



BISHOPS AND
DEACONS :
The Persons and
Their Work.

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BISHOPS AND DEACONS: *The Persons and their Work.*

OUR subject this evening, as most know, is “Bishops and Deacons, the Persons and their Work.”

The word translated “bishop” is derived from two words, which mean “to oversee.” The idea expressed, therefore, in the word “bishop” is, taking care with the view of protecting, of providing all that is necessary for the comfort of those who are thus protected, and the guiding of them in the due performance of that which is comely for them in their behaviour to manifest.

Bishops were never chosen by churches of the saints ; bishops were never chosen by churches of God in Christ Jesus ; bishops were never ordained even by apostles through the laying on of hands. So far as still the Scriptures are listened to by us we never find bishops made such by apostolic power, nor any power short of the direct operation of God, putting earnest care into the heart of His children, or the placing by the Holy Spirit as overseeing ones given persons in given companies of God’s gathered together ones.

Some, of course, will readily think of Acts 14, 23. We might look at it for a moment : “And when they [that is, Paul and Barnabas] had ordained them elders

in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." We are told by some that the word here used regarding the ordaining of the elders is a word that means, "to vote by show of hands." Well, granting that that is so, the only hands that were shown in the choosing and ordaining of the elders here mentioned were the hands of Paul and Barnabas, and not a hand of any one in the given churches. It is a remarkable word this word "ordained," and it may interest especially young men Christians, to know, and for their sakes I mention it just in passing, though it is a digression from our subject, that the word "ordained," as found in our English New Testament,* is the translation of no less than 13 different Greek words, which 13 different Greek words occur in the New Testament 1,490 times, and out of the one thousand four hundred and ninety times that the words occur, the translators of the English Testament have rendered these words, only *nineteen times* "ordained;" that is to say, the word "ordained," as found 19 times in your English New Testament, is translated out of 1,490 times that God uses the words, translated "ordained." Thus you may see what a struggle the translators had to get the word at all into the New Testament, for you know, or if you do not, you may now, that King James required of the translators of 1611 that they should maintain ecclesiastical phrases; because he held if there be no bishop, there will be no king, or in his own words, "nae bishop, nae king," therefore retain "ordained" where it is possible, and retain a show of bishopric where it is possible, else the king himself goes, with your sending away from the pages of Scripture ordination and bishopric.

This is the only instance where we have the apostles pointing out elders; none but they ever did this. Titus was delegated to set them as we read in the epistles by Paul to him. Chapter 1, verse 4: "To Titus, mine own son according to the common faith: grace, and mercy, and peace, from God the Father and

*Authorised Version.

the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. For this cause left I thee in CRETE, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (*i.e.*, set) elders in every City, as I had appointed thee." Then follows the direction from the apostle to Titus in order that he might know whom he might "ordain" in fulfilment of his instructions as the apostle's delegate.

Not only do you get these directions minutely given to Titus, but you get the scope, or the range, in which Titus might exercise this delegated authority in the appointing of elders; for if Titus had gone outside the Island of Crete, demanding to be recognised as one authorised to ordain elders, the Christians of early day had rightly questioned his authority for so coming to them, and while to those in Crete he could produce the apostolic letter, the authority of God for this his doing, take him outside of Crete, and he had no power to do similar things, for he had no authority. I believe it has found its way into print that Timothy also ordained elders, but that is an unscriptural assertion, for the Word of God, so far from saying that Timothy did such, or should do such, says the very opposite.

The great contrast between the bishop that God makes and recognises, and the bishops that obtain too largely among God's people is this: man says, Be made a bishop, and then do bishop-work. Be appointed to the bishopric, then do the bishop-work. Be recognised as a bishop, and then do bishop-work. That is man's way. God's way is: Do the work, and so long as you do the work, you will be the man; but cease doing the work, and you will cease being the person.

Now in the 1st Epistle by Paul to Timothy we are told distinctly the object for which he wrote this letter. Read with me chapter 3, verses 14 and 15: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how one ought to behave oneself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." In this Epistle, then, that teaches us how to behave, you may read it from end to

end, and not find a word about ordaining bishops, nor yet a word about ordaining deacons, nor yet deaconesses, for while no woman may aspire to bishop work, every Christian woman may aspire to deacon work, and ought to ; and while none but such as do shepherd-work will get the crown of glory from the Chief Shepherd when He appears, sisters may lose a crown for faithful service to Christ as Lord if they refrain from performing deacon-work.

