

Deacons (3)—The Qualifications of the Deacon: Men Whose Witness and Work Testify to Spirit-Transformation

2022.05.01 Morning Sermon in **Acts 6:3–5**

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Main idea: The Lord has attended, in part, to our earthly needs by giving us Spiritual men to oversee our ministry to one another in those needs.

³Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁵And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch

Introduction: Serving an ascended, enthroned Christ by proclaiming eternal life in Him can be hindered by inconvenience and inconsistency.

1. Men

- a. A male-specific word. This is one of the qualifications. There is no such thing as a woman who is qualified for this office, though all Christian women should seek the rest of the qualifications for this office.
- b. This is another part of the data that show that this is an office of authority.
- c. It also means that the first place to look for “witness” is from his wife and children.

2. Witness (reputation of fruit).

- a. Others give good witness to their conduct. They are not all talk.
- b. Their conduct gives good witness to their character.

3. Full of the Holy Spirit (source and nature of fruit).

- a. Source of the fruit: the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. These qualifications are not attainments from the man, but gifts from Christ. A man obtains the qualifications of a deacon by grace.
- b. Nature of the fruit: those things that we see in the context in Acts that the Spirit especially does to a man; and those things that we see in the context of the New Testament that the apostles would have been preaching as the fruit of the Spirit’s work in a man. Especially (but not limited to) that nine-fold single fruit described in Gal 5:22–23.
 - i. Knowing (2:36) and believing that Jesus is the Lord Christ (2:38). And being ready to give an answer in behalf of Him and His gospel (6:9–10; 7:2–53). i.e. Having the mind of Christ (cf. 1Cor 1:17–2:16). Full of faith (v5) means not hoping against hope but with absolute confidence that God Himself and what God says is true and reliable.
 - ii. Having the character of Christ (cf. Rom 8:1–27, 12:1–2)
 - iii. Displaying those qualities that believers have and are increasing: diligence, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2Pet 1:5–7)
 - iv. **Love**—wholehearted commitment to the good of the object, first and foremost the desire that God would receive His due glory, and then one’s neighbor as oneself.
 - v. **Joy**—especially flowing from love for God, because of delight in the absolute confidence that He will, indeed, receive that due glory.
 - vi. **Peace**—the stable state of knowing that this God bends all things toward His glory and our good. And therefore peaceableness with others.

- vii. **Patience**—both before God (because of our own sin), but especially “bearing long” with others’ sin. Some of the “necessities” with which the deacon deals are simply because of our finiteness. But others are due to sins of one or many, and the deacon must be one who can “bear long” with believers whose sanctification is far from perfect.
- viii. **Kindness**—the outward manner that displays an inward affection. Countenance, word choice, tone. They are safe for you, and your name is safe on their lips.
- ix. **Goodness**—actions that flow from the affection of kindness to keep the commitments of love. If either one (kindness or goodness) are missing, then claims of love are hollow and vain. This is why another aspect of the fruit is...
- x. **Faithfulness**—saying what you mean, keeping your promises, fulfilling your obligations. An integrity that never needs to waver because God Himself is already faithful to you, and you cannot come out a loser by doing what He requires of you.
- xi. **Gentleness**—the last two aspects of the fruit are denials of the flesh. This one is a denial of the pride of the flesh. The word is actually “meekness.” It is first and foremost toward God: submissiveness to obey God’s Word and submissiveness to accept His providence. But then it expresses itself toward others: recognizing that any good we have is a gift, esteeming others better than ourselves, and preferring their interests to our own. It is closely related to kindness because this humility and tenderness of heart expresses itself in gentle and affectionate demeanor and manner.
- xii. **Self-control**—denial of the pleasures of the flesh. Distrust of emotions and desires, recognizes that feelings are not to be trusted, that desires are often wrong, and that even good desires often come in a wrong proportion. So if self-control doesn’t actually trust self, then who’s in control? Scripture-control. But how can the Scripture control me? Not by the force of my effort to control myself (I cannot be trusted!, cf. Rom 7:5–24) but by looking to the Spirit to use the Scripture to control me (cf. Rom 8:1–27). ... the last two aspects of the fruit are especially highlighted in the “walking in the Spirit” of vv24–26... men whose crucifixion of their flesh with its passions and desires has produced a man who is **humble and not provocative**.

4. **Wisdom** (track record of application of that fruit).

