate—as Wolf suggested—that the women here mentioned “sustained a close relationship to the deacons, and if not a separate class engaged in similar duties, they must have been their wives actively taking part in the official duties of their husbands. In administering alms to sick and dependent females, the deacons would of necessity call to their assistance their own wives, who must accordingly excel in the same virtues prescribed for their husbands.”

Cook argued in somewhat a similar vein. “The Greek has no article. It is very difficult to determine whether by ‘women’ we are to understand deaconesses as an order, or the wives of deacons. For the first, it is argued, that it is not likely that St. Paul, in his directions to Timothy, would omit all mention of an order which, in the case of Phoebe, appears to have existed at least at Cenchrea; that the expression, ‘in like manner,’ has just before, v. 8, introduced the mention of a new office; that the qualifications required include no special reference to domestic duties; and that in the case of the bishops, although ‘husbands of one wife,’ the qualifications of *their* wives are not alluded to. On the other hand, the evidence for the existence of an order of Deaconesses at this early date is far from clear; the mention of these ‘women’ in the midst of—not after—the qualifications for the office of deacon, seems to point to the deacons’ wives whose character would be material to their husbands’ fitness, rather than to deaconesses unconnected with them; and it is probable that the wives of deacons whose office contained much more of the lay element than that of the bishop, would be more associated with them in their work, assisting them especially in the distribution of alms. And if it should appear that a class of female ministers is indicated by the Catalogue of Widows mentioned in v. 9, it becomes at least probable that ‘women’ here is to be understood of the Wives of Deacons.”

As H. E. Phillips pointed out, the reference to Phoebe in Rom. 16:1 does not prove that she was an officer in the church; for the term for servant is used of others who did not occupy the office of deacon. The apostles were servants (2 Cor. 6:4); as was Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Thess. 3:2); as are all Christians (John 12:26); but none of these were deacons just because they were servants. “Any duty given to a woman will make her a servant. . . .” The word “elder” can mean an older person, one who is not young; but it can

also refer to the office of an elder. Every "elder" is not an "elder" who holds the office of elder. Just so every female servant of the church is a deaconess, but this does not mean that there is an office of deaconess. We know that there is an office of elder, for it is clearly stated in the New Testament. There is no such clear statement concerning the office of deaconess. Just as women could labor with Paul and assist him in his work without being apostles (Phil. 4:2-3), just so women could labor with the deacons and assist them without being deaconesses who occupied an office.

#### FEMALE SERVANTS OF THE CHURCH

The author is not convinced that there was an office of deaconess in the church, but it is clear that there were female servants of the church. It is not necessary to prove that there was an office of deaconess in order to prove that there were women whom the church selected to do special work for the church. Thus, it is unnecessary to settle the question as to whether technically there is such an office; for surely there is such work. Furthermore, a woman who would not serve the church unless she was recognized as an officer in the church would not be the kind of Christian one would want in such an office; if there were such an office.

There were women who in some way helped the apostle Paul in his work. *The church in Philippi* had sent a brother to work with Paul (Phil. 2:25-28); and in helping Paul, Epaphroditus was doing "the work of Christ." (Phil 2:29-30). Paul urged the church in Philippi to help two women who had labored with him in the gospel. "I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life." (Phil. 4:2-3) These women, too, were doing the work of the Lord, and it was right for the church to help them.

Churches selected and supported women to do some of the work of the Lord. Thus Paul said: "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self." (Rom. 16:1-2) The work which she was doing was not confined to the vicinity of the congregation of which she was a deaconess or servant. In writing to the Romans (Rom. 1:15), the apostle Paul mentioned this servant of "the church that is at Cenchrea"; and told the Romans to receive and to help her. She had helped Paul and many

others. She was traveling, as it were, with a letter of introduction and commendation; for Paul here introduced and commended Phoebe to the church in Rome. There are nurses in Nigeria, for example, who are supported by the church and they minister to many. They are not public preachers of the gospel, but they are effective servants of the church. A church, if it saw fit, if there was the need, and if it were able, could support a woman as a full time nurse to help the sick in a community. For it is right to support those who devote themselves to the work of the Lord; those who are helpers of many. And yet, some churches which support a janitor—and this is a worthy work, for what a clutter it would be if there were no janitors—to look after the physical building where the church meets, would think it out of order to support a nurse to look after the physical needs of sick saints and sinners.

This is not to suggest that all servants of the church are to be financed by the church, for it would be a spiritually poor church which no one would serve unless they were paid.

Women may be asked by the elders to serve the church in numerous ways. They may see that the materials are available for the Lord's supper; they can assist women at baptismal services; they can do visitation work; and many other things.

The apostle Paul showed that aged Christian women in general were to possess at least some of the characteristics of the women in 1 Tim. 3:11. The aged women were to be grave in that they were to be reverent in demeanor. The women in 1 Tim. 3:11 were to be grave. The aged women were to be "reverent in demeanor" (Titus 2:3) and to teach the young women to be sober-minded. (Titus 2:3, 5). They would have a hard time doing this, if they were not sober-minded themselves. The women were not to be slanderers, and neither were the aged women. (Titus 2:3) The women were to be sober, and the aged women were not to be "enslaved to much wine." (Titus 2:3) The women were to be "faithful in all things," and this general description would well describe the aged women.

These aged women were to help train "the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed;" (Titus 2:4-5)

The church needs more servants of this kind. They do not have to be assigned by the elders to this work. For they are assigned to this work by Paul, when he told Titus to "speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine . . . that aged women . . ." (Titus 2:1-2) Some may be assigned by the elders to such a work; but it would not be necessary to be so assigned in order to find and to



utilize such opportunities.

There were widows who were enrolled in a special group of widows. These were supported by the church. (1 Tim. 5:9) They had to meet certain qualifications. First, they were not to be supported by the church in the special group of widows unless they were without support from kinsmen (1 Tim. 5:3-4, 16). They were desolate (5:5). Second, they were to be at least sixty years old. Third, they were experienced in domestic affairs; they had reared children. Fourth, they were women who were known for their good works; which included hospitality to strangers, menial tasks such as washing the saints' feet, and the relief of the afflicted. In fact, they were to have "diligently followed every good work," and to be "well reported of for good works." (1 Tim. 5:10) These were the "widows indeed" whom the church was to relieve (1 Tim. 5:16).

What services did these women provide for the church? They were ones whose hope was set on God and who were steadfast in prayer. They were not spasmodic, but "continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." (I Tim. 5:5) As praying women—and all Christians ought to pray—they would pray for the church in general, and for individuals in particular. But, they would not be women who did nothing but pray. Prayer is an essential part of the life of every Christian, but this life is not lived by prayer alone. There are various responsibilities that come to all of us; and these widows would have responsibilities which were commensurate with their abilities, training, and strength. Since they had been skilled homemakers, they could help the younger women. Since they knew how to show hospitality and to care for the afflicted, they could serve the church in such capacities.