God's way for His people having bishops ; God's way for making shepherds among His flock, is given us in this 1 Timothy 3. "This is a true saying." God help us to lay it to heart. It is a true saying in the light of what you get in Acts 14, 23, when that was done they pointed them out, and in the light of what you get in Titus 1, 5, he was delegated to Crete, and in the light of what you get in 1 Timothy 3, 14-15, THIS I write that one may know how to behave oneself in the House of God. "It is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop" Why say the office of a bishop? There is no word office. When God wants to speak to us of office He uses a word to express office. God's Word, like God's works, is far too precise, and is indeed too really the Word of God for us to allow the importation of terms that destroy the word that God uses, and thus we read, "If any one desires oversight:" that is. if anyone earnestly stretches after, which is the force of the word "desires." It is not a mere wish, but it is a wish in energy, as David says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek to obtain." I do not know how you find it, but I find myself desiring a great many things, and never seeking to obtain. God help us to be like David ; we want to have the spirit to seek to obtain our desire. That is the word here. "If any one earnestly stretches after oversight," no office of a bishop at all, it is oversight, or bishop-work. "If any one earnestly stretches after oversight he desireth a good" office? Is that it? Look at it ; "He desireth a good work ;" and the word "good" here is different from the word "good" as found in Romans 5 for example, "peradventure for

a *good* man some would even dare to die." A good man, you know, is different from a righteous man. If a man, for example, is a righteous grocer, and you are buying from him, say, a pound of tea, he will give you sixteen ounces for the pound ; but if he is a good man, and you are a poor person, and you go in for a penny-worth, he may give you three-halfpence worth for the penny ; for he is a good man. Peradventure for a good man ; they will say, "That is a good man, I will die instead of him." But that is not the word here. This word in connection with work, the work of overseeing is, "he desireth beautiful work." It is the same word as is applied to "The Good Shepherd," and everywhere and anyhow you look at Him as the Shepherd He is beautiful just like a precious stone, the more you turn it over in the sunshine, the more beautiful it becomes. So is the work of overseeing, it is beautiful work. But it is a very humble, insignificant office, and because it is in fact no office at all, but diligent, laborious, heart-taxing, strength-taxing, love-proving work, the Lord holds out at the end of the course a crown of glory to him that does the shepherd work ; and none but shepherds will get from Him "the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

"A bishop [or, the bishop], then, must be blameless, the husband of one wife." That does not mean he must be a married man. There were men then who were not husbands of one wife, even as still in a part of British dominion (in the Island of Mauritius, for example) you will get a man living and there are three or four women in that place whom he has had joined to him in marriage, and whom he has, with the consent of British rule, divorced, so contrary to the mind of God ; and that is what this word here means, it was to save from the then prevailing custom, that alas ! yet prevails to the disgrace of British dominion, as I have cited. And to show you this the more clearly : Let me suppose here is a brother ; he is a married man, and he has care put in his heart of God to shepherd the flock of God ; he goes in and out among the saints, and stands before them in the Lord beautifully ; verily, he

is unquestionably a shepherd. It pleases God at the end of ten years of his shepherd work to take his beloved partner home to Himself before He takes him. Must that brother desist from shepherd work because God has made him a widower? Must he indeed take unto himself another wife, in order that he may exercise himself in shepherd work? I trow not; and all that God is here saying in connection with the fitness of the bishop is:—if he be married he will be the husband of but one woman; “vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach—.” That does not mean he shall be able of necessity to stand and PUBLICLY tell out the mind of God as in Christ Jesus for His saints. “Apt to teach” means he shall be ready, quick of scent to give godly counsel when conferred with by any of the lambs, or the little sheep, or the sheep of the flock of God. If I were asked to prove this I would point to 1 Timothy 5. 17, where a distinction is made betwixt those who are overseers and those of them who *specialy* labour in the word and doctrine, that is, in word and teaching. Chapter 3. 3: “not given to wine, no striker, but patient.”* “Not a brawler, not covetous [that is, not fond of money], one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” That does not mean that a man in whose heart God has put earnest care, and has a wife, if in the will of God he is not blessed in grace with children, therefore he must desist from shepherding, from doing oversight work; neither does it mean that if, as sometimes happens, God has blessed a man with children, and by-and-by, as he is going on in his labours for the Lord in bishop-work, with acceptance and accedance of God, God takes his children from him by death, that he must desist from overseeing work because it hath pleased God to deprive him of his children. No one would say so. Therefore, the meaning of God is clear, that if he has children he shall be “one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity, but [or, for] if one know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care

