

# **“The Role of Elders and the Congregation”**

## **By Associate General Pastor Hubert Ulysse**

### **Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Amen, amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you very much; you may be seated. Good morning, everyone. I'm glad to be back with you. And, as you know, it is a special day. It's a very, very special day. It's a day you should put in your calendar, because, you may want to refer back to it. Because, I believe, like Pastor Taylor says, there will be change, there will be change, and then you will see it's a change for the good. And, this change, it's not us who came up with it. It was there, way over two thousand years ago. Way over two thousand years ago, the Lord sent his Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, sent Him. And, He came and preached, and performed miracles, and He had a multitude of disciples after Him. A multitude. But, He had a mission, right? He had a mission. He didn't come to live forever, here. He came to accomplish something specific. And, you remember at one point, where He told the disciples, when He sent them Himself, He told them, “As I was sent, now I send you.” (John 4:34-38) So, you were sent with a mission, and then He sent us with a mission, too. But, in Luke, chapter six, verses twelve to thirteen, which, I don't think we have it. Do we have it up there? I don't think I gave it to you. This is where—it's there? This is where Jesus gets to a point in his ministry where He says, “Well, there must be a change. The mission that I came for must continue, but it has to last for a long, long time. It's not going—I'm not here forever. But, My mission, My work must remain.” So, what He did?

**Luke 6:12**     *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to [do what?] pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

If you can do it, as a homework for yourself, find every time that Jesus went to the mountain and spent the night to pray, He had an important decision to make. All the time. I remember that one time, He went and prayed, and His disciples were seeking for Him everywhere, because people were coming from everywhere to be healed and to—and then He went out and they were looking for Him; they could not find Him. And, when, finally, Peter and the other disciples found Him, they said, “Jesus where have You been? We have been looking for You. There are so many people waiting for You to be healed, and to hear from You, or whatever.” and Jesus, “You know what, let's go to another town.” Say, “What? They're waiting for us!” “No, let's go to another town, because they also need to hear the Word. So, you would think He would say, no, after praying, the decision came, He needs to leave. Go somewhere else. So, after He prayed, in verse thirteen, the Bible says:

**Luke 6:13**     *And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: [all who were following Him] and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;*

Among all of them, He picked twelve. Because He was going to go to the Father, and the work had to continue on. He chose these twelve, He called them Apostles, and, the Apostles, they are the ones to establish the church, as we know. And, we have the Acts of the Apostles. That's where we find everything they did. And, when we study the Word, we see that they established elders in every Church. They established elders, and you have right now, you have the churches, you have elders and deacons, because, as they were doing their work, and then, you know, trouble started. They felt like, “Okay, there must be somebody else to serve tables, so they could stay in prayer and ministering of the Word.” So they have the deacons to help them out. It's the same thing we're doing today. That's what's going on. That's what is

going on. But, I know there is even as of last week, when we made the announcement that we were coming here to ordain Parrish and Andy, we were asked by members, faithful members in our congregation in Norfolk, "Okay, are they going to be pastors, or elders?" I'm talking about people that you would say, "Really?" You still don't get it." But, I know it's here, it's everywhere. What we say elders, bishops, pastors it's the same thing. Okay? It's the same thing. You want to call them elder, call them. You want to call them pastor. But, I want to make a difference for you. Like, when you say elder, keep in mind you're talking to—you see the person. When you say elder, you see the person. When you say Bishop, you see the office, the position. He is an overseer. So, the elder is an overseer. Okay? And, then, when you say a pastor, when you call him a pastor, that's his job, what he does. He is to shepherd, to feed, okay? He is to shepherd, to feed. So, it's like when you say pastor so and so, it's like you're calling him shepherd. Somebody who takes care of sheep. That's what the person does. But, when you say Bishop, you're talking about the office. He is an overseer. He oversees stuff. And, when you say elder so on so, you see the person. We find that in Acts, chapter twenty, verse twenty-eight. I'm sure Pete has that, too. Paul was heading to Jerusalem, and he stopped, he stopped somewhere, in Ephesus—close to Ephesus. And, then, the Bible says he called the elders of the church. Okay? It says he called the elders of the church, and then this is what he told the elders; verse twenty-eight:

