

Introduction:

1. The past few Sunday evenings, we have dealt with the topic of elders.
 - a. We discussed elders must come from within the congregation, being members serving in the specific role of leaders.
 - b. We discussed three words the Bible uses to describe elders and how that helps to define them:
 - i. They must be “older”
 - ii. They must feed and protect the congregation (spiritually speaking).
 - iii. They must oversee and manage the congregation.
 - c. We also looked into the authority which elders have in the local congregation.
 2. This week we will be looking at the congregation’s responsibilities towards the elders.
 - a. It is common that you will find Christians who disrespect the elders of their congregation.
 - b. Many elders are treated as ones who “think they are better than the rest of us.”
 - c. If we are to be those who follow the Bible, we must realize that we have responsibilities towards the elders!
 - d. The things we will be discussing today assumes that we have Scriptural elders who are truly trying to fulfill their role as such.
- I. The congregation has a responsibility to recognize the elders (I Thessalonians 5:12-13).
- A. The congregation has a responsibility to know those who are over them in the Lord.
 1. The word “over” is the same as “rule” in I Timothy 5:17.
 2. This is a specific reference to the elders in the local congregation.
 - B. The word “know” in this verse has reference to recognizing and acknowledging.
 1. Therefore the congregation has a responsibility to recognize the elders as the leaders of the congregation.
 2. We cannot be like some Christians in the first century who tried to cast doubt on the leadership of certain men (they acted as if Paul had no authority).
 3. We must acknowledge that these men are the elders and that they have authority over us in the Lord.
 - a. “In the Lord” means spiritually speaking.
 - b. It is according to the Lord’s will that they rule over us in the church.
 - C. We are also to “esteem” the elders (I Thessalonians 5:13).
 1. This means that we give them respect.
 2. We look up to them.
 3. The reason we do this is because of the work which they are doing.
 4. The work of an elder is an oftentimes difficult one, and we should respect them for the hard work they put into it.
 - a. Do you like to be recognized for the work that you do?
 - b. Many times husbands want to be recognized for everything they do around the house.
 - 1) The joke goes that a man’s wife is outside repaving the driveway, and he comes outside to tell her that he refilled the ice-cube trays, then goes back inside.
 - c. If you want to be recognized for the hard work you have done, should you not recognize those whose hard work can help lead your soul to heaven?

- II. The congregation has a responsibility to remember the elders (Hebrews 13:7).
 - A. We are commanded to remember the ones who have the rule over us.
 - 1. This again has reference to the eldership (see again I Timothy 5:17).
 - B. What does it mean to remember them?
 - 1. Does it mean we are not to forget their names?
 - 2. Does it mean we are to remember them in prayer?
 - 3. The meaning of the word used here is that of being mindful, with a view to observing the admonitions, of those who have the rule over you (Wuest, Vincent).
 - 4. We are to be mindful of them and the role which they are fulfilling in the Lord's church.
 - 5. We are to remember their leadership and the things which they have said we must do.
 - C. We remember them because they have spoken the word of God to us.
 - 1. We keep their admonitions in mind because they come from the word of God.
 - 2. We need to remember the elders because they are holding to the rock-solid foundation of the Scriptures.
 - 3. We need to remember the elders because they are trying to help us by showing us how to improve ourselves from the word of God!

- III. The congregation has a responsibility to obey the elders (Hebrews 13:17).
 - A. We are commanded to obey those who have the rule over us.
 - 1. This again is a reference to the elders.
 - 2. This is seen because those who rule over us in this passage also watch for our souls.
 - 3. Thus this cannot have reference to governmental bodies who care not for our souls.
 - B. We obey the elders because they are looking out for our own souls' best-interest.
 - 1. They are trying to get us to heaven, and we should obey them because they will help us get there!
 - 2. They are also trying to help others get to heaven, so we should obey them to give an example to others as well.
 - C. The congregation has the responsibility to obey the elders when they give directions.
 - 1. If the elders say we need to meet at a certain time, then we meet at that time.
 - 2. If the elders say we need to pray for someone, we should pray for that person.
 - 3. If the elders say you need to repent of something (an attitude, perhaps), then you need to repent!
 - 4. If the elders say that certain songs should not be lead during worship, then those songs should be left out.
 - D. We need to remember that we are the sheep, and it is the eldership that is shepherding, guiding us.
 - 1. How easy is it to obey someone that you know has a genuine concern for your well-being?
 - a. Do children find it easy to obey their parents when the parents show a genuine concern for them?
 - b. Or is it easier for them to obey when the parent acts as if they hate them?
 - 2. How easy is it to obey someone who knows what they are talking about?

