

Call to Worship: Psalm 79:13

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 3:14-19

Sermon: "The Elders of the Church - Applied"

Benediction: Luke 12:32

## INTRODUCTION

We are studying together Paul's farewell speech to the elders of the church in Ephesus. Taking what seems like the main idea of it, I am waving a flag over this study, with this motto: "To Testify the Gospel of God's Grace. Under that flag, we are studying what Paul has to say about life in God's church---keeping the church in a good condition so that our testimony will be strong and credible and enduring.

Taking the passage in the order it comes, we have started with verse 17, where Paul calls for "the elders of the church." To understand what he means by that, we have gone down to verses 28-31. Recall that last week we studied this subject.

## REVIEW

- I. We, God's Church, Are a Flock of Sheep (that is, we are, in several ways, like a flock of sheep)
  - In Paul's use here, the main similarity between the church and a flock of sheep is this: being a flock of sheep, we are in danger of wolves
  - by wolves, he means men who teach what is not true
  - these are like natural wolves, in that they want to scatter and kill the sheep
  - but they are not like natural wolves, in that they are dressed in sheep's clothing; they arise from among the flock; they are those who appear to be Christians
- II. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself Is the Good Shepherd
  - A. He loves us so much that He has laid down His life for the sheep
  - B. He is not a hired shepherd, but He owns the sheep, having purchased us for God with His own blood, shed on the cross
  - C. Ultimately, this is all our hope, all our joy; He is the shepherd whom we love and follow
- III. The Lord Jesus Christ Gives the Elders of the Church to Shepherd His Flock
  - A. They are elders, they guide the flock, they govern or rule the church, not as tyrants, but as examples and servants
  - B. They take up a position from which they watch over the flock; they are overseers of the church, bishops keeping up a constant watch over the church
  - C. They shepherd the flock; they pastor the church, keeping the church together, taking the flock to green pastures, to still waters; they preach and teach, warning the church not to stray; feeding the flock with the pure milk of the word, with the nourishing meat of the scriptures

Teaching and learning those concepts took our whole time last week. But we need to consider how that applies to us. In light of this, what must we do and not do? So today we have part two of this address: The Principle of the Elders of the Church---Applied to Us.

As I have prepared this study for today, I have been sorely tempted to use this opportunity to stand on my soap box and impose on you all my pet ideas.

I've shown you in the text that I'm a ruler over you.

I've warned you from the text that it is dangerous to your soul not to obey me.

Now I am ready to burden you down with all my orders!

Thankfully, God graciously granted me a measure of wisdom to resist that temptation. I decided to offer only such applications as are made in the bible under this same metaphor, and made perfectly clear in plain language, also. So these applications I share with you today are not my pet subjects, but the very applications made in the scriptures.

I. APPLICATION: In all thoughts of the church as a flock of sheep needing shepherds, let us think first and last of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Shepherd of our souls.

1 Peter 2:24-25 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

II. APPLICATION: Let us submit to this arrangement willingly, not reluctantly.

Elders:

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

Church:

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

III. APPLICATION: Let us accept the financial reality of this arrangement.

Church:

1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

Elders:

1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

-Observe the humble nature of these occupations the apostle draws on

-a soldier

-a farm worker

-a shepherd

-Observe that this is not maintenance in a situation, but compensation for labor

IV. APPLICATION: Let us practice humble leading and following

Elders:

1 Peter 5:3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

This requires humility in that it is pleasing to pride to dictate orders, and to pontificate about ethics, but it is humiliating to deny the flesh and be conformed to the image of Christ

Church:

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

V. APPLICATION: Let us stay together instead of scattering.

Elders:

John 10:12-13 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

Church:

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

VI. APPLICATION: Let our leading and following be through the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Elders:

John 10:1-4 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Church

John 10:5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

VII. APPLICATION: Whatever failings we may observe in shepherds and in sheep during this life, let all of our confidence be in the One Good Shepherd.

John 10:27-30 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father are one."

## CONCLUSION

We, as one of God's churches, are a flock of sheep owned by, loved by, and ultimately protected by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. While we live this life, we are threatened by wolves, false teachers of every variety, who would scatter us, drawing us off to follow them and be devoured. The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, has appointed some of us to have the rule and watch over the flock, that we may all pass through danger safely, remaining true to the high calling we have received in Christ Jesus our Lord, the Good Shepherd. Let us embrace this arrangement and live in it peacefully with one another to the glory of the Lord.