There were widows in the church in Joppa. "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. And as Lydda was nigh unto Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him entreating him, Delay not to come on unto us. And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her

alive." (Acts 9:36-41) It is not stated that Dorcas was one of the widows enrolled with those who were supported by the church. The widows, who were enrolled in the special group supported by the church, were desolate and without anyone to support them. (1 Tim. 5:3-5, 16) If any of their kinsmen could support them, they were to support them so that the church would not be burdened. The same principle would hold true if the widow was able to support herself. If she could support herself, there was no reason that the church should be burdened with her support. In fact, they were not to be, because the church needed to support those who were widows indeed. (1 Tim. 5:16) Dorcas seems to have been a woman of sufficient means to support herself, for she was able to do many almsdeeds for others. She was described as "full of good works and almsdeeds which *she did*." (Acts 9:36) But whether a widow indeed or not, she served the church through doing such works for Christ. She associated with the widows and they have a special nearness to her. For "all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." (Acts 9:39) "With them" need not, however, refer to being "with them" as one of the widows; but with them while she was alive. That she did not have a family seems implied in that when she was raised nothing is said about presenting her to her family; but to "the saints and widows." (Acts 9:41) Dorcas may never have been married, so far as the text shows; but she was a woman who served Christ, and there was also in the church there a group of widows.

Women may serve Christ with their skills; and some, like Dorcas, can do it with their needle.

There are some who think that the women of 1 Tim. 3:11 were the "widows indeed" of 1 Tim. 5:3. These widows, it is true, would have possessed the qualifications of 1 Tim. 3:11; although the women of 1 Tim. 3:11 were not as strictly limited in their qualifications as were the widows indeed. If the "women" were the "widows indeed", it would have been simple enough for Paul to have thus designated them; but he did not do so. There is nothing in the statements concerning the widows which indicates that Paul was continuing the discussion of 1 Tim. 3:11.

The widows indeed would be able to do the work of the "aged women" in Titus 2:3, but there is nothing to indicate that the "aged women" had to have the set of qualifications which the widows indeed had.

Women served the church in such capacities as we have described. They could also serve in any other ways which were in harmony with their ability, training, opportunities, and the Biblical

principles regulating woman's position in the church. Every congregation has female servants whether formally selected and appointed or not. There are always women whom the church knows that it can depend upon, and upon whom it calls; or who automatically respond to certain needs.

### QUALIFICATIONS OF THE WOMEN

The women who could assist the deacons and do the work which women were better fitted to do, either by training or because of the customs of the day, were to possess certain qualifications. What were these qualifications? First, they were to be grave or dignified. The elders were to have their "children in subjection with all gravity" (1 Tim. 3:4); the deacons were to be "grave" (3:8); and the women were to be grave "in like manner." (3:11) She was to be dignified or respectable. This has already been discussed under the qualifications of deacons.

Second, she was not to be a slanderer. This same word is used with reference to aged women, and with reference to men. (Titus 2:3; 2 Tim. 3:3) According to some commentators, it is a stronger expression than double-tongued and literally means that they were not to be devils. " 'No scandal-mongers please!' he says, as it were. Those who *slander* imitate the evil one, whose very name is *diabolos*, that is, slanderer." (Hendriksen) Potiphar's wife and Jezebel were slanderers. (Gen. 39:7-33; 1 Kings 21:5-10) Women servants of the church, more than the other women in the church, would be in a position to learn of many problems about which they might be tempted to gossip. They might learn some things which would tempt them to jealousy, and to slander. Slander reveals evil in one's heart. And every Christian, including the men, needs to guard against that idleness of life, and *busyness* of tongue; which Paul showed described certain women. "And withal they learn also to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not." (1 Tim. 5:13)

Although Paul spoke of men who became slanderers (2 Tim. 3:3), there are some who think that women are perhaps tempted, along the line of gossiping and tattling, more than men. If this is so, they have strong temptation indeed; for we have so often seen gossiping amongst men. Do you agree with Heubner, as quoted by Lange, who thought that since a "woman has no arms, no weapons, brute force, like man; her tongue is her weapon; and her natural feeling of dependence makes her more susceptible to envy and rivalry"? Concerning gossip all of us need to ask: Is it true? Oftentimes we

may pass on that which is false because we passed on something which we have heard without an investigation of its source. Second, is it necessary that I pass it on? There are things which are true, which should not be spread. It will not do any good, and only harm can come of it. All of us realize that someone knows something about us which it would be best not to pass on. Third, if it should be passed on, to whom should I pass it? Where, and to whom, should it be told in order to correct the matter? Fourth, what are my motives in passing it on? Am I seeking the good of others, or am I doing it with malice and with joy that I have a "choice morsel" to pass on?

Third, sober or temperate. If taken in its literal sense, Wolf said that it was parallel to "not given to much wine" in verse 8. Certainly temperate would include this, but also much more. This is the same word as in 1 Tim. 3:2. Hendriksen wrote: "Other possible translations of the adjective would be *sober* (not, however, in the sense of *somber* or *sad*), *circumspect*. Such a person lives deeply. His pleasures are not primarily those of the senses, like the pleasures of a drunkard for instance, but those of the soul. He is filled with spiritual and moral earnestness. He is not given to excess . . . but moderate, well-balanced, calm, careful, steady, and sane. This pertains to his physical, moral, and mental tastes and habits."

To be temperate is to keep in hand, to control; and this quality would be essential for wives of deacons, or any other women who served the church. Vine thought that the reference was to deacons' wives. She sustained an active relation to his work, "and by her ministries would increase his efficiency, and by frivolity, slander, or intemperance, would bring him and his office into disrepute." This, of course, would be true of anyone who assisted deacons in their work.

Fourth, faithful in all things. This would include faithfulness or trustworthiness in every way and in every sphere of her life and work. If she helped to dispense alms, she would not love money so that it stuck to her fingers instead of being used to relieve the poor. She would be conscientious in using it for the purposes for which it had been designated. As Adam Clarke put it: "They were not only *faithfully to expend all they had got*, and *for the purpose* for which they got it; but they must do this with *impartiality*, showing no *respect of persons*, the degree of *distress* being the only rule by which the distribution was to be regulated." They would be trustworthy in keeping private those matters which were entrusted to them, and which were of such a nature that they did not need to be known by others. They would be careful, as Lipscomb observed,

in carrying out the instructions and duties which they were given. At the root of such faithfulness, and upholding it, would be their faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. He who really trusts his Lord can be trusted by men, for trust in Christ involves obedience to His will; and this includes trustworthiness. Being faithful to Christ, women will not rebel against any limitations which He has placed on their sphere of activity in the church of the living God.

## CHAPTER VIII

# How Are Deacons To Be Selected?

The Bible does not tell us how deacons are to be selected, and so one cannot affirm that there is only one way to do it. It should be done in such a way as to harmonize with the Bible instead of contradicting the Bible. There are some who maintain that they are not selected in any way, but are appointed by the Holy Spirit in that they gradually develop these qualifications and do the work that deacons are to do. This is also the way, they assume, that the Spirit made elders. The Holy Spirit made the elders (Acts 20:28), but Paul here did not say how. If the Holy Spirit did it directly, there would have been no need for the apostle to have stated the qualifications of elders; or to tell Titus to "appoint elders in every city." (Titus 1:5) How would an individual, if he just grows into it, know when he is an elder with authority? How would the congregation know it? If an individual claimed that the Spirit had made him an elder, how could anyone refute his claim if the church has nothing to do with the selection and appointment of elders or deacons?

