

Sermons To Baptist Churches

CHAPTER 10 WHO RULES IN THE CHURCH?

This is an enormously practical question. For while we are taught in a number of places in the New Testament that a church *is* democratic in polity – that every member has a vote in all major decisions, and that the majority is to rule – yet reason as well as Scripture requires that someone take the lead. In using the word "rule" we would not suggest that anyone has dictatorial authority in the Lord's churches. However, the use of this word in Hebrews 13 makes it certain that there is a leadership authority that God has given to some in churches even though they are democratic bodies. "Remember them which have *the* rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [conduct or behavior]. . . Obey them that have *the* rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. . . Salute all them that *have the* rule over you," (Heb. 13:7; 17 24).

These verses do not give a title to these rulers in the church, yet several things are said here that give a strong intimation as to who they are. They are described as: (1) Those that have spoken the Word of God to them. They are necessarily either teachers or preachers. (2) Those believers who set an example that should be followed. (3) Those to whom they are submit and obey. This implies that they have some sort of authority. (4) Those that watch for the souls of men. This suggests that they have a commission from God to do so (Cf. Ezek. 33:7). (5) Those whom God holds accountable for rightly teaching and guiding people. (6) The words "remember," "obey," and "salute" indicate that respect is to be shown to these. Based on these things, it is obvious that God never intended His churches to be constituted of an unguided, undisciplined, unsubmitive mob that does everyone "that which was right in his own eyes," (Judges 21:25), as Israel did in the days when she had no king and lived much in anarchy.

But that this is no justification for a church dictator is made clear by the inspired condemnation of the imperious attitude of Diotrephes in 3 John 9-10. His exact office is not defined, probably purposefully so that this may be applied to anyone that may assume his arrogant and egotistical attitude. That it has to do with church leaders of some kind, however, seems suggested by the admonition in verse 11: "Beloved *follow not that which evil*, but that which is good." A leader is required where there are followers,

so that this admonition implies that Diotrephes was a leader of some sort, even if it was a usurped leadership.

The New Testament sets forth only two kinds of officers in the churches bishops and deacons, (Phil. 1:1). The first of these is one that ministers in spiritual things primarily, and is expressed by various terms—bishop, elder, pastor, preacher, etc. —depending upon the aspect of the ministry that is stressed. The second, which literally means servant, relates to a ministry in physical and material things, and has no ruling authority in it. Yet, in spite of the New Testament limitation, men have often invented various and sundry offices, so that there are two dozen or more terms that different denominations use for the multiplicity of offices, and most of them have no biblical justification. Thus we read of popes, archbishops, cardinals, bishops (but not in the biblical sense), archdeacons, deacons (but again not in the biblical sense), acolytes, readers, priests, pontiffs, vicars, apostles (not in the biblical sense), clergy, prelates, parsons, rectors, canons, chaplains, fathers, divines, and on and on we might go. Little wonder that there is so much confusion in the religious world over what is proper leadership in churches. Imagination has often been substituted for inspiration.

Now Baptists have generally not succumbed to this confusion, being predominately a "people of *the Book*," for they take their doctrinal beliefs therefrom, which always prevents confusion. This relates to their stated belief, but in practice, they have sometimes tolerated an unscriptural leadership, or at least unscriptural influences on the leadership of churches. It is with this in mind that we have proposed the question of our title, and intend to inquire into several of the views relating to leadership.

I. CONSIDER THE DICTATORSHIP VIEW.

By this we refer to the practice of some ministers of setting themselves up as the absolute and unquestioned authority over all that goes on in a church. They may seek to justify their actions by citing the practices of the apostles, or by stressing that "bishop" (episkopoV ; episkopos) means an overseer, and so, has absolute authority, or in other ways. But their view will not mesh with New Testament teachings or practice, for while it is true that the apostles had authority surpassing that of regular ministers, (1 Cor. 9:12, 18; 11 Cor. 13:10) ("power" is literally "authority"), they seldom if ever exercised it. Indeed, Paul disclaimed authority over anyone's faith, (2 Cor. 1:24).

The same thing is true in regard to any supposed *episcopal authority*, for while there is a certain authority in the office of a bishop or overseer, it is a limited authority, not a kingly authority that knows no limit, as some seem to think. In fact, Peter, whom some think had supreme authority on earth as the first pope, was moved by the inspiring Spirit to say that bishops are not to be overlords, but only examples to the flock, (1 Pet. 5:2-3) ("taking the oversight" is the verb form of "bishop"). As suggested in Hebrews 13:7, 17, the authority that church leaders have is only to be that authority that comes from Biblical teaching and a holy example.

