

**BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE
TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION**

(Thursday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

**The Producing of the Elders in Life
to Care for the Church in an Organic Way**

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:23; 20:28; Titus 1:5; John 21:15-17; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11

I. The elders are produced not by appointment but by growth in life—1 Tim. 3:1-7:

- A. The children of Israel had elders, but the Old Testament does not tell us how these elders were appointed; likewise, there were elders in the church in Jerusalem, but there is no record of when or how they became elders—Exo. 4:29; Acts 8:1; 15:2, 4, 6.
- B. The New Testament shows us the importance of the elders in God's administration—Acts 11:29-30; 15:2, 4, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18:
 - 1. The elders are overseers in the local church—20:28:
 - a. The title *elder* denotes a person of maturity, whereas the title *overseer* denotes the function of an elder—14:23; 20:28.
 - b. To oversee is to observe the situation, condition, and need for the purpose of taking care of the church with all the saints—1 Tim. 3:1.
 - c. The elders should oversee the church altogether according to God's thought, feeling, will, and choice—1 Pet. 5:2.
 - 2. The elders take the lead in the local church, going ahead of the flock to set an example—1 Tim. 5:17.
 - 3. All the elders should be apt to teach the members of the local church—3:2:
 - a. The elders are the local shepherds, and to be a shepherd is to be a teacher; teaching is the main way to practically shepherd the saints—Acts 20:28.
 - b. The elders should be occupied in teaching the saints concerning the practical matters of the daily Christian life and church life.
 - 4. The elders bear the burden of shepherding the local church; the church is like a flock, and the elders are the shepherds to shepherd this flock, taking care of the situation of the flock and meeting the needs—v. 28.
 - 5. The elders take care of the finances in a local church; an elder must be pure in money matters, especially since the church fund is under the elders' management—11:29-30; 1 Tim. 3:3.
- C. The producing of the elders does not depend mainly on the appointment by the apostles; rather, the producing of the elders is mainly a matter of life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5:
 - 1. The elders are produced by what they are in life according to their growth and maturity in life—1 Tim. 3:1-7.
 - 2. To appoint elders is simply to point out or indicate to the saints who the elders are in order to avoid confusion or complication; nevertheless, we

need to be clear that the elders are produced not by appointment but by life.

3. The strength of the eldership depends on life and teaching; if the elders are rich in life and in teaching, the situation in the churches will be wonderful.

D. Elders are not transferable—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5:

1. The elders should be raised up locally from among the saints meeting in a church, and there should be no transfer of elders, because this violates the principle of life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
2. Transferring elders is dangerous because it opens the door to hierarchy and causes the churches to lose the Lord's blessing—cf. Rom. 15:29; Eph. 1:3.
3. Transfers cause a local church to become a man-made organization without the nature of a family—Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15.
4. Transferring elders is absolutely against the biblical principle and is useful only for those who want to build up their own kingdom by manipulating the situation in order to gain control over certain local churches.

II. The church is the organic Body of Christ, and the elders should care for the church in an organic way—John 21:15-17; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Pet. 5:2:

A. The eldership is organic, and the elders' care for the church should be altogether organic, not organizational—John 21:15-17:

1. The term *elder* indicates something organic, something of life; an elder is a person who is mature in life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
2. The elders should be one with the Lord Jesus to feed, shepherd, nourish, and cherish the church; this is the organic way to care for the church—John 21:15-17; Eph. 5:29:
 - a. The word *shepherd* nearly equals the words *nourish* and *cherish*—1 Pet. 5:2; Eph. 5:29.
 - b. All the elders should be nourishing mothers and teaching fathers—1 Thes. 2:7, 11.
 - c. We all need to learn not to control the saints but to nourish and cherish them.
3. To take the lead, to administrate, to function as an elder in the church, is one of the gifts given according to grace; this indicates that the leading of the elders is organic and that it is by life and is not organizational—Rom. 12:4-8.
4. If the elders take the lead in an organizational way, this indicates that the church has degraded, for to be in the realm of organization is to be in degradation.
5. If the elders live in the spirit by life to nourish, cherish, and shepherd the church, they are organic; when a church is organic, all the serving ones serve organically—8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:29.

B. Among the churches there should not be an improper coordination that brings in hierarchical organization and human headship—Rev. 2:6, 15; Col. 4:15-16:

1. Coordination often implies organization and activity; for the churches to have fellowship is normal, but to coordinate in the way of organizing nearby churches is an improper activity—2 Cor. 9:13; 1 Thes. 2:14.

2. Fellowship among the churches and the saints is the healthy flow of life, and it is normal for the elders in nearby churches to come together to fellowship; however, for the elders to coordinate may be a snare that causes the church to fall into organization—1 John 1:7.
3. We may come together for fellowship, but we must avoid hierarchical organization and human headship not only among the churches but also within each local church—Col. 2:19; 4:15-16.