

## Servant of the Master

My beloved, as an overseer or pastor of Canyon Bible, I greet you this morning as Paul and Timothy did in their letter to the Philippians. Greetings as a “*slave of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Canyon Bible, with the overseers and deacons: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” What a blessing to come before all of you this morning and speak about the calling and responsibilities of being a deacon or servant of Christ and His church. This morning is different however, because we are ordaining Patrick to the Office of Deacon.

Let me open in prayer.

The word deacon means servant. The Greek word is “*diakonos*” meaning the *servant of a master*. In the Church our Master is Jesus Christ and as our Lord said, “*If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*” (John 12:26) The servant or “*diakonos*” of Christ is called to serve their Master and fellow believers. When Jesus sat down with the 12, He said to them “*If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.*” (Mark 9:35) It is Jesus Himself that modeled this and made clear one of His purposes for coming to earth, saying, “*You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.*”<sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For even **the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” (Mark 10:42-45)

The word deacon means servant, simple, nothing fancy and nothing extraordinary. However, the word deacon can lead to confusion. When a church calls a man to become a servant of the church or to serve in the Office of Deacon, the brethren might be tempted to take the attitude that the servant serves and they can sit back and be served. This is a wrong attitude and goes against what God teaches in His Word. There are a number of passages in the Bible that teach every Christian, every follower of Jesus, is to be a servant or deacon to the church and fellow believers. So, there is serving or deaconing which is a responsibility of every believer and there is the Office of Deacon which also means servant but with greater responsibility.

Paul said in his letter to the believers in Rome, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe (foy·bay), a servant of the church.” (Romans 16:1) She was a servant or a deacon because she served the church, but did not hold the Office of Deacon. All of us are to seek opportunity to serve others, to be deacons of the church and thus when this happens no one’s needs go unmet. Men and women are spiritually equal before God, but our Lord has given men and women different roles and responsibilities. As I just read from Mark chapter 10 Jesus said, “whoever would be great among you must be your servant, the Greek word is “diakonos”, Jesus continues <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.” To be Christian is to have a heart of a servant towards others and a heart of a slave with Jesus as their Master. This brings to the forefront the question, if every Christian is to be a servant or deacon, why is there also the office within the church of Deacon? Are Pastors and Deacons held to a standard different than others believers; the goal would be to answer “No”. Every believer is held to the standards God gives in His Word. Pastors and Deacon are not held to higher standards, but they place themselves in a position of higher responsibility and accountability before God and His church.

Let me illustrate it this way, my father had some simple rules in our family that as a child I learned and learned not to violate. He instilled in me a number of these basic rules. In my house one of the simple rules is if you take it out - put it back when you are finished. We have an area in the house with toys for the grandchildren. Now if a 2-year-old takes out toys and does not put them back we take time to teach them they need to put them back and we help them in order to show what they need to do. If a 10-year-old does not put the Legos back, I instruct them what is expected and supervise the cleanup. The rules are not different because of age, but if there is disrespect and disobedience the consequences are different because of maturity. With maturity comes more responsibility. The same is true within the church. As one gains spiritual maturity, they also gain a greater responsibility of service to Christ and their brothers and sisters in Christ. So, those serving in the Office of Deacon have accepted greater responsibility in serving the needs of the church community and frankly, the expectations are high.

The Deacons of Canyon Bible Church share some common traits. I do not know everything about the lives of David, Richard and Patrick. But I can say without hesitation that they have a deep love for Christ, for the Word of God, they look for opportunities to solve problems and help others, they share a deep love for their families and are willing to sacrifice their time and energies to help. At most ordination services the text from 1 Timothy chapter 3, verses 8 to 13 is the focus. It gives a list of qualifications that are to be strived for and to a greater degree met. Let me review them briefly. Reading from 1 Timothy, <sup>8</sup>“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.” The world is in desperate need of men who are honest and live with integrity. I have found Patrick to be a blunt and honest man. You know where he stands and he is committed to the truth of God’s Word. He keeps his word. Continuing in verse 9, “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” Patrick has

