

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

C1132 – September 21, 2011
Responsibility Of Congregation To Leadership

We have been studying the topic of church leadership, elders and deacons, and therefore our study has been directed by NT passages which come in four different categories; first, several passages, especially in the Book of Acts, describe the formation of these offices (Acts 6:1-7; 11:30; 14:23), how in history they came to exist, what historical situations gave rise to the offices under the providence of God. Second, several passages describe the qualifications of the men that serve in these offices (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9), such qualifications are necessary for the proper shepherding of God's household, not just any men will do, mature men called to the office are required. Third, several passages describe the function of the men in these offices (Acts 20:18-21, 24-27; 15:1-29; James 5:14-18; 1 Tim 5:3-16), showing them in action, giving us a model to follow. And fourth, several passages describe various charges given to the men that serve in these offices (Acts 20:28-38; 1 Tim 5:17-25; 1 Pet 5:1-4), exhorting them to fulfill the office, to uphold biblical principles, to shepherd the church of God among them.

Such charges are necessary because it is easy to forget how important this work is, as history attests, and therefore these charges remind us of the great order of importance of this work, that those in leadership are shepherding Christ's sheep that He purchased with His own blood, that they are not our sheep, but His and He laid His life down for them. In lieu of His departure He implants a desire within certain men to take up the high responsibility of caring for His sheep.

Now, in the NT we have found that the amount of material has been heavily weighted toward the elders. Why? The reason is because they have the responsibility of overseeing all aspects of the local church. Oversight is particularly important because there are threats to the flock, there are needs, etc...Since there are so many things to manage properly God providentially

gave the office of deacon to assist the elders. The deacons are assistants to the elder in carrying out oversight responsibilities. Oversight responsibilities come in two spheres, both the spiritual needs sphere and the material needs sphere. Human beings are spiritual-material entities made in the image of God and therefore have needs in both spheres. The elders focal point is the spiritual needs, which are met on the human side by prayer and ministry of the word, the deacons focal point is the material needs, which are met on the human side by distribution of funds to the needy, handling the church building, serving as male role models to orphans, etc...anything that might assist the elders so they don't neglect prayer and ministry of the word. Both are important and necessary, but the spiritual needs are most important because they benefit us both in time and eternity while the material needs only benefit us in time. So the emphasis in the NT is on the elders and their shepherding in the spiritual needs sphere.

That briefly summarizes what we have said about church leadership, but our class would be incomplete if we didn't look at the congregation's responsibility to the leadership. If there is leadership there must be somebody to lead, otherwise why leadership? So tonight we want to turn our attention to the congregation's responsibility. Now it's very true that the entire NT describes the responsibility of the congregation; epistle after epistle contains God's will for every believer in the church age, whether you are an elder, a deacon or neither. So we can't look at all of that in one night, this is not looking at the general responsibility of every believer but looking at the specific passages that discuss the congregation's responsibility to the leadership in the local church.

There are four or five responsibilities that are explicitly noted in the NT epistles; First, there are passages that speak of honor, respecting the leadership, holding them in high regard (1 Thess 5:13; 1 Tim 5:17). Second, there are passages that speak of providing an honorarium, providing compensation for those who rule well by working hard at speaking and teaching (Gal 6:6; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17-18). Third, there are passages that speak of the importance of keeping them in mind, remembering them so that in your daily life you can imitate them, follow their example (Heb 13:7). And fourth, there are passages that instruct the congregation to obey their leaders and yield to their authority (Heb 13:17). There is an authority structure in the church that should be respected, a form of church

government and it is for the good of the congregation if they submit to the leadership and let them do their work with joy.

