

A Quarterly Religious Journal

(Presented by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

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Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

Feature One: Editorial

How Should An Eldership Rule?

Having now served as an elder for several years I have contemplated this topic more than once. I have known many elderships in the past and I have seen many different styles of leadership. What does God expect of the eldership, and what does God expect of the congregation? In this quarter's editorial I would like to examine the first part of this topic. What does God expect of the eldership?

First, we need to keep in mind that the instructions the Lord has left for us are different from what society might dictate. Sometimes it is hard for us to step out of our national society and see the picture of what God commands of us. What does he want in His society? The first passage I would like to explore is John 13:9.

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples 'feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Jesus was the “master” and this was the work of a servant. In the Jewish society what he did was unthinkable. As the story continues, Peter at first refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus let Peter know that to belong to Him, he must allow it. But Jesus was doing much more than washing His disciples' feet. He was teaching them something of what he wanted for His society.

Matthew 20:27 *And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

We need to keep in mind that Jesus is our “chief shepherd” (1Peter 5:4) or we might say our “chief elder”. It is He that lays down the rules that govern our society. He tells us that we should love, honor, and respect the poor. In Luke 21:2 he used a poor lady to teach us the importance of sacrificial giving. In James we see a strong lesson about how we should treat those that have less than do we.

James 2:1-9 *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*

The society in which we live most definitely shows respect to wealth and power. Our Lord, however, gives us different instructions. As elders we must be sure we treat all others with the love and respect that the Lord instructs. We must become “chief servants” if we are to please our Master.

Understanding this lays the groundwork for the manner in which an

eldership must lead the congregation. 1 Peter 5:3 makes this clear.

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

We are to lead by being an example just as Christ taught his disciples not only by what he said, but also by what he did. Jesus loved his disciples and we must love the brethren. (1 John 3:14). That does not mean that we are not to teach what the Lord has instructed us. We must. As shepherds we are to “feed the flock” over which the Lord has given for us to lead.

When we speak of “loving the brethren” we must turn to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 to see what this means. I am using the American Standard Version because it uses the word “love” rather than “charity”.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; 6 rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; 7 beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Love never faileth:

This must be the attitude elderships must have toward the members of the Lord's body that they are leading.

There is also a reason that our Lord chose “older” men for this task. Age does bring experience. Older men have also lived their lives before the congregation for a number of years. That is why in selecting elders we are told that an elder should not be a “novice” or “newcomer” to Christianity. The members need to be sure men are being appointed that they will trust to lead them as would Christ. It was in 2 Kings 12:6 where Rehoboam asked the older advisors how he should govern. They answered with the wisdom

that comes from age and told him "..., saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men...." (verses 7 and 8). If you notice, they were actually giving Rehoboam the same advise and counsel that Jesus asks of us. We are to be servants of the congregation where we serve.

Anytime our Lord has issued commands to be followed, the elders must follow those commands. Often, however, elders must lead the congregation in such a way as to keep the congregation safe. Sometimes, in those cases, elders must make decisions based on what they believe to be safe. For example, if a family happened to find a rattlesnake in the yard and a child was about to go pick it up, what should a parent do? It may not be against the law for the child to try to pick up the snake, but it certainly would not be wise. Every parent that I have known would stop the child. Elders that allow uncertain practices into the worship or work of the church are like parents that do not protect the people within the congregation.

This leads me to our topic for next quarter, "To What Extent Should Members of the Church Follow the Eldership?"

Feature Two: an article by R. C. Oliver

Note: This was taken from the script of a radio sermon delivered by R. C. Oliver.

A Study of Mark 16:15-20

Mark 16:15-20 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall

17 They shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. 19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Notice the reading of verse 17. "And these signs shall follow them that believe." The word shall, as used here, means futurity plus the determination of the speaker. So this is not something that might happen, or it is not something that may happen, but, Jesus said, it is something that shall happen, No question about it. "And these signs shall following them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover, So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." Now, is that not the way your Bible reads, friends? Now, in view of what we have written here, why did those two men die who drank strychnine no doubt intending by this to demonstrate the validity of this passage of scripture?

This text does affirm that these signs shall follow them that believe. And who can deny that these men believed, for they laid down their lives in order to show their faith. How could one believe more than this. Certainly, no one can deny that these men believed. Now, what was to happen to those who believed, according to this passage? The passage says that these signs shall follow them that believe. They shall cast out

devils. They shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents. And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. And they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. Now, that is what the text says. And when two preachers in East Tennessee drank deadly poison thinking they would not be harmed, but it did hurt them, for they died. Did they believe? Indeed they did. They believed a lot more than many of whom I know who teach the same thing believe, for they were willing to prove their faith by what they did! But they died.

