

# A Letter to the Folks at FBCD

## *about whether the Bible expects us to have deacons who are women*

Beloved,

It has come to my attention that there has been some question in the church about whether it is biblically permissible for a woman to be a deacon. I've also been told that this question has arisen on at least one other occasion within the past several years. My purpose in this letter is to make available to the church my best effort at understanding what the Bible actually teaches on the subject.

I could just huff and puff and say something like, "As long as I'm pastor here, there will never be..." But I have at least four good reasons not to approach things that way:

1. Only the highly impressionable are ever convinced by such tactics.
2. They only remain convinced until a larger-huffing, louder-puffing voice speaks up.
3. A pastor doesn't and shouldn't have the authority simply to impose his will on the church by fiat.

My authority in this church begins at the front cover of the Bible and ends at the back cover. God has called me to teach you His Word, and to exhort you to believe and obey it – never to command you to believe or obey me or any other mere man.

4. Only a biblically-informed church can ever become a solidly-grounded church.

So what I'll do here is the following:

1. I'll survey the New Testament occurrences of the Greek word *diakonos*, which occasionally appears as the English word "deacon" in our translations.
2. I'll talk a little about how words are used to convey meaning in the Bible and elsewhere.
3. I'll have some things to say about customary understandings of Scripture on important issues in individual churches, and what burden of proof is laid upon those who would ask a church to change its customary understanding.

I recognize there will be some who will feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information I present here. All I can say to you beloved brothers and sisters here is this: you can trust your King James, and your New King James, and your NIV, in their translation of the Greek text. They've got it right when they never apply the word "deacon" to a woman, and when they translate 1 Timothy 3:11 so as to make it clear that Paul is talking about deacons' wives, not women deacons. Believe your Bibles, beloved!

Yet I know that some of you are like me: always prying the lids off things, poking under stuff, and asking difficult questions. You are aware that the word *diakonos* is used for a woman in Romans 16:1-2, and that the literal meaning of the key term in 1 Timothy 3:11 is "women," not "their wives." Perhaps you've heard some people who know a little bit of Greek point these facts out, and then draw conclusions about "women deacons." As I aim to show you presently, "a little bit" of Greek is a dangerous thing. "A little bit" of knowledge of Greek is like "a little bit" of expertise in building nuclear reactors. You'd be better off with no Greek than "a little bit" of it.

But if you're nosy like me, dire warnings won't get it. You need the details. So here they come. First, though, a prayer:

*Holy Father, please use this paper to guide Your church into a more solid, more settled understanding of what Your Word teaches. Only Your Spirit can help us here. Grant His guidance to us in full measure, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## NEW TESTAMENT OCCURRENCES OF THE GREEK WORD *DIAKONOS*

There are several connotations (distinct nuances of meaning) for the word *diakonos* in the New Testament. I have classified them under six headings here, giving at least one example of the use of each connotation, along with the locations of the other verses using the word in this specific way. *Diakonos* is translated by a few different English words in these passages. It is identified here by being underlined in the text of the verses. The New International Version is used here.

### ***Diakonos* can refer to one's POST in servitude to another**

(a servant, a waiter, a butler, a lackey, a person under constraint to do someone else's bidding)

literally speaking: an actual, earthly, human servant

*Matthew 22:13 Then the king told the attendants, "Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

This connotation appears three times. The other occurrences are in John 2:5 and 2:9.

figuratively speaking

*Romans 13:4 For [the secular ruler] is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

This connotation appears three times. The other occurrences are in 2 Corinthians 11:15 and Galatians 2:17

### ***Diakonos* can refer to one's POSTURE toward others**

(a servant, willing to submit, glad to give in, eager to help)

*Matthew 23:11 The greatest among you will be your servant.*

This connotation appears six times. The other occurrences are in Matthew 20:26, Mark 9:35, Mark 10:43, Romans 15:8, and 1 Corinthians 3:5.

### ***Diakonos* can refer to one's PART in the work of the church**

(a servant, eager to help wherever needed)

*Romans 16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.*

*Ephesians 6:21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything,*

*Colossians 4:7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant...*

These three are all the occurrences of this connotation in the New Testament.

