

Seven Deacons Selected

Key Verse:
***“Therefore,
brethren, pick out
from among
yourselves seven
men of good repute,
full of the Spirit
and of wisdom, and
we will appoint
them to undertake
this duty.”***

—Acts 6:3,
*Weymouth New
Testament*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 6:1-8

IN THE DAYS OF THE EARLY

Church, widows, generally speaking, had no income and were often dependent upon charity for their material needs. In this regard, there “arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” (Acts 6:1) The Grecians were Christians who spoke Greek and were not Jewish by birth. We do not believe the situation described in the foregoing verse was caused by any intentional partiality or neglect of the Grecian widows. Rather, differences in language and culture

between the Grecians and the Hebrews may have created confusion and misunderstanding among the brethren.

When this issue was brought to their attention, the Apostles promptly addressed it by calling “the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. 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 business.”—vss, 2,3

This recommendation by the Apostles “pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.” (vs. 5) It is interesting to note that the seven who were chosen by the multitude all had Greek names. Here we see the wisdom of the congregation of brethren in the Early Church, in purposely selecting seven men who were Greek, who might better identify and address the specific needs of the Grecian widows.

Another lesson we can learn from this account is that each separate church, or “ecclesia,” is to consider the Lord as its Head. (Eph. 5:24; Col. 1:18) Hence, each congregation of the Lord’s people should seek to recognize the will of the Head in respect to all its affairs. It is very proper, then, that the general affairs of an ecclesia should be decided by the congregation, and not by any one person, nor by the elders of the church only. —Matt. 18:17; I Tim. 3:15

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, which means a “servant.” The Apostle Paul outlines the qualifications which should guide the congregation when selecting brethren as deacons. These include: good Christian character, faithfulness to the Truth, and zeal for service to the Lord and his flock. Paul concludes by saying: “They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—I Tim. 3:8-13

The Apostle Paul also used the same Greek word in a broader sense, when he referred to himself and Timothy as “ministers [*diakonos*] of God.” (II Cor. 6:4) Hence, we see that all true elders in the church are also deacons or servants. Jesus used this word in a still larger sense, when he said to his disciples: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant [*diakonos*].” (Matt. 23:11) Thus, all consecrated followers of the Lord should be servants, and with “love serve one another.”—Gal. 5:13 ■