

## Setting the Church in Order # 3

### Responsibilities of Elders

#### Int.

1. Aim: To discuss what the Bible teaches are the responsibilities of the elders to the congregation.
2. Tit. 1:5 = Last week we discussed the qualifications of Elders
3. Today we will discuss the duties or responsibilities of elders
4. Being an elder is a great work. They are not mere figureheads, nor is it merely an official position. 1 Tim. 3:1 "he desireth a good work"
5. In this lesson we will not discuss everything that an elder is to do, but some of the general responsibilities
6. Acts 20:28 "Take heed therefore unto **yourselves**, and **to all the flock**, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." = take heed - Pay Attention
  - a. Take heed to themselves
  - b. Take heed to the congregation

#### Discussion

#### **I. DUTIES OF THE ELDERS to Themselves**

##### A. SELF DISCIPLINE

1. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves:"
  - a. Take Heed = Pay attention to, be cautious about
  - b. "Keep watch over yourselves"

## 2. Why?

- a. Elders have a soul to save, their own. An elder must not become preoccupied with the spiritual needs of others and forget their own spiritual needs.
- b. Elders are not immune to temptation. He must constantly watch to make certain that he overcomes the temptations.
- c. An elder must examine his own life to see if he conforms to the requirements of elders and Christians - 2 Cor. 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

## 3. If elders do not watch carefully their own lives, they are not in position to fulfill the requirement that demands they keep the church pure and free from false doctrine.

- a. This refers to their own personal godliness and faith.
- b. He must be sincere in his Christian living. He must be faithful in his life.
- c. A man who is an elder will be in attendance at all the services.
- d. He does not forsake any assembly.

## B. An Elder is an example to those in the church and to those outside the church.

- a. 1 Pet. 5:3 "...being examples to the flock." [Example = pattern, a model]
- b. An elder needs to be an example in speech, conduct, business, family life, habits and in the work for the church.
- c. Elders must stand head and shoulders over the crowd.
- d. He meets the qualifications - therefore he is an example.

## C. An elder who is not living the proper kind of life will bring a blemish and hurt to the congregation.

## II. **DUTIES OF ELDERS To the Church** "To the flock" Acts 20:28

### A. DUTIES ARE BEST Described by 3 terms in the N.T.

	Greek	Latin	English
1.	Presbuteros	Presbyter	Elder
2.	Episkopos	Bishop	Overseer
3.	Poimen	Pastor	Shepherd

\* These 3 terms also tell us about the work of these men.

### B. **# 1 ELDER** -Presbuteros - presbyter

1. Means literally one who is older - but has a secondary meaning based on the custom of the older men of a village making decisions for the village.
2. The idea behind this work has to do with an administrative function -- they are responsible for "ruling"
  - a. Heb. 13:17 ...rule over you...
  - b. 1 Tim. 5:17 ...that rule well...
  - c. Tit. 1:7 ...steward of God... = this word means administration of God's house.
3. The elders must make decisions which affect the congregation.
  - a. They cannot make laws which God did not make
  - b. They make decisions in areas of expediency - human judgment in carrying out the laws of God.
4. They turn over the day to day decision making to deacons, ministers, the treasurer and others working under their oversight
5. They must supervise the work of those who have been delegated decision making authority

6. The eldership is to make the decisions for a congregation in matters of judgment.
7. These decisions are to be made with the overall good of the congregation in mind.
8. I Pet. 5:3 "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."
  - a. Lords =
    - (1) Not tyrants
    - (2) Elders do not constitute a spiritual dictatorship which wields autocratic powers that we will either rule or ruin the congregation.
    - (3) Elders are not to be as hard-headed business executives who are unapproachable and know next to nothing about real sympathetic leadership.
    - (4) They are not to be as ruthless labor bosses who run roughshod over any and all opposition in their way.
  - b. Elderships are not to make their decisions in isolation from the congregation
    - (1) They should ask for input
    - (2) The elders cannot please every member of the congregation, and they should not try, but they should listen to the people.
    - (3) There needs to be communication between the elders and the congregation - the elders must not be isolated from the members.
    - (4) Elders should inform the members about decisions being considered
  - c. The more people involved in helping plan the work, the more people will be involved in the execution of the work.
  - d. But the decision making function is not the only work of the elders.....