APPLICATION:

The reason we are together is that the

APPLICATION: Our own flesh and our previous church experiences tempt us to reject this model of church life in favor of some other model. We must resist this temptation, and embrace this model of the church as a flock of sheep with the elders as shepherds.

A. The entertainers of the show

1. play

2. concert

3. talent show

B. The salesmen of the store

C. The executives of the corporation

APPLICATION: Being sheep, we have in us both the instinct to flock together and the tendency to stray away. It is of the utmost importance that we flock together instead of straying away.

APPLICATION: The sheep of the Good Shepherd hear His voice; they will not follow the voice of a stranger. Therefore when the elders of God's church, keeping watch over the flock, feed the church through preaching and teaching, it must be preaching and teaching of the Word of Christ.

APPLICATION: Determinations about who the wolves are must be done by something other than by sight.

APPLICATION: As we stay together and are pastored by the elders, our destination is the kingdom of heaven. (Luke 12:32)

APPLICATION: The elders who labor in the word and doctrine should not do so for money, yet

their expenses should be paid for from the flock.

1 Peter 5:2

1 Corinthians 9:7

APPLICATION: The elders, shepherding the flock, are convinced of the truth and falseness of various doctrines.

JRY: not entertaining the sheep

Romans 16:17-20 Now I urge you, brethren, **note those** who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and **avoid them**. (18) For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. (19) For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to **be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil**. (20) And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Our unity is around the truths of the faith, not around other things.

Good: I don't think I agree with how Pastor Young does this.

Bad: I don't think the Lord Jesus was really human.

Dykstra:

We are now one flock; Jewish believers do not have the liberty, from the scriptures to have their own "Messianic" congregations.

Pastoral responsibilities:

1. distinguish between sheep and goats (responsibility as a pastor is to Christians) (John 20:7 tells that sheep hear Christ and follow Him; this becomes evident in their lives)
2. feed the sheep (their main responsibility) "How vital it is for pastors to study."
3. protect the sheep (1 Samuel 17:34-36) "Shepherds the world over are always armed."  
-Paul and Barnabas "had no small dissension" with them  
-Romans 16:17 "mark them"
4. lead (from the front) John 10 "they follow me"  
-I have to set an example, especially in my family life
5. seek the straying (Isaiah 53 among others tells us this is characteristic of sheep)

Implications of being compared to sheep

1. we are all vulnerable to predations
2. we are safest when we are with the flock
3. we, by our changed nature, want to be with the flock

JRY:

We shepherds must be shepherds in whom the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd, and so can follow.

- "That is not the law of love from the Good Shepherd; that is a man-made law."

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Raines:

Lisa:

We are going this way down the middle of the path---if you go off to the left or the right, you won't be with us!

Bratton:

If you are devoted to the apostles' doctrine, you normally will be able to detect doctrine that does not comport with it. (not a quote)

JRY:

We elders must take care that we ourselves do not play the part of the wolf!

JRY:

This church's stated system of beliefs is what we consider to be sound doctrine; ideas that contradict this church's stated system of beliefs is what we consider to be false doctrine.

APPLICATION (from Dillon):

You know, it's interesting that you ask me that. During the sermon yesterday it seemed reasonable for me to warn and question myself about having wolf-like tendencies. So I meant to ask while on the walk if you plan to use examples from other parts about what wolves look like so we can watch our own hearts and vet what we hear.

JRY:

What does the metaphor mean by "in sheep's clothing."

Dillon:

It probably means that the church needs a similar exhortation with these things as we do with understanding 666. I forget the address, but it goes something like: "Here is a call for wisdom." Regarding false teachers, we all need to be watchful of what we believe. We need called unto wisdom or insight, and James encourages us by saying that the Lord gives wisdom without partiality. Part of it is simply knowing that false teachers will try to draw us away. So we know to be on our guard. If we're not careful of what we build on, believe, we're likely to get some not good material in our foundation; we're likely to accept all kinds of unauthorized doctrine and have a weakened faith. so a wolf in sheep's clothing in plain language...their teeth will be words they

say, mostly, so the "rampart" needs built on our hearing...People will try to add to scriptures, reinterpret the scriptures, invent new doctrines, invalidate the scriptures, etc. . . . It's encouraging to think of the Lord's words in John 10 that say his sheep will not follow the voice of another. I've understood that to mean that the Spirit helps each person to stay away or depart and also helps the whole bunch through undershepherds . . . . In the end, the most important seems to be understanding the truth of Jesus and praying. We need to pray for understanding of his work and for continued prayer. That way we're ready for any angle a wolf might attack from and be able to quickly identify his words, crack his deception open for the light, and do whatever else is necessary.

