

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(24)

1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, 1 Timothy 2:1-3:13

The Deacons of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

(1 Timothy 3:8-13) **Introduction:** this passage discusses the second officer of the church, the deacon. The office of deacon is so important that the qualifications required are just as high as those demanded of a minister or bishop. In this day and time, when worldliness, immorality, and lawlessness are running so rampant, the qualifications for deacons need to be studied, heeded, and guarded ever so diligently.

The Importance of the Seven's Task

The laying on of hands, along with the early appearance of this account in Acts, indicates the significance and necessity of the Seven's task. Some people might find it hard to believe that appointing men to care for poor widows and handle money would require the laying on of the apostles' hands. Those who don't understand why the apostles took this matter so seriously don't understand how important the care of the poor is in God's eyes. As the Scripture says, **"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."** (James 1:27).

The saintly, Scottish revivalist and pastor **Robert Murray McCheyne (1813–1843)** understood the importance of giving to the poor and used the strongest possible words to teach his congregation in Dundee, Scotland, the necessity of giving to needy people. Prayerfully read the following closing words of his sermon on Acts 20:35, **"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive"**

I fear there are some Christians among you to whom Christ cannot say [**"Well done, good and faithful servant"**].

Your haughty dwelling raises amidst of thousands who have scarce a fire to warm themselves at, and have but little clothing to keep out the biting frost; and yet you never darkened their door. You heave a sigh, perhaps, at a distance; but you do not visit them. Ah! my dear friends! I am concerned for the poor, but more for you. I know not what Christ will say to you in the great day. You seem to be Christians, and yet you care not for his poor. Oh, what a change will pass upon you as you enter the gates of heaven! You will be saved, but that will be all. There will be no abundant entrance for you: **'He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.'**

I fear there are many hearing me who may know well that they are not Christians, because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudging at all, requires a new heart; an old heart would rather part with its life-blood than its money. Oh, my friends! enjoy your money; make the most of it; give none away; enjoy it quickly, for I can tell you, you will be beggars throughout eternity.

John Owen reminds us that many of the first Christians were poor: “Many of them who first received it were of the state and condition, as the Scripture everywhere testifies: ‘...The poor have the Godpel preached to them....,’ [Matthew 11:5](#); ‘...Did not God choose the poor of this world...,’ [James 2:5](#).” Therefore, care for the poor and needy, **Owen** adds, was “one of the most eminent graces and duties of the church in those days.”

We must never, he cautions, treat flippantly this important responsibility to the poor and disadvantaged:

... if all churches, and all the members of them, would wisely consider how eminent is this grace, how excellent is this duty, of making provision for the poor,—how much the glory of Christ and honor of the gospel are concerned herein; for whereas, for the most part, it is looked on as an ordinary work, to be performed transiently and cursorily, scarce deserving any of the time which is allotted unto the church’s public service and duties, it is indeed one of the most eminent duties of Christian societies....”

Biblical commentator **William Barclay** relates an old legend that beautifully illustrates the value of the poor and the importance of caring for them:

In the days of the terrible Decian persecution in Rome, the Roman authorities broke into a Christian Church. They were out to loot the treasures which they believed the Church to possess. The Roman prefect demanded from Laurentius, the deacon: “Show me your treasures at once.” Laurentius pointed at the widows and orphans who were being supplied, “These,” he said, “are the treasures of the Church.”

No wonder the Seven were commissioned for their work through the laying on of hands! Thereby they were given official status to handle the important work of caring for the churches needy. The Seven formed a distinct body of officials who were separate from the apostles. They were not equal with the apostles, nor were they junior apostles or shepherds in training. They did not become assistants to the apostles. The Seven formed a separate but complementary ministry to that of the apostles.