

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through **1Peter**

1Peter 5:1-4

49 The Weight and Reward of Shepherd/Elders, Part 2

April 28, 2019

1 Peter 5:1-4

1 Therefore, 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,

2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

To the Glory of God

Now, as I told you last time, because this section of the Apostle's Letter is so rich and full, I think it wise for us to "pitch our tents" here on this Passage for a few weeks and pause in our "journey" through **1 Peter** and dig deep, so we can receive all that God the Holy Spirit moved along Peter to give to us, because he begins this part of his inspired writing by saying this:

Therefore, 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, exercising oversight ...

And I want you to take note of two words that Peter uses here:

- 1. Therefore**
- 2. Exhort**

Now by using the word “**Therefore**”, we can see that this section of Peter’s Epistle is a *continuation* of what Peter was teaching in the last Chapter. And because he uses the word “**Exhort**”, shows us that the subject Peter is addressing here is very serious and deserves whatever time we can spend on it.

Now it is obvious that at the time that the Apostle wrote this Letter (at the last third of the 1st Century), he was looked on as being a very reputable and godly man. Peter had great credibility with believers, not only as a called and chosen Apostle, but, also, on a more personal level, as a kind and loving bond-slave of Jesus Christ. And the way he addresses himself, here in verse 1, tells us volumes about the man. Peter calls himself:

- ***your fellow elder***
- **a witness of the sufferings of Christ**
- **a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed**

... so, Peter doesn’t “pull rank” here. He doesn’t “push his weight around”. For example, he doesn’t mention that he is the only man, other than Jesus, who has walked on water. Peter doesn’t give himself any “pedigree” by referring to the time that he, along with James and Andrew, beheld Jesus in His Glory on the Mountain of Transfiguration. He also doesn’t “make hay” over the fact that he was the *protos*, the unquestioned leader of the Apostolic group. Instead, the only position he refers to is that he has been “set in” as an Elder in the Christian Church. The other two identifiers that Peter uses here are very personal and show great humility.

Now I don’t know *when* Peter was set in as an Elder. And we also don’t know in which local church Peter served. It is possible that he was both an Apostle and an Elder at the same time, and *could* have ministered in the Church that was at Sardis, or even Rome, but the Bible is silent about this. Now the sad reality about this great Apostle is that, because the Roman religious system has invented so many fabrications about Peter, it is hard to get any solid historical facts about him outside of the Bible. But suffice it to say that at some point after the Resurrection, Peter was set in as an Elder and served a local church.

Now almost all early societies and religious communities were guided in some way by a group of older men that were called "Elders", which were the wisest and the most experienced men of the group. According to **Genesis 50:7**, there were "**Elders of Egypt**", and according to **Numbers 22:7**, there were Elders in both Moab and Midian. So, there is nothing *unique* or *unusual* about having Elders in positions of Authority. Rather, it is odd *not* to have them.

Now we must realize that the early Church sprang up out of Jewish soil. Its first members and leaders were all Jewish, its Lord was Jewish, and the Church saw itself as the *fulfillment* of the Jewish Scriptures and as the "true" people of God. Therefore, it is understandable that the Church, as it emerged from Judaism, would in *some ways* pattern its life and structure on the life and structure of God's people in the Old Testament of which they were now the true posterity.

The "Elders of Israel" are referred to in the Old Testament from the beginnings of the nation in Egypt (**Exodus 12:21**) down to the period of the rebuilding of the Temple after the Babylonian exile (**Ezra 6:7**). In **Ezekiel 7:26**, the Elders are grouped together with Prophets and Priests, each group having its special concern:

... they will seek a vision from a prophet, but the law will be lost from the priest and counsel from the elders.

In **Leviticus 4:15**, the Elders had a *representative* function in certain worship practices. And in **Numbers 11:16**, the Elders are described as "Officers" over the people. So, in general, we can say that, while through the long history of Israel, the role of the Elder evolved, they were, basically, the older men of the community who, because of their wisdom in counsel and the natural honor due to them (**Leviticus 19:32**), became the official "Administrators" or "Leaders" of the Community.