Why did they die? They died simply because their use of this passage was a misuse of it. For the same Bible that teaches that miracles were to characterize the church of the first century, also, and just as plainly teaches that these miracles would cease whenever that which is perfect came.

Please see I Corinthians 11:8-10. We now have that which is perfect, the perfect law of liberty, the New Testament, in its completed form, and miracles which were used originally in order to confirm the words contained in the New Testament have been discontinued, No one can perform miracles in Jesus' name today, for Jesus has discontinued performing miracles since that "which is perfect" came. But we are not finished with this message in Mark 16:15-20, for there are several other things there that fall in the same category that drinking deadly poison fall into. Casting out devils, speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, and laying hands on the sick, and the sick recovering are also mentioned here in the text, so whatever is true of drinking deadly poison is also true of these other things that are mentioned. If a believer can do the one, he can do the other, but if he cannot do the one, then he cannot do

the other. If not, why not? Indeed, if a believer cannot drink deadly poison today and live, neither can he speak in tongues or cast out devils, or lay hands on the sick and cause them to recover. But some say that to stage such a thing as this would be tempting God. It is not any more a tempting God to stage one than it would be to stage another. If you can plan a "Speaking in tongues" program, then you could just as easily plan a "Drinking deadly poison" program. Why? Simply because both or all are dealt with in exactly the same manner. However, there are those who announce that they are going to have a tongue speaking service, but they never say anything about the other signs that are mentioned here. I wonder why? Could it be that they themselves know that they cannot do what they claim they can do, and for this reason they limit themselves only to those signs wherein a sham demonstration can be made in such a way that will not hurt them? Or could it be that they actually believe what they are saying, and that God has sent to them a strong delusion that they might believe a lie and be damned because they love not the truth? You know, this is what Paul says about certain ones who believed in miracles in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12. Here Paul is talking about those who believed that miracles were being practiced and Paul admitted that they were a kind of miracle or wonder but he said that they were lying wonders. Read it for yourself in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Here it says that this is the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." And he further says: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." If there is any one thing that is

condemned in the Lord's sight, it is for one to claim a false gift, for it is written: "Who so boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain." That is, they are simply a great big disappointment to all who place their trust in them, But that Is exactly what everyone is doing today who claim that he can either cast out devils, speak in tongues, handle serpents, drink deadly poison, or raise up the sick! These are all false claims, because the same Bible that teaches that such did characterize the church of the first century also teaches that all such would cease just as soon as that which is perfect came. Furthermore, everyone who insists that miracles are still needed in the church today are by virtue of this insistence denying the validity of all the miracles that our Lord and the early disciples performed for they are saying that their miracles are not sufficient to confirm the word for us!

Paul speaks of certain ones who want to teach, but they know neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. And Peter says that there are those who wrest the scriptures of Paul, as well as the other scriptures to their own destruction. II Peter 3:16-17.

Indeed, miracles ceased with the closing out of the apostolic age, The baptism of the Holy Ghost was confined to that age also, And the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given with the laying on of the apostles hands. See Acts 8:17-19. Notice that it says: "They laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money Saying, Give me also this power that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost," Notice, that this gift was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands. We no

longer have Biblical apostles today; therefore the source of this is removed from us today.

Feature Three: Sandy's Women's Corner

THE WEDDING DRESS

About 20 years ago, our house burned; and we lost almost everything. Among the things that were not destroyed was my wedding dress. It was in the attic, carefully wrapped and in a box. We rebuilt the house, and I stored the wedding dress away.

About 6 years ago, we built a new house, and I once again found the wedding dress. I cautioned Bob not to misplace or throw away this cherished item. Much to my distress, I couldn't find the dress when we moved into the new house. I haven't stopped looking for it, even though every search has proven futile.

A few weeks ago, we were cleaning out our attic to take some things to our daughter's yard sale. Bob hates yard sales, but he reluctantly agreed to help me in cleaning out and removing a lot of "junk".

I was going through a box of Christmas decorations, and I found a bag that didn't look familiar. When I opened it, there was my wedding dress and veil. It brought a lot of tears and many happy memories. I was so happy to see the dress, not because I will ever wear it again but because of what it symbolizes. It reminds me of a day in my life like no other.