Let's start with the first and second kind of passage, 1 Tim 5:17, a passage we've already studied in this class but it's very clear. It discusses both category one and category two, honor and honorarium. **The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.** We said in our exegesis that this is not dividing ruling elders from teaching elders, but identifying elders who rule well as those who work hard at preaching and teaching. The word especially, *malista*, should be translated "that is," to identify the elder who rules well as the elder who works hard at preaching and teaching. Now not all **elders...work hard at preaching and teaching.** And not all elders have to work hard at preaching and teaching. Paul recognizes the principle that there are first among equals, there are some elders that are called to full-time preaching and teaching and those who are not, that there are those who are called to vocational preaching and teaching and those who are not. They are all equally elders, mature men in the word of God, but some preach and teach full time while others do not. Those who do not may rule well by other means, but they have a job outside of preaching and teaching by which they make a living. And Paul's point here is to require the congregation to support the elder who is called to full-time preaching and teaching *if* they are doing it well. How do you know if they are doing it well? Well, do they work hard at it? How do you know if they work hard at it or not? This is a question many people have today because they've been in the church for 40 or 50 years and they've never heard quality teaching. They've heard the same old surface material for years and years. Here are some basic criteria for evaluating whether an elder is ruling well by working hard at preaching and teaching. One, does he expect you to bring your Bible to church? It may surprise you to know that a lot of churches do not expect the people to bring their bibles to church. And the reason is because their ministers don't teach from it. And if that is your church you need to leave today. You are not getting God's word, you are getting man's word and you are being controlled by men who lust for power. And they know that if they open this book their agenda will be exposed and you'll see them as wolves. So they're not about to change that procedure. You need to leave and go to a church which expects its people to bring their bibles. Two, does the church spend more time preaching and teaching or entertaining, singing, etc...? There is no requirement in the

Scriptures for congregational singing. Did you know that? Do you know why? Because congregational singing does not make you grow spiritually? There is not one passage in all Scripture that says that congregational singing makes you grow spiritually. Now I didn't say it was wrong or that it isn't even good. But what I am saying is that what is good cannot take the place of that which is best. And what is best is to preach and teach the word of God. That alone is what stimulates faith. Faith coming by hearing and hearing by the word of God. It's the preaching and teaching of this book which opens ears to hear the word of God and that, and that alone we might add, stimulates faith. So if you go to a church and you sit there for 45 minutes with your eardrums blowing out singing praise song after praise song and the pastor gets up for 10 minutes with some inspiring little ditty, don't drop a dime in the offering plate, get up and leave the church immediately. The majority, the vast majority, of the time should be spent in the preaching and teaching of the word. Entertainment, which we didn't comment on, but entertainment doesn't have any role in the church meeting. People always think that if we just had a rock band then we'd bring more people in and then they would hear the gospel. And so this is a technique, a marketing gimmick that people think would make the gospel more palatable, or at least get a hearing and they think that if we don't do that we're wrong. Let me tell you something. Here's the same argument. I'm going to make the same argument from a different sphere and you tell me if it makes sense. It's Super Bowl Sunday, we're hosting the production, and what we're going to do to make more people like football is have a half time show with a big production by some performance artist. Now does that make any sense? What it is is an attraction to make more money, not to convince people that football is a great game. Why do people go to the Super Bowl? Well, some people go because they love football and some people go because of the half time performance artist. If you had only the performance artist the people who loved football wouldn't go. And if you only had the football game the people who loved the performance artist wouldn't go. The point is that people flock to what they are attracted to. But being in the same room doesn't make them attracted to the other thing. If people love hot rock music and bombastic rhythms and you supply this at church then will you attract a certain crowd. Yeah, of course. But what would happen if you took that away? Well, they'd go away. Now everybody knows this in the outside world but for some reason they think this is a useful technique in the church. It's not. The only reason they come is because your blasting their ears out with music and it gives them a euphoria.

It has nothing to do with their love for Bible teaching or interest in the gospel. They are there for one reason and one reason only; the music, and maybe the girl nearby, but they are not interested in the word of God. And that's not how you get them interested in the word of God. Where did you ever see that technique used in the Bible? You didn't. You know why? Because it makes void the power of God unto salvation. That's why. It is wrong to try and dress up the gospel to make it more attractive; it is not attractive, the cross is a repelling message, it's a bloody, disgusting message and how dare you try to make it appealing by creating the euphoria caused by bombastic rhythms. That is an appeal to emotion and not intellect. And faith is not stimulated by emotion; it is stimulated by intellectual thought about the gospel. And yet a lot of money is poured into entertainment at churches and it is a waste, it is taking the hard earned money of Christians and pouring it into the world and affirming that the gospel is not the power of God unto salvation but in helpless need of the world and it's gimmick techniques to make it attractive, to win hearers. So one, does your church expect you to bring a bible? Two, do they spend more time teaching the bible or entertaining people? Three, does the minister of the word spend more time telling stories or teaching the content of this book. It's very easy to tell stories, anyone can tell stories, let's have a big campfire and sing kumbayah. Anyone can do that, not anyone can teach this book. Because teaching this book takes study, it takes effort, it takes mental sweat. And the amount of time spent there should be obvious in the presentation. Four, does the teacher show use of the original languages when necessary? Sometimes it is necessary, sometimes it's not. There are two sides to this error. As one of my friends, Thomas Ice said, it's not necessary to take apart every word in a sermon. Things like the word *and*, *and* is a copulative conjunction which means it's connecting these two phrases. Why should I tell you that, and means and? Then we have the noun *didaskalia* and it means "teaching." Yeah, I can read, I'm not stupid, that's what it says in my English Bible. So why go into the original language if the English is sufficient. If it says teaching and it means teaching why go into some big hairy explanation of it. That's not teaching the word, that's exegeting the word. And the job of a teacher is not to exegete the word in front of people but to exposit the word, to explain what it means. And if he's doing it correctly he's already done the exegesis in his study, that is required, we're not demeaning it, but it's not what is done out here. So one error is exegeting in front of the people, that is not teaching the word, that shows lack of preparation actually because he

