

# What an Eldership Owes the Congregation

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## INTRODUCTION:

A. Two important passages will serve as a basis for this study

1. **1 Peter 5:1-4** – 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;
  - 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;
  - 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.
2. **Acts 20:28-32** – Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
  - 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
  - 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
  - 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.
  - 32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

B. What does an eldership owe to the congregation? Two main categories will be examined.

1. Some prohibitions elders owe to the flock.
2. Some obligations elders owe the congregation.

## SOME PROHIBITIONS ELDERS OWE TO THE FLOCK

A. **"Not by compulsion but willingly."**

1. An elder should never assume the awesome work and tremendous task as a matter of:
  - a. Compulsion
  - b. As an enforced service
  - c. Or through a burdened sense of duty.
2. He **must desire** the work.
  - a. For the word "desire," Paul uses the word "oregomai."
    1. **1 Timothy 3:1** – This is a faithful saying: If a man **desires** the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2. It appears only here and in **Hebrews 11:16** - Hebrews 11:16  
But now they **desire** a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

b. It is imperative that a man desire the work.

c. The eldership is not a work for the highly reluctant.

3. Elders need the desire to serve before they are appointed.

B. **"Not greedy for money."** 1 Timothy 3:8

1. "Filthy lucre" (KJV). Comes from a compound verb in the Greek text that describes gain (money) made by low, bas, and dishonorable means.

2. He must maintain honesty and integrity in the community as he earns his living. If his goal is physical wealth, the devil will cause him to slip in the area of spiritual wealth.

3. As a side observation: According to **1 Timothy 5:17-18**, some elders in the first century were paid. "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

4. This word of caution: If one member of the eldership works either part-time fulltime in the church and is supported financially in that role, do not make the mistake of viewing that elder as being more important or authoritative than his fellow elders.

C. **"Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you"** 1 Peter 5:3

1. Elders are not:

a. Dictators

b. Labor bosses

c. Hard-headed business executives

2. Elders are surely not to be like the daring Diotrephes of John's era.

a. **3 John 9-10** - I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

b. The record does not tell us whether Diotrephes was:

1. An egotistical elder.

2. A daring and dictatorial deacon.

3. A presumptuous preacher.

4. Or a member of the rule-or-ruin disposition, firmly fixed in his personality or pride.

- c. Consider this for a moment.
  1. If he was an **elder**, he had swept underneath his feet, every qualification set forth in the Timothy table . . . The Titus table . . . And Peter's list of musts for elders.
  2. If he was a **deacon**, he had cast aside the basic qualifications given for the seven servants of the Jerusalem church in Acts 6.
  3. If he was a **preacher**, he failed to heed every gospel guideline incorporated by Paul to Timothy and Titus.
  4. If he was just a **regular member** of the congregation, he violated the principles of how to reach and maintain real greatness in the kingdom of God as depicted by Jesus in **Matthew 23:11** - **But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.**
    - a. In Luke 22:24, the apostles are among themselves as to who would be the greatest.
    - b. In Matthew 20:20-28, the mother of James and John requested places of prominence in the kingdom for her two sons.

## OBLIGATIONS ELDERS OWN THE FLOCK.

### A. "Take heed to yourselves."

1. An elder must take heed to himself before he is in a position to hold vigil for the flock he helps to oversee.
2. Take heed to:
  - a. Motives.
  - b. Speech. No vulgarities or profanities.
  - c. Habits
  - d. Morality
  - e. Behavior
  - f. Honesty

### B. "Take heed . . . To all the flock."

1. Not just some of the flock . . . But ALL the flock.
2. Elders should make it a point to know the spiritual needs of their members and fill those needs to the very best of their ability.
3. Like Ezekiel of old, they are watchmen on the walls of spiritual Zion.
4. New Testament elderships are clearly charged to care for souls.
  - a. **Hebrews 13:17** - **Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**
  - b. The matter of being an elder in the Lord's church is serious business.

