

OVERSEERS

Sunday Morning: August 11, 2002

Text: Hebrews 13:7, 17 "Remember them which **have the rule over you**, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

Verse 17. "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."

This message is a message that covers my responsibility to you, the flock of God. As the flock of God you are the ones that have been purchased by His blood. I am a shepherd and a under shepherd. My desire it to follow the Great Shepherd the Lord Jesus Christ. What I am doing this morning is helping you appreciate where I am coming from on Sunday morning in the ministry of the Word of God to you. My desire is for the flock to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ at his judgment seat approved. I want you to be rewarded for the labor you have done during your pilgrimage here on the earth. I want you to hear well down thou good and faithful servant and enter into the joy of the Lord. We believe that it does make a difference how you live. If you haven't down well, do think God is going to lie to you or me in saying well down you slothful and wicked servant. No. So I am here not only to encourage myself in the Word but I am here to encourage you to be profitable, to be fruitful, to be faithful to the Lord so you can here that "well down thou good and faithful servant." It does make a difference how you live.

Paul was very aware of the fact that he needed to be faithful lest he be a castaway. 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27. But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Paul was not fearful of losing his salvation but he was fearful of being disapproved.

GIFTS GIVEN BY THE LORD

Ephesians 4:11-14 "And he gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors and teachers**;

12. For the **perfecting** of the **saints**, for the **work of the ministry**, for the **edifying of the body** of Christ:

I am not an apostle or a prophet. I do evangelism when the opportunity present it, but I do not have the gift of evangelism. I am a pastor teacher. I am here to feed the flock. To take the flock from one pasture, in the scriptures, to another. My job is to perfect or complete the saints. For what reason? "For the work of the ministry." Today's concept of hiring a pastor is to him the job of doing the work of the ministry that the saints have been commissioned to do.

13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

As a pastor teacher I want to lead us together that we may live together for the single purpose of pleasing God by faith. We need a deeper understanding of the Son of God who was a perfect man, that we may be have in the same manor as the Lord. We need to mature to the measure of the stature of Christ. We need to become Christ like in our lifestyle.

14. That we henceforth be **no more** children, **tossed** to and fro, and **carried** about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"

Today many in the church do not know why they believe what they say that they believe. The reason for that is the lack of teaching of the Scripture in the churches in these last days. The emphasis today is more on the activities and programs which do not provide the stability found in doctrine. The emphasis here at Grace Bible Church is on doctrine or teaching of the Word of God that we be not tossed to and fro and carried about by the sleight of men.

Notice the word "wind." Who is the prince of the power of the air? Satan. It is Satan that causes every wind of doctrine to lead astray those who are not grounded in the Scriptures.

PRAYER AND THE WORD

Acts 6:4 "But we will give ourselves continually to **prayer**, and to the **ministry of the word**."

This passage in Acts 6:4 provides the informed church the responsibility of the pastor teacher. Prayer and the ministry of the Word. Praying is something that I believe in very much. I have a prayer list with names, burdens, that I do not want to forget. I do want to depend on my memory to bring these on my list to mind. I know that the Lord can bring them to mind, but I have a list to ensure that I call out the names and burdens on that list. As I call out the names of those on my prayer list, I am asking the Lord that we might all stand perfect and complete in the will of God.

The apostles prayed continually for the flock. They prayed for leadership as to where and when they should go. As they went they then ministered the Word. They taught the Word so that it could be understood and applied. It takes a lot of preparation time to be able to minister the Word. It is line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little there a little.

The ministry of the word includes the ministry of the milk of the word as well as meat of the word. I have used this illustration before but it gives us some insight into what it takes to prepare for the ministry of the Word.

According to Isaiah 7:15 "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." the Lord eat butter and honey that he might refuse the evil and chose the good. Proverbs 30:33 "Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter . . ." My grandmother churned cream to get the butter and not milk. To churn milk to make butter would take her too long. The meat of the Word is in the milk of the word and it takes a long time to get the butter that those who are of full age need to make good decisions in the walk with the Lord. Hebrews 5:14 "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

ELDERS OF THE CHURCH

Acts 20:17 "And from Miletus he sent to **Ephesus**, and called the **elders** of the church."

Paul called the elders of the church of Ephesus. Elders were among the gifts given by the Lord to the church. Paul called the Elders from the church at Ephesus.

In Acts 20:28 an elder is further defined as bishops or overseers.

ELDERS ARE OVERSEERS

Acts 20:28 "**Take heed** therefore unto **yourselves**, and to **all the flock**, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers** [bishop], to **feed the church** of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Do you see the challenge given to the elders, overseers, bishops the leaders of the church. He said to them "To feed the church of God." You first of all take heed to yourself. You work on your own life and spiritual growth by feeding on the Word. Feed yourselves first then feed the flock.

Next we are encouraged to know our elders. One of the things about coming to a body of be-

lievers is to know those who have been given the responsibility to encourage you in the things of the Lord.

As a pastor teacher I am not the boss. I am not calling any shots in your life. That is not my responsibility. I am a leader. I am a persuader. I am a teacher and I will try to encourage you to do the right thing.