God, Christ, and the Spirit may be said to do what they do through others. Jesus baptized in that His disciples baptized on His authority. (John 4:1-2) Christ preached to the Gentiles, but He did it through others. (Eph. 2:17; Acts 15:7-8) The Spirit convicted men of sin, righteousness, and judgment, but He did it through the word of truth which He revealed and confirmed. (John 16:7-9; Acts 2:36-41) The Spirit makes men elders and deacons, but He does it through His word and through the church. First, the Spirit has revealed the qualifications of elders and deacons. Second, the Spirit through His word enables them to grow, so that they can meet these qualifications. Third, the Spirit has said that there are to be elders and deacons. Fourth, since no one has the right to be a dictator over the congregation, and tell them that they must accept so and so as a deacon, regardless of whether he is recognized as being qualified, the congregation should be involved in some way in the selection of the deacons. How can deacons serve the church, if the church is not convinced that they are qualified; and does not really recognize them as deacons?

If anyone had the authority to appoint seven men to serve tables without consulting the congregation, the apostles certainly had the authority. And yet, although they laid down the qualifications—just as the apostle Paul laid down the qualifications of deacons—they

left it to the congregation to search out those who were qualified. How much more so should a congregation be involved in the searching out of officers today. Even where there are elders, the congregation should at least have the opportunity to pass on whether or not they believe that the individuals, who are proposed by the elders for their consideration, are qualified. After all, the deacons must work with the congregation. Furthermore, there may be some in the congregation who know a just cause why a particular individual should not serve. To say the least, it can raise unnecessary complications if individuals are selected and appointed by the elders first, and then someone comes forward with a scriptural objection.

Since a congregation cannot go to sleep one night without having thought about deacons, and awaken the next morning with deacons serving the church, there must be some way to select and to appoint deacons. Although the Bible is not specific as to how it is to be done, it does clearly indicate that they are to be selected and appointed, or designated, for this work. For unless they are, how is it possible to have deacons? There must be some way to first prove them and then to indicate that they are to serve in the office of deacon. They must be selected before they can be appointed. Acts 6:3 shows that with reference to the seven, the church selected them (looked in their midst for them), and the apostles appointed them to the work.

### QUALIFIED FIRST

In selecting deacons, the qualifications must be applied to individual cases so as to ascertain whether or not an individual is qualified. It must be known that an individual is qualified. Paul said: "And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless." (1 Tim. 3:10) It should be carefully noted that the apostle emphasizes that the office of the deacon is not a training school wherein someone who is not qualified is appointed and later becomes qualified. The deaconship is not a reform school to try to straighten out wayward members by giving them something to do. As the Seventh-day Adventist commentary pointed out: "Paul here specifically condemns the proposal sometimes made—that assignment to church office be made as an encouragement to those who have been careless, or weak in the faith, in the hope that such recognition may stimulate zeal and piety."

It is, of course, very important that people have something to do. They need to be put to work in order that not only may their interest in the church be maintained, but also that they may grow spiritually. Thus individuals may be asked by the elders or the

deacons to help the deacons in doing certain jobs. Through assisting deacons they grow; and not only is the work of the church advanced by what they do, but they may also in time qualify themselves to become deacons. Tasks may be assigned which do not involve their working with some of the deacons. They may work either by themselves or with other members of the body of Christ.

This is not to suggest that all work in the kingdom needs to be assigned work. We need more spontaneous participation in the spread of the kingdom of God. The woman of Samaria was not commanded by Jesus to go into the village and tell the people about Him; she did it spontaneously. She had been confronted with such good news that she wanted other people to hear about it.

There are some, however, who may need the encouragement of being asked to do certain things in the kingdom. These things should be within their ability and talent. Through doing these the people grow in the awareness that they are a part of the kingdom. If we do not do anything, we are apt to feel more and more that we are not really a part of the church.

There were some who might think that since the deaconship is not as high an office as the eldership, care does not need to be exercised in selecting deacons. But as Calvin pointed out, "the choice must not fall at random, and without selection, on any that come to hand; but those men are to be chosen who are approved by their past life in such a manner that, after what may be called full inquiry, they are ascertained to be well qualified."

Paul teaches that men were to be proved or tested first, and then if they passed the test they were to serve as deacons. Lenski said that Paul "uses his favorite word for testing, which is employed regarding coins, metals, etc., but he does not use the aorist imperative to express a formal and a set test but the present imperative which indicates a testing that covers some time.

"This does not indicate a period of probation, that men were tried out in the office before permanent appointment was made, but a constant testing so that, when deacons are later needed, such men may be nominated as candidates.

"The participle is not conditional: 'then let them minister if they be blameless' (R. V.) but predicative: 'as being (men) unaccused,' *unbeschuldigt*. Having been such before this time, the congregations may expect them to continue as such."

The qualifications fit him for the work, and then he should be appointed to the work. The work of the office of a deacon will not qualify him for the work; it cannot give him the characteristics, if he does not have these characteristics. Men who are not qualified



should not be appointed to the office of a deacon; any more than unqualified men should be appointed to the office of elder. Paul implied that the elders must also be first proved when he said "let these also first be proved." (I Tim. 3:10)

The fact that they were to be first tested, and *then* they were to serve, indicates at least four things: First, that the deacon was not to be a novice, a new convert, about whom little or nothing was known; and one who had not been a Christian long enough to have manifested his faithfulness. Second, the deacon would not be a newcomer to the congregation; even though he may have been a Christian for many years. If he has just moved to the community, and has just become identified with the congregation, they do not know what kind of person he is. They have not been in a position to observe his conduct. One cannot test anything except in the light of a standard by which it is tested, evaluated or measured. The standard in the light of which the men are to be measured, who are being considered for deacons, consists of the qualifications set forth by Paul. Their life should be evaluated in the light of the qualifications. This implied that one must have a knowledge of the qualifications and of the men. Third, one who does not possess these qualifications was not to be appointed as a deacon. Fourth, one was not to be appointed as a deacon simply on hearsay. They were to know him well enough to know that he had these qualifications.

#### HOW TEST?

How was the testing or proving to be done? The apostle Paul did not say how it was to be done. Obviously it would not be by a formal examination wherein the individual was simply questioned as to whether or not he had the qualifications. He might think that he did, when others knew that he did not. How can it be known that a person possesses the qualifications which Paul specified? It could only be known by an observation of, by knowledge of, his manner of life over a period of time. It would also involve the investigation and evaluation of questions or charges which might be brought by some against those who were being considered for the office of deacon. If someone said that they lacked such and such a qualification, this charge would need to be evaluated. This could involve questioning the one who is being considered; as well as discussing the matter with others who are in a position to possess knowledge concerning the particular charge. To put it briefly: They would be proved by the church's knowledge of the lives which these men had lived in their midst. Vincent suggested it did not imply, "a formal examination, but a reference to the general judg-

ment of the Christian community as to whether they fulfill the conditions detailed in verse 8. Comp. I Tim. 5:22; II Tim. 2:2."

Who is to do the proving? The apostle did not say in I Tim. 3:10. The deacons are to serve the church. Therefore, they must be men whom the church believes to be qualified. As Ellicott said: "The qualifications were principally of a character that could be recognized without any formal investigation." In Acts 6, the apostles laid down the qualifications and asked the brethren to find men who had these qualifications. This they did. If the congregation has elders, usually the elders would be in a position to know whether these people were qualified. However, the congregation also needs to know it; and thus the congregation should have a part in their selection. How this can be done we shall consider later.

