



The qualifications for the ministry of mercy

"They that profess themselves to be Christ's are known not only by what they say, but by what they practise. For the tree is known by its fruits."

Ignatius

*"I will abundantly bless her provision:
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
Her priests also will I clothe with salvation;
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy."*

The Book of Psalms

"Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride And e'en his failings leaned to Virtue's side; But in his duty prompt to every call, He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all."

Oliver Goldsmith

The church is the body of the Lord Jesus, and as such she is made up of many members.

These members differ widely in character, level of spirituality and specific talents or endowments. Within that spiritual body there is an almost infinite variety of gifts, and it is incumbent on all the members to employ these readily and cheerfully for the advantage and salvation of others.

For all the living members of His church God has a unique place and purpose. Therefore the congregation is under obligation to take seriously the question of the proper qualifications for the several offices which must be filled. Since these are specifically mentioned by the Word, it follows that not all the members of the congregation are eligible for the various positions of leadership. Also for those who are to hold office as deacons the Scriptures provide a list of qualifications. This is clearly recognized by the *Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons*, which reads,

"To fill worthily so sacred an office, the deacons, as well as the elders, should set an example of godliness in their personal life, in their home life, and in their relations with their fellowmen."

This insistence is based directly on the teachings of Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3. In the former the command is given to the assembled congregation,

"Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you choose seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

A longer list of qualifications is afforded by Paul in the latter, in order that Timothy might have a guide to aid him in selecting those men who were most qualified to serve in this position.

"Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience ... Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."

From these two statements it is apparent that the congregation should consider carefully the deacons' personal godliness, their home life and their relations to their fellow-men. And since

mention is also made of "proving the deacons" before they shall be permitted to serve, it is necessary to devote some attention to that matter.

The deacon and personal Godliness

Several demands are made by the Word with respect to the personal godliness of those who shall serve in the diaconate. They should enjoy the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in an unusual measure, the gift of wisdom and tact, and the virtue of holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

Strange as it may seem at first glance, the Bible maintains that the deacons must possess the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in a special measure. Now, it ought to be remembered that every living member of the church has received the function of that Spirit who works within him/her the full benefits of salvation. This includes those gifts and graces with which the Christian life must be adorned. Among these are such virtues as knowledge, faith, hope, love, obedience, loyalty and piety. However, those who shall assume office in the church should manifest these graces in their lives to a special degree. A word of caution is in place at this point, lest anyone suppose that the deacons must be perfect. Since sanctification is never completed in this life, we may not expect perfection of the deacons. Nor should the statement of Peter which refers specifically to being "*full of the Spirit*" be interpreted to mean that these men must possess those unique gifts which enabled the apostles and evangelists to write infallibly the Word of God. To demand anything of this sort would bar everyone in the church today from holding this office and leave it unattainable and unfilled to the detriment of the congregation and in open violation of the revealed will of God.

However, the deacons should be above average in the development of their spiritual life. It should be evident to the members of the congregation that these brethren who are chosen possess the gift and working of the Holy Spirit in a rich measure. Especially are we to think in this connection of a special measure of those virtues which are necessary to the faithful and fruitful discharge of their office. Thus in sympathy, kindness, loving interest, hospitality and helpfulness they should be above reproach, since they are to represent the solicitude of the Saviour for all who are in need. Then in spite of the weaknesses which will appear from time to time in even the best of them, they will be able to set a worthy example to the rest of the members of the congregation. Since in the cultivation of such gifts and graces the Christian is necessarily dependent on the continual operation of the Holy Spirit, they must be men of prayer who confess their complete dependence on God, seek their help from Him alone and strive to live in close communion with Him.

The apostle Peter at the time of the institution of the office of the "Seven" also made mention of the gift of "*wisdom*." This quality includes far more than intellectual apprehension of the truth of the gospel. They are to be adorned by that grace which enables them to put their God-given knowledge into practice. Smend defines the terms used in the original languages of Scripture to denote this virtue as "*the art (ability) of reaching one's end by the use of the right means.*"¹ Thus in spiritual matters the wise man is "he who gives to the things of God the same acuteness that other men give to worldly affairs." It is a practical and useful virtue which presupposes a knowledge of human nature as well as of the way of salvation and life and an ability to deal with God's people lovingly and tactfully, so that the spiritual goal desired in and for them will be reached. For the deacons such "sanctified common sense" is a requisite, since they must deal with both the rich who are commanded by God to give liberally and the poor who must receive these gifts gratefully in the name of Christ.

