

THE OFFICERS OF A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

I Timothy 3:1-13

In this message we shall consider the two scriptural officers in a New Testament church, the pastor and the deacon.

The Pastor

I. His Pre-requisites.

Pre-requisites are the things that are necessary to accomplish an end or object.

1. An ability to preach.
2. An experience of grace.
There is no substitute for it. No man has any business in the ministry without it.
3. An assurance of salvation.
Know it beyond peradventure of doubt.
4. A good reputation.
Reputation is what others think and say about one. It is a great asset.
5. A good character.
Character is what God knows that you are. Your character will be greater than your work.
6. A call from God.
It is a life-long tragedy for any man to presume to be a minister of the gospel without having a call from God. No one ought ever to try to preach without it. If a man enters the ministry for any other reason, while in it he will conduct himself as he wants to and go out of it when he wants to; but if he realizes that he has been placed there by the call of God, he will try to please God while in it, and he will stay in it as long as life lasts.
7. A heart of compassion.
Must love people -- all kinds of people. So sympathetic that can suffer in every sorrow that comes to his people and rejoice in every joy that comes to them. Usefulness to a great extent depends upon capacity for sympathy. Sympathy is "Two hearts tugging at one load."
8. An eagerness to learn.
Learn by listening to the great spirits of the past in literature, to the words of the wisest and the best men of own generation, and to the Word and voice of God. If one thinks he knows so much that it is not worth his while to give attention to anyone else, then he is a hopeless prospect for the future. Learn the truth from every possible source.
9. An unquestioned sincerity.
This means to be free from pretense. Sincerity is an absolute necessity.
10. A spirit of optimism.
A minister ought to be the happiest, most hopeful and most optimistic person. A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty. If not optimistic, one misrepresents Christ. Cheerfulness is contagious.

11. A dedicated life.

God does not demand a beautiful vessel for His work, but He does demand a clean one. If one is not clean and consistent in his life, the more he keeps his mouth shut about Christ the better it is for Christ and His cause.

12. A willingness to sacrifice.

The ministry demands it. "Endure afflictions." Ministry was never intended for tenderfoots.

II. His Preparation.

A call to preach is a call to prepare. Preparation is necessary. It largely determines the degree of one's success and usefulness.

III. His Problems.

Many think the life of a minister is simplicity itself; that all he has to do is to be able to draw his breath, an inference, a crowd and his salary.

1. Physical.

A good sound body is to a preacher what a good foundation is to a house. The physical man must be strong. A minister is subjected to a nervous strain which is continuous and sometimes terrific. He is subject to call day and night; exposed to every type of weather and disease. The sounder the body the more effective will be his preaching.

2. Spiritual.

He is apt to become so busy in answering calls for service that he neglects his own spiritual life. He has the tendency to think in terms of others and become professional. When he reads his Bible he thinks of others instead of self; looking for sermons. He cannot lead others where he has not gone.

3. Intellectual.

Mental must be alert as well as physical be strong and the spiritual be true. He must cultivate studious habits. He must feed his mind with truth. Other things being equal, a preacher should have some sense. He actually needs brains. Study. He can preach only what he knows. He knows what he learns. He learns by study. He has to keep up with his age intellectually. He can't preach to it from behind. People will listen to a man that knows more than they do. A minister has to fight for time to read, think, and study. A mind that is constantly giving must be constantly receiving. There never was a great preacher who wasn't a great and diligent student. It is easier to move a little box of sermons than it is to dig down and fill up a new box. That is one reason why some change pastorates so often.

4. Moral.

He must be morally straight. He has to serve all classes -- moral and immoral. He must guard his personal honor with utmost vigilance.

5. Social.

He has to guard against cultivating too intimate friendships. How large a part should a minister take in public affairs? There are insistent calls for public service. He must learn to say "No." Things need me -- yes, but the Lord and church need me more. Speak on moral questions; but never for any politician. He will betray you.

6. Financial.

He must go respectably well dressed. His home must be a credit to himself and his church. He must support his family, entertain, lead in contributions, build library and subscribe for papers, meet his obligations and settle his accounts

promptly. Most church members think there are just two qualifications for ministry -- humility and poverty. They are determined that they will keep him poor if the Lord can manage to keep him humble.

IV. His Perils.

1. Prayerlessness.

No ministry can be a spiritual one without prayer. God's greatest preachers have all been men of prayer. The mightiest preachers in prayer are the mightiest in the pulpit.