### BLAMELESS

If their manner of life shows that they are qualified, and they are blameless or without reproach, they can then serve as deacons. But what does it mean to be blameless? They were to be "unaccused." In other words, no charge could be brought and sustained against them. They passed the test. They have the qualifications. Does this mean that at no time have they been blameworthy? Obviously not, for every Christian is blameworthy at one time or another in one matter or another. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, we make God a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10) A person, however, can be blameworthy at one time, but, having repented, be blameworthy no longer in this matter.

This can be illustrated from the life of Peter. Peter was an elder. (1 Pet. 5:1-3) And yet, there was a time when he was to be condemned for not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. (Gal. 2:11-14) Peter evidently repented, for his name will be one of the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb in the foundation of the wall of the new Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:10, 14) Although blameworthy at the time of his transgression, he was no longer blameworthy when he repented and turned from his transgression.

Just so, in the past there may have been something which kept a particular person from being qualified; but now he is qualified, and his manner of life proves that he is now qualified. There may, of course, be some cases where the transgression in the past was of such a nature that it would hurt the church in the eyes of the community for the individual to be an officer in the church. In such a case the bad influence such an appointment would have must be taken into consideration. There is a difference, of course, between this and someone in the community not liking this person. For in

some cases they may not like him because of his faithfulness to God.

Being blameless, in this context, had reference to being blameless in that he had the qualifications. Having these qualifications, however, would mean that his life would be of good report; for a man with these qualifications would be living a good life. However, no Christian is blameless in the sense that no one has anything against him. First, every Christian will be misrepresented sooner or later by some of those who oppose Christianity. Our Lord warned us to beware when all men speak well of us. (Lk. 6:26) What type of person is it of whom all speak well? As far as the author knows, it is the individual who is negatively good. He refrains from doing certain evil things, and thus the good people speak well of him; for quite a few people think of a good man as one who refrains from certain things. This is their total concept of goodness. Because he is only negatively good, he does not engage in a positive program of righteousness which challenges and disturbs the sinners. And thus, the sinners, since he does not bother them (either by his trying to lead them to righteousness or by rebuking their sins), and because he does not do them any harm, are apt to speak of him as good. The Lord warns us against being a negatively good person. The one talent man in the parable had not done anything that was wrong from the standpoint of losing the money, or consuming it in riotous living. He had not done anything with it; he had buried it. The Lord spoke of him as a wicked and slothful servant. (Matt. 25:24-30)

Second, we know that God's people will at one time or another be spoken evil of. "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." (Matt. 5:10-12) Thus when a deacon is said to be blameless, or an elder is to be of good report, it does not mean that literally everyone gives him a good report.

By the way in which some people talk against a Christian, one can see that it is a compliment to the Christian. They may say that he is a very narrow-minded man, because he will not do certain things. They may say that he is narrow-minded about his religion, because he does not think that one thing is as good as another. But one can distinguish between the objections that are made because of his religion, and those criticisms which are made because of wrong doing.

Third, being of good report or blameless does not mean that the individual has never at any time been blameworthy. For example, the apostle Paul, before he became a Christian, was a persecutor of the church; he was blasphemous, injurious, and the chief of sinners. (1 Tim. 1:12-16) And yet he was converted to Christ. As a Christian, however, Paul was not to be held blameworthy because of what he had done before his conversion. His manner of life showed that he had changed.

Those who interpret "blameless," so as to demand perfection of a deacon, disqualify themselves from being Christians. Not only was a deacon to be blameless (1 Tim. 3:10), but elders also. (1 Tim. 3:2) The evangelist, Timothy, was also to be blameless. (1 Tim. 6:14) The apostle Paul taught that all Christians are to be blameless. In writing to the Corinthians, and including "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place" (1 Cor. 1:2), Paul said that he wanted them to be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8). Christ desires to present all Christians—and this included the Colossians—as "holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him." (Col. 1:22) All the Christians, which included the bishops and deacons in the church in Philippi, were to be "blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world." (Phil. 2:15) Concerning the Thessalonians Paul prayed: "And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your Spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23) And Peter said: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight." (2 Pet. 3:14)

### SELECTING DEACONS

How are the deacons to be selected? The Bible does not give us any details on how this is to be done. Therefore, we should do it in such a way as to observe Biblical principles and not to violate any Biblical principles. When the problem arose in Jerusalem, concerning the Grecian widows being neglected in the daily distribution of the necessities of life, the apostles had authority over the church. As apostles they could speak with authority. It is instructive that instead of selecting the men themselves, they called the multitude of disciples together and said: "Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:3)

We can see the wisdom of this. These individuals were to serve the church; furthermore, they were to start their service under the cloud of a problem because certain widows had been neglected. It would take wise men to do this job, but it would also take individuals whom the congregation had some knowledge of; and in whom they had confidence. Although the apostles authoritatively laid down the qualifications, yet they did not tell the church by what means they were to select the men; or which individuals they were to select. It is true that the apostles had the final word in that they appointed the men to this work. If they knew men had been chosen who did not have these qualifications, they would undoubtedly have rejected these men; for the men were to be selected in the light of the qualifications.

Does not this suggest that, since deacons are to serve the church, it would be the part of wisdom for the church to have a part in searching out men who have the qualifications? Certainly this would be essential when a congregation is selecting elders and deacons for the first time. No one would have a right to come from the outside and decide who were to be the deacons. The church could invite someone in to help them, but no one would have the right to dictate to the church in this matter. Furthermore, even if elders are there, would it not be even more fitting that elders urge the congregation to select men in the light of the qualifications of the deacons, than it was for the apostles to leave the selection of the seven to the church? In other words, the apostles had far greater authority than the elders were ever to have; so why would it not be fitting for elders, too, to have the congregation search out men?

Or, if the elders did select such men, they should be appointed only on the condition that they are approved by the congregation. By approval, we mean recognition by the congregation that the men are qualified.

We are not told exactly how the multitude in Acts 6 made the choice. J. W. McGarvey said "in what way the choice was made by the multitude, whether by balloting, or by a *viva voce* vote, and whether with or without nominations, we are not informed; and consequently, in reference to these points, every congregation is left to its own judgment." If the congregation had been asked to select men with certain physical characteristics, they would have looked amongst themselves for men who had these characteristics. It is more difficult, and takes more time, to discern spiritual qualities than it does physical characteristics; but the basic principle would be the same. That is, the individuals would take the qualifications and look around for those who measured up.

So far as the author knows, the following suggestions for the selection of deacons harmonize with the Bible. First, there should be a series of studies over a period of time on the qualifications of deacons. The congregation as a whole, as well as prospective deacons, should know the qualifications.

Second, it should be emphasized that it is not a question of a majority voting the deacons into the office over the protest of the minority. The office of a deacon is not a political office to which one can be elected by majority vote.

Third, it is not a matter of voting for someone who is a close personal friend. There may be many fine friends in Christ who are not qualified to be elders or deacons. The question is not whether we feel close to them personally, but whether they have the qualifications.

Fourth, it is not a matter of voting against someone because he has hurt our feelings at one time or another. It may be that he crossed us at one time or another; but this is not a sufficient ground to disqualify him as a deacon. It should be emphasized that this is not a political campaign wherein individuals, or their friends, campaign to see how many votes that they can get. It is not a matter of a congregation deciding, upon the basis of popularity, and voting that they like certain men and that they should serve. For the church has not been given the right to decide what the qualifications should be. What the church is to do is search out men who have these qualifications. God has laid down the qualifications, and it is up to the church to decide who has these qualifications. Thus the church should be cautioned against any idea of a popularity contest.