**Acts 20:28** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, [he's talking to who, now? The elders.] and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [who made them overseers? The Holy Ghost. So, the elders, they are the overseers. The word overseers, is the same word for Bishop. (G1985) so, when they say elder or Pastor don't look at it as elder or Pastor, the bishop is on top common the pastor comes after the bishop, and then elders come after. That's not the way it works. The elders were made overseers, bishops, by the Holy Spirit] to feed the church of God...*

Feed is to pastor, to shepherd. Okay? So, they were the elders, the Holy Ghost established them, put them to be bishops, overseers, to do what? To feed the flock of God. So, an elder, a bishop, a pastor is the same thing. Now, the author of Hebrews wrote something very important and this is—I'm going to use a couple of verses to speak to the congregation and to know elders. I don't know how to title it. How did you title it, Pete? Pete titled it "The Role of Elders and the Congregation." Oh, okay. Yeah. So, it's like, I'm going to use the Scriptures, and then I'm going to use that Scripture to see what's your duty, what's your responsibility as a congregation, and what is the responsibility is, of an elder. And, it's really, really going to be just—I believe you'll understand, that you're going to be blessed in it, but you're going to have to go through so many, many more studies on that. I'll ask you, if you don't mind, let us stand, and let's read together, we want to read together this verse, these verses with me, Hebrews, thirteen, verses seventeen and eighteen:

**Hebrews 13:17-18** *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. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.*

May the Lord bless this portion of His Word, for the edification of our souls, and for His Glory. Thank you, you may be seated.

From these verses I'm going to go over the three commands we find: command one is obey, command two is to submit, and the third one is to pray. The word "obey"—first of all, let's say it says obey them. Somehow, the author assumed they will be more than one person, and they assume that they would be a congregation with the structure that have leaders in it, there

would be more than one, that the congregation will obey. So, that's part of plurality of eldership, of pastors. And, we see it's an imperative. It is a direct command. There's no way to confuse that. Okay? But, let me tell you this word, there are two words in Greek for "obey." This is not the regular obedience, obey, we would see for the children, and for—what—this is different. This is a word in Greek (G3982). This is what it says: it means to suffer yourself to be persuaded. Okay? To be won over as the result of persuasion. That's what the word means. So that means we hear the word of, the word is teach to us, we get persuaded. The word is taught unto us and we are we get persuaded. So, what is not the brutal and royal command. It's not like, "Okay, you do this, and you obey." Okay? That's not what we're talking about, okay? So, it is—the Word is addressed to us, and we are engaged in God's Word, and then we follow. Okay? Also, it's not an outside obedience. It's not like, okay, you act like you obey, but you don't. You know? It's like—the way I can illustrate that is, there is a young boy, I read somewhere, he was jumping in an airplane. He was inside the airplane; he wouldn't sit down. He would jump back and forth, and, then, finally, they put him in a seat and tied him up. And, they said, "You stay here." Yeah. He was there. He was obedient, right? But, he was smiling and happy. And, they said, "Why are you smiling?" And, he said, "I am still jumping. I am still jumping. Inside, I am just jumping. Yeah, you tied me down, but I am still jumping." So, there are people who will act as if they obey the Word of God, but they are not. It's like the obedience must be from the heart. Okay? The form—remember, God knows the heart. He knows if you are obeying.

But, I must be honest with you. And, you need to be honest with yourself. There is something deep in our flesh that does not like what we are hearing right now. Very deep. Very deep. I don't like it; you don't like it. We would rather if it said, "When you are comfortable, when you are in the mood, consider what they are saying, and do it, if you want to, if you like it.". That's our flesh. Now, you know why you must feel like that? And, it's okay, it's for all of us. Can this be abused by authority? It can? I believe so. And, it's—maybe you have been abused, already. Maybe you can't stand to read that verse. And, the sad reality is, every good thing of God's Word can be used wrongfully, you know. That's just the truth. The word says power corrupts, right? And, absolute power corrupts absolutely. This is one more reason why, when you have plurality of elders, you know, if it's done right, the proper way, and, like Paul says, to watch each other, they will watch over themselves. Because, they have to watch over themselves first, before they can watch over the flock. If it's done right, and then they say, "Oh, no, no, no. that's not abuse of power here, or this or that." So, that's the way it works.

