

The Church

Elders - Introduction - Part 1

Readings

- Romans 1:1-2 - The fidelity of the scriptures
- 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2:9 - "As it is written." This expression is found fourteen times in Romans, six times in 1 Corinthians; and six times in 2 Corinthians. It means, "It stands unchangeably written" irrespective of time, place, people, culture or nation, administration or judicial body of men. The word of God is "settled forever in Heaven" (Psa. 119:89)
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - The scriptures are given for our spiritual development (and comfort, Rom. 15:4)
- Acts 11:29-30 - The first reference to "elders" relating to a New Testament church

Introduction

There are four main passages in the New Testament which deal with the subject of elders. They are:

- a) 1 Timothy 3:1-7
- b) 2 Timothy 2:1-6; 12-16, 22-26. While this verse does not use the word "elder" or any of its associated words, it does give the characteristics of a saint individual, which is what an elder should be.
- c) Titus 1:5-14
- d) 1 Peter 5:1-4

In an ideal world

The only infallible guide of church doctrine and behavior is the Holy Spirit. It is He, the Spirit of Truth, who has come to, "guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). That truth deals with three great doctrines: Christ, the Church, and His coming. Any doctrine which denies or modifies any of these is not from the Spirit of Truth but is Satanic in its origin.

- a) The only Head the church has is the Lord Jesus.
 - i) "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23)
 - ii) "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18)
- b) The only authority the church has is the Holy Scriptures. These are the "manual," the "how to," and "instructions", written material for the individual, the local and corporate church. This leads to the question:
 - i) What is meant by "the scriptures?"
 1. Before there can be any consideration of the importance of any doctrine of the "scriptures", there must be an understanding of what is meant by the term "scriptures". The word "scripture" is derived from Middle English Latin and it means "writings", and can refer to any "sacred" writings of any religion. The Qur'an, the Vedas are referred to as the "scriptures", therefore clarification is necessary.
 2. In this context the scriptures are the sixty-six books of the Holy Bible, nothing more and nothing less. However, they are more than a collection of sixty-six books. They are God's written communication to us. They are the Word of God and contain His declarations by the repeated expressions such as: "and the Lord spake" (144 occurrences); "God said" (46 occurrences); "God spake" (12 occurrences); "thus saith the Lord (413 occurrences), and "the Lord said" (219 occurrences). Since these writings are that which the Most High God has said, they are marked by authenticity and ultimate authority. No matter what any man, board, or political authority determines, if it is not in perfect alignment with the scriptures it is wrong. In this paper when we speak of the Scriptures, it is referring to the authoritative Word of God. God is the great King (Psa. 95:3) and it would be foolishness to set aside that which He has given legislation for.

The Importance of The Scriptures Alone

The fundamental foundation to any study for personal or ecclesiastical life is to start with set borderlines. In the consideration of church leadership, there are not perimeters (plural) but a single perimeter which is, “the scriptures alone”. The Word of God must be the final court of appeal. They must never be manipulated nor should an individual seek to interpret them according to today’s ideology, or use them to force one’s view of things which may be bias or lop sided, or by personal background. The scriptures are like a three-legged stool and those three legs are:

1) The Fidelity of the Scriptures

- a) “Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Rom. 1:2). The scriptures are the “Scripture of truth” (Dan. 10:21) for they originate from God who is true (Jn. 3:33; 2 Cor. 1:18); they are inspired by “the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17) concerning Christ who is the truth (Jn. 14:6). It is because they are such that we learn of salvation, for they are “the word of truth” (Eph. 1:13). Any deviation from them is error and comes from Satan. When Eve discussed the forbidden fruit there were three changes made:
 - i) There was an addition to that which God had said. God said: “Thou shalt not eat of it” (Gen. 2:17), Eve added: “Neither shall ye touch it” (Gen. 3:3).
 - ii) There was a minimizing of what God said. God said: “Thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17), Eve said: “Lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3).
 - iii) God had said: “Thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17), Satan said: “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). There was a denial of what God had said.

2) The Sufficiency of the Scriptures

- a) “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (brought to maturity), throughly furnished (having been provided with all necessary instruction) unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16).
- b) “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting (restoring, and refreshing) the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (those who are subject to delusion, mistaken belief). The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa. 19:7-11).

3) The Finality of the Scriptures

- a) The expression “As it is written” occurs forty-five time, and it means, “it stands written” or “that which is written is permanently fixed”. In Daniel there is mention of the law of the Medes and Persians concerning which it is stated: “It be not changed . . . which altereth not” (Dan. 6:8, 12, 15). Since that law of man could not be changed, the law of God is even more unchangeable.
 - i) “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa. 40:8);
 - ii) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23)
 - iii) “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle (a tiny mark in the original spelling of a word) shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18).

The Church Elders - Introduction - Part 1

Concluding Remarks

There is no debating with that which God says. The scriptures are the instructions and revealed Will of God, consequently, we have no right to modify the scriptural qualifications or excuse adjustments of them. To do so is setting oneself above God, which at the least is idolatry, and possibly at the worst, it is insolent rebellion. If there are not men of this caliber then it is a manifestation that we are dreadfully deficient.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia