

The Role of the Church Authority Part 1

“17 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.” (Hebrews 13:17 KJV)

Usually the above Scripture is used to speak about submission to the church authorities and leadership. But in this message we will use the above Scripture to find out what are the duties and the responsibilities of the church leader and what he needs to do to the flock, and that will be the base for him to be respected and earn the submission of the flock to his instructions.

The leader, the pastor or the overseer of the church sure has responsibilities and important roles to play. From the above chosen Scripture we can find out the following responsibilities and commitments:-

1. “for they watch for your souls”: The church leader should keep watch over the church and over the new born believers and the flocks that God had placed under his or her care. To watch over include the following meanings and functions: To look after, to watch for, to keep an eye on, to guard, or to mind. **Therefore the Lord had placed a real duty and burden on the church leader and he needs to comply with God’s call for his life.** Notice also the Scripture declares that the church leader should keep watch over, so it is a continuous process and responsibility on his side. But if he will fail the Lord then instead of doing the watch over job that he has from the Lord he will start to neglect the flocks and the people that the Lord placed under his care. To watch over is to see and observe everything especially the personal areas of people’ life and especially where sins and works of flesh are there. It require from the church leader to interfere when he sees things go wrong that may cause harm and injury to the people whom the Lord had placed under his care. The church leader should be a caring person like a mother or father caring for their children. Doing all the above in love as Paul spoke to the Thessalonians the following: ***“7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, 12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12 KJV)***

Apostle Paul on his farewell to the elders of the church of God at Ephesus gave them the following commission: ***“28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28 KJV)*** The instruction here is to take heed over themselves and over the flock that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, in order to protect the church and nothing evil will come in and destroy the work of God as Paul expounded in later verses: ***“29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not***

to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20: 29-31 KJV) To watch over here is to protect the sheep from the wolves, the false teachers and the false pastors that may slip in and harm the church’ members and disturb the flocks.

Therefore such ministry that God had placed in the church when He had commissioned the leaders to do so is a big blessing to all the church members and His provision for them to be directed and nurtured and grow in the right way. That will be the case if two conditions are met; ***First***, the called leader abide with God’s call and faithfully and honestly perform his responsibility and ***Second***, the flock members are willing to listen and obey and cope with the leader who is doing his very best to serve them.

Apostle Peter address the following to the church leaders: ***“1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter 5:1-4 KJV)*** This Word of God directs the church leader to do the following:-

A. Feed the flock of God which is among you: That is part of the watch over responsibility to give the members the right spiritual food that is needed to nurture their souls and to direct them with the right advice and the right council, and to warn them from the threats and the dangers that they are not able to see, and to restrain them from going into the dangerous ways of the world and from walking in the council of the wicked.

B. Taking the oversight: * Church leader is a servant of the Lord, to serve the people and to care for them in the ways of the Lord and oversee their lives and direct them to the right way in all the affairs of their living and admonish them and correct them when they will go astray in the wrong way. * The church leader should do that gladly because he is willing and eager to serve. He should not do that to fulfill his or her ambition to be a certain figure and use the people, the money or material resources that under his or her care as a base to climb and fulfill his or her selfish ambition and greed.

C. Being examples to the flock: That requires much discipline, humility and self-control because the church leader’s life shall be the model for the flock to watch and imitate and follow the same. They should be the teaching models for others to observe, follow and perform.

2. Most give account: Here we found that the function of the leader is to give an account, so he or she needs to be accountable to the ministry, to the church and to the Lord who had called them. **To give an account is to show that you are responsible person and you need to excel and do your best in the ministry that the Lord had placed you in. And that requires a real commitment and dedication to the task.** To give an account includes the following meanings and functions: To report, to tell, to state, to describe, to give details, to testify, to convey, or to inform.

3. Which labor among you: To labor for the church members is the primary function of the church leader and that is his or her responsibility before the Lord, “12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 KJV) As describe here the church leader should be a hard working person because the truth is this: The Lord had placed people under his or her care. We can also read in **1 Thessalonians 5:12** that one of his responsibilities is to admonish the people, but admonishing would come after he had labor for them.

