

Church-to-Church Diaconal Ministry (1)

Biblical Theology of the Diaconate #41

2023.07.09 Sabbath School class

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All right. Let's uh, Go ahead and bring him prayer. Our gracious gardener heavenly father how he thank you and praise you that you have given us. Not only a fellowship with yourself. But also fellowship with one another and that One of the things you have given us to share with, you is then being good to one another.

Both with regard to each other's souls and With regard to each other's. Um, Earthly. And Physical well-being. We pray. Oh, lord, that you would Continue to conform us to christ. We thank you. That you have given us. Uh, instruction about what you use to do that. And you have given us your spirit.

Who applies christ himself to us. We thank you and praise you. That you have given your design for the church. For oh lord. We see how much. Confusion and variants, there is even with instruction in your word. Uh, how much more? Uh, perplexed and conflicted and confused we would be a lord.

Without your word. And so we bless your name for your goodness and your faithfulness your wisdom. Whether your generosity to us, And we ask that your spirit would now bless Your word unto our understanding. That we might follow after christ. And that. We might be pressed into his form that we might be conformed to him.

So we ask it in his name. Amen. Well, one of the things that we've been noticing the last, A couple of weeks is that. The. The diagonal service is part of that fellowship in which the lord. Has brought us. Uh, fellow in fellowship to himself. And therefore to each other.

And, Where you have a couple of good paragraphs on that in chapter 26 of the Westminster confession. Uh, that summarize well what we've seen from all these different scriptures. At a fair amount of length. All saints that are united to jesus christ their head by his spirit, and by faith have fellowship with him.

In his grace of sufferings death, resurrection and glory. And Being united to one another in love. They have communion in each other's gifts and graces and their obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private. As do conduced to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man, so there's that.

Duty that we have to want another in the outward man. And then the second paragraph. Covers that and a little bit more length saints by professional bound to maintain, and holy fellowship, and communion in the worship of god, and in the performing of such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification.

So that's the inward man. As also in relieving each other, in outward things according to their several abilities. And necessities. Rich communion as god, offered opportunity is to be extended unto. All those who in every place call upon the name of the lord jesus. And so that second half that extension of care in the outward man, focusing on the household of god not merely on the local congregation but recognizing That congregations of Christ's true church.

Everywhere are part of The household of god, the household of faith. What we saw in? Uh, in collision, six to go to all and especially to the household of faith. Has a broader extension and that's something that earlier in the book of galatians. Well, paul had Uh, recognized, you're taught them when he was teaching them, that we are all.

Uh, one house. Very similar to what we were considering the last couple of weeks in acts 21. With, uh, with the apostle going by the dividing wall, Whenever he went into the jewish only part of the temple. And we thought about ephesians 2 and how, this was the very apostle who had preached that jesus had, abolished the dividing wall, Uh, in galatians 2.

Uh, they had had a situation in antioch. Uh, where Peter. Been in antioch, and And it was. Um, And it was fine with him to To be with. The gentiles eating with them, but then, These jews came jewish, christians came. From jerusalem from james, the same james, By the way, who led the session meeting that convinced, Uh, convinced paul to do what he did.

In. In x21. Uh, but right before that, in in chapter 2, In in that particular context, paul was describing how The jerusalem church had actually recognized paul's ministry and the gentile churches as being of the of the same household. So he says, uh, from those who seem to be something whatever they were, it makes no difference to me.

God says, personal favoritism to know man. I'm up in verse 6 of chapter 2. For those who seemed to be something. Added nothing to me but on the contrary when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter for.

He who worked effectively and peter for the apostle slip to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the gentiles. And when james Surface peter. And john, who seemed to be pillars perceived, the grace that had been given to me. They gave me and Barnabas The right hand to fellowship.

That we should go to the gentiles and they to the circumcised. You perhaps have been you if you have been to a presbyterian meeting and And someone has been. Ordained minister has been ordained that the Presbyterian meeting. A couple of you. Were at? Uh, the installation service when i when i came in but i don't think they do.

Right hand to fellowship and installation, they do it at ordination. Uh, But this right hand of fellowship is a recognition. That it is, it is the same ministry in the same. Church. But one of the Uh, one of the corollararies of that. One of the necessary conclusions. Uh that there are one church, one household of faith like he's going to say four chapters later.

