

## CONGREGATION'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ELDERS

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Thessalonians 5:12-13**. From Roy H. Enoch.
- B. "Elders should remember that they have a responsibility that looks in two directions. First of all, they are responsible to God; and secondly, they are responsible to the congregation. The decisions which they make should not be for selfish or personal reasons. They should make only decisions that will be to the best interest of the cause of Christ." (J. M. Powell. THE WORK OF ELDERS)
- C. "There are duties which the congregation owes to the elders. When the HS teaches elders to rule over the congregation, it at the same time, teaches the congregation to submit to the government of the elders." (H. Leo Boles)
- D. Much emphasis is given to the qualifications and responsibilities of elders:
  - 1. We properly require that those considered for elders meet the qualifications for the work they are to do.
  - 2. We need to study the work described for them that we may understand their responsibilities.
- E. But their responsibilities reflect ours, as Bro. Boles pointed out.
  - 1. The congregation is responsible for helping them with their work and to make it as easy as possible.
  - 2. Today we want to study five passages of Scripture which reflect the responsible of the congregation to the elders.

### I. **THE CONGREGATION MUST "recognize" THOSE WHO ARE "over you in the Lord" (1Th. 5:12-13).**

- A. To "recognize" (NKJ), "know" (KJV), (ASV) and "respect" (NIV), is to appreciate and highly regard them.
  - 1. Their character and reputation must be exemplar.
  - 2. Their work requires great dedication and sacrifice.
  - 3. They must expend much time and effort in the work.
  - 4. They "are over you in the Lord."
  - 5. They are to "admonish you."
  - 6. They are responsible for "warning" and "reproving."
- B. We are also to "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."
  - 1. ESTEEM
    - a. Those who have lived and conducted themselves so that the congregation entrusts its cause to their care are deserving of esteem.
    - b. The undeserving sometimes seem to feel that if they can "cut down" those deserving respect, that it will make them look better.
  - 2. This esteem is deserved: "for their work's sake."
    - a. This is far different from cowering in fear.
    - b. This is not "apple polishing" for favor.
  - 3. This esteem is not resented or diminished.
    - a. "esteem them very highly. . ."
    - b. "in love. . ." would refer to sincere appreciation.
- C. We are to respect and pray for our rulers.
  - 1. This was commanded when the Jewish leaders were described by the Lord as hypocrites.
  - 2. The Roman Governor was seeking political favor or bribe.
  - 3. The Roman emperor was Nero.
  - 4. Paul even seems to apologize for rebuking the High Priest (Ac. 23:1-5; Ex. 22:28).

### II. **"Obey those who rule over you, . . ." (Heb. 13:17).**

- A. The command to "rule" or "lead" implies the responsibility to follow or obey.

1. The "obedience" is to be "submission."
2. It is the yielding to authority from God.
- B. The reason we are to "obey" and "be submissive" is that "they watch out for your souls."
  1. "as those who must give account:" They are responsible for the welfare of the members of the congregation.
  2. Submission will make the responsibility a "joy and not grief."
  3. Rebellion or the refusal to submit is not profitable.

**III. WE ARE TO IMITATE THE ELDERS' EXAMPLES (Heb. 13:7).**

- A. We are to submit to their example as well as to their authority.
- B. The end of all godly conduct is to receive eternal blessings w/the Lord.
- C. The command to imitate is limited as Paul says (1Cor. 11:1).

**IV. Give them double honor (1Tim. 5:17-18; Deut. 25:4, Lk. 10:7).**

- A. "Honor" means respect, and is from the same word as "honorarium."
  1. Elders who preach as well as teach should receive double respect and support.
  2. They should be respected and supported in keeping with the service they perform for the church.
- B. The church should gladly support elders who devote much time to the work of the church (Gal. 6:6; 1Cor. 9:14).

**V. THE CONGREGATION SHOULD DEFEND ITS ELDERS (1Tim. 5:19-22).**

- A. The congregation should protect the reputations of its elders.
  1. Evil-minded people might be disposed to bring charges against elders who had rebuked them for their sins.
  2. Also, those who don't get their way sometimes complain.
- B. Do not accept an accusation unless there are at least two witnesses.
  1. This is a divine command.
  2. It forbids listening to an individual accuse an elder.
  3. It would therefore forbid one elder making a complaint against another w/out corroborating testimony.
- C. This special protection for the reputation of elders indicates their value to the church and the Lord's work.

**CONCLUSION.**

- A. The congregation may have as many responsibilities outlined to their elders as for the elders to the congregation.
- B. We need to study these duties, and practice them.
- C. It will help us better appreciate their work, and make them much more effective.