- a. Skill in practice. Similar to “able men” of Ex 18:21 (where “fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness” correspond to what we’ve already seen above)
- b. Tested by their life, and the skill and effectiveness that the Lord has providentially given them.
- c. Tested by the church (cf. 1Tim 3:10), and found blameless in that test. (which is another proof that the ministry of service, while overseen by the deacons, is carried out by many)
- d. Tested in their home (cf. 1Tim 3:12)
- e. One significant example being Joseph in Egypt (cf. 7:10). Whatever he puts his hand to prospers, and whomever with whom he interacts favors. God has established the work of his hands and given him favor in the eyes of others.

Conclusion: The qualifications of a deacon are all the very things that all believers hope that God is producing in us. So, when we see that the Lord does this exemplary work in some, who then are recognized by us, and proceed to help us in our service in earthly things, we ought to praise and thank Him for that! And we ought to seek from Him to do that work in us, and in our children. And as He does it in men and boys, we should be preparing to recognize those in whom He does it in such a way as to identify them to us as the deacons that He has called for Himself and given to us.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Acts chapter 6. Our portion today is just verse 3 Act 6:3. These are the words of God. Therefore, brethren seek out from among you seven. Men of good reputation full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business so far, the reading of God's inspired and dinner and toward

So, the last couple of weeks we have heard

About the purpose of the Office of Deacon that the ministers of the Word, in this case the Apostles. But later those whom God calls to be ministers of the Word in the generations, following the Apostles that the ministers of the Word would be freed for the ministry of the word that they would not be the ones who receive complaints and come up with plans for addressing them and oversee all of the net.

The earthly things that are necessary, but they need to give themselves to prayer. And to the ministry of the word prayer being both necessary for understanding the word rightly, and for seeking from God, that power that must attend the preaching. Because even the most technically accurate and well, presented preaching cannot ever succeed apart from the power of God.

And so they must pray, especially in connection with their own ministry and part of their ministry is also this in every house. Helping the men know how to pray. Since men must lift up holy hands without wrath or doubting in every place to be the ones who lead prayer.

And so deacons exist, for the purpose of freeing, the ministers of the word, especially for that. And then we heard about the work of the deacon, which we see. Even in the passage in the verse that which is our passage today, that they are over the necessary things needful or necessary or required being the idea behind the word that's translated business.

But they are authorities over those things. And so, in this case, the thing that was necessary was the collecting of that, which was given and distributing it in a wise and fair manner, not just, so that people wouldn't be hungry. It's hard to listen and live, well, when you're hungry, but also so that people would not have in their hearts.

The difficulty of the inconsistency of preaching Christ and His goodness and then not being good to others. So conflict and disunity dissension. Bitterness these things in a congregation are very contrary. Make us unable especially in the public worship to lift heart and mind before God and hear his word.

Well, they are offenses against the Holy Spirit who is who gives us our fellowship with one another and failing to be kind to one. Another tender hearted and forgiving one another, but rather harsh and unforgiving and bitter. These are the ways in which we grieve the Holy Spirit upon whom entirely rests.

Then this the success of the ministry and work and worship of the church. So in this case, it was hunger but there are other things that are needful and necessary that have to be attended to so that we may have the ministry of the word. And so that we may have prayer properly, that was more important that they pray and teach others to pray.

That was more important for the apostles to do for the success of the minister of the Word. But while that was important, that wasn't the only needful thing. There are a number of earthly things that needed attended to eventually you get to a situation like we have now where the church has to figure out a place to gather and has to figure out the logistics that are necessary and all those things and someone needs to lead in those things.

And that's what we have deacons for. And so today we come to having heard of the purpose of the Office of Deacon and brief sketch of the work of a deacon. We come to what are the characteristics or qualifications of a deacon? And he says, therefore brethren seek out from among you seven, men and it is the male specific word for men.

It's not surprising. Since the Lord gave, man to be in authority, and since this is an office of authority. And another apostle says elsewhere. In first, Timothy 2, he doesn't allow a woman to have authority over a man, so they have to be men. And then it says of good reputation, men of witness men, whose character witnesses to their faith and to the fact of their having the Holy Spirit and men about whom others witness that they are full of the Holy Spirit.

And so, it says, men have witness full of the Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit thus far has been especially announcing Christ. This is what we saw at Pentecost. When the Spirit came down, what immediately happened to the men who received the spirit, they preached, Excuse me, and they preached Jesus as the Lord and Christ.