Fifth, Christians should be asked to pray about the matter. They may also be asked to fast.

Sixth, they should be asked to consider the good of the church and not any petty like or dislike which they may have.

Seventh, they should lay aside personal ambition.

Eighth, there must be some way for the church to make known its belief that certain individuals have these qualifications. They can be given a period of time in which to think upon this matter; then they should be asked to write down and turn into the elders, or to someone else in whom they have confidence (such as a preacher), the names of those whom they believe meet the qualifications of a deacon.

Ninth, as a general rule there will be a number whom the entire, or almost the entire, congregation believes to be qualified. If there are some whom only a very few consider qualified, it is likely that

they are either not qualified, or they are not yet sufficiently well known to the congregation. If they are not sufficiently well known, it would not be possible for the congregation at this time to prove or test them before their selection.

However, to stop here would imply that one is put into the office by a majority vote. There may be those who know some reason why one of the individuals is not qualified, and they will know that someone has been put into this office without being qualified. This creates a bad situation which also will have potentials for later trouble.

Tenth, the individuals involved should then be talked with by the elders, if there are elders. If there are no elders, it can be done by the committee the congregation has appointed to help in this matter; or by the individual whom they have asked to help. The individuals should be told that their names have been submitted; they should be asked whether or not they believe they are qualified to serve, and whether they are willing to serve. It may be wise, in at least certain circumstances, that each one whose name was submitted be talked with; but in the author's judgment, if the majority of the congregation does not think that they are qualified, it would not be necessary to consult those individuals whom only a few suggested. But this is only my opinion, and it may be wrong. Some of the individuals who are consulted may not believe they are qualified; or they may not feel that they are able (for reasons which they deem sufficient) to serve at this time. This likely would be the case with most of those whose names only a few people submitted.

Eleventh, in order to keep it from being a case where a majority vote put people into this office, the individuals should be asked if they will permit their names to be placed before the congregation for a designated period of time in order that the congregation may pass on them. In other words, the names will be submitted, and the congregation will be asked to bring any scriptural objection which would prevent any one of these from serving as a deacon. It should be stated that if no objection is brought, *and sustained*, it will be concluded that the entire congregation recognizes that these men possess the qualifications of deacons. Therefore, at the end of the designated period these men will be appointed as deacons. In this way, it has not been a case of a majority vote, but a case where the entire congregation recognizes that these men are qualified.

The author believes that this harmonizes with the Bible. First, it stresses that only those who are qualified should be selected. Second, it involves the congregation itself. Just as in Acts 6, the

congregation is asked to search out from its own midst people who have certain qualifications. Third, it is a means of finding out who passes the test. Paul said that *after* they had been tested, or proved, they were to serve as deacons. Through their association with these men, the congregation has learned that they are men such as Paul describes. Fourth, it avoids even the appearance that someone has forced deacons on them; regardless of whether the congregation thought they were qualified.

One congregation, after a series of studies, passed out a sheet of paper which, after referring to the scriptures which set forth the qualifications, the congregation was asked to fill in. They were told to remember: "(1) Consider the Scriptures carefully. (2) Pray before you come to any conclusion. (3) Study the people carefully. (4) Do not allow 'personalities' to cloud the issue. (5) Have the good of the cause of Christ in mind. (6) Be willing to forget self and personal ambitions." Then there was the question: In your judgment have we men possessing in a satisfactory degree the scriptural qualifications of deacons? If the answer is "yes", please write down the names of those whom you believe to possess these qualifications. Then these names were placed before the congregation; as we have mentioned above.

### APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS

There must be some way of recognizing those who have been selected as the deacons. Concerning the seven, the apostles told the congregation to find qualified men and they, the apostles, would appoint them over the work of serving tables. (Acts 6:3, 5) We have no apostles today; but since we are not told how to select and to appoint deacons, and yet they must be selected and appointed in some way, we should do it in such a way as to harmonize with the teaching of the Bible and not to contradict the Bible.

The simplicity of the New Testament worship and work, in contrast with the Old Testament, is striking to students of the Bible. The types and shadows of the Old Testament have given way to the spiritual realities in connection with the New Testament. The law, with its types and shadows, came by Moses but the truth by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17) In other words, the truth or the reality to which the Old pointed is found in the New. The Old was the shadow, the New the substance. (Heb. 10:1) The Old was the shadow and the New is the body or substance which pertains to Christ. (Col. 2:17) We do not have the elaborate ritual of the Old Testament. We do not have its ceremonialism, the dress, and the ritual involved in the appointment of priests. But this does not



mean that we should be slipshod in how we select and appoint deacons. The New Testament does not authorize a specific procedure; but we surely cannot be wrong in following the examples of the selection and appointment of men to special works.

A way which is agreed upon should not be sprung, so to speak, on the congregation. If an individual thinks that a certain way is not scriptural, and if suddenly this way is followed in appointing deacons, it may cause difficulty. However, if the matter has been thoroughly discussed beforehand, the minds of the people will be prepared, disturbance can be avoided. Harm can be done by individuals who think that because a certain way is right, although other ways are right also, they are thereby justified in thrusting it on an unprepared congregation.

### PRAYER

How were individuals appointed to special works in the days of the apostles? The apostles prayed and laid their hands on the seven when they were appointed. (Acts 6:6) When Paul and Barnabas were sent on a special mission, fasting, praying, and the laying on of hands were involved. (Acts 13:3) And on the return trip, Paul and Barnabas helped appoint elders. "And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." (Acts 14:23) What can we learn from this? First, prayer was involved in the appointment of the seven. (Acts 6:6) Prayer is always appropriate; and especially in connection with any undertaking which involves our welfare and the welfare of the church. We are to pray in season and out of season; and certainly when deacons are appointed special prayers are in order.

### LAYING ON OF HANDS

Second, the apostles laid hands on the seven. (Acts 6:6) Why did they lay hands on them? It is not specified in the context. We know, however, that the apostles could confer miraculous gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of their hands. (Acts 8:18-19; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11) Before the apostles laid hands on the seven, we do not find a record in the book of Acts of anyone, other than the apostles, working miracles. (Acts 2:43; 3:1-9; 4:33; 5:12) However, after this we find Stephen working miracles (Acts 6:8); and also Philip. (Acts 8:6-7, 13) We do not have apostles today; and thus we do not have people today who can impart miraculous gifts through the laying on of hands.

