

“Take Church Leadership Seriously!”

Acts 20:28

Intro. – It has been stated “The best things said come last. People will talk for hours saying nothing much and then linger at the door with words that come with a rush from the heart”. Men, we’re lingering at the door. I pray you sense a “rush from my heart.” Indulge me and listen to a clip from a teacher who taught me no church will ever rise above its leaders (L. Esdil Dale edited clip for Northmen)... It’s clear to me the reason many of our churches are weak/impotent is because of the lack of Biblical leadership. We evidently aren’t listening. Kinda like what Archie Bunker said to Edith his wife, “The reason you don’t understand me is because I’m talkin’ to you in English and you’re listenin’ in Dingbat.”

Paul is giving his farewell to the elders at the church of Ephesus. What he says under the inspiration of God ought to have our attention. The question today is, are we listening with renewed hearts or dingbat ears?

Purpose: to show just how seriously we better be taking church leadership

In this one verse, we are instructed not only why and how to take church leadership seriously, but we are reminded what should be the motivating factor behind it!

I Take the Names (Titles) Seriously

- 3 Greek words are used in reference to this Biblical office. All three are found in the Acts 20!
- A. πρεσβυτερος (presbuteros)
 1. Acts 20:17 “*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.*”
 2. Literally means: “older, advanced in years and experienced” – those naturally looked to for making Godly decisions.
- B. επισκοπος (episkopos)
 1. Acts 20:28 “*...among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers...*”
 2. Literally means: *epi* “on or over”; *skopeo* “to look, watch or oversee” = idea of guardian/manager
 3. “Elder” refers to decision-making function... “Bishop/Overseer” refers to delegating function...
- C. ποιμην (poiman)
 1. Acts 20:28 *...to shepherd the church of God...*”
 2. Literally means: “shepherd” and is where the Latin comes up with the word “pastor”
 3. Poiman refers to the very nature of the elders’/overseers’ function in the Lord’s Church – it is the most powerful image of the work of the church leadership and is also the most abused term.

All three of these terms are used throughout the NT in reference to leaders of the local church under the Headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; etc.). We need to take them seriously.

II Take SHEPHERDING Seriously

- A. Distorted Models of Shepherding
 - Illus. – Tour Guide on bus in Israel’s countryside was telling a heart-warming portrayal of ancient shepherd/sheep relationship. He was pointing out shepherds don’t drive sheep but lead them... Suddenly realized he had lost his audience. They were staring out the bus at a guy *chasing* a herd of sheep. He was throwing rocks at them, whacking them with a stick and siccing the sheep dog on them. The sheep-driving man had torpedoed this guide’s enchanting tale. The guide was so agitated he ran into the field and accosted this guy. “I was telling these tourists about the gentle ways of shepherds and here you are mistreating and assaulting them! What’s going on here?” The man responded, “Man, you’ve got me all wrong. I’m not a shepherd. I’m a butcher.”
 - what a great illustration of what a “good shepherd” is not!
 - 1. Hireling
 - a. John 10:12-13 “*He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.*”
 - b. the modern hirelings are the kind of leaders who abandon the sheep when things get tough.
 - 2. Cowboy/Sheriff

- a. Matthew 20:25-28 “...You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
 - b. simple difference between cowboys/shepherds – shepherds lead; cowboys drive.. Any church leader who has to assert his power/influence by flashing badges is clueless!
3. CEO
- a. 2 Timothy 4:5 “But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of the Senior Pastor, fulfill your ministry.”
 - b. what has happened to doing Bible things by Bible names... Men, there are no excuses in the dire misuse of term “shepherd”. More preachers are being Pastorized... where one guy calls all the shots... Frankly, such practice is a denial of God’s Word being relevant/authoritative.

B. Accurate Models of Shepherding

1. Protector

- a. a significant role of the New Testament elders is to protect the local church from false teachers – Kenneth will be dealing with this matter...
- b. having adequate knowledge of Bible to be able to refute false teachers, courage to stand up for the truth and God’s people – without which the local church will be devastated by every doctrinal storm and internal conflict... Shepherding is all about protecting the flock!
- c. this includes the preacher and his family... treat preacher like a brother in the Lord and not like an employee... such is only right and will result in harmony of the brethren.

2. Provider/Leader

- a. when Ezekiel tells of a bad shepherd, 34:1-3 he says, “...he does not feed the flock.”
- b. no wonder Paul tells Timothy (1 Tim 3:2) that elders are suppose to be “able to teach”
- c. the ability to communicate truth is key requirement of effective shepherding – feed the sheep!
- d. with skill/knowledge, elders of a local lead the sheep to water and pasture. Leading/managing a flock is significant. Why? Because sheep are born followers! Take shepherding seriously!!

III Take the MOTIVE Seriously

- Illus. – let’s be honest, being a shepherd/elder in local church is a *thankless* job. I’ll illus. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of England 5-10-40. He singlehandedly restored Britain’s resolve. One historian said of Churchill, “...he transformed cowards into brave men.” 5 years later 5-7-45, Germany surrendered to the Allied forces. How did Britain show their thanks? 7-25-45, Churchill was voted out of office. That’s less than 3 months after Germany’s surrender!...
- how can we ever expect to “recruit” and urge godly men to desire such a thankless job?

A. It is the Lord’s Church

- 1. Not talking about a convention meets once a year where brotherhood/denominational “Senior Pastors” strut their political mumble jumble.
- 2. Not talking about what once were Bible Colleges but are now Universities who have magically opened doors for their graduates to do more “ministry.”
- 3. Not talking about a place where you/your family can go and get, get and get
- 4. Am talking about the Body of Christ, the Church – It’s not my church, it’s not your church, it’s not their church. It’s CHRIST’S Church!!
- 5. Why can’t we seize this fact alone and be constantly preparing young men for leadership?
 - a. let me ask, in local church of which you are a part, what is being done to prepare for future shepherds in the church? What are you personally doing to accomplish this?
 - b. if your answer is “nothing” may I respectfully but forcefully say you then really don’t take leadership of the church seriously do you?

B. It is Purchased With His Blood

- 1. Literally = “*purchased by God with His own blood*” i.e. shed in the person of His Son. Why?

- a. that His people would be willing to make all needed sacrifices for Her good in the future.
- b. that His people begin to understand how much He really loves Her, desiring none to perish.
2. Larenelle Harris sang a song years ago that struck a chord with me: “You Paid Much Too High a Price”
 - when all of us think of just how languid we have been in the past concerning leadership in the blood bought body of Christ we all must hang our heads and say – You paid much...!
3. Main point here: with Church being purchased by nothing less than the blood Jesus, all, especially leaders must value the church and give of themselves to build/protect Her! Motive = seriously take

Conclusion: In summary/conclusion, I was reading of a noted preacher who a biographer wrote, “Prick him anywhere and he bleeds the Bible.” Such is none truer than Edsil Dale. Remember that clip? It made in 1979!

My point? His assessment of the past, present and future of the Restoration Movement is “spot on.” How we need to get back to the basics and re-establish strong Biblical local churches. It’s not going to happen through post-modern thought; nor will it happen through the emergent church. We’re going to have to bleed the Bible anywhere we get pricked!

I love Thy Church, O God!
 Her walls before Thee stand,
 Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
 And graven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall;
 For her my prayers ascend;
 To her my cares and toils be giv’n,
 Till toils and cares shall end.

My farewell to the Northmen: Men, let’s take church leadership seriously!