

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

Outline

3 Tithes in the OT (review)
Ministry and the NT Church
The Ministry of Widows continued
Deacons

Intro:

To Minister means to serve. We can do many things, but it must involve service to someone else to be ministry.

3 Tithes in the OT (review)

Tithes were the **increase of crops and livestock.**

1. The Levitical tithe Num 18:24-32

-A tenth of their first fruits went to the Levites, who had no inheritance. From that tithe, the Levites themselves would then tithe (tenth) to Aaron (the priests) in the form of a heave offering. *After* the Levites had offered up a heave offering of the best of what they had, they would use the remaining portion of their tithes for themselves. It was important for the Levites to take the tithe seriously and offer the best. God warns them to not pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest they die (Good stewardship of tithes, this will relate to deacons)

2. The tithe of the feasts Deut 14:22-27

In *addition* to the Levitical tithes, Israel was to lay aside another tithe to feast off of in a place the LORD would appoint. They were to take joy in this, and feast before the LORD, thanking Him for His provision. If the distance was too long, they were to exchange their tithe (physical things) for money, then use the money to purchase what they wanted once they reached their destination – oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or anything else “their soul desired”. They were also to share with the Levites during these feasts.

3. The tithe for the poor Deut 14:28-29

At the end of every third year, they would store up the tithe of that year's increase and bring it to the gates of their local cities. The Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow shall come and eat and be satisfied. This tithe has the promise of a blessing attached to it. “That the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.”

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

We do not tithe under the law as we did in the Old Testament. For those who do, it needs to be a minimum of 20% each year, plus even more every third year. Also, you must consume 10% of the 20% you offer each year by feasting at the appointed place (your church, the temple mount?). You shouldn't eat your money, but you can spend it on strong drink and Oxen and feast at the church if insist on keeping the law of the tithe.

But it's very important we understand the *principal* behind the commandment of the tithe, the blessing (and curse) that was attached to it (we are not under the curse of the law, but under grace), particularly for the needy. Just because we don't tithe the same way today, God's church is expected to care for its priests (those who minister in an official sense - Levitical Tithe), the needy (tithe for the poor), and spend time resting in God and rejoicing in his blessings (Tithe of feasts).

Here's another example of the importance of understanding the principle behind a law rather than just the law itself. Why would God command that Israel do no work one day out of the week? Is it just to make life difficult for them in having to pre-cook meals and plan out their day? God explains the purpose behind the Sabbath in Deuteronomy.

*[Deu 5:14-15 KJV] 14 But the seventh day [is] the sabbath of the LORD thy God: [in it] thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that [is] within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant **may rest** as well as thou. 15 And remember that thou **wast a servant in the land of Egypt**, and [that] the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*

The Sabbath reminded them that they were slaves, but no longer. God ordained a day of rest not because He is a legalistic God, but because He wants to spend time with His people. Most Christians I know today don't keep the Sabbath the way it's laid out in scripture – doing no work from Friday Evening to Saturday evening. Yet the principal behind this law is still very important. God desires us to take time out just to be with him. If seven days out of the week we are too busy to rest in God, then we are behaving as slaves in bondage. It may be tempting to say something like, “yeah, but I'm doing ministry things”, or “everyday is my Sabbath”. Again, God doesn't need us, He desires us. Therefore to say we are serving him but not taking any time out for Him is going against His wishes as a loving Father.

God's heart for the needy

[Exo 22:21-27 KJV] 21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. 23 If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. 25 If thou lend money to [any of] my people [that is] poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. 26 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: 27 For that [is] his covering only, it [is] his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I [am] gracious.

Our state of existent outside of the grace of God:

[Lam 5:3 KJV] 3 We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers [are] as widows.