hasn't had time to think about and digest it so he can exposit it in a clear manner. All he has had time to do is look at the original text and identify the parts of grammar and tell you what they mean, what those parts of speech are, and that's not teaching the word, that is exegeting. Teaching the word is expositing, drawing out what it means, explaining what exegetical conclusions you came to and why and what it means to the people. On the other hand it's true that there are times when it is necessary to explain a verb or a noun or a prepositional phrase or something, to clarify what it means. And a teacher should be doing that. If the English is not sufficient to render the original then you do that. That's one error, the other error, and this one even more egregious, is not using the languages it all. The Bible was written primarily in Hebrew and Greek, a few chapters are in Aramaic. But if you don't know and study in the original languages how can you be accurate? It'd be like studying the US Constitution in Chinese. That's second hand translation and any translator of languages knows the dangers of losing precious content. Five, does the teacher bring out the historical context or not? If he doesn't then again he can make egregious errors and mislead you. You can't solve everything by grammar. There are points of historical background that help you solve passages and rightly interpret them. Sixth, does he use logic to put everything together? You can have the grammar and the history right and miss it by a mile because your conclusions are contradicted by something five verses later. I have seen this a number of times. I know a number of people who are excellent with the languages but in logic they are flunkies. They don't know how to put a passage together, all they can see is the individual, tiny details, but they don't know how the pieces relate in a whole picture, they can't see that and it's dangerous because it leads to errors. Finally, seven, does the teacher systematically teach this book or not? If he's jumping around Sunday after Sunday and there's no systematic flow, he doesn't tell you why he's doing what he's doing, then that isn't going to help you think properly, that's going to confuse in the long run, keep your mind in a jumble. A good teacher will always be a systematic bible teacher and you should be able to tell from these criteria who is working hard and who isn't. Am I telling you who to give your money to? You bet. Am I telling you what kind of church to go to? You bet.

Now Paul says in 1 Tim 5:17 of these kinds of teachers, that are ruling well by working hard at speaking and teaching the word of God, who are systematic bible teachers, they should be considered worthy of **double**

honor. What's **double honor**? Single honor is accorded to all elders, that's respect, and I'll focus on that in our next few passages, but double honor is something beyond single honor, it's an honorarium, some kind of financial remuneration. Verse 18 explains, **For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,"** a quote from Moses in the Torah, **and "THE LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS WAGES."** A quote from Jesus in the Gospels. The point of both sayings is that somebody who labors should be paid for his labors. And here it's the labor of preaching and teaching. Now this has been handled a number of ways down through church history. There is the parsonage, the providing of a home with a stipend, some amount of money that enables the family to grow or buy food and make a living. There is simply a stipend, sufficient for the teacher to buy his own home and grow or buy food to make a living. There is providing food. There are a number of ways this can be done and all of them are valid, the important point is that he is being paid for his hard work. That's a principle that God requires be fulfilled. As the apostle Paul said, "The Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel." It should not be considered wrong to do that. It should be considered right. Summing up, it's the congregation's responsibility to support financially an elder who rules well by speaking and teaching. The word translated preaching there is speaking, one who gives time to speak the word and teach it. If you are prospered spiritually by the teaching of the word of God then you should provide materially for the elder(s) who are especially working hard at it.