### C. "Shepherd the flock of God." "Feed the church of God." (KJV)

1. This is commanded by both Paul and Peter.
  - a. Paul in Acts 20:28
  - b. Peter in 1 Peter 5:2

2. The Palestinian shepherd cared for his sheep.
    - a. He saw to it that they were led to green pastures.
    - b. He saw to it that they had water to quench their thirst.
  3. Elders must feed the members on the bread of life and see to it that they drink the water of life.
  4. Sound curriculum all in the Bible classes . . . And any time any type of Bible class is taught.
    - a. Sound literature.
    - b. Reliable translations of the Bible.
  5. Sound doctrine preached from the pulpit.
- D. **"Therefore watch" . . . Guard the flock.**
1. Paul spoke of:
    - a. Wolves from the outside.
    - b. And apostates from the inside.
  2. Both are dangerous to the truth and to the souls of men.
  3. The flock needs to be guarded from all error regardless from which direction it comes.
  4. Therefore, the proper posture for an eldership relative to error is its total exposure and unrelenting opposition to every form of falsehood.
    - a. Question: Why is this so important?
    - b. Because error will cause you to lose your soul!
- E. **"Serving as overseers" . . . "Taking the oversight thereof" (KJV)**
1. To take the "oversight thereof" is the basic meaning of "bishop" or "overseer."
  2. Elders are divinely charged to oversee the church . . . That is to look after the activities of the local flock.
  3. Other MAY and MUST do much of the actual work of the local congregation . . . But it must be done under the oversight of the elders.
  5. A note of caution: In some places overly ambitious and untaught deacons need desperately to learn that they are likewise UNDER . . . Note over or even on par with the elders in the authority Heaven has granted.
- F. **"Being examples to the flock."**
1. Elders should serve as a model or pattern to the flock.
  2. Jesus knows the power of example. **1 Peter 2:21** - For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.
  3. What kind of example is an elder when:
    - a. He puts the world before the church?
    - b. His secular job before his spiritual job?
    - c. His secular work before the services of the church?
    - d. He schedules vacation time away during a gospel meeting or special effort of the church that has been LONG scheduled? (Explain)

- e. His personal habits are questionable?
- 4. Every elder owes the congregation a good example.
- G. **"Rule the church of God"**
  - 1. Every institution must have its vested authority.
    - a. The school has its principal.
    - b. The classroom has its teacher.
    - c. The college or university has its president or chancellor.
    - d. The corporation has its CEO.
    - e. The city has its mayor.
    - f. The state has its governor.
    - g. The Nation has its president.
    - h. The home has its father as its head and mother as manager of the household.
  - 2. In the church God has placed elders as overseers or spiritual leaders.
    - a. Those who dislike these terms of overseeing or ruling should take up their objections with the Lord because He put them there.
    - b. These designations and the authority inherent therein derive from Deity . . . Rather than from men.
  - 3. Elders have NO legislative authority in doctrinal matters.
    - a. All doctrinal matters have been crystallize by the One lawgiver . . . The Lord Jesus Christ.
    - b. Elders do have the delegated authority to see that the Lord's will . . . the full doctrine of God's gospel . . . is fully and faithfully executed.
  - 4. In matters of human judgment or expediency they are in the driver's seat and the flock should be submissive or subservient to the same.
  - 5. In their meetings as elders they should stand as a unit in all matters of right or wrong. In matters of opinion, love . . . Not self will . . . Must predominate in all decisions reached.

**CONCLUSION:**

- A. **1 Peter 5:4** - **And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**
  - 1. Elders who do their work well will be appreciated by the dedicated and devout of the flock.
  - 2. They royal recompense is rich indeed when they see the congregation they oversee making real spiritual progress and really marching for the Master.
  - 3. Rich will their real reward be when they wear the fadeless crown of glory come resurrection morning and can present their flock as faithful recipients of glorious crowns as well
- B. May God bless every elder of every congregation who is taking his work seriously and with the gravity that it truly deserves.
- C. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**