* The words that follow are left out in the Revised Version correctly.

of a church of God." Verse 6: "not a novice [not a new plant, not one newly come to The Faith], lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation [or, judgement] of the Devil. Moreover, he must have a good report from them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the Devil." The judgement of the Devil and the snare of the Devil, as spoken of in 1 Timothy 3., are the judgement and the snare into which the Devil himself fell. This snare of the Devil is not to be confused with, or thought to be the same as the snare of the Devil spoken of in 2 Timothy 2. : for that snare of the Devil is a snare laid by the Devil.

Here is God's standard ; let him bring himself up to this standard ; let him have a care to see whether he is vigilant, sober, etc. ; a man who by reason of use has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil ; a man that brings the word of God down to his own feet ; a man that brings the word of God down to his own hands ; a man that brings the word of God down to his own thoughts ; a man that brings the word of God down to his own wishes ; a man who uses the Scriptures, and who, by reason of use of the Scriptures in every circle of life, is a man using the Scriptures in his spirit, on his spirit ; in his soul, on his soul ; in his body, on his body ; and so has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Why are the children of God so far behind in discerning right from wrong? It is because they do not have their senses exercised through reason of use. They hear the Scriptures, but what practical use do they make of them? God help any who thus seek to do oversight work so to be and do. The men whom God precludes from stretching themselves forward to oversight work are such as answer to the word "novice," "newly come to The Faith," which simply is a new plant ; all men who are not novices, all who are not new plants, all having the moral character of 1 Timothy 3., may with earnest care in their hearts, for the glory of God, aspire to stretch earnestly forward to doing the beautiful work of oversight.

God has given a beautiful picture that helps in the

understanding of this. Turn with me to Zechariah 3. ; the first five verses are well known through being so often preached from in the Gospel, which they so aptly set forth ; I do not stay to speak thereof, but read verses 6 and 7, as showing what God expects shall follow conversion. Zechariah 3. 6 and 7 : " And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua saying, thus saith Jehovah of Hosts." Oh! the beauty of this introduction, " Jehovah of Hosts." He has plenty who would gladly do His will, and yet He says to us, such as have heart to perform oversight work—" Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts ; If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, *then* thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by."

Why are the courts of God's House to-day not kept ? Why is the House of God not judged to-day after the mind of God ? Because in chief, the men who are stretching themselves forward in the exercise of overseer work have never learned firstly themselves to walk in the ways of the Lord and to keep His charge. Hence their slackness, hence their dimness of vision, hence their failing to discern right from wrong ; whereas God precludes all such from overseership, and wants such as would be overseeing men to walk firstly in His ways, to keep His charge firstly, and then thus adorning the doctrine of God as to His ways and His charge, they are fitted also to judge in His House, and also to keep His courts, so that none shall come into the House but such as He would have brought in.

1 Thess. 5. 12, 13, give us words from God to the rank and file of His flock, that is to say, words to such as are not themselves overseeing ones, and words that by God are meant to teach these how to behave themselves towards those that are indeed overseeing ones according to the mind of God. " And we beseech you, brethren, TO KNOW them which LABOUR among you and are OVER you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their *work's* sake." Not their office's sake, but their work's sake. They

labour among you, they are over you (or stand before you) in the Lord.

There are some to-day that would be acknowledged over saints, that cannot be acknowledged, for they are not in the Lord in their ways. What is this word "are over"? It is the word of 1 Tim. 3. : "ruleth." But what does it mean that such "are over"? It simply means who stand before you, who stand before you in the Lord. They say, brethren and sisters, this is the way, we are ourselves examples of the flock, follow us, follow us who are over you, that is, who stand before you in the Lord and admonish you. "Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

How may we know if we have got bishops?

You will know them if they do the work ; and God only holds us responsible to recognise them as they manifest themselves by doing the work. If they do not do the work, we may not, in the fear of the Lord, encourage them in paths of sinfulness by accounting them fit to be recognised as overseeing ones. Then follow words from verse 14 to 22, to the overseeing men themselves. From verse 14 to verse 22 there are words given from God to the overseeing men. Let us read the 14th verse: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly." What is the word unruly? It is a military term. It means literally "not keeping rank"; but if the overseers themselves are not keeping rank, if the overseers themselves have been going on marching according to the bidding of the Lord for a time, and after a time have got wearied of His path of separation, wearied of the reproach of Christ, and seek to go back and mingle with that from out of which they were brought professedly by the call of the Lord Christ, how are they able to warn others that do not keep rank? And if they go out of the rank themselves in a body, or even individually, shall the saints of God follow them who are themselves not keeping rank? God forbid.

