

# Elders

Acts 20:17-27

Introduction: Paul had some parting words for the Elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:28-32). It was a sad occasion for which Paul's concerns turned to the well being of the church. He wanted to make sure that the men appointed to the task were prepared for that which was before them and the church. We get the impression that the work of the elders is extremely important and that they have some big responsibilities.

## I. The positions of the Elders.

A. God arranged for each congregation to have Elders (plural).

B. Elders become such based on the qualifications set forth in scriptures by the Holy Ghost (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Elders have some extremely important responsibilities.

C. The Elders become such by appointment (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The Greek word for appoint ("kathistemi") does not prohibit the church from selecting the Elders (Acts 6:3). Elders are traditionally selected by the flock.

D. There are several names for this same office: Bishop (Overseer), Elder, and Pastor (Shepherd). These terms are interchangeable (Acts 20:17-28; Titus 1:5-7).

E. Pastors are not Preachers (Eph. 4:11-12).

## II. The duties of the Elders.

A. Eldership is not an honorary position but a work (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9).

B. The Elders work is to oversee.

1. Pastor (Eph 4:11) defined by Vines as "a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them)."

2. Overseer (1 Pet. 5:2) is one who "exercises the oversight" [Vines]. "It is not a matter of assuming a position, but of the discharge of the duties."

C. Elders have authority to rule.

1. Obey them and be submissive (Heb. 13:17). Why? They are accountable for how they oversee because they look out for our souls. Further, don't make them regret it, because this is not profitable to us! Rule here means (according to Vines) "to lead." They "are the guides."

2. However, Elders have no legislative authority (2 John 9).

3. One of the qualifications for an Elder is one who rules his family well because he is going to rule those in his care.

a. Vines says rule in 1 Tim. 3:4-5 means “to lead, attend to (indicating care and diligence).”

b. A father does not rule his own house well only by teaching and being a good example. Fathers make decisions that affect the family. They have a responsibility to bring order to the family (Eph. 6:4).

c. In other words, Elders are expected to make decisions for and bring order to the local church.

### III. How do Elders rule and oversee?

A. They encourage the weak and fallen (Gal. 6:1).

B. They consider problems and act in the interest of the church (Acts 15:5-6).

C. They take the lead in disciplining members (2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 Cor. 5:11; Titus 3:10-11).

D. They stop error from being taught (Titus 1:10-11).

E. They teach the truth (2 Tim. 4:2).

F. They make decisions (John 7:24).

G. By definition, they lead and attend to the needs of the flock of members for which they are appointed.

Conclusion: Elders deserve our respect (1 Thess. 5:12-13). Unfortunately, we are without the benefits of an Eldership. Therefore, we must look forward to a day when they will be appointed in this congregation.