That is why, also, because the Word is the power. That is why, also, the elder must be apt to teach. Because, everything—because, obedience is the response to the Word of God. Obedience is the persuasion. You are persuaded by the Word of God. Then, the Word of God must be taught, in order to be obedient, in order to be obey, in order to be persuaded. So, the elders are to be apt to teach, and to feed, and encourage the sheep. Because, the authority is not the elder, really, the authority is the Word of God. The church is not the authority. You know that, because, the Word was there first. Doesn't the Bible say, at the beginning was the Word? The church came after. So, it is not the church that is the authority, it is the Word of God that is the authority. So, it's not to be enslaved by man, but it is, rather, walking in the liberty of God's Word. Okay? So, it's understandable, I mean, why our flesh would not want to hear that. Okay? But, even though we feel like that, even though there are cases, even though men will abuse the Word of God, if we have the mindset that we don't like it, we're not going to obey, we're not going to follow the instructions; this mindset can lead us to something that is counter to the Gospel. It can be counter to our spiritual good. So, our fearfulness about abuse of leadership must be tempered by two considerations, two things. Regardless what's going on, where have you been, what you were thinking right now, there are two things that you need to consider: the first one is: Being a Christian necessarily requires self-denial and cross bearing. Isn't that true? If you want to come after Me sure, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me. Those two things must exist. To die to self and live to Christ. Obviously, it's not hard to obey elders when

they tell you to do what you want, or what you want to hear. It's harder when they ask you to stop something we would rather do. That's just the way the flesh works. The second thing we need to consider is that Christian leadership is servant leadership. All the elders are, sad to say, they are your servants, servants to the congregation. That's all they are.

And it says, obey them that have the rule over you. Oh, that's even harder. They have the rule over you. "Ruling over" is potentially offensive to most modern hearers. I mean, it is offensive. We are raised in an egalitarian culture, we have our rights, the autonomy, and personal liberty are stressed. After all, we are American. We are told millions of ways that no one has any right over us. What does it say, "Don't tread on me," something like that? That's it. No one could rule over us, could correct us, admonish us, and it's a sad thing too, even parents don't have as much right as they used to. Yeah. The teachers, some of you may be as old as I am, or raised a culture where I was raised, if you do something, the whole village has power over you. Oh, yeah. You get caught doing something—first of all, everybody knew who you were. You may not even know them; they know your parents or whatever. They'll fix you up, and then you're praying that they won't go home and tell your parents. Because, you're going to get a second... Our teachers, even in our school in Haiti—Now, I am begging the school administration not to use the—yeah, I'm begging them, the last trip, the very last trip I made, I went to visit the class, the fifth grade class, and the teacher was not in class, because, I told them, "No, no, no, the way I grew up, they need to start changing, stop beating the kids." You know? And, I went to a parents' reunion, the parents are begging the school to beat their kids to help them out. And, I said, "No, no, no, we have to change. We cannot continue like that." So I went to that fifth grade class, and I saw rods, you know, that long (gesturing about a three-foot distance with his hands). Big stuff. I thought they were rulers for—so, I said, "What are these, guys?" They were happy, they said, "Yeah, these are to correct us." and they said, "Oh, we have more, look at this," and they opened a little door, and they were full of them. I told the administration, "No, we don't want that," but that's the way it still is. It still is. So, and, also, what makes it even sadder, we do have abuse going on. And, the reason why we get where we are, that's because the kids get abused, and women get abused, and so things are changing. And, also, don't men love ruling over other others? You know, don't you want to be the boss, and you want to, you know, "No, you listen to me!" right? And, it's not us here. It's not something new. Because, Peter, if we go to First Peter, five, one through four, we're going, you can take from it, it existed a long time ago. Verse one:

**1 Peter 5:1** *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:*

This is what he told them to do:

**1 Peter 5:2** *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof [be a bishop], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

Verse 3:

**1 Peter 5:3** *Neither as being lords over God's heritage...*

That's the key, right there. Even the lord is not a capital "L," even the little lords, you cannot be over. But, what you need to be is, be an example to the flock. That's what it is. Elders are just people who are willing—really, when you look at the qualifications of for an elder, that's a qualification for any Christian. Any Christian should be that. But, when you take responsibility to be recognized, and be ordained as an elder, you say, "You know what? I'll serve as an example." So, now, all fingers will be on you, all eyes will be on you, you, give permission for

people—I love it when people about, they have the private life, or I am... You know what? once you say I do, it's over. Yeah. It's like being married. You say you do, think about it before you say you do, young kids. Because, once you say you do, it's done. It's done. Or, you can say, "Well, if it doesn't work, I'll just get the divorce." You have pain for your whole life. You need to do it once, and keep in mind it's for life.