Let's go to 1 Thess 5:12-13. This discusses both honor and honorarium like 1 Tim 5:17 but it is harder to see until you work out very carefully from the original text the two words that are used here. The first word is used in verse 12, **But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you,** the word **appreciate** is key because verse 13 is going to use another word, **and that you esteem them very highly in love.** So two words, **appreciate** them and **esteem them very highly.** What is the difference in these words? Well, the first one, **appreciate**, is *eidenai*, from the root *oida*, and in this context means "to recognize merit," in the sense that you are stimulated to take an interest in them, to care for them. And naturally that would be some kind of remuneration, provision of food, water, shelter, the basic necessities of life. He is diligently laboring among you, he has charge over you in the Lord and gives you instruction, you should

appreciate him by providing an honorarium. So the word **appreciate** refers to the honorarium, the financial support of an elder who rules well by speaking and teaching the word as in 1 Tim 5:17. The second word in verse 13, **and that you esteem them very highly** is talking about in your mind, how you think about this elder? You esteem him highly; you have high regard inwardly for him. So verse 13 is the inward appreciation, it's respect for them, verse 12 is the outward expression of appreciate, the financial remuneration for their hard work. Why is this so important? Because these men are shepherds, they shepherd your souls, they watch over you, and a lot of that is unseen, it's private activity, it's private study, because they are having to watch for heresy from outside the church and inside the church. There are wolves and there are wolves in sheep's clothing, and it takes a lot of work to keep your finger on the pulse of these attacks, where they are coming from, how to cast them down, how to articulate and explain them to the sheep so the sheep are not led astray, this is a lot of work, a lot of it is private work, careful study, critical study and it should come out in the teaching of a good shepherd, one who loves the Lord and is trying to protect the Lord's sheep. And I can say with full confidence that is what I and the other elders are doing here. We are constantly evaluating, critically analyzing and turning to this book alone as the source for the answers. Why? Because we believe in the sufficiency of this book. We don't think it needs to be emended by man's ideas. We think that God's ideas are sufficient to shepherd His household with. And this is a tireless procedure, it's a constant procedure. You have to always be going back to this book and asking, how does the word of God tackle this issue? And it often is not in a direct fashion, it tackles it in a round about way and you really have to think about how the principles of Scripture work together to address some of these issues. And the answer is always there, there's a pattern and there are things that fit the pattern and things that don't. And it takes quite a bit of skill and careful study of this book to work it out. It's one of the reasons that the word of God talks about the importance of meditating on this book. The reason is because everything is not spelled out directly and you have to think about the overall pattern and what practices are consistent with the pattern and which one's are not. So meditation upon the content of Scripture is vital and it's how a lot of problems are solved in some of the most interesting ways. It's where you find those nuggets, and when you see it you're in awe of God because you're seeing the tapestry of how God thinks and how everything is interwoven. So I hope that you appreciate financially your elders, that's the outward aspect,

and you highly esteem them, that's the inward aspect that leads to the outward.

Third passage, Gal 6:6. This one deals only with financial remuneration but I wanted to point out a few things. Actually v 6 continues on to v 10 and then he transitions to the benediction in v 11. So vv 6-10 are a unit. And he starts off specifically and ends generally. In verse 6, he targets specifically financial remuneration for the teacher, **The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.** It may include just telling the teacher what kind of benefits the word of God has had in his life but it's more than that. The word **share** is *koinoneito*, it comes from *koinonia*, a word many of you know as "fellowship," that's one definition in the lexicon of the word, but another definition, and the one used here means "to contribute a share, to give a portion" and the implication is that by doing so, you become a partner in this ministry. Whatever ministry you give to you are becoming a partner in that ministry. That's why it's so important to only give to those elders that are ruling well, those organizations that are following the word of God. Because the NT is very clear that you are giving to demons when you are giving to sorry ministries. And the sorry ministries are a dime a dozen. They're being supported by a lot of Christians and it is a tragedy that so many Christians support apostate ministries. I have one friend who has a Ph. D in Theology and he was dedicated to this book and he had to work at Home Depot stocking nails. It's unbelievable the failure of the modern church to recognize those elders who are Christ's shepherds and to support them. But I know plenty of them. And I'll tell you another thing about how important this work in the church is. Every once in a while someone says to me, one day you're going to be in the seminary, this is too good, this can't go on forever. Now that's a nice compliment, I appreciate it, it's part of that highly esteeming in love, and maybe I'll go someday, I don't know, but I'll tell you one thing, I don't see many open doors, I don't see many seminaries that would even be interested in me and the reason is because I am interested in this book. And I'm not interested in going to the seminary too much anyway, I'm interested in you. I have always been interested in you. Christ established His church, not the seminary. Now I know why men want to go to the seminary. It's easier, they get to study and develop all their theory. But let me tell you something, I don't think much of a seminary professor that hasn't been in the trenches with Christ's church. Who hasn't battled it out and gotten down with the sheep and all the poop and crud that

