

Words of Truth

Elders And Preachers Are Not The Lord Or His Apostles

By: Brian A. Yeager

Of late, I have noticed a trend in questions I am receiving in emails and over the phone. It is not a new problem. Generally speaking, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The trend of the emails and phone calls is that of elders and preachers taking on more authority than the Lord allows. Again, I am not saying that this is a new problem. I have included two of these questions in recent questions we answer at the end of the month (May and July). The number of similar emails and calls though is far greater and that is troubling.

Let me give you two direct quotes to give you an idea of what we are talking about in this article. Here is the first quote: "Brother Yeager, Thank you for responding to my question earlier today. The large scale issue I have is with the elders. We have three elders. They have met about supporting a group of preachers through some organization. I have challenged the authority for that decision. Their answer is that I am to obey them and they give me Hebrews 13:7. They do that with everyone that has questioned this. What can I do with that?" The second quote is this: "the evangelist at our congregation has been preaching on starting programs. he said that he is going to be busy creating a system for all the members to take part in. the programs he has in mind are having young peoples club, sisters for sisters, training wheels for babes, singles program, woodworking program, and I cannot remember the rest. I know these are wrong. I asked about them in class and he said that he has evangelistic oversight since we don't have elders. He thinks he is a pastor like the denominations has. When I talk to other members they are fearful of approaching the man to talk with him. What recourse is there? thx."

In the questions above you can see a common problem. Elders and preachers start thinking that they have authority to teach or practice things that the Scriptures speak nothing of. Listen, the only men that HAD authority to teach things that had not been taught before were the Apostles. They were ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20 and Ephesians 6:20). Having said that, even they did not just teach what they wanted to teach. They were inspired men of God, led by the Spirit, teaching things revealed to them by Christ (Matthew 10:16-20, John 14:26, John 16:13, Acts 2:1-4, I Corinthians 2:9-13, I Corinthians 14:37, Galatians 1:10-12, Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:29, Revelation 3:6, Revelation 3:13, and Revelation 3:22). Had they [the Apostles] taught something that was not authorized by Christ, even their words would have been accursed (Galatians 1:6-9). Now, the Holy Spirit supernaturally leads none of us. So, where do we get our authority?

Who Is In Authority Over All Of Us (Elders And Preachers Included)?

All of us in the body of Christ need to be reminded that none of us are the standard of authority (including elders and preachers). Jesus said: "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all*

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world... For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (Matthew 28:18-20 and John 5:22).

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25). Notice who is supposed to be head over the church: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:19-23; cf. Colossians 1:12-18).

It is certainly true that elders are to spiritually feed and oversee the flock of God (Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:1-4). It is certainly true that preachers are expected to preach the word of God with all authority (Titus 2:15). Preachers even are in place to appoint elders (Titus 1:5-9). However, the authority that preachers and elders have begins and ends with the word of God. All men, regardless of office, are expected to fully obey and only practice that which was and is the divinely revealed words of our Lord (Matthew 4:4, John 6:63, Colossians 3:17, II Timothy 2:2, II Timothy 3:16-17, Titus 2:1, Revelation 22:18-19).

Consider an application to these things that all should be able to understand. God tells us to obey those in civil authority over us (Romans 13:1-7 and I Peter 2:13-16). However, we all know that such authority is limited. We cannot obey man when man contradicts what is pleasing to God (Acts 5:29). It is no different with preachers and elders. When preachers and elders start creating instructions that God did not authorize, they become like Herod whom took a seat that was beyond his reach (Acts 12:1-25). Thus, we cannot allow elders or preachers to take upon themselves a position of authority that belongs to our Lord.

What Is Your Role With Elders And Preachers?

Again, with additional Scriptures, we must realize that man is not our standard (Isaiah 2:22, Jeremiah 17:5-6, I Corinthians 2:5, I Corinthians 4:1-6, and II Corinthians 10:12). When elders take a role of authority that is beyond the Scriptures and such is surely proven out, you must rebuke them before all (I Timothy 5:19-21). When preachers take a role of authority that is beyond the Scriptures and such is surely proven out, you must do likewise (Galatians 2:11-17). Both elders and preachers need to be STOPPED when they err (I Timothy 1:3-7 and Titus 1:10-14). That is your role. Stop them! If they refuse to repent, mark and withdraw yourselves from them (Romans 16:17-18, II Thessalonians 3:6, and I Timothy 6:3-5).

Conclusion

If you allow men a role that is not given to them through the Scriptures, you are to be blamed (Ephesians 5:6-11, I Timothy 5:22, and II John 9-11). This problem will always be as it has always been. Men like to step above their roles of authority (i.e. Matthew 23:1-10). Let's keep that from EVER happening here!