

I TIMOTHY 3:8-13

We noted in Chapter 3:1-7 some 16 qualifications for those who are called to be a pastor of a local church.

Chapter 3:8-13 now addresses the qualifications for the deacons and their wives in a local church.

Notice this passage is not dealing with the duties or work of the deacons but with the spiritual qualifications for men who should be appointed to serve in this position.

Just like certain individuals do not meet the qualifications for the pastorate, some individuals do not meet the qualifications to serve as a deacon.

V-8. The word deacon means "servant" or one who serves.

The service of deacons is based largely on the account mentioned in Acts 6:1-5 where certain individuals were appointed to distribute portions to help certain widows. This was done to relieve the apostles of this responsibility so they could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Based upon this passage and the responsibility given to these men, some have erroneously assumed that the deacons are to run the affairs of a church and take care of temporal things so the pastor can just do the preaching.

Two other errors are often common-place based upon this passage. Some churches believe there has to be seven deacons appointed in every church. So they go about to find this number to fill the office. Another error has arisen involving ordaining men to this position.

It should be noted that the word "deacon" is not used in Acts 6:1-5. Neither is there an injunction in the N.T. to ordain deacons as there is for elders (Titus 1:5).

Because of these errors many pastors have been restricted and ministries hindered because there is a continual struggle for control between the pastor and the deacons . And rather than assisting the pastor in the Lord's work many sit in positions over-lording over God's flock in unscriptural ways. The Bible says deacons are servants not mastors! What did the Lord Jesus point out about greatness?

V-8. Deacons must be "grave." In other words those who serve in this position should take spiritual responsibilities seriously and not be flippant about the Lord's work.

V-8. "Not double-tongues." Means deacons should be consistent in what they say. Men who serve in this position are not to say one thing to one member and then go behind one's back and say something different to another member.

V-8. "Not given to much wine." In verse 3:3 the word is "with wine," here it is "occupied with or addicted to wine." Some have supposed since the word "much" is used it means the pastor couldn't have any wine but the deacons could have some wine. These two verses are essentially saying the same thing and mean that the pastor and deacons were not to be persons who overindulged in wine and therefore prone to intoxication.

V-8. "Not greedy of filthy lucre." The N.T. reveals that men who served in this office were given the responsibility or handling and distributing monies. Consequently men who are greedy for money should not be appointed to this position.

V-9. Intimates that deacons should be men who are doctrinally sound. The mystery of the faith refers to the truth about Christ which was hidden through the ages but is now revealed to believers. And to hold this truth in a pure conscience means to live a clean life void of offense before others.

V-10. Indicates that men who serve in this position should first be proved and found blameless before being appointed. This requires giving individuals minor responsibilities and observing how faithful and trustworthy they are with them.

Notice a certain principle in Matthew 25:21:
Faithful over a few things leads to responsibility over many things. Also Luke 16:10 points out how little things have a way of proving us.

V-11. Here we notice that men who serve as deacons should also have wives who meet certain qualifications concerning Christian character.

"Grave" - means to take spiritual responsibility seriously .

"Not slanderers or not devils" - in others words they are not to gossip and run others down. Notice the word devil literally means "slanderer" and this is his work to accuse the brethren and speak against them. When women go about gossiping and running others down they are doing the same thing the devil does.

"Sober-minded" - means one who thinks clearly about spiritual matters.

"Faithful in all things" - covers the whole realm of Christian service - church attendance, serving, giving, and whatever responsibilities they are given. Sad to say some men are disqualified because of their wives.

V-12. Deacons like the pastor must be "the husband of one wife." This means he cannot be a person who is divorced and remarried (Man in church in Eden when requirement was not met)

This also rules out women to serve in this position. They cannot be the husband of one wife.

Some may argue that Phoebe (Rom. 16:1) was a deaconess because the feminine verb for servant is used of her, but I Tim. 3:12 refutes that idea and also does the context of I Tim. 2 referring to a woman's position in the local church.

V-12. The deacons must be men who rule their houses and children well. Godliness begins in the home. If a man can't take care of his children and home he is not qualified to serve as a deacon. This principle is similar to what is required of pastors.

V-13. Says those who serve well in this position purchase a good "standing" or rank in Christian service.

There is a principle involved here. Faithful discharge of one's Christian duties leads to greater opportunities and greater responsibilities in the Lord's service and greater rewards as well. To cite a couple of examples note how Stephen and Philip were used in greater capacities. Notice this was true of Saul and Barnabas as well (Acts 13:2).

Now let me point out some differences between the qualifications for these two offices. It is not required that a deacon be apt to teach or qualified for the ministry of the Word like a pastor should be (3:2).

There is also a vast difference between being ordained to the gospel ministry which requires a call from God and being appointed to serve in various areas.

Notice deacons were called upon to assist the pastors in the local churches and this oftentimes involves collecting of offerings and distributing them where there was a need.

Now with these things in mind I want to challenge you about your Christian service.

Are you faithful and trustworthy to fulfill whatever responsibilities you are given? Would you pass the test of being approved?

Wives are you a help or a hindrance to your husband in spiritual matters?

Do you measure up to what is required of you?

I. AS A DEACON?

II. AS A DEACON'S WIFE?

If the Lord has quickened your conscience about something or convicted your soul I hope you'll make a spiritual commitment to do what is required of you for the sake of the Lord's work.

Men who serve in this position and do not meet the qualifications do great detriment to the Lord's work in a local church.

Men who meet these qualifications and serve will not only be blessed of the Lord but will be a great blessing to others.