comes with it. And I for one am not going to sit in an ivory tower and write articulately about subjects I know very little about in practical experience. I want to be down here with you, walk through life with you, identify with you and the trials and sufferings you face, I want to model how to live the Christian life, how to face trials and be victorious. What good is it to sit in an ivory tower some place and make mighty disputations with the pen? You are Christ's sheep, you are His household and I love you. And by the way, do you really think the other elders don't love you? Why would you think that? If they didn't love you why they'd stop me from teaching the way I teach and they'd stop me from teaching the things I teach because we all agree we're teaching you the word of God. But they do love you and they are growing too, but more about that next week. The point of Gal 6:6 is that you should provide financial remuneration for those who teach you the word. Verse 7, **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.** That is, in the area of financial remuneration, don't think you can reap eternal rewards by not contributing a share to a good bible teacher. Because the implication, here, as in Phil 4:15, is that you become a partner. Let's say that you invest in this ministry, assuming this ministry is following the word of God, then guess what? You will reap eternal rewards. You are building up for yourselves treasure in heaven when you invest in this ministry. And as one man said, you are getting a lot of bang for your buck! It's not the number of people that come; it's the content that is delivered. Verse 8, **For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.** That's enjoyment of life as well as eternal reward in the hereafter. And it's after the flesh/Spirit dichotomy. You can walk one way or the other, you can invest your money in fleshly ministries and reap the corruption or you can invest your money in Spirit ministries and reap eternal rewards. **Do not lose heart doing good,** verse 9, **for in due time you will reap, if you don't give out, if you don't grow weary.** It will all be worth it in the end because treasures in heaven do not rust and decay, they are imperishable crowns.

Now let's turn to a third category, Heb 13:7. We've covered honor and honorarium, inner respect and outward provision, the inner respect is due to all elders, that's single honor. The inner respect and outer respect, financial remuneration is due to elders who rule well by working hard at speaking and teaching, that's double honor. These principles are very clear in the NT. Now

Heb 13:7, we don't know the human authors name but we know it's the word of God. **Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.** Now just like Hebrews 11, where we are given the heroes of faith, men and women of God who lived faithful lives, who laid down a pattern for us to follow, so the author of Hebrews says those spiritual leaders, those elders **who led you**, *egeomai* is the participle and it's going to be used again in verse 17. So I take it that these are the elders for that reason. And secondly, I take them as elders because the verse says in the Greek, **who surely spoke the word of God to you**, that's an elder function. And he's saying **remember** them, that is, keep them in mind, on a daily basis, keep them in mind, how they lived the Christian life. But there are some interesting qualifiers are here. Number one, we're supposing that they did speak the word of God to you, so these are your teachers, men who taught you the word of God, and two, **consider the outcome of their behavior**, so it's saying, don't only look at what they taught, but look at the results of how they lived. How did it turn out, what was the effect of the way they lived? They may be dead at this point but what was the outcome when they died. Now this is very important to consider. Somebody may be a great teacher, a great expositor of God's word but they don't live it in certain areas, they neglect their marriage, they neglect their family, learn from that, learn not to do that because in the process of trying to save many souls they neglected the very souls that God put closest to them. I have seen this a lot in ministry. I am a watcher. I listen and observe what other teachers of the word of God do. I've never been a big talker when I get around other teachers of the word of God, mainly I listen and watch. And I have to say that there are too many times that I am very saddened by what I see, by the behavior and the outcome of their behavior as I watch their marriage and family crumble as they minister the word of God. It detracts from the effectiveness and I think it's because these men have put themselves at the center of their ministry and not Christ. That is a hard accusation but nonetheless I think it is true, the focus is on them and not on Christ. The only thing I can say that is good about it is that it's a signal for me to look out for that, to guard against that, to be very careful not to neglect, to pay attention to what I am teaching and to make sure I am living my life accordingly. It does very little good to preach the word but not live it. After awhile you become nothing more than an annoying clanging cymbal. I know that and you know that. There are no facades here. Just genuine teaching and living. And I hope that in the end you can look at my

life and remember how I spoke to you the word of God and how I lived my life. And I pray that you will be able to look at my marriage and my family and how I managed this church and you will be able to say that is a good model, that is the way I want to live my life and you will do it.