Is in verse 10. The desired only that we should remember the poor. The very thing which i was which i also Uh, was eager to do. And so, there's this. Uh, there's this Problem in. In the judean church and the jerusalem church perhaps because of Uh, jewish hostility. Uh, toward Uh, towards the The jewish christians unbelieving Jews towards believing jews, but also because a famine Occurred in judea around that time.

And so, Uh, so the believers, their brethren In judea needing. Uh, being in great material need. The brethren here in. Um, In Macedonia, galatia okaya. Uh, The gentle brethren. Were collecting. In order to send to them. And so there's a church to church. The actual ministry. This is something that Um,

But we need Uh connectionalism. Uh, across not only nations but really internationally. Uh, now in order to pursue something that Uh, we frankly don't do

particularly well. I was part of an organization that tried to do this. To some extent. Uh, when, when the organization that i was part of was began, trying to evangelize and Muslim majority countries.

One of the difficulties was Of finding a local church for someone who was. Converted, or inquiring, and there's a lot of danger with that and muslim authority countries, because they're not all sincere. When they indicate that they're interested in jesus, they might just be looking To out the local church.

And so partnershed, or Evangelism. Uh, through first, it was radio. And when the minister began Required. Knowledge of connection to local churches. And, Uh, eventually one of the one of the things that became Obvious, was that there were two big needs? Uh one was those, local churches need a training for their pastors and elders.

And They didn't have educational opportunity. Some of the countries you know the churches were literally on the run south sudan. For, for instance, Well, and so biblical training was A big need and that's the branch that i was in, but another big need was just survival. A lot of these churches, They, they were starving to death.

They were naked, they needed shelter. Uh, and And so, When we're connecting with churches to the west to bring in, Uh, ministers. From the west to teach. We were also connecting to churches in the west to try and And help with the actual needs in, in the various In the various reformed indigenous churches, but even that isn't really the biblical model is it.

Because the organization that i was That i was part of was acting as Uh, this kind of intermediary. Rather than Uh church to church or send it to senate or presbyterian Presbytery and so. So there's some Uh, there's some work to do here. To do it in the way.

That we hope to see in the rest of the passages under number two, there. On your outline. But remembering the poor then is A necessary corollary, a necessary conclusion. Of this right hand to fellowship of this connection. Of the one church. One visible church, capital c. Yes, the word church is often used of local assemblies.

But because we are so congregationalist. In our thinking. Um, we think of the church as basically just the congregation of which we're a member rather than Thinking more corporately, universally of the visible church. As a whole. You may have noticed that i tend to use the word congregation more often, when i talk about a local church.

And i tried to reserve the word church for something that is more broad or more connectional but there's a deaconly component to that. And, Especially. Uh, when When churches. Are not generally in need and don't have that much need among them, which is something else that That we have.

Uh, we have recognized as we've gone along that. Um congregations in our area. Generally do not have very many needy in them. And when they do, Uh, There's often just Person to person brother to brother charity. That can address it. We're not often in Situations, like the the church was an act six where there were so many people to take care of that, although there were wealthy.

Rather than them, try to distribute. Themselves. You know, they would bring and it would be distributed centrally by the church. But even then, It required administration and oversight. Dave. Okay. How do you see that practically taking place because What i I have observed. My read the old testament, especially It seems like churches in people walk into this place until they're best.

In other words, it seems like when they become destitute then these things. Begin to get carried out. Have nowhere else to go. Well, that often happens in the spiritual things as well. Uh, they play church, they play, even jolia motive. Whatever. And then, Persecution comes or god comes by his mercy in Uh, in communicating the greatness of his holiness.

And the horror of our sin. And, Uh, desperation for the lord himself and The gospel that actually redeems and transforms. Uh, as often used by god. As a precursor to revival in that. Uh, but yes, i i think you're you're right neediness. Um, Neediness is something that God has.

Has providence uses. I don't think. We're going to get to. A desire to be as biblical as possible. In care of earthly things without Spiritual revival and biblical reformation in the churches. In other words, Uh, we're not going to start doing better. Following god and obeying. The second table of the law.

Until god brings us to reformation and repentance with regard to the first table of the law. Hand in hand many times or very close time wise. Yeah, they they should and they will and this was actually something that happened. In the Reformation, many people lost. Uh, Land's titles property.

