

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XLVI : DIGRESSION #2 - PAUL AS MINISTER OF THE MYSTERY TO THE GENTILES (3:1-13)

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 KJV)

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 NIV)

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the nations, if, indeed, ye did hear of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me in regard to you, that by revelation He made known to me the secret, according as I wrote before in few [words] — in regard to which ye are able, reading [it], to understand my knowledge in the secret of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit — that the nations be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in the Christ, through the good news, of which I became a ministrant, according to the gift of the grace of God that was given to me, according to the working of His power; to me — the less than the least of all the saints — was given this grace, among the nations to proclaim good news — the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to cause all to see what [is] the fellowship of the secret that hath been hid from the ages in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ, that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly [places], through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, according to a purpose of the ages, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him, wherefore, I ask [you] not to faint in my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 Young's Literal Translation)

Paul as Minister of the Mystery to the Gentiles (3:1-13)

The essence of what Paul is saying is as follows:

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles —

*if, indeed, ye did hear of **the responsibility of managing the GRACE of God which was given to me, namely, that He made known the mystery that the Gentiles should be***

joint – heirs

and joint – body

and joint – partakers

of His promise in Jesus the Messiah through the gospel;

this **GRACE** was given to me

- to preach the unsearchable riches of the Christ among the Gentiles
- and to enlighten all as to what is the plan of the mystery

in order that [hina] the untraceable wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and to the authorities in the heavenlies through the ecclesia.

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart in my tribulations on behalf of you which is your glory.

v 7 — TRANSITIONAL VERSE — Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. — οὐ ἐγενόμην διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθείσαν μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ [hou egenomēn diakonos kata tēn dōrean tēs charitos tou theou tēn dotheisan moi kata tēn energeian tēs dunameōs autou] *This verse is a transitional verse. “3.2-6 treated the place of Paul, and others, in God’s plan and the nature of the mystery which was disclosed. In v. 7 we begin to be told how Paul communicated what he had learnt to others. Vv. 8-12 continue the account of the communication of the revealed mystery; v. 7 is in effect a transition verse between the disclosure and the action taken in response to that disclosure.”* [Best, 313] “Paul has finished his discussion of the mystery. He has explained his administration of it, how and when it was revealed, and the content of it (vv. 2-6). Now he will discuss his placement into the ministry with the attending responsibility to impart the knowledge of the mystery to the Gentiles.” [Hoehner, 448]

Whereof [οὗ, hou] “The relative pronoun [‘of which’] relates back to the [‘gospel’] in verse 6. Paul was made a minister of the gospel.” [Hoehner, 449]

THE GOSPEL CLARIFIED BY THE MYSTERY — “At this point it becomes difficult to distinguish between the gospel and the mystery, yet there must be a distinction for the gospel was proclaimed prior to Paul’s conversion and the disclosure to him of the mystery. Was the earlier proclamation not that of the true and full gospel? The apostles and prophets now drop from view and Paul alone occupies the centre stage; if he has a ministry to fulfil it is necessary both to say what it is and to describe how he accomplished it.... In fact, in so far as we know the story, Paul was the leading exponent of the gospel to the Gentiles, though the evidence of Acts (e.g. 10.44-48; 11.20f) suggests he was neither the first to preach it nor the only one to do so. If Acts is correct, Peter had evangelised Cornelius before Paul was brought to Antioch, and it cannot be assumed Barnabas ceased his missionary work with Gentiles after his split with Paul. The speedy growth of the early church shows that there must have been many Gentile areas which were evangelised by people whose names remain unknown.” [Best, 313]

I was made [ἐγενόμην, egenomēn] passive, underscoring the fact it was the Lord putting Paul into the service of minister. “Paul emphasizes the fact that he did not make himself a minister but that he ‘was made a minister’.... Any person in the ministry of the church whom God has not appointed is a usurper. No matter how seemingly good his intentions, he can do nothing but harm to the work of the Lord and to the Lord’s people. Jeremiah speaks to this matter when he writes the Lord’s word: ‘I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied.... I did not send them or command them’ (Jer. 23:21, 32). No man should enter the ministry unless he is absolutely certain of the Lord’s calling.” [MacArthur, 94] “[N]ot according to his natural capacity, his liberal education, or acquired learning; but according to a gift, a ministerial gift bestowed upon him, for such service.” [Gill, 80]

a minister — see comments below.