Another thing that is shown here is that there is a very definite pattern to the Christian life that is very clearly set apart from the way of the world. And it is that pattern I am trying to draw you into. It is that pattern that I am trying to set before you as so eminently superior to anything the world has to offer. I want you to see what the word of God looks like when it is put to the streets. Because it does very little good to have the word of God in your head but not transferred to your hands and feet. To have it all in your head with nothing to show for it is what James warned against when he says, "Be not a hearer of the word only but a doer also." Such a one who merely hears the word has a dead faith, a cold, worthless orthodox profession if not coupled with a lively orthodox application. I hope that my life and those of my fellow elders is both lively and orthodox, that it is a true exposition in life of that which we hold most dear. And therefore for your sake I hope that you will follow the admonition of the author at the end of verse 7, to **imitate their faith** as you might imitate Abraham's or Moses' parents or Rahab's. Imitate means to follow in the same path, to walk according to the same pattern, to come and follow us as Christ said to His disciples, so I say to you, come and follow me, follow us in our teaching and follow us in our living. Imitate us.

And finally verse 17, after giving more instruction he says, **Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.** First, **obey** and we're talking about the leadership, those who are elders, those who shepherd you under the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. He says, **obey** them, which can mean to obey them, in the sense of "do what they say," or it can mean "to follow them." Probably both are intended by this word. There is no doubt that the passage presupposes an authority structure and that the elders hold a position of authority and it is your duty to obey and follow your elders. Now I understand that some churches teach false doctrine or do not teach hardly at all and for those who attend such churches there is no reason to stay and keep throwing your money at corruption. Leave! But in a congregation where the truth is taught and taught well, there is the command from the Chief

Shepherd that you obey the elders and follow them. Too often, in our own body, you are not obeying and following us but you are grumbling about us and what you suppose that we are doing. You are unhappy sheep, unhappy about this, unhappy about that. I wish that you would understand that we are not out to get you, I wish that you could see the sweat and tears that are shed trying to get you to follow us without bickering and whining. I wish you could see how much we care for you, but I realize that much of this is a private matter, prayer and study of the word does not happen in the open assembly but behind closed doors. I understand that you cannot see all that goes on in the shepherd's meeting, but let me assure you that it has to do with how we should lead you, how to restore male headship in the home as spiritual leaders of their wives and the children, what about their role in the meeting of the local church? They do have one. And it is interesting that the Bible is very definite about the role of children. These and many other questions, literally thousands of questions, have been and are being searched out and we are diligently searching only one source to find the answers? This book. That, my friend, is shepherding. So stop bickering and grumbling as if your shepherds do not want to take you to greener pastures. Some of the pastures you are grazing in as we speak to me are nothing more than barren wastelands, we intend to lead you to lush pastures, but many of you would rather stay in the barren desert. Why? Because there you are comfortable and out there is the world of the unknown. That is why you must walk by faith, friend, you must trust the word of God. The word of God will show us the way, and I will explain it to you, and I will expect you to search the Scriptures to see whether these things aren't so, and I will expect you to follow us. I will expect you to trust the Lord that there are greener pastures than we are now grazing in. I'm asking you to obey us and to follow us where we are going. We will lead the way, will you follow?

And the author also says, **submit** to us. That is, yield, give way, stop being stubborn and making our lives a big frustration. I speak for myself when I say it's been very frustrating and continues to be frustrating. I keep teaching this stuff but then on many counts, nothing happens. Now in that situation I can only conclude three possible things. And I have thought about these for years. One is that you think my exposition of the text is faulty, in which case I don't know why you're still here, go somewhere else if you think I'm misrepresenting God's word. Two is that you are complacent and you don't want to do it. You are relying on your past reputation, your money, whatever,

you are comfortable where you are. Friend, that is a very bad position to be in, complacency in the Christian life is the death of Christianity in a culture. I did not present to you a complacent Christianity but a living, breathing, vibrant one. Three is that you are simply in rebellion against the word of God, you are not going to do it, even though you hear it you hate it. At least in this case you are not complacent, and it is better to be zealous about something and stirred by issues than complacent about everything. But for you you must wake up, you must realize we are in the fight of our lives, we are in a fight for our children and for our country. God is not done with you; God has many battles for you to fight.