### ***Diakonos* can refer to one's POSITION among the leadership of the church**

(one of the men called and gifted by God, qualified according to the scripture, and ordained by the church to be one of the designated "Servants" of the church; a deacon)

*Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:*

*1 Timothy 3:8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.*

*1 Timothy 3:12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

These three are all the occurrences of this connotation in the New Testament.

### ***Diakonos* can refer to one's PLACE under the authority of Christ**

(a servant of the Master)

*John 12:26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.*

This connotation appears five times. The other occurrences are in 2 Corinthians 6:4, 2 Corinthians 11:23, Colossians 1:7, and 1 Timothy 4:6.

### ***Diakonos* can refer to Paul's PURPOSE in the spread of the gospel**

(his calling to "serve" the gospel to any who were willing to "ingest" it)

*2 Corinthians 3:6 [God] has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant*

This connotation appears four times. The other occurrences are in Ephesians 3:7, Colossians 1:23, and Colossians 1:25.

The denotation of the word *diakonos*, the fundamental meaning of the word, the idea out of which all the various connotations spring, and upon which they are based, is "servant." That is the starting place in everything we have to discuss. *Diakonos* is "servant."

## HOW WORDS ARE USED TO CONVEY MEANING IN THE BIBLE AND ELSEWHERE

We have two specific issues to address here: transliteration versus translation, and technical usage versus general usage. Now don't give up yet! I'll explain what I'm talking about!

### ***Translation and transliteration***

Translation means taking the meaning of a word in one language, and finding the right word in a second language to express that meaning. Transliteration, on the other hand, is simply lifting a word wholesale out of the first language (with its alphabet) and dropping it down into the second language (with its alphabet) without ever really translating the word (that is, conveying its actual meaning). For example:

translation: Greek Χριστος English "Anointed One" (actual meaning clearly translated)

transliteration: Greek Χριστος English alphabet *Christos* Engl. language "Christ" (no meaning translated)

Or here's another example, close to our Baptist hearts:

translation: Greek βαπτίζω English "dip (into a liquid)," i.e., "dunk" (actual meaning clearly translated)

transliteration: Grk. βαπτίζω Engl. alphabet *baptizo* Engl. language "baptize" (no meaning translated)

So why would translators ever transliterate a word, rather than actually translate it? Sometimes because actually translating a word might have cost the translator his head. Wycliffe and Tyndale (two of the earliest translators of the Bible into English) both lived at times when the state church called the sprinkling of babies "baptism." It could have been dangerous to let people know that the Bible actually says new Christians are to be dunked. So why do the newer translations not translate the word clearly, choosing rather to continue transliterating it? I'm not sure. Is it because they need to sell Bibles to folks who still prefer to call the sprinkling of babies "baptism"?

### ***General and technical usages of words***

At other times, transliteration is done for very valid and necessary reasons. One such reason is the phenomenon known as technical language. In Greek, as in other languages, words can be used in a technical sense, or in a general sense. In English, for example, "master" just means "master" among the general population, and we Americans generally don't like the word. However, down at the Masonic lodge, the word "master" has a specific technical meaning: a man who has attained a particular rank within the organization. That meaning of the word may not be recognized among men who are not Masons, but those who are Masons understand it immediately.

How does this happen in the Bible? In many ways. For example, the word "angel" is an English transliteration of the Greek word *angelos*, which simply means "messenger." Sometimes the word is being used in a general sense, and should be translated as "messenger," to let the reader know that a human messenger is in view (as in Luke 7:24). The vast majority of the times it appears, however, it should be translated as "angel," because the author is indeed using the word in its technical sense (that is, a heavenly messenger), a sense widely known and instantly recognized in the early Christian community. To translate it literally, as "messenger," would actually hide the author's intended meaning from the modern reader. The word *Christos* is another example. Its basic meaning (general sense) is "Anointed One," but it should never be translated that way in the New Testament. In a more technical sense, it's a title: "the messiah." In its most technical sense, it's a personal name: "Christ."

