

ELDER'S DUTY IN MEETING THE FORCES OF ERROR

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INTRODUCTION:

1. A vitally important area in which elders must lead the local congregation is that of meeting various errors which confront the cause of Christ.
 - A. The Bible very clearly teaches that elders bear the responsibility of doing such.
 1. Elders must be willing to lead in the defense of the gospel against error.
2. Paul gave such instructions in relation to the qualifications of elders in Titus 1:9-11.
 - A. This verse provides clear insight in regard to this responsibility and duty.
 1. Titus had been left in Crete in the midst of perilous times.
 2. Verses 10-16 indicate that morally corrupt, false teachers had entered among the brethren to sow seeds of discord and confusion.
 - A. These sought to turn the faithful away from the truth into error.
 3. To stop these false teachers from "overthrowing whole houses," it was necessary to silence them.
 - A. With this in mind Paul said that it was the elders who had to be capable of confronting these false teachers and prevent them from destroying the church.
3. With this in mind let us consider this role in the church today.

BODY:

1. In returning to Titus 1:9 the phrase "Holding to..." means not only to adhere to the truth but also to be devoted to it and to take an interest in it.
 - A. The same word is used in Matthew 6:24 where Jesus spoke of the inability of a man to serve two masters as he will "hold to one, and despise the other..."
 1. The elders must be devoted to the "faithful word."
 - A. This, of course, refers to that definite, fixed body of doctrine, which had been taught by God's inspired servants.
 - B. Adhering to and being devoted to the true doctrine will enable elders to accomplish a two-fold task:
 1. First, they will be able to "exhort in sound doctrine."
 - A. The word "exhort" conveys the idea of urgently imploring or encouraging someone to be faithful to God and His word - Acts 2:40; 14:22; Jude 3.
 - B. The word "sound" is from the word that literally means to be in good health.
 1. It is used in the N.T. concerning the correct or true doctrine in contrast to different doctrines which are contrary to the truth - 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3.
 - C. Thus to "Exhort in sound doctrine" refers primarily to the ability to strengthen those in the faith so that they can recognize and meet error.
 2. Second, elders will be able to "convict the gainsayers."
 - A. Several concepts are inherent in the word "convict."
 1. Bringing to light, exposing, demonstrating.

2. Convincing.
3. Reproving, correcting.
- B. The word "gainsayers" literally means those who speak against or contradict the truth.
- C. Elders, therefore, must be capable of exposing the error of false teachers by demonstrating the truthfulness of the gospel.
 1. Undoubtedly this is why an elder must to "apt" to teach - 1 Tim. 3:2.
- C. To "exhort" and to "convict" have a durative quality.
 1. The implication here is that it is the elder's duty to continually build up the brethren in the truth, and to continually protect them from the inroads of error.
 - A. It is not enough for the elder to be able to denounce error.
 - B. He must also be able to meet it and refute it so that the purity of the gospel is preserved and that the false teachers may be saved – Tit. 1 :13.
2. There are many other passages, which help us to see the elder's duty of leading the congregation in meeting error - Acts 15:6-29; 20:28-31; Heb. 13:17.
3. Let us now make a practical application for the eldership today.
 - A. In order to properly lead the church in meeting the forces of error, the elders must be capable of analyzing the situations confronting the church.
 1. Paul and John cautioned their readers to be aware of false teachers and their attack on the church - 2 Tim. 4:3,4; 1 John 4:1-3.
 2. Elders must have the same kind of foresight that will enable them to recognize sources of error and be prepared to deal with such.
 3. Elders must also be capable of making plans to meet the current and future forces of evil.
 4. They must also be capable of leading the congregation in the furtherance of these plans.
 - A. They do this by making every use of scriptural means, i.e. Bible classes, sermons, special classes, etc.

CONCLUSION:

1. These are perilous times for the church.
 - A. They call for capable and prepared leaders.
 1. Leaders who are fully devoted to the truth.
 2. Leaders who are capable of preparing themselves and other Christians to meet all challenges - Acts 20:28.