- a. Imagine calling tech support for your computer and not believing that person on the other end of the line knew anything about computers.
 - 1) Would you find it easy to obey them?
 - b. However, the elders are “in the Lord,” and speaking “the word of God” to us.
 - c. They know what they are talking about, and we should find it easy to obey them, if we truly care about being right with God!
- E. As the sheep, we go where the shepherds lead us.
- IV. The congregation has a responsibility to make the elders’ job as easy as possible (Hebrews 13:17).
- A. Another of the reasons we are to obey the elders is so that they can fulfill their role in the church with joy instead of grief.
 - 1. When a parent has an obedient child, it makes life so much easier and more enjoyable.
 - 2. When the child is unruly, or will not do what he is told (sometimes even after continual correcting), it makes the parents’ lives difficult and depressing.
 - 3. The same thing is true with the eldership.
 - a. When the congregation willingly obeys the elders, it makes their job an easy one.
 - b. They will be much happier in their role as elders.
 - c. When the congregation (usually just a few members) causes problems, it can make the elders’ lives miserable.
 - d. Many elders have been so disheartened because of the reaction of the congregation that they simply quit.
 - e. Some elders have been so depressed by the actions of the congregation that they have left the church altogether.
 - B. Here is a question: as a child, is life easier for YOU when your parents are happy?
 - 1. Is life easier for you as an employee if your boss is happy?
 - 2. Is life easier for you as a Christian if the elders are happy?
 - C. When someone in leadership is dissatisfied with their role because of the people who are supposed to be under them, it is oftentimes made known through their behavior.
 - 1. An angry boss takes it out on all of his employees, often piling more and more work on them.
 - 2. An angry parent will sometimes over-punish the child, and at the least will be short-tempered towards the rest of the family.
 - 3. An angry elder will lose focus on his responsibilities to God and to the congregation.
 - 4. When members cause grief for the elders, they are endangering their own soul, but sometimes the souls of the elders in the process!
 - D. We should make it a point to make the elders’ job as easy as possible so that the whole congregation can be happier.
- V. The congregation has a responsibility to imitate the elders’ example (Hebrews 13:7).
- A. The elders should be living their lives in a way that others should follow.
 - 1. This should be true of all Christians (I John 1:7).
 - 2. But especially true of the elders, because the other Christians are to follow their example.