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:3-4

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Sermon: "The Elders of the Church" Acts 20:17,28-31

Benediction: Hebrews 13:20-21

## INTRODUCTION

Last week we began working through this very poignant farewell address Paul delivered to the church of Ephesus through the elders of the church. I told you it seemed to me like a "manifesto," Paul making clear his beliefs and intentions regarding his own ministry and the church. I see an opportunity here for us as a congregation, with at least half of us new to each other, to develop a shared, biblical understanding of the nature and ministry of this church. So let us have a series of sermons based on this address of Paul's, and hopefully a series of conversations over the lunch tables. Taking an important line of Paul's from this address, I suggested we fly a banner over this series of studies that says, "To Testify the Gospel of God's Grace."

That introductory message having been given last week, I hope to study through this passage basically in the order it's given. The first thing we come to, then, is the introductory statement in verse 17, Paul "called for the elders of the church." Okay, to find out what the bible means by, "the elders of the church," interestingly we come here to this very passage. So, the study today will be about the concept of "the elders of the church" from verse 17, and the main material we will study to understand that concept is verses 28-31 of the this same passage, with other places in the scriptures brought in, also.

## SERMON

Read the text: just verse 17

“Elders of the Church” is a phrase that just uses the basic term for two groups of people:

**Church** - the Greek word translated here as “church” of course does not mean, “church building.” It is *ecclesia*, those “called out” to form an assembly. This is, very plainly, what the church is—an assembly of those the Lord has called out of the world.

**Elders** - the greek word translated “elder” is *presbuteros*, which is the word for “old person,” someone mature in age. But here in Acts 20 and most places in the New Testament it is used as a name for a class of officers in the church, men from the church being appointed to the office of elder if any is qualified according to God-given criteria. Maturity in natural age is not here the main idea of “elder,” but maturity in the faith. Note that the word “elders” here is in the plural, as it normally is in the bible, because the ideal situation in God’s church is for there to be more than one, a plurality of elders.

But in the bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus Himself describe these two groups with a very vivid metaphor. So let’s study the concept of “The Elders of the Church” according to this metaphor.

Read the text: verses 27-31

I. We, God’s Church, Are a Flock of Sheep (that is, we are, in several ways, like a flock of sheep)

A. In this passage of the bible, and in many other places in the scriptures, the Lord teaches us that we, His church, should understand ourselves to be a flock of sheep

B. There are a number of ways we are like a flock of sheep, but there is one main similarity between the church, and a flock of sheep, that Paul is talking about here, and it is this: Being a flock of sheep, we are in danger from wolves (29)

1. The apostle Paul is making the same use of this metaphor that our Savior Jesus Christ did in the Sermon on the Mount; so let’s have these two passages open, and use both to help us understand the idea

Matthew 7:13-15 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

2. Consider the severity of this metaphor

i.e. The metaphor is not anything light or mild, “We are like children on a playground, and there is a bully who won’t let us get on the slide.” No, this metaphor describes something deadly serious

1. wolves want to scatter the flock
2. wolves want to kill the sheep
3. So if, when you think of us as a flock of sheep, you have a nice, peaceful view of us, all fluffy and clean, everything happy, the sun shining all the time

4. Adjust your view of this metaphor a bit

- a. just over there in the woods is a pack of wolves
- b. many times they have come out of the woods and attacked the flock
- c. the wolf jumps on the sheep and clamps its fangs down on the sheep’s neck
- d. its teeth pierce the arteries in the neck, and the sheep’s life blood drains out; or its jaws close off the windpipe, so the sheep cannot get any breath, and it suffocates
- e. then the wolf tears at the flesh of the sheep and eats it

3. If we, the church, are the flock of sheep, in danger from wolves, who are the wolves? The wolves are people who teach things that are false

1. see how the Lord Jesus put it (Matt 7:15): “beware of false prophets”
  - a. they claim to be speaking what God says
  - b. but they are not

2. see how Paul put it (Acts 20:30): “men will rise up, speaking perverse things”

3. see how what they say is the same idea? The wolves are those people who claim to be speaking the truth from God about religion, but what they are saying is not actually the truth, and therefore not from God.

