

THE SPECIAL OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

ELDERS and DEACONS

TOPICS:

- **#1 – Desiring to be an Office-bearer**
 - **#2 – Preparing to be an Office-bearer**
 - **#3 – What the Special Offices are**
 - **#4 – The Work of Elders**
 - **#5 – The Work of Deacons**
 - **#6 – Our Calling toward Office-bearers**
 - **#7 – How Office-bearers are Chosen**
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THE SPECIAL OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

#5: THE WORK OF DEACONS

WHAT IS A DEACON'S WORK?

- Deacons represent Christ as our Priest. They have the duty to show mercy to the poor and needy.
 1. Christ as Priest (1) has pity/mercy for the poor in their misery – deacons must do the same!
 2. Christ as Priest (2) delivers the poor out of their misery – deacons must do the same!
- As deacons are merciful, they must remember:
 - Christ is not stingy or harsh in His giving to His people, but gracious and generous.
 - Deacons must reflect this in showing mercy to the poor and needy in the church.

THE BIBLICAL PROOF (1)

- Texts concerning CHRIST BEING MERCY:
 - Psalm 9:13 – *“Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:”*
 - Psalm 103:8 – *“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”*
 - Hebrews 2:17 – *“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”*
 - Psalm 103:10-11, Psalm 116:5, Psalm 117:2, Hebrews 8:12, I Peter 1:3, etc.

THE BIBLICAL PROOF (2)

Texts concerning DEACONS BEING MERCIFUL:

- ACTS 6:1-3 – *“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 ministrations. 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. 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.”*
- MATTHEW 25:34-40 – *“... For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; ... Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*

THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT

ARTICLE 25

The office peculiar to the deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity and, after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the consistory may see fit.

THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT

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The office peculiar to the deacons is: (1) diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and (2) after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; (3) to visit and comfort the distressed and (4) to exercise care that the alms are not misused; ...

THE DUTIES OF DEACONS – part 1

1. COLLECTING ALMS

- The deacons collect and receive the financial gifts and other gifts from the congregation.**
- Implies the congregation has the duty to give, so the deacons are able to do their work. Psalm 41:1, Matthew 6:33.**
- The church needs to have a “Benevolence Fund” collection. Acts 11:27-30, I Corinthians 16:1-2, Galatians 2:10, L.D. 38.**

2. DISTRIBUTING ALMS

- Give faithfully and diligently to the poor.**
- Follow the principle of giving “according to need.”**
- Be generous toward the poor, as Christ is to us.**
- Give only after a decision is made by the whole diaconate.**

THE DUTIES OF DEACONS – part 2

3. VISITING AND COMFORTING THE POOR

- Not only provide for the physical needs of the poor, but also (especially) for their spiritual needs (which they will have).
- Deacons must bring “comfortable words from the Scriptures” to the needy (see the *Form for Installation of Deacons*).

4. GUARDING AGAINST ABUSE

- Guarding against those receiving assistance being carnal and earthly minded. I Tim. 6:6ff, Heb. 13:5, etc.
- Guarding against those receiving assistance being bad stewards of God’s gifts. Ps. 24:1, Ps. 50:10-12, etc.
- Guarding against those receiving assistance not striving to support themselves. II Thess. 3:10, Eph. 4:28, etc.

WHY ARE DEACONS NEEDED?

- Because of the reality of POVERTY. Deut. 15:11 (Mark 14:7) – *“For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”*
- We shouldn’t be surprised by the fact that the people of God are poor. I Corinthians 1:26-29, James 2:5.
- God has a special love & concern for the poor of His people. Leviticus 23:22, Psalms 12:5, Psalm 35:10, Isaiah 25:4.
- God is angry at anyone who does not help the poor, or who takes advantage of the poor. Amos 2:6, James 5:1-6.
- Thus God provides for the poor of His people, and does so through the Office of Deacon and the Benevolence Fund.

WHO ELSE MUST CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE POOR AND NEEDY?

- 1. The family of the poor person is first of all responsible to care for the poor.**
 - I Timothy 5:8 – *“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.”*
 - Deacons must remind God’s people of these duties.
 - (1) That the poor must seek help from family first.
 - (2) That the family must help their poor relatives.
- 2. The office of deacon does not eliminate the calling of God’s people to personally show mercy to each other.**
 - Matthew 5:7, Luke 6:35.
 - Galatians 6:10, James 1:27.
 - Matthew 25:31-46.