PAUL RETURNS TO HIS OPENING THOUGHT — **according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me** [κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθείσαν μοι, kata tēn dōrean tēs charitos tou theou tēn dotheisan moi] — this qualifies ‘minister’, making it clear that *whatever Paul is in relation to the Gentiles he is by the gift of God’s grace.* “[Paul] rounds off the first major statement about the mystery within the digression of 3:1-13 by returning to the thought and language with which he had begun it in vv 1,2. With the mention of the gospel in the previous verse [he] can now be brought back to the fore as the servant of that gospel.” [Lincoln, 181f] “Most of v. 2 is repeated here. When God gives he is not simply conferring a benefit; the gift entails also a particular duty.” [Best, 315] Verses 2 and 7 compared; the part of verse 2 repeated in verse 7 is in red:

verse 2: ‘of the grace of God which was given to me’ (τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι, tēs charitos tou theou tēs dotheisēs moi)

verse 7: ‘according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me’ (κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθείσαν μοι, kata tēn dōrean tēs charitos tou theou tēn dotheisan moi)

THE GIFT OF GRACE IS THE OFFICE OF THE APOSTLESHIP OR THE MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES — ‘Gift’ was used in classical literature meaning ‘a gift, bounty.’ Used in the LXX 35x, 23x in the canonical books. It is used 19x to translate a Hebrew word meaning ‘without payment, gratis, for nothing’ or ‘without cause, in vain’. It is used in the NT 11x, 5x by Paul and twice in Ephesians (3:7; 4:7). *It always refers to a gift that God graciously gives, unearned and undeserved, for which there can be no payment. “The particular ‘grace’ in view is the office of the apostleship or the ministry to the Gentiles.... That ‘grace’, too, was God’s gift.*” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 306]

THE GRACE THAT SAVES INCLUDES THE GRACE THAT ENABLES FOR MINISTRY — ‘Grace’ is used here as the grace which calls to and empowers the recipient for a duty. *“Paul ... does not clearly distinguish, as systematic theologians do, between saving grace and the grace which equips for a special function. Paul’s conversion (saving grace) and his call to minister to Gentiles (the ‘grace’ of our verse and 3.2; Rom 1.5; 15.15f; 1 Cor 3.10; Gal 1.15f) were not two distinct events in either his eyes or those of his school, for it was on the Damascus Road that he was saved through grace and received grace to be the minister to the Gentiles (cf v. 8). The inseparability of ‘saving grace’ and missionary activity should be true not only for Paul but for all Christians.”* [Best, 315] *“That Paul was made a minister of the gospel is an evidence of grace, but that he was given a gift of grace that enables him to perform the duties of ministry is further evidence of God’s unmerited favor towards his servant Paul.”* [Hoehner, 450] “The gift of the grace of God,” may mean the gracious gift, i.e. the gift due to the grace of God; or, the gift which is the grace of God; so that the χάρις [charis], grace, as Paul often calls his apostleship, is the thing given. In either way the gift referred to was his vocation to be an apostle. That he who was a persecutor and blasphemer should be called to be an apostle, was in his view a wonderful display of the grace of God.” [Hodge, 115]

given unto me — τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι [tēn dotheisan moi] *Here the gift of grace underlines God’s graciousness* (cp Rom 3:24; 5:15,17; 2 Cor 9:15). “Given — which (gift of grace) was given to me by (Greek, ‘according to,’ as in Eph 3:20; 1:19: as the result of, and in proportion to) the effectual working (Greek, ‘energy,’ or ‘in-working’) of His power.” [JFB, Commentary on Whole Bible] More will be commented on this statement below.