**1 Peter 5:4** *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

There is a Chief Shepherd. We are under shepherds, that's what we are. We are under shepherds. Now, how many we said Jesus chose as special? How many? You think He would choose the twelve perfect ones, right? That wouldn't have this mentality. Well, according to your verse, I see here this morning, in Mark, chapter nine, you see, you know, they were asking, who should be the greatest? That's the mentality. I know we are twelve, but one of them wants to be the greatest. One of them would like to lord over them. And, in Mark, chapter ten, the conversation continues, verse thirty-five:

**Mark 10:35** *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.*

And Jesus said, "Go ahead, make your request."

**Mark 10:37** *They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.*

We want to be the top guys.

**Mark 10:38** *But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask:...*

Which they did not really know. They asked to be crucified with Christ, without knowing. Do you know, even—let me continue with marriage, do you know many people want to be married, but they have no clue what being married is? They don't know. How do I know? Because I was the same. five years into marriage, I had no clue what it was. And, no joke, the day I got married, I was driving to go to honeymoon, and, then, my wife was on my right, and I was driving. All of the sudden, my heart kept on beating. And, I looked at her, you know, and I said, "My goodness, what have I done?" I said, "Man, that's..." and now I'm thinking, "Now, her hunger is for me, her sick is for me, everything is for me," would I think about that before, I probably would at least delay that thing, you know? That's what happened. They asked but they don't really know what they asked for. So Jesus said, "Can you guys drink the cup that I'm going to drink, I have to drink from, and, be baptized with the baptism?" Even though, they did not fully understand, they said yes. And, in verse thirty-nine, Jesus said, "Yeah, actually you will, oh, you will, regardless. You will go through it." (Mark 10:39) Because they had a ready mind, and Jesus knew they were going to last, you know? But, Jesus said, "as far as sitting on my right hand and on my left hand, that is not mine to give, it's not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. It's not mine." (Mark 10:40)

**Mark 10:41** *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.*

Can you imagine, there are twelve of you, as a team, and two of them just would go by night, and just ask to be the top guys.? That by itself is bad. And, then for the other ten to find

out. So, big issue. Nowadays, it's ten against two, now. But, even those ten, they probably, you know, they get mad, because, "Why you left us here, and then you want that position, well, I want it, too. We all want it, so why you?" We don't have this mentality here, do we? Well, unfortunately, we have it everywhere. You just have to watch yourself, that you don't go by night to Jesus, and just pray, "Lord, make me the top. Make me this." No, it's bad. Jesus will rebuke you oh, and you're going to be in trouble with everyone else when they find out. Okay?

**Mark 10:42-43** *But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, [all twelve of them,] Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you...*

No, not among us. Not among Us. Actually, in one other place it says "I am the only Master here; we are all brethren." (Matthew 23:8) That's what it said.

**Mark 10:43-45** *But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man [even the Son of God] came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

And He said, obviously, the same way He gives His life, He wants you to lay down your life for your brethren.