It made me think. We are the bride of Christ. Sometimes Christians get lost, sometimes for short periods of time and sometimes for a long period of time. We can't give up seeking those lost souls and trying to restore them to the church. The day of our baptism is the most important day of our lives.

Our marriage to Christ is the beginning of our journey to heaven. It is most certainly a day like no other, or at least it should be. Our baptism symbolizes our union with Christ and our dedication of our lives here on earth.

I am happy to know that I have my wedding dress, but the greatest happiness any of us could know is that a lost soul has been returned to the Father. “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Luke 15:10.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

As a speech teacher, I have often been asked, “Why am I so afraid to speak in public?” I believe the answer is quite simple. When I taught in a boy’s school I would ask a student in my class who had never played high school football, but loved to watch the game how he would feel if we was asked to play the quarterback position for our school in a game with thousands looking on. He said he would be terrified. I then asked the class why they thought that would be so. The responses included: not knowing the plays, not having practiced, not knowing all the rules, not knowing what to do as well as knowing what not to do and so on. I would then tell them the same is true for public speaking. They had watched good speakers, but that is not the same as knowing what to do, or not to do. It takes practice. Like most skills, however, it can be learned.

- 1) Remember, it takes practice to be good at anything. You need to know what you are going to say and you need to practice it over and over.
- 2) Remember, not looking someone in the eye is a source of distrust. You need to be ready to look at your audience. Never look over their heads

or off to the side.

3) Ninety-three percent of your message is delivered by your body movement, hand gestures, tone of voice, and eye contact.

Feature Five: Bible Question

“Why do you believe that it is wrong to pray through at a mourner’s bench?”

Let me begin by a little story. Suppose a farmer went out into his fields, got down on his knees, and prayed to God that he would give him a big harvest. Now suppose that the farmer decided not to do any work, and trust in God to answer his prayer. What do you believe would happen? It doesn’t take a Bible scholar to realize that God will not give a good harvest if a farmer does not prepare the field, plant the seed, and then care for it until the harvest. You see God has laid down the laws of nature that He will not set aside.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. When a man asks God to save him from his sins, he needs to realize that God has laid down the spiritual laws that must be obeyed. On one occasion Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15). Many people do not realize that “believing on Christ” is actually a “work” of God. (John 6:29). When people say we are saved by grace but not by works (Ephesians 2:9) they fail to realize that there are different kinds of works. There are the works of the devil (1 John 3:8); the works of the law (Galatians 2:16); the work of faith (1 Thessalonians 1:3) and we have already seen the Bible speaks of God’s works. Now must we avoid “all” work if we want to be saved? Or must we

“do the works of God”? I content that if one wants to be saved he or she will do what the Lord commands for us in His word. When he or his ambassadors (the apostles) teach that repentance and baptism is required for remission of sins and thus salvation, I believe we should obey that command. It is a work of God. It is commanded (Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:38).

When one tries to “pray through” at a mourner’s bench, he is asking God to set aside for him the concepts he set forth for the remission of sins and the becoming a Christian. As the farmer will look out over a weedy unrewarding field if he does not do the work God set forth for a good harvest, a man will end up with his sins in the day of judgment if he does not do the works of God as set forth within his word.

Humor:

Because she had been disobedient, an 8-year-old was being punished and was made to sit in the corner of the dining area at a table set especially for her. The rest of the family was ignoring her, until they hear her giving thanks. She said, "I thank thee, Lord, for preparing a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

In Closing:

If you will, keep Brother Sam Hester’s wife Phyllis in your prayers. She was diagnosed with cancer and recently underwent surgery. Brother Hester is the director of CTS.

I realize this series of study is almost here, but I again want to invite you to attend. It is such an enjoyable time of study and fellowship.

Freed-Hardeman University's Christian Training Series is "continuing education for Christians". Set for July 10-14, the annual event includes classes for men and women, devotional periods, fun and fellowship. This year's theme is "Set Apart for God's Purpose."

The registration deadline is June 24. A deposit of \$25 is due at the time of registration, or, registrants may pay the entire \$75 fee at that time. Those interested may see a video about CTS or read the brochure, simply by going to fhu.edu/cts. Attendees may register as individuals or as a church group for one congregational fee.

Open to all Christian adults, CTS provides the environment, opportunity, and motivation for spiritual growth, organizers say. "Don't rest your body but neglect your soul. Make four days in Henderson a part of your summer vacation," Hester says.

I have enjoyed our visit as I hope you have.

In the Master's service,

Bob Oliver