Now in the warped and ungodly Judaism of Jesus' day, the Elders of Israel were still very dominant. The most frequent use of the word "Elder" in the New Testament refers to the *Jewish Elders*, who opposed Jesus during His Lifetime. Within all four of the Gospel Records and the **Book of the Acts of the Apostles**, "Elders" are most often viewed as forming a close-knit group with the evil "chief priests." Over and over

we read about “**the chief priests and elders of the people**” (**Matthew 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:1**, etc.). Now that term “Elder” was very broad and would have included members of the scribes as well as the Pharisees and Sadducees (cf. “**traditions of the elders**” **Matthew 15:2; The Acts 22:6**).

So, it is obvious that the “Judaism” out of which the early Church emerged was one in which Elders played a very distinctive and well-known *leadership* Role. And this familiar Role in Jewish society was no doubt where the early Church got the title “Elder.” But what the character and function of the early Christian Elder was should only be determined by studying the New Testament texts. It would be wrong to assume that the Jewish concept of Elder was simply absorbed with no modifications, because the Church is absolutely NOT a “carbon copy” of Judaism or of Old Testament Israel, but is an entirely separate entity that was created by the Realities and the Commands and the Blessings of the New Covenant.

Now it is very important to note that Peter did *not* see himself as the Christian Church’s “Chief Elder”, but simply as a “fellow” Elder, and he warns the other Elders *not* to serve the Church by “**lording it over**” the flock (**1 Peter 5:3**). This tells us that, contrary to what Rome teaches, there was no hierarchy among Elders. They functioned together in both spiritual authority and personal humility as “fellow-laborers” in their relationship to one another, and as Shepherd/Servants in their relationship to the flock.

Now, whereas the Office of Apostle was both *limited* and *temporary*, the New Testament clearly teaches that every *local* church was to have its own group (board) of Elders (**Titus 1:5**; cf. **The Act 14:23**). In **The Acts 15:2**, Dr. Luke tells us that there were both Apostles and Elders in the Jerusalem Church.

Now the difference between an Apostle and an Elder was in their Anointing, Gifting, and Responsibility. Apostles were called and chosen and gifted with the ability to:

- Establish Christianity by receiving the final, full, and completed Revelation of God, directly from God the Holy Spirit, articulate that Revelation, and write it down.
- Confirm the Divine Origin of the Revelation of the New Covenant through signs, wonders, miracles, and various gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- Correctly interpret the writings of the Prophets of the Old, or First, Covenant.

Elders exercised Oversight over a *local* Congregation in accord with the Revelation of the Apostles (New Testament Scriptures). So, the “sphere of Authority” for the Apostles was *Christianity itself*, the entire, world-wide Church as a whole (i.e., *every* believer). So, Apostles were responsible for laying the “Doctrinal Foundation” of the complete Christian Church (**Ephesians 2:20**), while the Elders were responsible for *preserving* and *protecting* that Foundation within a *local* Assembly.

Now it is interesting to understand that the Office of “Priest”, that was so prominent all through the pages of the Old Testament, was NOT brought into the Church. Both Prophets and Elders (cf. **Ezekiel 7:26**) have their counterparts in the Church (especially early on), and both of these Offices are referred to frequently as the Church was beginning. But there is no official counterpart to the Old Testament “Priest”. Instead, the New Covenant contains a radical new understanding of “Priest” in that the entire Church (both Men and Women) are, collectively, a “**holy priesthood**” (**1 Peter 2:5**), or a “**royal priesthood**” (**1 Peter 2:9**).

The Revelation 1:6b

... He [Jesus] has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The infinitely superior New Covenant promises that *every* individual believer has access to the “Holy of Holies” (God’s Throne of Grace), because of the “once-for-all atoning Death” of Jesus Christ. No Officer in the Church has the function of *mediating* between the believer and God. This was a *huge* Issue during the fires of the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago, and the Reformers helped return Christianity to adherence to the Scriptures as they hammered out the “Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer”. The hierarchical system of priests, that is firmly in place today, illustrates just how *unbiblical* the entire system from Rome really is.

Now, last time, I gave you concrete examples of just how important correct and full Teaching is to our souls and to the life of the Church, and to the propagation of Christianity throughout the world.

Since we are saved by what we *believe in*, and by what we *trust in*, and by what we *confess*, then what we believe and trust in and confess *matters*. And that is *why* the primary Ministry of the Christian Church is "Teaching".