Understanding this matter of general and technical uses of words could help us all a lot. There are several words that were used commonly in both general and technical senses in the early church, and so appear in the Greek manuscripts without any clarifying comments. The result is that the translator must carefully and prayerfully choose how – or whether – to translate the word. Here are some of them....

The word *apostolos* means "sent one" or "emissary." Usually it is transliterated as "Apostle" (technical sense), one of a select few men (including the Twelve) who met some very specific criteria:

1. Each man had to have actually seen the resurrected Christ.
2. Each man had to have been commissioned by Christ Himself
3. Each man was called to found the churches on the infallible word of Christ, to speak to them with binding divine authority about what to believe and how to live.
4. It was expected that God would authenticate a man as an Apostle with signs and wonders.

A few times, however, it just means "emissary" (general sense), as in 2 Corinthians 8:23. One of the emissaries mentioned in Romans 16:7 may even have been a woman (although probably not). If we were to translate the word *apostolos* in such a way as to distinguish between these two groups, while at the same time actually translating the word, we might use capitalization to help. Many, if not all,

believers are emissaries of the Lord and of His churches; yet only a few men in the earliest years of Christianity were designated as His Emissaries.

The word *prophetes* is transliterated as “prophet,” but its basic meaning is “speaker” or “forth-teller.” All Christians are called, and some Christians, both men and women, are specially gifted, to be “speakers,” telling forth the truth of God in the appropriate ways. But in the beginning decades of Christianity, there were a few men who were “Speakers” (Prophets, as they’re called in Ephesians 2:19-21, 3:5, and 4:11), like the Apostles/Emissaries communicating infallible, authoritative revelation from God – Holy Scripture upon which the church was founded. Unlike the Apostles, however, there was no requirement of having personally seen the resurrected Christ, and no expectation of miracles.

*Episcopos* means “overseer,” or “foreman.” All members of the church, men and women, exercise some kind of oversight or leadership. But the “Overseers” (bishops, in many of our translations) are to be men. *Presbuteros* means “older man.” Both older men and older women have important roles to play in giving direction to the church. But the “Elders” are to be men of any age who stand out for their spiritual maturity. *Poimen* means “shepherd”; we usually see an English transliteration of the Latin word *pastorum*, which means, of course, “shepherd.” Everyone in the church, man or woman, must be continually engaged in shepherding other believers. Yet the “Shepherds” – the pastors – of the church are to be men.

We could also talk about the words *euangelistes* (evangelist) and *didaskalos* (teacher) if we had the time. But we don’t. But I can give you a brief chart summarizing what might be a helpful way to translate these words:

<i>apostolos</i> (apostle)	= “emissary”	= man or woman sent with a message by the Lord or by a church
	= “Emissary”	= one of a few men sent by Christ to lay the foundation of the church, the Lord’s written Word
<i>prophetes</i> (prophet)	= “speaker”	= man or woman empowered by the Spirit to speak God’s truth
	= “Speaker”	= one of a few men inspired to speak and write Christ’s infallible Word
<i>euangelistes</i> (evangelist)	= “gospeller”	= any Christian, man or woman, with a special gift to share the gospel
	= “Gospeller”	= a man called to preach the gospel and organize converts into churches
<i>didaskalos</i> (teacher)	= “teacher”	= any and every Christian, man or woman, teaching God’s truth always
	= “Teacher”	= a man called to teach the Word with authority; a preacher
<i>poimen</i> (pastor)	= “shepherd”	= any and every Christian, man or woman, feeding God’s truth to His sheep always
	= “Shepherd”	= a man called to teach the Word with authority in a particular church
<i>episcopos</i> (bishop)	= “overseer”	= any believer, man or woman, with any leadership role in the church
	= “Overseer”	= a man called to give oversight to the whole church
<i>presbuteros</i> (elder)	= “elder”	= any mature Christian man or woman, called to set an example for all
	= “Elder”	= a spiritually mature man called to set a sterling example to show the whole church how to live for Jesus

And, of course, used in a technical sense, these last three words all refer to the same office in the church: what we call “pastor.”

