

INTRODUCTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one perfect man, the one man who was born without any sin in Him, and the sin of Adam not charged to His account.

He is the man of such honest report, of such good reputation, that every accurate report of His life recounts that He only ever did good works His whole life. He is well known only and fully to have acted in the deepest, strongest love for God and for man, even for those who persecuted Him. God the Father commended Him with His own voice. He had no wife and children of His own during this life, but His loving treatment of us, His disciples, His church, who are to Him spiritual wife and children, is the very model for how men should love their own wives and children. Many of the good works our Lord Jesus did were miraculous signs, showing Him to be the very Son of God.

He is the Man who lived His whole life full of the Holy Spirit, so much so that He resisted the strongest temptations that could be brought by the devil himself in person. Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus preferred to obey the word of God rather than to gain pleasure, wealth, or glory for Himself. Far from being a man given to much wine or any other sensual indulgence, He refused even bread when He was hungry, if He could not have it according to the word of God. Far from being greedy for filthy lucre, He refused all the wealth and glory of the whole world in order to worship God only, according to His word. He held to the promises of God with a pure conscience of obedience to His law.

He is the man who was filled with wisdom even when He was a boy, so much so that His insightful questions and excellent answers astonished the expert bible teachers in the temple. He then continued to grow in wisdom until He was greater in wisdom than even King Solomon. Far from being double-tongued, or being a slanderer or gossip, He was grave, serious, reverent. No one could find the least fault in anything He said, because He is the wisest man ever to live.

This is the utterly perfect character of our Lord and Savior, our Master, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Christ, Son of Man and Son of God.

None of us came into this world with anything like that perfect character of Christ. By our sin, first in Adam, then each of us in his own works, we had separated ourselves from God. The best we could do was still like filthy rags in God's sight. But God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived the perfect life that we did not live, and died on the cross the death that He did not deserve, but we did. He died, and was buried, but rose again to life the third day, the first day of the week. Now He sends His church all over the world preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins. For all who turn from sin to follow Him, trusting in Him, God counts His death for us, and His life for us. He was punished, that we need not be punished. He lived in sinless perfection, that His righteousness may be counted for us!

We who have so repented, who so believe, we who are His disciples, admire Jesus Christ for His perfect character, as displayed in His perfect life and sacrificial death. But not one of us, His disciples, has that character in perfection, as He has it. In His great love for us, God the Father is pruning us, sanctifying us, making us more and more like our Lord Jesus. But during this life, not one of us will attain His character in perfection.

Yet, there are men among the disciples of Jesus Christ of whom it can be seen that they are pressing on toward perfection, following Jesus as His disciples. God has worked in them so that the church can see they look not to their own interests, but also the interests of others. Their fellow disciples can see in their lives the mind which also was seen in Christ Jesus when He walked the earth. Those are the men the church can rightly choose to be deacons.

The church needs deacons, official servants who will take care of essential business in the church, leaving the pastors free to minister in the word and prayer. The church must choose for its deacons those men of whom it can rightly be said that they will be deacons in the character of Christ.

TEXT

Acts 6:1-7

BODY

- I. The Congregation Is to Choose What Men To Have As Deacons
 - A. The apostles charged them to do so (Acts 6:3)
 1. Greek contains the connotation of “to look”
 2. English
 - a) look ye out
 - b) seek you
 - c) pick out
 - B. The church did so: “chose” (Acts 6:5)
 - C. Consider that the church may not make just anyone an officer, but “must” choose
 1. the beginning of the section of 1 Timothy that addresses the appointment of church officers states explicitly that the church must not have just anyone for its officials, but must choose
 - a) 1 Tim 3:2 a bishop **must** be blameless
 2. when the bible speaks specifically about deacons and their wives, it does not repeat the word “must,” but it is so strongly implied that our English translations supply that word “must”
 3. 1 Tim 3:8 Likewise deacons **must be**
 4. 1 Tim 3:11 Likewise, *their* wives **must be**
 - D. Choosing means that the church may approve a man to be a church officer if and only if the congregation finds him qualified
 1. Titus 1:5-6 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you-- (6) **if** a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.
 - a) GEN If any be unreprouable
 - b) KJV If any be blameless
 - c) ESV If anyone is above reproach
 2. when you consider all the men in the church, you may have a deacon or some deacons if and only if any are qualified
 3. when you consider every individual man, you may have him as a deacon if and only if he is qualified