Whether we like to admit it or not, ministers are not exempt from that pride of life that is common among all the sons of Adam, and lingers even in the best of saints. Because of this, pride often warps one's thinking so that he mistakes his own carnal desires to glorify himself for the Lord's will. It is most instructive that in the qualifications for ministers in 1 Timothy 3:6 "being lifted up with pride" is rendered "being demented with pride" by *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*. As we are told in Ecclesiastes 9:3, the natural man's heart is full of madness, and even saved people are not immune to lingering pride that often rises to the surface, and God is antagonized by all pride, (Prov. 16:5). It is this ministerial pride that sometimes causes *even a* good man to assume to himself a dictatorial attitude toward the church over which he has been appointed bishop so that he may become a bane to it instead of a blessing.

That even apostles struggled with that pride that tends to dictatorialness is evident from the Lord's rebuke of them in Matthew 23:8: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." There is equality between all the Lord's people, and none ought ever to desire to dictate to others. Yet the desire to be accounted great is wrought into the very warp and woof of human nature, and this can lead to a dictatorial spirit if one does not guard against it. The remedy is the Lord's teaching that all believers are equal in His eyes, and no one has a right to lord it over others. We see this equality taught clearly in Galatians 3:28. On numerous occasions the disciples had disputed with one another over who would be the greatest in the kingdom, (Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:33-34; Luke 22:24). We sometimes forget that not even the apostles *were super-saints*, nor did they ever become so. At best they only finally became *seasoned saints*, as we all should, but they each had a struggle with pride and ambition before they attained that state. And faithful disciples today must do so also so that they will not be tempted to want to dominate others.

Let it be remembered what Peter went on to say in 1 Peter 5. There is a special crown of reward promised to the faithful minister at the Lord's return, (v. 4), but it will not be given to the minister that seeks for present glorification in the sight of men. Who would want to trade the Lord's reward for the empty glory of being a dictator over one of the Lord's assemblies? This was not a mere theoretical matter to Peter, for he spoke from experience, having learned through much humiliation not to seek for worldly glory.

The minister that would be a church dictator cannot do so except by the suffrage of the church that he pastors. The church often tolerates this out of a sincere respect for the pastor, and sometimes from the mistaken idea that God's Word requires them to tolerate such a man. At other times it is tolerated because people fear to confront the overbearing pastor. But it is as wrong for a church to tolerate such a dictator as it is for a minister to be dictatorial. In both instances it is contrary to New Testament teachings, and works to the detriment of the church's ministry in the community. However, wisdom and spirituality are required for this matter to be rightly resolved without there being a bad spiritual upheaval that stinks up the whole community. And though it is not often the case that such a situation comes to this point, sometimes it does. The best

thing is that there be a proper understanding between church and pastor from the beginning, so that such a problem never is allowed to develop. Each needs to understand the other's position, with neither concealing its beliefs and expectations. Thereby a would-be dictator would never be called.

There is a sense in which preachers are servants of churches. Divine wisdom declares that it is an incongruous and disturbing thing for a servant to presume to be king, (Prov. 30:22). "Reigneth" here (Hebrew malak; malak) means to rule as a king, hence, to have dictatorial authority. Having said this, however, it must be considered that there is an opposite, though equally erroneous, view of who rules in a church.

II. CONSIDER THE DOORMAT VIEW.

We use this terminology because it is sadly the case that some churches are the dictators in this matter, and they treat their pastors with great disrespect and even with contempt. To treat him as a mere doorman to be walked on, is to show a total ignorance of His call of God, and the fact that he is God's gracious gift to that church.

This attitude is sometimes manifested when a new pastor is called, and someone tells others, "We hired us a preacher." The implication is that the pastor is nothing more than a hireling that can be bought if enough money and perks are offered him. And while it is true that there are a lot of hirelings in the ministry, there are not so many of them in the Baptist ministry as in other denominations for at least two reasons. First, Baptists generally believe in a God-called ministry, and do not want a pastor that is in the ministry for any other reason. And second, Baptists generally pay much smaller salaries to their ministers than other denominations, which tends to hinder mere money motivated men from entering the Baptist ministry. Now a poor salary in itself is not right, for the meaning of "honor" in 1 Timothy 5:7 more commonly referring to things of value than to respect, shows that a preacher that is a good pastor and good doctrinal teacher is worthy of double the pay of less faithful preachers.

