

5th Elders Caring for the Flock

(for discussion 4-25-2010)

Review of the evaluation of covenant succession

We need to review this because of the view has serious implications.

1) Is appeal to authority sufficient for such a gigantic claim, or any claim for that matter?

2) Are we not to include the children's personal responsibility with parental responsibility? cf. Ezekiel

18.10-20 (minimized by Rayburn, 197)

3) Is "covenant succession" an example of a historical-redemptive misunderstanding?

When God saves a man, of course he saves him as a father, husband, and worker; he becomes a light of truth in all his relationships but does God promise to save all in these relationships (cf. the unbelieving spouse, 1 Cor 7)? Is it historically-redemptively sound to apply the promises to Abraham directly to Christian parents? Are the children of Abraham, in a sense, still the covenant people? Do not all children have the promises of the Abrahamic covenant?

Eldership Care for the flock of Christ

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them...28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert... (Acts 20.17-31).

1A. Plurality

Note the reference to elders (plural) of the church of Ephesus, as is typical. Churches were established as Paul went out on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). On his way back to Jerusalem, he revisited the new churches: **21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed (14.21-23).**

2A. Their work has two sides to it.

Paul says, pay attention to yourselves, and pay attention to the flock (the local expression of the sheep that belong to Christ). The work relates to the kind of learning that is going on in the church that demands being **alert** (v. 31) with regard to the twisting of Scripture (v. 30). Therefore, the task of spiritual leaders is **to care for the church of God** by promoting untwisted and sound learning *in themselves* and *in the church* that Jesus obtained by His loving sacrifice (v. 28).

Thus, ruling elders are to be attentive to the work of the teaching elder for their own learning and the learning of the flock in order to guard the gospel for the care and benefit of the church and churches (cf. all whom Jesus obtained by His death). This may sometimes include the delicate matter of criticism that is guided by charity and with attention to the overarching diet in which particular weaknesses may surface.

3A. They are overseers by the appointment of the Holy Spirit

This involves means such as examination by the church per the qualifications the Spirit has put into the hands of the church (cf. testing), the consent of the church (cf. voting), and official appointment (in a way analogous to baptism and membership covenant-making).

How can we support the claim that a plurality of elders are not necessary for the existence of local churches, but that it is necessary for their well-being?

How does having a *plurality* of elders contribute to the well-being of the church?

cf. wisdom in counsel of many; ordained for definition and good order; guard the gospel by learning and attending to the flock.

How does this text help us form an eldership job description?

How do the work of Christ and the appointment of the Spirit give solemnity, encouragement, and motivation to elder care of the flock?