- B. The congregation has a responsibility to follow their example of faith.
 - 1. Elders should be those who are not novices (I Timothy 3:6), but instead mature Christians.
 - 2. All Christians should make it their goal to become more mature in Christ.
 - 3. The elders are supposed to be the example one earth for us to follow in order to get to heaven.
 - C. We are to follow their example remembering what the end (goal) of their conversation (manner of life) is (Hebrews 13:7).
 - 1. Their goal is first and foremost to get to heaven.
 - 2. If we follow their example, it should be because we want to get to heaven as well!
- VI. The congregation has a responsibility to trust the elders (I Timothy 5:19).
- A. Accusations should not be allowed to stand against the elders except with the testimony of two or three witnesses.
 - 1. Because elders are the leaders of the church and are to be esteemed, we must show trust in them.
 - 2. If someone brings an accusation against an elder, we should side with the elder.
 - a. This is because the elder has shown himself to be a man of God.
 - b. This is because his foremost priority is to get to heaven.
 - c. This is because he has lived his life as an example for others to follow.
 - 3. We should not entertain frivolous accusations against the leaders of the local congregation.
 - B. The elders look out for our souls (Hebrews 13:17), and we must trust the decisions that they make (so long as it does not go against God's word).
 - 1. If we do not trust the elders, then we will be second-guessing everything they try to do, and we will be disobeying the command to make their jobs as easy as possible.
 - 2. If the elders have shown themselves to be examples for us to follow, we should trust that their decisions are the right ones because they are holding to the truth of God's word!
- VII. The congregation has a responsibility to correct the elders (I Timothy 5:20).
- A. If it has been shown that an elder is in sin, he is to be publicly corrected.
 - 1. Elders are not exempt from sinning.
 - 2. They need to be corrected from time to time as well.
 - 3. This does not mean that any time an elder sins we have to publicly expose it, because it might just be something between him and God.
 - 4. But if an elder commits a sin which can bring reproach on the Lord and His church, that elder needs to be corrected publicly (in the congregation).
 - 5. If the elder is sinning and will not repent, he is to be publicly corrected.
 - B. Why correct him publicly?
 - 1. Look to the example of Moses when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it.
 - a. God punished him because he was the leader of the people.
 - b. If the leader can "get away" with sinning, then those following would have used that example as an excuse to sin.
 - 2. The congregation needs to know that not even the elders are exempt from correction and punishment from God.

- a. If elders are allowed to “get away” with sinning, then that is an example to the rest of the flock.
 - b. The leaders must be held to the same standard of God’s word as the rest of the Christians.
 3. The congregation needs to have fear and respect for God.
 - a. The reason why church discipline does not work as well as it should is because people have ceased to practice it.
 - b. If you as a Christian thought you would be publicly corrected for your sins, would you not think twice about sinning?
 - C. If the elders are teaching (or allowing) false doctrine, they must be held accountable.
 1. If left uncorrected, an entire congregation could lose their souls.
 2. We cannot let anyone (even elders) get away with adding to or taking away from God’s word.
 3. Many people seem to think that if the elders allow something, it must be okay.
 - a. These people have put their faith in men instead of in God’s word!
 4. If an elder is guilty of promoting or allowing false doctrine, they must be corrected publicly.
 - a. This will either end in repentance or the man being removed as an elder.
 - b. The congregation CAN NOT take this responsibility lightly.
- VIII. The congregation has the responsibility to treat the elders equally (I Timothy 5:21).
- A. We cannot act as if one of the elders is better, higher, or preferred above the others.
 1. If an elder sins, he is to be corrected publicly.
 2. It does not matter which elder it is.
 3. We cannot let our friendships come between the need to help them get to heaven.
 4. We need to remember that the goal of a Christian is to get to heaven, and we need to help other Christians get there (even the elders).
 - B. We cannot allow one elder to “get away” with something, yet hold others accountable for the same thing.
 1. If it is sin, we should treat it like sin, regardless of who it is that is sinning.
 - a. This goes also for family relationships.
 2. If the thing is not a sin, then we have no right to treat it as if it were.
 3. If we have concerns, we take it to them.
 - C. We cannot take our concerns and problems to one elder and leave out the others.
 1. The eldership is a unit.
 2. We do not have one-man rulers in the church.
 3. One elder cannot make the decisions for the congregation.
 4. All of the elders are watching out for our souls, not just one of them.

Conclusion:

1. Just as the elders have responsibilities to the local congregation, the local congregation has responsibilities to the elders.
 - a. We must recognize them and their authority.
 - b. We must remember the things they have taught us and told us to do.
 - c. We must obey them, making their job as easy as possible.
 - d. We must imitate them.

- e. We must trust them.
 - f. We must correct them when they are wrong.
 - g. We must treat them all with equal respect and accountability.
2. These are not things to be taken lightly.
 3. These are commands of God which will help us and them to get to heaven.
 4. Also, if these commands are followed, life in the church will be a whole lot easier, and the work of the Lord will be much smoother.
 - a. This is because the elders will be happy.
 - b. This is because the members will know they are making God happy.
 - c. This is because we will all know we are obeying God and that we have a home in heaven awaiting us.
 5. Do you want to go to heaven?