Suffice it to say that with each of these words, there is both a general sense that refers to the parts that Christian men and women must play in the ministry of the church, and a technical sense that refers to positions that certain God-called men must take in the leadership of the church. Careful study of all the relevant passages reveals that the key element that distinguishes the latter from the former is this: spiritual authority among the people of God, exercised by the formal, authorized, public teaching and preaching of the Word. In short, the Bible teaches that in the church, leadership is to be biblically based and bounded, and is to be male. The pattern laid down in Scripture, not the sexism of the ancients, is the reason for the classical conclusion of orthodox Christianity: when a woman or women are leading and teaching the church, the church is out of step with the revealed will of the church’s Head.

Now that’s a lot to swallow, in today’s culture. How can I back it up? In two ways. First, all of the words we just considered refer to different kinds of men of God. In the Bible, a “man of God” is a man who has been called by God to a unique ministry of authoritatively proclaiming the truth of God; he is a spokesman for God. And, while there are female prophets (small “p”) and even a female chieftain (“judge”) in the Bible, there is no “woman of God.” There are only men of God, in both the Old Testament and the New. Second, there is the whole question of what kind of teaching role a woman may have in a church. Paul says quite clearly (1 Timothy 2:11-15) that a woman may not teach so as to usurp authority over men. That pretty well precludes the possibility of a woman’s exercising one of these authoritative teaching roles in a church. There’s a lot more to say on this subject, but this is not the place.

## But what about deacons?

Now then, I'm well aware that most of the members of Dundalk's First Baptist Church already believe that the office of pastor or preacher is to be exercised only by men. But what about the office of deacon? Must deacons also be men, according to the Scripture? There are two key questions that must be answered here:

1. In the Bible, is the office of deacon an office of spiritual authority and leadership in the church?
2. Does the Bible say that there were female deacons in the early churches?

So let's try to answer these questions, each in turn.

### ***In the Bible, is the office of deacon an office of spiritual authority and leadership in the church?***

I've heard it said that, since *diakonos* means "servant," it cannot refer to a position of authority or leadership. But that's clearly wrong. Words aren't used in such wooden, simplistic ways in any language – English or Greek. In 1 Corinthians 3:5, the Apostle Paul referred to himself as the *diakonos* (servant) of the Corinthian church. Does this mean he did not also hold a position of profound authority as the man who planted the church? Of course not! It simply means that he was careful to approach the church from the posture of a servant. Or how about Paul's words in Romans 15:8? There he called the Lord Jesus Christ the *diakonos* (servant) of the Jews. Does that mean he no longer thought of Jesus as the King of the Jews? Ridiculous! It does mean that the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. In fact, that's the sum and seal of His Lordship over us.

*Diakonos*, when it is used in its most technical sense, refers to an office of leadership in the church. In Acts 6, where the office was instituted, seven men were chosen to give oversight (leadership) to a specific and crucial ministry of the church. The widows who could not afford to buy their own food were cared for by the church. The deaconship was created to organize and lead this effort. (Incidentally, deacons, according to God, are not solely responsible for the care of the church's widows. Rather, they are responsible to see to it that those members of the church who cannot care for themselves are cared for properly by other members of the church. Deacons are called to oversee the ministry, not merely do it.) Friends, the deacons are to help the pastors in the oversight of the church's ministries. Theirs is a position of service through leadership. And in the church, as in the home, men are to lead.

Acts 6 presents the biblical evidence we have of the role of deacons in the original church, so it is a vitally important passage. Some object that the passage does not explicitly identify the Seven as *diakonoi* (deacons). However, it does refer to their ministry with the related noun *diakonia* in verses one and four, as well as with the verbal form of the word, *diakoneo*, in verse two. Additionally, Christians have understood the Seven as the prototypical deacons from the earliest times. If the rest of Scripture were to speak clearly so as to invalidate this understanding of Acts 6, obviously we would drop it. But the Scripture says no such thing, as we are about to discuss.