However, a God-called pastor who is in fellowship with the Lord will not be influenced by the amount of the salary. In fact, there is not enough money in the world to hire such a man unless he has a conviction that he has a call from God to become pastor of that church. Therefore, it is an insult to the pastor to ever speak of "hiring a pastor." The proper terminology is "we have called a pastor," or, "we, the church, and the preacher, mutually believe that God is leading us into a relationship together," or other such spiritual expressions. And while some speak of hiring a pastor out of ignorance, some thereby manifest the subconscious contempt that they feel for him.

In some churches any teenaged member of the church has as much authority and influence in church decisions as the pastor has. We have known instances where the pastor's recommendation regarding revivalists, missionaries to be supported, building plans, etc., was totally ignored, and even contradicted by members. This ought not so to be. Such often exists in churches that do not want a pastor, but only want a preacher. That is, they want someone that will preach for them (provided he does not say

anything that will convict any worldly members of their sins) but they do not want a man that will take the lead and make any decisions, or even recommendations. The title "pastor" means literally *shepherd*, and by its very meaning implies his leadership and guidance over the flock. Someone once well asked, "Who ever heard of the sheep telling the shepherd what to do?" Yet many churches do so.

There are a lot of decisions that have to be made *in* churches that are not major enough to require being brought before the church in a business meeting. And it is an extremely foolish and rebellious church that refuses to let the pastor be pastor and take the lead in such decisions. It is not the mark of respect for church authority to demand that every purchase of church supplies, or every decision about Sunday School studies, or who is to be the revival or anniversary day speaker, etc., be brought up in business meeting in order to determine it. Such an attitude makes a mere doormat of the pastor, and treats him as if he did not have either the knowledge or spirituality to male such a decision. If a church does not have the confidence *in* a man to leave all such minor decisions to him, it should not call him as pastor to begin with. But if it believes that the Lord has a man for the pastorate, it should not hinder him from his work by petty little restrictions. Most pastors are conscientious in their endeavor to lead and feed the flock, and have as high as, if not higher than, desire for the church's best interests as any other member of it.

One has only to look at the practice of the Jerusalem church in the Book of Acts to see that first Peter, and then after him, James, took the lead as pastor in most matters. Only major things did they bring up for the church to decide by congregational determination. And in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, never was the pastor or "angel" of the church treated as a mere figurehead or doormat. Instead, every one of those messages for the churches was sent directly to the pastor of the church for him to reveal to the church. God always respects the pastor that the Holy Spirit has set over a church, (Acts 20:28), and speaks to the church through him. Wicked and rebellious church members may not like this, but there is no New Testament example to the contrary of this, and churches had better follow the New Testament pattern if they want to receive God's blessings.

Sometimes pastors, especially young ones, through a false humility, will tolerate being treated as a doormat to be walked on, and sadly, most churches have some unspiritual, if not unsaved, members that delight to do so. But these are not biblical attitudes on the part of either the pastor or the member. Paul was inspired in 1 Timothy 4:12 to command Timothy, who was of a rather timid character (2 Tim. 1:6-7), to "let no man despise thy youth; but be thou and example of the believers. . ." And to the church in Corinth Paul wrote "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do," (1 Cor. 16:10). This seems to be a command that the church there make sure that none treat Timothy as a mere doormat simply because he was not as aggressive a leader as some preachers were.

Sometimes unsaved people, and more commonly, unspiritual people, get into churches, and try to force their own unspiritual thoughts upon those that are spiritual, but they should not be tolerated for a moment. We see Paul's teachings in regard to this in Galatians 2: 4-5. "And because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Disorder in churches is always detrimental to the teaching and preaching of the truth. Doubtless this is why Satan delights to have some unsaved or unspiritual person that will try to keep preachers from doing what God has called them to do in the way that God intends them to do it.

That God will not tolerate His appointed spokesmen from being treated disrespectfully is clear from such texts as Psalm 105:14-15. "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Nor will it do to say that this only had to do with Old Testament prophets, for "prophet" does not necessarily refer to a foreteller of future events. It is rather in reference to a forth-teller of truth, as the word means. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 a prophet is defined as one that speaks to men for their edification, exhortation and comfort. And New Testament preachers are commonly referred to as prophets in this sense, (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 11:28), etc. Disrespect for the man that God sends to a church is disrespect of God Who sent him, as Jesus taught in John 13:20. It is a solemn sin to do so.