But it isn't merely *any kind of* Teaching. The *only* kind of Teaching that the Christian Church is commissioned to put forth must have several characteristics to it:

- ✓ It is *true* Teaching
- ✓ It is *authoritative* Teaching
- ✓ It is *trustworthy* Teaching

... which can be summed up by saying that all Teaching conducted by the Church of Jesus is to be:

Biblical Teaching

... because the entire *existence* of the Christian Church lies in the Assumption that the 66 Books of the Holy Bible contain the *full* and *completed* Revelation of God to all of Mankind. *Everything* about both "Life" and "Godliness" has been revealed to us by God, and was written down by 40 different men over a 1450-year time frame.

And that makes the Scriptures to be the "Rule" of the Christian Faith. What we are to believe and trust in and confess and obey has already been provided for us by and through the Ministry of the Holy Spirit called "Inspiration", where He "moved along" those frail and fallible men in the same way that the invisible wind "moves along" a sail boat across the water. And so, what those men wrote down is the God-breathed Revelation of God to Man.

And so, if *anyone* desires to have their sins forgiven and to enter into Heaven, they must labor to start or stop *anything* so they may align themselves to be in accord with what the Bible teaches. Here is what the Apostle John wrote about this in **1 John 1:3**:

what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Now the words “**we**” and “**our**” here are *not* referring to all believers, but *specifically* to the Apostles. And so, what John is saying here is that, since it is true that the Apostles have been gifted with the ability to understand the Truth of Scriptures *correctly and fully*, if *anyone else* desires to be in “right sanding” with God, they *must* be in “right standing” with what the Apostles teach. In other words, there is no such thing as *anyone* being in “right standing” with God and being at odds with what the Apostles teach. And what the Apostles teach has been faithfully recorded for us in the 27 Books of the New Testament.

So, because all of the Prophets and Apostles are now dead and have entered into their Reward in Heaven. all we have left is what these men were moved along by God the Holy Spirit to write down. And so, *everything*, from Salvation to how to organize and run the Church, to how we are to raise our children, and how we are to spend our money, *everything* about both Life and Godliness is contained in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. And that means that everything hinges on us understanding the Bible correctly and fully.

But what makes Teaching to be “true” and “authoritative” and “trustworthy” is *not* how many people accept it, *nor* how popular it may be, *nor* how it makes us feel, *nor* how exciting it is. Neither is it the popularity of the one who teaches. What gives Teaching the Power to “bind the conscience” of the individual and to determine “Right” from “Wrong”, what gives Teaching the ability to make a distinction between that which is “Holy” and that which is “Profane”, and what allows Teaching to be the “Means” by which God grants “Saving Faith” to the hearer, so he may be saved, is if that Teaching is in accord with the sacred Scriptures.

So, teaching the Bible, *rightly and fully*, is the *primary* function of the Christian Church. Because, everything else flows out from that single Effort, including Salvation. So, if people are going to have their sins forgiven and be able to enter into Heaven with God, if they are to be found faithful on this earth, and if they are going to pursue Holiness on purpose, they must be taught the Truth of Scripture. And that means that all Teaching must ask and answer three Questions:

1. What does that Verse of Passage actually say?
2. What does it *mean* by what it says?
3. What does *Obedience* look like in the 21st Century?

And we saw last time that the one, single Ministry in the Church that is assigned the Responsibility to “see to it” that what is being taught in the Church is indeed “Biblical” are what the Bible calls the “Elders”.

Now we must remember that all “false Teaching” is, by definition, a lie. But not a single sin can be forgiven by trusting in a lie. And so, *false Teaching, incorrect Teaching, incomplete Teaching, contradictory and confusing Teaching*, not only dishonors God, it hurts us. And it hurts us *eternally*, because everything we do is based on what we believe to be true. All of our efforts at Obedience, how we live our lives, how we spend our money, how we raise our children, what we will allow and what we will not allow, is all predicated on what we have accepted as being true and real and eternal. And yet, what we believe and what we embrace is based on what we have been taught. And so, two things are *eternally* important to us as followers of Jesus Christ:

1. What we are being taught
2. Who is teaching us

So, it all begins with Teaching. Teaching the Scriptures, rightly and fully, leads to Salvation and to Sanctification and to “right living”. And so, the most important aspect that goes on in the Church of Jesus is Teaching/Preaching/Articulating/Explaining/Expositing the Scriptures. And *everything else* flows out from that. All of our singing, all of our praying, all of our believing, all of our doing, everything else that the Church of Jesus says or believes or does flows out from Teaching. And that makes Teaching very important. Here is what Peter said:

Therefore, 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, exercising oversight...