The church of God is called to serve in numerous ways, but the heart of God has not changed from the OT to the NT. Churches should be a continuation of God's ministry in the OT which included – and indeed focused on – the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. Even spiritually we are still ministering to this group. We reconcile people back to their Father (God the Father), by introducing them to Jesus (the church's husband). They are no longer poor, but rich in spiritual blessings; they are no longer strangers, but citizens of God's Kingdom (Phil 3:20) and children of Abraham by faith (Gal 3:7). But the spiritual ministry does not make void the physical ministry. The practices of ministering to these groups appeared to continue in the NT church.

Let's look at some examples of this type of ministry in the NT, as well as see how God gave us a special office to aid in this type of ministry.

Ministry and the NT Church

Caring for those in need or in distress is not optional for Christians.

[Jas 1:27 KJV] 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.

Matt 28:19 is what we are commissioned to do, but that doesn't mean all the other words in red are void. Jesus gave us many other instructions that are important in the New Covenant.

How we can treat the poor of the world:

[Luk 14:12-14 KJV] 12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor [thy] rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons
Jonathan's Speaking Notes

maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

How we can treat the poor of our brethren:

[Jas 2:15-16 KJV] 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be [ye] warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what [doth it] profit?

Peter, James and John heard Paul's testimony and acknowledged that God has indeed called him (Paul) to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. What an enormous responsibility. Let's read what they say to him:

*[Gal 2:7-10 KJV] 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as [the gospel] of the circumcision [was] unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we [should go] unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10 **Only [they would] that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.***

Paul is spreading the gospel to the heathen, an important task no doubt. Oh, and he is also writing letters that will become our Bible in his spare time. But none of these things are important to neglect the heart of ministry. We see here that the proclaiming of the gospel should not be separated from good works to the needy.

There is a tendency to swing too far to either side. A church can be all about Biblical knowledge and making converts, but neglect the needs of those within the body and community. Likewise, a church may be so focused on humanitarian needs, that they neglect the primary purpose of the great commission, and that is to see souls saved.

Both are needed.

A church should have ministries within it. The Salvation Army is an example of a ministry. Orphan's Promise is an example of a ministry. They have specific purposes and mission statements. The mission statement of a church is the Bible. Both the proclamation of the gospel and meeting the needs of the orphans, widows and the poor should be part of a church. A ministry is a service outreach. A church is a structure with many ministries within it. Yes, there is one church as in one body of Christ. But we see churches in the New Testament as having elders and deacons as they grow, which means spiritual ministry (teaching, discipline, accountability, funding of the office, gifts) and physical ministry (collection of offerings, distribution, administration, gifts) within that body.

Widow Ministry in the NT (setup deacons, shows continuation of OT ministry)

Ministry to widows in Acts 6

The ministry to widows was carried over from the Old Testament. Whenever it is mentioned, it is assumed. By assumed I mean, we just see it happening just as it had always been happening as a part of the Jewish law and culture.

[Act 6:1-7 KJV] 1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples [unto them], and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid [their] hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

In Acts 6 the Grecian (Greek speaking, also called Hellenists) widows felt neglect in the daily administration. Were there only Grecian widows? No, there were most certainly Hebrew widows as well.

Hebrews: Jews born in Palestine who used the Native tongue. Some probably looked down on the Grecians as an inferior class.

Grecians: Those born in the provinces who spoke Greek.

We don't know the extent of this neglect, but it seems that maybe they were still dealing with division and classes at this point, which would make sense.

Since the care of widows was already a part of the Jewish faith and Israeli culture, then it appears the followers of Christ were possibly no longer welcome in that system, seeing that they now had to set up their own. The followers of Christ (originally called followers of "The Way" or "Sect of the Nazarenes" before they were called Christians at Antioch) did not immediately seek or desire separation from their Jewish brethren. They still worshiped at the temple, went to synagogue, still read from the Law and prophets; the difference was that they now believed the law and prophets not only pointed to, but were fulfilled in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We don't know the exact situation in Jerusalem, but it appears believers were funding

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

their own ministry at this point.