2. Studylessness.

When we cease to grow mentally we cease to glow spiritually. Persistent, honest study fertilizes, fructifies, generates, refreshes, and stimulates vigor and alertness.

3. Laziness.

One can easily allow himself to be drawn into petty performances of little or no value.

4. Anger.

When any man loses his temper in the pulpit he also loses his influence.

5. Selfishness.

It is ruinous for any man to think and act in terms of self only.

6. Self-pity.

7. Second best.

The Lord commands our best, the work deserves our best, the world needs our best, and we owe our best. In fact our best is not good enough.

V. His Product.

It is a high privilege to hold the highest office from Him Who sits on heaven's throne. His life is filled with many high hours -- fellowship with God's good people, experiences with them in joy and sorrow, touch with those whose lives are blighted and broken by sin -- high hours. The highest hour is when he stands behind the pulpit ready to preach the Gospel. The congregation is looking up to him for guidance and help. Those rich in Christian experience have come for fresh vision of the crucified one. Struggling ones need help to strengthen them in the Christian race. Lost ones are appealing to the preacher to point them to the Lamb of God. What a tremendous task, what a pressing responsibility to God and man.

1. Preparation of the sermon -- both man and message.

2. Purpose of the sermon -- move the will and bring it into tune with the will of God.

3. Preaching of the sermon -- prayerfully, dependently, objectively, earnestly and expectantly. Must preach Christ -- His virgin birth, victorious life, vicarious death, victorious resurrection and visible return. The sermon should be scriptural, simple, sincere, sympathetic and short.

VI. His Privileges.

The preacher must be a versatile man -- He is expected to be a bureau of information and a walking encyclopedia. Administrator; pastor -- know names, dispositions, habits, and needs of people; prophet of God -- speak to God for people; evangelist; teacher; leader -- moral and religious.

1. Being a real Christian gentlemen.
2. Being a highly respected citizen in the community.
Win respect by upright ways and useful service.
3. Being a good example to others.
4. Gaining the confidence and love of others.
Come to you with personal problems, family difficulties, factions, crimes, etc.
5. Acquiring a large number of friends.
6. Being Christ's representative in the world.
He enjoys a privilege not granted to the angels to speak and teach for Him.
7. Being God's fellow-worker.
8. Helping people to get right with God.
9. Helping saved people to live victorious lives.
10. Being an interpreter of Christ.
11. Being useful.
This he does by giving counsel and rendering service, speaking with the burdened, comforting the sad, encouraging those striving to live the Christian life. It is a real joy to draw forth from the fountains of revealed truth, things new and old, which will heal hearts, quiet fears, renew courage, strengthen faith, and rekindle hope.
12. Increasing the population of heaven.
By winning souls to Christ.
13. Being happy in his work.
The preacher's joy is in the Lord and doing His will.
14. Holding forth the Word of Life.
Declare the living Word, echo the thoughts of Jesus, point men to the wicket gate, and feed souls of redeemed.

If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all to Christ in the ministry.

God help me to be a good man and a good minister of Christ.

The Deacon

The word "deacon" comes from Greek word "diakonos." Meaning is servant. Servant view is confirmed by circumstances of origin. In church at Jerusalem, new duties and responsibilities arose that overtaxed time and strength of apostles. Needed servants to relieve them of details that they might be free to give themselves to study and ministry of word. Thus office called into existence by specific and manifest need of service. Particular need passed, but not office. It was perpetuated, but under different circumstances and for different services.

Deaconship involves idea of service. It is distinctly a call to serve. Deacons are servants of church. Elected with view to service. Office is not just a post of honor, but a medium of service. If deacon conceived of his office as place of personal honor

and authority, he has taken first step toward making himself disagreeable to his co-laborers and hinderer of work of church. Deaconship dishonored when regarded as post of honor rather than medium of service. First Church, Wichita, ceased to ordain deacons. Certificate for retirement or elevation to church boss. Congratulate you upon election. Make ordination a significant event in life of church, one makes abiding impression on all here. Not get any salary, but will get little praise, and a lot of criticism. Hope be good men, loyal to Christ and faithful to church. Talk about three things:---

