

# Elders / Bishops

August 13, 2000, Canyon, Texas

I trust that the verses we're going to read this morning will be edifying, they'll be uplifting in the most holy faith, because anybody that ever occupies this pulpit should seek to edify the Church. The subject matter of this morning is of no greater importance than any subject matter that the Bible speaks of. It is in fact an opportunity for us to begin a study of Bishops and Elders.

A couple a weeks ago when I started putting together this lesson, it dawned on me a couple days ago, I better get an outline together. I better put all these thought together so I can present them in a very short time. And I realized during that time just how much I needed to study and just how much I know about bishops and elders. But my heart goes out and my appreciation goes out to a man who many years ago set me down when I was younger and encouraged me. And he said and I will never forget the jest of his meaning. He said, now while you are young you think about the qualities and these characteristics about the elder. Because some day you may be called on to be one. I will never forget when I was young, I believed, no I'll never be able to fulfill the office of an elder and in fact I may never be an elder. It takes a great deal of wisdom for men to say that. And I've heard men in this congregation say it may be better if I were not serving in the capacity of an elder. You shouldn't feel ashamed. I've heard men of this congregation say I desire to be an elder, but I don't meet the qualifications, I don't believe. There's nothing to be ashamed of. I've heard others say they desire it. I've heard others say they haven't thought about it. While you are young and you've got some time to work on these characteristics, I encourage you to think about it.

I'd like to begin our study this morning in the book of John. And I'd like to look at one of my favorite subjects of mine and that of course is Peter. What lesson on elders and bishops would be complete if we could not study about the life of Peter. In John 21st chapter in verse number 14, the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead. He is found here sitting at a meal with his disciples and Jesus speaks to Simon and in verse number 15 he says Simon, son of Jonas Lovest thou me, more than these Now think about this. Think about the question our saviour in walking up to this disciple and he says do you love me more than all these others? Do you love me more than anything else in the world? I think that's what he's asking. And Peter answered him and said yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Now someone who knows a little about Peter, might not have been so forgiving. Might not have been so loving and so caring. And might look down on this man and say, you know I saw you Peter. On the day that Jesus was on that cross. I saw where you were and I will never forget where you were. I will never forgive you of how you denied the saviour three times, our saviour knew in his heart that Peter loved him. And Peter knew in his heart that the saviour had forgiven him. And he gave him this commandment and the last part of verse 15. He said feed my lambs. And that wasn't all, In verse 16 Jesus once again said unto Simon, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? And he said unto him Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He sayest unto him Feed my sheep. He said unto him the 3rd time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me. Peter was grieved because he ask him the third time lovest thou me and he said unto him, Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, feed my sheep.

There was a time in the early church when there were men such as Peter, that were needed. Men that the saviour could call upon and men that had been thru the trials of fire and stood outside there watching them drag Jesus thru the street and it took men a long time perhaps to embrace the walk that they were going to be servants of the most high. And so Jesus takes one disciple and leads aside and says, do you love me more that all these? If you do feed my sheep.

Now I want to go to I Peter 5th chapter and I want to show you what this man did in his life and spoke to the elders of the congregation and it says in I Peter 5 verse number 1