Of generational wealth. Uh, just by becoming Protestant by becoming. Reformed, and there was. Um, A providential giving of Material and earthly need that came at the same time. As the the giving of spiritual reformation, but if they hadn't had the spiritual reformation, they would not have done. Biblically and how they responded to the material need.

So yeah, a lot of those, a lot of those things do come. Um, Do come hand in hand. Yeah, it's interesting. We think of Well, we think of the book of romans, We're going next as. A summaries. Of the doctrines of grace in scripture and that it is, but it was also a A support letter asking.

Uh, asking for support. For mission work and in Romans 15, when he's Uh, when he's Um, Giving that. That request for support, one of the ways. That he does. So there's never so suddenly, by example, Uh, describing how The. The churches in Macedonia and decaya have supported for the material need of Um, Of the believers in jerusalem and now he was hoping that when he gets to Rome the church in Rome is going to support.

For the church planting or the evangelism. In gall, which was at the time was GAUL. Which was the name of spain. Um, So, he says, Whenever i journey to Spain, i shall come to you for. I hope to see you on my journey and be helped on my way that way there by you.

At first, i may enjoy your company for a while. But now, i am going to jerusalem to minister to the saints. Four. It please does from Macedonia and decaya to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in jerusalem. It pleased them, indeed. And they are their debtors For if the gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is to minister to then.

In material things. And as interesting, the word minister, we've noted many times as we've looked at new testament. Passages is often the word for deacon. Or the word service is often the the word for deacon. This word is actually A word that means a religious duty. Or a religious service and it's the word from which we, we get our word liturgy.

And so he's, he's describing. Uh, brothers care for one another. As a A spiritual. Exercise, although he does use Uh, the the diagonal word. For the Which is more servant rather than religious duty although you can see how those two things are. Concepts. Similar concepts. Uh, so Uh, there is this.

Church to church diagonal ministry. The that is. Um, That is taught and modeled in the new testament and the primary place that we see it. You know, a large portion to chapters of the book. That we call second Corinthians or the letter that we call 2nd Corinthians. Is actually devoted to.

This collection for the judean church. For the jerusalem church. So, if you are following along the bible or using a bible, you could turn to second Corinthians chapter 8. And you can see again this. This concept of fellowship. Fellowship, not only. With one another but fellowship with the lord, In his grace.

Is what what? Is the foundation. Of this material sharing. This is very different than merely loving your neighbor. Uh yes. There is A duty of love and charity to love your neighbor as yourself. But the actual ministry of the church as a church. Is focused entirely on believers. The church is not a neighbor.

To the world, the believer has neighbors. In the world. But this actually, The, the actual ministry of the church comes out of the Uh, the fellowship the union that the church has in christ. So, he starts. Second Corinthians moreover brethren, we make known to you the grace of god bestood on the churches of Macedonia that in a great trial of affliction.

The abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. Now, when he says riches, he doesn't necessarily mean the the Uh, quantitative size. Of the gift. Remember what the lord jesus said about the widow with the two copper coins. One of the things that God did by giving them poverty was he gave them joy in poverty.

He gave them the Philippians 4 opportunity, Right? If you have joy, when you're wealthy. Uh, then you might, then you might not know if that joy is in the lord. Um, it's actually very difficult spiritually or challenging spiritually to abound in the right way. So in philippians 4, one of the things that that the lord had done by his grace and all was give him to know how to abound That even with all of these earthly, things has joy would be in the lord.

But it can be a gift from his providence, if he takes away your earthly things and you still have your joy. And then if you give, you have an abundance of generosity, even if the gift is smaller than what it was when you had much. Uh, and so there's this demonstration of abundance of generosity that connects in verse 9.

It is a demonstration of life. That did not come from you. Remember those of you, many of you Have been attending the The midweek sermons and Romans and to recognize and as we're recognizing, what's coming out of me, that's from my remaining flesh. And what's coming out of me, that is from christ by the spirit and the new life that i have in him.

So that i, you know, want to choke and strangled, suffocate and kill what's coming out of me, that's from my flesh, and i want to cultivate and flourish and encourage and practice what's coming out of me. That's from christ. Well, one of the things that comes out of us that is from christ.