And, in command number two, it says to submit. It says 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. To submit means to comply with, to trust in, to have confidence in, do not resist, but give way, to yield to authority. Because, they watch for your souls. Now, you know, some people take—and I hope Andy and Parrish don't understand it this way, they take it as, "Okay, once they're an elder everybody will be watching over them, protect them, and take care of them, and whatever. No, no, no. The word watch means to stay awake, in order to stand watch. You stay awake in order to stand watch. You are a soldier. You are a shepherd. And, you should watch a lot of movies about shepherding to see how the shepherd—you know, I have my one thing, my brother, he has an animal. This guy will not come to see you, no vacation, because, he would put his animals to sleep, and then, it's that night, escape, do something, and then he has to come back by daylight. And he just cannot stay out for anything, because his mind is always thinking about, "How, how are they doing? Are they feeding?" And, to me, it's a pain, I say, "Why would anybody put themselves into this situation?" Because he would get up early in the morning, to take them out, so they can feed, and doing in the middle of the day, go ahead and put them in shade area, and get them something to drink and then in the afternoon, again, go back again to lock them up. I would rather have a car, or, I don't know. But, to me, it's just a pain. This is what watching for souls. And, you know what even is worse, being watching for souls? Let's say, do you know the difference between, you have somebody, your friends, your sister, your brother, or family drop their children in your house, for you to watch over them, comparing to your kids? Even though you think it's hard with your kids, have somebody else's kids, and see the difference. You're so careful, right? You don't want anything to happen. Even when you have they discipline, you're careful. Right? They're not your kids. And, their parents have a way to discipline their kids. You cannot discipline them the way you want. No, no, no, no. That's not the way. So, watching over them, you need to ask questions to the owners, to Jesus Christ, say, "Okay, how do you want me to?" One thing, I think pastors make great mistakes, really great mistake, by ruling, and then abusing the sheep, and making—if only they thought about Jesus died for the flock; Jesus gave his life. If He can die for the flock, can you imagine how much more patient He will be to save as many? it's like the servant, when the master came, and said, "Okay, this fig tree, every year I come and nothing happens to it.

Cut it off.” Don't be quick to cut it off. And, the real servant will say, “Well, sir, do you mind if we take one more year? This time I will do this and do that and if, after that, nothing happens, we will cut it off.” Even if the Lord tells you something like that, “Well, sir, you know, let's be more patient.” You cannot be faster than your master, and say, “No, this sheep, we need to eat it, no, we need to sell it, we need to—” No, no, no, no, no, no, no. They're not yours. They're not yours. You're watching them for Christ. And, Christ is the boss. He is the boss. And, I have a couple of Scriptures, or three, to show the example of watching for the souls. It's giving themselves to prayer. Because, when you see what the Apostles did, it gives me an idea, giving yourself to prayer, that might be a very, very good way. And, Acts chapter 6 verse 4, you know the story, but they say, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.” What was happening, they were doing so many other things, people were calling them back and forth, dealing with this and that issues, and, and then said one of them said, “You know, this is not good. It's is not good, because now we feel like, we're lacking in our prayer; we're lacking in the Word.” That's why they came up with the deacons. To help them out. So they can give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. And, in Colossians, chapter four, twelve:

**Colossians 4:12** *Epaphras, who is one of you, [Paul says] a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

Paul Vonn, in Norfolk, he did something for me in my office. That's the greatest thing I feel I have. I have a corner, we joke around with it, that's the corner confession booth. That's my confession booth. So, people come to my window, there, and I listen, stuff like that, and, well, anyway, we have the whole ministry, the whole ministry, he put it on a tree, a tree, right? And, then I put on top of it, feed my sheep. So, that's my job: feed God's sheep. You know, that visual helped me so much. I have the whole ministry in front of me, and I have the key leaders, for Norfolk, I have what we call the community groups, I have people there. It helped me so much. So, every day when I come, the first thing is, like looking there, and it helped me to pray for everyone. It helps me. It's easy to forget. It's easy to. But really, our job is to fervently pray that the people may stand perfect, and complete in all the will of God. I think that one of the greatest examples of watching for souls, is the example of Christ in Luke, chapter twenty-two. Jesus saw what will happen to Simon, and He said:

**Luke 22:31-32** *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Sometimes it's easy to just think you're just going to go ahead. “I'm going to go fix him, or either fix him, or kick him out, or whatever.” But, Jesus said, “I see what's going on. Peter, you are a great guy, but Satan wants to have you. Satan wants to have you. I'm going to pray; I have prayed for you. I have prayed for you.” Obviously, Jesus' prayer, you know, was taken greatly before the Lord, but, did every prayer that Jesus prayed get answered the way He wanted it to? He didn't want to go to the cross. He said, “Lord, if it's Your will, then let Your will be done, but really, I don't want to go.” But, He prayed that Peter be restored. He was so confident, He said when you are converted. And, it's interesting, as you know, Peter was with Him during all that, but, yet, Peter needed so much prayer. So, people, in your midst, you see they are active, and strong, or whatever, but there will be a little attitude, there will be something that will give you a hint: Satan is working something out. And, sometimes you can't even point it out. You can't even tell him what it is. You don't even know it, but you know Satan is doing something. You pray that the Lord restore them, Because, once they are restored they will help

the other ones. They will help the other ones. And, then the third command he says, "Pray for us. Pray for us, for we trust that we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly." Having the will is not enough, you need the power, right? How many of you, who would love to be the best Christian ever? Wouldn't you want to be the best Christian ever? But, you know you are not, and you may never be. Because, it's a struggle. It's a day-to-day—it's a lifetime struggle. Today you're up, tomorrow you're down, but, keep going on until this trumpet sounds. Your elders need prayers, the prayers of God's people. They need it. And, we're talking about whoever would write Hebrews, some assume it's Paul. We're talking about some great men, some great men! And, asking, pray for us. They are on the front lines of spiritual warfare. You know, when you have two armies fighting, you know, they, really, they could care less about the soldiers if they can get the officers. If they can get the king, if they can get the president, that would demoralize the troops. So, it's no surprise Satan would want you guys. And, you, as a congregation, you need to pray for them. So, priority, primarily, the responsibilities of the elders, role number one is to teach the Word of God. We should be men who know the Word of God, because, they need to be able to persuade the congregation in order for the congregation to obey. They should be apt to teach, obviously, some people may think, because they are apt to teach, they are suitable. They can teach, that means they have all the knowledge in the world. Some people also think because you are an elder you should, automatically, have all the answers to everything. I tell you what, to feed the flock of God is a hard work. I said it in Norfolk many, many times, "Norfolk, our ministry is the hardest flock to feed, because, we have knowledge. We have knowledge in this ministry. We grew up in the Word." So, you know, it's come to be like when somebody comes up to teach, preach, and you find more critics. You find more people saying, "Ah, this," and "Ah, this," instead of getting edification, or, we repeat the same things over and over. It's just... But, you know, the elders, what they're supposed to do, it's different. They're going to spend time in study; they're apt to teach, but they have to study to get the knowledge to teach. I remember, two years ago, yeah, two years ago, I had a series of families, and I had to teach on homosexual in the Bible. What do I know about homosexuality? I cannot come, just take the Scriptures talking for or against something I don't know. So, I have to buy books; I have to read about what they believe, where do they come from, why, what do they use to prove their points, they should be accepted, they are accepted, or God is happy, or whatever? You know what? After I bought that book, okay, I understand. I still don't agree, but I understand. And, that's the way you approach. It took a few weeks to study. But, you cannot come and just say whatever, okay? You have to speak with knowledge, with knowledge. And, knowledge, you don't just, "I'm going to pray, and the Holy ghost will tell me what to say." No, that doesn't work. You study, and as you study, and then the Holy Ghost will tell you all the points you need to bring. That's the way. If you don't study, you stay on your knees, you come in here, everybody will see you are not prepared. Everybody will see it. I remember, in the Navy, brother Malcolm was on my ship, and, somehow from day one, I was studying, and Brother Malcolm left, and I was continuing studying. Every time I don't take time to prepare, to study, when I come I don't have much to say. I really don't. And, every time I take time to study, I have lots of stuff to say. And, people will see it. The people of God is not dumb. They know if you spent time or not. Okay? Nowadays, there is no excuse for being ignorant. No excuse. No excuse. The internet, whatever subject you want to search, even if you've never heard anything about it, all it takes is time. It does take time. Because, not only do you find—you get everything you find, but you have to make sure it's the right thing, you have to—you know, it's a lot of work. A lot of work. When the Bible says my people perish for lack of knowledge, and they reject knowledge; it's even worse now, because, I don't think they have the internet back then. If you don't have knowledge right now, you'll perish. Right Parrish Lee? Oh, yeah, different perish? All right. For lack of knowledge, because they reject knowledge. So, they have to put time and effort; they have to know about the original languages. They need to study context, theology, doctrines, always learning, always. It's so interesting; the context will change



