

Pastors As Shepherds of the Sheep

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Let's turn to 1 Peter 5 once again. Tim read part of that. . "Therefore, I exhort the elders," here's an exhortation or charge to the elders, "I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

And this phrase- "taking the oversight thereof," which is included in the King James and I think in the more recent New American Standard. So all of these are there- shepherding the flock of God, the elders taking the oversight. And then in Acts chapter 20, you just keep your place there in 1 Peter, Acts chapter twenty. And we learn quite a bit here from the example of Paul and his words to the elders here in Acts 20:17, "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." Now, usually we talk about the pastoral epistles, ones like Timothy for example. But really, Timothy was not a typical elder in a local church. But these men here are just unknown, typical elders in local churches. And Paul calls for them, calls to him the elders of the church. "And when they had come to him, he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; and how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, bound in Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. Now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. I,

therefore, testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”

Now, there’s so much that we could talk about in all this. But, now he begins to exhort directly, exhort the elders. He says, in verse 28, “Be on guard for yourselves”. First of all, the minister's self-watch. And then, be on guard “for 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. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert.”

Another exhortation, "Be on the alert, remembering..." We need to remember these things. “Remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God...” Many times, we’ve prayed this for people that are going out, like when brother John Dees went out to India or to Bangladesh; we prayed this prayer. “We commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up...” and so on. But really, that was specifically in the context of the elders. And so we commend you to God. Dan and Mark, we commend you to God and to the Word of His grace; which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Paul says, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In every matter I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak,” now he’s giving an example to elders, “that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship.” Now, think of this: the one who was going down the road, breathing out threats and slaughter, here they are kissing him, weeping, hugging him. Think of this, what a thing!

Well, we’ve gathered here this afternoon to officially recognize and appoint and set aside these 2 men for the work that God has called them to do. Last night, we looked a little bit at the responsibilities of the sheep toward the shepherds, towards those that God has placed

over them. And we saw that the basic responsibility of the sheep is that they are to esteem the elders highly, very highly, in love for their work's sake. This afternoon I want to give a charge to Dan and to Mark in relationship to their responsibility towards the sheep. And really, when you begin to look at these things, I don't think there's anyone- I've been a pastor for quite a few years- I don't think there's anyone who would not feel that they have failed so much in fulfilling all that we have in the Bible about this work of shepherding. But I want to just look at some of these things. Those of you that have heard- I know Tim and others have talked on this work that Mark and Dan have entered into, so I know that you have been instructed at to some of the different names by which the work is called.

What is it? One of them we've talked about- the shepherd or pastor. What are the others? The elder and what else? The overseer. So, and I've read these passages. 1 Peter has all three names. He's talking to the elders and he says to shepherd the church of God. And right there it says, "Taking the oversight thereof". And then in Acts 20, Paul calls for the elders and he tells them, he exhorts them to shepherd the church, which He purchased with his own blood, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." So, they're shepherding, overseeing and elders- all 3 descriptions of this 1 work.

And what I want to do today is just talk a little bit more about this aspect of shepherding. Brother Tim has mentioned it. And the Bible has so much to say about shepherding, but I want to say just a little bit about elders, about the term elders and about the term overseer. I want to ask you, what comes to your mind, what should be, what's the responsibility of an elder? Just from the terminology, the term elder is literally, the Greek word just means an older one. What do you think of? What ought to be in their lives, if they're elders? Maturity. Did anybody say something different? I can't hear up here very well. Humility- that's good. Approachable. The idea of an older one- I tried to think through what this would mean- well: maturity, wisdom, experience. That doesn't necessarily mean older in years, but it means having had some time to walk with the Lord, not a beginner. Not somebody that's never been through anything.

And so the charge, just in relation to being an elder is, a lot of it is just an area that you're supposed to be grown up and be an example. And isn't it true, beloved, that most of our sin problems in our Christian life, is acting like children and acting immature? And it's like- grow up! But the elder is to set an example of what it's like to be grown up and to be mature. And that's one of the biggest things- to be an example; to be wise, responsible, sober, mature,

experienced. And we have these exhortations in 1 Timothy 4, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity show yourself an example of those who believe. And Titus 2:7-8, “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity and doctrine, dignified, sound in speech,” and so on. So- soberness, maturity, humility, not to dominate the sheep, but to set an example for the sheep.

