

BAHRAIN REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

Diaconate 3

July 19, 2024

Ordination

Note: If we accept Acts 6 as the origin of the diaconate, those chosen were clearly ordained for this office.

- They were chosen from among the membership by a free suffrage of the members
- When they were chosen, the apostles laid hands on them
- The 1689 BCF affirms the act of ordination to be accorded to deacons [XXVI.9] [BRBC, Cons. 5.3.4.1] - “As with eldership, the ability to serve as a deacon is a gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to His church. Those who are to serve as deacons will be chosen from the men who display the necessary gifts and abilities. [ibid. 5.3.4.2] – “The elders have the responsibility of recognizing when the need arises for deacons to be appointed, and accordingly to make recommendations to the church. The procedure for appointment to this office is the same as that for eldership, as also is the procedure for removal from office.”

Point: The church must choose such men convinced of their qualifications, and they are to be set apart in solemn ordination...

Relinquishing of the Office

Note: A deacon may be removed from office should he neglect his duty, be guilty of sinful behavior, fall into error, or hold views contrary to our confession and constitution... Cf. BRBC 5.3.5.1

- The church officers are subject to the same disciplines as outlined in Cons. 6.3.2
- A deacon unable to fulfil his commitment for legitimate reasons such as declining health and ability should relinquish his office. Such retirement must be ratified by vote at a meeting of the church... 5.3.5.4

Practical Concerns:

- (a) What about the issue of deaconess?

Note: It is argued from the use *διάκονος* = *diakonon* (masculine) in Romans 16:1 of Phoebe

Issue: Masculine form of *diakonos* is used to describe Phoebe – the feminine form did not exist at that time.

Review: Every Christian is called to be a (generic) deacon (Gk. *diakonos* = servant).

Texts: Rom 16:1; 1 Thes 3:2; 1 Cor 3:5; Col 1:7; Eph 6:21; etc.

Point: Among all the deacons/servants of the church, there is an *designated deacon as an office* in the church... Act 6:1f; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12...

- The origin of the diaconate assumes the exercise of that authority... Act 6:1f
- This office is paralleled to the eldership that suggests strongly the presence of authority... 1 Tim 3:1, 8; Phil 1:1

- Paul exhorts submission to specific men who exercised diaconal functions... 1 Cor 16:15-18
- This will have to be weight against apostolic prohibition of female authority in the church... 1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tim 2:12; Eph 4:11-12
- There may be women in the church who exercise diaconal gifts and functions, but the office is only for qualified men...

Ephesians 4:11–12 describes offices within the church, not giftedness of individuals.

- (b) Is it important to use the title “Deacon?”

Beware: There is a real danger of men seeking leadership in the Church simply for the title or the recognition that the title brings... Mt 23:11-12

Note: Leadership in the church is not about acquiring titles but about becoming a servant... 1 Thes 5:12; 1 Cor 16:15-16

Point: But since the deacon is called as an office, it is appropriate to call them by their title not in respect to man but to God who appointed them...

Texts: Act 6:3, 6; 1 Tim 3:10; Phil 1:1

[Benjamin Merkle, *Deacons*, loc. 302] – “Titles are not essential to the Christian ministry, but they are important. They demonstrate that the church's basis for authority is not found in human wisdom, but in God's. They also allow the congregation to know what to expect from their leaders. Finally, they link a particular office with a particular set of qualifications that must be met before someone can appropriately take the title.”

- (c) Is the diaconate a preparation for the pastorate?

- The pastorate and the diaconate are parallel offices, not ladder-structured
- The deacon may exhibit pastoral gifts – and later may be recognized as elder... cf. Stephen, Acts 6:5, 8-10

“Public ministry is impossible without private service. Had the seven not freed the apostles to focus on teaching and prayer, the gospel would not have spread (Acts 6:4, 7).” p.56

“Deacons are like a congregation's Special Ops force, carrying out unseen assignments with fortitude and joy.” p.39

~ Matt Smethurst, *Deacons*