by the effectual working of his power (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, kata tēn energeian tēs dunameōs autou) — this second ‘kata’ phrase does not parallel the first but rather is connected to ‘given to me’. Two nouns are used here, ‘effectual working’ (τὴν ἐνέργειαν, tēn energeian) and ‘power’ (τῆς δυνάμεως, tēs dunameōs), both of which has already been used together in 1.19. ‘By, according to’ (κατὰ, kata) probably denotes Paul received the power appropriate to the ministry to which he was appointed. *“Both terms used for God’s power are already present in the similar formulation Col 1:29 employs for the enabling of the apostolic ministry. They occur also earlier in Ephesians in 1:19 with its piling up of synonyms for God’s power in connection with raising Christ from the dead. For [Paul], the power of God which raised Christ from the dead and is at work in believers was also the power operative in conveying grace to the apostle.* In this way the realization of the mystery concerning the Gentiles can also be traced back through Paul’s apostleship to the power of God.” [Lincoln, 182] “In conclusion, Paul was made a minister of the gospel and was able to carry out this awesome responsibility by the gracious gift of unmerited favor of enablement that was given to him. That enablement corresponded to the activity of God’s dynamic ability to convey the mystery. *God does not give responsibility without the provision of his power to carry it out. In the end God is to be praised, for humans can neither initiate nor accomplish the work in their own power.*” [Hoehner, 451] *“It is this power and not some inborn ability or talent which enables him to be the servant of the Gospel. Whether such a clear distinction can be made in actual practice is another matter; it was Paul’s nature to be zealous, whether prior to his conversion in respect of the Law or the persecution of Christians, or after in respect of the Gentiles. God uses people with different talents, if not characters, in different ways.* It is difficult then to say that the ‘energy’ with which Paul pursued his mission was simply and solely a matter of grace. Within Ephesians God’s energy and power operate in relation to the resurrection and ascension of Christ (1.19f), the building up and sustenance of the church as his body (4.16), the prearrangement of affairs by his will (1.11), the transformation of believers (3.20).” [Best, 316] “As the former sentence affirmed the gift of the grace, this one states the manner of the bestowal. The standard or proportion of the giving was the efficiency, the efficacious working of God’s own power. *The change in Paul when God made him an Apostle of Christ to the Gentiles was so great that he saw in it nothing less than the result of the Divine omnipotence.*” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 306] *“These words, which are to be connected with δοθεῖσας [dotheises, ‘given’], are by no means superfluous, but express the ever-present consciousness of St. Paul that his mission as an apostle was not due to anything in himself, it was the grace of God given with Divine power that alone changed the persecutor into the apostle.”* [Abbott, 84] *“In 1:19 Paul has prayed that his readers might understand the vastness of the power that God has put into effect for them. Here in 3:7, he may be subtly presenting himself to them as a practical example of how this works. God’s great power was behind Paul’s own conversion from persecutor to herald of the good news and remains effective in his ministry despite his imprisonment (v. 1) and suffering (v. 13).”* [Thielman, 207]

GOD ALONE IS GIVEN THE GLORY FOR THE WORK OF PAUL — We have seen this said in different ways throughout this verse. *All of this celebrates Paul not as a hero in himself but as the instrument of God’s grace.*

- ‘I was made’ is passive, indicating it was the Lord that did the work in Paul’s life.
- ‘the grace of God given unto me’ is almost redundant; ‘grace’ is unmerited favor, receiving something undeserved yet Paul expresses this grace as being a gift.
- Paul finishes this verse by emphasizing *the working of the power of God* made Paul who he was, and not he himself.
- This is a continuing theme in all of Paul’s writings:

‘But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’ (1 Cor 15:10 NKJV)

‘For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?’ (1 Cor 4:7 NKJV)