I. What You Should Be.

1. Men of Christian character.
A Christian--experience of grace--saved.
Also a man of well-developed Christian character.
2. Men of good reputation.
"Men of honest report." Unblemished reputation among church members and others. Must have reputation as well as character. Circumstances amid which live determine reputation; truth believe determines character. Reputation is what supposed to be; character is what you are. Reputation is photograph; character is face. Reputation comes over one from without; character grows up from within. Reputation will enable you to get position; character enables you to keep it. Reputation makes you rich or poor; character makes you happy or miserable. Deacon must have reputation for honesty. If unreliable in discharge of personal obligations should not be entrusted with Lord's business. Be noted for keen sense of honor and promptness in meeting obligations. That will inspire confidence. Conduct be such as to command respect. Not honest and pay debts bring dishonor to church and reproach upon Christ.
3. Men of genuine piety.
"Full of the Holy Spirit." Religion is indispensable to a deacon. Can't get along as should without it. Cash not take place of Christ. Man of prayer--in secret, at home, in church. Avail himself of spiritual enrichment afforded by mid-week prayer service. One church quit having prayer meeting. Ill. Consider it duty to be present. Spirituality is always valuable asset with deacon. If man of prayer and consecration, will have stronger and more wholesome influence with membership.
4. Men of wisdom.
"Full of wisdom." Not literary men, not college graduates; but men of good common sense. Filled with that divine wisdom which gives a peculiar insight or understanding. Piety is not only requisite. Known godly men in whose ability to direct business affairs do not have confidence.
5. Men of sound judgment.
Plenty of good common sense. Need gumption as well as grace. Needs sense. Ability to see proposition from all angles. Need sense to understand conditions, meet emergencies, and solve problems. Promote harmony rather than cause friction and discord.
6. Men of exemplary deportment.
Obligated to set worthy example for other members.
Influence multiplied in official position.
(1) Serious-minded. "Be grave."
No, not graveyard men. Not long face.
Not think it a sin to smile. Cause people to draw wrong conclusion. Boy and mule. Long face not mean one long on religion; maybe short on faith and grey matter. Deacon be able to tell clean joke and be happy. "Grave" signifies gravity or weight. Deacon should be a man who counts; whose support of cause will be a distinct asset. World may take religion as joke, but deacon must not do so. Serious men, not frivolous.

- (2) Truthful. "Not double tongued."
Not say one thing to one man and another.
Say what mean and mean what say. Word as good as bond. Honesty not called in question. Men who do what say. Not two faced.
- (3) Sober. "Not given to much wine."
Intemperance brings disgrace on church. Be a total abstainer. If going to represent and lead a church, temperance is essential.
- (4) Lacking in covetousness.
"Not greedy of filthy lucre."
Stinginess disqualifies for deaconship.
Right to make money in right way and use it for God's glory, but never can all you get. Covetousness is a deliberate crime, and no criminal should be a deacon.
- (5) Orthodox.
"Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience."
Must believe right or cannot live and do right. Be rooted and grounded in the faith.
- (6) Not a polygamist.
"Husband of one wife." Not mean that must be married. Not have more than one wife. Most husbands convinced that one is a plenty.
- (7) Blameless. "Blameless."
Dictionary says means, "free from fault."
Not mean perfect--preacher had letter from mother filled with misspelled words and grammatical errors. Very defective but blameless. She did best she could. Is that not meaning?

7. Men of tact.

Sanctified common sense. Barber.

Have level heads and use tact in dealing with many problems:--

- (1) Trouble between members.
- (2) Dissatisfaction with pastor.
- (3) Work of young people.

Time is great solvent.

8. Men of vision.

Take long look into future. Plan challenging program. Be aggressive and progressive. Not hold back--deacon wore out one collar and twenty-five pairs of back straps in 25 years.

II. What You Should Do.

Average church member think should accept blame for everything goes wrong. Pass plates.

1. Grow as a Christian.
Become an informed church man.
2. Help fill the church pews.
Pastor fill pulpit and deacons fill pews.
3. Care for the sick and needy.
Don't just call pastor and inform him about them.

4. Enlist the unenlisted.
 - (1) The unaffiliated.
 - (2) The inactive members.
5. Greet visitors.
6. Help create a good fellowship.
7. Look after the church finances.

A church with good deacons will not need a "finance committee."
Deacon should give before soliciting others.
Illustration: SEG--GBD.
8. Give some time to the church.

Greatest danger is drifting into idleness.
Be willing to perform disagreeable tasks even, "for Jesus sake."
9. Do your very best.

Let your motto be: "I magnify my office."
 - (1) For your own sake.
 - (2) For the sake of others.
 - (3) For the sake of the church.
 - (4) For the sake of Christ.

III. What Your Reward Will Be.

1. Consciousness of a task well done.
2. Appreciation of pastor and people.
3. Joy over helpful service rendered.
4. Benediction of the Lord Jesus.
5. Crown of glory.