He's saying here is generosity So, So, Of, you know, kids, this may be one of the easiest ways for you to recognize the flesh and to recognize the spirit that part of you that wants to cling tightly to all the stuff that you That you treasure as yours that is coming from your flesh.

And that part of you that wants to, To use it to. Uh, to minister to others, to show them that you prefer them to yourself. To care for them to honor the lord with that that comes from the life of jesus in you. And that's something you can learn and practice and develop in your living room or toy room or whatever.

It is, what wealthy christians in the history of the world have had toy rooms. A little potentates. But you can practice it there, but it's really what paul is talking to the Corinthians about, isn't he? About. Uh, their fellowship with one another and showing the grace of generosity. For i bear witness that according to their ability yes and beyond their ability.

There were freely willing and flooring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship. Of the ministering to the saints. And there's that word again, fellowship and that word. Ministering in this case, in verse 4 is The diatomal word. It's, it's from the same word that we get.

And that we get the word deacon. And not only as we had to first, they gave themselves to the lord and then to us by the will of god. So we urge titus, that is, he had begun. So he would also complete this grace in you as well, because you abound in everything and faith, and speech, and knowledge and all diligence and in your love for us.

See that you abound in this grace also, I speak not by commandment but i'm testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence for of others for you know the grace. Of our lord jesus christ. Uh, and so, he's saying, one of the ways that you could tell that what's coming out of you is from jesus, is that it looks like what he has done in others.

This is the, this is the A greatly encouraging thing for a christian. I don't know if you have. I have a have ever heard or maybe even responded this way from your flesh, you hear about something that a christian does. And you're like oh I could never do that.

I could never go through that. I could never respond to to that suffering, that way. Uh, But that didn't come out of them. It came out of the same. If it's a, if we're talking about something that was a work of the grace of christ in them, it came from the same christ to whom you are united, by the same spirit, who is applying Christ to them.

And as applying Christ to you And so when when we talk about things like growing in obedience and growing in christian maturity and suffering, well or abounding well or whatever other part of the christian life, it is We're talking about a grace that is at work in all. In all christians.

And so, Uh, So he's comparing, he says. I'm not commanding. You i'm testing the sincerity of your love by the public, diligence of others. Here's what their since your love from jesus produced and then don't you want to know. If what is in, you is actually from jesus. Well, obeying him independence upon At his grace give Uh, give cheerfully.

And so, don't just commit. Uh, we all have moments in which we We resolve and we commit but now he says don't just commit follow through. Because jesus gives us more than feelings and more than intentions this too of corresponds to what we've been hearing in the second half of ramen, seven, and the first half of Romans, Romans 8, at the midweek meetings, you know, that that phrase that he's using the law of my mind to talk about his new intentions, and his new resolutions that the spirit has given him because he's united to christ now.

And he's no longer in himself. When in his flesh, he's in christ, even though his flesh is still in him, he is not in his flesh. And so he's got the law of his mind. But what else do he had? He had what he calls the law of his members, or the law of sin.

That is always present with him, the one who wills to do good, but he, thanks god. And, and we're just started to get into this this past wednesday, but we'll be

doing this for a couple of weeks. In the first third or so, of Of chapter 8. He thanks god that the one who has given him this new willingness is also in the process of giving him.

The walking is in the process of giving him the following through because both come from jesus. And so the first part, He says, this is one of the things where you can see if you really have christ, if you really have Christ's grace, one of the things he will produce in your heart is generosity.

And especially generosity towards the brothers and he gives not just commitment. But also follow through. And that's versus 10 through 15. And in this, i give advice it is to your advantage. Not only to be doing what you began and we're desiring to do a year ago. So there's a commitment and here comes the follow-through, but now you also must complete The doing of it.

That as there was a readiness to desire it. So they're also may be a completion. Out of what you have. For if there is first, a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has and not according to what he does not have. And so if you read between the lines, there may be an implication that the Corinthians Are giving up on or endanger of giving up on the contributing, the to the collection because they're not impressed with the amount that they have.

That they have collected. But he's saying, jesus gave you the willingness follow through, with whatever jesus has given you in his providence? He's not expecting you to match a quantity that you had hoped to give or a quantity that somebody else was able to give or a quantity that the person you're sending it to was hoping to receive What was what he's expecting you to do is to follow through, according to what it's in his province.

