Authority Of Elders/Preacher

Intro: To a great extent out society has rejected authority. Today instead of authority, it is how someone feels. Sadly, the thinking has invaded the Lord’s church. Several years ago many Christians attacked the authority of elders, claiming they had no authority except as examples. That would mean they had no authority what-so-ever. Additionally, the inroads of denominationalism has been felt within the church. Denominations have taught that the preacher, as they say “the pastor” is the one with authority. The combination of these two ideas have lead to a great misunderstanding and lack of knowledge within the Lord’s church concerning the authority of elders and preachers, and authority in general.

I. JESUS IS HEAD OF THE CHURCH.
   A. Scriptures
      1. Eph. 1:22-23 “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
      2. Col. 1:18 “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”
      3. Mat. 28:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”
   B. He makes all laws relating to the church.
      1. 1 Cor. 9:21 “To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.”
      2. Gal. 6:2 “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

II. ELDERS HAVE AUTHORITY.
   A. Some deny that elders have any authority except by example.
      1. 1 Pet. 5:3 “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”
      2. While they are to be examples and must not lord it over the flock, that does not negate their authority.
   B. Terms or Titles given to the office or work.
      1. Overseer, Bishop
         a. Comes from the Greek word επίσκοπος (episkopos).
         b. Thayer, “A man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly.”
      2. Shepherd, Pastor
         a. From the Greek ποιμήν (poimen).
         b. Thayer, “The presiding officer, manager, director of any assembly; so of Christ, the head of the church...of the overseers of the Christian assemblies.”
      3. Elder, Presbyter
         a. From the Greek presbuteroς (presbuteros).
         b. Has its background in the rulers of the Jews.
         c. Thayer, “A term of rank or office...the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from the elderly men...among Christians those who presided over the assemblies (or churches).”
   C. Scriptures showing their authority.
      1. 1 Tim. 3:1,5 “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. ... 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”
      2. 1 Tim. 5:17 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”
3. 1 The. 5:12 “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;”

4. 1 Pet. 5:2-3 “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 ensamples to the flock.”

5. Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

6. Heb. 13:17 “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.”

D. Elder’s authority.
1. They do not have authority to make laws; only Christ can make laws.
2. Within the laws that Christ gives there are areas of judgment.
3. Their authority resides in those matters of judgment, in expedient matters.

E. Some of the duties of elders.
1. Take heed (to self and the flock); Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
2. Watch for the souls of the flock; Heb. 13:17 “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.”
3. Oversee (rule, superintend, govern, manage, direct the flock).
   a. Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
   b. 1 Pet. 5:2 “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;”
   c. 1 Tim. 5:17 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”
   d. 1 The. 5:12 “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;”
4. Feed, tend the flock; 1 Pet. 5:2 “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;”
5. Be an example to the flock; 1 Pet. 5:3 “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”
6. Hold Fast the Word; Tit. 1:9 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”
7. Guard the flock against evil men.
   a. Passages
      (1) Tit. 1:9 “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”
      (2) Acts 20:31 “Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”
   b. Watch for wolves.
   c. Convince, convict the gainsayer.
   d. Stop the mouths of the unruly, vain talkers, deceivers.
8. Charge over money affairs; Acts 11:29-30 “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”
F.  Congregation’s duty to the elders.
1. Know them; 1 Th. 5:12 “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;”
2. 1 Th. 5:13 “And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”
   a. Esteem them
   b. Love them
3. Follow, imitate their faith; Heb. 13:7 “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”
4. Obey, submit unto them; Heb. 13:17 “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.”
5. Count them worthy of honor—double honor; 1 Tim. 5:17 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”
6. Have confidence in them; 1 Tim. 5:19 “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

III. Preacher Has Authority.
A. His authority is to preach God’s Word.
1. Tit. 2:15 “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”
2. 1 Tim. 4:16 “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”
3. Preach the Word; 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
4. Rebuke elders that sin; 1 Tim. 5:19-20 “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”
5. The authority to preach the word does present some areas of work that is the same as elders.
   a. The salvation of souls are our concern (preaching to the lost and edifying the saved).
   b. They must work as a team for a congregation to be successful.

B. Authority preachers do not possess.
1. They do not possess a decision making role.
2. They are not the Reverend, Pastor, the Minister (all Christians are to be ministers).
3. They do not run the church.

Conclusion: Let us all work together for the greatest cause on earth—the cause of Christ, recognizing the authority of the elders of the local congregation.