***Deacons - PH12-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:1***

We are studying the visible church, and we are basing this on Philippians 1:1 which has referred to the saints, not only who are in the invisible body of Christ, but those who are at Philippi, a specific location on the face of the earth. The local church is the only agency authorized in the New Testament for teaching the Word of God. There are many agencies which have arisen purportedly, maybe rightly or wrongly, because the local church is not doing the job that it should be doing in expository teaching. Consequently, these outside agencies have arisen in order to try to meet a certain need. Be that as it may, they are not strictly speaking authorized by the New Testament. The New Testament has only one teaching agency under the blessing and direction of God, and that is the local church.

**Deacons**

This agency has certain officers as well as members, and we have been looking at these officers. First, the pastors are the final authority in the local church once they are appointed to office. Then, associated with them in the administration of the work are deacons. These officers lead the church ministry. The Bible lists the qualification for the elder bishop pastor in order to guide the congregation in selecting and recognizing a pastor for that congregation. The Bible also gives us the qualifications for those who minister in the other areas of the work--the material and administrative areas of the work; that is, those who are deacons. We have these qualifications in order to guide the congregation to recognize men suitable for these ministries.

Actually, we should point out right at the beginning that here, within the structure of our own ministry, while we have a board of deacons, as such, it is well for you to remember that the things that we say here are equally applicable to our other boards such as the Berean Christian Academy board, for those men, in effect, are in truth deacons, as well as the Berean Youth Club board and the Berean Tape Ministry board. All of these men are really deacons. They just happen to be working in a specific area of the ministry, but they are ministers in administration and in the material aspect of the work.

So, we are talking about a sizable group of people. Then, beyond these who are officers, it is also true that the Word, as we shall see, applies to Christians in general relative to their service to the Lord. While an officer must have certain qualifications in a certain direction (perhaps in a unique sense because he is in a position of leadership), the basic character requirements are equally applicable to anyone who holds a position of leadership within the congregation.

Now we're going to look at the office of deacon. They are those who deal with the material leadership of the local church and its administrative responsibilities. In Philippians 1:1, as we have noted, there is a difference between an elder bishop pastor leader and the deacons. It is not accurate for us to assign spiritual leadership responsibility to deacons. Deacons do not engage in their official capacity in spiritual leadership responsibilities. Many churches, I realize, have men who assist the pastor in spiritual responsibilities somewhat in the form of an executive committee, or an executive board as we have here, and that is up to each local church to structure for its own organization. However, these men who do assist in that capacity are not deacons. Deacons have only to do with material leadership. The church had deacons in the New Testament such as Philip and Stephen who did engage in certain specific areas of spiritual leadership, such as the work of evangelism and teaching. However, they were not doing this in the office of deacon. They were doing this in the exercise of particular spiritual gifts which they had along that line.

It is very important to a local church to have a functioning board of deacons to assist the pastor in the administering of the church material and financial structure. When the church is small, this burden tends to fall more heavily upon the pastor. However, it is the most desirable thing in the world that, as soon as possible, other people who are responsible and who can carry through and who are dependable will take over the administrative structure of the work under the executive head of the pastor. The Philippians had a good church. Remember that the keynote of this book is happiness. It was a happy church. The reason for it was because it was perfected in its organization. It had a pastor, and everybody recognized what his responsibilities were before God, and what his authority was in that congregation. They had deacons who carried on their business and performed their job, and were not figureheads who held office. However, they were men who functioned. They were not mavericks who were functioning on their own, but they were pulling as a team in coordination with the executive head of the pastor in the various churches of Philippi.

A church ministry will be greatly restricted if its deacon board does not carry the ball. The material facilities are very important because they set the scene for the spiritual ministry. We are talking about a very strategic factor in the local church ministry. Nothing can be more important than the ministry of a deacon to the life of the church.