This 14th verse is an exhortation to those that are over others in the Lord, for did we not see the exhortation in verse 12 was to the brethren to know those who

admonish them? The word admonish is the same as the word warn.

In verse 14 it is clearly a word to the overseeing men. From verse 14 to 22 there are fourteen things enumerated that overseeing men ought themselves to be found doing as overseeing ones. And more than that, each and all of these fourteen things, if you read them carefully, you will discern, are things which overseeing men are not to do individually. They are things that overseeing men are to do unitedly after holy conference with one another, unitedly carrying out in the fear, and at the bidding of the Lord Christ, whatever is His will in the given matter on hand.

It would be to me delightful, and to you, I doubt not, it would be profitable, to dwell on each of these fourteen things mentioned in 1 Thess. 5., but time quite forbids us attempting that. Let us turn to Hebrews 13. 7: "Remember them that have the rule over you." These words "that have the rule over" are the translation of one word that simply means "leading." "Remember them leading" (or, as some would render it, "Remember them that led you,") for you know that while in this country the shepherds most commonly drive the sheep before them, in the Eastern lands, from whence the Lord's pictures are taken, the shepherd walks before the flock, and leads them after him.

"Remember them that have spoken unto you the word of God." I have marvelled at times how saints remember you when things are going well with them. When one comes to them and tells them the mind of God, they hang upon one's lips, they take in the word of God with such delight, many even go the length of expressing their gratitude to God, and to the speaker; but when things are not going so favourably with the same people, oftentimes they care not one whit for what he says. Compare Gal. 4. 11-18.

What though he spake of God with acceptance to them in days gone by; what though he told them the

truth in days gone by, they set at nought such as they gladly followed so clearly in the Lord before.

“Remember [saith God] those who have spoken unto you the word of God, considering the end of their conversation”—considering the drift of their manner of life; what is the issue of their manner of behaviour; whether seeking to make merchandise of you, whether leading you after themselves, or after Christ, to whole-hearted obedience to Him, or to cleave to Him with purpose of heart. And yet it is astonishing how twisted is the hearing of saints when they hear the truth of God. As I remember hearing a well-known servant of the Lord tell publicly in the town where, as a lad, I listened to His ministry. He said, “When I used to hear So-and-So teach the truths of God for His people’s present obedience, I thought the meaning of it all was, ‘Come and join the Brethren.’ But it flashed upon my understanding that when God converted me to Himself, and I became a son of His by faith in Christ Jesus, I became by new birth a member of His family, and so was joined to, and indeed was, one of THE BRETHREN. Then I said, What do they mean? And the word of the Lord answered, ‘Go forth unto Him without the camp (Heb. 13.). And so soon as I understood it was to go forth unto Jesus Christ as Lord, I ran from the camp of ecclesiasticism according to man, out unto ‘Jesus only,’ and when I got to Him I found a whole lot of brothers and sisters who had got there before me, Hallelujah !”

That is it, beloved. When his own heart and his own vision were made clear and strong he heard aright, he understood aright, and he got right.

Yes, there is a gathering to Him to-day. Are *you* with Him? Have you come out from the camp? For if not, understand this: “He that is not with Me, is against Me.” You may fear Him, you may love Him, but if you are not with Him you are against Him. “And he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.” Are you with Him? Thank God. Are you gathering with Him, child of God? If you are not with Him,

understand you are against Him. If you are not gathering with Him, you are scattering.

Heb. 13. 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls." That is the work of the bishop, he is to be a watcher for souls; he is to be as far as in him lies a speaker of the word of God, a man whose manner of life will lead unto Christ, who will lead to whole-hearted devotion to the will of God as in Christ Jesus.

Obey them, collectively together. Brethren aspiring to do oversight work take care to act together, take care never to appear before the saints with divided judgement. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." That is their work—they watch for souls as they that must give account. They look on the lambs, the little sheep, and the sheep of the flock as the Lord speaks of His family in John 21., and they look on them as being responsible to the Chief Shepherd for each one. Think you that David went out after the lion that took away the lamb, for the prowess of killing the lion? Nay, verily. He went out after the lion for the joy of delivering the lamb. God help you, brethren, to keep the lambs out of the lion's mouth, and out of the paw of the bear.