strong convictions and desires to hold fast to the Word of God. Verse 10 reads, “**And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.**” No man is blameless before God, but as one matures spiritually the result is, they sin less and honor God more. The word “blameless” is not the best word to convey what Paul was writing. The Greek word has the meaning of being free from reproach or have no stain on your character. Patrick and Linda have been part of Canyon Bible for some time now and they have served as deacons or servants and look for opportunities to serve and care for others. I have found them to be above reproach. No man can serve in the Office of Deacon well without the sacrificial support of their wife. This is why verse 11 is important, “**Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.**” Linda is this wife. Speaking for myself, David, Richard and Patrick we are far more and better as men because of the wives God has blessed us with. Linda has a servant’s heart and encourages Patrick and is his helpmate. Look with me at verse 12, “**Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.**” I know Patrick has only one wife so let speak about raising one’s children in the way of the Lord and the precepts of God’s Word. It takes consistency and takes time. Frankly, this is one I have struggled with to be consistent and steadfast, but I have improved over the years. I believe this is true of the Deacons of Canyon Bible, they have desired their children know Jesus as their Lord. They have a love for the Word of God and for their families to develop a love for God’s Word also. Paul finishes in verse 13, “**For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.**” Is this not the way it is with many things God calls us to? Give of one’s self and you gain a heart that has compassion and love for others. Serve others and you grow in your faith and develop a reputation of being faithful to God, family and community. To serve is a sacrifice, but it is a sacrifice with great rewards in our relationship with Christ and our fellow believers.

If all believers are called to be servants or deacons then why is there an Office of Deacon within the church? To answer this question, I want to examine a different list of qualifications from those found in 1 Timothy chapter 3. Please turn in your Bibles with me to Acts chapter 6. Here Luke records why the first deacons were chosen. As we examine this passage, I would like you to ask for yourselves 2 questions; first, why were deacons chosen and secondly, why were these men chosen? It is my hope by the time I finish you will be able to answer these 2 questions.

Reading from Acts chapter 6, beginning at verse 1, “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists (*meaning Greek speaking Jews*) arose against the Hebrews (*meaning Hebrew speaking Jews*) because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ <sup>5</sup> And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus (**prokh·or·os**), and Nicanor (**nik·an·ore**), and Timon (**tee·mone**), and Parmenas (**par·men·as**), and Nicolaus (**nik·ol·ah·os**), a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.”

First question, “Why were deacons chosen?” They were chosen because there were complaints in the church. The church was growing and the needs of some people were falling through the cracks. If the church then and the church today was perfect and filled with perfect people, it would mean everyone is serving as deacons or servants and everybody’s needs would be met - if that was the case there would be no need for the Office of Deacon. The Office of Deacon was created to solve a

problem. A problem arose within the church and the Elders solved the problem by creating the Office of Deacon and the deacons were assigned to address the practical problems and meet the needs within the church thus allowing the Elders to focus on the spiritual needs of the church. I can testify that David and Richard and Patrick look for opportunities to fix problems and meet the needs of the church, which is its people.

Why were the men listed here in Acts chapter 6 chosen? They were chosen because they possessed 3 main qualifications. Depending on your translation verse 3 says pick men of good repute or of good reputation. In other words, Deacons must have a good name. The best thing a man may possess is a good name. In Proverbs 22 begins with, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” (v.1) The value of a man is found in the value of his name and his reputation. It takes years to build a good reputation and it only takes moments to destroy it. So, one’s reputation is to be protected and developed and as one builds their reputation, they show the lost world the remarkable value of the name Jesus Christ. The world has it backwards; the world says work hard so you have material luxuries for yourself and your family. The world says your children should have more than you have had. Doing whatever is necessary for you and your family to become secure through material wealth will be worth it. Sacrificing self and family to gain material wealth will be worth it in the end. But, the Bible says work hard to build a good reputation and to serve others and do no worry about money – for money is a tool not the goal.

God wants men to strive to be great. Can you believe you just heard me say that? Men you are supposed to strive to greatness. There is nothing unchristian about greatness. For years the church has been so worried men might become proud and arrogant or chauvinistic, which is possibility when a man does not understand God’s Word and lacks spiritual wisdom. The church has overreached and tried to beat men

into submission and make them docile. I say, God wants men to be bold in living their lives for Christ. God wants men to be great for the sake of His Son's name. God wants men to be spiritual leaders and sacrificial leaders of family and church. When the 2 disciples were trying to figure out who was the greatest in Jesus' kingdom in Matthew 20 and Mark 10 - Jesus did not correct them for desiring to be great but Jesus said to them, **“whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.”** (Matthew 20:26-27) Jesus wanted the disciples to be great, but He was teaching them to be great in God's way, not the worlds. Men we are apprentices of our Lord, Jesus Christ and we are to strive to be great and bring God glory. Our testimony before the broken world is to be men of greatness; great men of God, great husbands, great fathers, great workers, great givers, great in sacrifice and on and on, and our word is to be our bond.

