

OBSERVATIONS OF DEACONS AND LESSONS THEREFROM

Acts 6:1-8, I Timothy 3:8-13

In the first church at Jerusalem new duties and responsibilities arose that overtaxed the time and strength of the apostles. There was a strong tendency toward diverting the energies of the Lord's ministers from their main task. The apostles could not do everything that needed to be done in the church, and neither can the pastors do so today. If the work of distributing food and serving tables were done by the apostles, it had to be at the expense of their preaching. They could not do both efficiently.

Knowing that their major task was prayer and the ministry of the Word, and being unwilling to devote their time and energies to secondary matters, the apostles called the members of the church together, and suggested to them that it was not common sense for them to become waiters when people needed the Word of God, and recommended that something be done to provide the necessary help. The church concurred in their recommendation and, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, chose seven qualified and dedicated men for this work, thereby relieving the apostles of serving tables and enabling them to major on preaching. This plan worked so well that it gradually and finally resulted in the office of deacon. Through the intervening centuries many godly men have served their Lord faithfully in their respective churches in and through the office of deacon. Unfortunately some churches have placed men in this important office whose records in it have not been good or commendable. Each and every man elected and ordained to this office made his own record and nobody on earth can change it in any respect. The influence of his words and deeds is permanent. It can never be recalled or undone.

The New Testament teaches that a deacon should be:

1. A child of God.
2. A church member.
3. A man with a good character.
4. A man of good reputation.

His conduct must be such as to command respect.

5. A man of prayer.
6. A man of wisdom.

By wisdom is meant the ability to know and to do what is right.

7. A man of sound judgment.
8. A man of exemplary deportment.

He should be a worthy example for other church members. Others rightfully expect him to live in such a manner that he will not bring any reproach upon either his church or the cause of Christ. He should support his church with his presence, his prayers, his purse, and his performance.

9. A man of tact.

Sanctified common sense is invaluable in handling various problems that arise.

10. A man of vision.

It is important to look beyond the present and to plan wisely for the future.

God's Word also teaches that a deacon should strive to be an informed church member, help fill the church pews by being present and by inviting others, greet and welcome visitors, care for the sick, the aged, and the needy, try to enlist the unenlisted, strive to create a good fellowship, look after church finances, and do something positive and helpful for his church.

Through the lives and services of capable, dedicated, faithful, dependable and godly deacons the Lord's churches have been greatly blessed, and the cause of Christ has been advanced, and the First Baptist Church in Murray, is one of those churches.

If any church is to meet the needs of the people for whose welfare it is responsible, it must have some interested, thoughtful, trustworthy, and godly deacons to work with the pastor.

The six brethren who were elected by our church at the June business meeting are to be congratulated upon their election to this scriptural office for this particular task. Their election is simply and definitely a call to service. This office is not simply a post of honor or authority, but it is a medium of service. These brethren have not been given a special honor which is detached from all responsibility. The two of you, who are soon to be ordained, are about to be inaugurated into a highly important service for God, your church, and others. We hope that your ordination will be a significant event in your life and in the life of your church. How honorable a deacon you will be is going to be determined by your attitude, spirit, and manner of doing your work. The esteem in which you will be held, and the extent of your influence, will be determined by you in your response to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Although experience is life's greatest teacher, it is not necessary for you to acquire all of your knowledge from this source. Observation can be a very effective and helpful teacher, also. During the years that I have served the Lord Jesus Christ in the Christian ministry, I have associated and worked with many deacons, and from them I have learned some valuable lessons by listening and observing. On the occasion of your ordination to the deaconship, it is certainly appropriate for me to convey to you some of the lessons which I have derived from these observations. I do so in the sincere hope that these observations may be helpful to you, too. I trust that they will enable you to get off to a good start in your new office, and then to follow through to a successful finish in this position of trust, responsibility and opportunity.

Our subject, "Observations of Deacons and Lessons Therefrom", should cause us to focus our attention on two things.

I. Their Censurable Traits.

1. Impulsiveness.

This is demonstrated by deciding and acting momentarily, without taking time for due consideration.

2. Talkativeness.

Occasionally one does more than his share of the talking in the meetings. More injure their church by talking too much in public places before those who are not members of the church.

3. Selfishness.

This is shown by one's determination to have his own way, or to have done that which will be to the personal interest of some relative or friend.

4. Instability.

One's usefulness is impaired greatly if he lacks stability and firmness.

5. Duplicity.

Doubleness of heart or speech is revealed by pretending to have one set of opinions and feelings and acting under the influence of another. Double dealing is never right.

6. Meddlesomeness.

It is easy for one to have too much interest in and concern about the affairs of other church members and church officers. Any office will provide plenty of work for any officer without his interfering with the duties of anybody else.

7. Chicanery.

If one indulges in trickery or unfair practices for personal financial gain or fails to pay his debts, he deprives himself of the respect of people who have good character. How unfortunate if one merits the title, "skinflint"!

8. Fault-finding.

Neither Christianity, nor any other worthwhile cause, has ever been advanced by fault-finding. It is a practice which does not require either intelligence or Christianity.

9. Sensuality.

Any deacon who indulges in carnality or sensuality does his church, the cause of Christ, and himself an irreparable injury. He thereby forfeits the respect, esteem and influence which he formerly possessed and prized, even though he and some of his friends may not realize it.

II. Their Commendable Traits.

1. Spirituality.

I have seen deacons whose spirituality was recognized by all who knew and associated with them. Their prayerfulness, study of the Scriptures, and witnessing for Christ convinced all who knew them of their genuine godliness.

2. Magnanimity.

It was their daily habit to do the big thing. Nobody ever mentioned and ridiculed a little thing which they did.

3. Consistency.

They were the same seven days in the week. They were not easily excited, upset, or influenced by the chronic complainers, but always kept a cool head. They had too much intelligence and Christlikeness to be swayed by the flattery of the gripers, and soon made it clear to them that their petty gripes were unsolicited and unwelcome. Complainers never make many trips except to the place where they get a sympathetic hearing.

4. Patience.

It is wonderful when one has the patience to wait for God to solve problems which nobody else can solve correctly. God has the proper solution to any problem that ever arises in one of His churches. When He solves the problem, it does not have to be solved again. Time is one of the greatest solvents. Oh, that men had sufficient judgment to recognize that and the patience to be governed accordingly!

5. Cooperation.

They never go off on a tangent, let anybody draw them into a wrangle, or make a mountain out of a molehill, but they pool their ideas with those of others, arrive at a wise decision, and then work with others in the execution of the plans. A good body of deacons will never bring a majority and a minority report to a church. Instead, they will submit one set of recommendations, which have been prepared after earnest prayer and full discussion, and then all good deacons will cooperate in carrying out the actions of the church.

6. Trustworthiness.

Their family, fellow-Christians, friends and Lord can depend on them. Under no circumstances could they be influenced to meet with any group in secret and deal with another person who is absent.

7. Faithfulness.

The measure of a man's worth is his faithfulness to duty. Faithfulness to Christ, the Scriptures, the church, and one's duty will be rewarded. If you will be faithful

in the performance of your duties as a deacon, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done your duty, the realization that you have honored Christ and advanced His cause, the appreciation of some of the people to whom your services have been helpful, and the assurance of the commendation of the Lord: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."