You need to know your elders.

Before I became the pastor of Grace Bible Church I held three or four Bible conferences in this church. In the meeting that were held each evening, the Word of God was taught. After the service many of the men and their wives would gather at the pastors house so that I could continue to teach them. I taught them how to study the Word for themselves. We would be up to twelve one o'clock in the morning. Those were great times and the benefit of those sessions continue to this day. After the first Bible conference, some of the men took vacation time so that they could spend more time learning the Word and how to study. It was through these times that this church began to know me and my burden, so that when you called me to become your teaching elder, you knew me.

KNOW YOUR ELDERS

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 "And we beseech you, brethren, to **know them** which **labour** among you, and are **over** [stand before you, preside] you **in the Lord**, and **admonish** you;

The labor in this verse is to minister the word and to pray. The word "over" carries the meaning to stand before, to preside, to be the example and not to lord over the flock.

13. And to **esteem** them **very highly** in love for their work's sake. And **be at peace** among yourselves."

When the flock esteems the elder highly because of their work and for the sake of their work it should encourage peace in the assembly.

DOUBLE HONOR

1 Timothy 5:17 "Let the elders that **rule well** be counted worthy of **double honour**, especially they who **labour in the word and doctrine**."

If you can't respect and respond positively to the elders of a church you need to find a place to worship and serve where you can. I realize that and I know that I can not please everyone and no elder has been able to do that. Even Paul and Barnabas had their differences and had a parting of the way. Even in their differences the work of God was furthered.

Again, you need to know your elders and respect them and to submit yourself to them in the Lord. Those who labor in the word and doctrine are especially to be given double honor.

APPOINT ELDERS

Titus 1:5-9 "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain** [appoint] **elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee:

In this country we are living in a democratic society where we vote to place people in office, and there is nothing wrong with that. That is probably the lowest form of government. We see that in Jeremiah 10:23 "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." The image, representing world powers, that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream had a head of gold. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold and he was the supreme potentate of Babylon. The problem with his government was Nebuchadnezzar was a man. When Jesus Christ reigns as the only potentate it will be a perfect government. The point of all this is to say that when it comes to elders they were not voted on in the early church, they were

appointed. Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in every city where there was a body of believers meeting.

Often times voting is based upon popularity and not on need of the flock. It is not as if the Lord can overrule in such circumstances, because he does and has done so.

Qualifications for an elder were provided for Titus, as well as for the church today.

QUALIFICATIONS

6. If any be **blameless**, the **husband of one wife**, having **faithful children** not accused of riot or unruly.
7. For a **bishop** (elder) must be **blameless**, as the **steward** of God; **not** self willed (does not have to have his way all of the time, flexible), **not** soon angry, **not** given to wine (does not use drink to relieve stress), **no** striker (not one who settles issues with a fight), **not** given to filthy lucre (not seeking a position for gain);
8. But a lover of **hospitality**, a lover of good men, **sober, just, holy, temperate**;
9. **Holding fast the faithful word** as he hath been **taught**, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to **exhort** and to **convince** the gainsayers."

These are the qualification for an elder. These men are not perfect, but his problems to not hinder him from ministering to the flock.

BISHOP

1 Timothy 3:1-7 "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a **bishop**, he desireth a **good work**.

As an elder or bishop I take courage that what I am doing is a good work. I am glad that it is and is not a waste of time. The preaching and teaching of the Word is not vain, Jesus Christ is risen.

QUALIFICATIONS

2. A bishop then must be **blameless**, the husband of **one wife**, **vigilant, sober**, of good **behaviour**, given to **hospitality**, apt to **teach**;

In many of today's churches they are changing the qualification for an elder or bishop. They are putting women in the place where a man should be. A woman can not be the husband of one wife. A bishop is one who is going to be vigilant. One who is vigilant is observing and aware, being sensitive to the flock.

3. **Not** given to wine, **no** striker, **not** greedy of filthy lucre; but **patient, not** a brawler, **not** covetous;
4. One that **ruleth well** his own house, having his **children in subjection** with all gravity;
5. (**For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?**)

The phrase "take care of" give us some insight as what is meant to be an overseer. As a husband cares for his wife and children so does an elder take of the church when it comes to spiritual matters.

6. **Not** a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.
7. Moreover he must have a **good report** of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

The devil is always going to appose the teaching of the Word. He is going to use any chink in the armour of a pastor to bring him down so that the ministry of the Word will come to an end.

CHALLENGE TO ELDERS

1 Peter 5:1-4 "The **elders** which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Peter is testifying that he had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as well as what happen on the mount where Christ was transfigured before him as well as James and John. He is saying is that he saw the glory of the kingdom of the heavens. He is telling the elders that I have seen the glory of the kingdom and am looking forward to that glory and you, as elders, can look forward to that glory as well.

WILLINGLY LEAD

2. **Feed** the flock of God which is among you, taking the **oversight** thereof, not by constraint, but **willingly**; not for filthy lucre, but of a **ready mind**;

The exhortation to the elders is to feed the church of God. Peter continues by saying, do not be forced into the ministry of an Elder. Do not let the lure of money draw you to the work. To have a ready mind is to know what is to be expected of an elder and be prepared to take that challenge.

