

What the Congregation Owes the Elders

INTRODUCTION:

- A. It is easy to think about what the eldership owes the congregation . . . But have you stopped to think about what the congregation owes the eldership?
- B. The Bible is just as replete in the answer to this question as it is in answering what obligations an eldership sustain to the congregation.

WHAT THE CONGREGATION OWES THE ELDERS.

A. Have a working knowledge of the leadership.

- 1. Members should know what the Bible teaches about elders.
- 2. The Biblical doctrine of the eldership is not a very familiar theme to many in the church in our day.
- 3. Members should know:
 - a. Members should know what the Bible teaches about elders.
 - b. Members should know the designations in the Bible that refer to elders
 - 1. Presbyter (elder)
 - 2. Bishop (overseer)
 - 3. Pastor (shepherd)
 - c. Members should know God's plan for the eldership
 - d. Members should know the qualifications for elders.
 - e. Members should know the authority the Bible delegates to elders.
 - f. Members should know the difference between elders and deacons . . . That the elders are overseers and that the deacons are servants.
 - g. Members should know what the work of elders is . . . And what the work of elders is not.
 - h. Members should recognize what the elders owe to the congregation and what the congregation owes its elders.

B. Know them, esteem them, and be at peace.

- 1. **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** - And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, **13** and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.
- 2. Three things are commanded here.
 - a. "Know them which labor among you."
 - 1. This knowing comprehends vastly more than simple acquaintance or the instant ability to call them by name when you see them.
 - 2. Know their responsibilities to you and your responsibilities to them.
 - 3. We cannot ignore them according to the apostolic intent of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 if we ignore every exhortation they extend

and rebel against every admonition they ardently advocate toward the flock they oversee.

- b. "Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."
 1. Esteem means to hold them in the highest regard.
 2. Paul calls for us to do exactly that.
- c. "Be at peace among yourselves."
 1. When elders are really what they ought to be and congregation are what they ought to be, the way to congregational harmony and Christian serenity is ardently assured.
 2. Peace and unity are so important to the church.
 - a. **Matthew 5:9** – Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
 - b. **Hebrews 12:14** – Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.
 - c. **Romans 14:19** – Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.
 - d. **Romans 12:18** – If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.
 - e. Peace is a part of the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23
 3. Godly elders deserve to oversee a congregation that majors in peace and practices holy harmony.

C. Count the elders worthy of all honor.

1. **1 Timothy 5:17-18** - Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.
18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
2. Paul uses the word "elders" in two different senses in 1 Timothy 5.
 1. In verse 1 of the KJV he writes, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren."
 - a. Here he is speaking of older men in general. NKJV renders is more clearly, "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers."
 - b. In verses 17-18 he is speaking about the official overseers of the local congregation.
3. Paul commands that the eldership be afforded proper and well deserved honor because of the character they possess and the teaching and work they do.
4. Often the work of elders is too frequently a thankless task.
5. We are to honor elders because:
 - a. Of their willingness to serve.
 - b. Theirs is a worthy work . . . A weighty work.
 - c. They have met the qualifications and have permitted their being

appointed.

- d. They feed us and tend to our spiritual needs.
- e. They watch for our souls and remain as alert sentinels on Zion's walls.
- f. They are over us in the Lord.
- g. We are to honor elders because of their:
 - 1. Work of faith.
 - 2. Their labor of love.
 - 3. Their patience of hope.
- h. Because of the authority Heaven has delegated to them to see that things in the church are to be done correctly . . . Correctly being according to God's will.
- i. Because they definitely possess the authority to act in matters of expediency and to make decisions that are binding as touching human judgment.
- j. We honor them by honoring the work they assign to us.
- k. We honor them by heeding the gospel-centered exhortations and Biblically-oriented admonitions they give us from time to time.
- l. We honor them by:
 - 1, Knowing them well.
 - 2. Respecting them.
 - 3. Loving them.
 - 4. Holding up their hands in every righteous endeavor.
 - 5. Defending them against unjustified and inflammatory attacks from their opponents.

D. Be slow and cautious in the criticism department.

- 1. **1 Timothy 5:19-20** - Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.
 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.
- 2. Elders in the 1st century as well in our current century, were and are, targets of severe criticism by:
 - a. The unknowing.
 - b. The unthinking.
 - c. The uncaring.
 - d. The unkind crowd of supercharged and super sensitive critics.
- 3. Paul forbids Timothy's reception of any accusation against an elder except upon the testimony of two or three witnesses.
 - a. It had been the axiom of Hebrew law since times of antiquity that in the mouths of two or three witnesses every statement was to be verified. Deuteronomy 17:6

- b. Jesus alluded to this well-defined and deeply familiar precept when he declared in **John 8:17** - It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true.
- c. Quite obviously, Moses, Paul, and the Lord had in mind reliable and reputable witnesses . . . Not the kind prone to lie or those who would concoct a story if a little money was passed into their covetous pockets in the pernicious process.

E. Obey and submit.

1. **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.
 - a. This verse must be a constant thorn in the side of those who endeavor to deny any and all authority to elders in the Lord's church.
 - b. Such expressions as "obey," "rule," "submit," "watch," and "must give account" are all connected with concepts of authority.
 - c. These five expressions point out the authority of elders and the need to submit to them.
2. "Obey" is from the Greek word "peitho" and means to be persuaded. Inherent is a trust and a willingness to be persuaded.
3. "Submit" comes from the Greek word "hupeiko" and means "to resist no longer, but to give way, to yield to authority and admonition, to submit."
4. Just as the members are accountable to the elders, so the elders are accountable to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 5:4

F. Emulate their faith.

1. **Hebrews 13:7** - Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.
2. Elders should daily be sitting a worthy example before the flock.
 - a. Nothing less will help the flock.
 - b. Nothing less will please God.

CONCLUSION:

- A. May each of us be pleasing to God by obeying His expressed will regarding elders.
- B. May we ever hold their hands up in the work of the Lord's church.
- C. May we pray for them every day.
- E. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation.**