Seek the lambs of the flock, defend, and protect them, guide them, and feed them. For it is the shepherd that feeds, who is the shepherd that leads, and He is the shepherd that bleeds for the flock of God,

Verse 24: "Salute all them that have the rule over you." Do not be afraid of giving to such as are labouring among you high esteem, this God would have you do, and that for their work's sake.

What we have said about the bishops, we trust will be enough in the grace of God to show who the persons are, and what their work is. They are persons who are converted to God, not novices, and who, with earnest care put into their hearts, stretch forward to

oversee the flock of God, and they seek to make themselves the persons having the character of 1 Tim. 3., then they seek to do the fourteen things spoken of in 1 Thess. 5. : "Warn the unruly," etc., and they speak the word of God, they live an exemplary life, they are examples of the flock of God, they watch for souls as they that must give account, they tell the saints the mind of God unitedly that they may be obeyed in the Lord, they do the work of diligent labour among the saints and thus become known to the saints, loved by the saints, esteemed by the saints, and submitted to by the saints. Such are bishops, and such is their work, and such is their present place in the will of God, whereas their reward is that crown of glory He will give to shepherd ones only.

For Deacons, turn, please, to 1 Tim. 3. 8 : "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre"; that is "of base gain." They would not get any advantage at the expense of another—"not greedy of base gain." It is not money merely. It is gain that is baseful, low, contemptible, unrighteous gain. "Not greedy of base gain, holding the mystery of The Faith in a pure [a clean] conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon."

These six English words "use the office of a deacon," may be translated, as elsewhere in the New Testament the word often is translated, by five letters of the English language which are s-e-r-v-e, "then let them serve." There is no office about the deacon any more than there is office about the bishop. We said when God wants to speak about office he does it; for example in Romans 12. God uses a word to express office there, and if God wanted to speak of office in connection with this, He would have used it. Don't be trifled with, saints of God, understand what word God uses, "and let these also serve." "Even so, women;" not "wives," not "their wives," but it is women who may be deaconesses as we shall show presently. "Even so, women, grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." Then he goes back to deacons, you see.

“ Let deacons be husbands of one wife.” If he had spoken about their wives, he would not introduce the deacon again and his wife.

It is all in the range of deaconship. “ Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife.” And so deaconesses wives of one husband. “ Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” The same word “ ruling.” Standing beautifully before. “ For they that have USED THE OFFICE OF A DEACON.”

These six English words are simply translatable (if in truth the word of God were translated) into a word of six English letters s-e-r-v-e-d. “ For they that have served *well* [that is, they that have served beautifully] purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in The Faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The word “ deacon” is a Greek word Englishized. The word “ deacon,” like the word “ baptize” in the New Testament, is an untranslated Greek word, which word, when translated, is minister, servant, as elsewhere it is sometimes translated ; for example, Matt. 20. the first occurrence of the word “ deacon.” Matt. 20. 26, last part of the verse : “ Whosoever is great among you, let him be your minister ;” that is, your servant.

John 2. 5 : “ His mother saith unto the SERVANTS, whatsoever He saith unto you, do.” Verse 9 : “ When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the SERVANTS which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,” and so on. The word “ servants” in verses 5 and 9 is the translation of the same word we get in 1 Tim. 3. deacon, and is the word in Matt. 20. It is derived from a word that means to serve. The radical thought, the stem, the branch, and the fruit thought of the word deacon is SERVANT.

Look for a moment at Acts 6. The word deacon occurs 30 times in the New Testament, and if any one here present thinks that I am making an unjust selection you are at liberty to call me in question while I am

speaking. It will be no interruption to me, and it need not be to the meeting. We affirm from first to last of the word it is ever radically in its meaning and signification, service. Acts 6. 2: "Then the twelve [Apostles] called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, 'It is not pleasing [the word is "pleasing," not "reason"] that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.'" The word "serve" here is part of the word "deacon." "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this need. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry (that is, to the service) of the word."

Turn again to 1 Cor. 3. 5: "Who, then, is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man." The word "ministers" here is the word "deacon"; they were deacons.