Were hands ever laid on for purposes other than the impartation of miraculous gifts? In some cases, in the Old Testament, hands

were laid on to invoke or to confer a blessing; as also did Jesus in His personal ministry. (Gen. 48:14; Matt. 19:13, 15; Mk. 10:13, 16) Hands were laid on scapegoats, in the Old Testament (Lev. 8:9). Sometimes hands were laid on persons who were to be healed. (Mk. 5:4; Lk. 4:40; 13:12-13; Acts 9:12; 28:8)

Were hands ever laid on individuals to appoint them to a special work; but not to confer on them some miraculous gift; nor to heal them? When Paul and Barnabas went out on a special mission, being sent by the Spirit and the church in Antioch, what did the church do? "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:3) This was for a special work to which the Spirit had called them. (Acts 13:2) This work was limited in duration and was thereafter fulfilled. For at the end of their journey "they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for *the work which they had fulfilled.*" (Acts 14:26) The fasting, praying, and laying on of hands was their way of committing Paul and Barnabas to the grace of God. This was not the appointment of Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ. How do we know? First, his apostleship was neither of man nor through man. (Gal. 1:1, 16-17) Second, Paul had been preaching the gospel as a witness for Christ long before he was sent out by Antioch. (Acts 9:20, 27-30; 11:24-26) Third, if Acts 13 was Paul's appointment to the apostleship, his work as an apostle ended when he returned to Antioch. For they fulfilled the work on which Antioch sent them. (Acts 14:26) This work was fulfilled just as certainly as was the work of taking relief to Judaea. It was sent "to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11:30) "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministrations." (Acts 12:25) Just as surely as this work was fulfilled, just so surely was fulfilled the work to which he was called in Acts 13:2.

In the case of Antioch, an appointment to an office was not made. Instead, they were committed to God for the work. They could be similarly committed for another work. Surely it cannot be wrong for us to commit people to a work—whether to a special missionary journey or to the work of an office such as that of a deacon—through fasting, praying, and the laying on of hands.

Timothy was appointed to a special work. We assume that it was the work of an evangelist. Paul laid hands on him and conferred on him a gift. The elders concurred in this and laid their hands on him also. However, the elders did not have the power to confer miraculous gifts. Therefore, their laying on of hands must have been for some other purpose. Of course, if Peter had been among the elders,

he could have conferred a miraculous gift. Peter was an elder. (1 Pet. 5:1) But his power to confer gifts was not based on his eldership but on his apostleship. The Scriptures, however, show that it was through Paul that the gift was given; and there is no indication that Peter conferred on Timothy an additional gift.

Paul expressly said that Timothy had a gift "*through* the laying on of my hands." (2 Tim. 1:6) He did not say that it was through the hands of the elders; instead he wrote: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with* the laying on of hands of the presbytery." (1 Tim. 4:14) As H. Harvey said: "The gift is said to be in him *through*, or *by means of (dia)* the laying on of the apostle's hands—language which makes the imposition of Paul's hands, in some sense, the medium of conveying the gift." "The gift was imparted *in connection with* the imposition of the hands of the elders of the church." It was "the direct result of the imposition of Paul's hands, who doubtless united with the presbyters in the act. . . ." The elders could show their approval, of course; and they could lay on hands to commend Timothy to God for the work which he was to do. But Paul gave him a special gift which would help him in this work.

Paul told Timothy not to act with partiality; nor was he to lay hands suddenly on any man. (1 Tim. 5:22) Surely the apostle did not mean that he was to be slow and thoughtful and then to lay hands in violence on someone. Probably Timothy, like Titus, helped in the appointment of elders and deacons. Although Paul did not expressly tell Timothy to appoint elders, as he did Titus, (Titus 1:5), yet he told Timothy what the qualifications of elders were; just as he told Titus. And Timothy was told not to hastily lay hands on anyone. In other words, the appointment of someone to an office was not to be done lightly and without due deliberation.

Timothy did not have the power to impart miraculous gifts. Thus he must have laid on hands for some other purpose or purposes; such as, the appointment of elders or deacons to their offices; or the commending of people to God for some special, though limited in duration, work which they were to perform.

We can lay on hands today for the same purpose that hands were laid on in Acts 13. The church in Antioch could not confer miraculous gifts on Paul, and they could not make him an apostle of Jesus Christ. But they could and did commend him to God for the work which he was about to do.

No one today has the power of the apostles, so no one today can lay on hands to impart miraculous gifts. No one today has the power to work miracles, so no one can, like Ananias, lay on hands

in order to cure blindness. But it is possible today to commit people to the grace of God for a work on which they are being sent; or to which they are being appointed. There can be no scriptural objection to the laying on of hands for such a purpose; and there is scriptural example where such was done. Thus we are not going back to Judaism, nor are we depending on the traditions of men, when hands are laid on people to commit them to God for a special work. In fact, it would be a tradition of men if anyone forbade the laying on of hands for such purposes.

Who laid on hands? The indications are that it was the teachers and prophets in the church in Antioch who laid hands on Paul and Barnabas. "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as *they* ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I have called them. Then, when *they* had fasted and prayed and laid *their* hands on them, *they* sent them away." (Acts 13:1-3) It may be that others were involved, but the context seems to indicate that it was these individuals instead of the entire church. In the case of Timothy, some elders laid hands on him. And Timothy who did the special work of an evangelist, also laid hands on some people. Elders could lay on hands; or anyone else whom the congregation wanted to assist them in the appointment of deacons.

Where were the hands laid on? The author has had the picture in his mind of hands being laid on someone's head. Perhaps he derived this from the hands being laid on the head of the scapegoat (Lev. 16:21), or a knight being knighted! However, the New Testament gives us absolutely no information on this, so far as the author knows. Hands are laid on when one shakes hands with another. In some cases one holds the hand of another person in his hands. Hands are laid on when one puts his hand on the shoulder of another; in some cases while shaking hands with the other hand. Certainly it would be impressive, and also within the confines of New Testament example, for the one in charge of the service to take a deacon, who is being appointed, by the hand, or also to put his hand on his shoulder, and give him a word of exhortation or admonition; as he stated that the congregation had seen fit to recognize him as a deacon. To have a person to kneel, while one laid hands on him, looks, to the author, too much as if one Christian is bowing before another in a religious service. However, one would not have to bow to have hands laid on his head—unless the one in

charge of the service was very short and the deacon very tall!

In this laying on of hands there is no conferral of authority from the one in charge of the service. He has no authority to convey. It is simply a means of committing the person to the Lord for this work.

### FASTING

Third, fasting also took place in connection with the sending out of Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13:2-3) There were certain fasts which were bound on God's people in the Old Testament. No specific seasons of fasting have been bound in the New Testament, but there are examples of fasting. It is left to the decision of the individual and the congregation. We cannot say that one is required to do a certain amount of fasting, but we can say that there are examples of fasting in the New Testament. We are not to fast so as to be seen of men. (Matt. 6:16-18) We are not to pray to be seen of men, so that men may praise us, but it is right to pray in the assembly. We are not to fast to be seen of men; but the church can call for a time of fasting. It would be good for an individual to fast while making his final decision as to the selection of elders and deacons; or some other special occasion. It would be good to fast when they are being appointed; or when someone is being sent out on a special work by the congregation. It could be announced, if the appointment was to be in the morning, that all who found it in their hearts to do so are requested to fast, and to do some extra praying, that morning. This leaves it up to the individual.

Some individuals have never missed a meal for the sake of the kingdom of God; but certainly a time of fasting and prayer, whether requested by the congregation or not, would be profitable for Christians.

These simple and solemn things could lead all of us to take stock. They would be a means of impressing both the congregation and the deacons of the seriousness of the work to which they have been called through the word of God and by the people of God. How much better to do this, than to simply announce it—perhaps between an announcement of someone being sick and an announcement of a basket lunch!

The author again suggests that something should not be suddenly "sprung" on a congregation. If they have not had any teaching about fasting and the laying on of hands, it would be very unwise suddenly to confront a congregation with it. It is not enough to say that they ought to realize that there are scriptural examples for such. Instead, one should call their attention to these scriptures; and they should not wait to do it until the very day on which the appointment is to be made.