The word Deacon comes from the Greek word "diakonos." You can see that our English word deacon is basically a transliteration of the Greek word, and the word simply means "servant." It is one who is engaged in some kind of ministry of service. The word "diakonos" comes from a Greek root which means "to hasten after" or "to pursue." Thus, the word deacon, in a way, comes to mean "runner." From its roots, it means a runner. The word stresses, in other words, that a deacon is a person of activity in his ministry. At the wedding in Cana in John 2:5, we have this word "diakonos" used of the servants in their activity of running about doing what they were told.

In the marriage supper, which we find in Matthew 22:2-14, we have the word "servants" in the English text, but we have two Greek words for it. In verses 3, 4, 8, and 10, the word "servants" is "doulos." "Doulos" is the word of a servant in reference to his dealing with a person. It simply stresses that this servant deals with a person in behalf of his master. However, when we get to verse 13, we have another word for servants, and it is our word "diakonos," or "deacon." This is the word which is stressing activity, as we indicated, and here in verse 13, we have the servant described who is casting out the man who came to the wedding supper without the proper garment on. So previously, we have servants being sent out to contact people to bring them into the wedding feast. "Doulos" is the word for them. This is a servant in contact with people. However, when somebody walks into the wedding supper in unqualified clothing and he is thrown out, then it uses a word for "servant" who is active. This is reflecting a ministry of activity, and it uses our word "diakonos," emphasizing the activity factor.

In the parable (the application), the "doulos" servants are men who are contacting people with the gospel and witnessing to them, but the "diakonos" is the angel who executes the king's judgment upon those who have rejected the gospel.

So, the word deacon means, above all, a man of activity in the performance of his office. This word deacon was used in a general way. It is important that we understand this. If you don't, you will think that women should hold the office of deacon in the local church. Women are never in positions of official leadership in the local ministry. The word deacon, we must point out, is used in a general way.

For example, in John 2:5, it is used of a domestic servant. In Romans 13:4, it is used of a civil ruler as a servant of the state. In Romans 15:5, it is used of Christ as the servant of the circumcision. In several passages, it is used of various church leaders simply as Christian workers (2 Corinthians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 6:4). It is used specifically even of a pastor-teacher as a servant in 1 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, and Ephesians 3:7. It is used of a Christian woman named Phoebe as a servant of the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). As a matter of fact, the word "deacons" is even used in reference to the servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

You can see that this word is used in a general sense. It has also a technical meaning, and that's the one we're interested in now. In Philippians 1:1, it is used in the technical sense of referring to a specific office in the local ministry. In this use, it is applied only to men in church leadership. Women who are also servants within the local church (and there are many who are in that capacity in a very vital group of those who minister in the local church). However, the women are not servants in an official office-holding position. They are like Phoebe here. They are servants of the Lord in an unofficial capacity. So get that distinction.

Where did all of this begin? In Act 6:1-7, we have the basic background for the origins of the serving ministry in an official capacity within the local church. We have a problem that arose in the early church. The word "deacon" is not used in this passage. However, but we do have words here which refer to the work of the deacons. We have derivatives of the word that refer to serving from which we get the word "deacon." In Acts 6, we have words like "diakoneo" which means "to serve." This is the verb. We don't actually have the word "deacon" ("diakonos"), but we have the description of those who serve, and these words are related to "deacon." So, we know that this passage is speaking about deacons. These, in other words, are describing the work of a deacon.

The problem that we have here in the Jerusalem church is simply this. There was a great increase of believers in this city. The Grecian Jews began to complain that their widows were not receiving a fair share of the distribution of the material resources of the church in Jerusalem. The Palestinian Jews were in charge. They were the majority. They got together with the apostles in order to resolve this friction among the early Christians. The problem was that the apostles who had been distributing (in the charity work) found themselves so absorbed in this that they were being pulled away from study of the Word; pulled away from prayer; and, pulled away from the effective teaching ministry that they were supposed to be carrying on. The problem was that they were spending too much time on their capacities in material administration of the local church.

