

The Covenantal Life: Being the Church

Week 6 - Church Officers

Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:1-6

- Jesus established His church and delegated authority in it to His apostles (Matt. 16:18-19, 18:18)
 - Initially, this authority in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5:3-11); as the church scattered, local bodies were established by associates of the apostles (Acts 11:19-26); elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23), and this pattern continued (Acts 20:17, 28, 32, 1 Tim. 4:14, Titus 1:5, 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
- New Testament sets forth two ecclesiastical offices - elders and deacons
 - Certain traditions attempt to add other authoritative offices (teaching vs. ruling elder, Bishop, Cardinal, Presbyterian, etc)
 - God delegates authority to the local church and rule to local elders
- The church is not a democracy - it is a monarchy under Christ as King
 - Officers appointed must meet the qualifications laid out by God (1 Tim. 3:1-13)
 - Primarily, qualifications have to do with character
 - Leaders must be an exemplary Christians, imitation worthy (Titus 2:7-8)
 - Secondly comes knowledge - “credentials” come after character
 - Elders must be “able to teach” - must be able to bring people along to deeper, more mature understanding (Col. 1:28, Heb. 5:11)
 - Deacons must “hold the mystery of faith” - must know, understand, and believe sound doctrine
 - When biblical qualifications are not met, this is spiritually detrimental
 - If a person meets the qualifications, he may be appointed to the office
 - Church members choose leaders from among themselves (Acts 6:3)
 - Confirmed and appointed by elders through the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6, 1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22)
- Responsibilities of elders
 - 1 Tim. 5:17 - primary duties are to rule and to teach
 - Teaching comes with great responsibility (Jas. 3:1)
 - What we believe is paramount - teaching is highly exalted and deeply necessary
 - Titus 1:9 - must be able to instruct and rebuke
 - Jude 3 - must be able to contend for the faith
 - Col. 2:7 - sound teaching is the foundation for everything else in Christianity
 - 1 Tim. 4:13 - elders are to be devoted to teaching
 - Honor is given *especially* to those elders who teach regularly

- Teaching is to be laborious - exhausting - legitimate work
- Ruling - governing, leading, shepherding - exercising headship (Heb. 13:17)
 - 1 Pet. 5:1-5 - elders are undershepherds under the chief shepherd
 - Exercise oversight - keep watch on doctrine and life (Acts 20:28)
 - Willingly - joyfully fulfilling heavy requirements
 - Not domineering, by example - leading humbly as servants
 - 1 Thess. 2:5-12 - self-giving, poured out for others
 - Requires the exercise of discipline, yet always with humility, patience, and grace (1 Tim. 5:1-2)
- Responsibilities of deacons
 - Deacons are given no spiritual, judicial, or teaching authority in the church
 - Called to serve in practical, tangible ways - distinct from the service of the elders (Acts 6)
 - Chief servants of the church - assess needs, labor to meet needs, help the poor, care for sick, organize, administrate, recruit others to meet needs
 - This is demanding work that would divert elders' attention from teaching and ruling
 - Still under the broad authority of the elders (1 Tim. 5:3-16)