

# SCRIPTURAL ELDERS: Their Work and the Role of the Church

## Introduction

- 1) Our previous study gave an overview of the *office* and *qualifications* of scriptural elders
  - a) It is an office to be desired as a good work
  - b) Spiritually mature and scripturally married man who has raised believing children
  - c) Holy life characterized by gentleness, self-control, soberness, blameless, good reputation
  - d) Life not characterized by wrath, violence, quarreling, greediness, selfishness, intoxication
  - e) Will hold fast the word of truth to teach others and refute false teachers
  - f) Wives are to be reverent and faithful in their lives
- 2) These qualifications are necessary to properly carry out the work they have been given
- 3) These are men of ability and character to perform a good and authorized work
- 4) This lesson will consider the scriptural *work* of elders and the *role of the church* toward them

## I) THE WORK OF ELDERS

### A) *Take Heed (Acts 20:28)*

- 1) “Take heed to” = turn one’s attention to, pay attention to, apply oneself to, adhere to
- 2) Elders are to “take heed to” two things:
  - a) “Yourselves” – constant, vigilant watch over their lives and work; maintain their lives in order to serve God for good; take heed lest fall away
  - b) “All the flock” – those “among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”; “entrusted to you” (1 Pet. 5:3); the church of God purchased with His own blood; pay attention to *every* member of the congregation

### B) *Shepherd (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2)*

- 1) Who? The “church of God”; “the flock of God which is among you”
  - a) Realm of work limited to local church; not to shepherd other flocks (local churches)
  - b) Division has occurred over unscriptural “sponsoring church arrangements”
- 2) “Shepherd” = feeding, guidance, and protection; work of a pastor
  - a) **Feeding** = instruction, teaching, growth, maturation
  - b) **Guidance** = application, reproving, rebuking, discipline
  - c) **Protection** = watchful for dangers from inside and outside (Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9-11)
- 3) Shepherds must know needs and problems of the flock, and apply the word of God to spiritually feed, guide, and protect the flock
  - a) Always at the ready to serve the needs of the flock (Jas. 5:14)

### C) *Overseers (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2)*

- 1) As a shepherd oversees the flock, the elders are overseers of the local church
  - a) Divinely-appointed work – “among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”
  - b) Work of service to God and the flock – “serving as overseers”
- 2) Oversee the spiritual growth and life of the church and each individual member
  - a) See that flock listen to and apply the word of God
  - b) Their oversight is for our good, whether it is encouragement or rebuke

### D) *Rule Over (Heb. 13:17)*

- 1) “Rule over” – to rule, command, to have authority over, superintend, preside over
  - a) Not authority to make laws, but to oversee our obedience to the word of God
  - b) Cannot bind matters of personal judgment, but insist on obedience to God’s word

- 2) “Watch out for your souls” – rules over with personal desire for salvation of every soul
  - a) “As those who must give account” – their salvation is on the line in their rule!
  - b) Not “lords over” (1 Pet. 5:3) – tyranny, overbearing, selfish use of authority (cf. Matt. 20:25-27)
  - c) “Being examples to the flock” – rule as example of service and submission desiring to please God (1 Pet. 5:3-4)

## II) **ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION**

### A) ***Recognize and Know Them (1 Thess. 5:12)***

- 1) Develop a familiarity and close working relationship; can become an ignored, forgotten, and thankless work
- 2) Pray for and support their work with faithful obedience; listen to their admonitions

### B) ***Esteem Them Highly for their Work’s Sake (1 Thess. 5:13)***

- 1) Honor them for the work they have undertaken – servants serving God and flock
- 2) Seek and maintain spiritual peace that promotes truth and love – we are responsible!

### C) ***Honor (1 Tim. 5:17-20)***

- 1) Worthy of honor for work’s sake; yet, some receive all the blame for member’s failings
- 2) Double honor to those who labor in word and doctrine (preaching)
- 3) Not to receive an accusation against an elder but before two or three witnesses
  - a) Serious matter! Must be very cautious how we speak and how we listen to others speak of those placed in authority by God

### D) ***Call for the Elders (Jas. 5:14)***

- 1) If spiritual/physical problem afflicts a member, the elders should be the *first* to be called
- 2) Their work is to oversee the needs of the flock as shepherds – capable, interested, desire
- 3) To keep them “out of the loop” will provide Satan many opportunities – the flock will be to blame and suffer greatly
- 4) Don’t wonder why elders didn’t do something if they were not made aware of a problem
  - a) Days of spiritual gifts is past – no mind reading or supernatural knowledge today
  - b) Elders must be fully informed and we must help them to be so for our own good!

### E) ***Obey/Be Submissive (Heb. 13:17)***

- 1) Elders placed in position of authority by God to watch for our faithfulness – not something to be offended about, but to be thankful for – it is the wisdom of God!
- 2) A congregation chooses elders and places themselves under their oversight – no right to question or rebel unless elders go into error and abuse their office
  - a) If elders contradict word of God, we must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29)
- 3) Does our submission to God bring joy to the elders, or does our unfaithful lives and ungodly attitudes bring them grief? The latter is most unprofitable and troubling!

## Conclusion

**Faithful elders** have the promise that “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 5:4). They serve a **vital function** in the scriptural organization of the local church. They are **vital to the work** of protecting, leading, bringing peace, and providing wisdom to the flock. May God bless them with wisdom and love in carrying out their work. May each congregation with godly elders understand and honor the blessings that God has given them.