Nor does all this justify a proud, arrogant and overbearing attitude on the part of a pastor. As we have already noted, there is no room in any New Testament church for a dictator. Sadly, Catholicism is not the only denomination that has Popes. There are some would-be Baptist Popes but this is not the will of the Lord.

In answer to the question of the title of this article, we must needs go further and look at yet another erroneous assumption about who rules in a church, which leads us to –

III. CONSIDER THE DEACONSHIP VIEW.

In some Baptist churches the board of deacons is a ruling body that dictates to both pastor and people as to what is done. Even in churches that do not have an *official board* of deacons, sometimes one or all of the deacons presume an authority that the New Testament does not allow to them. In honesty it must be said that sometimes this is not the fault of the deacons themselves. Sometimes churches, in ignorance of what the diaconate is, mistakenly think that it is a board of ruling elders, and they push that duty upon the deacons. But that is not Baptist polity. That is *presbyterian polity*—rule by elders instead of the democratic form of church government that the New Testament specifies for the Lord's churches.

The office of deacon was instituted in Acts 6, and even a cursory consideration of this passage shows that deacons were never intended to have any sort of ruling authority. It was an office of service as the Greek word *diakonos* (diakonouV) literally means. Of the

thirty appearances of this word in the *New Testament* it is rendered "servant" or "minister" in all but Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8, 12, where it is transliterated as "deacon." And the thirty-five times that the verb form of the word appears it is always rendered "minister" or "serve" except in 1 Timothy 3:10, 13, where it is translated "use the office of a deacon." In 1 Timothy 3:8-13 where the qualifications for this office are set forth there is not even a hint that they have any ruling authority whatsoever except that of ruling their own families.

In Acts 6 at the first institution of this office, the expressed purpose of the office was to serve in material things, to which the ministers were to appoint them as needed. Notice: they were not ordained to be watchdogs over the pastors, nor to rule the church, nor to exercise any authority whatsoever. No! The office was one of service, which was *to be directed by pastoral authority*, (Acts 6:3). Its purpose was to relieve ministers of the distractions of the numerous physical services that would hinder them from giving themselves wholly to prayer and study, which is their primary work.

Therefore, anyone that thinks or tries to exercise authority as a deacon over the church or pastor shows that he is in gross ignorance of the office, that he has the spirit of Diotrefes, and has disqualified himself from the office of deacon. No church should tolerate such a man in the office, but should immediately put him out of the office, and, if he will not submit to this, should exclude him from the church for the rebellious and disruptive force that he is. The ordination to the office of deacon is for life in the church that ordains him *provided he does not become disqualified* for the office. This is shown in 1 Timothy 3:10f which literally reads "let them use the office of a deacon, being blameless" (present participle—so long as he maintains a state of blamelessness as to the office of deacon). But the endeavor to usurp authority over either church or pastor is a manifest violation of the qualification for the office, and should be summarily dealt with by the church.

Often a church has maintained an official board of deacons, or has tolerated the exercise of authority by deacons so long that it thinks this is right simply because it is of such long standing practice. But remember! Jesus indicted all tradition that is contrary to Scripture, (Matthew 15:1-9), and this is a violation of New Testament requirements that should be repented of and changed if a church would be Scriptural in its practices. If a Baptist church is unwilling to do this, and retains an authoritative diaconate, it has departed from Baptist polity. It ought to take down the name Baptist, and put up a name denoting what it truly is, a Presbyterian church—a church that is ruled by a presbytery of ruling elders. It is no longer scriptural in its government.

In honesty it must be acknowledged that sometimes an authoritative diaconate is tolerated or even instituted by a pastor that is unwilling to shoulder the responsibility for his office. He wants a board of others to bear the responsibility of leading the church and making the necessary decisions. Many of us are cowards in this regard, and would like to have others *upon whom we could shift* the blame when things go wrong, but this is not the thing to do. It is not wrong for pastors to seek the counsel of others in the

decisions to be made. It is scriptural to seek counsel *from* others, (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6,) but this does not justify inventing an authoritative board of ruling elders in the church. Neither should counsel be sought just from the deacons. *Where* there is need for counselors, a wise pastor would call for a meeting of all of the men of the church and confer with them before making a recommendation to the church. This would prevent the introduction of an unscriptural authority that would almost certainly usurp the authority of either church or pastor in due time, and so violate the scriptural polity of the church.