So that when that event becomes Peter's sermon Peter's sermon is a sermon especially on Joel chapter 2 in which you always says he will pour out his spirit and in which, everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved. Joel 2, verse 28, and Joel 2, verse 32.

And then Peter concludes his sermon God has made this Jesus. In you crucified both Lord. He is Yahweh from Joel to and Christ, the promised anointed one, the Savior of Israel, the great king from the line of David, and then when they say, what shall we do? He says, repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit gives the message, and the Holy Spirit, gives the ability to receive and be convinced of the message. And to trust in the Christ of the message, This was the great work of the Holy Spirit. This is the first great thing that it means when he says men of reputation or men of witness full of the.

Holy Spirit does not mean men who do not use their minds or who are overly emotional or who seem to get impulses from God and our lead around by impulses. Those are all false definitions that people actually have of being filled with the Holy Spirit that you have to watch out for when you talk to other Christians.

But the first thing is that they be men who are convinced by the Holy Spirit of right doctrine and not just our convinced but probably have some ability in giving an answer for their faith. We often refer to what Steven does in the next chapter as his sermon. But it's really Steven giving an answer for his faith.

He's on trial, he's being accused that his faith attacks, Moses and the temple, and he is ready to give an answer for his hope and answer for why he believes Jesus to be who he says he is and to have done what Jesus says he has done. And of course Steven's answer is no, actually you guys hate Moses and all of all of God's true ways of doing things, Moses prophesied about Christ.

The temple looked words to Christ. The temple was never able to contain the living God. But Christ himself is the great prophet that Moses promised Christ is attacked. Just like you have attacked all of the good men that the Lord has ever sent his people. And now you have attacked and killed his son.

And Christ is the one to whom the temple looked forward in whom the fullness of the Godhead is actually able to dwell bodily because he's a divine person with with the two nature's. So, you see the kind of man who is full of the spirit as someone who understands the scriptures?

Well, especially receives, and is able to, to understand. And even communicate the truth about Jesus deacon is not a teaching office, but one of the primary qualifications for the office being full of the spirit means it's someone who has very good doctrine and is able to show that doctrine particularly in its connection to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Alas we live in an age when very many who are in even the Office of Elder do not have this aspect of being full of the Holy Spirit which is a qualification Deacon. Well, we got that far in the the sermon last week. The next part is wisdom, the wisdom of God, being not just the knowledge of Christ, but the working out of that knowledge, not just in the character, but in the work of life and being skillful, this wisdom is wisdom.

Not only in spiritual things, we have we've mentioned good doctrine and the handling of good doctrine. And there is skill and spiritual things, and the producing of fruit in the life, which we're going to, which we're oh, what can do the rest of the follow the Holy Spirit. So it's not just doctrine with the Holy Spirit.

But also the fruit of the spirit, the, the doctrinal teaching, and the doctrinal receptiveness. For instance, in first Corinthians chapter 2 is a big part of being full of the Holy Spirit, but it's also, someone who has a spirit formed character because what does the spirit do, the spirit takes away the mind of atom and gives you the mind of Christ?

That's how you come to be able to receive the gospel in the first place. But then, as he takes away the mind of Adam, he makes you to hate and crucify. The works of the flesh. And so, Galatians 5 talks about the works of the flesh that are obvious, and that are crucified by those who are in Jesus waste.

Well, that means your active in killing sin. But it also means that in the place of that fleshliness that is being removed from your life. The Holy Spirit is producing fruit and I don't know if an if any of your Bible, verse songs, had a list of the fruits of the spirit.

That's one of the most helpful Bible verse songs that I had. When I was a little kid, I still remember. It's probably NIV because that's what we had in my church growing up and God still has been very merciful to me. Praise God, but love joy, peace patients, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control and the so you're killing sin.

Love is first, of course because it the love of God is that from which all other obedience and graces and service must flow joy in the Lord. Knowing his love for you is the only way you come to love God and loving God is the only way you come genuinely or rightly to love others.

If you love others apart from the love of God, then you make the second great commandment into the first great commandment. And you owe disobey the first commandment. And so there's love and joy. So this joy is as of one who knows, God himself and who knows? God's love for you and who has already the hope of the gospel.

And so the certainty that that knowledge of God that you have. Now partially you will have fully and that knowledge of his love and enjoyment of him that you have. Now, partially you will have fully and so Christian ought to be joyful in the Lord, in a way that cannot be taken by circumstances.

This is also one of the primary ways that we love one another is by having not just joy, not just being a pleasant person to be around so that you're not always dragging someone down. But joy in the Lord, someone who has always pleasant in worldly. Things always excited about or enjoying frivolous.

Things is not is not demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit is not loving others. And the joy of course, produces the piece, the stability, someone who has this in themselves will find that, they are not what they want to be. And others certainly are not what they ought to be.

And that gives us room for patients. If you have love, and joy, and peace, in an age in which you are a sinner and others are sinners, then the love and the joy, and peace counter. The difficulties in the current circumstance, the greatest of which is that we're still sinning and being sinned against and you can exercise patience, patience with yourself every time, you see the sin giving it that strong, no working hard to kill it learning.

What helps you what God has given to help you in killing it. And also making observations in your own life about the way of killing sin. And yet having all along this patience. That comes from a confidence in God and a hope in God that enables you not to be always frustrated and anxious and discouraged and despairing.

But patients also with others that you do not, take personally and respond intensely to others sitting against you or falling short in what they ought to be kindness. Then the attitude of wanting, what is the best for others, not just the the giving of yourself and the commitment of yourself really for the good of others or onto the glory of God, since you can't do God, any good, That was love that committing of yourself onto the glory of God and unto the good of others as His love for others.

But that kindness as an aspect of love, it is the aspect of love that desires for them. That is interested in and delights in good coming to them and it is, especially expressed in as your thoughts are internal to yourself. However, kindness is also the term that is used for seeing that affection in others.

It will be tied to goodness and gentleness, which we, which are the next two. But it has a lot to do with your countenance towards others. The way you look at them, the tone of your voice with them. It's one of the reasons why it's so alarming when we use or hear one another's names used in a harsh way.

Or when our language with one, another is gruff or snippy. Or when we give haughty or murderous stairs, all of these things communicate and expose from the heart unkindness. But if we're committed to the good of others, let us also be kind, but let us also have that emotional and relational component of kindness.

And then goodness. That's just actions that it's not a surface level fraud in our kindness or an imaginary but without substance unreality in our commitment to others, you'd say, well I'm committed to you, but if you don't ever do anything for them, are you really committed to them? And you may smile upon them and and speak and warm tones and all of those things.

But it's exposed does not coming from a genuine heart of love. If there's not actions or even worse, if there's actions that harm and so goodness, especially in charitable, deeds, gentleness actually translates a word that means something more along the lines of meekness humility, lowliness self self-forgetfulness. And this is something that can be seen in others and towards others, but as especially between you and God, that you would know that God is glorious.

And therefore everything you do would not be so that others would think well of you. But so that others would think well of him. And if God is glorious, then those whom he has made in his image are worth spending time and effort on rather than always thinking and laboring and plotting towards how you can appear better.

You now are spending your, your thoughts and your planning and your desires on how God can be glorified to others, because they're enjoying Him as the best thing for them. And so meekness really is the heart from which genuine goodness can come. Because if the actions do not aim at God being praised and that others and at others enjoying and praising him, then they're not really good actions.

You know, you may, you may attend to some need that reflects the way that God, attends to all of our needs and in the way that you reflect that God does that, there's some superficial good, but if it doesn't come with humility, if it doesn't come with meekness, if it doesn't come with lowliness, it doesn't come with a desire that God would be praised.

If it doesn't come with a desire that they would enjoy, first and foremost in Then, as it really good. And so you tell yourself a great big, no, whenever your heart wants to be praised that's gentleness or meekness the other. The next one is telling yourself a great big, no.

And you can see it right in the word. Can't you self-control If meekness is telling yourself a great big. No. When you want to be praised self-control is telling yourself a great break. No. When you want to be pleased, There are many things that that we might do or abuse either.

We would do them in a wrong time or a wrong proportion or wrong way. There are many things are sinful in and of themselves. A lot of things that you have to tell yourself know about and in this life but if God is not the ruler of your heart of the spirit is not the ruler of your heart.

If you're if you're impulses rule your heart instead, then how you ever going to love God. And if you don't love God, you can't love people. And all the rest of the fruit fall apart, which is why these nine things are the fruit singular, not the fruits, plural of the spirit in Galatians 5:22, they all hold together and we may think that we have one or a half a dozen of them.