## CHAPTER IX

# They That Have Served Well

"For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 3:13) The word translated "served well as deacons" means simply those who "ministered excellently." Hendriksen stated that nowhere else in the New Testament did it mean "*serve as a deacon*. It means *to serve, to minister, to care for one's needs* (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 10:40; 22:26, 27; John 12:2; II Tim. 1:18; I Pet. 4:11; etc.) or to supply by ministering. (I Peter 1:12; 4:10) The mere fact that Paul has just been speaking about deacons would seem to be hardly sufficient to ascribe to the verb a technical sense which it has nowhere else in Scripture." Lipscomb and Sewell state: "The word translated *use the office of a deacon* is frequently used in the New Testament, but is always translated *serve* or *minister to*." (*Questions Answered*, p. 163) The phrase "to serve as deacons", Lenski thinks is not technical, but refers to the elders, the women, and to the deacons. It is true that all these servants would purchase to themselves some type of standing through excellent service. If it included all three groups Paul mentioned, it included the deacons; so it is true of them also. Thus it is unnecessary for us to determine whether the expression to "serve well" refers just to the deacons; or includes the excellent service of all three groups.

### INCENTIVES TO SERVICE

There are many rewards in the life of service which each Christian lives. He has blessings here and now; and he has the hope of heaven, too. Elders, the deacons, and the women, mentioned by Paul, have these blessings that all Christians have; but Paul stated that they gain something for themselves if they serve well. He speaks of those who serve well or are faithful; and not of those who do nothing but occupy the office of an elder or of a deacon. Lenski maintained that when Paul said "*for*," he used it neither as causal nor illative (related to, dependent upon, or denoting, such as the use of the word therefore); it is explanatory, and the precise relation which it indicates is to be determined from the context. "Here it introduces a result which is to act as an incentive to those who have obtained these offices and is to move them to fill these offices *kalos* (well), in an excellent way. The sense of 'for' is: These are the requirements and qualifications; all of them are necessary, 'for' these offices are not merely to be filled somehow or other but so that those who fill them may gain for themselves an excellent standing

as a result and a reward. As their very names indicate, all these offices are to serve others; hence the qualifications are such as will insure true service in advance. It is thus that those who do well in these offices thereby acquire a noble place for their own selves."

It is not only scriptural to use incentives, but it is unscriptural to fail to recognize the place and value of incentives. Motivation deals with arousing behavior, sustaining behavior, and directing behavior. Since we are not automatic, but have a will of our own, it may take more than one appeal to get us to act. And even then we may not act; for we have a mind of our own. If we were perfectly mature spiritually, possibly the only motivating appeal one would need would be the appeal of love. But we have not yet achieved such perfect maturity. Thus we find our Lord used many motivating appeals. He has set before us certain rewards. Jesus said that those who have forsaken all for Him will be rewarded both in this life and in that which is to come. (Mk. 10:29-30) It is right to strive for the crown of righteousness. (2 Tim. 4:7-8) We should run the race for the joy which is set before us. (Heb. 12:1-2) If we overcome, we shall eat of the tree of life. (Rev. 2:7) The crown of life will be given to those who are faithful unto death. (Rev. 2:10; see also 2:17; 3:5, 12, 13, 20-22). As Hendriksen pointed out: "looking forward to a reward is not at all sinful, provided one plans to use this reward for the glory of God and for even greater service (if possible) in his kingdom." The earthly rewards can also become a means of our greater growth.

In the author's book *Jesus—The Ideal Teacher*, some of the other motivating appeals which Jesus made are discussed. He appeals to men by the authority with which He spoke; He appealed to their sense of self respect in calling upon man not to be a fool; He appealed to fear; He appealed to man's yearning for true greatness; He appealed to cross-bearing; He appealed to love for God and love for man. He showed that in serving others we are serving Him. The question of good works will be raised in the day of judgment. We can be motivated to good works, when we recognize that it is in this way we serve Christ. He stated that if we have done it unto the least of these, we have done it unto Him. (Matt. 25:41-46) We would, if Christ were here in person on earth, be willing to render many services to Him. Jesus shows that we can render services to Him through rendering them to others. And this is the only way we can render such service to Him.

All of the appeals which motivate us in the Christian life should also motivate deacons. Paul also appealed to them in the sense that there is a yearning in man to advance in whatever he is doing. We

want to make progress, and rightly so. Those who serve well as deacons purchase themselves a good degree, and growth in boldness.

#### A GOOD DEGREE OR STANDING

Those who serve well purchase, acquire, or are in the process of acquiring, something. They win a good position or attain to an honorable degree. E. F. Scott observed that "the word used is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and means properly a 'step' (e.g. of an altar or a platform)." It is a standing or status that one gains. Those who have ministered or served well gain an excellent standing. As Lenski said: "working excellently produces excellent standing as a result and a reward." They gain a good "standing, a rank. By having ministered excellently all church officers are obtaining 'a standing that is excellent', noble, fine. The thought is complete. Some think that a genitive, a phrase, or something should be added and state to what this step refers. They have in mind quite a different 'step' from the one to which Paul is referring; he speaks of a step or a standing that is excellent in the ministering in which the congregational officers have been engaged (*having ministered, aorist*). He is dealing with nothing else. Because those who have served are still in office he says that they 'are acquiring' (present) such an excellent standing and not that they have already ended it. Why Paul should have used the comparative 'more excellent,' as some think he should have done, is not apparent. This is not a comparison between a standing which they had prior to their offices or at the time when these persons were chosen and a standing to which they attained later on. 'A standing that is excellent' in that persons have served excellently is at the same time a reward and an incentive."

What are some of the other explanations of the good degree or standing of which Paul speaks?

#### BECOME AN ELDER?

There are some who think that by serving well as a deacon, one is advancing toward the office of an elder. It is undoubtedly true that those who serve well as a deacon, and become qualified otherwise, would at least in some cases be selected by the church as elders. The elders would be familiar with them and their work, and these deacons through their work have become well acquainted with the congregation. Thus if they grow until they are qualified to be elders, they may be selected to serve as elders. However, they have a good degree as deacons even though they do not become elders.

We do not think that Paul refers to advancement to the eldership.



First, the deacon, through this excellent service, is even then acquiring an excellent degree or standing. He is now acquiring this regardless of whether or not he ever becomes an elder.

Second, there is no indication that Paul is trying to motivate them to excellent service by saying, if you serve well you will be promoted to the office of an elder. As Scott said: "This idea, however, seems foreign to the writer's whole intention. He is not concerned with the relative dignity of Church offices, but with the moral qualities they require. He wishes deacons to value their position, not for the chance of promotion which it offers, but for what it is in itself. One feels that the previous instructions would be made ridiculous if they closed on the note, 'Try to be a good deacon, for you will then be in the running for the next vacancy among the elders.'" This would have been as if Paul said to a preacher in a small congregation: Serve well and you will be invited to a big congregation. This may all be true, but it is not the reason for serving well in the position which one now holds. And yet, it is right to aspire to be an elder.

Third, if the serving well refers to the elders and the women also, it obviously cannot refer to promotion to the office of an elder. Women cannot be elders.

Fourth, the idea of a promotion does not seem to fit in with the rest of the sentence which, after saying they gain a good standing, states that they also gain great boldness in the faith which is in Christ.