Some have sought to justify such a ruling board in churches because Scripture reveals that some New Testaments churches had several elders in them, and especially from the reference in 1 Timothy 5:17 to "Elders that rule well." This is thought to suggest that in New Testament churches there was a separate group of preachers that were designated *ruling elders* in contrast to *teaching elders*. But this is a misinterpretation that finds no countenance anywhere else in the New Testament. The verse itself shows that these were teachers also. The reference is to the fact that some elders (bishops, pastors, ministers, etc., which are used throughout the New Testament as synonymous with one another) are better at ruling and teaching in the church than others, and that these are worthy of double wages. In several places, the Greek word here used is rendered "price," (Matthew 27:6), "sum of money," (Acts 7:16), and other ways that suggest that things of material value are meant.

"But," it may be objected, "what about preaching deacons, such as Stephen and Philip? Surely they must have had some authority!" The requirements for the office of deacon does not require any deacon to preach. But God has used many of them to do so, and very effectively, and it is a blessed church that has such. However, they are exactly that "preaching *deacons*" and nothing more, and so, having no authority. Their occasional preaching does *not* change *them into* something else, nor does it confer any authority on them. And though Philip is called "the evangelist" (the Greek word simply means a Gospelizer) in Acts 21:8, he had not thereby become something else than a deacon. For the same verse shows that he was still considered a deacon, for "which was of the seven (deacons)" is not *in* the past tense as the English version seems to indicate, but is a *present participle* – being yet of the original deacons.

Ignorance and pride are the only bases of the idea that deacons should ever be authoritative in churches, but many churches allow this, and it is always detrimental to the faithful ministry of God-called pastors. Any church that has such a situation should immediately remedy it so that the Word of God will not be hindered. But in answer to the question of our title, there is another thing at which we need to look.

IV. CONSIDER THE DOMINATRIX VIEW.

By this we refer to the domination of a church or pastor by some female or group of females. The suffix -atrix changes the word "dominator" into the feminine form. For wise reasons of His own, God has decreed that women are not to exercise any authority

over men in spiritual matters, (1 Tim. 2:12). This is based both on the original order of creation, (1 Tim. 2:13), and also upon the Law of God, (1 Cor. 14:34). This is *in no* way demeaning to women, but is simply God's ordained order. Godly Christian women generally respect this, although it is common to hear some of them complain that "We'd get things done a lot quicker and more efficiently if we women were allowed to run the church." But this is more often said in jest than seriously. But the sad fact is that sometimes a Christian woman will get out of her God-given role, and will try to dominate the pastor and sometimes the whole church. When this happens it is often done by a woman that is not in subjection to her own husband, axed not being satisfied with dominating him, she wants to dominate others as well. Sometimes serious psychological disturbances dating back to her youth may have produced such a rebellious spirit against male authority.

At least one of the churches of New Testament times had this problem, and the Lord reproached it for tolerating such a situation. "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, *which* calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols," (Rev. 2:20). This woman justified her errors by claiming to lie a prophetess—a God-called spokesman. Often women that try to dominate worship use this same claim—that they are called of God—to justify their unscriptural practice. The first charge that God lodged against her was that she taught the men, which was a violation of 1 Timothy 2:12. But furthermore she led the Lord's people into fornication (whether physical or spiritual is not declared), and into false worship. One error leads into another as a general rule. A domineering woman in a church will eventually get around to teaching heresy of some kind, for the Spirit does not guide rebels against the Lord's authority, but leaves them to themselves and they fall into further error.

This endeavor to dominate the legitimate authority in a church is often done in subtle ways. Sometimes a radical change in church procedure or practice is sought to be introduced by a woman coming to the pastor and saying, "The Lord has revealed to me that we ought to do thus and so." When this has happened to this writer, he has been tempted to reply "Now that is strange that I, whom the Lord has placed as the leader of this flock, was not told this by the Lord, but rather that he told you, who have no authority in the matter." Graciousness would prevent such a reply, but there is a strong negative implication when *such is* done. The implication is that the pastor is either deaf to the Lord, or else is not spiritual enough to understand what the will of the Lord is. And a parallel implication is that the Lord *has* the ear and heart of the woman that brings the matter up because she is so much more spiritual. In any case, it is a reflection upon the pastor, and manifests a manipulative spirit on her part as she tries to exercise rule in the church.

Sometimes the endeavor of women to dominate the church is not by a frontal confrontation but is more in the background by the manipulation of the men. And having said this, a mistake must be guarded against. There is nothing wrong with

husbands and wives, brothers and unmarried sisters, fathers and unmarried daughters, and other such relationships, discussing church matters, and the women expressing their views to the men, and the men taking that into consideration in their recommendations. This is about the only way that they can exercise their rights as church members without violating the Biblical injunction against them speaking out in the assembly. The wrong is when women try to dominate the church or the pastor.

