

PHILIPPIANS Lesson 8

Chapter 1, Verse 1: The Order and Structure of Church Government

13 June 2022

Vs 1 Notice that one church has bishops (plural) and deacons (plural).

The structure of various denominations:

1. In some denominations, a church has a “board” of deacons or elders or presbyters. They rule over the pastor, controlling what he is allowed to preach and teach. If the pastor isn’t a perfect puppet, he won’t get paid.
2. The structure of many denominations has several churches and pastors in many cities which are controlled by one bishop. This is unscriptural. The bible speaks of many bishops in one city or in one church.
3. Two organizations have one man with complete and total authority, answerable to no one, governing all the sheep in his organization.
 - a. Roman Catholic Pope.
 - b. Protestants with a hierarchy or chain of command.
 - i. Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran.
 - ii. Independent Baptists under a dictatorship: *“DR. BIENVENIDO MIRANDO ABANTE, JR. defied traditional (and biblical) church growth strategies and methods.” “He suffered alienation and persecution among his peers and seniors in the ministry due to his maverick (rebel) ways.”* (Italics are quotes from their own website, Metropolitan Bible Baptist Church. Words in parenthesis are my comments).
 1. 12 cities in the Philippines, 20 churches in the Middle East and other countries.

Church organization in the Bible:

1. Every saved person is a member of the Body of Christ. No one is superior to another.
2. Some men are gifted to serve as pastor, teacher, or evangelist. These are equal to all the brethren.
3. Some men qualify to serve as bishops or deacons within a church. These are equal to all brethren.
4. With all the members on equal footing, the church will remain stable no matter what happens to any individual (including the pastor and other church leadership).

Acts 14:19-23 The early church followed the pattern of a *plurality* of elders in a *single* church (vs 23).

Acts 15:1-4 In the church in Jerusalem, there were apostles and elders (plural).

Acts 15:13, 22 In Jerusalem, there was one church, James as the principal leader in that church, and more than one elder in that church.

Acts 20:17, 28 **Vs 17:** “Elders” (plural), church (singular). **Vs 28:** (speaking to the same group of elders), “Overseers” (plural), church (singular). An elder is to be an overseer.

- The office is called the office of a bishop.
- man filling that office is called an elder.
- The elder is responsible to be an overseer.

Mat 20:20-27 Jesus does not want us exercising authority over each other like the Gentiles do (vs 26). He wants us minister unto and serve others, laying down our lives and putting others first.

Heb 13-7, 17 Believers are told to submit themselves to “**them (plural) which have the rule.**” This is not an individual, but a plurality of overseers. A congregation does not submit to the authority of one man. They are grateful to have several biblically qualified men who care for them and are watching out for them.

Four things to look for in an overseer:

2. He must speak unto you **the word of God** (Heb 13:7).
 - a. Not church constitutions, bylaws, rules, regulations, standards, convictions, and creeds of a particular denomination.
 3. He must believe what he preaches from the bible. “**Whose faith follow.**”
 - a. He doesn’t correct the bible.
 4. He must live a life that matches what he preaches: “**Considering the end of their conversation.**” (“Conversation” in the bible speaks of moral behavior).
 5. He must have a genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of each individual in the congregation. “**They watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy.**” (13:17).
 - a. He should be filled with joy at the thought of you receiving a full reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
-