But if we don't have the other three at least in some measure then than the taxonomist who comes and he says, what kind of fruit is it? And he starts checking off the list of the nine different characteristics that are necessary for a positive diagnose, diagnosis of Holy Spirit fruit.

If you only gets to six and seven, eight and nine are completely absent. He says, nope, it looks a little bit like a fruit of the spirit for there are, there are three essential components that are missing. This is, this is something else. All right? So someone who's qualified to be a deacon and we could look at other places but they hold to to write doctrine with conviction and even some ability to communicate and answer for the hope that is within them and they are bearing.

The fruit of the Spirit, they're crucifying the deeds of of the flesh. But they're also full of wisdom, which just to say they are good at living the kind of life and producing effects in life, both spiritual effects. And this is not just in the way they conduct themselves which gives them good witness.

But if we were good to go to first Timothy 3 or Titus chapter 1, we would see that they have had skill also in how they run their own household. And scripture says, they ought to be tested. First, you know, is the spirit really not just working in them.

The way he works in everyone else, but as he working in them in a way, that makes them useful for leading others setting, an example for others, organizing others leading others. So they must be full of wisdom. They must have some ability and some opportunity to build some track record of being useful by the spirit in actual producing of results.

The first place that that happens is, of course, as we said for somebody three Titus, one in the family, One of the things that a well-qualified diaconate then does for us, is it shows us what a Christian is supposed to look like. Because all Christians have the Spirit. If one does not have the spirit of Christ, he is none of his Romans 8 verse.

I think 12 all Christians are led by the Spirit of God as many as our led by the Spirit of God. These are the sons of God, Romans 8 verse 14. So, as we think about what kind of person a deacon should be and as a man hopes that the Holy Spirit will produce in him, the kind of character that a deacon should have and as we by God's mercy to us, hopefully have

properly called and qualified and ordained and installed deacons will have not people of whom we would say, oh I could never be someone like that.

They're so different than I am. But Thank God that the Holy Spirit makes all Christians like that, and that they are an example to me and a helper to me. There are example to me of what I ought to be. And a helper to me and walking in the way that that I ought to walk.

Now, that's the kind of person that God wants in his church that God has called that Christ has called in his church, to attend to the necessary things. Not so that it would be in competition with, or supplementary to the ministry of the Word, but it is a ministry of the word, loving ministry of the word, formed, spiritual person who recognizes that, that things being done.

Well in every area of life, actually enables us to better worship and better ministry of the word, and better reception of that word. And as we see the Lord doing that in them, we have good hope that the same spirit who has produced it in them, is working in us and they are a great help.

Then to the church in serving and filling out and helping be more effectual the ministry of the Word. So, that's the kind of, man, that we're looking for, for the diaganant and our congregation that every congregation should be looking for, to kind of, man, that dads should hope that their sons are going to grow up to be even if they never get recognized for it or installed to the office of deacon.

What of the things in the qualifications of the Office of Deacon? Would a man not want for his son and as the kind of thing that you my boys ought to seek to be but also you my girls because you don't pursue these qualifications so that you can get to be a deacon, aren't all of these things, except for maybe wanting to be an authority or headship.

Although if God makes you a mother, aren't you going to have authority of your children and skill and leading them well so that they grow and being one who even speaks the words to them, you know, aren't these things that you want to be able to do. And so the nursery of the diaganant the seminary for the diakonet is the home growing up and it's not a three-year program, it's like a 15-year program.

But if we think that we are going to train them, to be what they ought to be in prioritize, what they ought to prioritize in a few months time. Just because someone said, hey, we don't have enough deacons and everything is. Everything's grumbling around here. Then we haven't followed God's plan for producing qualified men.

So the Lord bless our private worship day by day are family worship day by day. Our public worship week by week and the spirit uses, his means to give us qualified men for this office. That Christ has institute in his church, it man. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven. We pray that your spirit would be working in us. That we would be spiritual men, who receive spiritual things, who knew give the mind of Christ, instead of the mind of the world. Since the natural mind is dead and cannot understand or receive the things of God that you would give us not just the mind of Christ but the character of Christ and Lord since one of the things that you have given your church to free up the ministry of the Word and to lead to the congregation and serving you, well in its use of material things.

Since one of the things you have given your church for that are deacons. We pray that you would give our church deacons who are like this and that you would be helping us all to be like this whether we would ever be deacons or not for your glory and for the good of your people.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen