

IF I HAD BUT ONE SERMON TO PREACH TO ELDERS
Hebrews 13:17

Introduction:

1. There are many offices which carry great responsibility:
 - a. The President of the nation.
 - b. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
 - c. The Governor of the state.
 - d. The C.E.O. of great multi-national corporations.

2. The office which has the greatest responsibility of all is that of elders.
 - a. Elders deal with the most precious of all commodities - the eternal souls of men, women and children.
 - b. They deal with the most crucial message - the Gospel of Christ.
 - c. Their efforts transcend this earth and continue into eternity.

3. If had but one sermon to preach to elders, here is what I would say.

Discussion:

I. ELDERS HAVE A GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY.

- A. They “watch out for your souls as they those who must give account” (Heb. 13:17).
 1. I told an elder this verse “scared me to death.” He said with a shrug, “I try not to let it bother me.”
 2. One soul is worth more than the whole word (Matt. 16:26).
 3. Jesus told of a shepherd who left ninety-nine safe to seek one who was lost (Luke 15:4-7).

- B. H. E. Phillips wrote: “To think of having to give an account of all the souls in the congregation over which he rules is the most serious thought one could have. No greater charge has ever been given to any man. What a tremendous responsibility! Little wonder that God wanted the strongest men in the church to be the overseers of His flock” (Scriptural Elders and Deacons, p. 211).

II. ELDERS ARE THE SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK.

- A. David spoke of God as his shepherd (Psa. 23).

- B. Our Lord spoke of Himself as “the Good Shepherd” (John 10).

1. His sheep follow Him for they know His voice (4,5).
2. He gives His life for His sheep (11).
3. He does not flee when danger comes (12,13).

C. Elders as shepherds have special obligations to the flock:

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 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 Pet. 5:1-3).

D. Many elderships are little more than a board of directors.

1. Their chief concerns are the building and grounds.
2. They spend little time on the spiritual problems of the church.

III. ELDERS MUST STUDY.

A. An elder must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2).

1. According to Vine’s, the Greek means “skilled in teaching.”
2. One cannot teach what he has not learned.

B. An elder must be able to correct those who teach falsely.

“...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (Tit. 1:9).

C. Elders must spend time in daily Bible study.

1. They need a good Biblical library.
2. They need to read Christian publications.
3. They need to attend lectureships and Gospel Meetings.

IV. ELDERS MUST UNDERSTAND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

A. The mission of the church is not:

1. To have big numbers at any cost.
2. To entertain the members and keep them happy.
3. To build fine buildings.
4. To build big bank accounts and invest the Lord’s money.

B. The mission of the church is:

- 1. To preach the Gospel to the world (Mark 16:15; 1 Tim. 3:14,15).**
- 2. To care for widows, orphans and the needy (Gal. 6:10; Jam. 1:27).**
- 3. To teach and build up the members (Matt. 28:20).**

V. ELDERS MUST TAKE THE LEAD IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

A. Discipline is “The Forgotten Commandment.”

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6).

B. Because discipline is not done, many churches are weak and dying.

C. The design of discipline is to save the soul of the saint who has sinned.

“...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5).

Conclusion:

- 1. James D. Cox wrote: “Too much of the time the preacher is spending his hours doing mostly what the elders are supposed to be doing - visiting, counseling, overseeing and shepherding the flock. The elders are spending their time doing the deacons’ work - unlocking the building, cleaning the baptistry, fertilizing the lawn, etc. and the deacons are on the outside looking in, wondering what is going on” (James D. Cox, With the Bishops and Deacons, pp. 15,16).**
- 2. Elders must remember they “watch for souls as those who must give account” (Heb. 13:17).**
 - a. Many will be in Heaven because of the diligence of good elders.**
 - b. Some will be lost because elders were derelict in their duty.**
- 3. A precious promise is given to faithful elders:**

“...when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 5:4).
- 4. One becomes a member of the Lord’s flock by obedience to the Gospel.**

