

ELDERS AND DEACONS, A WARNING

There is no doubt the church is in dire need of more elders and deacons. The Lord wants them in the congregations or He would never have made them a part of the church government (Eph. 4:11). Some few brethren believe these offices passed away with the age of miracles, but if one closely examines the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9, he will see that there is not one of them that requires the power of the Holy Spirit or a miracle. The qualifications are attainable by ordinary men, who along with their families, diligently work toward that end. The same can be said for the deaconship.

If men are qualified according to the scriptures and have the desire for the offices, they should be ordained and allowed to serve (Tit. 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:1). I will go even further. If men qualify for these positions in a congregation and the church does not install them, the congregation is wrong. The apostle Paul says, "Ordain them elders in every city". If it were not the will of God, or if there were no need for them, the apostle would not have advised, yea, commanded Titus to ordain them. Why was there a greater need for them then than now?

While all this is true, and regardless of how much these officers may be needed in the church, there is no excuse for our being stampeded into installing men in these positions who are not qualified, and who, therefore, would not be recognized by the Lord, even if they were appointed.

Some in this day and time seem to be willing to lower the standard or minimize the importance of the qualifications in order to have bishops and deacons. I doubt the wisdom or the scripturalness of such practice. It can only provoke the displeasure of the Lord.

A congregation can function without elders and deacons. It can work and worship without them. They did in the days of the apostles until men could be appointed, and they do now. However, it is bound to be better to have them, otherwise the Lord would not have wanted them. A congregation is not fully grown or fully mature until it has such officers. However, it is far better to have none, than to have men claiming to be elders and deacons who are not qualified and of whom the Lord does not approve.

Men should be honest enough to refuse to be ordained until they have fully studied the subject and are fully persuaded in their own minds that they meet the Lord's requirements. Preachers also should be honest enough and serious enough to be sure the men whom they are asked to ordain meet the scriptural qualifications before they do the ordaining, for fear of partaking of other men's sins and thus jeopardize their own salvation.

I wonder how long it will be before we become like our digressive brethren who have relaxed the standard to the point they ordain elders and deacons everywhere, even if they did not qualify, just to be sure they have them. Brethren, this cannot be the will of God. Paul, the apostle, instructed Titus to ordain elders ' if ' they are qualified (Titus 1:5,6). Again, he said to Timothy, "a bishop then must be" qualified (1 Tim 3:2).

Brethren, let's demand that men meet God's standard and qualify by God's word before they are ordained as officers in the Lord's church. After all, God does.