Also in connection with personal qualifications mention is made of "*holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*" Two chief interpretations of this statement have been given. There are those who claim that this stresses the duty of appropriating the truths of the gospel as objectively presented in the Word. Others insist that the emphasis falls on the subjective or personal appropriation of the faith which will yield the fruit of personal godliness. These two do not necessarily cancel out each other. Both qualities are essential for the deacons. Their orthodoxy, based on insight into the "*mystery of the faith*," must be above question. Anyone who does not fully agree with the doctrines of Scripture, as taught and defended by the church, in which he is to

assume office, cannot be considered for this high calling. Yet such an intellectual acquaintance and agreement hardly suffices. The gospel of Christ makes the claim that its power radically changes the whole life of the believers. Their personal acceptance of the truths must be reflected in their actions. This is to be done *"in a pure conscience,"* meaning not merely that he is personally sincere but also that because of abundant evidences his sincerity is not open to serious question. Thus he must be steadfast in the faith, wholly committed to the doctrines which are according to godliness. And adorning his profession with true piety, he will avoid also those sins mentioned in the previous verses to which the calling of the deaconship exposes him in an unusual measure. By constantly manifesting himself in this way, he will enjoy the special blessing or reward of gaining to himself *"a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."* Such boldness will enable him in the performing of his work to comfort the people of God with the promises of the Bible and refute all those who oppose the doctrine of the way of salvation.

The deacon and his family

The second group of qualifications makes mention of the deacon in his relation to his family. This is of the greatest significance for the development of the Christian life. Life is of one piece. Thus a man's personal convictions and conduct are manifested in his attitude towards his family and their attitude towards him. The Scriptures give the right to review a man's personal life in the light of the conditions which exist in his family in which he has been placed as husband and father by God. The Christian family is the seed-bed of the church and the kingdom, and as a man conducts himself there so, too, will he manifest himself in usual circumstances in the house of God. Therefore those who fail to set a godly example in their homes may not be regarded as worthy candidates for office in the church.

The first qualification mentioned is that the deacons shall be the husband of one wife. Difference of opinion and consequent confusion has arisen in the church because of this statement of Paul. Some have thought that Paul warns against polygamy; others (notably the Greek church), that he forbids second marriage after the wife of the deacon has died.

From other passages of the Bible it ought to be evident to all that Paul warns against the sin of polygamy which was rampant in certain parts of the Roman Empire. It could hardly imply a prohibition against second marriages, since he plainly teaches the right to remarriage after the wife or the husband has died. (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:9, 39; 1 Timothy 5:14) The objection raised by the Greek church to such remarriage is rooted in its acceptance of the ascetic ideal, which maintains that virginity and the unmarried state are inherently higher and more spiritual than the state of marriage.

There was good reason for Paul to insist on monogamy on the part of the deacons. To all who are acquainted with conditions which prevailed in the Greek and Roman world of his day it is evident that polygamy was still widely practiced and publicly tolerated. When those who had more than one wife were converted, it seems that they were permitted to enter the fellowship of the church without putting away any of their wives. The New Testament is strangely silent about this whole problem which undoubtedly arose in several Gentile communities. However, such individuals, though tolerated as members of the congregation, could not be considered for the office of deacon. Also in this regard their lives had to be exemplary and above reproach. In our western world such a prohibition would hardly be required. But with the breakdown of Christian morality and the prevalence of divorce, the implications of this statement of Paul should be seriously considered. Likewise, when churches are established on the mission fields where polygamy has been strongly entrenched for centuries, this specific injunction should be heeded.

The second requisite deals with the discharge of the deacon's duties as husband and father. He must be able to rule his own house and children well. The Bible teaches that God has ordained the man as head of the home. He is responsible for the training of those lives which have been entrusted to him. And although the apostle does not discuss the matter in detail, we may legitimately conclude that what he has said on this matter in relation to the eldership also applies to the deacons. Only the general rule is stated that the officers of the church shall rule their own

house well. Yet one specific aspect is singled out for special mention, undoubtedly because in the mind of the apostle this was most significant. The deacon must have his children in subjection with all gravity. The reason for this is added, *"If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"* It is undeniably true that only those who show concern for good order in their own homes are well qualified to exercise a measure of spiritual leadership and authority in the church of Christ.