“[T]o avoid claiming for himself more than is proper, he affirms that it is the gift of the grace of God, and that this gift was an exhibition of divine power. As if he had said, ‘Inquire not what I have deserved; for in the free exercise of kindness, the Lord

made me an apostle of the Gentiles, not for any excellence of mine, but by his own grace. Inquire not what I formerly was; for it is the Lord's prerogative to "exalt them of low degree." (Luke 1:52.) To produce something great out of nothing, shews the effectual working of his power." [Calvin, 252]

THE MIRACLE OF THE NEW BIRTH IS UNDER-APPRECIATED BY MOST (ALL?) BELIEVERS — Charles Hodge makes an interesting observation: *"It was not the blinding light, not the fearful voice, which he refers to the power of God, but the inward change, by which he, a malignant opposer of Christ, was instantly converted into an obedient servant. The regeneration of the soul is classed among the mighty works of God, due to the exceeding greatness of his power."* [Hodge, 115f] I believe that to be very undervalued in our modern Christian culture. I believe part of the reason for this is due to our man-centered theology combined with the forced 'walking the aisle' experience, filling our churches with false professions where there is little evidence of true regeneration. But true salvation is an incredible miracle, mentioned alongside the act of creation itself:

'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' (2 Cor 4:3-6 NKJV)

A former pastor was fond of commenting that salvation is the greatest change that would ever occur in the life of the believer, even greater than the glorification of our bodies at our entry into the eternal state. To take a heart of one that loves self and hates all that is holy, a heart that refuses to submit to the authority of God, a heart that is willfully separated from the Lord; to take that heart and breathe into it new life by the Holy Spirit is indeed a miracle. That individual now follows the Lord, embraces holiness and hates his residual indwelling sin, and loves the One who he once despised. If we are truly saved by the merits and blood of the Son of God through the planning of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, then may we wonder at the love and grace of our Lord and Saviour!

a minister (διάκονος, diakonos) — used to describe Paul's function, and it definitely places no stress on his importance nor his personal renown. "διάκονος [diakonos, 'deacon'] is a *servant, attendant* of any kind; also a *deacon* in particular (Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12), or a *deaconess* (Rom. xvi. 1), and perhaps a *waiter*, one who serves at table (John ii. 5, 9). Here it has the general sense of minister, as Paul designates himself again in 2 Cor. iii. 6; Col. i. 23." [Salmond, Expositor's GK Testament, 305f]

The General and Specific Usage of the word 'Deacon'

DIFFERENT GREEK WORDS TO EXPRESS 'SERVING' — "The concept of serving is expressed in Greek by many words which are often hard to differentiate even though each has its own basic emphasis.

δουλεύω [douleuō] means **to serve as a slave, with a stress on subjection.**

θεραπέυω [therapeuō] emphasises **willingness for service and the respect and concern thereby expressed (esp. towards God).**

λατρεύω [latreuō] means **to serve for wages. In NT days it had come to be used predominantly for religious or cultic duties.**

λειτουργέω [leitourgeō] denotes **official public service to the people or to the state, being used in the LXX for service in the temple and in Christianity for service in the church.**

ὑπηρέτης [hupēretēs] means at root **to steer. In terms of service, it signifies esp. the relation to the master to whom the service is rendered....**

As distinct from all these terms, διακονέω [diakoneō] **has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another.** It is thus closest to ὑπηρέτέω [hupēreteō], but in διακονέω [diakoneō] **there is a stronger approximation to the concept of a service of love.**" [Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol 2 pg 81] TDNT also notes the basic usage of the word outside of the NT was **"to wait on a table; to provide or care for"**

The Greeks thought serving others undignified. "How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?" was the sophist formula. Judaism had a much deeper understanding of the meaning of service and was an acceptable status, especially in consideration to God (TDNT notes the LXX does not use the Greek word for deacon when translating the Hebrew; rather they use *douleuein, leitourgein* and *latreuein*).

