

Overseers Or Overlookers?

We read a recent article that mentioned the above. We wish to expound upon the thought here.

The Bible says that elders are "bishops", literally "overseers" (Titus 1:5, 7). These men are to oversee the local church. The Spirit says, "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly" (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

A major part of their job as overseers is to ensure the spiritual strength of the local church, that is, they are to make sure false, corrupting, damning doctrines and practices do not creep in. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31). Unfortunately, instead of being shepherds and elders who oversee the flock, some men appointed to that office are overlookers.

Some overseers will overlook the sin of adultery. There may be a couple in the congregation who is living in adultery, but for fear of "running them off" and "causing waves" the elders ignore the sin (cf. Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 5). Or, it may be that the overseers view the subject of divorce and remarriage as "too controversial" and choose to overlook the matter in the teaching program. We wonder what these men would have done about the subject of Jesus being the Christ if they lived in the first century.

Some overseers are afraid to raise the matter of dancing and the prom, so they choose to overlook it. They are either too cowardly to point out that the modern dance is lewd and sinful, or they are not convinced of such themselves (Gal. 5:19-21). By overlooking this sin, instead of overseeing the flock as commanded by God, it creeps in and infests the church. One day they wake up when a large portion of their teenagers go to the prom, but then it is too late.

Some overseers overlook the sin of forsaking the assembly (Heb. 10:24-25). They realize that brethren are "hit-and-miss" in their attendance, but are "concerned" that mentioning it will cause them to stop altogether. If that is a logical argument, then why mention any sin to any Christian? Rather, the overseers should be diligent in encouraging or rebuking those who are luke-warm.

Friend, in the congregation where you attend, are the overseers overlookers? If not, great! They are fulfilling the charge of God. If so, then take steps to change it. Talk to them about your concerns and encourage them to fulfill their God-given duties.

Steven F. Deaton