And then elders are called to give wise counsel. And so it means that when you open your mouth people are going to listen to what you say, in a way that’s almost scary. I’ve had people come to me and say, “Well, I remember when you said such and such.” I said, “I said that? When did I say that?” “Well, about eight years ago you said that.” And so, in other words, you’re cast upon God, brethren, to ask for wisdom in your speech and to know what to say and what not to say. And so, James tells us, “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally.” You’re going to need to be asking for wisdom. And, you know, there’s so many things that appear, on the surface, to have an obvious answer. You know that case with the Gibeonites where Joshua just went according to what it looked like on the surface and did not seek counsel from the Lord. So we desperately need to realize how much we need God’s wisdom for this job. That’s all tied up in the term elder.

You’re the older brother. The older brother ought to, the older brother ought to be able to tell his younger brothers some things to avoid. Now, often times, the younger brother doesn’t listen, but at least he’s being told the right thing to help him not to make bad decisions. I’m sure there’s more on that, but that’s just that briefly.

But what about 'overseer'? What comes to your mind on 'overseer'? I mean, that’s a term that God gave us to describe this work. What? Watching, yeah. And the word is literally, you’ve probably taught on this, it’s literally Greek: 'Epi' and the word 'scope', which, we have for saints or you have oversee. Literally, that word, to watch over. And what’s an overseer doing like that on the job site? He’s got the plans and he’s coordinating, telling people things. He’s got a little bit of an idea of direction, of where the thing’s going. So you ought to have a little bit of an idea of where things are going and how things are fitting together, where it’s not just totally in a cloud and in a fog. Well, protecting, watching over, looking out for, directing- in general, just tied up in this word oversight.

But anyway, 'shepherd' is the one I want to center in on because there’s so much in Scripture about this and it’s so much on God’s heart. What do you think of in terms of shepherding? Shepherding. Caring for. What else? Protecting. Caring for, protecting. Leading.

Did somebody say leading? So you've got guidance. What did we say? Leading, caring for, protecting. Those sheep are going to get awful hungry in the process of all of this. And pasture, we get our word pasture and it's the same word as pastor and it comes from shepherding. So, feeding. These are all things that are tied up in this: caring for the wounds and sicknesses, being on guard, and protecting. Now there's so much in the Bible on this. Throughout the Old Testament, if we just looked at the Old Testament alone, God as our Shepherd and the Shepherd of His people and Him carrying His lambs and so on. So we have that just in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we have the Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and so on.

So, God Himself is a Shepherd, and then He has, Peter says, He has under shepherds. So we are entering in, those who are shepherds are entering into the very work that God is doing. And it is very much on the Lord's heart. Let me just give you one example. If you'd turn with me to John. John chapter 21 and verse 15. "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' And he said to Him, 'Yes Lord, You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord, You know that I love You.' And He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' and he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" Isn't that amazing? I mean, here's an apostle, and this whole issue of love, the love relationship between him and his Lord and it all comes back to "Feed My sheep. Tend My sheep. Shepherd My sheep." It's a thing that's on the Lord's heart. And for those that are called to this work, this is the way our love to the Lord is expressed and proved and tested. Whether or not we'll shepherd and tend and feed His sheep.

I want to read one Old Testament passage and then I want to try to draw some things out of this just in summary. Ezekiel 34, let's turn to that. It says so much about shepherding. There's really a lot that we could talk about from this, but I just want to bring a few things. If you want to learn about the work of shepherding, you go back to Ezekiel 34, there's a lot here. "Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, prophecy against the shepherds of Israel; prophecy and say to those shepherds, "Thus says the Lord God: woe shepherds of Israel who has been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the

flock. "" Now look at all these, we could literally spend hours on this.

"Those who are sickly, you have not strengthened." That's what shepherds should be doing. "The diseased you have not healed." That's what shepherds are supposed to be doing. "The broken you have not bound up." That's what they should have done. "The scattered you have not brought back." That comes up over and over, the scattering of the sheep. "Nor have you sought for the lost. But with force and with severity you have dominated them. And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill. My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth and there was no one to seek for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my flock has become a prey, my flock has even become food for all the beast of the field for lack of a shepherd. And My shepherds did not search for my flock, but rather the shepherds feed themselves and did not feed My flock. Therefore you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds and I shall demand my sheep." He says all the way through, 'My sheep...My sheep...My sheep'. "I shall demand my sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I shall deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be food for them." And then He goes on with wonderful promises in relation to the new covenant and what He'll do. And I won't read all of that, but if you just read this entire chapter, you see the work of the shepherd.

But what is a true shepherd called to do? I just want to give you 5 things here. First of all, he's called to seek. He's called to seek. We see that here several times it comes up. He's called to seek the lost sheep, in the sense of the unconverted. You have that in Luke 15. The shepherd goes out, leaves the 99 and seeks for this sheep until he finds it. He's called to seek the straying sheep. Matthew 18, the same picture, only this is talking about people, little one's, that belong to the Lord. He leaves the 99 and goes out for that one little one that's straying. God does that. That's what a true shepherd is to do. And then finally, he is to seek those that are scattered. We have this in Ezekiel 34, this idea over and over. If you look, if you study this thing, it talks about the sheep being scattered. And the wolf comes in and scatters the sheep. And so, seeking those who are lost, who are straying, who are scattered.

So seeking, secondly: leading. We talked about that, leading the sheep. Where does he lead them? One of the big things the Bible emphasizes, we know he leads them to pastures.

He leads them to pastures, he makes them to lie down in green pastures. But one of the big things that God emphasizes in your leading is leading the sheep to rest. “He leads me beside still waters. He makes me lie down in green pastures.” And you look at some of these passages in the rest of Ezekiel 34, our job is to lead God’s sheep into rest; not keep them in a frenzy, but get them to where they’ll rest, where they can rest in God. And that’s where the productive labors are going to be, in a place of rest. Leading to rest and leading to pastures; make them feed. And that’s the 3rd thing.

So seek, lead, feed. Not abstract, theoretical Bible knowledge, but wholesome, nourishing words that build up the soul and help them in the battle of life. Paul says to Timothy, “In pointing out these things to the brethren you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine of which you’ve been following.” Well, if that was true of Timothy, then he’s going to nourish those sheep with sound words; feed them.

So, seek, lead, feed, heal. Take care of; heal them. Bind up the broken. And you go down again, it would take us hours, to look even at these verses in Ezekiel 34, about binding up those that are hurting and broken and healing the disease and so on. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He’s anointed Me to bind up the broken hearted.” One of the most glorious works of the shepherd is having the privilege of binding up wounded, broken, hurting sheep and getting them to rest and lie down in green pastures. That’s a glorious thing.

Seek, lead, feed, heal and protect. Acts chapter 20- we read that, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the church, all the flock. Savage wolves will come in.” And so our job is to protect them. Not only from men, but also from demonic attacks; helping the sheep not to be afraid of anything.

Jeremiah 23:4, “I shall also raise up shepherds over them, and they will tend them.” Now, God’s promising New Testament shepherds. He raises them up. What a promise! God says, “I’ll raise up shepherds over my people and they will tend them and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing, declares the Lord.” What a blessed thing! God says, ‘I’m going to raise up men to look after you so you won’t have to be terrified anymore, you won’t have to be afraid of anything.’ It’s a glorious promise! There in Ezekiel 34, we didn’t read this, but down in verse 38 God says, “They will no longer be a prey to the nations. The beast of the earth will not devour them, but they will live securely and no one will make them afraid.” There is no reason for any sheep to be living in fear. And part of the

work of the pastor is to help them and bring them to the place where they will not be terrified or afraid.

Well, who is sufficient for these things? Nobody is. Nobody can do it. And we know that in all these things, we have to have the Lord. But that's the charge. Seek the sheep, lead the sheep, feed the sheep, heal the sheep, protect the sheep. And how we need the Spirit of God to help us to do that!

Let me just close with one verse that has meant a lot to me over the years. Let's turn to this one, Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10. This parable of the good Samaritan, you remember the Lord Jesus speaking of Himself as the Samaritan? He was the one that they actually said, "Do we not rightly say, 'You're a Samaritan and have a demon!'" And He was rejected, despised by men. But He's a certain Samaritan. Verse 33, "A certain Samaritan on a journey came upon him," this man who was in the ditch, "and when he saw him, he felt compassion on him and came to him..." This is what the Lord does for every one of His chosen ones, "and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. And he put him on his own beast, and brought him to -a church- an inn..." a church, "he brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the next day took out two denari and gave them to the inn keeper and said, 'Take care of him and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'" Now, what's the Lord do? He comes to you in the ditch, He puts you on His own beast and He pours on oil and wine and He takes you to an inn and puts you in a group of believers and He says to the inn keeper, "You take care of him, and whatever it costs you, I'm going to pay you back when I return." And it's a good thing. Sometimes, you've got that guy there and he's costing you a lot. But you know that the Lord brought him there for you to take care of. Just this promise, let these words go through your mind, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you." That's a good thing to remember in your work as shepherds of the sheep.

May the Lord bless you! Amen.