Here the Apostle Peter instructs men, whom God has called to be “Elders” in the Church, to do two things:

1. Shepherd the flock of God

2. Exercise Oversight

... and everything else Peter says tells us what those two things looks like.

And it is the Elders who carry out both of these tasks by and through the Teaching of God's Word. So, yes, we are to pray with people. Of course, we are to offer Support and Comfort. Absolutely, we are to visit those who are struggling to offer Hope and Courage. But the *primary* task, the *most important* task, the *one* task that defines everything else is Teaching the Scriptures, rightly and fully.

By faithfully and relentlessly making the Word of God plain and clear and understandable to the people, the Elders are *shepherding* God's flock, and we are exercising Oversight in the Church. So, every Bible Study, every Sermon, all Counselling, all Instructing, all Rebuke and Correction, is merely another opportunity for people to gather together to find out what God has infallibly said in sacred Writ about that particular subject.

And this is *why* the main distinction between an Elder and a Deacon is found in just three words. And Elder *must* be:

... able to teach... (1 Timothy 3:2b)

Now that doesn't mean that Deacons *can't* teach, but simply that all Elders *must* teach. And notice that the Apostle Paul said that the Elder must be "**able**" to teach, not merely that he *wants* to teach. So, by inference, an Elder must be trained, he must *understand* Biblical Truth, he must be able to "put the pieces together" (Theology), he must be *prepared*, he must be *ready*. So, this tells us that while sincerity and passion are wonderful gifts from God, an Elder must have *more* than mere sincerity and passion. The Elder must actually know what he's talking about. So, there must be *some* method that is ongoing and consistent, whereby, the Elder is *constantly* being taught.

One of the most important characteristics of a good Teacher is that he is also a good Student. I have no desire to learn *anything* from *anyone* who takes the position that he either already understands everything, or that he has no need to learn from others. One of the most egregious fallacies of the Pentecostal Movement has been the notion that a believer can disconnect from other believers and have God

the Holy Spirit teach him *directly*, without any input from other Teachers. That is entirely an *unbiblical* concept that actually *fights against* acquiring Biblical Truth.

And one of the best attributes of a good Student is that he has an *insatiable* curiosity, and asks lots and lots of Questions. So, it is vital that each Elder pick several other men who all have impeccable credentials, where the Elder can “sit at those men’s feet” and learn.¹ So, the Elder is *constantly* learning. He is *ongoingly* being challenged, and he is frequently being exposed to spiritual aspects that he would never have even thought of, if left to himself.

We must understand, dear friends, that it is Teaching that is at the very *heart* of the Office of Elder. *Fundamentally*, what Christian Elders offer the people is *not* their own personal ideas or experiences, it is *not* their ability to entertain people, *nor* even their executive abilities. Elders are stewards of God’s very Words. **Ephesians 4:11** tells us that God has sovereignly *gifted* His Church with the Gift of “the Pastor/Teacher”. And these men are those who have the God-given Ability to receive, and understand, and integrate, and index, and access, and defend, and effectively communicate God’s precious Word to both His *Own* people and to the world.

The New Testament does *not* vest the Shepherd/Elder with Authority “in and of himself”. Rather, their Influence is tied directly to the true *Source* of Authority in the Christian Church: Christ Himself, accurately expressed in the Words of His first-century Apostles. Jesus Christ alone is “Head” of His Church. And that means that everything “done” or “said” or “sung” or “taught” or “believed” in the Church is to be carried out for one single Goal: to the magnification of the inherent Worth and Value and Glory of Jesus, the Christ.

And Jesus *personally* appointed the Apostles to speak *authoritatively* on His Behalf in the first few decades when Christianity was being established on the earth. And the Church’s only enduring objective Source of Authority today is that body of Teaching that was written down by those same men. And that body of Teaching (which represents the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man) was supernaturally and miraculously preserved for us, and compiled into a single location (the Holy Bible), and given to the Church to preserve and

¹ It is my own personal recommendation that each Elder pick Teachers from every phase of the history of the Church- and not merely popular men of our own day.

guard and defend and preach and teach and believe and love and enjoy. And that is why *Teaching* that entire collection of Divine Truth is so centrally important to every believer.