God is not careless *about* how things are to be done in His churches, and for every declaration that is made in Scripture regarding *practical* church matters, there is good reason, so that none ought to be ignored or violated. On the other hand, the pride of life is one of the three main avenues of temptation, (1 John 2:16), and human pride is such that we all, men and women, have to continually be on our guard against it lest our endeavor to glorify ourselves lead us to violate Scriptural church procedures.

Finally, having looked at four negative aspects of who is to rule in the church, we come to the fifth, which is the clear Bible teaching on this matter.

V. CONSIDER THE DUAL AUTHORITY VIEW.

By this we mean that the authority involved in the church is not a matter of either the church or the pastor, but is rather both, with each working harmoniously with the other. It is clear from Matthew 28:18-20 that the Head of the church authorized it to do His work on earth. But it is equally clear beginning in the book of Acts, and evidenced throughout the rest of the New Testament that the pastor of the church took the lead in declaring what was needed, and how it was to be done. There was no competition between the two, but rather an amazing harmony in all recorded cases.

This is based upon reason and logic as well, for what is the responsibility of all in a given group will not be done unless there is an organizational structure with someone taking the lead and delegating the work to different ones and directing it. To a pastoral people such as many first century Christians were, the idea of a shepherd over a flock would be perfectly understandable. And even city dwellers would understand this principle as well. Hence the title "pastor" (shepherd) is the most common one for the leader of a church. The greatest group of people that could be assembled in a place would not operate efficiently without such a leader. Indeed, anarchy—mob rule without leadership—is always destructive only, and never accomplishes any good.

The titles given to the leaders of the Lord's churches—pastors, bishops, elders—all are suggestive of authority, but it is not a dictatorial authority. It is the directive and practical authority of pastors under the organizational authority of the church. And in like manner all the qualifications for the ministerial office, (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4, etc.), are suggestive of this same duality of authority.

In the foregoing refutations of the erroneous views of the proper exercise of authority in the Lord's churches we have shown much of the evidence of this duality of authority. Nowhere does it stand out more clearly than in Acts 1:15-26 and Acts 6:1-7 where we

have the choosing of church officers set forth. The pastor declared the need, and the way to fulfill it, and the church nominated the candidates and then voted upon whom it thought were God's choices for the offices. Here was *pastoral authority* working with *church authority*, with no conflict whatsoever, but rather with perfect harmony. So ought it always to be, and so it will be where the Spirit of God is given the lead. It is always only when the flesh gets in the way that confusion enters.

One other thing needs to be considered in this matter, and that is, What is to be done when there is a disagreement between a pastor and a church? Neither an individual Christian nor a congregation of Christians is proof against making a mistake, and so there may be times when a disagreement between pastor and church is of such a nature that it cannot be resolved except by them parting company.

Ideally, in such a disagreement, either the pastor or the church would see the error of its position, and would yield to the other. But sometimes both hold their positions so adamantly, and perhaps by conviction, that there is no yielding the point. As a general rule, the pastor simply resigns and moves on to another field, even if he is sure that the church is wrong. If it is, the church will suffer for not yielding to sound preaching. If the pastor is wrong, then the church will be able to call another that is more in harmony with its beliefs. But in no case should the matter ever be appealed to any outside arbiter. 1 Corinthians 6:1ff forbids this.

As for Scripture guidelines, we have a case that, though not exactly parallel, yet is similar enough to throw light upon this matter. In Acts 15:36-41 there arose a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over whether to take John Mark, Barnabas' nephew, with them on the next missionary journey. Paul did not want to do so because Mark had turned back on the first missionary journey, (Acts 13:13). The contention was so sharp that the matter was brought before the church, and it apparently felt that Paul was right, and sent him and his party forth on the second missionary journey. Upon this, Barnabas departed for his home in Cyprus, taking Mark with him.

Though Barnabas was not then pastor of this church, he had worked with this church in its infancy, and had possibly been its first pastor, (Acts 11:22-26), but in any case he had helped them much, (Acts 13:1). Upon the church taking a contrary position to his, he simply retired to another place of service, thus setting an example for others.

God has given authority to His churches to carry out His work. In like manner He has called pastors to lead the flock, and there will be no conflict of authority where both of them are submissive to the Word and Will of God. However, the flesh of even the best of saints being what it is, there is great potential for abuse and even denial of church authority. May God enable each of us to know and to submit to His truth.