4. Consider that, unlike real wolves, these wolves come to the flock dressed like sheep

We, God’s Church, Are a Flock of Sheep, and . . .

## II. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself Is the Good Shepherd

A. He is the one who so loves the sheep that He has laid down His life for the sheep

B. He is not the kind of shepherd who has been hired to care for the sheep, but He is the shepherd who owns the sheep, having purchased them with His own blood (28)

C. This is gloriously true, and is the ground of all our hopes as a flock of sheep, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our Good Shepherd. If you would like to read more on that, I recommend to you John chapter 10 for further study.

D. BUT, I'm not going to go on any more about that right now, because the Lord Jesus Christ as our Shepherd is not really the point of what Paul is getting at here in this doctrine about the elders of the church. What he's getting at here is this:

## III. The Lord Jesus Christ Gives the Elders of the Church to Shepherd His Flock

We, God's Church, Are a Flock of Sheep, and . . .

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself Is the Good Shepherd, and . . .

The Lord Jesus Christ Gives the Elders of the Church to Shepherd His Flock

NOTE: Before expounding this concept, let us all agree to accept that there are two complementary doctrines here---two sides to the same coin. We all readily accepted the previous point, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Good Shepherd. But as soon as I said that the elders of the church shepherd the flock, our eyebrows became furrowed, our foreheads became wrinkled, we squinted our eyes, we crossed our arms, and we bristled a bit at the idea of the elders of the church being our shepherds. So before going further, let us unwrinkle our brows and accept willingly that Jesus as our Shepherd and the church elders as our shepherds are not ideas in conflict, but ideas in harmony. Let me offer some examples of similar complementary doctrines, to get our minds into the right mode here:

1. God is our Father, right? He is the One ultimately who trains us how to live, and the One whom we obey. But would we say that idea is not compatible with the idea that God trains us how to live through our earthly fathers, and that we should obey them unto the Lord? The Bible teaches these things together, right? God is our Father, and He does some of his fathering through our human fathers. We would not want to teach and believe and practice one of these without the other, right? These ideas are not in conflict, but in harmony.

2. The Lord Jesus is our King, right? He is the One ultimately who rules over us and protects from harm, and to whom we should yield submission. But would we say that idea is not compatible with the idea that God rules over us and protects us from harm through earthly governments, and that we should submit to them?

The Bible teaches us these things together, right? The Lord is our Ruler, and He does some of His ruling through our human rulers. We would not want to teach and believe and practice one of these without the other, right? These ideas are not in conflict, but in harmony.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the great Shepherd of the sheep, right? He is the One ultimately who guards us from wolves, and whom we should follow to green pastures and still waters for our nourishment. But should we say that idea is not compatible with the idea that the Lord Jesus shepherds us through human pastors, and that we should submit to their oversight willingly? The Bible teaches these things together, right? The Lord is my shepherd, and He does some of His shepherding through my human pastors. We would not want to teach and believe and practice one of these without the other, right? These ideas are not in conflict, but in harmony.

A. This truth is expressed by a combination of three key words: elder, overseer, and shepherd. Here's how the three words are used to express this idea:

The **elders** of the church are **overseers** to **shepherd** the church as a flock

The **presbyters** of the church are **bishops** to **pastor** the church as a flock

1. see how the apostle Paul puts uses these three words in this passage
  - a. "called for the elders" (17) Greek *presbuteros* transliterated "presbyters"
  - b. "made you overseers" (28) Greek *episkopous* transliterated "bishops"
  - c. "to shepherd the church" (28) Greek *poimainein* also translated "pastor"NOTE: In our English language, "pastor" and "shepherd" used to be two words for the same thing. "Pastor" is the one that has stuck as the word for use in speaking of the an elder who cares for the church. "Shepherd" is the one that has stuck as the word for a person tending actual sheep. But please understand that the word "pastor" and the word "shepherd" are synonymns; they mean the same thing.
2. see how the apostle Peter puts this concept (1 Peter 5:1-2)
  - a. "elders"
  - b. "shepherd the flock"
  - c. "serving as overseers"

B. The Lord Jesus Christ has made this arrangement, He Himself giving pastors to the church

1. Ephesians 4:11, Paul tells us that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who gives pastors to the church for its perfecting

2. How has the Lord Jesus done this? He has not done it personally. How has

He given shepherds to the flock of God, His church?

- a. in the spiritual realm, where you can't see it, He has worked by His Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28)
- b. in the physical realm, where you can see it, He has worked by His churches to place qualified men in that office to do that work
  - i. Acts 14:23 "appointed elders in every church"
  - ii. Titus 1:5 "I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders"

C. The Lord Jesus has told the elders how to do the shepherding, the pastoring; those three key words show us that it is a three-phase work; or there are three aspects to it

1. We are to assume the leadership, the governing, the rule of the church; not as a tyrant or dictator, of course, but with an attitude of service; nonetheless, we are to be the church's governors
  - a. this is built into the idea of being an "elder"
  - b. it is also a part of the metaphor of being a shepherd; a flock goes where it goes because the shepherd is leading it
  - c. it is also stated explicitly in Hebrews 13:17 where it says that we are the church's leaders, its rulers
  
2. We are to take up a position of oversight; we serve as supervisors; we maintain a watch over the sheep; (Acts 20:28 and again Hebrews 13:17)
  - a. in terms of the sheep metaphor, we are to watch the flock
    - i. to see if any are wandering off
    - ii. to see if any are falling behind
    - iii. to see if any wolves are sneaking inand we do this as men who must give an account to the owner
  
  - b. in plain terms, leaving the sheep metaphor, we watch over your souls; and we do so as men who must give an account to the Lord for you
  
3. From that position as the governors, the leaders, the rulers of the flock, keeping a constant watch over the sheep, we are then to feed the sheep
  - a. you can probably hear in your mind the words of Jesus to Peter as He said to him three times, "Feed my sheep."
  - b. this is the main connotation of the word "shepherd" or "pastor" in the bible, so much so that in some of the translations the bible says "feed the flock" rather than "shepherd the flock"
  - c. not as we in Texas agriculture would feed them---we have the sheep all in a fenced-in field, and we opening a bag of pellets and pour it into the trough; the metaphor would be of the ancient middle eastern shepherd; or the shepherd in the Alps; or the shepherd in the Rocky Mountain region of Wyoming or Colorado; his task of feeding is done in this way

- i. the flock is out in the wilderness, the wild country, up in the hills
- ii. the sheep are tempted to fall behind or wander off, where they will be easy prey for wolves; so the shepherd keeps the sheep together as a flock, using his dog or his staff or his voice to bring back any who are lagging behind or straying off
- iii. keeping them together, he takes them over the mountain pass to the next valley where there are green pastures and still waters; there they can eat and drink and grow strong rather than being killed and devoured by wolves; they can produce wool and milk; they can reproduce, multiplying their number

d. In plain terms, leaving the sheep metaphor, how are the elders to shepherd the flock, how are we to feed it? We do it with sound doctrine; that is, we preach to them and teach them the truth from the bible.

*Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*

- i. exhorting, encouraging those who are weak or tempted to stray
- ii. warning those who are straying
- iii. refuting, rebuking, convicting those who are going astray and speaking falsely so as to lead others astray
- iv. If you would like to read more about this see the same thought expressed more fully in 2 Timothy chapters 3 and 4.
- v. thus kept together and taught the truth, the church can prosper, growing both in the faith and in number, producing all kinds of good fruit

APPLICATION: We all have the temptation to reject this picture of church life because we have learned to see the church as something very different from a flock of sheep with shepherds.

1. we see it as a service provider competing with others for our business
2. we see it as a club we join based on mutual interests
3. we see it as a retail establishment where we shop
4. we see it as a public facility like a park or swimming pool that we make use of when we feel the need for it

Let our minds be renewed to see the church as a flock of sheep with shepherds.