The Congregation Is to Choose What Men To Have As Deacons

II. The Choosing Is Not By Extraordinary Means, But By the Ordinary Means

A. Not extraordinary

1. not by God speaking directly to us
 - a) as with Abraham
 - b) as with Moses
2. not by God giving us a vision as with Isaiah
3. not by angels telling us
 - a) as with John the Baptist
 - b) as with the Lord Jesus
4. not by the Lord Jesus Himself choosing in person
 - a) as with the 12 apostles
 - b) as with Paul on the Damascus road

B. But ordinary

1. as with the choosing of the elders in Israel, in the time of Moses and Jethro
 - a) despite all the extraordinary, supernatural things that were going on!
 - b) the choosing was ordinary, by natural means
2. so with the choosing of the deacons in the early church, in the time of the apostles
 - a) despite all the extraordinary, supernatural things that were going on
 - b) the choosing was ordinary, by natural means
3. so also with us, and with all the churches all over the world until the Lord Jesus comes back
 - a) despite all the things people say about how God told them this or that
 - b) we choose deacons by the ordinary, natural means the bible describes

C. Do not fall to temptation to try to acquire some special revelation from God about whom to choose

D. Do not fall to temptation to shirk your responsibility under some spiritual-sounding slogan

E. Take comfort where it really is to be found

1. not that Jesus will do something supernatural
2. but that our Master, the Lord Jesus,
 - a) will help us do well in our ordinary tasks
 - b) will govern all things for our good no matter how well we do or how we might fail

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III. The Process We Follow Is What the Bible Says

- A. The pastors instruct the congregation
 - 1. on the principle
 - 2. on the duty to choose
 - 3. on the criteria/qualifications
- B. The congregation chooses
- C. Those men already in office set the newly-chosen men in their office by prayer and laying on of hands
- D. This simple framework is non-negotiable

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The Process We Follow Is What the Bible Says

IV. The Details of the Process We Do Freely By Our Own Judgment, As Expressed in Our Church By-Laws

- A. A special congregational meeting for electing deacons is announced at least one month ahead of time
- B. Any member of the church may nominate any men he thinks should be a deacon, by informing the pastor
- C. The pastor examines each nominee to ensure he holds to the principle tenets of our Christian faith; the pastor then certifies each man who is found to be orthodox in the faith
 - 1. note: our by-laws cannot be precisely followed at this point, because they would empower the pastors to, in effect, make the choice instead of the congregation
 - 2. so, I will certify each man only as to the orthodoxy of his beliefs, not as to his character, which must be judged by the congregation
- D. The pastor announces the men who are certified to stand for election; at least one week ahead of time
- E. At the meeting, there will be a vote by secret ballot; every member votes in favor of or against each nominee
- F. Those men receiving a majority vote in favor are considered to be elected

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- V. As We Choose Deacons in Obedience to Our Lord, We Pray and Believe He Will Bless Us
- A. According to the specific blessings mentioned in Acts 6
 - B. According to the many blessings the bible pronounces on the obedient

CONCLUSION

Brothers and sisters, rejoice with me that our Lord Jesus has given us this opportunity, which, for years, we have been longing for.

Pray, that the Lord will help us, believing firmly that He will.

Within two weeks from today, by the end of the Lord's Day, February 9th, submit your nominations to me as pastor.

God willing, no later than the Lord's Day, February 23rd, I will announce the names of the men nominated and certified to stand for election.

God willing, we will have a special congregational meeting on the Lord's Day, March 1st, at which the congregation will have opportunity to elect men to be deacons.

If any are elected, I will set them in office by prayer and the laying on of hands the soonest Lord's Day that is convenient for everyone.

I have a letter to the church almost ready to send, containing all this information. I plan to email it to you this week, so you will have all of this at your fingertips.

Call to Worship: Psalm 30:4-5 - Jeremiah

Scripture Reading: Joshua 23:1-11 - Thad

Sermon: "Deacons in the Character of Christ Part 4: Choosing"

Congregational Prayer - Dillon

Benediction: Psalm 30:11-12

Prelude: Trinity 6 "All Ye That Fear Jehovah's Name" - Anna

Trinity 168 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" - Rita

Trinity 27 "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" - Allison

Trinity 207 "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands" - Anna

Trinity 462 "How Blest Is He" - Anna

Hymn

Trinity 442 "Behold the Amazing Gift of Love"

Scripture Proofs

Romans 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

1689 Confession

1689.3.6 ...they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified

Baptist Catechism

36. Q. What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardoneth all our sins (Rom 3:24-25; 4:6-8) and accepteth us as righteous in His sight (2Co 5:19, 21), only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom 5:17-19) and received by faith alone (Gal 2:16; Phi 3:9).25

37. Q. What is adoption?

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace (1Jo 3:1), whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God (Joh 1:12; Rom 8:14-17).

