

Tuesday, May 24, 2016 – “As Those Who Will Give Account“

The elders at the congregation we attend announced last week that we would be studying the qualifications of elders as we begin the selection process. This is good and this is right.

What I hope is that Christians would also take the time to study and understand what our responsibilities, as members of individual congregations, are to elders as they lead the flock. Hebrews 13:17 weighs heavy on the hearts of men who currently serve or consider serving in this role when the writer states, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Men, who meet the God given qualifications to become an elder and accept that responsibility, do so knowing that the souls under their leadership come with various levels of spiritual knowledge and maturity. When elders make decisions, they are not acting for their own personal benefit. They make decisions to benefit the members of the church. They are trying to get as many as they can to heaven. They do this by ensuring NOTHING but the sound doctrine of Christ is taught to those souls they lovingly lead. How do we, as recipients of this glorious message, receive the Word? James answer this for us in James 1:21-2 when he says, **“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”** It is only the "implanted" Word that can truly save our souls. Therefore we must be sure to take the words out of the pages and implant them into our hearts!

The Greek word for "submissive" is *hupеiko*, which means to yield, to listen to, or be persuaded by. As many elders will admit, it is hard to lead when others refuse to follow. "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3). In addition to hearing The Word, we look to the examples of these men whose authority to lead us comes from our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Knowing the heavy responsibility they carry, we need to esteem them highly in love (1 Thes.5:12-13), pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-2), and lift them up by encouraging them as they fight against all those things Satan will attempt to utilize to discredit the Lord's church.

In addition, please consider these other items which should be a part of our lives so that they can give account of us, "...with joy, and not with grief..."

1. **Hold the faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:19).**

- 1.1. The Christian must trust God implicitly, looking to him for help under all circumstances.
- 1.2. He is to seek to know what is right, then do what he believes to be right. Otherwise, he may be condemned by Jehovah (**1 John 3:20**).
2. **Be diligent in preparation (1 Tim. 4:13-15).**
 - 2.1. The Christian is obligated to study the whole Bible.
 - 2.2. We are to give all diligence that we may stand approved of God (**2 Tim. 2:15**). Paul instructs that he give himself wholly to his study and work. He should be as well informed as possible in all things.
 - 2.3. Attend bible classes, attend all meetings of the saints.
3. **Take heed to ourselves concerning our life and teaching (1 Tim. 4:16).**
 - 3.1. Christians are prone to seek to correct the faults of others, the church and the community.
 - 3.2. We should never forget to turn the searchlight inwardly, lest after we have taught others we find ourselves lost (**2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 9:27**).
4. **Keep ourselves pure (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:22).**
 - 4.1. Be free from hasty and unjust actions. Exercise sound judgment.
 - 4.2. Do not allow self to be used in unethical schemes.
 - 4.3. Avoid youthful lusts.
 - 4.4. Avoid questionable places and conduct. Not only should we avoid evil, but also hate evil (**1 Thess. 5:21-22; Rom. 12:9**).
5. **Follow after righteousness (1 Tim. 6:11-12).**
 - 5.1. This command is in connection with the warning against love for money.
 - 5.2. Covetousness is idolatry (**Eph. 5:5**). The mercenary Christian cannot please God.
 - 5.3. In order to be righteous -- a condition acceptable to God -- one must flee covetousness.
6. **Hold the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 2:7-8).**
 - 6.1. Greatest care should be exercised in stating truth in the language of inspired writers.
 - 6.2. The teaching of Christ as given by the Holy Spirit must be upheld (**John 16:13-15**).
 - 6.3. The truth should be positively unmixed with the philosophies of men.
 - 6.4. Christians must seek to please God (**Rom. 15:3**), not seek the applause of men (**Matt. 6:1-6**).
 - 6.5. Put aside things written by Lucado, Graham, Shelly and turn to the Holy Spirit inspired writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and others.
7. **Suffer hardships (2 Tim. 4:4).**
 - 7.1. Christians should not be exalted in mind over their accomplishments. Compare them with the sufferings and hardships of Paul.
 - 7.2. He must bear persecutions that come because of preaching the truth (**2 Cor. 11:21-28**).
8. **Bring to remembrance the ways of Paul (1 Cor. 4:17).**
 - 8.1. He followed Christ (**1 Cor. 11:1**)
 - 8.2. Sought no personal glory (**1 Cor. 2:1-5**)
 - 8.3. Was honest (**Acts 23:1**)

8.4. Declared the whole counsel of God (**Acts 20:20,27**)

8.5. Gave himself wholly (**2 Cor. 11:23-31**).

Heed the words of Eph. 4:31-32 - Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

The church needs member-backed leadership and leader-backed membership. The elders face a difficult task. The stakes are high, the responsibility is grave, and sometimes decisions are made that are hard. However, the members should realize that good elders are there for a purpose -- a purpose designed in the mind of God. Absolute submission to the leadership of the church, by the membership, as dedicated men who are submissive to the Lord's will, is to honor God and glorify his name on earth.

A church composed of this loving attitude cannot be shaken by outside pressure, foes, or opposition.