Therefore, they decided that both material ministries and spiritual ministries were in danger of neglect by their leadership. Spiritual leaders got together. They brought up a plan, and they recommended to the congregation that they select seven men to take over this material business aspect of the work. They listed certain general qualifications which were to guide in the selection of the deacons. They were to be "from among you;" that is, from among their own members--not out there in the world, some professional they hired. There were to be seven men--male leadership--no women officers. The number was no doubt commensurate with the need of what was required to be done at the time.

They were to be of honest report. That is, they had a good reputation as Christians, and they were positive to the Word. They were to be full of the Holy Spirit. They were to be spiritual men, not carnal men. Being rightly related to the Holy Spirit is more important than being a clever business man when it comes to being a deacon. They were to be full of wisdom. They were to have good business judgment and good human relations judgment. However, they were also to be able to apply doctrine in practice, and full of wisdom.

Well, the congregation considered this plan, and they accepted it. They selected seven men who met these qualifications, and the apostles inaugurated them into their office of deacon with the laying on of hands. This addition to the local church organization, we read in verse 7, led to a certain prosperity for the work. The Word of God, we are told, prospered. Why? Because the apostles were free to devote themselves to prayer; to preparation; and, to teaching the Word. The people grew in discipleship. That means they grew in spiritual maturity. The saints had the information they needed in order to develop. This included many antagonistic Jewish priests who were impressed when they heard the Word taught.

The deacons did their job in such a way that the apostles were relieved of the material aspects of distributing the charity work. They took this material responsibility as a divine call, and the congregation's election recognized them as God's choice. These deacons did not need, obviously, anyone to keep after them to do their job. That is the great problem with deacons today in churches in general. These deacons, obviously, had eyes to see what needed to be done. They also had minds that could come up with solutions for the problems, and they proceeded to do it. They were deacons who kept the spiritual leadership informed as to what was needed, and enabled the spiritual leadership to give direction to the work; to inform of the needs; and, thus to see the Lord make provision. Actually these deacons served as unto the Lord, and they didn't dare neglect this divine responsibility which had been placed upon them.

People who serve in terms of divine good production are dependable responsible people. If you have not learned something, incidentally, about human good, here is one thing you want to learn about it. Human good is fickle. When people come to you to do things on a human good basis, they are not trustworthy. You may find that the good comes through. You may find that, at moments of time, it is snatched away from you. Human good is not dependable. When you find church officials who are on again, and off again; and, doing the job, and not doing the job. One of the reasons is because when they out of fellowship, they're functioning on human good, and human good is not dependable. It is fickle. Consequently, their staying with the work lags. When they get back into fellowship, they begin to pick up a head of steam, and they again become the kind of people that we need, and upon which the work will really be built. They'll be really leaning upon these kind of men to carry the burdens.

God prospered them and blessed their work, as God will prosper and bless the man today who gives priority to his duties toward the local church material needs in his office as deacon. The man who gives priority to that is a man that God will bless. This is a general principle. The Bible puts it in these terms: "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." I don't care whether you are a student in school, when it comes time for Bible class or when it comes time for church worship, there is no place in all the world where you before God are to be but right there. There may be some occasion when you should be preparing for an exam or something, but most of the time, God says, "Do this first, and these other things will fall into place." You will get just as good grades, and you will be just as prospered in life, and you'll be just as successful when you are there in the study of the Word of God.

When you put aside your personal things that need to be done around the house in order to get the things done at the Lord's house, so to speak, God will prosper you. Your business will not go wanting. When your finances are directed to the Lord's work, and when you have financial needs yourself, God says, "Put you first the kingdom of God, and everything under the sun that you need will be given you. You will not fail in one thing. If a deacon fails in his responsibility, the saddest part about that failure is that it falls upon the administrative shoulders of the elder bishop to have to solve the problem. He has to carry the ball. There are certain material things that cannot be left undone. Sometimes pastors find themselves having to perform material chores just because they cannot be left undone, and for the spiritual ministry to be able to be performed. The New Testament solution for relieving the pastor is the basis for creating this office of deacons, and any other names that you may call church boards--they are all deacons.