38. Q. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace (2Th 2:13) whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God (Eph 4:23-24), and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness (Rom 6:4, 6; 8:1).26

they are to be chosen by the vote and suffrage of the church

the number of seven in the first church is not a rule and example binding on all future churches; but such a number are to be chosen, and may be increased, as the exigency of churches requires; and some have thought, that where a church is very small, a pastor may perform the whole work, with a little assistance from the church; but I cannot but be of the opinion that one deacon at least, if not two, are necessary to form an organized church

their principal business is to “serve tables”

1. the Lord’s table
2. the minister’s table
3. the poor’s table

not that they are to exercise any part of this office first, that it might be known how capable they are of it; but that it should appear that they are men of the above characters and qualifications; are of some standing in the church, and are well known and approved of for their soundness in the faith and purity of conversation.

Dagg:

Deacons should be chosen by the churches, from among their members, to minister in secular affairs.

J.L. Reynolds (pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Richmond, VA) *Church Polity or The Kingdom of Christ in its Internal and External Development*, 1849

The nature of the deaconship is thus defined, by the history of the origin of the office. The official duties of the deacons, are the opposite of those which are assigned to ministers; and the very object contemplated in the institution of the order, was to relieve preachers of the Gospel from the management of secular interests, by placing them under the direction of others.

Every Church must have a place of worship, a pastor to be supported, and poor members who need assistance. It is the duty of every Church to contribute to the spread of the gospel, at home and abroad. For all these purposes, money is needed; and it is the duty of the deacons to collect and disburse it.

R.C.B. Howell *The Deaconship: Its Nature, Qualifications, Relations, and Duties*, 1846.
chapter III The Forms of Election and Ordination to the Deaconship

p. 62

When deacons are to be elected...their [the church members'] first duty is to receive instructions on the whole subject. This course is important, not only because it is that adopted and practised by the apostles, but also because it is necessary that, in all such cases, the members should deliberate maturely, with a full knowledge of the matter upon which they are about to act.

p. 63

After ample time and means have been afforded for reflection and decision, the church, as a body, proceeds to the election...We know, and that is sufficient, that it was by the suffrage of the whole body, and that all elections should still be conducted in the same manner.

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"In the government of states, whatever its form, checks and balances between the several departments are, by experience, found to be necessary to secure the interests of the parties concerned. They have, accordingly, been adopted by all civilized nations. In the Church of Christ they are instituted by divine authority. We have now before us a striking example. The ministry have no right to ordain any man to the Deaconship, not previously elected by the Church to that office. The consent of the Church is positively necessary... On the other hand, though brethren may be elected by the Church, they are still, unless ordained by the ministry, not deacons. There must be a concurrence between the Church and the ministry to create the officer. True, they do commonly concur, but not always, nor is it by any means a matter of course. Similar checks and balances exist with regard to the ordination of pastors...

James M. Pendleton *Church Manual Designed for the Use of Baptist Churches*, 1867.

As deacons were appointed at first "to serve tables," it may be well to say, there are three tables for them to serve: 1. The table of the poor. 2. The table of the Lord. 3. The table of the pastor. The pecuniary supplies to enable them to serve these tables must be furnished by the church.

it is eminently proper, though not indispensable, for them to wait on the communicants in the distribution of the elements.

Deacons must serve the pastor's table. It is not for them to decide how liberally or scantily it shall be supplied. The church must make the decision, and enlarged views should be taken when it is made; for the energies of hundreds of pastors are greatly impaired by an incompetent support. The pastor's compensation having been agreed on by the church, the deacons must see that it is raised and paid over. They may appoint one of their number acting treasurer, who shall receive and pay out funds; but it should never be forgotten that deacons are by virtue of their office the treasurers of the church. To appoint any other member to act as treasurer is not warranted by Scripture.

laying on of hands is a token of designation to office.

It is the custom in some places to lay on hands in ordination during prayer. This is not according to scriptural example. Whenever prayer and laying on of hands are referred to in connection with each other, as in Acts 6:6; 13:3, it is evident that prayer was first offered?then followed imposition of hands ? to be seen and known as a designation to office, but which could not without a violation of propriety be seen during prayer. It is very desirable that all the churches adopt the practice of ordaining deacons by prayer and the laying on of hands.