

FROM THE PREACHER

By: Blake Hudson

On Deaconesses: Acts 6 and Romans 16

Last week we considered 1 Timothy 3:11 and the debate around women deacons (deaconesses). As I explained, I am convinced that Paul is referring in that verse to the wives of elders and deacons, not to deaconesses. In this article I'd like to consider two more points in the debate over whether the New Testament sanctions an office of deaconess: the selection of deacons in Acts 6 and Phoebe in Romans 16. The first is strongly in favor of limiting deacons to men; the second is often used to argue for an office of deaconess.

In Acts 6, we encounter the beginning of the office of deacon in the Church (even though the men chosen are not referred to explicitly as deacons, it makes sense to identify them as such). In that chapter, we read of a problem with the distribution of food among the widows of the church. The issue is brought to the apostles who respond, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4). As it relates to our discussion, note that the apostles instruct the Church to pick out seven *men* to be appointed. This is even more interesting when the nature of the work is considered: the distribution of food among widows. So, at the beginning of the office of deacon we find instructions for men to be appointed, even though the work could very appropriately be done by women. Were women at all involved in this food distribution ministry? I suspect that they were. Nevertheless, it was the seven men who were appointed by the apostles to oversee the work.

On the other side of the argument is Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2 which reads, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well." The reason this passage is brought up in the debate is that the word "servant" is our word "deacon." Keep in mind, *deacon* is a transliteration of the Greek word *diakonos* (meaning "servant," or "helper") and, like "elder," can be either a personal description or the title of an office, depending on context. Also, remember that we are *all* called to be servants of the Church, even if we are not all "deacons" in an official sense. So, the question before us is this: is Paul simply describing Phoebe as one who serves, or is he referring to Phoebe as one holding the office of deaconess?

Credit where credit is due, Romans 16:1 is perhaps the strongest verse for the office of deaconess; however, I am not convinced that is the correct conclusion to draw from it. First, I believe that Paul is describing Phoebe as a servant in a general sense before going on to describe the nature of her service as being "a patron of many and of myself." By being a patron – perhaps by providing financial assistance, hosting the Church in her home, etc. – Phoebe is rightly called a servant of the Church, even if not a deaconess in an official sense. Second, when placed on the scales of reason, I do not think Romans 16:1 outweighs the combination of Acts 6, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, and the Bible's repeated pattern of male leadership in home and Church (next week's topic, Lord willing). Taken in isolation, Romans 16:1 may be convincing for an office of deaconess; however, we must always keep the entirety of Scripture in mind when drawing conclusions. Phoebe is an important reminder, however, that we are *all* to be servants of the Church, and that God smiles upon faithful service, regardless of any official title.

Attention Youth!

Teens

The next Teen Devotional will be November 9th. Please make plans attend and bring a friend!

Please join us for a ladies breakfast this Saturday, Nov. 1st. We will meet at the building at 9:30am and carpool to Pearland.



Adult Bible Study
Sunday morning's Adult Bible class will be covering Acts 14: 1-28

The next Ladies Bible Study will be held Saturday, November 15th.

India could use your continued support in sponsorship of student preachers enrolled in preaching school. If you would like to support a student the cost is:

- \$50 per month to support an in-person student
- \$20 per month to support and online student

Please give payments to any elder or office staff.



Give yourselves a round of applause!

Final Count: **10,536**

Thank you for all you do!



If you would like to donate toward college students care packages, please see Carol King.



Mark your calendars! December 6th, we will be participating in Angleton's Heart of Christmas. There will be a informal planning meeting this Wednesday during the meal. Please contact Blake Hudson for more information.

Please Pray

James Carr will have hip surgery 11/3...Pattie Cooper will have a procedure tomorrow...LeBlanc Family & West Bay Church as they prepare for the hurricane...Brian Dodds, co-worker of Randy Wilkinson, is in ICU with brain bleeds...Johnny Toon, Karen Lowe's son is not doing well, please pray for Karen and the family as well.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

Len Boling, Shirley Brown, Barbara Filipp, Robert Gautney, Jeanie Granger, Cliff Harper, Jackie Haynes, Erin West Janik, David Johnson, Dorothy King, Marie Leblanc, Charm Moser, Karen Smith, Charles and Elizabeth Street, Andy Tilley, Maggie Walker