**Church Business Meetings**

I want you to notice also in this passage that we have a little clue to a local church business meeting. Local church business meetings have a way of devolving into political campaigns, and contemptible expressions, and people showing whose old sin nature is the worst. The pattern that we have revealed here in Act 6:1-7 is this. Notice in verses 1 and 2 that the business meeting was called by the spiritual leaders. Why? Because a real item of business existed. They did not call the meeting because it was now the day of the month when they have a business meeting, so they met. If you meet at a certain day of the month, you may not have any church business to meet for. If you call a business meeting where you do not have business to deal with, you will deal with monkey business. That's what begins to get churches in trouble.

Many a local congregation creates frictions for itself over holding business meetings where they are discussing monkey business. It is the responsibility of the spiritual leaders to call the meetings at such time as business exists to be dealt with. If the spiritual leadership, along with his associates and deacons, are really doing their job, there will be a minimal necessity for church business meetings.

Verses 3 and 4 indicate that the spiritual leaders sat down and thought through the problem before calling a meeting. They considered prayerfully the possibilities of solutions to the problem that faced them. Then they were ready to call a church business meeting to present both the problem and the best Holy Spirit led solution that they had come up with. The congregation was given an intelligent briefing on the issue and the solution. If you call a meeting where spiritual leaders have not previously thought through the potential solutions and have a recommendation to make as to how to handle this problem, people will come up with shallow human viewpoint man-made policies. It will be something thought up on the spur of the moment, and the result is that failure usually follows. Many church business meetings are doomed to failure from the very start because the leadership has not thought through the problem so that the congregation can be brief and directed to a solution.

Verse 5 indicates that the congregation, when it was presented with a real business issue and a spirit directed solution, were ready to act. They did act, and the church then, verse 6 indicates, having acted and having made a policy, then depended upon their leaders to execute the decision of the congregation. The leaders then proceeded to carry out that policy according to their judgment and abilities. Verse 7 tells us that that's the kind of a business meeting that God honors. That's the kind of a business meeting that churches should run.

**Qualifications of a Deacon**

Now, with that background of the office of deacon, we look at the qualifications. We're going to select men to handle the business of the church. They should have certain qualifications. You will find these in 1 Timothy 3 right under the qualifications of the elders. We look first of all at the deacon in his relationship to himself in verses 8 through 10.

1 Timothy 3:8 says, "In like manner." The words "in like manner" are the Greek word "hosautos." "Hosautos" is a word that is a marker word. It indicates that a new category is coming up. It is a new area of discussion now about to be considered. The first area of discussion was the elder bishop, the pastor of the church. His qualifications were given. This word now signals that a new group is to be considered, and these, in a similar way to the elders, are supposed to have certain qualifications. "In like manner" means that these men have certain requirements, and here they are:

**Qualifications of a Deacon to Himself**

1. A deacon is to be **grave**. The word is "semnos." It connotes a certain dignity of such a nature in a man that he is respected for it. He creates thereby confidence in the people relative to his capacity to do the job. A deacon must command confidence and respect for the work to which he is called. Sometimes the congregation will appoint a man to a deacon capacity just because they need somebody. So they look around and they really don't see that the Lord has provided somebody toward whom they would have confidence in--a man who would therefore qualify as being grave, bearing the dignity that would bring respect--the confidence. So they just put in somebody that they really don't have confidence in. They fill an office, and nothing happens. This is a very vital requirement. If you do not have confidence in a man to be able to perform a certain function, then in heaven's name, don't ask him to join a board to perform that function that you don't have confidence that he can pull off; that he has the gifts for; and, that he has the devotion to perform. He must be such as draws forth confidence.
2. Next, he is not to be "medilogos." "Di" is two, and "logos" is word. So this means "not two-worded." He is **not deceitful in speech**. He is not saying one thing and meaning another. He is not giving different versions of the same thing to different people so as to please all. He is not that kind of a wheeler dealer within the congregation and the performance of his ministry. Honesty and straightforwardness is required in people who handle the church's money and its material plan. A deacon is not to be an operator who uses deceptive words in order to perform the Lord's business. That's out of line.
3. Next, he is **not to be given to much wine**. "Given" is "prosecho." "Pros" means "toward," and "echo" means "to hold," so it means "to hold toward"; "to attach oneself to; or, "to apply oneself to wine. This is in the present active participle. Grammatically, it is saying that he is not constantly, by deliberate choice, to be given to drinking. It means "addicted to." The word "wine" means an alcoholic beverage here. It means that an intemperate person is open to intoxication, and he lacks dependability. How are you going to trust a heavy drinker with the church funds? I heard a seminary professor one time who told about the first church he had. They had to fire their church treasurer because he went home with the Sunday morning offering one morning, and went down to the local pool hall, and put one of the offering checks on the table in a gambling bet. This is untrustworthy with the handling of funds, and a person who drinks tends to be an untrustworthy person when he drinks to the point of intoxication.

This doesn't mean that a deacon has to booze it up a little bit. It is wise in our age not to booze it up at all. I'm going to keep saying that even, though I know that this offends some people. They think that it's very legalistic of me to say that in our age and in our day, it is best for leaders not to booze it up at all. Don't forget that the book of Proverbs says that a person in political office (those who are kings and rulers) are not to use strong drink because their judgment is prone to be affected, and the lives of many people will be injured and destroyed by it. If the president of the United States is not supposed to drink, then certainly the pastor of your local church should not do so either. You have a lot more at stake in the judgment of the pastor than you will ever have relative to the judgment of the president of the United States. Therefore, I say that for spiritual and material leaders, it is best not to drink. What you do is up to yourself. The Word of God stresses one thing. Don't get drunk. That's what this means. Don't be addicted to the booze. That is a very legitimate and proper responsibility laid upon us.

1. Furthermore, we are told that he is **not to be greedy of filthy lucre**. That's an old English word for being greedy for money. The word is "aischrokerdes." "Aischros" means disgraceful. "Kerdos" means gain. He is not to be greedy of disgraceful gain. This connotes an inclination to seek material gain by dishonest means. If you have a man who is in business in your congregation, and you know that he doesn't mind pulling a shady deal in order to make a little money, you would be ill-advised to say, "That would be a good fellow to have for one of our deacons to help raise funds for the church." If he's going to be shady in dealings of raising money for himself, he will not be above being shady in dealing with your money as a congregation. A deacon should not have an emotional attachment for money. And we're back to that again, just like we were with the elder. Paul cautions Timothy that men that have an emotional attachment for money are not to be placed in spiritual and material leadership. Church funds for such a person are a temptation (1 Timothy 6:9).
2. The next qualification is **holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience**. Mystery of the faith refers to Christianity and its revealed doctrines. We have this word "mystery" which is "musterion." That means that it was kept secret in the past. It has now been made known. A pure conscience is "katharossuneidasis". Our conscience is initially empty. It acts only upon information that we put into it. If you put Bible doctrine information into it from your human spirit, your conscience will have values and standards that are approved by God, and you will have what the Bible calls a good conscience. If you pull in ideas from the world, and you feed this into your conscience, you will have a bad conscience. Your conscience will justify evil, or it will condemn evil, depending upon what you put into it. That's what God is saying here.

A man who is a deacon must have a conscience which has been fed by God's viewpoint--God's standard. This word for the conscience itself means co-knowledge. It means what you put into it. That's what it functions on. It in itself simply has the quality of sensing right and wrong. But how it senses depends upon what you put into it in the way of the standards upon which it operates. So we are to have men who have pure consciences in the sense of their being obedient to doctrine. This is a conscience which does not condemn their minds. Conscience is that body of ethics and standards in the soul which is created by doctrine.

