

ELDERS CAN STOP THE SPREAD OF LIBERALISM

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We firmly believe that the elders of the local congregation have the divine right and responsibility to determine what shall be taught and who should do the teaching (Acts 20:28-31). Much of the trouble that we are presently experiencing could be avoided if elders of local congregations would be more careful of who does the teaching and preaching and what is taught. Preachers known for their liberal views should not be used in meetings, lectures, youth rallies or any other function that the church has. It is time that the elders take away their audiences. But not only do we need to take away audiences; it is high time we heed the command of John. By inspiration he wrote:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Throughout the brotherhood it has been the common practice in many circles to use men for meetings, lectureships, youth meetings, etc., who are known to espouse liberal views. One day elderships will answer for their flagrant disobedience to John's injunction. There can be no right in fellowshiping false teachers.

The church needs elders who will stand up and be counted; elders that will stop the mouth of the gainsayer. Thus, elders that are following New Testament doctrine will not only cut off the false teacher's audience and pay, they will mark him as such and will have no fellowship with him. In Romans 16:17 Paul said, **"mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."** In Titus 3:10-11 he said, **"A man that is an heretick [false teacher] after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."** We have no choice in the matter! If we fellowship false teachers, we disobey God. When will elders be as concerned about obeying Romans 16:17 and Titus 3:10-11 as they are about obeying Acts 2:38?

The elders that tolerate false teaching and corrupt practices share the guilt of the false teacher or the evildoer (2 John 11). I recently read of an eldership that would not fire their preacher, even though they knew him to be a rank liberal. Their excuse was, "If we let him go, we are afraid he will leave the church of Christ and go into some denomination." Their first responsibility, as we see it, was not to fire him, thus letting him go to some other congregation of the Lord's people to teach his false doctrine. This has been done too many times during recent years. The elders should first seek to convert him to the truth of the teachings of Christ. If that

cannot be accomplished, then they have no alternative but to withdraw fellowship from him (thus firing him at that time) and mark him as a false teacher. If this act of New Testament discipline fails to bring him to repentance for the salvation of his soul then he may as well be in a denomination. Elders must obey New Testament teachings. And if following the will of Christ drives a man to a denomination, then to a denomination he must go. False teachers cannot be tolerated or harbored in the church of Jesus Christ! May God have mercy on such spineless elders!

Never has there been a time when those who have the oversight of the Lord's church should be more careful in what the church is being taught than now. Elders should know every person that teaches both from the pulpit and in the classroom. They should be acquainted with every piece of literature that is being used. When some of our literature is copied from sources that do not believe in the inspired Word it is easy for error to creep in. It would be a giant step in the right direction if elders would refuse to buy any material from those who are printing false doctrine. When they learn that they cannot sell their material then they will stop printing it.

Among the qualifications of elders is the one that states, **“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”** (Tit. 1:9). Paul continued in verse eleven talking about these false teachers and the responsibility elders had to them by saying, **“Whose mouths must be stopped.”** Not only must elders know the Word and be able to correct the false teacher, they first of all must be able to recognize error when it is taught. Just recently I heard of a preacher who taught from the pulpit the direct operation of the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the Word. There were elders in that audience that did not even notice that error was being taught! If that is the caliber of elders the Lord's church has today then may God help us! I am thankful for godly elders that know and love the truth. They are willing at any time and in any way to defend it. May their number increase and their faith and courage wax strong in these days of trial and turmoil.

Elders, the question as I see it resolves itself around this point. Shall the church continue to teach and practice a **“thus saith the Lord,”** or shall we change our teaching and practice to suit the whims of contemporary man. You overseers hold the answer.~

Deceased