#### INCREASE OF INFLUENCE?

It is thought by some that their life of service gains them a good degree since it gives them a position of influence in the congregation and in the community. It is true that through excellent service in any area we enlarge the scope and the depth of our influence. We also go up higher through growing up higher through exercise. However, there is no indication that Paul is saying that if you serve well you will become influential. We should want to become an influence for good through service; but this is not what Paul is saying.

#### GREATER REWARD IN HEAVEN?

There are those who maintain that Paul is saying that one who serves well has taken a spiritual step, has advanced in the spiritual life, and that this also means that he has taken a step toward future blessedness. Lange suggested that: "The Christian life here and hereafter is, in the Apostle's view, one united whole; and in proportion as we advance here in our spiritual growth, shall we reach undoubtedly a higher degree of blessedness."

Whether Paul had reference to the good degree being one's reward in heaven or not, it is true that service on earth is rewarded in heaven. Thus the Sermon Bible suggests that the degree consists "in a higher state of spiritual life—a stronger faith, a higher hope, a more intransing and captivating love;" and also "a higher state in glory, a place near God in the world to come, a more perfect knowledge of him, and more intransing enjoyment of him for ever and ever."

Are degrees of rewards taught in the Bible? Degrees of punishment seem to be taught in Jesus' statement that it would be more tolerable for some than for others in the day of judgment (Matt. 10:15); that the servant who knew His master's will and did it not will be beaten with many stripes; while he that knew not His master's will and did it not shall be beaten with few stripes. (Lk. 12:47-48)

Not every Christian is called on to leave all for Jesus Christ. We are to exalt Him above all others in our lives, but this does not mean that all of us have to give up kindred and lands for Jesus' sake. But of those who do, what did Jesus say? "And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit eternal life." (Matt. 19:29) Will those who have not done this for Christ receive a hundredfold here and now? There are degrees of reward here and now. One who has left all for Christ has hundreds of homes open to him. There are many mothers in Israel who will be as a mother to him. But this says nothing as to difference of rewards in the life to come; for all Christians inherit eternal life.

The parable of the talents seem to indicate a difference in reward. (Lk. 19:11-19) Although we do not maintain that each faithful servant rules over literal cities, yet, whatever this may symbolize, it surely symbolizes something. Ruling over ten cities and ruling over five cities, surely do not symbolize the same degree of reward. It may be that each one receives a reward which is equal to his capacity. Some may receive more because they have greater capacity for enjoyment of heaven; but all enjoy heaven to *their* full.

Paul spoke of a man's works—in this case, his converts—being tested by fire; and that if any works were unworthy they would be consumed, and the worker suffered loss to that extent. (1 Cor. 3:10-15) Paul's converts were his crown of rejoicing. (1 Thess. 2:19-20) If any fell by the wayside, they would not be stars in Paul's crown. There would be other stars, consisting of those who were faithful; but in the case of the ones who were lost, Paul's labor was lost on

them, and this part of his crown of glorying would be missing. The principle of spiritual life, which applies here and now, may apply to the future reaping. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. 9:6; does 2 John 8 apply here?)

Although we do not base the degrees of reward on the fact that it fits in with our sense of justice, yet it surely should not be thought strange if the apostle Paul, who labored so diligently and so dangerously, received a greater reward in heaven than at least most of the rest of us. Will not the Lord "render to every man according to his works? (Rom. 2:6-7) But if it is according to our works (and this obviously is not denying faith and the grace of God), do not our works differ? Was Paul not "in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft"? (2 Cor. 11:23) If Paul is rewarded more richly in heaven than I am; in this I shall rejoice for he sowed more bountifully than I; or you.

Although the greater service may be rewarded with the greater reward, this does not seem to be the context of Paul's statement concerning the good degree which the deacons purchase through serving well.

#### GOOD DEGREE HERE AND NOW

As was pointed out earlier by Lenski, Paul is speaking of a good degree or standing which those who serve were now acquiring. Huther argued that standing "means a stage; it cannot at the same time mean the claim to a stage; if *standing* must mean the claim to something, then there is nothing to indicate what the claim refers to." He thought that the right interpretation of this standing was related to what is meant by confidence or great boldness in the faith. It means "in the first place, candor in speech; then more generally, bold courage in action . . . and lastly, firm confidence in something" whether with reference to men (2 Cor. 7:4) or to God. (Heb. 4:16; 1 John 3:21) Since there is nothing in the context to indicate boldness toward God in the day of judgment, or with reference to future life, "it is more natural to refer these ideas to the sphere in which the *servicing* takes place, and to understand by *standing*, respect in the church; by *boldness*, confidence in their official labors. These two things stand in closest relation to one another, since only *he* can possess right confidence in his office who is open to no just reproach, who is honored for conducting himself well in the matters with which his office is concerned."

"The verb separates 'excellent standing' from the second object:

'great boldness in faith in Christ Jesus.' The two objects are thus distinct: 'excellent standing' is one item to which another is added, 'great boldness.' Paul does not intimate that the standing has reference to men, to church membership, and the boldness to God, either now or on judgment day. Both standing and boldness refer to the offices of which Paul speaks, the excellent position one acquires when service has been excellently done, plus the free, open, assured feeling (*boldness*) for the work yet to be done. This is, of course, 'great boldness in faith,' the faith that rests 'in Christ Jesus' (the phrase being added by the article). Here, too, 'great' is proper and not the comparative 'greater.' All these offices—certainly not only that of the male deacons—are to be exercised 'in faith'; all these persons serve as earnest believers. To have served excellently for some time places one beyond any intimidation or hesitation and makes him act with boldness and assurance. The acquisition of such boldness in faith, the blessed faith that rests in Christ Jesus, is the most satisfying reward and the incentive to proceed on this tried course." (Lenski)

#### FAITH IN CHRIST

Every Christian's faith, just as that of the deacon, is in Christ. Our confidence is not in an abstract and impersonal plan but in the living Person, Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the scheme of redemption is planless; but it does mean that the plan centers in the Person—Jesus Christ—and draws its meaning and value from Him.

The reference in I Tim. 3:13 to faith does not refer to the objective faith (the gospel) but to the subjective faith (the man's own faith in Christ). As Harvey pointed out the article, "the" is not in the Greek. It literally means "in faith". Thus "the right use of the office secures a strong faith or a higher confidence in the exercise of that faith which is based on Christ." This confidence will manifest itself in the various aspects of his-life of service, and also in his increased confidence in Christ. It does not refer to boldness in speech as such, but the one who has grown in boldness, (confidence, assurance) in faith in Christ will also manifest it in his life; including his speech, (Acts 4:13, 2 Cor. 7:4), his coming to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16), and his standing before God. (I John 2:28; 3:21) As the Seventh-Day Adventist commentary suggested: "When a church officer is united with Christ, no problem, whether personal or professional, should cause him to become discouraged. Doing well each assigned task will result in serenity and confidence, and prepare a man to meet more difficult problems in the future."

One ought not to be "cock-sure" but he ought to grow in confidence. The more we live faithfully, the less we should live fearfully. The faithful deacon, and every other faithful Christian, should grow in confidence as they faithfully serve Christ. This may not be an even, or ever-progressive, growth; but growth will take place as we continue to serve. And this growth is within itself one of the rewards of the life of service.

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