

**BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE  
TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION**

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

**Aspects of the Eldership Revealed in Titus and First Peter**

Scripture Reading: Titus 1:2, 6-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-7

**I. Paul's Epistle to Titus, which concerns the maintaining of order in the church, says that Paul was an apostle "in the hope of eternal life"—1:2, 5:**

- A. The hope of eternal life, which is the divine life, is altogether a matter of the expression of this life not only for the coming age and eternity future but also for this age:
  - 1. We have much to hope for in the eternal life, the life of God, because it is able to do many things that we are unable to do in ourselves.
  - 2. The hope of God's promise is Christ as the seed of life, the eternal life, that is sown into the believers (Mark 4:26-29); we have hope because the seed of life as our hope has been sown into us to be our daily salvation.
  - 3. We can meet the requirements of the elders described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 only because we have God as the eternal life within us; since the eternal life is within us, we can fulfill the highest requirements.
  - 4. The high standard of the requirements in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 should not discourage us; instead, we should be hopeful in the realization that these requirements prove the capacity of the divine life in us.
- B. An "overseer must be unreprouvable as a steward of God"—Titus 1:7a:
  - 1. A steward is not only a servant but also one who dispenses—1 Pet. 4:10.
  - 2. Therefore, an elder should be one who dispenses, or ministers, God to others.
- C. An overseer must be "righteous" and "holy"—Titus 1:8:
  - 1. These words show that the requirements of an overseer are based not on his ability but on his manner of life.
  - 2. To be righteous is mainly toward man, and to be holy is mainly toward God.
- D. An overseer must be one who is "holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose"—v. 9:
  - 1. The faithful word is the full revelation of the New Testament, and the elders must hold to this revelation, which is the teaching of the apostles; the elders in a local church should hold to this faithful word so that they may fulfill their duty in teaching—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:2; 5:17.
  - 2. The elders' holding to the faithful word is both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to deal with the opposers; this indicates that the overseers need to have two kinds of teaching—one kind to edify, nourish, and heal the saints and the other to fight the battle so that the mouths of the vain talkers and deceivers may be stopped—Titus 1:9-11.

3. Thus, all the elders have to dedicate themselves to study the Bible and the ministry books in order to be fully educated in the crucial aspects of the truth; when we are educated in the teaching of the apostles, we will be able to safeguard and protect the local church—1 Tim. 4:6.
4. The more we study the Bible and the ministry books, the more enjoyment we receive; it is also a great enjoyment to help others in the church, especially to minister Christ to the young ones and the weak ones.
5. In God's economy to be an elder is a great blessing; thus, we should treasure the eldership.
6. The testimony of God today rests on the shoulders of the elders; they bear the Ark of the Testimony, Christ (Exo. 25:22; 26:33-34), for the Tabernacle of the Testimony, the church (38:21).

## **II. First Peter speaks of the elders' shepherding and its reward—5:1-7:**

- A. "The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed"—v. 1:
  1. To shepherd the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ as Christ suffered (Col. 1:24); this will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4).
  2. Every elder needs to be an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ; this means that the elders should be ready to sacrifice their lives as a part of their testimony—v. 1; cf. John 21:19; 2 Pet. 1:14.
  3. Every elder should be a martyr, a witness, one who sacrifices his life for Christ; nothing is more noble than living a martyr's life and dying as a martyr for the Lord; whether a church is strong or weak depends upon the loyalty, faithfulness, and sacrifice of the elders—cf. 1 Pet. 4:13.
  4. The main thought here is that the eldership depends not on what we can do but on what we are and the kind of life we live; the qualifications of the elders are not matters of ability but altogether matters of their life, living, and person.
- B. "Shepherd the flock of God among you"—5:2a:
  1. Peter heard the Lord say, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep"; the Lord laid down His soul-life so that His sheep may have His divine life—John 10:11.
  2. After His resurrection the Lord found Peter, restored Peter's love for Him, and charged Peter to shepherd His sheep; then He prophesied that Peter would be martyred—21:15-19.
  3. Eventually, Peter was martyred because of his shepherding of the Lord's flock; today the Lord is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4a), and as His fellow shepherds, we must follow His pattern to sacrifice and live His suffering life as martyrs for the flock of God.
  4. Acts 20:28-29 indicates that because there are wolves, the elders must be martyrs to shepherd the Lord's flock; when we consider 1 Peter 5 together with John 10 and 21 and Acts 20, we can see that to be an elder requires a spirit of martyrdom.

- C. “Overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly”—1 Pet. 5:2b:
1. To oversee the church is not to rule it but to safeguard, preserve, and protect it as a shepherd oversees a flock; it means that we take the oversight, looking diligently to be aware of the situation.
  2. *Not under compulsion but willingly* means not by constraint, pressure, or force; this is like a mother’s care for her child—1 Thes. 2:7.
  3. To shepherd the flock “according to God” means that we shepherd it according to God’s nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to man’s preference, interest, and purpose.
  4. We must overcome the temptation to seek gain through base means; we must earnestly love the saints and be willing to give our life for them without any thought of material gain—cf. 1 Tim. 5:17; 6:5.
- D. “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock”—1 Pet. 5:3:
1. The elders should not lord it over the saints, because the church is not their possession; the church, which includes the elders, is God’s possession.
  2. Among the believers, besides Christ there should be no other lord; all should be servants, even slaves—Matt. 20:25-27; 23:10-11.
  3. The elders’ being patterns indicates that they are on the same level as the other saints; to be a pattern is to take the lead to serve and care for the church, that the believers may follow.
- E. “When the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory”—1 Pet. 5:4:
1. The crown given by the Lord to the faithful elders will be a reward for their loyal service; the glory of this crown will never fade.
  2. This crown will be a portion of the glory for the overcomers’ enjoyment of the manifestation of the kingdom of God and Christ—2 Pet. 1:11.
- F. “In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble”—1 Pet. 5:5:
1. The phrase *in like manner* indicates that the elders are on the same level as the younger brothers; also, the phrase *all of you* places us all on the same level.
  2. The word *gird* is derived from a noun meaning “a slave’s apron”; such an apron girded up the slave’s loose garments in the service; it is used here as a figure of speech, signifying the putting on of humility as a virtue in service—cf. Luke 22:27.
  3. The pride of the elders frustrates God’s grace from coming to the church, but the humility of the elders keeps a living flow of grace coming into the church.
- G. “Be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time”—1 Pet. 5:6:
1. To be submissive to God’s mighty hand, to be willing to be made lowly, is to take the God-honoring way that gives Him the ground to exalt us in His time.

2. To be willing to be made low by God's humbling hand in His discipline is a prerequisite to being made high by God's exalting hand in His glorification.
- H. "Casting all your anxiety on Him because it matters to Him concerning you"—v. 7:
1. The anxiety mentioned in this verse should come from our concern for the church's condition and for the saints' growth in life; as elders, we should be concerned to the uttermost for the church and the saints.
  2. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul writes, "There is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches."
  3. At times when we are in extreme anxiety for the church, we need to learn to cast all our anxiety on the Lord because He cares for the church and the elders, and "it matters to Him concerning you"—1 Pet. 5:7.