In connection with this matter practical questions have arisen in the churches from time to time. May anyone be elected as deacon, if his children are especially unruly? May it legitimately be concluded that if any of his children has forsaken the service of the Lord, he as father has been remiss in his duty and has thus forfeited the right to be considered for the holy office? Should anyone whose wife apparently makes the decisions for the family be regarded as not possessing the necessary qualifications for office? Although those who prepare the nominations should guard against the ever-present danger of being hypercritical in such and similar cases, they must nevertheless face the question frankly and honestly whether these men, whose families are not exemplary, are in truth endowed with the qualifications on which the Bible insists. Surely its high regard for the offices in the congregation teaches that the officers should be blameless.

An interesting question has also arisen in this connection concerning 1 Timothy 3:11, *"Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things."* Does the apostle here make stipulations for the wives of the deacons or not?

Some hold that Paul here mentions certain virtues which must adorn the lives of all the female members of the church of Christ. Although the very general term "women" is used, such an interpretation is hardly plausible in view of the unique position which this text sustains to the other verses of the chapter. In both the preceding and succeeding verses he has busied himself with the qualifications of the deacons. Thus the argument does not seem to concern itself with the general requisites for membership in the church.

Others have sought to find here a reference to the order of deaconesses which seems to have existed in those days. Yet since he considers that subject directly in the fifth chapter, it hardly seems likely that the apostle would make such an obscure and unconnected reference to them here.

The most plausible answer has been given by those who hold that this verse has reference to the wives of the deacons. Only then does it become plain why Paul has inserted the statement here. But this raises the further question why Paul should have laid down certain requisites for the wives of the deacons and not for the wives of the elders. Among commentators there are those who insist that the text refers to the wives of both elders and deacons. But again this seems unlikely in view of the position which the verse occupies. Paul is discussing deacons and not elders in this context.

Very likely the explanation must be found in the specific tasks which were laid upon the deacons and would often entail the assistance of their wives. Such participation in the rule of the church by the wives of the elders is, of course, immediately excluded by the Scriptural teaching that a woman is not permitted to rule. However, because the deacons were entrusted with the care of the poor among whom were widows and women who were ill (two classes highly inaccessible to men in those days), it was to be expected that some diaconal service would have to be performed by the wives under the supervision of the diaconate. This would surely be the case in those congregations where there were no deaconesses, a situation which likely occurred in several places since so little mention is made of this office or function in the New Testament.

If we grant that this verse refers specifically to the wives of the deacons, the list of qualifications mentioned is very understandable. First of all, such women must be grave. Lest the church be despised and the work of the deacons made ineffectual, these women should, in their conduct, be exemplary. They may not engage in slander as women spending their time in spreading false rumors or idle tales. Because of the intimate knowledge which they would gain from their associations with the deacons, as assistants in their work, this danger was far from imaginary. In

all things they should be temperate, lest they give occasion for jealousy and envy to the poor by ostentatious show. To sum up the matter, the apostle insists that they be "*faithful in all things*," the small as well as the great. Surely such intimate and personal work required of the deacons demanded that their wives, especially if they rendered any assistance, conduct themselves tactfully and edifyingly in the sight of the whole congregation.

The deacon in his relation to others

The last group of qualifications mentioned by the *Form for Ordination* consists of those virtues which the deacon must display especially in his relation to his fellow-men. These are of several kinds. Paul begins with one, which though stated very broadly, is of utmost importance. He insists that those who serve as deacons must be "*grave*," a term used also in connection with the elders and the wives of the deacons. Unless a man is highly respected and honoured by the members of the congregation and the community, his work will not be well received and the cause of Christ must suffer in consequence. Although the Bible everywhere teaches that we must be first of all "*well-pleasing to the Lord*," yet it does not minimize the necessity of enjoying a good reputation among our fellowmen. That these two are by no means mutually exclusive is evident from the words of Proverbs, "*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold*." Such gravity may be described as dignified seriousness. All lightness of demeanor, especially on the part of officers in the church, is a denial of the seriousness of the work with which they have been entrusted. The lack of this quality betrays a superficiality of character which is in direct contrast with the responsibilities which Christ Himself has laid upon the diaconate in His church.

