

017 - Acts 6:1-7 Work Too Important to Leave Undone - 2019-11-10  
originally delivered 2012-04-01

## INTRODUCTION

I hoped to speak to you today from 1 Timothy 2, beginning to address the wonderful doctrine “God our Savior will have all men to be saved.” But I could not get that sermon written for today...

sermons on Acts from seven years ago

**There is work too important to leave undone; therefore in the church of Jesus Christ there always is the great need for deacons.**

## TEXT

Acts 6:1-7

## BODY

**There is work too important to leave undone; therefore in the church of Jesus Christ there always is the great need for deacons.**

I. The Work of Providing for Physical Needs Is Too Important to Be Left Undone (verse 1)

A. Most people work to earn their own living, as well they should, and so do not need someone else to meet their physical needs for them

B. There are always types of people who cannot provide for themselves; someone else must give them their living out of their earnings; we have been over this concept before, just several weeks ago, so we won't linger here long; but to bring this to mind, see how they are described in the different periods of biblical history

1. from the time of the patriarchs Job 29:11-15

a. fatherless

b. widow

c. blind and lame (disabled)

2. from the time of the Old Testament Deuteronomy 14:27-29 (as several other places)

a. Levite

b. stranger (alien)

c. fatherless

d. widow

C. The work of providing for these is vitally important

In fact, James describes the doing of this as part of pure and undefiled religion

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

E. In these earliest days of the church of Jesus Christ, not surprisingly, the church is providing for the needs of the widows; later, in the letters to the churches, we read of the apostles appealing to the churches in strong terms and with much explanation that caring for all of these kinds of people is work much too important to be left undone

The work of providing for physical needs is too important to be left undone

## II. But This Important Work Must Not Be Left to the Pastors to Do (verse 2)

A. Because if it is left to the pastors, one or the other of two bad things will happen

1. They will devote themselves to the ministry of the word and to prayer, and will not give this important work the needed attention; and so problems will arise in this work (verse 1)
  - a. in this case those of Greek orientation felt that their widows were being neglected compared with the widows of Hebrew orientation
  - b. and we all know from experience that this kind of thing springs up all the time in churches, when pastors try to govern all the physical activities of the church with just a bit of their attention, while focusing on the word and prayer
2. They will devote themselves to this work, and will not give prayer and the ministry of the word the needed attention; and so problems will arise in that work (verse 2)
  - a. it seems to me this is the more common story
  - b. it goes like this: the pastor works hard to oversee all the work of the church in the area of meeting physical needs; then he preaches and teaches little and poorly, and he prays little and poorly
3. There is a third bad thing that sometimes happens, which is not mentioned here. Let us give it less note, but not fail to observe that sometimes a pastor works very hard on both of these areas. But something has to give somewhere.
  - a. sometimes he neglects his own health, especially sleep, and has some kind of breakdown, either suddenly or slowly
  - b. sometimes he neglects his own family, and has some kind of rebellion from his wife or his children

B. The reasoning is that if the pastors do the very important work of meeting physical needs, they will necessarily neglect the even more important work of meeting spiritual needs

1. the church's elders have been charged with the ministry of the Word and with prayer; that is, their office in the church demands that they make disciples by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and teach those disciples to obey the commands of Christ; along with this comes the responsibility to pray about these things and to lead others in prayer; this is the work by which God saves people's souls for all eternity; think how undesirable it is

that the work of saving men's souls for eternity should be neglected in favor of doing work that saves men's bodies during this life only (verse 2)

2. the neglect would come in different forms

- a. reluctance to establish additional preaching and teaching times
- b. very short sermons and bible studies, leaving the congregation taught only very little
- c. frequent errors in exegesis, due to hurried preparation

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But this important work must not be left to the pastors to do

### III. Instead, This Important Work Must Be Done By Certain Men Chosen To Do It (verse 3)

NOTE: Not meaning that only certain people may work to meet the physical needs of God's church; no, everyone helps with these things;; but the responsibility to make sure this work gets done well must be assigned to certain men

A. How did the apostles know that this work must be assigned specifically to certain chosen men? They followed the model given in the scriptures, as we read earlier: just as Moses led the Israelites to do, so the apostles led the church to do

1. this happens time and again in the New Testament scriptures: the apostles take principles from the Old Testament scriptures and apply them in the New Testament church
2. the phrase used in our confession of faith to describe the value of the old laws in the new church is "general equity;" underlying the many laws in the Old Covenant is a sense of reverencing God and treating every person justly; of doing everything in such a way that God will not be dishonored and people will not be mistreated

B. How are these certain men to be chosen?

1. They are to be chosen by the congregation, not by the pastors
2. They are to be chosen from among the members of the church
3. They are to be looked for, searched for, chosen by inspection  
illus. looking through fruit at the store; looking through boards at the lumber yard

C. How does the congregation know whom to choose? The apostles gave the church a list of qualifications, very brief and general. Later, the apostle Paul wrote another list, which is longer and more specific (1 Timothy 3:8-12). **[Note: see here in 1 Tim 3:8 the name given to the men who service in this office: deacons]** Taking them together, it becomes:

1. They must be men of good reputation
2. They must be men full of the Holy Spirit
3. They must be men full of wisdom
4. They must be reverent, grave, dignified
5. They must not be double-tongued
6. They must not be given to drinking much wine
7. They must not be greedy for money
8. They must hold to the Christian faith with a pure conscience

