

Church of Christ

... Heart to Heart ...

Over the last few weeks we have looked at these men called *elders*. *Elders* are *overseers*. They have oversight of the church. They are called to feed and tend as they *shepherd* God's flock. They are not a board of directors but spiritual men, who care about the Lord and His people. They make sure the church is sound spiritually. They aren't lords, but examples to the flock (I Pet. 5). They are not to be selected because they are financial advisors or good businessmen. They are spiritual, godly men whose lives are given to the Lord. Their role is very important and needed in the Lord's church. The church Jesus built and died for never had conventions, synods, hierarchies or associations. Each congregation was autonomous, with Jesus as the head.

The church has an obligation to God in regard to their *elders*. We must submit and obey (Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:5). **God put no one to oversee the overseers!** That's the Lord's responsibility. Some brethren have the idea that a *shepherd* has terms in the position, much like terms of office in our government. Where did we come up with such ideas? There is no Scriptural basis for this thinking. Paul reminded the *elders* from Ephesus to "***be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit made you overseers.***" (Acts 20:28) The *overseers* are to be on guard not only for the Lord's flock, but also for themselves! Spiritual men care about the spiritual well being of God's congregation. If one of the *elders* is being sinful, they need to take care of him, even if it means to expel him from being a *shepherd*. That's the role of godly *elders*.

Serving as an *elder* is sometimes a thankless task. We are to appreciate and esteem highly those who labor among us and have charge over us (I Thes. 5:12-13). *Elders* sometimes receive harsh and unjust criticism. **Members who do such will be held accountable by God.** We need to uphold them, not undermine them. I have sat with them many times, praying with them, watching them face difficult and frightening situations. They agonize, pray and seek out wise counsel, as they study from God's word, seeking His direction. Decisions are made, that sometimes won't be favored by some, and others will try to undermine, but are needed for the spiritual well being of the whole congregation. They deserve our love, prayers, understanding, patience and support. They love God and His church. They do everything trying to help us, not hurt us!!

Listen as they inform us. Follow with good attitudes as they lead us and we should always be thankful for godly *elders* who help us grow and give us work for the Lord's kingdom and cause.

On a final note, we must each protect our *overseers* from petty nitpickers that try to undermine behind the scenes. This is most ungodly! Let's pray God will continue to raise up more men among us to *shepherd* His church. Encourage your *elders*! They need it from us. Think about it!!!