

INTRODUCTION

It is good that in recent weeks we have been studying how there is one God, who will have all men to be saved, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; and that He gave Himself, His life, His blood, a ransom for all. Those are the precious truths that make up the foundation of true religion; the very most basic tenets of the Christian faith; those are the things we believed, to the saving of our souls; those are the things we speak to poor lost sinners, so that they may believe in God through Jesus Christ as we do; that they may repent of their sins and find forgiveness with God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now we find ourselves in need of studying something that is less a matter of theological truths, and more a matter of practical necessity in the life of the church.

This church, as also other churches, has been in need of deacons for some time, but has not gone through the necessary process of choosing them and setting them in office. Now, thank the Lord, the church seems ready to go through the necessary process of choosing deacons and setting them in office to do their work.

A few weeks ago, I spoke to you from Acts chapter 6 on the church's great need for deacons. In just a few words, I will remind you what we saw in the bible about that:

1. in the church, the work of providing for physical needs is too important to leave undone
2. but this important physical work must not be left to the pastors to do, lest their spiritual work, the ministry of the word and prayer, be neglected
3. this important physical work should be done by certain men chosen to do it

Having spoken to you already on the need for deacons, today I begin to speak to you about the necessary character of deacons. Let me put it to you this way: **The church needs deacons, but must choose as deacons men with the character of Christ.**

That Christ-like character is described for us very briefly in Acts 6:3. When our Lord's apostles instituted the office of deacon, they described the character necessary in deacons in three items; men:

1. of good reputation
2. full of the Holy Spirit
3. full of wisdom

To instruct the church on this subject, I plan to give one sermon on each of those three items, teaching you from the bible the character necessary for a man rightly to be elected a deacon in the household of God, which is the church of God.

Where we have been in our study through 1 Timothy, we have almost got to where the apostle addresses this same subject, and gives more details about it. So, as I speak to you on the three items from Acts 6:3, I'll be trying to bring in what is said in 1 Timothy 3, also. But when we have had these three sermons, it probably will be necessary to spend some more time looking into those things in 1 Timothy 3 that I haven't been able to cover under these three heading from Acts. So we'll probably have between four and six weeks of sermons on this subject.

You have heard a reading today from Exodus 18, and recently from Deuteronomy 1, recounting how Jethro advised Moses to appoint men to help him govern Israel, and how Moses led Israel to choose such men from among themselves. Those men were more like elders than like deacons. But in that those chosen men served the congregation, so that all needs would be provided for, and so that the spiritual leader, Moses, could concentrate on teaching the word of God, it seems that Old Testament account served as the basis for how the apostles instituted the office of deacon. So I hope to refer to those passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy to help us all understand this good character that was needed in Israel's elders, and also is needed in the church's elders and deacons.

Yes, although elders and deacons differ in their responsibilities, in their jobs, the character required is the same. We serve our dear Lord Jesus Christ. We are His church, His household. So the character required for a man to be appointed to one office in the church is the same character required for a man to be appointed to the other office in the church. The elders generally serve in things spiritual; the deacons generally serve in things physical. But the righteous character displayed by our Lord Jesus Christ when He walked this earth is the character required in men to be chosen as church officers, whether elders or deacons.

The new testament normally speaks of church elders in the plural. We as a church want to have more than one elder. Hopefully God will grant us that. But the process of examining and approving a man to be an elder is longer and more involved than it is for a deacon, and will take some time. Meanwhile, the process for examining men's qualifications to serve as deacons has mostly been done as we have observed the men in this church over the past few years. Hopefully we can set some men in office as deacons sooner rather than later.

Also, our church's by-laws provide that when there is only one elder, two deacons can serve with the elder in handling necessary decisions until such time as additional elders can be chosen.

So, please allow me to address with you the subject of electing deacons, and work toward electing additional elders in the future.

During all this month or two of instruction from the scriptures on the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is required to be present in men chosen as deacons, you are asked to think about the men of this church in light of what we see in the scriptures. In just a few weeks' time, I hope you will be nominating and electing some of the men to be deacons for this church. It is a great joy for us to be able to do that, which has been left undone for too long already. But it will be necessary to choose the men rightly, as the word of God teaches us.

You already know the men and their wives pretty well. You've had opportunity to observe them for years. Now, as we look at the scriptures together, you are asked to compare what you know of the men in this church with the character of Christ, as described in the bible. No man will measure up to the perfection of a amazing, unique Lord Jesus, the one Mediator between God and man. But perfection is not the issue. Perfect righteousness is found in Jesus Christ alone. His righteousness is imputed to us for our salvation through faith. But the working righteousness in us is an ongoing work of sanctification until He comes again. Yet, it is required of a man, for him to be elected a deacon in the church, that he have essentially the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose disciples we are.

TEXT

Acts 6:1-4

1 Timothy 3:1-15

BODY

The church needs deacons, but must choose as deacons men with the character of Christ; men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of wisdom. Today we work from that first item: men of of good reputation, men of good repute, men of honest report.