We will use now a Scripture from the Old Testament that speaks about the leadership of Moses over the Israelites and we will study from that the more precise roles for the church leadership: “13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. 14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? 15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: 16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. 17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. 18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. 19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: 20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. 21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: 22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. 23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. 24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.” (Exodus 18:13-25 KJV)

The Israelites were around 2-3 million in population and Moses was alone to work as a judge to help them to decide and determine what they needed to do. His father in law when he saw that he admonished Moses that he should not do that alone but to raise up other people with him to do the same work and to extend the government's body to more people so the task will be easy and the burden will be less on Moses the leader and on the people. As we review the above Scripture we can conclude the following roles for the church leadership.

4. To judge: “13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people:” To judge is to show the people and help them to know what is right and what is wrong. The responsibility of the church is to teach the people what is Godly and what is ungodly and to teach them to differentiate between the holy and the common as the Word of God instructs us, “23 And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezekiel 44:23 KJV)

5. Help the people to inquire of God and to know His will: “15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:” This is one of the prime responsibilities of the church leader is to help the people to know God's will and to discipline them to do it. One aspect is to know God's will, and another aspect is to achieve it. The responsibility of the church is to lead the people to know God's will and direct them to do it. “8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: 10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: 11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.” (Deuteronomy 17:8-11 KJV) That is all to secure that the people of God will know God's will and to do it and that is the responsibility of the church leadership and their authority. If the church fails to do that then the church had failed the Lord and the task that had entrusted with. The Lord also supported the church with authority when He said, “12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 17:12-13 KJV) That supported with Jesus' Word in Matthew 18:15-17, “15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

6. Help the people to decide: “16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.” As a church we do that by teaching them the Word of God and His decrees and instructions that will help them to take the right decisions.

7. Show the people the way to live: “20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” This another responsibility is to teach the people and show them the way and the style of life that God wants them to live by teaching them the Word of God, and this shall include to teach them for example the way to serve God, the way to be good citizen, the way to have family, the way to be good parents, the way to take care of their children, etc.

8. *To show them the duties they are to perform: "and the work that they must do."* Man according to the Word of God had responsibilities directed toward God, toward his family, toward the church, toward his work and toward the society that he live with. **The church responsibility is to show the people of God all these responsibilities they need to perform. And that will be the way for them to show their love and obedient to God.**

9. *"21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:"* This is another responsibility for the church to select capable men with strict criteria to serve as elders, deacons, pastors and leaders over others who are new in faith. **This is the responsibility of the church to raise the next generation and future leaders to lead the flocks into all God's will to let them experience His promises.** Jesus trained the seventy disciples and the twelve apostles, later on the apostles trained others to lead. Paul said to Timothy the following: *"2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."* (2 Timothy 2:2 KJV) **We need to continue to teach faithful people who are able to teach others.** And that is our responsibility as a church in leading the people of God while we are waiting for the blessed appearance from Heaven of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who will come to take us to Heaven to be with Him and forever.

The Holy Spirit will call people and equip them to lead the flocks. And the responsibility of the church is to recognize what God is doing, and work with the Lord to teach the people and train them to be equipped for God's service. God in His Word in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament supported that with many Scriptures as we will discuss now:

"11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:11-16 KJV) **So here clearly God gives different gifts to the church, therefore the church should recognize and approve what God is doing by appointing leaders with suitable titles and functions so that people of God will be equipped for God's service and the church will be build up and mature reaching the full measure of Christ. So there will be increase in number accompanied by maturity. In addition that will also enable the church to be protected and escape the cunning of the devil and the hazards of the false teaching and the false teachers.** Paul said to Titus the following: *"5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:"* (Titus 1:5 KJV) **There is always a need for a person who knows the Word of God and the will of**

God to lead the people in any congregation so that God's blessings will continue to flow in people's lives.

