



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – February 15, 2015

## ***Heart to Heart...***

What do you know about the *elders* in a congregation? What is their purpose? If you were converted to Jesus from a denominational background, you might not understand who these men are and their importance in Christ's church. They are the *shepherds* and *overseers* of the church of the Lord. At times the *eldership* has been treated as a political office or a board of directors or advisors. In some places *elderships* 'lord' things over the people and do not shepherd. That's not what God calls these men to do. I can remember in years gone by that I was advised: "*Beware of any man 'running' for the office of an elder in the church!*" The *elders*, *shepherds* and *overseers* are all one and the same but they are men who are servants of God, raised up by the Lord with the working of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) to watch out for Christ's blood bought church! Somewhere we need to accept that the Holy Spirit is involved in raising up these men. The Holy Spirit does reside in the body of Christ, His church (I Corinthians 3:16-17)!

*Elders* are older men with maturity and experience but not just any older man. They are older spiritually minded and godly men. They are *shepherds*. That's their work. They are *overseers* of God's people. That's their function. Each term used to describe these men is emphasizing God's purpose within the church. They are also *pastors*. That term is used only one time in Scripture (Ephesians 4:11). It is the same Greek word '*poimen*' that is used for *shepherds*. It is a term that is abused by the religious world.

As *shepherds*, they are to tend to the needs of the flock. They look-out for the well-being of the flock (Acts 20:28-32). As *pastors* they tend and feed the flock of God. As *overseers* they make certain things function as God wants them to function. They follow the Great Shepherd and make certain all things are done according to His way and His will (I Peter 5:1-4).

First and foremost they are spiritual men! They aren't perfect men but they are spiritually mature and allow their work to be guided by the Lord and His Scripture, not the will and wants of people. People within Christ's body can make things difficult! The church isn't a democracy and run by popular demand. Christ is the head and we, the church are attached to Him and these men are appointed as they meet the criteria the apostle Paul calls for in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Christ's interests are what they seek and point His body toward. They need to be above reproach as faithful, spiritual men.

*Shepherds, elders, pastors and overseers* are all referring to the same role in the Lord's body, the church. Each name shows their walk and their work. Take some time and read the following to get a better insight on who our elders are and expected to be in their God-given roles: Ephesians 4:11-13; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4.

What does God expect from the rest of us toward these men? Be subject to them! (I Peter 5:5/ Hebrews 13:17). Anytime you want to '*oversee*' them and their work, you have just taken on something that the Lord did not call you to do. That is not subjection but insubordination! Pray for our *shepherds* as they guide us down the spiritual path. Encourage them as the weight of this congregation rests upon their

shoulders that the Lord will lead them to the spiritual betterment of all. Speak with the *pastors* about your concerns so they get a better understanding of the needs. Appreciate the *overseers* as they will give an account to the Lord Himself for their direction of this body of Christ and your souls. Pray for other spiritual men in our congregation, that God might raise them up before us that we may see them as becoming one of our *elders*. May God help us and shine His grace upon this body of Christ as we seek His will above our own. Think about it!!!

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