Furthermore, it is required that the deacons shall be "*not double-tongued*." Even more than in the work of the eldership, the deacons are in serious danger of falling into this sin. Time after time they must contact the poor and needy in their homes, discuss personal matters with them, listen to the recital of their circumstances and seek to alleviate their distress in every way possible. Such an arduous task requires not only a sympathetic and loving heart but also a steady and unswerving character. A deacon must be able to win the confidence of those whom he seeks to help. These must feel that his word is dependable; that he makes no promises which he is unable to fulfil. Likewise he must be able to judge fairly the situations which exist, keep himself free from prejudice, and, as much as possible, defend his judgment before the other deacons and elders to whom he is responsible. Anyone who makes fine promises without rightful authority or before he has adequate knowledge of the circumstances will find himself in the unenviable position of being charged as undependable, unstable and even deceitful.

Paul further instructs Timothy that the deacons must not be "*given to much wine*." As they went from home to home, gathering both the gifts of the rich and distributing these to the poor, there was a temptation to indulge too freely in strong drink. Although the Bible nowhere specifically forbids the use of wine, it does caution against the dangers involved in its use and severely rebukes all who fall into excess. Those who err in this respect, especially as deacons, set a poor example and cannot conduct their work with gravity. In those countries where wine was daily used as a beverage, this warning of Paul was highly appropriate and even necessary.

Finally, mention is made of the deacon's attitude to money. He may not be "*greedy for filthy lucre*." Although this qualification was also mentioned in connection with the eldership, its mention in connection with diaconal service is at once understood and appreciated. Those who love goods and gold are tempted daily by this ministry. Through their hands pass many gifts for the poor and needy. Thus the possibility of embezzlement and theft is always present. All who are chosen for this office must be above suspicion on this point. For although the name of Christ and the cause of His church are grievously slandered when any member falls prey to such sins, much greater is the shame and infamy heaped on the people of God when an officer of the church makes himself guilty of these sins. All who love money betray a niggardly and miserly spirit, which ill becomes a deacon who is charged with using money to the advantage of those who are in need. Surely such a person who loves money more than the poor will not be able to represent the merciful and loving Highpriest of our profession.

Proving the deacons

In addition to the qualifications for those who are to be appointed as deacons in the churches, Paul in this connection mentions something which has given rise to much discussion. To the list of virtues he adds the injunction,

"And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless."

(1 Timothy 3:10)

Several interesting interpretations of this relatively obscure passage have been offered. In the past Jacobus Koelman, who in his day did much to remind the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands of the unique importance of the offices of the elders and the deacons, claimed that this text authorized an examination of all candidates for the diaconry. Thus before anyone might be publicly installed he would have to submit to an examination on doctrine, conduct and general knowledge of the nature and functions of this office. This was to take place before the elders and deacons who already held office in the congregation. His position gives rise to several questions. First of all, when would this examination have to take place: before or after his election by the congregation under the supervision of the consistory? Is it to be expected that some in the church aspire to this office and manifest this by studying diligently the doctrine of the church and the nature of the diaconate and thus make known to all their desire to be inducted into this holy office? Surely if this were required by Paul, most congregations would soon find themselves without deacons. Also, why then would Paul mention such an examination for the deacons and not for the elders? As long as the deacon is expected to serve for a limited time and is not salaried by the church, we cannot expect that candidates or aspirants for this office will present themselves to the consistory and submit to formal examination.

Undoubtedly this passage refers to one of the responsibilities which rests upon the consistory at the time of making nominations. The church must be assured that those who are appointed to this work possess the gifts of wisdom and gravity so highly essential in the diaconal ministry. That such a testing is not mentioned in connection with the elders need occasion no surprise. The qualifications for the two offices are quite different, as even a cursory reading of 1 Timothy 3 will show. Whether anyone possessed the requisites necessary for the ministry of government could be easily discerned by the members of the congregation, especially since in those days all members enjoyed the right to address the congregation at the time of public assembly. There it would soon become apparent whether a man was temperate, sober-minded, orderly and apt to teach. But in the case of the deacons it was more difficult for the congregation to know whether they possessed the necessary qualifications, since their office required them to visit the homes of the poor and deal with them in strictest confidence. Therefore, the apostle considered it necessary to prove the deacons. This does not necessarily imply any formal examination by either the consistory or the congregation. One commentator suggests that perhaps the deacons were given opportunity to work under the supervision of those already installed in the capacity of helpers. Only upon having successfully completed such a period of probation would the candidates then be ordained.