Daily ministrations = probably alms or food

Look ye out among yourselves... The **congregation** chose the men, the **apostles** appointed them. Is the influence of a congregation acceptable in the election of leaders? Yes.

Proselyte from Antioch = one who has been converted from a Gentile religion to Judaism.

While not called deacons, these seven men formed a good template for the church and arguably could have been what deacons were modeled after. We see men devoted to the word (elders/bishops), and men serving in an official ministry role (deacons). Note that these men were powerful men of God and this task was in no means unimportant to God's church. The devotion to the word is important, and the daily ministry is important. Look at the great boldness of **Stephen (Acts 6:8, Acts 7:59)** and **Phillip (Acts 8:5-6, 12 Acts 8:26)**. We will revisit that later.

-Those who are greatest among you will be your servant!

And look at the result. Because the administration to the needy was taken care of and given the attention it was due, the word of God increased, plus many priests were obedient to the faith. The word should not be separated from the ministry. I imagine it was easier for the priests to convert once they saw that the same ministry God had commanded under the Mosaic Law was taking place in this new sect. Indeed, if this Jesus truly was the Messiah, one would expect to see an extension of God's commandments being fulfilled.

Qualifications for widows

Qualifications for widows who are to be cared for are listed in 1 Tim 5:2-16. Qualifications are listed for elders, deacons and widows. This is because they are all a part of how ministry is to be done. This is a model for us to be obedient to.

[1Ti 5:3-16 KJV] 3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And withal they learn [to be] idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

1. If widows have children or nephews, they should receive support and care from them before receiving it from the church.

Piety: G2151 Vines: "to reverence, to show piety" towards any to whom dutiful regard is due. Requite = recompense.

Honor your Father and Mother, the first commandment with promise (be well with you and live long). Basically, practice religion in your own house first. Those who don't provide for their own household have denied the faith! God asks those whom He has begotten as a Father to take care of and honor their natural families. Woe unto us who would neglect those whom God has entrusted us to care for!

The Pharisees adopted this attitude. They felt their service to God and the temple trumped them having to provide financial for the parents (Matt 15:5).

How important is ministering to widows and the fatherless to God? Very! This is reinstated in vs 16, let the family take care of the widows if they can.

2. Must be at least 60 years old.
3. Woman (or wife) of one man
3. Must have been actively involved with caring for the saints, good works, raising children, cared for the afflicted.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

It's better to deny grace altogether than to acknowledge God's grace and withhold mercy from those in need, particularly our own family.

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Deacons

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

Diakonos

Translated "minister" 20x, "servant" 8x, and "deacon" 3x in the KJV. The word deacon is actually a transliteration of the word *Diakonos*, not a definition. Basically, the translators looked at the context of the word and realized that even though the literal meaning is to serve or servant, the context demanded a slightly different meaning. Therefore they kept the word the same but just translated the sound of it, hence a new English word is created. The context of the three places deacon is used seems to be referring to an office, so simply saying "servant" or "minister", while accurate and acceptable, might not do the original intent of the word justice. The same thing occurred when translators decided to transliterate the Greek word for shepherd into pastor. They only did this in certain areas where it seemed appropriate to imply a shepherd of men vs a shepherd of sheep.

The word diakoneo, while not translated deacon in Romans 16 (at least not in the KJV), is used to refer to a woman named Phoebe, who appears to have served Paul in some important (possibly official) sense. This study will not address the roles of men or woman in serving, but will just examine the office itself and stress its importance.

Besides 1 Timothy, we see Paul address the two offices of the church in his letter to the Philippians:

[Phl 1:1 KJV] 1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

We see a model for a church here that is consistent with the rest of scripture, particularly the pastoral epistles of Timothy. The church consists of 1) Bishops (overseers or elders) 2) Deacons and 3) the congregation (saints). The bishops pastor the flock in spiritual matters, the deacons minister and lead administrative tasks, and the congregation exercises ministry and gifts in their own right.