You know to-day the word deacon is thought by some to be an ecclesiastical officer whose business it is to care for the temporal matters of a church, but the word "deacon," as God uses it, while it covers that, distinctly means such diligent labourers in the ministry of the word as were the Apostle Paul and Apollos. They were deacons who carried to them the truth of God, and through whose deaconing these Corinthians had believed.

Turn back now to Romans, please. Rom. 15. 8: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." The word "minister" here is the word "deacon." Jesus Christ was a deacon of the circumcision for the truth of God. He deaconised the truth of God, and confirmed the promise of God in His deacon work.

Rom. 16. 1: "I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, who is a servant of the Church which is in Cenchrea." The word "servant" is "deacon." Phebe was a deacon, or, as an Englishman would more correctly express it, she was a deaconess of the church that was in Cenchrea. Hence it is, I judge, that we

have the words in 1 Tim. 3., teaching how the deacon man and the deacon woman are to behave themselves in the House of God.

Mark, the word deacon, as traced in all its occurrences in the Scriptures, teaches that the service is of a public, or seen, character. We speak of it chiefly in connection with the House of God, Church of the Living God, for the person who is allowed to open the door and to put persons into their places in the room or hall where a church of God is wont to have meetings, that person is a deacon, and that person ought not to be allowed to do such work unless he or she is a person answering to the description given in 1 Tim. 3. ; as to deacons and deaconesses ; nay, more, should in no wise be allowed to distribute hymn books at the door of the meeting-place, unless he or she has the requisite character attaching to public service in connection with an assembly of God.

Thus a man may not be allowed to give out a hymn in a meeting who lacks the character of a deacon enumerated in 1 Timothy 3. ; a man may not be allowed to lead in prayer who lacks the character of 1 Tim. 3. ; nor any allowed to open their mouth in connection with the gospel who lack the character of 1 Tim. 3.

Would God that His deacon ones and His bishop ones understood this : then much that prevails and obtains to-day would be stamped out, and we should have a ministry in the power of fellowship with God from the deacon ones, not necessarily old men, as is the case in I do not know how many places, and it is the same old men from one year's end to another. How is that ? Why do the young men uncover their heads ? If they have no exercised heart about pleasing Him who is the Lord and Christ, better they should keep their hats on, like the women.

But if there be an exercised heart to do what the Lord would have them do, let us strengthen these brethren to understand that they are in the way of the Lord. Let them learn to stand before the flock ; to be an

example of the flock. If the Lord does not come immediately we shall be gone, and who are to deaconise? Why, they who with us have been led out and on in the way in the fear of the Lord.

But let it be in His fear, and not by doing anything to fill a gap. Better to have a gap that brings down to tears before God, than to have it filled up by a fleshly act to the grieving of the Holy Spirit in oneself, and the quenching of the Holy Spirit in another.

And let the saints be careful not to discourage the Timothy-like one (Acts 16. 1-5), which often is done through want of thought, as, alas! sometimes also by want of heart. The accepted and desired labourer may also help, since he forgets not how at first he too stammered, and even failed to put his words together as he wished and now manages. Mother or teacher does not upbraid the irregular stitches, etc., in the work of the one they seek to bring on to usefulness.

“Making a difference” obtains all through the affair of life and in the “things of our Lord Jesus Christ, even nature itself teaches much. He therefore who is in the mind of the Master will gladly acknowledge, “She has done what she could.”

To the elder sister who is acting out Titus 2.: he who is on the mind of the Master will say, “God bless you, sister, and keep you from gossip and slander—God help you to be faithful in all things.”

Oh, beloved, it is a heart knitting, a soul joining, and a feet quickening work to pray the one for the other, by name to the Lord, by name to go over the gathering one by one, and if any need to do this, surely such as claim to be overseeing ones should be intensely careful to see that thus they do, and they of whom, and for whom, we have spoken to our God, if it should be that we go to speak to these about their doings or their mis-doings, we will do it in the fear and love of the Lord.

Why does the Lord preclude the novice from the bishopric? It is lest he fall into the snare of the Devil. It is for the blessing of the newly planted Christian.

Why does the Lord call all to deacon work? John 12. 26: "If any man serve Me"—if any man deacon Me—if any man deaconise Me—"let him follow Me: and where I am, there shall also My deacon be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." Why is there a call to deacon work for one and all in the flock of God, men and women of the flock of God? The Lord designs our blessing, brethren, for "if any man deacon Me, My servant will be where I am, and My Father will honour him." He wants us to be honoured of His Father: He wants us to have His blessed companionship, and therefore he wants the men and the women in a church of God to be deacon-ones. Who, then, are deacons? Such as seek to serve the Lord Christ, being the persons who honestly strive to answer to the description of deacon given in 1 Tim. 3.

Shall we seek to ordain deacons? Shall we seek to elect them? Shall we seek to appoint them? If we do, let us know that in thus doing we are misbehaving ourselves, for unto deacon work being done the word of the Lord has been given in 1 Tim. 3. that we may know how to behave ourselves in the House of God, which is the Assembly of the Living God. He who would deaconise, or serve the Lord Christ, must be one who is to be careful that he is "not double tongued," not one thing in the church and another thing in the home, not one thing in the religious circle, and another thing in the world circle, not one thing to the saints' face and another thing to the saints' back, not double tongued, not two tongued; "not greedy of base gain," would never say a word about another to advantage himself; would never do a thing against another to set off himself; "holding the mystery of The Faith in a pure conscience" careful as to what he does, that he does not depart from the way of The Faith, careful that his temper, and his words, and his ways, all exemplify The Faith; so to do that if he is married and has a house he is standing beautifully before his house: that he is an example of the believers in speech, in manner of life, in purity, in *purity*, in PURITY. God knows how much that is wanted even among His people to-day.

May we be jealously careful, beloved saints, in each church of God, which is teeming with privileges of the most sacred character, and because teeming with such privileges is teeming with terrible temptations, against the which, if we be not fortified through the grace and truth of God in our heart, if we be not careful to maintain a clean conscience, we shall terribly, awfully fall, and instead of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, we shall cause it to be evil spoken of because of our ungodliness. That God may forbid such, and help us to be such as He would have us, let us now and ever pray.

QUESTION. *Does the "public" character of deacon service justify a woman to speak in public, or at meetings for ladies only?*

ANSWER. 1 Tim. 3. 14, says that the entire epistle was written to teach how to behave in the House of God. And by chapter 2. the woman is not allowed to teach, nor to exercise herself as man, but to be in silence. Then in Cor. 14. 33, 34, it is written, "As in ALL the churches [assemblies] of the saints" let the women (not *your* women, see R.V.) keep silence in the churches (assemblies) for it is not permitted unto them to speak, which is allowed to the prophets, verse 29. Yea, for the doing of which, Paul thanked God that he excelled every other one. And yet the world has been asked to believe that this speaking of 1 Cor. 14. (it is the *same word* all through the chapter) is "chattering" and such like. Fancy Paul thanking God because he chattered in a tongue more than all! Or the prophets told that they might chatter, but the women not!!!

But it is argued, "women prophesied," and prophesying means to preach, and therefore, a woman may preach the gospel or preach in a public meeting. Taking those who say so on their own ground, we have the distinct word of the Lord that "Prophe-sying serveth NOT for them that believe not, but FOR them that believe." (1 Cor. 14. 23.) We suppose that no born again person, *i.e.*, no Christian, will contend that "the gospel serveth not for them that believe not." The conclusion here is inevitably distinct. Is it not?

The "at home" sphere for Christian women is taxing enough for such as are spiritual without their exercising themselves as man. The picture of which is Deut. 22. 5, read in the light of Rom. 15. 4.

In Titus 2. that which becomes sound doctrine is enjoined upon "aged women," who are exhorted to cause the young women to be sober, or discreetly minded, and to be "home workers," (*not* keepers at home) which homework is beautifully set forth in, for example, the "goats' hair' curtain doubled over the forefront of God's tabernacle-dwelling." For yet the woman has her work and sphere of honour from God. And, as in Israel, the wise, willing-hearted woman spun at home such as the Lord wanted; so to-day He brings her work, though not herself, into publicity. And thus "Her own works will be her praise in the Gates."

The woman professing godliness is exhorted to be adorned with good works. And was not Dorcas so adorned, Acts. 9. 39? Is not she, too, thus adorned, who fills up her own account, 1 Tim. 5. 10 with Phil. 4. 17?

But then, did not some women help, or labour with Paul in the Gospel? They did. And what they did, EVERY ONE in the church at Philippi was exhorted to do. See chapter 1. 27th verse. Does any one think, believe, or say, that each and all were expected to publicly preach? We trow not. Well, please understand that ALL were charged to do whatever these women had done, and this in connection with "The Faith of the gospel."