

## LESSON SEVEN

# DEACONS

TEXT: Acts 6:1-7.

### A. **THE GRECIANS:**

In Acts 6:1 we read the account of dissatisfaction arising among the Grecians who complained that their widows were being neglected.

Who were these Grecians? It is necessary to have a clear understanding of just who they were. First of all they were not Greeks but they were Jews, of pure Jewish blood, just as the Hebrews.

The Grecian Jews were Jews who were living abroad and were visiting Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost, or they were Jews who had lived abroad and had now moved back to Jerusalem. They spoke Greek and were greatly influenced by Greek culture. For this reason they were called Grecian Jews or Hellenists. Greek customs and ideas had influenced them. Undoubtedly they were more prosperous and had been enjoying a higher standard of living. They were more open-minded and less tied to tradition than the Palestinian Jews.

These Hellenists would be conscious of differences in language and culture. They would be very sensitive about any supposed difference that the Apostles would be making in their administration of the affairs of the church. Whether or not the Grecian widows were neglected we are not certain, but when some supposed unfairness seemed to arise, the Grecian Jews were quick to express their complaints.

Possibly, this was the first incident that any nationalistic spirit ever affected the church.

### B. **CHURCH GOVERNMENT:**

Scriptural Reference:

*"God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets...governments, diversities of tongues" (I Corinthians 12:28).*

Here we read that God set governments in the church. The word "governments" refer to the power of ruling, the organized control that God has placed in the church for the maintenance of order among the saints.

The Lord has placed certain offices and ministries in the church to govern the church (Ephesians 4:11). When the problem arose of the dissatisfaction of the Grecian Christians. The Apostles were quick to handle the matter and we are able to see the great wisdom they used in this act of governing.

### C. **THE DEACONS:**

The twelve apostles called the multitude unto them and said, "*It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.*" Their work was to give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Ministers of the gospel need to always remember the wisdom of the apostles here. The first responsibility of the preacher is to give himself to prayer and the ministry of the Word, and not get involved in secular work unless it is absolutely essential.

The apostles commanded the saints to look out from among themselves seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. This they did, and the apostles laid hands upon them and ordained them as deacons.

The names of these seven deacons were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Pramenas and Nicolas.

Let us note just how these men were appointed: (1) The apostles gave the qualifications; (2) The church did the choosing or electing; and (3) The apostles appointed them or ordained them.

The method by which this was done made everyone happy. The people did the choosing but the apostles kept the authority and the final decision clearly in their own hands.

It also should be noted that these men all had Greek names. It is quite probable that they were all Grecians. What a wonderful gracious way the apostles used to settle this matter and restore unity! If the Grecians felt that they could not trust the Hebrew brethren, they now learned that their brethren were ready to trust them.

#### **D. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS:**

In Acts 6:3 we read of the qualification for these deacons:

1. **MEN:** The Greek word used here is the specific one, which meant males. Women couldn't be chosen.
2. **AMONG YOU:** They had to be in the church. No outsiders were to have part in the government of the church.
3. **OF HONEST REPORT:** They had to have a good reputation.
4. **FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST.**
5. **FULL OF WISDOM:** They had to be men of maturity.

In I Timothy 3:8-13 we have further qualification stated:

1. Must be grave.
2. Must not be double-tongued.
3. Not given to much wine.
4. Not greedy of filthy lucre.
5. Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
6. They must first be proved.
7. They must be blameless.'
8. Husbands of one wife.
9. They must rule their children and houses well.

One can readily understand the importance of this office when he studies the above qualifications.

#### **E. THE RESULTS OF THIS EVENT:**

In Acts 6:7 we read that the Word of God increased the number of disciples multiplied and even a company of priests believed and were saved.

This revival took place because unity had been restored, everyone in the church now was happy, and the apostles were able to give the needed time to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

We must also note that at least two of the deacons became powerful evangelists: Stephen and Philip. This proves that a man may hold the office of a deacon in the church and at the same time be an effective minister of the Word. Although the office of deacon was primarily that of serving in the material things, yet this would not hinder from also ministering in the spiritual.

LESSON SEVEN

SELF HELP TEST

A. Name FIVE qualifications of deacons.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Name the seven first deacons:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ |          |

C. Explain clearly who the "GRECIANS" were.

D. What were the results of the appointment of the deacons?