1. The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,  
(a man like Peter became an elder? Why we look at those qualifications and sometimes in our mind we would never forgive somebody like Peter, I think, we need to change our attitude. Not sacrifice anything there that the master says needs to be done, or the qualities or characteristics that men have to have, but I do believe. That there is a way for men to fulfill the place of an elder or bishop if God desires them to have that office. And so it is that the Apostle called these men together and he says I exhort you, and he proved to all the world that he himself was also an elder and then he goes on to say) and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
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;
3. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.  
And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.
5. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.
6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:
7. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.
8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
9. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.
10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
11. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Do you hear the words of the Apostle as he's preaching and teaching and encouraging these men over here, that are elders? Do we not understand that these men have the obligation to feed the flock? And how it is that Jesus asks Simon son of Jonas, three times, lovest thou me? If you love the Lord, he says you will feed that flock, and you'll no more draw your sword and cut off those ears. You'll no longer be the one out there in the forefront that's ready to be a striker. You'll no longer have any of those temptations that came along with being as it were a "Red Head", but you'll have those qualities that says, I love Jesus and therefore I want to feed the flock. And did you read over there also that it said they take the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly. And I find that places that I go to that have elders, the congregation has stood behind those elders, have believed in those elders, men that have taken on the position because they are accepted. And we find here in this writing of I Peter 5 that whenever it said in verse number 2, the oversight thereof, it is simply the fact that God has given them the opportunity to have some kind of control as they watch and feed that flock. Not by constraint. Not because it has to be done. Not because there's an emergency that arises, not because someone says you ought to be an elder. Not because someone says I'm going to make you an elder regardless of what everybody else thinks, not because of that. But willingly, or of a ready mind. And if you read the other passage, the other thought, there in verse #2, not for filthy lucre. Everywhere we see this we should think about the time that Judas traded a kiss for 30 pieces of silver. We ought to think about the bribe that were given to those men who saw the stone rolled away at the tomb of Jesus. Who were given money, paid a great sum of money to keep their mouths shut. And we ought to think about that when we think of filthy lucre. We ought to think about the times when money has taken over and the wealth of those elders that were at Jerusalem in the time of Jesus Christ and those elders that Jesus suffered from, were elders that had their protected territory and their wealth and didn't want anybody coming in and they didn't want Jesus there to take away and fulfill those things he had come to fulfill.

That's the wrong kind of elders. When we think of those people in verse #3, neither as being Lord's over. I'm going to make my child obey but I'm going to live an example so that my children will desire to obey. Those men who were put into the capacity of Bishops were to serve as examples. And so it is that men everywhere begin to examine themselves and examine one another. There are some beautiful thoughts here. I will not be able to talk about all of them tonight, I mean today. I wouldn't be able to talk about all of them if we took the next week and talked about just this subject. But I think before we can ever really get into this study and really understand about bishops and elders we've got to understand all of this. I just hope that as we read these passages, some of them we're going to read very quickly. I hope you'll write them down and you'll go back and meditate upon them, because we are going to show you what the Bible has to say about bishops and elders. And I know that it's been on your minds. I know that it's been on many of your minds. Well I started out here and trying to understand what the bishops do and we read there from the Apostle himself, who also exhorted those men over there. How they ought to feed the flock, take the oversight, and they ought to live as examples, and they ought to watch for the souls of those whom God has entrusted them.

I want you to know that there is a relationship between the members and elders. As we read in Ephesians 1st Chapter verse #6 that those apostles and those men that God set in order and those men that fulfilled those duties have become accepted among men. Because of their deeds, because of their actions, because of what they believed in, because what they practiced.

We find in I Timothy 3, verse #5 the qualifications.

II Peter 2, verse #11 talks about the acceptedness there.

Jude verse #9 also the Apostle Paul when he talked to the young man in the qualifications of an elder also said men, members of the Body of Christ must accept that. Also the relationship between those men and elders was one that ruled or had a presiding. Just as we rule or preside over our home, no doubt. For the Apostle Paul in one place mentioned that it was that men ought to have the oversight or the rule because if you can't rule your own house how can you rule the Church of God. There is no difference.

I find that amazing. I find that interesting, so interesting it ought to deserve a lot more of our time.

Let's just turn over here, let's turn to Acts 14th Chapter and get into all this historic evidence.

8. And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

(and here comes these Apostles, able to do miracles by God and in verse #9)

9. The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10. Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet, And he leaped and walked.

11. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14. Which when the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, the rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15. And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein;

16. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

There was a time in the history of the Church when elders and bishops were needed, it was an urgency, and this apostle later on, we are going to read sends a young man to every Church and every place. One setting up everything that was needed and #2 setting up elders and bishops so that when the apostles would send forth those messengers over there to those Churches, they would have a nucleus of men that they could be trusted to receive those messengers. Put them in their homes, feed them if necessary and that they could take those messages to the people of their community without fault or believing that they were liars or untruthful and they would present these messages before all the people. And we would find that this example would live and reign and so forth and so on throughout the history of the Church, to keep men like this from offering up God's unto the Apostles.

Now here's another example in verse 19

19. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.
20. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.
21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,
22. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.
23. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

It is no doubt then as I alluded to and we might as well turn and read in the book of Titus that the young man Titus was instructed in Titus the 1st chapter beginning in verse #5 to take care of some of the things that was happening here at this church or in these churches.

Titus 1st chapter beginning in verse #5.

5. For this cause  
(what Cause?)  
For this cause I left thee  
( now read it very carefully)  
in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:
6. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.
7. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;
8. But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;
9. Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, tht he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.
10. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:
11. Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

I don't know about you, but I read these things and I see the urgency of the Church. I see there's a lot of people trying to teach and lead off those people who have believed and become obedient to the truth. And so therefore, these men were set up. We find another example and that is in II Timothy 2 and verse #2. How the apostle Paul told the young man Timothy as a son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

And in the 3rd chapter beginning in verse #1

1. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.
3. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
4. Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.
5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Those men do not fit, they don't fit in the kingdom, they don't fit as rulers over God's heritage, they do not fit as being one who feeds the flock, they do not fit. And so therefore, from such turn away.

In Titus the second Chapter, we find in verse #1 that the Apostle Paul exhorted the young man to speak the things which become sound doctrine.

2. That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.
3. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;
4. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,
5. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.
6. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

And then the last part of this verse is I believe preparing this young man, all of these things are preparing him. but most of all in verse #7

7. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.
8. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Why? Why do we have all of this admonition? Wouldn't it be, wouldn't it be simpler, wouldn't it be just a little bit easier so to speak if we could just lessen, move those qualifications down just a mite.

If we just simply have leaders and we have somebody over the congregation. Who would care for our souls.

I don't think that's a question we ought to ask. I saw two men walking down the street the other day who told me they were elders. They are not married, they don't have children, they have not a house to rule over. They have not any of these things but they call themselves elders. I see another people who put bishop in their signs, those bishops are men who do nothing more than occupy the pulpit every Sunday. God's people are going to have to be the kind of people the Apostle Paul as he talked to Timothy, simply said shew yourself a pattern of good works. You find out how you examine yourself, you can put yourself in the spotlight and you find out what things you are lacking and if you lack those things, understand that some of those things may not be characteristics you're to have. You may never as it is, fulfill those qualifications. But it doesn't make you

There's room in the kingdom, fellow citizens, fellowheirs, there's labor, there are works for you to do, much work to do. There is work on every hand and our master prayed for laborers. He said, the harvest is white.

Now I want to take you back in time, over here about the characteristics of the kingdom

But it's part of what we've got to understand before we understand about bishops and elders.

Matthew 20: begin in verse #20 The children, mother of Zebedees children came to Jesus, and as she comes to Jesus she has on her mind worshipping, of course, but it says in verse #20, she desired certain things of Jesus. Jesus of course knows our hearts and our intentions long before we ever begin. So he looked at this woman and said, What would you that I do for you? And she said unto him. Grant that these my two sons might sit one on the right hand and the other on the left. But Jesus answered and said verse 22.

22. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. They say unto him, We are able. 23. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

WOW!

God has a plan. Every man, every human being, every child, every human being who becomes a child, who names the name of Christ fits into that plan.

But there are certain offices, there are certain positions, there in the right hand and the left. Jesus says my Father is the only one who can give it. Look what happened.

Verse #24 Ten men, ten other people who heard what went on said in verse 24. Were moved with indignation. Can you imagine the thoughts perceived from their hearts. To desire to have a position in the Kingdom of God above any other member? Can you imagine any body having a desire to be over members of the Body of Christ? It's a hard thought, but it's happened.