I. The Word Used Here

A. What we read in our English bibles

1. Of honest report
2. Of good reputation
3. Of good repute

B. "Honest" or "good" is understood, but not really present in the Greek original

C. G3140 *martureo* witnessed to; reported; reputed

II. The Example of Our Lord Jesus

- A. Our word *martureo* is used several times in this passage, describing how the Lord Jesus is witnessed to, how He has an honest report, how He is of good reputation or repute. The words used in English here are “witness” and “testimony.”
- B. John 5:31-39 "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. (32) There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. (33) You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. (34) Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. (35) He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. (36) But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. (37) And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. (38) But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. (39) You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.
 1. Jesus is witnessed to; He is of report; He is of reputation or repute
 2. He is witnessed to by Himself, but of course a man's own reporting on Himself does not prove anything
 3. verse 33 John the Baptist has testified; Jesus is of honest report from John
 4. verse 37 God the Father has testified, by His own voice when Jesus was baptized; Jesus is a man of good reputation as reported by God the Father
 5. verse 39 the Scriptures have testified about Him; Jesus is a man of good repute by the testimony of the scriptures
 6. verse 36 the works Jesus did testified about Him; Jesus is a man reputed to do good works, even miraculous works

III. The Example of a Deserving Widow

- A. As we keep going through 1 Timothy, we will get to instructions about taking on the support of destitute widows
 1. if a widow has family or other means of support, the church does not take her into the number of those supported by the church
 2. but if a widow does not have means of support, the church is to take her into the number of those supported by the church, but only if she is of Christ-like character; the character required is very similar to what is said of deacons

- B. Our word *martureo* appears here, and in the very sense meant about deacons in Acts 6. For a man to be selected a deacon, he must be *martureo*. For a widow to be added to the number, she must be *martureo*.
- C. 1 Timothy 5:9-10 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, (10) well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.
1. see in verse 10 "well reported" or "having a reputation" that's our word *martureo*
 2. see that just as Jesus Christ was testified to by His works, so a widow is testified to as to her good works
 3. in the case of our Lord Jesus, His works were good, many were even miraculous
 4. in the case of a Christian widow, of course her works are not miraculous; but she is to be taken into the number only if good works testify to her character; only if she is well-reported for good works
- D. See what those good works are
1. she has nourished children; has brought up children
 2. she has lodged strangers; or has shown hospitality
 3. she has washed the feet of the saints
 4. she has ministered to or relieved those in adversity or affliction
 5. in short, she has continually given herself to good works; she has devoted herself to good works
- E. That is a description of the good works that cause a woman to have a good reputation, to be of honest report; that is essentially what is meant for a man, also, for him to be chosen as a deacon
1. if he has children, he must be observed to be bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; seeing that they obey their parents
 2. if he has his own home, he must be observed to be willing to have the saints in his home when needed
 3. he must be known to be willing to serve, even when the service might be lowly, and even if it means getting the hands dirty
 4. he must have a known interest in relieving those in the church who are in need, are having difficulty
 5. he must be reported to be a man not occasionally or slightly interested in good works, but whose whole life speaks of him as being given to good works, devoted to doing good

IV. Detailed Instructions from 1 Timothy

- A. 1 Timothy 3:7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.
 - 1. see that as a man must be of honest report in the church
 - 2. so also he must be of honest report outside the church
 - a) perhaps he is slandered, which is not disqualifying
 - b) perhaps he had a bad reputation years ago, before he was a Christian
 - c) but it must be that his general character, as reported by those who know him, is a character of good works
- B. 1 Timothy 3:12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.
 - 1. see that in the case of a widow it is specified that she have been the wife of one man, and is well-reported for bringing up children
 - 2. so it is for a deacon; for him to be of honest report, he must be the husband of one wife and be doing well at ruling his own children and household
- C. 1 Timothy 3:10 let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless
 - 1. you see that determining whether a man is blameless, and so able to serve as a deacon, is to be done beforehand, before he is chosen
 - 2. that is, he needs to be a man whose honest character is reported before the church can elect him a deacon

V. Caveats

- A. There is to be charity, grace, compassion
 - 1. No one among us is perfectly like this; what is needed is that he be generally like this
 - 2. No one among us has always been like this; what is needed is for a man to have been like this for some years, so that his character being like this is well known
 - 3. Some among us might be like this, but you haven't had enough time or experience to know
 - 4. Some among us might be like this, by God's sanctifying work, a few years from now, but not really just yet
- B. There is to be no dishonesty; no pretending; no pridefulness
 - 1. in a man's judgment of himself
 - 2. in a wife's judgment of her husband
 - 3. in the church's judgment of a man or his wife

CONCLUSION

Summary: To be elected a deacon in the church, a man must be one who, like our Lord Jesus Christ, devotes himself to doing good, so that he has a good reputation, because his good works testify that his character is the character of Christ.

Let us consider well, praying for the Lord's help, so we can choose only men of honest report to be deacons in this church.

Call to Worship: Psalm 13:5-6

Scripture Reading: Exodus 18:8-27

Sermon: "Deacons in the Character of Christ" Acts 6:3

Benediction: Psalm 116:1-2

Prelude: Trinity 579 "Be Still, My Soul"

Trinity 206 "Up from the Grave He Arose"

Trinity 26 Psalm 90 "Our God, Our Help In Ages Past"

Trinity 580 "It Is Well With My Soul"

Trinity 700 "Trust and Obey"

VI. Full of the Holy Ghost

A. Full G4134 *pleres* of the Holy G40 *hagios* Ghost G4151 *pneuma*

B. The Lord Jesus

1. Luke 4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness
2. When the bible says that our Lord Jesus was “full of the Holy Ghost,” what he did was deny himself food, and resist temptation to sin

C. The saints in Ephesus

1. Ephesians 5:18-21 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, (20) giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (21) submitting to one another in the fear of God.

D. A man under consideration to be made a deacon

1. 1 Timothy 3:8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, **not given to much wine**, not greedy for money,

E. Summary: a man who lives not under the control of desires, passions, appetites, so that his life is characterized by sin, but under the control of the Holy Spirit, so that his life is characterized by righteousness

VII. Full of Wisdom

A. G4678 *sophia*

B. The Lord Jesus

1. Isaiah 11:1-5 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (2) The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (3) His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; (4) But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. (5) Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.
2. Luke 2:40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

C. The saints in Ephesus

1. Ephesians 5:15-17 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, (16) redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (17) Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

D. A man under consideration to be made a deacon

E.

VIII. Of Honest Report

A. G3140 *martureo*

B. The Lord Jesus

1. John 5:31-39 "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. (32) There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. (33) You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. (34) Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. (35) He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. (36) But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. (37) And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. (38) But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. (39) You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

C. Cornelius

1. Acts 10:22 And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

D. Timothy

1. Acts 16:1-2 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. (2) He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

E. Ananias of Damascus

1. Acts 22:12-13 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, (13) came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

F. A deserving widow

1. 1 Timothy 5:9-10 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, (10) well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.

G. The saints of the past who lived by faith

1. Hebrews 11:39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

H. Demetrius

1. 3 John 1:12 Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.
- 2.
- 3.

IX. Full of the Holy Ghost

A. Full G4134 *pleres* of the Holy G40 *hagios* Ghost G4151 *pneuma*

B. The Lord Jesus

1. Luke 4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness
2. When the bible says that our Lord Jesus was “full of the Holy Ghost,” what he did was resist temptation to sin

C. Barnabas

1. Acts 11:21-26 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. (22) Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. (23) When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. (24) For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. (25) Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. (26) And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.
2. When the bible says that Barnabas was “full of the Holy Ghost,” what he did was
 - a) go on a mission on behalf of the church
 - b) encourage the believers to purpose in their hearts to continue with the Lord
 - c) sought out a gifted preacher he knew about
 - d) assembled with the church and taught a great many people

D. Stephen

1. Acts 7:55-60 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, (56) and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" (57) Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; (58) and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. (59) And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (60) Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
2. When the bible says that Stephen was “full of the Holy Ghost,” what he did was
 - a) testify to Jesus Christ
 - b) express his faith in Jesus to receive him when he died

c) pray to the Lord to forgive those who were murdering him

X. Full of Wisdom

A. G4678 *sophia*

B. The Lord Jesus

1. Isaiah 11:1-5 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (2) The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (3) His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; (4) But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. (5) Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.
2. Luke 2:40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

C. Bezalel son of Uri

1. Exodus 31:1-5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. (3) And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, (4) to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, (5) in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.

D. Joshua son of Nun

1. Deuteronomy 34:9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

E. Hiram from Tyre

1. 1 Kings 7:13-14 Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. (14) He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a bronze worker; he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill in working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did all his work.
- 2.
- 3.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Deuteronomy 1:13 Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes...

Exodus 18:21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness...

1 Timothy 3:8-12 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; (9) Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. (10) And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. (11) Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. (12) Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Acts 6:3	Deut 1:13	Exodus 18:21	1 Tim 3:8-12
of honest report NKJV of <i>good</i> reputation ESV of good repute	known NKJV knowlegeable ESV experienced		
full of the Holy Ghost			
full of wisdom	wise	such as fear God	
	understanding		
		able men GEN men of courage	
		men of truth GEN dealing truly BB true men ESV who are trustworthy	
		hating covetousness ESV hate a bribe	not greedy of filthy lucre NKJV for money ESV for dishonest gain
			grave NKJV grave ESV dignified
			not doubletongued
			not given to much wine ESV addicted to much wine
			holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience

			ESV clear conscience
			husbands of one wife
			ruling their children and their own houses well ESV managing

G4134 G4151 G4678

JRY:

I showed you last time that Acts 6 looks to Deut 1 regarding the need for deacons.
Now I show you that it also looks there regarding the qualifications for deacons.