everything. Things you've been saying for years, you've been fighting for, when you humble yourself and sit down, you understand the context, if you're truly humble, "Man, I had that wrong all those years." Sunday, I preached about, we had a family series going on, and, somehow I taught about how the ladies, we had a Bible study, about the old elder, about the women who teach the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, but, Paul, in Ephesians, said, "Husbands love your wives." Okay, but, in English, Love is Love. When you read the Bible, it says, "Husbands love your wives" you read it in Titus, it says, "Wife love your husband." To you, it's the same thing. But, the Bible wasn't written in English. As elders, you have to go to the word search and find the context it was used, and which one is it. Okay, then, when you go to Titus, Paul asked the wives to **phileo** their husband, but He asked, in Ephesians, for the husbands to **agape** their wives. It's not love like we know it. It's different. It's different, so, what do you ask your wives are not to die for their husbands, the wives are not to provide for their husbands, they are not to be the caretaker, that's not their responsibility. Their responsibility is to be the friend of the house, the friend of their husband's, and create the environment. But the husband, no condition. It's the **agape** love. You're ready to die, you're ready to provide with no conditions. The fact that saying, "Well, well, she did this, she did that, oh, God is not going to get that." That love—no excuse, you just have to love, to love, like Christ loves us. And, he says to love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave His life for it, for the church. And, not only does he say that, not only did Christ died for the church, He's working to present the church before the Lord. So, just, I say that to let you know that context is important. The words have meanings. And, their true meanings is not in English; it's in the original. You need to always ask the question, what did they understand when this was read to them. We have our constitution, for example. You know there are a group of people who are there to interpret it, to make sure they have it right, because it was written long ago, contexts change. Like, if we're talking about weapons, now, they didn't have what we have now, they didn't have internet for example. So, you have to put everything into context. And, if we have to amend, make change, you have to make change according to time, but, you have to go by what they meant, the Spirit of the Lord. The spirit that was behind it. If we don't do that for the Bible, we will lead the people astray. The days of what we call concordance Bible studies are over. Tomorrow we're going to study on baptism, on faith, and whatever, and then just take the concordance and boom, boom, boom. That's not for you elders, anymore. Research, study, and then present. Going back twenty years ago when I listen to what I used to teach, I say, "Oh, my goodness, I cannot listen to myself." and people were so happy, "Pastor has knowledge." It's like a—I don't have too many more. I have—there is a true story, in Haiti, where some pastors were ignorant. They really don't understand the context, they read it and they take it. So, this pastor was preaching about Abraham who had 100 teeth. Because, the word in French, "deux cent dents" it pretty much means 200 teeth. So the guy was preaching about Abraham who had 200 teeth, descendants, 200 teeth, descendants. "Oh, Abraham had 200 teeth. In his days, life was so great, and people lived a righteous life, and they used to have 100 teeth, and now, because of sin, we sinned so much we end up with thirty-two, now! And, you only have thirty-two for so long, because you continue to sin, maybe before you die you have none!" And, the whole congregation, "Amen! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord." This is what happened. This happens to us. We're saying things, and people who research are saying "Oh, my goodness, what is he saying?" and it doesn't look good. That's why, before you say something, make sure you listen to enough people to make sure what you're saying is right. You have to do that, and, congregation, your pastors are not the only voice. What I say? I am not the only voice. Parrish and Andy are not the only voice. Don't be afraid to do your research, to study, don't be afraid to listen. They are fallible men, attempting the impossible job of bringing the infallible Word. That's all it is, and I hope they know that. If you heard something different, then come and sit down, and see where and why it's different. That's all it is. It doesn't have to be with an attitude. It doesn't have to be like, "No, no, no, let's, okay, lets..." Doesn't the Bible say that if in anything we be otherwise minded, God