We'll spend our time looking at deacons in 1 Timothy.

Are ministry offices important in the church? Yes. Why was Paul having Timothy establishing deacons and elders? He lists the qualifications in chapter 3, then closes chapter three by saying:

[1Ti 3:14-15 KJV] 14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: **15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**

Deacons

5 Character Qualifications of a Deacon plus two others

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

[1Ti 3:8-10, 12-13 KJV] 8 Likewise [must] the deacons [be] grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being [found] blameless. ... 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

As we examine these qualifications, it's important to note that one of the primary difference between the qualifications of a deacon and a bishop is that a deacon does not need to be able to teach

Grave

Venerable (afforded a great deal of respect) i.e. honorable

G4586

Thayer's Lexicon

1. august, venerable, reverend
 2. to be venerated for character, honourable
- A. of persons
B. of deeds

honor + respect

Translated Grave 3x and Honest 1x.

[Phl 4:8 KJV] 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest (G4586), whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things.

Full of "honest report", we see this qualification in Acts 6.

Not doubletongued

-Let your yes be yes (Matt 5:37)...

Vines:

primarily means "saying the same thing twice, or given to repetition" (dis, "twice," logos, "a word, or speech"); hence, "saying a thing to one person and giving a different view of it to another, double-tongued," 1Ti 3:8.

They must be firm, not people pleasers with their lips, especially when it comes to finances and distribution. Being doubletongued can come from a deliberate desire to deceive, but could also come through giving in to pressure and showing partiality.

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

E.g. enforcing the rule that a widow must be 60 years old to one, but not enforcing it upon another due to peer pressure.

Not given to much wine

*[Lev 10:8-11 KJV] 8 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, 9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, **when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation**, lest ye die: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations: 10 And **that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; 11 And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes** which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*

Leaders in the church need to be able to distinguish between holy and unholy, especially those involved with finances and day-to-day ministry operations.

Wine is a gift of God and can be used for the glory of God

[Psa 104:14-15 KJV] 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15 And wine [that] maketh glad the heart of man, [and] oil to make [his] face to shine, and bread [which] strengtheneth man's heart.

Strong drink is dangerous:

Proverbs 23:29-35

Drunkenness is a sin:

[1Co 6:9-10 KJV] 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Being a drunkard is destructive to the person and those around them. Deacons are admonished to have minimum exposure to that path by only drinking moderately (Paul tells Timothy to take some wine for his infirmity later on in his letter). Deacons should not rely on wine for "gladness of heart", but on the Lord.

Not greedy of filthy lucre

Thayer's Greek Lexicon
-Eager for base gain, greedy for money

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

- Any kind of gain that is dishonest. Any kind of un-pure motive for gain, particularly for money, but it could apply to material possessions and power too. This is especially important for one who would handle money and/or potentially receive money from the church for his ministry.

Being fearful and not faithful can also lead to over-dependence on money. Dishonest gain can happen even if the person doing it wants to use the money for the church or ministry, i.e. improper teaching on tithes and offerings, using devious tactics to collect offerings, making for sale material that should be funded from tithes and offering money, churches using unlicensed music, not paying for stock images, etc. God told King Saul to utterly destroy everything he took from the city, not offer it up to Him. God wants the best of our increase through *honest* gain. God is no beggar.

There is nothing wrong with a deacon being wealthy; in fact, most should be wise stewards and hard workers in the areas of finance. But they must not covet money or the power of money.

[Act 20:35 KJV] 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

[1Ti 6:9-10 KJV] 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

How important it must be for those who handle money to be above reproach!

Judas used the office to serve himself; the deacon must use the office to serve others. Money, power and control cannot be a reason for becoming a deacon. For example, if your day job isn't working out for you and a deacon spot opens up at the church that pays enough to cover your car payments, you may wish to reconsider your motives for applying for that position.

Holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience. What mystery? A few paragraphs down **1 Tim 3:16**

Those who minister at the church in the office of deacon should be believers. It may seem that this may go without saying, but there is nothing wrong with a church paying a nonbeliever to do a service for the church, such as a financial audit or construction. Yet the deacon must be a strong believer. The deacon's service to the church is a spiritual act just as shepherding the church is a spiritual act. This qualification in itself adds much to what we can understand about the role. We cannot think of deacons as those who just serve at the church because they have a particular skill. There could be a paid member of the church staff that is neither an

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons Jonathan's Speaking Notes

elder nor deacon and is are just paid because their skill benefits the church. But the qualifications of a deacon are spiritual and moral. And as we see in Acts 6, the seven men did not do all the work, but they *oversaw* the business of the ministry to the widows.

The seven in Acts 6 were chosen by the people for the people. This means they were close to the flock, they were involved with their lives and they probably knew many on a personal level. It would seem a deacon would also need a solid relationship and constant communication with the elders. The feeding of the flock is not only spiritual (as in the teaching of the word), but also physical in the carrying out of ministry (distribution, collection, helping, etc.). Both reflect the health of the flock. The shepherds should be aware of the physical needs of their flock, and the deacons should be aware of the spiritual direction God is leading the flock.

A "pure conscience" requires a life of active faith and repentance. If the deacon (as with the elder) has fallen into a habitual sin that is affecting his conscience he should step down. God would rather have a low-skilled, faithful servant at this position, then a highly skilled person who is being unfaithful in other parts of their walk.

Be proved and found blameless (above reproach)

It does not say how they should be proved. In Acts 6, the works of the men plus their faith and devotion to God was evident among the body. If a deacon is being chosen from within the body, the body itself should be able to bear witness on the qualities of that deacon. It should be evident that they meet the other 6 qualifications.

Husband of one wife, ruling their children and houses well

One woman man. [reference Pastor Ulysse's message from the Eldershp series]

(advertisement)

Is there murmuring going on in the church?

What is the cause of the murmuring?

Is it ministry related?

You might need deacons!

Promise, those that use the office well

-purchase a good degree

-great boldness in the faith

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons
Jonathan's Speaking Notes

Good degree: (Good standing)

bathmos Strong's G898

Greek Dictionary of New Testament Words
a Step, i.e. (fig) grade (of dignity)

Thayer's Lexicon

1. threshold, step A. of a grade of dignity and wholesome influence in the church

Word used only once in Bible

Boldness

Thayer's Lexicon

1. freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech

A. openly, frankly, i.e without concealment

B. without ambiguity or circumlocution

C. without the use of figures and comparisons

2. free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance

3. the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity

*[Jhn 10:24 KJV] 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us **plainly**.*

*[Jhn 16:29 KJV] 29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou **plainly**, and speakest no proverb.*

*[2Co 3:12-16 KJV] 12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great **plainness** of speech: 13 And not as Moses, [which] put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which [vail] is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.*

When we don't allow people to purchase the office of deacon, we are obstructing them from this wonderful blessing of God.

Stephen was full of faith and power (Acts 6:8) Stephen preached the gospel boldly and became the first martyr, even before the 11 apostles (not that they were in a race).

Philip was one of the seven,

Ministry Pt 3. Ministry and the Importance of Deacons
Jonathan's Speaking Notes

[Act 21:8-9 KJV] 8 And the next [day] we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was [one] of the seven; and abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Philip not only coordinated the serving of table, but he exercised the gift of an evangelist (the ascension gifts, listed in Ephesians). He ministered to possibly the first Ethiopian convert, which would have spread the gospel into Africa. He also had four daughters who prophesied.

Those who are greatest among you will be your **servant!**

Conclusion: God's heart for ministry still revolves around the Fatherless, Widow and the poor/stranger. The proclamation of the gospel should not be separated from meeting needs (pure religion). Deacons are gift from God for a vitally important part of ministry, so much that God grants them particular privileges if they use the office well.