

10) LESSONS FROM 1. EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY *Chapter 3*

I. Introduction

In past weeks I dealt with subject of deacons, with focus on role of deacons in a local church. I discussed that they are servants who must meet certain qualifications set by Holy Spirit likewise bishops.

II. Comparison of qualifications for bishops and deacons

While number of qualifications for bishops and deacons are similar, there are other qualifications that differ. Question is how they differ and why?

Similar qualifications (KJV):

Bishops:

must be blameless 1Ti 3:2
vigilant, sober, of good
behaviour, given to hospitality
(part of being blameless)
the husband of one wife 1Ti 3:2
not given to wine 1Ti 3:3
not greedy of filthy lucre 1Ti 3:3
one that ruleth well his own
house, having his children in
subjection with all gravity

Deacons:

being found blameless 1Ti 3:10
grave, not doubletongued 1Ti 3:8
(part of being blameless)
the husbands of one wife 1Ti 3:12
not given to much wine 1Ti 3:8
not greedy of filthy lucre 1Ti 3:8
ruling their children and
their own houses well

even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things 1Ti 3:11

Differing qualifications (KJV):

Bishops:

steward of God Tit 1:7

apt to teach 1Ti 3:2

holding fast the faithful
word as he hath been taught,
that he may be able by sound
doctrine both to exhort and
to convince the gainsayers

no striker, but patient, 1Ti 3:3
not a brawler, not covetous

Deacons:

holding the mystery of 1Ti 3:9
the faith in a pure conscience

not a novice 1Ti 3:6 and let these also first 1Ti 3:10
be proved

he must have a good report 1Ti 3:7
of them which are without

having faithful children Tit 1:6

Podobné kvalifikační předpoklady (NBK):

Biskupové:

musí být bezúhonný 1Ti 3:2
střídmý, rozvážený, pořádný, 1Ti 3:2
pohostinný
(součást bezúhonnosti)

manžel jedné ženy 1Ti 3:2
ne pijan 1Ti 3:3
ne ziskuchtivý 1Ti 3:3
dobře vede svou rodinu a 1Ti 3:4
udržuje [své] děti v poddanosti
se vši počestností

rovněž manželky [ať mají] počestné, ne pomlouvačné, [ale] střídmé, ve všem věrné 1Ti 3:11

Diakoni:

bez úhony 1Ti 3:10
počestní, ne dvojího jazyka 1Ti 3:8
(součást bezúhonnosti)

manželé jedné ženy 1Ti 3:12
ne oddávající se příliš vínu 1Ti 3:8
ne ziskuchtiví 1Ti 3:8
dobře vedou své děti 1Ti 3:12
i své domy

Odlíšné kvalifikační předpoklady (NBK):

Biskupové:

Boží správce Tit 1:7

schopný vyučovat 1Ti 3:2

držící se spolehlivého slova Tit 1:7
podle toho, jak byl naučen, aby
mohl nejen povzbuzovat zdravým
učením, ale i přemáhat odpůrce

(ne) rváč, ale vlídný, ne svárlivý, 1Ti 3:3
ne lakomec

ne čerstvě obrácený 1Ti 3:6

musí mít také dobré svědectví 1Ti 3:7
od těch venku

má-li věřící děti Tit 1:6

Diakoni:

mající tajemství víry 1Ti 3:9
v čistém svědomí

ať jsou také nejdříve 1Ti 3:10
vyzkoušeni

Evaluation of qualifications

As we can see, both, bishops and deacons have to have very good moral characters. Both, bishops and deacons have to be married, have children and rule their families well. Both, bishops and deacons have to have grave and faithful wives.

However, bishops' differing qualifications indicate that bishops are God's stewards, teachers of the Word of God, who are mature in faith and are able to exercise self-control, having good reports not only of those within the local church, but also of those without. Bishops' task is to feed the Christian flock with spiritual food, take care of their spiritual needs, lead them and guide them on their way to salvation, defend them against gainsayers. This is why bishops are also called in Bible as shepherds. Another term used of bishops in the Bible is elders, which indicate men mature in age. In their role they imitate Jesus who is the chief Shepherd. Because of their role in the local church, one of their qualifications is that their children are faithful to God, i.e. Christians.

1Pe 5:1 ¶ The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

On the other hand in case of deacons it is enough if they are faithful to God, are tested and prove themselves blameless, prior to their appointment for the role of deacons. They may not be elder in age and even may be new in faith. Their children do not have to be Christians. That does not mean that their children can be rebellious, but it rather indicates that they may be too young in age to become Christians. It is not even clear that a deacon should have more than one child. (While 1Ti 3:4 speaks of children of a bishop, 1Ti 3:12 speaks of children of deacons.)

As we can see the differing qualifications have to do with different role that bishops and deacons have in the local church and different work they do.

III.

What do the deacons do?

While it is clear what is the work of bishops in the local church, it may not be that clear in case of deacons. So what do the deacons do? And, who determines what they do? The principles are set in Acts 6.

1] There was a special ministry that had to be done in church in Jerusalem – serving widows with food at the tables. (Acts 6:1-2)

2] Apostles identified that ministry and suggested church to select 7 honest, faithful and wise men, whom they might appoint to do the ministry. (Acts 6:3)

3] Church chose such 7 men and they were set before the apostles. (Acts 6:5-6)

4] Apostles prayed, laid their hands on them and thus set them apart for this ministry. (Acts 6:6)

Now, apostles in Jerusalem's church did the same work as bishops in other local churches. They

were teachers of God's Word and took care of spiritual needs and welfare of Christians.

In Acts 13:1-3 we can read that prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul to set them apart for missionary journey.

In 1Co 12:27-30 we can read that God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

The teachers in the church covered also bishops. Those teachers in Antioch who set apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary journey were probably bishops.

IV. Conclusions

1] Deacons can exist only in the church where there are bishops.

2] Christians in the local church choose and bishops set deacons apart for particular ministry that is needed in the local church. Church cannot have only deacons and no bishops.

3] Deacons may be men that are young in age and faith, but who have good, moral character and are faithful Christians.

4] Some of the services of deacon could fulfill properly only women, such as helping other Christian women at their homes.

5] Deacons are spoken of in plural in the Bible. Their number is not set, but it should be reasonable based on number of Christians and amount of work that needs to be done.

6] Deacons are servants of the church in physical matters, whether serving food at the tables, or are in charge of the building where church assembles or in charge of procuring materials for Bible studies, etc.

7] Since bishops are to shepherd flock among them, i.e. the local church where they are appointed, it is clear that deacons sphere of ministry is also limited to the local church.

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