shall reveal even this unto you? But, where we're at, let's continue. We can still continue in walking, and we have things we don't see together, but as we know, we'll see; the Lord will reveal it. When there is humility within the leadership, and obedient, submissive congregation, amazing things happen. Amazing things happen. You, the congregation, God's people, you have the responsibility in your hearing. You are not robots. Are there any robots here? You are not robots who respond to whatever comes from the pulpit. You're not. You should not take yourself for that. Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Prove all things. God's people are the people who listen, think, and examine the Scriptures. They listen, they think, and they examine the Scriptures. Obviously, by nature, the elders should have more time to study. This is why it's important that your elders, like the Bible says, to honor those who work—to give double honor to those who labor in the ministering of the Word (1 Thessalonians 5:17). So, now, if we have five elders in Norfolk, for example, not all of them are into the ministry of preaching. So, however many you have here, it doesn't mean that all of them will have the same capacity to teach. So, I think Scott is the primary person in our congregation, so, it is expected more out of him. And, obviously, Jonathan went to seminary or whatever. They are really into it, so those two are the main key persons. We expect that they would be deeper, because they put more time into it, they searched, whatever, so it's important. And, by nature, they will have deeper understanding of some passages, of some whatever than the congregation. It's just natural. Because everybody else is doing their stuff, day-to-day, taking care of stuff, but the elders, whoever is responsible, the main feeder of the congregation, should know more about the subject because they take more time to dig. Okay? It's not because that person is smarter; it's not because that person is whatever. It's just because that person give himself into it. That's what it is. Okay? We do not have to obey them, if they ask you to do something unlawful. And, yesterday, I shared with Andy and Parrish about submission. When the Bible says wives submit to your husbands in what things? In what many things? In what many things? In all things (Colossians 3:18). So, it's the same way, it says obey them; I don't want to give you the impression in all things. And, even in all things, the Bible says you need to use wisdom. If your husband is going to work, he is late, for whatever reason, he's on the highway--I'm not going to use 65 on 55--but she is doing 55 on 55, speed limit, and the husband says, "Whoa, whoa, I'm late, make it 75." Should she obey? But the Bible says submit in all things. Something will tell you, "Well, I know you're my husband, and the Bible says to submit to you, but you are not the authority right here; the police is." You see what I'm saying? The police is the authority. And, even when we are in church, if it's something to have to do with the church, guess who is in authority? No, the elders, the leadership of the church is in the authority. The church has its own ways of functioning. The church is an authority. Okay? Not over the Word of God, but it's an authority. Okay? What if she's at work? You think the husband is in authority? If she's supposed to be off, or whatever, can the husband say, "No, you're not doing this and this." Who is the boss, when it comes to work? If you don't want your wife to get ordered from boss, just let her be a housewife. The minute she applies, and she has somebody to work for, you lose that authority. You don't have it. You cannot say, "You cannot work late today." No, no, "That's my boss who tells me if I cannot work late or not, because she is my boss. If you don't like it, then, I guess I either don't have a job, or call my boss. But, you're not my boss." We do not have to obey, if we are asked to do something unlawful or unbiblical, no. We should obey, if we are asked to do something right. What if we are asked to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength? What if we are asked to love our neighbor as ourselves? What if we are asked to walk humbly with our God? What if we are asked to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to deny ourself, and pick up our cross daily and follow Him? Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together? What if the wives are asked to submit to their own husbands as unto the Lord? What if the husbands are asked to love their wives like Christ loved the church? Should we obey? What if the children are asked to obey their parents? Fathers, not to provoke their children to wrath? Should they obey? To live a life that is pleasing to God, to bear

one another's burdens, to do good to all men as you have opportunity, especially to those of the household of God? What if you are asked to pray without ceasing? Not to be easily offended? What if you are asked to work out your own salvation with trembling and fear? Those are the things, in church, you should obey, and, I am confident, these are the kind of things your elders will ask you to do. That's all that is. That's all that is. But, it says knowing that, if you don't obey, they will do it, because they have no choice, but they will not do it with joy, right? Because, hey, what did they say? Again, if you have somebody's children in your house, and they're not behaving, don't you have to endure? Can you just kick them out, and say, "I'm sorry, when your parents come, they can find you wherever you go?" You have to endure. But, it's not with joy, right? And, the next time, you may even say, "Well, if you find somewhere else, I would rather not keep your children." But, you know what the Bible says? It will be unprofitable for who? For the elders? (Hebrews 13:17)

So, with this, I am bringing Pastor Taylor to continue for us. May God bless you and may you not be hearers, but doers of the Word.