"18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. 19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. 20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." (Deuteronomy 16:18-20 KJV) **Here we found clearly the importance of the church to teach the people justice and to maintain justice by avoiding favoritism and favoring someone over another. This will only be possible through leadership who keeps and obey fully the Word of God; such integrity of the church leadership will pave the way forward to appoint well equipped leaders who are known by their integrity. Such step is an important step the church would take for God and for the wellbeing of the people. This will secure the future for the church because leaders who fear God and walk in His ways and hate dishonest gain are noble vessels who will carry the Word of God and pass it to the next generation.**

"14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Deuteronomy 17:14-16, 18- 20 KJV) **God wants the person who lead is well equipped with the Word of God, humble and obedient to it, and able to teach so he will be able to direct the affair of the church and the people under his care. You can be admonished more with the following: "15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."** (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV)

"8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: 10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: 11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. 12 And the man that

will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 17:8-13 KJV) “16 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. 17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God’s: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it. 18 And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.” (Deuteronomy 1:16-18 KJV) “1 If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. 2 And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. 3 Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.” (Deuteronomy 25:1-3 KJV) “16 If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; 17 Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; 18 And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; 19 Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. 20 And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. 21 And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” (Deuteronomy 19:16-21 KJV)

God is greatly supporting his church and the church leaders with authority and esteemed them among His people so that God’s Word will be obeyed and justice among the people will be prevailed. Therefore as the people will live the Word of God, then His blessings will flow in their lives.

My Dear and Beloved: The Lord had called the church leader to be in high discipline to God and to His Word. He is called to watch, admonish, correct and direct wherever that is needed for the lives of the church members, so that God’s blessings will flow in their lives as they listen and obey. We can review the church leaders’ duties and responsibilities as the following:

They watch for your souls.

They feed the flock of God which is among you.

They take the oversight.

They keep the good example to the flock.

They give account. .

They labor among you.

They judge.

They help the people to inquire of God and to know His will.

They help the people to decide.

They show the people the way to live.

They show the people the duties they are to perform.

They provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be elders, deacons, leaders, or pastors.

The church is a highly organized living structure composed of human and that is we and also of divine where God dwell among us in the Holy Spirit. God govern His church with His Word and give big responsibility and task to the church leaders as well as give them authority to help them in their service to God and toward His people.

Jesus also upheld his church with authority to combat those who are trying to take advantage of others by their disobedience to the Word of God when He said: ***“15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” (Matthew 18:15-17 KJV) “20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” (1 Timothy 5:20 KJV)*** Let us pray

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for your message to me that makes things clear in my mind, and makes me understand what the church is all about. Lord thank you for all the faithful leaders that you had raised in our church, and thank you for the teaching, the corrections, the rebukes and the admonishments we received in this message.

Confess now your sins and renounce them. Confess your non willingness to watch, care and labor for others. Confess and renounce your love of money and your love of power. Confess and renounce your wrong motive in serving God. Confess and renounce your lust, immoralities, your worldliness and the rest of the works of the flesh in your life. Confess and renounce your compromises, flatteries, telling lies, and having doubled standards. Renounce your bad stewardship, your laziness, and spending your resources in a not correct way. Confess and renounce your reluctance to listen to the God’s instruction from the church leaders who cares for you. Repent and renounce your reluctance to serve God and suffer for Him. Confess your lack of prayers and reading God’s Word. Repent of doing your own will and plan. Repent of your non willingness to humble before the church leaders and ask them advices and inquire from God through them. Lord forgive me I repent of the following sins

Lord I am willing to obey you in all the matters that we discussed in this message and walk in your ways. I commit myself to read your Word and to live according to your commands a life pleasant to you. Lord I commit myself to be available at your service by doing your will. Lord I commit myself to do my best service unto you to care for those whom you have entrusted under my care and to be obedient to those who care for me that you had placed to watch over my life, this is my prayer in Jesus name Amen.

Lord thank you for my Brothers and Sisters who repented and came back to you committing themselves to the teaching that we received today in this message. Lord uphold them with your grace and mercy, provide for them, protect them, use them to serve you and prosper the ministry that you had placed under their care.

Lord we pray as a church and we commit ourselves to set good example in caring and following up our individual members and do what is needful for them as we study in this message. Lord refill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the spiritual gifts that we need to go and evangelize, making new disciples, training new workers, and planting new Bible studies and congregations for the church. Lord bless and fulfill the vision of the church, 'Multiplication in peace with implementing the whole will of God'. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus' name, Amen.

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