

BISHOPS, DEACONS, ELDERS ... OH, MY!

PAULINE POSITIONS IN THE CHURCH

*"Brethren, be followers together of me,
and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."*

~ Phil 3:17

1. The Problems with Positions

- a. It is easy to tear down corrupt religious authority, but hard to build something true
- b. Building should be according to blueprint: Paul's pattern – 1 Tim 1:1-16
- c. We are talking about order in the assembly, not lords over your souls, or a vicar
- d. An old debate: Congregational(deacons), Episcopal(bishops), Presbyterian(elders)
 - i. The problem with positions/offices is primarily a failure to rightly divide
- e. In time past: priests, judges, kings - Lev 4:20, John 20:23, Matt 16:19, 19:28
- f. But now, only one mediator between God and man (not the Pope) – 1 Tim 2:5
- g. We are not in a kingdom, not Israel, not a building, Heb 10:25, 13:17 is not ours
- h. Pastors of music, children, counseling; worship leaders, priests are not Pauline.
- i. Eph 4:11 were gifts of the Holy Spirit, and does not describe church structure now

2. Members

- a. Membership is by faith, not denomination decree, certificate, or money – Eph 5:30
- b. Ministry is done by everyone and not just those in ordained offices – Titus 2
- c. There are young men, aged men, young women, aged women – not all are strong
- d. There are weak and strong – the new are all weak, the aged are not all strong
- e. We should all strive to grow to be an elder: its not about elections and paychecks

3. Elders = those ordained to set things in order doctrinally / behaviorally – Titus 1:5

- a. Not just aged, but fathers, rulers, those who came before - 1Cor 4:15, 1Pet 5:1
- b. They are stronger in faith and purchase to themselves a good degree – 1 Tim 3:13
- c. Ordained in every church – Acts 14:23; two kinds of elders: bishops & deacons

4. Deacons = the elders that minister to every member

- a. Tradition says if you want to change the church be a deacon (voting member)
- b. The office of a deacon is not about control – they are the local ministers, servants
- c. All apostles, bishops, ministers, servants should qualify for this office
- d. You must FIRST be proved before having the office – 1 Tim 3:8-10
- e. Holding the mystery of the faith (doctrine) in pure conscience (integrity) 1Tim 3:9
- f. They show great boldness in the faith (desire/zeal) – 1 Tim 3:13, 1 Cor 16:15-16

5. Bishops = the inspecting, overseeing, ruling elders

- a. Paul calls some elders together and calls them overseers – Acts 20:17, 28
- b. There is a need for confirmation/exhortation in churches – Acts 14:22, 15:41, 18:23
- c. The bishops are the elders that keep order and rule – Titus 1:5-9
- d. They are the caretakers and rulers of the local church - 1 Tim 3:5
- e. These desire the office, not "called by God" or voted, but come from the deacons
- f. Timothy was a bishop and was told to warn, command, teach, preach 1 Tim 4:6,11
- g. The way to rule well is to heed yourself, the doctrine, and continue in them not being ashamed - 1 Tim 4:16