### ***Does the Bible say that there were female deacons in the early churches?***

There are two passages that are pointed out constantly by those who believe that women should be deacons: Romans 16:1-2 and 1 Timothy 3:11. So let's talk about them.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 is by far the more crucial of the two passages, since it presents direct, deliberate teaching on who can be a deacon. It reads,

*8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.*

*9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.*

*10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.*

*11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

*12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

*13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.*

Some folks have noted that the word translated "wives" actually means "women," and that there is no definite article ("the") or possessive pronoun ("their") associated with it. Based on these facts, they conclude that Paul is speaking of women deacons in verse eleven. But this thinking is deeply flawed. Let me show you how.

First, we should note the absence of the word "the" or "their" in the Greek. Some have suggested that this proves Paul cannot be speaking of the deacons' wives, since one would normally expect to find such a qualifying word here. But that's simply not so. There are many reasons an author might omit an article or pronoun – even simply as a matter of personal style. In point of fact, Paul does the same thing several times in this passage, including before both uses of the word *diakonos* (in 3:8 and 3:12), and before both uses of the

word *aner*, which means “man” or “husband” (in 3:2 and 3:12). In short, here the absence of any qualifying word tells us precisely nothing. Those who claim that it does mean something simply are trying to pretend the Greek tells us something it doesn't tell us.

Second, we should consider the precise meaning of the word *gune* (“woman” or “wife”). We're told that, since it means “woman,” it must be talking about women deacons, rather than deacon's wives. But that's rubbish. There was no word for “wife” in the language of Paul's day, nor any word for “husband.” One word (*gune*) had to cover both the idea of “woman” and the idea of “wife.” Likewise, *aner* meant either “man” or “husband.”

Now look! Paul clearly means “wife” by his use of *gune* and “husband” by his use of *aner* in both verse two and verse twelve. Why would anyone think he meant “woman” when he used the word *gune* in verse eleven? Such an understanding of the Greek is permissible (just barely); but what makes it preferable? The only reason anyone would prefer it would be that he had already made up his mind about the “women deacons” issue before he ever came to this text. Yet we are supposed to let the Bible's teachings tell us what to believe, not let our beliefs tell us what the Bible teaches. First, the Word of God, then our convictions – not the other way around!

To sum it up, there is no compelling reason to believe that 1 Timothy 3:11 is talking about women deacons. Rather, it speaks clearly and eloquently about what a woman must be like before her husband can be made a deacon.

So we turn our attention to the other passage, Romans 16:1-2. It says, *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.*

Seeing that the word “servant” in Romans 16:1 is *diakonos*, some people claim that Phoebe was a deacon. However, of the twenty-seven occurrences of the word in the Greek New Testament, only three (Philippians 1:1, and then twice in 1 Timothy 3:8-13) clearly have the technical sense – speaking of someone's position among the leadership of a church. All three of them are set in contexts that let us know unmistakably that we should take the word in that sense.

What reason is there to take the word in its technical sense in Romans 16:1? There is none. In fact, verse two seems to paint a picture of Phoebe similar to that painted of Lydia in Acts 16: a godly Christian woman, willing to give of herself for the good of the churches. Now, as she travels to Rome, far from home, Paul tells the Roman church to bestow on her some of the grace she has bestowed on others. The most natural way to take *diakonos* in Romans 16 is the same way we take it as it is applied to Tychicus in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 4. Both Phoebe and Tychicus were helpful, godly servants of the churches, garnering Paul's ringing endorsement in his letters. There is no reason, in these verses anyway, to think that either of them was a deacon in a church. It is interesting to note that the NIV prefers “servant” to “deacon” as the proper way to translate *diakonos* as it applies to Phoebe, but doesn't even mention “deacon” as an optional translation as applied to Tychicus. Here is more evidence of the influence that modern feminism has, not only on biblical interpretation, but even on biblical translation.