Jesus goes on to give us some admonition and some comfort.

25. He called all of those ten together and said you know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise domain over them and they that are great exercise authority over them.

26. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

Turn with me to Luke 9th chapter, verse 26, Luke the 22nd chapter beginning in verse 24.

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Let's go back to Matthew in Matthew the 5th chapter beginning in verse 38.

Jesus said

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth

39 But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if any men will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and

pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same.

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Well, what can I do? What can I do? I want you to turn to Romans the 12th chapter and to realize that every soul who names the name of Christ must do this. And if you desire to be chief among people then you become a servant or you become the younger, or you become a minister, or you put yourself down on the servitude level and you begin those duties. And you realize that we don't have that type of thinking in the Church today. Because Jesus admonished against it and that is not, truly that is not the intent of bishops elders.

Romans 12:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

So when you begin to look at those qualification, and those characteristics and you find some that you're struggling with, he says in verse #3. Be man enough, be strong enough, to take on the challenge to do something better there but take on the understanding, not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Humble ourselves in the sight of God and if it be his will as the Bible says he'll exalt us in due season, if that's what he wants. Skip on down now to verse #16.

16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil, Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.

Turn with me to the 14th Chapter begin in verse #17 Now this is the key, this is the key, this is probably the passage that I'd like you to just take home and these two verses here, I'd like you to really meditate upon.

17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another

Now to me that's the key. Once you understand what the Kingdom of God is and how it is that you serve in that capacity, men will accept it, because God accepts it. And other things that are in this passage.

I Corinthians 12 is another good passage. Please remember Romans 14 and verse #17. In I Corinthians 12:

12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

Don't you sell yourself short, don't you do it. You understand that if you're gifted at teaching, if you're gifted at song leading, if you are gifted at mowing this yard out here. If you'r gifted at inviting people to the Church, if you're gifted in doing those things, those are just as equally important. And don't you sell yourself short because you are not the eye or you are not the hand, or you are not the smelling, or you are not the speaking. I would that we understood this.

Look at #27-31

27. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28. And God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

29. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

30. Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

31. But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Well I think that we need to draw this to a close. And I'm going to show you 2 passages of scripture that go to length describing the bishops and elders. And I think it is important that we read it. I Timothy is the first one. I Timothy is just a little bit different. I'll tell you what since I've read Titus the 1st chapter let me just say briefly that there are some differences to Titus 1 and there are differences in I Timothy 3. In Titus the young man Titus was sent over there to set in order the things in the church and

also to seek out men and ordain them as elders. He was instructed by the apostle to do that.

Now here there's need of these two great examples, because I feel like it is important. I feel like these two. I feel that these two are in here at length because #1 the Apostle desired for those elders to be set up in those congregations and certainly we need that. We found there were gainsayers and all kinds of people that the apostle needed them that they could trust. And they gave us the qualifications because when the Apostle wrote those letters and sent them to those congregation, faithful men had to receive them. Faithful men had to take those messages and dissiffer them if you will and begin to exhort and teach those things the apostles sent. Now there's another way and that is in I timothy 3. There is another way, men can become bishops and that is it says here verse #1.

1. This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

Two things, the desire of the office of a bishop also a work. It is a office, it is a work.

Verses 2-7

2. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;
3. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;
4. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;
5. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?
6. Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil,
7. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Well my friends if you get started studying this subject. You'll find that two weeks is not enough. You'll find that there are many things you want to know about this subject. I'd be glad to share with you any notes that I've taken. And I've just about got a book full. I'd be glad to show you verses and I'd be glad to share with you all the wonderful things that are in these passages. But I can't teach you a thing. I can't teach you a thing unless you take these verses and meditate upon them. Give thyself wholly unto them.

They've talked to me, they'll talk to you. These verses will show you things that are beautiful in the sight of God, a mystery to some people.

These verses will show you how that the church can function with elders and bishops and It'll show you how the church can function without them. It will show you how you ought to set your sight of achieving these things at any cost.