In our day the consistories usually present a list of candidates to the congregation in the form of a nomination out of which only one half of the number are to be elected. In preparing this list there is need for circumspect consideration of the doctrinal position and personal godliness of those who are mentioned as possible candidates. If this work is conducted by the consistory together with the deacons in a careful and prayerful way, we may believe that the demand which Paul here makes is fully met. A warning ought to be sounded against the rather prevalent attitude that any personable young man who is a member in good and regular standing and possesses a measure of business acumen has the necessary qualifications for the ministry of mercy. Often the hope is expressed in such cases that because the deacon's work is not too difficult such a candidate if elected will soon be able to perform the work suitably. This, of course, is contrary to the spirit of the text of Scripture. Although we need not accept the position of Koelman, whose insistence on a formal examination finds no Scriptural support and is burdened with almost insurmountable practical difficulties, the

council of the church must at least be reasonably assured that those whom it presents as nominees possess the requisites which the Bible plainly mentions.

Preparation for the deacons

Often those who are elected to this holy office express deep concern at their apparent lack of adequate preparation for the duties which are laid upon them.

In this respect the deacons, in comparison with the ministers of the Word, suffer a great disadvantage. The latter have usually enjoyed a systematic preparation in college and seminary over a period of several years. Also among the elders, who are generally chosen from among the older and more spiritually advanced members of the congregation, we find a better understanding of the task which awaits them. This is largely the result of a clearer understanding of the eldership among our people. The ministry of government is referred to more often in sermons and in catechetical classes than the ministry of mercy. Likewise, the average member of the church contacts the elders far more often than he does the deacons in an official way. Hence so many people have only a very vague impression of the actual work which faces those who are inducted into the diaconry. This is also reflected in the sad lack of literature on the office of the deacons particularly in the English language.

Thus the question arises from time to time how those who have been elected to the holy office of deacon can prepare for their work.

It cannot be denied that also here, as well as in the cases of the ministers of the Word and the elders, experience is usually the best teacher. Many things can be learned about the ministry of mercy only by actually performing the work. Therefore church councils should be very hesitant to take those who have served well for a term or two in the diaconate and present them to the congregation as possible candidates for the office of elder. Even though every church needs the best possible elders, the need for well-equipped, experienced and exemplary deacons is just as acute. Thus it is nothing short of tragic that in many congregations year after year the diaconate is composed of inexperienced and comparatively young deacons. No consistory or congregation has the right to expect its ministry of mercy to flourish, if it consistently elects experienced deacons to fill vacancies created in the eldership instead of continuing them for several terms in the office to which they have been first elected.

There are several ways in which the deacons may somewhat prepare themselves for their work. This preparation may conveniently be divided into two kinds, the first general and the second special. The general preparation consists chiefly of the duties which rest upon every member of the local congregation. All of them, and not merely those who are in office, must acquire some definite knowledge of the nature and function of the diaconates in our churches.

This may be gathered in several ways. Since the New Testament speaks plainly of the offices, the congregation has the right to expect from its minister of the Word a careful exposition of the passages relevant to the offices from time to time. How can our people be expected to take an active part in the life of the church, if they remain ignorant of what the Bible says on the subjects of church organization and government? In this respect we should learn a much-needed lesson from the rule which followed in the refugee congregation of the Dutch Calvinists in London. Under John a Lasco the rule was adopted that before nominations were prepared, the minister of the Word would expound to the congregation some passage of the Bible which dealt with the nature and duties of the respective offices.

Besides, in the catechetical classes there are fine opportunities for bringing this material to the attention of the young people prior to their profession of faith. This is fully as much a necessary part of their training for church membership as the knowledge of the historical sections of the Word and of the fundamental doctrines of the way of salvation.

Another fine opportunity to become better acquainted with the work of the deacons is offered by the various societies. Though not officially controlled by the consistories, they are under their

supervision and constitute an important and integral part of our ecclesiastical life. Not only must the Word of God be discussed there directly and thoroughly, but also its application to all of life should be considered. Thus especially the after-recess programs afford fine opportunities for discussing the place which the offices occupy in the life of the people of God.

Besides this general preparation a more specific type of preparation is highly desirable. Although as a rule not much time elapses between the election and installation of the deacons, yet these weeks as well as the first months of actual service ought to be a period in which new deacons devote themselves as much as possible to a better understanding of the nature of the work to which Christ has called them. This implies that they should study carefully whatever has been written about the Reformed diaconate.

Naturally the first and most important source-book is the Bible. All the passages of the New Testament which deal with it directly have much to offer. Also those which describe the nature of Christian love which is to be exercised in such a unique and concrete way by the deacons ought to be carefully considered. Every deacon ought to be well acquainted with the Word, not the least with the preeminent position of Christ in Whom the love of God is shed abroad to our salvation and joy. Furthermore, a study of the Old Testament social legislation, in so far as it has reference to the care of the poor, will prove very helpful. For although these regulations are not in force in the New Testament church, the basic principles which underlie them are valid for all times.

The deacons should also be thoroughly acquainted with the contents of the *Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons*. This ought to be read several times, in order that they may understand the significance of the solemn pledge which they make at the time of their installation. There are also several invaluable helps. The deacons have the duty of knowing what the *Church Order* has to say about their office. Of great help here are such books as Monsma and Van Dellen's *The Church Order Commentary* and John L. Schaver's *The Polity of the Churches*. These books should be part of the personal library of every elder and deacon, so that they may be able to refer to them frequently.

Besides such training which the deacon undertakes by himself, he should be aided by his fellow deacons. Too often those who are already in office simply take it for granted that somehow those who are newly-installed know what is expected of them. Many difficulties and much anxiety can be removed, if the council of the church takes time to discuss the nature of the offices from time to time under the leadership of the minister of the Word. Especially in those areas where the deacons cannot take advantage of meeting together with neighbouring diaconates, it is essential that the pastors give some instruction and advice. In many instances it will prove profitable not only to discuss the principles which govern the ministry of mercy but also the actual problems which must be faced.

Of great value are the diaconal conferences. These are regularly held in those areas where we find several of our churches in close proximity to each other. They are, of course, rather informal meetings and may never presume to exercise any official control over any of the diaconates. Nor should they take any binding decisions which would involve the local diaconies and rob them of their rightful independence or involve them in difficulty with their consistories. All official business must be transacted in the ecclesiastical assemblies – I consistories, classes and synods, lest there be set up next to the eldership another governing body in the churches. Yet for mutual counsel and inspiration these diaconal conferences will prove eminently helpful. Here the nature, origin, function, purpose and goal of the diaconry should be thoroughly discussed. Many of these conferences have also enabled the diaconates to cooperate in such programs as relief for distressed brethren and sisters in various parts of the world. In those areas where they have not as yet been organized, the deacons of the local churches should take the necessary steps in this direction.

In this respect the churches in the United States and Canada have not attained to the level of development and efficiency reached by the diaconates of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. There as early as a year and a half after the beginning of the *Doleantie* the diaconates of the liberated churches met together in such a conference. Since that time they have

been held regularly. They meet together not only regionally but also nationally. Under the supervision of this nation-wide organization a periodical partly devoted to the office of the deacons is published.

Above all, the deacons are to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. A faithful deacon is first of all a faithful disciple of his Lord and Saviour. From Him he has received his calling and authority. By Him he has been entrusted with the significant responsibility of assisting the poor and needy in His name. Through Him he is able to speak the words of consolation and cheer which bind up the broken hearted and comfort the sorrowing in spirit. To Him he must daily look for the wisdom and tact and patience necessary to the proper execution of his labours. In this way of loving, obedient and consecrated service he will receive in special measure the fulfillment of Christ's own promise,

"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

(Matthew 10:42)

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¹ Cf. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. V, p. 3089f; Cremer: *Biblio-Theological Lexicon of the N. T.*, p. 870 f.