In the NT: **"Jesus' view of service grows out of the OT command of love for one's neighbour, which He takes and links with the command of love for God to constitute the substance of the divinely willed ethical conduct of His followers. In so doing, He purifies the concept of service from the distortions which it had suffered in Judaism. Jesus' attitude to service is completely new as compared with the Greek understanding. The decisive point is that He sees in it the thing which makes a man His disciple."** [Kittel, *TDNT*, vol 2 pg 84] This is the call of Christianity: *'serve one another'*:

'Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called

benefactors. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. (Luke 22:24-26 NKJV)

'For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal 5:13 NKJV)

The Greek word (and its cognates) used in the NT for “deacon” is as follows: diakoneō, used 37x and translated ‘minister, serve, administer, deacon;’ diakonia, used 34x and translated ‘ministry, service, minister, office, administrations;’ diakonos, used 30x and translated ‘minister, servant, deacon.’ That being so, it is not unusual to find the usage in its normal sense of “to wait at table”

“Which of you, having a slave [doulos] plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’? But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’?” (Luke 17:7,8 NASB)

“But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the servicing alone? Then tell her to help me.’” (Luke 10:40 NASB)

“So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was servicing; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.” (John 12:2 NASB)

“Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.” (Mark 1:30,31 NASB)

This also is used in a wider sense of “to be serviceable”:

“Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing [lit. were ministering] to their support out of their private means.” (Luke 8:1-3 NASB)

“Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him.” (Matt 27:55 NASB)

Note in the following verses the service rendered includes clothing, feeding, ministering, providing shelter, visiting the sick and prisoners:

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care [lit. did not minister to you] of You?’” (Matt 25:41-44 NASB)

Note in the following verses Peter speaks of our spiritual gifts being given for us to be servants (deacons) towards one another:

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in servicing one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet 4:10,11 NASB)

The same comment might be made by Paul:

“if service, in his servicing; or he who teaches, in his teaching” (Rom 12:7 NASB)

Paul uses the word to describe himself taking the offering to Jerusalem:

“but now, I am going to Jerusalem servicing the saints.” (Rom 15:25 NASB)

THE WORD “DEACON” WAS WIDELY APPLIED TO THOSE WHO SERVE — In regards to the work of a deacon, all believers are to be “deacons”:

“But the greatest among you shall be your servant.” (Matt 23:11 NASB)

Governmental authorities are referred to as “deacons”:

“for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.” (Rom 13:4 NASB)

Paul states he is a “deacon”:

“Are they servants of Christ? — I speak as if insane — I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.” (2 Cor 11:23 NASB)

“but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses” (2 Cor 6:4 NASB)

“of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.” (Eph 3:7 NASB)

“if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.” (Col 1:23 NASB)

Paul called all ministers “deacons”:

“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.” (1 Cor 3:5 NASB)

“who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor 3:6 NASB)

Satan is said to have “deacons”:

“No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” (2 Cor 11:14,15 NASB)

Individuals are named as “deacons”:

“And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith” (1 Thes 3:2 KJV)

“But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you.” (Eph 6:21 NASB)

“just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf” (Col 1:7 NASB)

Jesus Himself was called a “deacon”:

“For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers” (Rom 15:8 NASB)

THE ORIGINAL OFFICE OF THE DEACONS WAS ONE OF SERVICE, NOT SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP — From those beginnings of the act of serving came the office of deacon: “Members of the community who are called deacons in virtue of their regular activity are first found in Phil. 1:1, where Paul sends greetings to all the saints in Philippi [with bishops and deacons]. *Already in this phrase there emerges a decisive point for our understanding of the office, namely, that the deacons are linked with the bishops and mentioned after them. At the time of this epistle there are thus two co-ordinated offices.... That the diaconate stands in the closest relationship to the episcopate is confirmed by 1 Tm. 3:1ff. Here an account is first given of the way in which a bishop must conduct himself (vv. 1-7), and this is followed by a list of the requirements for a deacon (vv. 8-13).*” [Kittle, TDNT, vol 2 pg 89f] We would be remiss if we did not give the origin of the office of deacon:

‘Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution [in the daily ministration]. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.’ (Acts 6:1-7 NKJV)