

Intro.

- A. Just moments ago we remembered Jesus death on Calvary, you may have thought of ...
 - 1. the trials he endured, his humiliation, the torn flesh of his body,
 - 2. You may have been remembering his concern for his fellow-man (sinners, penitent, family)
- B. The love the Savior has for all is seen in the cross, as well as his high aspirations for us.
 - 1. *Woman, behold your son...John,--- your mother...today, you will be w/ me n Paradise...forgive them*
 - 2. Similarly, parents should maintain high spiritual ambitions for their children (c. **3 Jn. 4**)s
 - 3. Some children literally grow up being challenged & encouraged to prepare for a *high calling*, **Phil.3:14**

Discuss.**I. ELDERS ARE TO BE EVALUATED, & THEN ELEVATED.**

- A. The qualifications set forth in **1 Tim. 3: 1-7** & **Tit. 1:5-9** clearly imply the need for evaluation.
 - 1. In this process, search is made for some possessing given characteristics.
 - 2. Possession of these qualities \times mean one is already appointed.
 - 3. **Ac. 6:3** suggest an appropriate means of selecting & appointing leaders in the church. (c. **1 Tm. 3:10**).
- B. We need to remember that being an elder in the Lord's church is to occupy the highest office in the world!
 - 1. they are to be *esteemed highly in love for their work's sake*, **1 Thes. 5:12-13**
 - 2. Recently a person told me of their parent's dream that their son would become a gospel preacher, but he didn't. He did become an elder. (I encouraged him not to feel bad 'cause his mother's goal = *little lower!*)

II. ELDERS ARE LEADERS, NOT LORDS.

- A. The terms God chose imply the leadership
 - 1. *pastors* (**Eph. 4:11**) = *shepherds* => responsible for the well-being of flock (feed & protect)
 - 2. *elders* (**Ac. 14:23**, etc) = *presbyters* => wise, thus able to advise & counsel
 - 3. *bishops* (c. **Phil. 1:1**) = *overseers* => managers, administrators
- B. Not being *lords over* the flock (i.e., *God's heritage*, the church) **1 Pet. 5:3**
 - 1. This gives a picture of one who has let his position of authority go to his head.
 - 2. (Pet. seems to be emphasizing the attitude & disposition of heart need by elders: humble willingness).

III. ELDERS MUST BE DEDICATED & DEVOTED.

- A. To whom should elders be dedicated?
 - 1. First of all to Christ, **Mt. 6:33**
 - 2. To themselves, (**1 Pet. 5:1-3**)
- B. To what....?
 - 1. To the church as a whole.
 - 2. The hospitality & counsel needs to be evenly dispensed, without respect of persons, families, or groups.
 - a. I have occasionally heard members actually say w/ reference to 1 elder, "*he's my elder*".
 - b. In fairness to everyone, don't just "latch on" to 1 individual elder, & exclude the others.
 - c. Elders should avoid becoming a mouthpiece of "special interest groups", as they tend the flock.

IV. ELDERS NEED TO BE GOOD EXAMPLES, EVEN IN EVANGELISM.. 1 Pet. 5:3

- A. *Being examples to the flock* (= model, pattern => a die or stamp, by implication)
 - 1. In the church they serve as examples as Bible students, workers in the church, as worshippers, etc.
 - 2. Their example will *raise the bar* in areas of evangelism, visitation, study, worship,
- B. In their daily conduct, they should be positive examples, too. (In home, at work, etc.)
 - 1. Remember, they are to be *of good report* from without the church (= in the community **1 Tm. 3:7**).
 - 2. There is nothing more devastating than for church leaders to live unfaithfully, bringing reproach on church.

V. ELDERS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE & RESPECTED.

A. **Ac. 20:28** - suggest areas of responsibility:

1. *Take heed...to all the flock...overseer* (administrative role) **c. 1 Pet. 5:2**
2. *Feed & (protect) => f/ dangers threatening f/ outside (wolves) & within (men spking. Perverse things)*
3. *Willingly...&... ready* (**c. 1 Pet. 5:2**)
- 4.

B. Respect & honor are benefits gained over time because of ones character & integrity.

1. *blameless* (**1 Tm. 3:2; Tit. 1:6** same as widows in **1 Tm. 5:7**) w/o reproach [* f/ word for epilepsy = seizures, i.e. – conduct such that impossible to seize upon a flaw in ones character & render powerless.]
2. *worthy of double honor* - **1 Tm. 5:17**

VI. ELDERS ARE OUR SPIRITUAL SERVANTS (i.e, SHEPHERDS).

A. **Ac. 20:28-31** take heed to all flock: *desires a good work,... feed* (teach), ...*watch,... tend* = a servant

B. The example of the chief shepherd (**Mt. 20:27f**) is not one who can to be served, but that of a servant.

1. Remember, whoever wants to be chief has to first be a servant.
2. Even in church leadership, the principle still holds true,

But many that are first shall be last; and the last first. (**Mk. 10:31**)

Concl.

A. We are looking at the possibility of appointing 2 new elders to help lead us to heaven.

1. That is why this is important enough for God to direct us in His word about church government.
2. In **Heb. 13:17**, we are told to:

*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.***

B. The thought of giving a reasonable account of our live before God in judgment should challenge us to Respond to the Lord's invitaton this very hour if...

1. you have not turned away from your sins & obeyed the Lord in baptism.
2. if you are one who used to follow the Lord faithfully, but are now fallen away, ...*crucifying the Son of God afresh & putting him to an open shame* in your own life, (**Heb. 6:6**)
3. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God,* **Heb. 10:31**

C. How much better it will be to stand before God, hearing the words of Jesus as in **Mt. 25:21**:

Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.