Anyway, you actually have Uh, follow through. With your commitment, with your desire. For, and he He continues for if there was first to willing my. Okay? We've read verse 12. For i do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened but by inequality that now at this time your abundance may supply their laugh.

That their abundance also may supply your life. That there may be equality. This is not Equal outcome, that's of course. Equal consideration. But both recognizing that the providence comes from christ. That who has at what time and how much they have and how much they're able to get. That, that all belongs to jesus.

And so you have willingness and you have generosity. That is a fellowship. In christ commitment, completion of the effort by man. We put in And this is still grace dependent the effort that we've committed to but whatever fruit comes from it or comes out of it who gave the fruit It was the lord.

And so if it wasn't as much as we had hoped, It's still, it was what the lord in his wisdom gave us to be able to give Now that's actually something that the lord helping us. I know it's a 5-point sermon. It's probably more than we can. Uh, more than we can chew, but we're going to bite it off.

At least in the In the worship today, we'll find that that's also true in evangelism. Paul was sure he could convince The jewish christians and jesus said no, actually you're not gonna Well, that was in jesus's providence. Is the one. Who decides who gets convinced? Uh, So, this expression of Uh, this fellowship that we have with christ and in christ with each other and This dependence on providence.

Versus 10 through 15. It is to be carried out with accountability. And you see that in the rest of chapter 8 and we're probably We're probably going to have to stop. There he says, but thanks beat the god. Who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of titus.

So, Again. Notice what he's saying about, where care among believers comes from, he puts the care into the heart. Which means if you don't care, like, you should. There's a solution. For that. There's help for you. You say lord, i don't want to be generous. Like mom tells me too, all the time when she tells me to share, like pastor keeps saying is where deactonal ministry is learned in my living room or my toy room.

But you put care into the heart of titus. Uh, for the go, for the Corinthians, and you put care into the heart of the Macedonians for the christians in jerusalem and you put care into the heart of the paranthians. For the same in jerusalem. Please put care for others into my art too.

And then there's There's the Testing or the proving by accountability. For he not only accepted the exhortation but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord and we have sent with him. The brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. And so paul is what is he doing?

He's uh, He's saying that. Titus was designated and immediately. He he took upon himself more. Then he was. Instructed to do and verse 18 may be luke. But we have sent with him. The brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. He's attesting the ones who are conducting the administration of the finances.

And not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift. Okay, so there again, you have this, this formal designation delegation, which is administered by us to the glory of the lord himself and to show you already mind avoiding this. That anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us.

Providing honorable things not only in the side of the lord. Okay, so Transparency is important integrity and accountability they're, you know, their ability to say yes, the people who are supposed to handle it. Handle that. Yes, they handled it. The way they were supposed to. The church should handle its finances in a way that people can say that without forgetting.

That the primary reason to give is not for the sight of man. It's for the sight of the lord and you can see that in verse 19, you can see that In verse 21. It is. Uh, it is the lord first and foremost. Whom we care to please, whom we care to serve.

That's what we mean. By theism there. Over against the humanism that That. Treats man, as primary. Even in the churches sadly and we have sent with them. Our brother whom we have often proved diligent many things but now much more diligent because of the great confidence which we have in you.

If anyone inquires about titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you or if our brethren are inquired about their messengers of the churches, the glory of christ go to them. And before the churches, the proof, Of your love and of our boasting, your behalf. And so, we'll have to take.

The rest of a. And hopefully be and see next lord's day. Let's pray.

Our father in heaven. We do thank you and praise you. That you give us not only, Of christ but also to make him known to bring him glory. As the one by him. Through whom we have, not only been forgiven. Of our trespasses but are also being cleansed of unrighteousness.

The one who's life and character and goodness. You are producing in us and oh lord jesus. We praise you for how much generosity? And willingness to be brought low for the sake of others. Even As part of your character in which you have saved us. Thank you for giving us opportunity when we or a brother are

brought low to Participate.

With one another. To have this fellowship. An experiencing you. And, Expressing. And Uh, your glory and serving you in serving one. Another please give us to do that, not only within our congregation Uh, but with your visible church as a whole We asking your name lord jesus. Amen.