9. If married, they must be husbands of but one wife  
That one wife must also be reverent, temperate, faithful; not a gossip or slanderer
10. They must rule their own households well (1 Timothy 3:12)
  - a. specifically: ruling their own children well
  - b. more fully: If fathers, they must have their children in submission with all reverence (1 Timothy 3:4)
  - c. explained: because if a man does not know how to rule his own household, it is not to be expected that he will be able to take care of the church

D. Why this long list of qualifications?

1. These men will be entrusted with very important work. If left undone, or if poorly done, it will allow strife within the church, and will damage the church's reputation to outsiders, so hindering the proclaiming of the gospel. It must be a high caliber of men who are entrusted with work of this importance.
2. These men will be entrusted with the use of the church's money. Temptation to misuse it will be very strong.
3. These men will be given some authority, some power. Temptation to puff up with pride and misuse that authority will be strong.
4. The church will look to these men for leadership in future decision-making.
  - a. the elders will look to them
  - b. the congregation as a whole
  - c. the individual Christians
5. These men will serve as illustrations of what it means to be full of the Holy Spirit. They will serve as model Christians. They will carry the official endorsement of the church. Christians will be told, in effect, "This is what you are trying to be like." Unbelievers will be told, in effect, "If you believe in Jesus Christ, He will make you be like this."
6. Note that the church at this time was made up of at least 5,000 men, and the apostles asked for seven to serve.

E. So, as a process, it goes like this:

1. The church sees that the important work of meeting physical needs is not being done sufficiently well, and brings that to the attention of the pastors
2. The pastors direct the church to choose qualified men, and may state the

number of men needed

3. The church searches within its membership for qualified men, examining them according to the scriptural qualifications; if they find any, they present them to the pastors

4. The pastors, examining the men, and finding them qualified, pray for them and lay hands on them, so appointing them to the work

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IV. When This Important Work Is Done, then the Pastors' Work Also Can Be Done, to the Salvation of the Lost (verse 7)

A. When the pastors concentrate on the word and prayer

1. the word of God spreads

2. the disciples multiply

3. leaders from false religious groups are converted

B. What we will see in the next few chapters is that some of the men chosen as deacons, namely Philip and Stephen, became some of the church's most effective evangelistic preachers; it seems that this is a wonderful by-product of obeying the Lord's instructions for handling this kind of thing---in the process, some men initially chosen for the physical work of the church will be spurred on to excel in the spiritual ministry, also!

C. Please note the difference between some of the modern-day ideas for reaching the lost with the gospel and the bible's instructions for what helps reach the lost

1. you have heard it said that to reach the lost you must have a super bowl party; the bible says to choose qualified deacons

2. you have heard it said that to reach the lost you must have an Easter egg hunt; the bible says to take care of those who can't take care of themselves

3. you have heard it said that to reach the lost you must conduct exciting, entertaining programs; the bible says to concentrate on the ministry of the word and prayer

D. A well-ordered church, where all members do what the Bible commands at work, at home, and in the assembly, is well set up to be used of the Lord in reaching the lost with the gospel

## CONCLUSION

Look to yourselves now. Take these instructions from the apostles and take stock of your own situation, both as individuals and as a church.

1. Men and boys, are you striving to meet these qualifications, not to gain an office in the church, but to be ready to serve the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you just messing around, focused on the pleasures of this life, and merely dabbling in Christianity? Let it be that from now on you are praying and working toward meeting these qualifications, so the church can call on you to serve as one of these chosen men.
2. Wives, are you striving to meet these qualifications yourself? Or are you a wife who will, by her faulty character and poor reputation, leave her husband unqualified to serve? Let it be that from now on, you are praying and working toward being a qualified wife, so you can be a help, not a hindrance, to your husband's service.
3. Men, again, have you firmly joined yourself to the church as a member? If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, by rights you are a member of Christ's church. But your fellow believers cannot consider you a member of this particular church if you don't allow it.
4. All believers in Christ, are you firmly committed to the bible's list of qualifications? What if there are some men you would like to see serving as deacons? Do you insist that only those who are qualified may hold that office, or do personal loyalties trump the bible's instructions?
5. Church, have you been praying about this? "Lord, do Your work in the men and boys of this church; mold them, fill them, move them, fit them for this work." If not, let it be that from now on your prayers go to the Father, asking Him to prepare men for this service.

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When this important work is done, then the pastors' work also can be done, to the salvation of the lost

**There is work too important to leave undone; therefore in the church of Jesus Christ there always is the great need for deacons.**



Prelude: Trinity 15 "Come, Let Us Sing Unto the Lord" - Dorita

Trinity 690 "Jesus Paid It All" - Dorita

Trinity 122 "Of the Father's Love Begotten" - Dorita

Grace 68 "Holy Child" - Anna

Trinity 125 "My Heart Doth Overflow" - Camille

This passage in Deuteronomy forms the basis both for the deacon ministry in the church the republican form of government in the country.

Philip had a long fruitful life of service in God's church  
Stephen was martyred after only very brief service

**JRY:**

The church must not appoint to the deacon office someone who is not eminently qualified, because the church and the community will see this as our example of what these qualifications mean.

Of course, a person who shows no interest in doing these things will not be appointed to doing them.

The apostles are describing their duties here in terms of themselves as pastors, not as apostles.

The Greek word is used in several senses, as are "law," "Israel," and "Moses."

Call to Worship: Isaiah 12:1

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 1:9-18

Sermon: The Great Need for Deacons Acts 6:1-7

Benediction: Isaiah 12:2

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