C. **# 2 OVERSEER** - Episkopos - Bishop

1. This word means over - to look or watch - superintend
2. Heb. 13:17 "They watch for your souls"
  - a. "For they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare." Amplified
  - b. "They are like men standing guard over your spiritual good, and they have great responsibility." Phillips
  - c. "For they are attentive about your souls as they must give account." Berkeley
  - d. "For they are attentive about your souls without resting." TEV
3. Watchmen - Ezk. 33:7-9
  - a. As watchmen of the flock the elders have a responsibility to the congregation to watch for the welfare of their souls
  - b. If they see signs of weakness or sickness, spiritually, then they must take the proper action.
  - c. If they detect signs of false teaching then they must move to stop this danger to the souls of the flock.
  - d. As watchman they are not in the position of being spies on the congregation. But they have a responsibility to watch for the good of the souls of the congregation.
  - e. Elders must have the courage to talk with weak or erring members and admonish them.

f. Admonishing the members is an important part of the work of elders. Admonish = "To warn of a fault; to reprove gently or kindly, but seriously; to exhort; to put in mind of something forgotten, by way of a warning or exhortation."

Webster Dict.

g. Likewise they must be brave in meeting error wherever it may appear.

4. As Watchmen the elders must take the lead in church discipline!

a. Withdrawing from those walking disorderly is done for the purpose of saving the souls of those involved and to keep the church pure.

b. The duty to withdraw from the disorderly is upon the congregation, not just the elders, but upon the whole church. The elders are responsible for leading in this action, if and when it must be taken.

D. **# 3 SHEPHERD** - Poimen - Pastor

1. This word literally means "one who tends a flock of sheep"

2. In Bible times shepherds lived with their flocks

a. As shepherds they fed the flock

b. They guarded and protected

c. They led them to the right places - for food and water and protection

3. The spiritual use of the term shepherd refers to spiritual teachers, counselors or teachers - elders - bishops - [Not the denominational way - preacher]

4. As pastors or shepherds the eldership is to feed, guard, and lead the flock

## 5. FEED -

- a. 1 Pet. 5:2 "Feed the flock of God which is among you,"
  - (1) Feed = Shepherd in NKJV ASV = Tend the flock of God
  - (2) William = Be shepherds of the flock of God
- b. Teach, they can do it or delegate another to do it
- c. They must possess knowledge, before they can teach - 2 Tim. 2:15 Study...
- d. This is implied in the qualification of "Apt to Teach"

## 6. GUARD - protect from false teachers and false doctrine

- a. Must know the truth - be able to recognize error
- b. Tit. 1:9-10
- c. Acts 20:28-30
- d. Be Alert - Be informed
- e. Must know what is going on in the congregation and in the brotherhood
- f. Periodicals and bulletins, lectures, meetings

## 7. LEAD the flock to be faithful. --

- a. Show the example of how to live = Give a model to follow
- b. 1 Pet. 5:3 b "being examples to the flock"

## E. These 3 words summarize the work of the elders

1. As elders they must be efficient decision-makers
2. As Bishops they must learn to be effective administrators
3. As pastors they will shepherd the flock.

F. 1 Pet. 5:1-2 NKJV “**The elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;”

1. The elders - Greek Presbuteros = Elder
2. Shepherd - Greek Poimen = pastor
3. Overseers - Episkopos = bishop

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The Work of Elders is just that -- it is a work
2. They must take heed to:
  - a. Themselves -- keep their own lives in harmony with God's word
  - b. To the Flock - or the congregation -- guide and protect the people of the church to help them in keeping their lives in harmony with God's word
3. Col. 1:10 “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.;

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