



¹ The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, 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. ⁴ 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. (1 Peter 5:1-7)

God's Word posits a strong exhortation to the ministers of His Church to *feed the flock of God which is among you*. From the first, the minister, especially, since he is the one who most needs the reminder, must know that the flock is by no means the minister's, but they belong to God alone! Unfortunately, we might get the opposite impression in observing the iconic popularity that many modern ministers promote for themselves in the large and spiritually devoid churches of America. The minister, I remind you (and myself), is a servant before he is a leader of souls to Christ. This is the most commonly neglected truth in all ministries of the church.

I have urged many friends, and even relatives, to read the Word of God and see if the truth does not burst forth in commanding light on some issue; but I am often told: Well, I must admit that the Bible clearly says what you claim, but my minister has a different opinion, and I must go along with him. Is this not amazing for its lack of common sense, and isn't it evidence of lack of faith and trust in God's Word? I firmly believe that many ministers of our day have Paul's counsel in Verse 2 above completely reversed. They misconstrue the command to be *feed ON the flock of God* rather than *feed the flock of God*. They are, either wittingly or unwittingly, become wolves in sheep's clothing. This is literally so, for the sheep's apparel that they wear is skinned from the helpless sheep themselves.

In order to advise and counsel others, a man must have walked the road that he advocates for others. Paul did this. Though it is scriptural for the church to assist the living of ministers whose greater time is devoted to service, it should be done so through limited stipends and not some lucrative salary. Paul was a tent-maker in order to spare the church of providing his living. How many Paul's do we have in the ministry today? We do, thankfully, have some; but not nearly so many as the other sort

that live deliciously on the back of poor parishioners.

taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; The call to the ministry MUST come from God and not man. Regardless of how strongly we feel that a promising brother should become a minister, our opinions and encouragements have no bearing on his legitimate calling in God. If as man's carnal will has been surrendered for that perfect Will of God, he will know the Voice of God calling him to the ministry when the call is sounded. That satisfies the first two requirements of a man being called to the ministry.

- 1) The call must originate in God;
- 2) The man must KNOW that God has called him;
- 3) The Church must recognize that calling upon the life of the man being called. There are no 'born' preachers, and none receive a calling by right of inheritance or personal volition.

not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; The term used here, filthy lucre, is a reprehensible motive in the mind of God. Lucre most often means, money. Filthy lucre means an inordinate desire for money at any moral cost – a tendency observed in many clergy today. It is not different than the kind of desire for wealth that a prostitute may exhibit. Rather than asking first what salary and benefits may be offered, the called minister should ask, 'Where, Lord; and who?' Not 'How much and how little?' There are too many pastors who kill and feed on the sheep for their wool. There are too many who preach their own mind and opinions rather than the Word of God. Ezekiel warned Israel of old about such despicable men: *1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; 3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing. (Ezek 13:1-3) False dreams and false visions are being openly preached today from many of America's pulpits. 6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. (Ezek 13:6)*

Please heed the warning to false shepherds: *Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5 And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. 6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. 7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; 9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. (Ezek 34:2-10)*

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. The pastors or clergy are not kings deserving of special privilege other than the honor due one who labors selflessly for the Lord's people, or a faithful old servant of mature years who has labored all of his life for a family. He is a servant! He is not a dictator, either. If he is a sound minister of the Word, and his love is profoundly obvious, the people will trust

his leading as a true under-shepherd and will follow him out of love and not compulsion. His life should be a high standard of purity and moral clarity and not a hint of moral turpitude. *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel,* (Ezek 13:8-9)

I once read that a great sea-going liner was bearing down on New York Harbor from Africa. Among the exhaustive passenger manifest, there were three important passengers on board – two of whom were more important by far than the third. These two very important people were aged and bent with years of labor, deprivation, and service as missionaries in the heartland of Africa's Ivory Coast. Their work came to an end because they had exhausted their health in working to save souls. When the great vessel came to anchorage at port side, the passengers were greeted by hordes of welcoming fans and followers. The old missionary couple walked through these crowds unnoticed; yet the third person of the three was Teddy Roosevelt, returning from safari in Kenya. The crowds were there for him. Teddy Roosevelt may have been a good man, but did he ever accomplish anything compared with this poor missionary couple? There was One, however, who walked with this couple from the ship – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* I am sure that the crown of glory by now has been awarded.

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. I have an abiding love and fondness for Asian people. One reason is perhaps because they honor their elders out of a cultural heritage in the way that we once did in America out of moral compunction. All pride is directed toward worldly considerations. No true Christian is PROUD of his own righteousness. He can boast of nothing because he is well aware that all that is good in his heart is the work of the Lord and not his own.

The whole remedy to any disconcerting points you may have gleaned from today's text are answered in the last two verses: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.* Some people treat love as if it were an exhaustible commodity, but it is not. The more we love, the greater is the treasure and wealth of love in our Fountain. Humility is the same. By lifting others up and putting ourselves down, God mysteriously lifts us above all. We have no need for anxiety or apprehensiveness. He is able to lift our unbecoming yoke, and demonstrate His love for us in ways the world can never comprehend. Have you felt that love, friend?