APPLICATION: Some of you have been in churches where it seemed there were no sheep, but only goats! Understand this is what lies behind some of what we do and do not do here in this church.

1. we do insist people give a believable profession of faith
2. we do not entertain the flesh (very much)

APPLICATION: It has been very difficult in previous church experiences to act according to this understanding

the shepherds were wolves

the shepherds were just being sheep, not shepherds

the shepherds were taskmasters as if sheep were beasts of burden

APPLICATION: To some extent some of us are understanding this, feeling it, and beginning to live by it.

APPLICATION: Let no one have an inflated view of himself.

1. Let us who are shepherds in one sense not forget that in another sense we are also sheep!

2. Let no one consider himself not to be a sheep, not to need any shepherding.

APPLICATION: It is “the elders of the church” whom the Lord Jesus has given to you, through His Holy Spirit, to shepherd you, not anyone else.

1. Not the leaders of para-church organizations---Billy Graham, Bill Gotthard, Bill Bright, James Dobson,

2. We, your elders, claim, on the basis of the simple structure the Lord has given to his church, a primacy in the life of this church, over Bible teachers much more able than we are. John MacArthur and R.C. Sproul and many other men are better bible scholars and preachers than I am.

3. Let us all learn from the wonderful bible teachers available to us.

4. But do not substitute them for your own church’s elders.

## CONCLUSION

We, God’s Church, Are a Flock of Sheep, and . . .

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself Is the Good Shepherd, and . . .

The Lord Jesus Christ Gives the Elders of the Church to Shepherd His Flock

This is the pattern the Lord has given us. Let us follow it, and be a well-nourished flock, growing strong and numerous for the glory of the Good Shepherd.

## **Wolves**

Matthew 7:13-16 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. (14) Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (15) "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (16) You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

Hodgins:

False teachers, wolves, will tell you falsely regarding the broad way and the narrow gate, so that if you believe them, you may see yourself as having entered the narrow gate, but actually you are on the broad road.

## **Church As Sheep**

John 10:11-16 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (12) But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. (13) The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. (14) I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. (15) As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be

one flock and one shepherd.

### **Sheep Threatened By Wolves**

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Luke 10:3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

### **Elders As Shepherds of God's Flock**

Acts 20:28 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.

1 Peter 5:1-3 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: (2) Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; (3) nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

Garrick:

elders - experience

bishop - oversight

pastor/shepherd - appears more as verb than noun

Ordinarily or normally we should expect more than one pastor per church

-OT elders are plural, functioning as a board

-NT

Acts 14:23; 15; 20:17

Philippians 1

1 Timothy 5:17

Titus 1

1 Peter 5:1

-important reasons

-pastors are ourselves sheep, with weaknesses and sin

- pastors die, move, retire, and if there is one, the church goes without
- new pastors need to labor alongside experienced ones
- temptation to make it "Jeff's church" is subdued

Gambrell:

take heed to yourself (the elders) and to the doctrine  
from among yourselves (the elders)

JRY:

What is the particular kind of shepherding they need? protections from wolves  
What is the particular way that is done? to preach sound doctrine

The church as a flock

- threatened from without
- threatened from within

The elders of the church

Plurality

Parity - each bearing equal authority

What did he preach?

- I. Proclaim and teach repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (21)
- II. Testify to the gospel of the grace of God (24)
- III. Preach the kingdom of God (25)
- IV. Declare the whole counsel of God (27)
- V. Warn of dangers (ESV: admonish) (31)

How did he live?

- I. Serving the Lord with all humility (19a)
- II. Serving the Lord with many tears and trials (19b)
- III. Not being moved by threats or counting his life dear to himself (24)
- IV. As running a race (24)
- V. As performing a ministry given by the Lord Jesus (24)
- VI. Coveting no one's silver or gold or apparel (33)
- VII. Working with his own hands to provide for his own needs

JRY:

a manifesto

See the different ways he summarizes his ministry

21 proclaimed and taught repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ

24 to testify to the gospel of the grace of God

25 preaching the kingdom of God

27 declare to you the whole counsel of God

31 warn everyone night and day with tears

APPLICATION:

These are the things that the church should be concerned to know and believe

These are the things that the church should be concerned to carry on

Renihan: what does it mean to preach the whole counsel of God?

1. preaching thoroughly about Jesus Christ