

The Responsibilities Of Elders

By Ron Boatwright

The duties and responsibilities of elders are awesome and very serious. An elder has a greater responsibility than even the president of the United States. The president is responsible for the physical welfare of people, but an elder is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the eternal souls entrusted to him. Whether a person spends eternity in Heaven or in the burning fires of a real Hell can depend on what an elder has done or failed to do.

Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I am innocent of the blood of all men". Why Paul, why? "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). As overseers of "God's heritage" (1 Peter 5:3), elders must see that "the whole counsel of God" is taught or they will be held accountable. In many congregations the whole counsel of God is not being taught which is going to cause many to be lost.

Paul in exhorting the Ephesian elders to be diligent in their duties says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to **all** the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to **feed** the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Elders are to take heed to their own lives and to the lives of the entire congregation, to make sure they are living a godly life. No one is to be ignored or overlooked. Elders in spiritually feeding the congregation are to see that they are being properly taught the "whole counsel of God" to prepare them for eternity so that none will be lost. But this is one of the problems facing the Lord's church today. Many elders have failed in their responsibility of seeing that the church is being properly taught the word of God. Many congregations are only being fed "fluff", and have "turned to fables" (2 Timothy 4:4). They are teaching only what is "politically correct". What is being taught and preached in some congregations would be acceptable in any denomination. Much of the teaching is feel good stories for the purpose of entertaining the congregation. This is the reason we are in the present apostasy today. God says, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

Elders are watchmen. In Hebrews 13:17 we read concerning elders, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit, for they **watch** for your souls, as they **must** give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Elders have the grave responsibility to be on guard and to watch out for the souls of everyone in their

congregation. When elders stand before the Lord on Judgment Day, they **will** give an account for what they has done or failed to do in protecting the souls of those under their oversight. For some elders this will be a joyful occasion, with the Lord saying, "Well done good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). But for other elders it will be a time of horrible grief when the Lord says to them, "You wicked and lazy servant", and then He will say, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:26, 30).

Notice that elders are to "watch out for your souls" (Hebrews 13:17). This is the responsibility that God has place on them. Elders are watchmen just as God told Ezekiel that he was a watchman, and what would happen to him if he didn't properly perform his duty. God said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house if Israel, therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, you shall surely die, and you give him no warning, or speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand" (Ezekiel 3:17). Elders today as watchmen have the same grave responsibility, which is not to be taken lightly. If elders fail in their duty to watch and warn those under their oversight, then God will require the blood of those who are lost at the hands of the elders. The Judgment will be a sad day for elders who have been derelict in their duty as watchmen. But for those who have faithfully fed, watched, and warned, it will be a glorious and wonderful day (1 Peter 5:4).