So, what Elders speak only has Authority over the individual believer to the degree that what they say is in accord with the Book. Other than that, an Elder can be as wrong and off-base and deceived and sinful as any other human. So, it isn't the Office itself that makes the Elder to be credible or trustworthy. The way an Elder behaves himself and what he teaches is what either gives honor to the Office or brings reproach to it.

We live in a day when entire denominations, each one with a godly reputation going back hundreds of years, are officially and formally teaching and preaching and doing and singing and believing things that are not only in direct contradiction to the Scriptures that they say they believe in, but which are also in direct contradiction with their own history. And we wonder at how fast and how thorough their fall is. So, how does that happen? How do people, who lay claim to believe the Bible is the Word of God actually promote blatant wickedness in the Name of a sinless Savior?

In every case, you will see a *departure* away from teaching and preaching and believing and obeying the Bible. And that departure will either be slow and gradual, or it will happen so fast it will make your head spin. But, at some point, those who lead in those organizations have left off an honest and ongoing effort at making the Words of Scripture clear to the people (*Teaching*), and of holding all professing believers *accountable* to what it says.

Because of the devastating effects that the Fall had on all who breathe air, no local church, no denomination, no group, and no individual is *immune* from the "gravitational pull" that the lost and pagan world has on us. So, unless there exists some form of an *ongoing, planned, systematic, full and complete analysis* of the Words of the Bible, by equipped and qualified men, there will be no Faith found on this earth when Jesus comes back. But thanks be to God that Jesus Himself is building His Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And so, God is determined that when Jesus returns, the Church will not only *exist* on the earth, but it will have prevailed! But if the local Church loses touch with the central importance of Teaching

the Scriptures, all we have left is human energy and historical inertia. It is the Elders that keep watch of that.

But, because we are all fallen, we must guard our hearts. Because even if we engage in Teaching, we must remember *what* we are doing and *why*, or we will still lose our way. For example, we must never think of Teaching as more like getting a degree than having our next meal. We should *resist* the notion that Teaching is something we need to endure for a while so we can graduate, rather than a wondrous Gift that we may receive regularly in order to stay alive. So, sitting under gifted Teaching is not a “season of life” for the Christian, but an ongoing lifestyle.

Just to take a sampling from the three “Pastoral Epistles” (**1 and 2 Timothy** and **Titus**), Teaching serves a much more central role in the life and health of the Church than many of us today are prone to think in the 21st Century. Consider just seven Observations, among others.

1. God’s Personal Reputation Relates to what the Church Teaches.

1 Timothy 6:1-5

All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against. Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these *principles*. If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

The very Honor and Name of God Himself is at stake in what Elders teach. “The Name of God” and “the Teaching” go together, either in being revered or being reviled. This alone should be enough to awaken us to the importance of Elders teaching the Bible.

2. It was Essential for the Apostles to be Teachers.

As you study the establishment of Christianity on the earth, by and through the Apostles, it becomes crystal clear that the very Nature of the Christian Faith with ongoing Teaching at its very core meant that it was essential for the Apostles to be Teachers, and not merely “decision-makers”. Two different times, the Apostle Paul mentions that he is not merely an Apostle (which might seem like all he needs to say), but also a Teacher (1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11).

3. The Church’s Mission *requires* Teaching.

Matthew 28:18b-20

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Christian “disciple-making”, the primary charge inside the “Great Commission”, simply cannot be carried out without Teaching. It is, essentially, a product of Teaching. The word *disciple* means “learner.” And so, to “be *discipled*” is to be taught to follow another’s Teaching (2 Timothy 3:10). And vital to the “disciple-making process” is *not* simply training up new Christians, but...

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

4. God means for His Word to be taught.

The Word of God, spoken through First-Covenant Prophets and New-Covenant Apostles, is *not* simply to be heard and believed and obeyed, but taught.

2 Timothy 3:16a

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching ...

All Church Elders, like Timothy, are charged to:

2 Timothy 4:2-4

preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Teaching the Word of God, *rightly* and *fully*, and *ongoingly*, goes hand in hand with the Elder's true Authority in the Church. They are *not* separate or distinct activities. They are the same. So, the primary way in which an Elder manifests his Authority in the Church is through Teaching.

