

Church Government:

Monarchy,
Anarchy,
or
Democracy?



The Two NT Church Offices

- Elders & Deacons
 - Elders
 - Elder – character
 - Overseer – function
 - Pastor – attitude
 - Deacons



Deacons: The Greek Word

- *Diakonos* (διάκονος)
 - 29x in the NT
 - translated
 - Servant (10x)
 - Servants (9x)
 - Minister (7x)
 - Deacons (5x)
 - means “servant”
- Senses:
 - Waiters (cf. Luke 4:39; 10:40; 17:8; John 2:5, 9; 12:2)
 - Messengers
 - Stewards (2 Cor. 4:1-2)
 - General Servants (Luke 22:27; John 12:26; cf. Rom. 13:3-4)

Deacons: The History

- The Prototype (Acts 6)
- The NT References
 - (?) Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7 – Tychicus
 - (?) Col. 1:7 – Epaphroditus
 - Phil. 1:1
 - 1 Timothy 3:8-13



1 Timothy 3:8-13 General Observations

- 1) It is a distinct office to which a few men are appointed.
- 2) By definition and by qualifications deacons are to be focused on serving, not on teaching.
- 3) Deacons are accountable to the elders and under their leadership and direction.
- 4) The office requires a spiritual man.

The Qualifications for Deacons

- Character (8)
 - Men of dignity
 - Not double-tongued
 - Not addicted to much wine
 - Not fond of sordid gain
- Doctrine (9)
 - Holding to the mystery of the faith
 - With a clear conscience.

The Qualifications for Deacons

- Reputation (10)
 - “Tested”
 - “Above reproach”
- Family (12)
 - “One-woman men”
 - “Managing well their children and their entire household”

The Duties of the Deacons

- Relief to and care for the needy (Acts 6:1-3)
- Oversight of specific ministries (“put in charge”; Acts 6:3)
- Care for the church’s finances (“not fond of sordid gain”; 1 Tim. 3:8)
- Care of the church’s property (“good managers...of their households”)
- Support of the public worship
- Administration of the ordinances

The Common Misunderstandings about Deacons

- A replacement for elders
- A board of trustees
- A police force to keep the pastor or elders in line
- Deaconesses?

Arguments for “Deaconesses” (1 Tim. 3:11)

- The repetition of “likewise”
- The absence of a pronoun (i.e., *their wives*)
- Reference to Phoebe as a “deacon” (Rom. 16:1-2)
- The absence of any mention of elders’ wives
- The testimony of church history
 - First mention of deaconesses—the *Didascalia* (3rd century).
 - Assisting the sick, assisting in baptism of women, ministering to the needy
 - The First Council of Nicea (325 AD)

Arguments for “Wives of Deacons” (1 Tim. 3:11)

- There is a Greek word for *deaconess*, but it never appears in the NT.
- There is no other example of the word *deacon* used of a woman holding an office, so Phoebe is probably not a deaconess (Rom. 16:1-2).
- Verse 11 is sandwiched between verses about deacons (8-10; 12-13).
- The meaning of the word for *women* (3:11) in its closest context (3:12).

The Application

- Elevates the serving gifts and their value in the church.
- Highlights the role and responsibility of every Christian to serve.
 - Christian leaders
 - Matt. 23:11 - the greatest among you shall be your servant.
 - 1 Cor. 3:5 - What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed.
 - Every Christian
 - John 13:12-16



The Application

- Brings the highest divine commendation.
 - 1 Tim. 3:13
 - Good standing
 - Great confidence
 - Cf. Mark 10:45