Now there are those of you who are zealous and are fighting the good fight among us. But all of these types are among us as well and it is evident who they are. I know those who are zealous and those who are complacent and those who are in rebellion. My fear is that most of us are complacent and those of you who are closest to me can attest that I have said for years that we are like the complacent church of Sardis and partly like the church of Ephesus. We have a reputation that we are so rich in Christ but we are poor and decrepit and soiled with sin and overt idolatry in many cases. I exhort you to wake up and to finish the race, to run so as to win, to follow us, to yield to your elders; do not fight us, why would we mislead you? What in the world purpose would we do that for? I want you to partner with us in this race, and join in reaping the eternal rewards.

For, the author of Hebrews says, **they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.** that is, we have an obligation to fulfill, elders must fulfill verse 17, they must watch over the souls of those allotted to their charge or else they are judged severely. This is a very serious work and all elders will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for how well they kept watch over your souls. You will not stand and give an account for this, but all elders will, it is a sobering truth. Jesus Christ will ask each one of us, did you watch over the souls of My sheep? It's the watchman motif from the OT, the sentry would stand on guard on the city walls of Jerusalem and he would watch lest the enemy sneak in and destroy. The elder's function is to watch out for the devil's sneak attacks, the false doctrine, the persecution, the dangerous deceptions as he tries to come into this flock and scatter us all. I do this daily, I know many other elders do this, they are constantly on watch. I will tell you that it is very difficult keeping up

with all the false and deceptive doctrines, it takes a lot of work to protect you, a lot of study, constantly, day in, day out, there is always some new twist Satan is trying to infiltrate and attack you. That's why I teach the way I teach and warn the way I warn. It's necessary to watch over your souls. I will give an account for that and so will every elder here. That's why it is very important to obey and submit to them. How do you know what the dangers are? It's not your job to be a watchmen, it's ours, and we watch over your souls, so it is to your benefit that you obey and yield to us, we have your best interest at heart. And we don't always have hundreds of hours to explain all the ifs, ands and buts. Just move, there are good reasons based on this book. When the shepherd says move out, move out, don't stand there and bicker, you may get slaughtered, and if you are going to bicker you better have some really good Scriptural reasons. And that, that's fine, I don't mind good biblical arguments, but we are not going to bicker about your little pragmatic argument about this or that. Pragmatic arguments don't cut it; Biblical arguments are the only thing that cut it. And I assure you, this book is very clear and I am not afraid to face it on any issue. And our job is to protect you according to our Chief Shepherd's voice in this book. We have no other motive.

Finally, verse 17, **Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.** It is to your benefit to obey us and to submit to us as the kind of shepherds we are. It is not going to benefit you to disobey and rebel. It drives us crazy as those who keep watch over your souls. And by the way, I forgot to mention, the words keep watch means fundamentally, sleepless nights, easy to wake up, and I can attest, as can my wife, that ever since I came here, about two years after I came here, I can hardly have a restful night. I'm up all night and you know what I think about? You. You think I don't think you're important? You think I do this for fun? I'd like to enjoy it and there are enjoyable moments, there are victories. But I will have to say it has been more grief than joy, far more, and I do not see how this is profiting you at all. I do not see why we cannot simply follow this book. But I do hope that you will set aside some of the traditions you are clinging to and will put on this book. Traditions that are not based on this book are built on some other philosophy, some other idolatry, only those based on this book are glorifying to God.

So our five responsibilities of the congregation are, 1) honor, single honor for all elders, hold them in high regard, 2) honorarium, double honor for elders who rule well by working hard at preaching and teaching the word, 3) keep excellent elders in mind as models of the Christian faith so you can imitate them on a daily basis, 4) obey them, follow them where they lead and 5) submit to them, yield to them as shepherds whom the Chief Shepherd has appointed them to watch over your souls. Please do this so that it will be a profit to you and you will become a partner in the things which result in eternal reward.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2011