

God's Wisdom: Eldership

by Wayne Goff

"So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" — Acts 14:23.

God ordained in His church that the spiritual leaders be in the **plural** — "**elders.**" Religious people and bodies have ignored that arrangement to their own detriment. We see one of the first *apostasies* from the New Testament order in **organization**: one elder was given primacy over the other elders in a local congregation and designated as "**bishop.**" This man then represented the church, but in so doing violated God's order.

Some denominations today have a "**pastor system**" of government. They designate their preacher as "pastor" and give him *some* of the authority God intended for the eldership alone. However well-intentioned the plan may be, it is dangerous in that it permits **one man** to rule the church contrary to God's plan. Doctrinal apostasy often results from following the influence of that one person.

In the New Testament, **Diotrephes** became a "one-man show" in the church to which the beloved apostle John wrote. John said that "*he loves to have the preeminence among them*" (3 Jn. 9). This heretic even rejected the apostle John, or anyone who would be in fellowship with John, putting them out of the church (3 Jn. 10).

Some *carnal* Christians in Corinth touted their favorite teacher — Paul, Apollos, Cephas, etc. (1 Cor. 1:12). Once again we see the danger of following one man to the spiritual detriment of the saints. Paul warned against thinking of men "*beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against another*" (1 Cor. 4:6).

God's wisdom is seen in *the plurality of men* that compose the eldership in the local church. Their **combined** wisdom and judgment protects the church from being led astray from the truth, or from becoming the "*bewitched*" (Gal. 3:1) who no longer obey the truth. So brethren, trust in God's plan and Word, and do not be puffed up for a one-man show!

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