EXAMPLES

3. Neither as being **lords** over God's heritage, but being **ensamples** to the flock. 4. And when the **chief Shepherd** shall appear, **ye shall receive a crown of glory** that fadeth not away."

Some have said that there is one crown with many adjectives like that of glory. There is the incorruptible crown, crown of righteousness, crown of rejoicing, crown of life, and in Revelation 3:11 "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" we told to hold on to our crown, singular in number.

Crowns represent positions of honor and glory in the realm of a kingdom. The kingdom will be the kingdom of the heavens where Christ will be the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

REMEMBER

Hebrews 13:7 "**Remember** [present active imperative, be mindful, consider] **them** which have the **rule** [present middle participle, lead, govern, chief, esteem, count] ~~over you~~, who have spoken unto you the **word of God**: whose **faith follow** [present active imperative, imitate], **considering** [present active] the **end** [result] of their **conversation** [conduct]."

Going back to Hebrews 13:7 I want us to look at words and their significance concerning the elder or those who help to govern in the body of believers.

The first word in this verse is a command to continually remember those who lead you. This is not a suggestion but a command and present tense indicates that it is to be on going. Remembering them it to pray for them. It is your responsibility to pray for me as it is my responsibility to pray for you. When you are praying for me, you need to ask the Lord to give me what you need so that you can grow spiritually and make changes in you life that will please God.

Remembering them is to make sure they have what they need for themselves and their families. If a man of God is ministering to you the Word is your responsibility to minister to his physical needs. Galatians 6:6 "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." The word communicate does not mean discuss with you teacher what he is teaching but to be helping with his physical needs.

The word "rule" is also in the present tense. This word is translated differently in other passages and carries the thought of "leading, governing," as well as other ways.

The words *over your* is an addition by the translators and they do not come from the Greek text.

The elder is to be an example of one who pleases God. Hebrews encourages *following* or *imitating* the elder that is leading you. Is your elder walking by faith pleasing God or is he pleasing himself lording over the flock.

Considering the elder end it to observe the way that he may handle success or adversity. Is His lifestyle a satisfying lifestyle or is there a continual struggle. The later part of this verse is a challenge to me to practice what I teach.

WORD OF GOD

Luke 8:10-11 "And he said, Unto you it is given to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of God**: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. 11. Now the parable (of the sower) is this: The **seed** is the **word of God**."

In verse seven reference is made to the Word of God. From this passage in Luke 8 we see that the Word of God is doctrine concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of God or heaven from Matthew 13. A qualified elder will be teaching the kingdom message and it's blessing to the faithful.

OBEY

Hebrews 13:17 "**Obey** [present imperative, **be persuaded**] **them** that have the **rule** [present middle participle, lead, govern, chief, esteem, count] over you, and **submit** [present imperative] yourselves: for they **watch** [present active, sleepless] 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**."

As an elder they are to be teachers of the Word of God. The word *obey* here in verse 13 is not what it looks like. It carries the idea of being persuaded by those who lead you. To be persuaded is not to believe what they say because they said it; but because of further study of what they said you are convinced that it is true. The challenge to the church is to be like those at Berea that searched the scriptures daily to see if the things that Paul taught them made sense and agreed with the Old Testament scriptures. Do not believe what a man tells you about the Word of God, but believe what he tells you because you can confirm it from the Word of God.

The words *obey*, *rule*, *submit*, *watch* all in the present tense which means continuous action. The challenge to you is the submitting to the doctrine. Does what we learn change our hearts and lives, not just our minds?

The word *soul* is a reference to ones life. I believe this can be applied not only in this present age but to the one that is coming. The millennial age. The word *watch* is in the present tense and it can be translated *not sleeping*. The watching for the souls of the flock would include prayer as well as study of the Word.

Elders must give an account of what they did for those under his ministry. Did they present the truth of the hope of glory. Did they warn of the judgment of the unfaithful. The elder is a watchman as in Ezekiel 33:6 "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

As a watchman, I do not want your blood on my hands. That is why it is so important to be truthful and straight forward in presenting the Word of God. It is profitable for me to do that with joy and not with grief. That comes with support from the flock in doing the easy things as well as the difficult things required by the ministry.

PRINCIPAL OF SUBMISSION

1 John 4:20 ". . . for he that loveth not his brother whom he **hath seen**, **how can he** love God whom he hath **not seen**?"

In applying this verse to submission I want to draw on the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a teacher and the Great Shepherd. You can not see the Lord today, but you can see me. If you can not respond with submission to the under shepherd how can you respond to the Great shepherd who you can not see. If you submit to the shepherd that the Lord has put over the flock it will be easier for you to submit to the Lord whom you can not see.

As a pastor I am your servant. Because you are servant that makes me a servant of servants. This can only happen in the body of Christ where we can chose to be servants of servants. I do enjoy serving and encourage to you and you are not a grief to me.