It becomes clear that the only reason to take *diakonos* in its technical sense (“deacon”) in Romans 16:1-2 is if you come to the passage with your agenda already set. If you come looking for an excuse to believe women should be deacons, you might claim you've found one here. But it will only be an excuse, not a valid reason, because it is based on a preconception that forces you to force the text to say something other than what it simply says. Phoebe was a servant of the church, not a deacon(ess) in the church.

Does the Bible say that there were female deacons in the early churches? It does not. Yet even otherwise stellar Bible teachers sometimes get this one wrong. For example, Mark Dever's little book, *A Display of His Glory*, is the best thing available on biblical church order. Yet he, too, makes the mistake, on page thirteen:

The example of Phoebe in Romans 16:1, the use of the deacon words elsewhere of women in the Scriptures, and to a lesser degree, the long history of deaconesses in Baptist churches, has led our own church happily to embrace the ministry of women serving us as deacons. Yet because of 1 Timothy 2 and of the larger Biblical picture of male headship, we would discourage churches from recognizing women as deacons if their office was confused with that of the elders (as deacons are in so many churches today). It is our clarity about the distinct role of elders, and the fact that those elders must be males, that enables us to encourage freely the service of our sisters as deacons or deaconesses recognized by the church.

Dever gives three reasons for having women deacons. One is his misunderstanding of Romans 16:1. Another is the observation that women are sometimes called “servants” in the Bible (which seems to prove very little, to me at least.) A third is the example of some Baptists of the past. He is careful to distance himself from feminist ideas, but fails, for all his care. He is right to say elsewhere that deacons are to lead the practical ministries in the church so that the pastors can give themselves to the Word and prayer. But he doesn't seem to see the conflict between that idea, the maxim that leadership in the church is to be male, and the notion that deacons can be women. I respect Mark Dever enormously and usually agree with him loudly, but he missed it on this one.

## CUSTOMARY UNDERSTANDINGS OF SCRIPTURE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES

Here's an important question. Is it possible that a church might get off on the wrong foot, and come to embrace a wrong understanding of Scripture as though it were the right understanding of Scripture? Naturally; we're only human. Well then, should a church ever correct its beliefs when it comes to see that its beliefs are unscriptural? Of course it should! Every church should be constantly learning and growing and repenting and changing.

But what should that process look like? Should the church rewrite its doctrinal statement every time the pastor finds a new hobby-horse? Should well-established understandings of specific scriptural issues be chucked out the window each time a new wind of minor doctrine blows in? The result would be chaos in the body of Christ!

A church should change its stated understanding of a specific doctrine only when the following are all true:

1. The pastors are fully convinced, based on a clear, compelling case made from the Scripture itself, that the new understanding is the correct understanding, and that the old understanding was a misunderstanding.
2. The deacons are largely convinced of the same things.
3. The solid majority of the church are either convinced, willing to be convinced, or willing to agree to disagree.

These principles of change are admittedly my own, not explicitly the Bible's. Rather, they are what seem to me to be self-evident truths, in light of the very clear biblical imperative that all things be done in a decent, orderly fashion.

What that means for us practically is this. This church has never had women deacons. If someone wants us to change that, that person carries the burden of proof. We are not required to prove our point in order to stay where we've always been. Those who think we should change must prove their case to us.

## THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

So what about the matter of women deacons? Can a case be made that women should be deacons? Yes, but it's a weak and doubtful case, built on unwarranted assumptions, significant leaps in logic, and a few frankly feeble presuppositions. It certainly is nowhere close to a compelling case. We will continue to work and fellowship with our Baptist brothers and sisters who ordain women deacons in their churches. We love them, pray for them, and treasure their partnership in the gospel. We just think they're wrong on this issue. Jesus is their Lord; we are not. Since we must all appear before His judgment seat, we'll keep on loving them and disagreeing with them.

So the long and the short of it is this: before I could ever support any effort to ordain women deacons in this or any church, someone would have to show me compellingly that I have misunderstood the Bible on this issue. For all the reasons I've just laid out, I'm not expecting that to happen any time soon. I pray this little paper will prove helpful to us as we seek to order this church in keeping with the will of our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed to us in His infallible, inerrant Word, the Bible.

God's grace to you, and His peace,