5. Error spreads though "false Teachers."

One of the ways we can judge the importance of Teaching is by examining the way in which satan deceives people. The *primary* way that people come to be deceived is by doctrines of demons being taught. What do "false Teachers" do? They Teach! (**1 Timothy 1:3-7; 4:1; Titus 1:11**).

6. Elders address Error through True Teaching.

1 Timothy 1:3-7

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

1 Timothy 4:1

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

We must understand that the battle lines between Truth and Error are drawn between good or false Teachers, not any other proficiency or skill. Faithful Elders propagate ...

... sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness (1 Timothy 6:3b)

... while those who infect the Church advocate (teach)...

... a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, (1 Timothy 6:3)

When people, who do not delight themselves in the Lord, crave "some new thing" rather than Truth, they will always...

... accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3b&4)

7. Shepherd/Elders in the Church are always Teachers.

There is no such thing as anyone who stands in the place of an Elder who is *not* a Teacher of Scripture. Elders are the "Watchmen on the Wall" guarding the sheep and warning of the approaching enemy. And the only effective weapon against *false* Teaching is correct, full, and complete *Biblical* Teaching.

We must remember that Christian Orthodoxy is not some mystical experience that is left up to each individual believer to possess through various means. There is a body of Teaching that is called "Divine Truth", and there is Error. And so, the only way for *anyone* to arrive at Orthodoxy is to hear that body of Truth taught, and to be given the Gift of being able to believe and trust in it.

Being saved, being a Christian means that the individual sinner has heard that body of Teaching taught, and God has given him the ability to be able to believe it. So, "True Faith" only stays "true" by virtue of that Body of Teaching being *consistently* and *completely* taught by the Shepherd/Elders, and then trusted in by the people. Other than that, everything we now hold dear will be lost in a moment

of time, and we will join in with those who promote and celebrate the lie.

Teaching is not optional in the Church. It is truly a matter of Life or Death. Paul commanded Timothy to...

... teach these things (1 Timothy 4:11; 6:2)

... and to keep a close watch not only on *his own personal walk with God*, but *also* on what he was teaching (1 Timothy 4:16). And this same Apostle commanded that Titus should...

... speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)

... and then Paul told Titus...

in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:7&8)

Elders in the local Church are *not* defined as "savvy decision-makers" or "experienced businessmen", but as:

... those who work hard at preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 5:17)

... and when we think about the Shepherd/Elders, we remember them as:

... those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you (Hebrews 13:7)

Simply put, the modern concept of Shepherd/Elders as being "professional administrators" is completely foreign to the New Testament, and it is killing the Church. The mentality of the "professional" is *not* the mentality of the bond-slave of Jesus Christ, and, thus, "professionalism", as defined by modern America, has *nothing* to do with either the heart or essence of the Shepherd/Elder.

The more "professional" we desire the Elder to be, the more spiritual death we will see. And that is true because there is no *professional* "child-likeness", no *professional* "tenderheartedness", no

professional “panting after God”, no *professional* “hungering and thirsting after Righteousness”, and no *professional* “weeping between the porch and the altar”.

The portrait that we should have in our mind of true godly Elders is one of a broken, contrite man, all too aware of his own personal failings, who stands unashamedly and proclaims the infallible word of the living God without hesitation, all the while trembling.

Listen, people, who are gifted by God with administrative and organizational talents are *wondrous* Gifts to the Church. They are *deeply* needed and *deeply* appreciated. They are useful for *many* forms of Ministry and Leadership and Service, but they are *not* Elders. The cultural pressure today is very high for the Shepherd/Elder to practice and be proficient at almost anything else *besides* the main thing that God told them to do, Teach.

But if the Covenant of Peace Church is to be faithful to the Bible and to Jesus, the Lord of the Church, we will relentlessly resist the very popular suggestions of the modern “church-growth gurus” to *reduce*, *minimize*, or outright *eliminate* the Teaching Ministry of the Shepherd/Elders, and we will engage in even *more* Teaching as we see the “Day of the Lord” drawing near, rather than *less*.

Peter said that Elders are to...

shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight...

... and, Lord willing, over the next several weeks, we will dig deep into Peter’s inspired Words to see just what that looks like, and *how* we may be found faithful to obey this important part of Peter’s Letter to the Church.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.