The meaning here of a pure conscience is positive volition to the mystery of church doctrine which is now revealed through a completed Scripture. This means knowing the truths of Scripture and practicing them so as to avoid being an offense toward God, and to side, in other words, with God. This means to understand the world's religious shams and the ignorance; and, to give no sympathy to the lust patterns of the old sin nature--the smugness of carnal Christians. You're not carried away by the frustrations of Christians who are taking it out on the local church. It is important that a deacon be able to operate with a clear conscience in the handling of his ministry.

1. And then there is the warning, as we had with the elder, that he should first be **proved** ("dokimazo"). This is present passive imperative. Imperative means it's a command. He is to be not examined by himself, so to speak, but he is to be tested passively by others. He is to receive this testing. "Let these also" (comparing it to the requirement for the bishop) be put to the test. This is the word that means put to the test for the purpose of approving.

This doesn't mean some formal examination, but it means the general spiritual judgment of people as they associate with this man. They observe him and he passively, under their observation, receives an examination. Having met the test, then they approve him to the office of deacon. If you take a person who is a new convert in the Christian life, he will not have good spiritual judgment; he will not have the frame of reference that experience will give you; and, he does not therefore exercise good judgment in dealing with the church's business and with the general public as well as the congregation. Remember that the role of deacon is not designed by God as a place to get people on the ball for the Lord. You don't give people a job to get them doing things functioning for the Lord. If they are not spiritual people and if they are not active participating Christians, giving them a job will not do it.

The purpose of this testing is that you confirm that this man, again like the elder, is blameless ("anegkletos"). He cannot be hauled off to jail. He's free from any just accusation.

**Qualifications of the Wife of a Deacon**

Then we have the relationships to the family. We have a word here concerning his relationship to his wife, and we have somewhat of a question here in verse 11. Our translation says, "Even so must their wives be," and then it gives qualifications. The Greek word for wives is "gune." Actually it's the word for woman. There is no Greek word for "wife." Therefore, we don't know whether this is "wife," or "women." There is some question whether this should be viewed as qualifications of the wife of a deacon. For this reason, that "Even so" is again our word which you remember we said at the beginning marks a new segment. Here is a new group that he is speaking of. Therefore, we have our marker word which seems to indicate that this is a new series, or a new group in this series. Furthermore, there is no possessive pronoun like we have in verse 12 where it says, "Let the deacons be husbands of one wife ruling 'their' children.'" It doesn't say, "Even so must 'their' wives."

You'll notice in your King James translation, "must their" is in italics which shows that it is not in the Greek. There would be some question as to why we should have qualifications given for a wife of a deacon, and no qualifications given for the wife of an elder. I think the answer is this. While women are not to hold the office of church leadership as deacons; and, we have that established by the general principle of men in positions of leadership and God's work, yet there is a body of women within every congregation which performs the kind of a work that the deacons do in many respects. They carry on the business of the local church in its administrative and material functions. There is always a body of ministering women, and God help a church that does not have a body of women who are willing to administer in that way. That makes the operation go.

Therefore, it seems that at this point, the apostle is interjecting some guidelines for women who serve in deacon-like ministries without holding the official office of deacon. As such, these workers in a local church should meet certain qualifications. Here are the qualifications:

1. They should be **grave** ("semnos"). This is the same word that's used for the deacon in verse 8, meaning again "worthy of respect." This is not an operator and not a female who maneuvers people around, but one who has a personal dignity that creates a confidence in the work which she is doing. This is not the pushy personality kid type. God preserve us from that. She is to be grave, and creating confidence because she has a bearing of dignity.
2. Secondly, she is **not to be slanderous** ("mediabolos"). The word comes from the word which means "to throw over," and thus came to mean "to throw things at people" in the sense of slander and defaming. In other words, a female worker in the local church should not be a scandal monger. This is the word you will recognize which is used as one of the names of Satan ("diabolos"). This is because the devil (and that's the translation) is a slanderer. In other words, this is a woman who speaks evil of anyone, whether it be true or false. She is a monster, and is to be avoided. The Bible calls her a "she-devil." She-devils are not to be permitted in positions of church leadership. When they become she-devils, they should be shooed out.
3. They are also to being **sober-minded** ("nephalios"). This the same word that is used in verse two for the bishop, meaning "temperate." It means calm, moderate, and not given to excesses. This is tough because women tend to be emotional to begin with. If she is going to be in a church ministry of leadership and of administrative work, she has to have a certain stability over her emotional natural tendency. This is a stability brought about by spiritual maturity in order to do that work. That's what sober-minded means.
4. Then she is to be **faithful in all things** ("pistos"). This means to be true to the trust which is placed upon her. In all things, she is a regularly reliable woman. She has to be dependable with the things entrusted to her.

Then with this little excursion here to women workers, he comes back to deacons.

**Qualifications of a Deacon to His Family**

1. They are to be husbands of one wife. We again have our term which literally means "men of one woman sort." The deacon does not have to be married, but if he is, he is to have only one wife.
2. He too is to have certain conditions at home. He has to have conditions where his children are under his control. He is to rule his children and his house well. "Ruling" is "proistemi." It is present middle participle. He is to do it constantly--present tense. Middle means he will benefit by this. The word means "to stand before;" "to preside;" or, "to superintend." It is his constant active duty as a church officer to personally benefit by controlling his family. This supervision extends to his children ("teknon"), and that means "his born ones" in his home. He is to preside over his house. "House" is "oikos," and it really means "household." He is to rule over his own household. Just as the elder bishop must demonstrate command presence over his own house before he can exercise it over the local church, so the deacon has to have command presence over his own wife and children before he can expect to rule well ("kalos"). That means an outward evidence of good ruling before he can hope to have that in the local church.

**The Rewards of a Deacon**

Finally, we have the reward of a good deacon in verse 13. It says, "Those who have used the office of a deacon well." Literally this is that verb again that we have used in Acts 6. It literally says, "Those who have served well." It doesn't say, "office of a deacon." It just says those who have served well. It says that they "purchase for themselves a good standing." The word "purchase" is "peripoieo." "Peripoieo" means to acquire--not purchase. It means simply to obtain. It is present--constantly they do this. It is middle--for their personal benefit. It is a benefit to the deacon personally. He obtains a great personal benefit by doing his job.

What he obtains is "a good standing." That's a "bathmos" which really means "a step." It is a step or a rank. He receives a respected standing of influence among the church members. The deacon who does his job is looked upon as one who should guide. He is looked to for direction. He is the one to whom people will look for direction in the conduct of the ministry.

A deacon can be a clown in the conduct of his work, and then he will be a drag on the ministry, and then he will inspire very little confidence. However, a deacon who does his work well will obtain for himself a standing of influence in the congregation which will have eternal reward and repercussions. This will particularly, it says, express itself in "great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Greek word is "polusparresia," and it means "freedom of speech." When you have freedom of speech, you have boldness among the congregation. This is boldness in the sphere of Jesus Christ. He has a good testimony, and this good testimony gives freedom to his service. If he does not have a good testimony, his own service is restricted. A man who bears a good testimony has a great power of influence in the congregation. It all comes by being God's man and doing God's job.

For the deacon, again we must say as for the elder, he has an old sin nature. This does not mean that he is going to be perfect, but it means that he is going to jerk his old sin nature back in line with these qualifications when he finds himself stepping out of line. That's what God is asking of a deacon. These are the kind of men that you should pray that God would raise up among us to continually supply this office as we need men to fill these positions.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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