Why did they choose the men listed in Acts chapter 6? First because they had good reputations. Second, because they were filled with the Spirit. It says choose those **“full of the Spirit and of wisdom”**. This is straight forward - being full of the Spirit gives a person spiritual wisdom. How does one become full of the Spirit? Luke chapter 11 tells us that God wants to give the Spirit as a good gift to those who ask. We need to ask to be filled with the Spirit each and every day. God is excited about giving you His Spirit. The old adage, “it is better to give than receive” began with God. God loves to give His essences - His Spirit to His children. Because God is the perfect Father it is the greatest compliment for His children to live with His Spirit and model their lives after Jesus, His Son, but we must seek and ask. We need to ask God to fill us with His Spirit each and every day because we are to be dependent upon Him and this grows humility within us. I was thinking about the wine representing the blood of Christ and the New Covenant. You do not pour fine wine into a dirty glass for it would keep one from seeing its beauty and taint the taste of the wine. You pour wine into a crystal so you can see its beauty and taste it from a clean vessel. 1

John 1:9 it says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When we confess and repent of our sins God cleans us to be like fine crystal, which people can observe as a testimony to how Christ changes lives and He is able to fill us with His Spirit without it getting tainted, without the dirtiness of the world. No Christian can do the work God has called them to do without the power of the Spirit. You cannot love the unlovable, you cannot show grace to difficult people and you cannot share the Gospel of Christ in a meaningful way without the Spirit of God.

The third qualification for the Office of Deacon was they were to be filled with wisdom. My mom told me all my life; wisdom comes with age. If wisdom comes with age, then how can someone be wise beyond their years? If wisdom comes from years, then how can you have more wisdom than the years you have been alive? If these sayings were true one could not gain wisdom beyond their years. But wisdom does not come from just growing older in years and experiencing life, although this helps. Proverbs tells us where wisdom comes from. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” (Proverbs 9:10) Through prayer and studying God’s Word and fear and awe of God you learn more and more of who God is and who you are because God fills one with His Spirit. You gain not just knowledge but spiritual wisdom. You learn what it means to fear the Lord. You learn to repent and accept the discipline of God for your correction. Discipline is never pleasant but it builds character. Isaiah was a man of God, but when God confronted him, Isaiah responded, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5) Isaiah knew he was unworthy, but he also knew that God had chosen him as His prophet and Isaiah lived up to God’s calling and desired to be great for the glory of God.



The writer of Proverbs 15 speaks not only to every deacon, but to every believer saying, “The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” (Proverbs 15:33) The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom and as one gains wisdom, they are humbled and as one lives humbly before the Lord, they will receive honor. These are the qualifications of a man called to the Office of Deacon. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are to be our teachers causing them to live with a good reputation because they model Jesus. Because they pursue greatness in their lives, in all areas, this brings God glory and through this process they obtain wisdom the world does not know or understand and this enables them to love and serve the church with humility.

So, children of God and believers in Christ, we are to be the answer to the problem. The problem is the world does not have Christ and because of this people are hurting and in desperate need. Deacons embrace the calling and task God has laid before you. Work to keep a good reputation and a great name through humble service. Be filled with the Spirit of God that will enable you to do good works and let the fear of God ever grow wisdom in you. Let yesterday go and serve God each day you rise up out of bed. Amen.

Now we have answered the 2 questions; why were deacons chosen and why were the men of Acts chapter 6 chosen? This also answers why Patrick was chosen and the great responsibility he will now take on. Patrick, please come forward to give a testimony as to how Christ has changed your life.

Now, I would ask Linda to come forward and stand with Patrick. David, Richard and myself will lay hands upon them and pray over them, just as the apostles did in Acts chapter 6. In addition, if anyone else who would like to come forward and lay on hands and bless Patrick and Linda please come.

(David and Richard will each pray over Patrick and Linda and Bill will close)