

Hillcrest Chapter – 12/2/01 p.m.

INSTALLATION OF GEOFFREY HILL AS A DEACON AT HILLCREST CHAPEL

Intro: Dr. Lockwood and I consider it a great honor that we have been asked to have a part in this service tonight. For practically the whole life of the ministry of Trinity Bible Church we, and most of our people, have had a keen interest in the work of the Lord here at Hillcrest Chapel. In part that has been because some of you were with us before you came to Hillcrest. We have rejoiced to see the Lord adding to your number, and it has always been a happy occasion when our churches have met together at camp, or on Thanksgiving, and how we have share together in Bible conferences when we have invited someone from the outside to come to minister to us. We have prayed for you, and we know that you have prayed for us. It has really been a wonderful fellowship, and we want it to continue until the Lord returns.

Gary and Vern have served as your elders, but as the work has grown, it has become apparent that the leadership needed to be expanded. This is a matter that needs to be taken up with a great deal of prayer and patient waiting upon the Lord. The pattern which most churches follow as they grow is to invite someone in from the outside to work with the young people, or with the singles, or the seniors, or with some other group, but the problem is that people coming in from the outside have no familiarity with the work, and often come in with ideas that change the direction in which the church has been going. And if the church has been going in a Biblical direction, as Hillcrest has, it is tragic when something like that happens. Therefore, the place to look for help is within the church, and the kind of people and the offices they are to fulfill is plainly taught in the Word of God.

Another problem that we have had to face in the ministry of the local church is the multiplication of organizations outside of the church, called *parachurch organizations*, and they have often been the ones who have dictated to the church how they should go instead of having the church be the people who are taking the lead in the work of the Lord. And this has developed to a great degree because the church has not been spiritually strong.

When I was growing up I can't remember ever wanting to do anything but preach. When I went to seminary I never thought of anything but pastoral work. However, the Lord led me to give about ten years of my life to

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teaching in a Bible School. Those were years of great blessing for me. I loved working with the students and with my fellow faculty members. But I always missed the pastorate. I think that the main reason was that in a school you have young people for three years for the most, but in most cases, it was not even that long. We never got to see how they got along year after year as you do in a church. And so when the invitation came to me to get back into the pastorate at Central Bible, I took it. I tried to do both for a while, and then got back into the pastorate full time. As you all know, the Lord led from Central Bible to the beginning of a new work which we called Trinity Bible Church, and most of you know the story from that point on.

As we were starting our work, I met with the men of the church for many weeks, and we went over Scripture after Scripture seeking the leading of the Lord for the work that was just getting started. And we learned that there are just two offices in the church: elders and deacons. And we learned that there were high standards for both of these offices, spiritual standards. In fact, we learned that those standards were so high that none of us felt that we could measure up to them. But we learned also that the standards are high so that those who filled those offices would know that they had to keep growing in the Lord so that the qualifications that they had to begin with could be perfected under the blessing of the Spirit of God.

I would say that there are two reasons for the high standards. The first is because when we were saved, we learned that God's ultimate purpose in our salvation was to make us like Christ. The second reason is that the leaders were to set the pace so to speak. They were to be examples to the people of God of what we all need to be. So when you take your Bible and read the qualifications for the elders and deacons, every child of God needs to realize that they are the spiritual standards for all of us. Elders and deacons are not super saints; they are sinners saved by the grace of God, set apart by God for the purpose of leading the people of God in ways that will make us all more like our Savior. This is through the teaching of the Word of God, and by godly examples.

Generally speaking with reference to local churches today, we have to say that the church is very weak. Churches are more concerned about quantity than they are quality. Bible teaching takes a second place to entertainment, to feeling good, to having a good time. One of our men told me recently that he attended another church with his daughter, and

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the man making announcements said of an evening service that it would all be music, *and no preaching!* And to my friend's amazement, the congregation broke out in a great applause! Such an announcement I am sure would be greeted with shock and amazement if it were made either at Hillcrest or Trinity. We are charged to preach the Word. That is our main business. The people of God need to know the truth of God's Word, and then see how it is to be applied to their lives. And the elders and deacons are to be men who are solidly behind such a ministry. As a pastor I can tell you that I am supremely thankful for men like Dr. Lockwood and the people we have at Trinity because they are solidly behind me in wanting to know the Lord better by receiving a greater understanding of the Word. And I know that you here at Hillcrest are like that. And thank God there are other churches throughout our country that want the ministry of the Word. But let me tell you: we are not in the majority. We are in the minority. But it is not our numbers which determine how we should go; it is the Word of God which is our guide.

So let us turn now to the Word. Open your Bible to Acts 6.

Although not everyone is in full agreement, yet there are strong reasons for believing that this was the beginning of the office of the deacons. The word "ministration" in verse 1, the word "serve" in verse 2, and very interestingly the word "ministry" in verse 4 all are words from the same root as the Greek word for deacon, which is *διάκονος*. It speaks of one who renders service to another. This word is used of our Lord in the NT. It is used of Paul and Peter and Apollos. It is used of Epaphras and Tychicus. All of us are servants of the Lord in one way or another. But when Paul used it in Phil. 1:1 and in 1 Tim. 3:8, he was using it of a special office in the church, an office which was created to free the apostles originally, and later the elders, so that they would be free to minister the Word of God. The people of God often have special physical and material needs as well as spiritual needs, and the church needs to be concerned about all of these. Deacons are not below elders. They work along side of elders, but doing for the people of God that which frees the elders to minister the Word of God.

But let us look now at 1 Timothy 3 where we have the qualifications for deacons. The qualifications for elders comes first, and then for the deacons. The qualifications have to do with spiritual character. In the case of the deacons, the wives are mentioned also, probably because in ministering to the needs of the saints, she would become involved too,

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working with her husband.

Go over the qualifications briefly.

But I want you to notice in particular v. 10, then v. 9, and finally v. 13.

It is a high honor, the highest of all honors, to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, ministering to His people. God's people are very precious to Him, and the love that we show for each other is that which delights the heart of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. It brings blessing to the whole church, and glory to God. But we all know that a high honor, which Paul spoke of in v. 13, is a call for the deepest humility, and gratitude to God on our part that He has permitted us, whether elders or deacons, to serve Him by ministering to the needs of his people.

I close with three verses from Hebrews 6, and I pass them on to you, Geoff, as tonight you are being set apart to serve the Lord and His people here at Hillcrest Chapel, as a deacon. Here are the verses:

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb. 6:10-12).

May the Lord continue to bless you and Kristin, and your dear family, and to use you for His glory as a deacon of the saints at Hillcrest Chapel. I assure you that I will be praying for you.